

BLIND CITY

a play

by

Alex Broun

Freely adapted from

Dante Alighieri's

"Inferno"

Translated by Gustave Dore

Sydney, November 2005

Email: abroun@bigpond.net.au

Alex Broun © 2002

BLIND CITY
was performed as part of Two Up ! at
The 2003 Sydney Festival.

“ By that hidden way
My guide and I did enter, to return
To the fair world : and heedless of repose
We climb'd, he first, I following his steps
Till on our view the beautiful lights of heaven
Dawn'd through a circular opening in the cave;
Thence issuing we again beheld the stars.”

- **Dante's Inferno**
(Canto 36, lines 127-133)

“Life's throw a curve”

- **Simple Minds**
Promised you a miracle

BLIND CITY

was first performed by

The New Mercury Theatre

at

The Bondi Pavilion Theatre
Sydney, Australia

On March the 20th, 2002

with the following cast:

Sophie Gregg

Jon Pasvolsky

Graeme Rhodes

Sarah Smuts-Kennedy

The production was directed by **Kym Weatherley**
and designed by **Anna Robb**.

Act 1. Isolation

Sounds of a busy city. Lights up on **BRENDA, KEITH, JAMIE** and **STEVE**.

We hear a hum building in the distance. The humming becomes louder and louder.

Suddenly the hum is cut off and the stage is illuminated by a brilliant flash of white light. Blackout.

Lights come back up on **STEVE**. He checks around then goes to the back wall. He pulls out a piece of red chalk and scrawls on the wall:

STEVE : (WRITING AS HE SPEAKS)
“ In the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood astray.”
(TO AUDIENCE) Did you see that light the other night ? The blinding flash. Incredible wasn't it. I was up on the roof, hanging out some laundry. I was standing right on the edge, looking out over the park. Bats screaming in the trees. Then it happened. This huge brilliant light in the sky. Bloody thing almost swallowed me up. Then afterwards -silence. This beautiful silence. I couldn't talk. Made me forget about myself, forget. For a whole five minutes.
You see recently I've become obsessed with the idea of killing myself. I have these fantasies about a train slicing me in two, my guts spilling all over the track. Or throwing myself off a tall building – or not so tall building - smashing my body on the concrete below.
I don't think the anti-depressants are working. Maybe I should increase my dosage. Six a day probably isn't really enough. The problem is I'm just really depressed. I mean really, really depressed. But I'm not letting it get me down.
(HE SMILES) In fact I've come to a decision. It came to me in the flash. Well I saw it in the flash. The graffiti. On the wall, across from my building, scrawled in red paint:
(READS FROM WALL) “In the midway of this our mortal life
I found me in a gloomy wood astray.”
Dante. Inferno. You know ? Inferno.
So in that moment – when I saw those words - I thought: “Why not ? If I go through nine circles of hell maybe I can get a little Paradise too.”
“Through me you pass into the city of woe
All hope abandon, ye who enter here.”
But pass through here we must to attain paradise.

HE CLICKS HIS FINGERS. LIGHTS CHANGE. **KEITH** ENTERS.

STEVE: “And lo ! Toward us in a bark comes an old man !”
Hoary, white with eld, crying “Woe to you,
Wicked spirits ! Hope not ever to see the sky again.”

1. GOLDILOCKS.

ART GALLERY. 2am.

KEITH IS THE SECURITY GUARD.

KEITH: I like it here among the paintings. Quiet, peaceful, warm. Funny word that - art. Add an f an what do you get ? Fart. That's what my father used to say. He didn't go much on art. Another one, gone to god. They're all gone now. Mum, Eric, Betty, Tom. All gone. Except me. I've been asking for overtime of late. I need to be here at the moment. Among the warm glow. My wife, Drie, went too you see a couple of months ago and I'm not bearing up too well. We were married for 27 years come Christmas. They say four months is the danger time. It's about then when things start to get tricky. At first I didn't think it would. I thought I'd be one of the lucky ones. But it's around then you really start to miss them and you begin to realise how empty your life is without them. You begin to understand the real meaning of the word loneliness.

It's all to be expected of course. It's always hardest for the one who remains. The other one sits on a cloud, sipping nice cups of tea, with cream and sugar, while you're stuck down here, among all the tears and memories. Hope they do have tea in heaven. She always loved a good cuppa. Not too hot, not too cold, just right. Like Goldilocks with her bowl of porridge. That's who she was to me. My very own Goldilocks. Have a cup for me love.

That's what I reckon that flash was all about. I was up in the canteen, on me break. It was so bright it went right through the whole building. Like an xray. They said it was dry lightning. Lightning out of a cloudless sky ? I never seen lightning like that. Then they said it was some build up of static electricity due to the new power station. But I reckon it was something else. (WHISPERING) I reckon it was them over there - sending us a sign that they were okay. Saying hello. It was Drie. Telling me I'm not alone.

Things like that happen. You get little signs and you gotta be aware of them. Like this bloke the other day. He was standing in front of the Magritte for hours, with this intense look on his face. I thought at first that he was, pardon the expression, a little barmy. We get them in here some days, trying to scribble on the Picasso. He wasn't like that though. In fact, he was quite the opposite. "Purify". That was his first word. Not a "Hello" or "What's the time ?", or even "What's this one called ?" Just "Purify." Then he went on. "Sit with it. Go through it. Emerge cleansed." Then he stopped for awhile. Went all silent. And then he said, real quiet like: "Begin now." Then he picked up his bag and just walked off. "Purify. Emerge cleansed. Begin now." Heady stuff. I remember it cause I wrote it down on the back of a piece of newspaper and stuck it in my wallet. I take it out and look at it from time to time. Especially at night. It helps me sleep. Not sure why. But it

KEITH: (CONT) helps me nod off. I don't who he was or where he come from but I'll tell you something, I think that chap had a direct line to him up there. You're gonna think I'm crazy but I think he was some kind of angel sent down to help me out. Those words he said, and the flash, they've given me renewed faith. And nothing, nothing on earth, is more important than that.

You see, that light cleansed us all. It's given me courage to go on. To wake up each morning and try to smile. But never forget she's there with me. Watching, laughing –gazing down at me through the flash. Sit with it. Go through it. Emerge cleansed. Begin now.

KEITH EXITS.

STEVE: “Now let us to the blind world there beneath descend
I go the first and thou shalt follow next
And entering lead you with me, on the bounds
Of the first circle that surrounds the abyss.
Suspended in that Limbo many a soul of mighty worth”

JAMIE ENTERS, FEELING HER WAY WITH A CANE.

STEVE: “There mark'd I Helen, for whose sake so long
The time was fraught with evil”

2. Beer and Newspaper

JAMIE: How we met.

I left work at 7.45pm exactly as usual. I came down the stairs of the hospital and walked across Macquarie Street and into Martin Place, past the fountain trickling on my left and the smell of garbage at the cafe where I buy my lunch. As I reached the corner of Bridge Street, I felt a slight cool breeze, ruffling my hair – and a warm glow on my face, like someone had lit a match - then silence. No cars, no traffic lights, no people. Nothing, except the trickling of the fountain. Then suddenly an explosion of sound.

A woman screaming - car horns, drowning each other out. Footsteps, a man's footsteps, running towards me. I'm knocked to the footpath by a middle aged man in a thick jacket. He grabbed my hand and tried to pull me up. “Leave me alone. I'm alright. You're the one who's confused. I know exactly where I'm going.”

I check my watch. 7.57pm. I had three minutes to get to my bus stop. He'd be waiting. But first I had to get across Bridge Street and the lights have stopped working. I couldn't hear any cars moving so I stepped on to the road. It was unsafe I know but all I was thinking is that I have two minutes to get to my bus stop or he'll be gone. I took another tentative step. Ten more quick steps and I reached the other side. Now it was 7.59. One minute ! I walked quickly down the slope to

JAMIE: (CONT) Elizabeth Street and made it to my bus stop. Eight o'clock exactly. But where was he ?
Where was the man who smells of beer? Not badly - he's not an alcoholic - just a faint smell. One or two after his hard day at the stock exchange. And he always has a paper which he reads on the bus. That's why I christened him Beer and newspaper. Before I knew his real name. Now it was 8.02. I had missed the bus. But no. Surely it had been delayed. But then where was he? Chanel and leather bag was there, standing on my right. She catches the bus two before mine at 7.58 and she was still there. My bus must've still been coming. 8.07. Chanel and leather bag sat next to me. "Did you see the flash ? What did you think it was ?" I did not answer. I sensed her embarrassment as she sees the cane I'm holding in my hand. 8.12. Still no beer and newspaper.
Cigar and umbrella arrived. Almost fifteen minutes late. "Somebody said they've blown up the Opera House" I heard him say. "If they've blown up the Opera House why didn't we hear the bang ?" replied Chanel and leather bag. 8.20. I couldn't bear it. Where was he ? Someone else began to speak. He shouldn't have been at my bus stop. "I reckon it was a nuclear bomb." What was he doing at my bus stop ? "One of those ones that just blows up the people and leaves all the buildings standing." 8.28pm ! I was going to scream. He'd caught a taxi home or worse still he'd been hurt in the flash.
Then suddenly I heard it - about a block away. A bus. Where is beer and newspaper ? The bus stopped. The doors open. Was it my bus ? I'm just about to ask Cigar when at last - the rustle of newspaper and the faint smell of beer. Only one tonight. 8.32. Beer and newspaper had arrived. I could feel him looking at me. Play it cool. Blind and independent is mysterious, sexy. Blind and needy is pathetic. "I see you made it." Was he talking to me ? "I was worried about you." "Don't worry about me" I thought to myself, "it's everybody else who's running around like fucking idiots." But then beer laughed and I suddenly realised that I said it out loud. I was embarrassed but I could feel a smile growing on my face. "Well that's alright then." Beer and newspaper was worried about me. Another bus pulled up. "Come on" he said, "that's us." That's us. I felt him gently take my arm. Together we walked over to the kerb and stepped up on to the bus.

JAMIE EXITS.

STEVE: If they had a competition for the most depressed person in the world I'm absolutely sure I'd win. Or at least come a close second. My sister would come first. She's depressed too. She's been in therapy for six years but her psychiatrist isn't as expensive as mine.
It's not much fun this greyness. I think it's a family trait. An overabundance of angst. Strindberg, Van Gogh, Beckett and Morrissey all rolled into one. Maybe I should just die. But what if you still get depressed even after you're dead ? Think about it. I mean

STEVE: (CONT) what do you do then ? I don't think the pharmacy in heaven is that flush with anti-depressants. And you can't commit suicide. You're already dead.

BRENDA ENTERS, CARRYING A TRAY OF SANDWICHES.

STEVE: "From the first circle I descend thus
Down to the second,
There I saw Electra, accompanied by many"

3. PARTY 1

Drinks Party. 9pm.

BRENDA: They're fucking. Not right now, but they are fucking.
How did I know ? Put it this way, it wasn't hard to guess. I know what you're thinking. I'm just being paranoid. Final confirmation came the night of the flash. I came in to collect him from the office and surprise, surprise. She was there. Taking dictation. And then came the light in the sky - blinding, hideously bright. The little mouse got so scared she virtually leapt across the desk and into his arms. A split second later the lights went out. But I'd seen all I needed to see.
Her name is Cheryl. Cheryl. Who in their right mind would have an affair with a girl called Cheryl. Sounds like a new brand of washing powder. "Use Cheryl on all your household stains." Her name is Cheryl and they're fucking. Everyone can tell. It's so bloody obvious. We're the laughing stock of the whole party. Scratch that. I'm the laughing stock of the whole party. "There's Brenda Williams. Did you know her husband is doing his PA ?"
Look at her. She makes me want to vomit. Nineteen. Nine-teen. I mean, look at that dress. Could it be any shorter ? Could her tits be pushed up any higher ? Does she have to be so bloody cute though ? Look at that face, angelic, and where did she get that tan ? Skin like that doesn't exist. I've got to give it to him. He always had taste. After all - he picked me. (LAUGHS) I'm pissed, and I don't care. In fact, I might get really sloshed and put on a show. Liven things up. Go over, slap her on the face, call her a tart and pour my champagne all over those pushed up, pulled out, over cooked tits. Why in the world did he have to bring her here ? Some decorum please. These people are my friends, for Christs' sake. How am I meant to look them in the eye when my husband has brought his work home with him ? His office floozy. His afternoon screw. His mistress. Such an exotic word for such a little slut. I wonder where they do it. A quickie bent over the photocopy machine. A coffee break bonk in the broom closet. Or do they sneak off to a little hotel for a sunset rendezvous ? I wonder how long it's been going on ? Quite a while I would say. I'm not sure when it started but it soon became apparent. Listen, when your husband is sleeping with someone else four times a week you don't have to be

BRENDA: (CONT) Einstein to work out something's changed. Christ. Now he's introducing her around. Like she was his bloody wife or something. Or his daughter. Christ knows he's old enough to be her grandfather. She keeps looking over at me. Like a cat guarding it's food. She thinks she's got a future with the boss, if only she could get rid of the old hag. I wouldn't hold your breath lovey. He'll get bored with you, just like he got bored with me. So how do I exact my revenge on this superhuman prick? An affair. Hit him with his own medicine. See how he likes it. A nice public one too. With someone really close to him. Chosen to cause maximum humiliation. Terry. Too old. Lionel. Too married. Barry. Perfect. The trustworthy, second in command. Good old Bazza. See how he likes them apples. And I'll make sure he knows. Rub his face in it, just like he's doing to me. Leave some stained undies under the bed. Or casually put Bazza's tie in with the dry cleaning. He'll soon get the picture. I'm having an affair with Barry. Ha, ha, ha. But there 's one problem. Just a teensy, weensy one. I don't want to have an affair with Barry. Or even Terry. Even after everything the prick's done to me I still love him. I don't want to sleep with anybody else. I don't want to cuddle up to anybody else in the middle of the night. He's the man I raised two children with and I don't want anybody to be with anybody else - now or ever. Pathetic isn't it? Guess I can't say the same for him. Are you sure you wouldn't like a sandwich ?

BRENDA SCREAMS AND HURLS SOME SANDWICHES ACROSS STAGE. SHE EXITS.

STEVE: "Thy city heaped with envy to the brim,
Held me in brighter days. Ye citizens
Were won't to name me Ciacco. For the sin
Of gluttony, damned vice, beneath this rain."

THROBBING DANCE MUSIC. CLUB LIGHTING.

4. Nothing less will do

Another party. 2am.

BRENT: There is a better party than this, I just haven't found it yet. There's a better drink than the one I'm drinking, I just haven't drunk it yet. There's a better drug than the one I'm on. I just haven't discovered it yet. If I had to give tonight a score out of ten it would be a six. The first party I went to was to a five – pretty groovy but boring. The next party was definitely a three. A half empty room full of losers. The one before this was really good. It was about an eight and a half. Lots of beautiful girls, lots of expensive booze, nice, mood lighting. I probably should've

BRENT: (CONT) stayed there but hey, I'm on the look out for the perfect ten. Nothing less will do. I haven't found it yet but I've got a feeling I'm not that far away.

This party is somewhere between a four and a six. If some more people turn up it could be a five. If they have drugs it could be a six and a half, and if the most beautiful girl amongst them thinks I'm attractive it could even push to a seven. If no one comes it will remain a four, and if that jerk in the green corduroy jacket keeps playing that stupid record it may even drop to a two. I have three more parties to go to tonight. Either of them could be the magic ten. The second one looks good, and I've got high hopes for my last stop but as for now I'm here, stuck between four and six. I won't stay much longer. It's too bright, I'm a bit hot, that jerk in the jacket is playing that song again and last but by no means least - I'm running out of drugs.

I'll keep moving. Keep rolling on in search of the perfect ten. I know it's out there. I can feel it. I'm getting closer too. I'm warm, very warm. It's just around the next corner. Nothing less will do.

It's like that light in the sky. That's what I'm really looking for. Something like that. I remember when it happened. It went right through me like a shot of ecstasy. And for a spilt second I got this feeling I never had before. This feeling of total ... ten.

I need something like that tonight. Something like that flash. And I will find it. There is a better party than this, I just haven't discovered it yet. There is a better drink than the one I'm drinking, I just haven't drunk it yet. There is a better drug than the one I'm on, I just haven't discovered it yet. Nothing less will do. I'm going. Soon.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

STEVE: "In the third circle I arrive
There I saw the livid stone, full of apertures
All equal in their width and circular each
From out the mouth
Of every one emerged a sinner's feet"

CLIVE ENTERS, CARRYING A SMALL TABLE AND BOUND VOLUME. HE SETS UP THE TABLE.

STEVE: If thou be able, utter forth thy voice."

5. INFIDELITY

MUSIC: Dido's lament from Dido and Aeneas. FADES.

CLIVE: Shakespeare was wrong.
Not in all respects of course. In most respects, he was often quite right, but in this respect he is most definitely - wrong. "The readiness is all". Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 4.

CLIVE: The readiness is not all. Acceptance is all.

It was an unceremonious departure. No tears and screaming at two o'clock in the morning. No harsh words or desperate pleas. I came back from lectures late last Tuesday. The night of the flash. The house was empty. But the lights were back on. I found a note on the bed. (READS) "Dear Clive, " so formal, "Dear Clive, I've gone." Two words. As simple and as complex as that. A fourteen year marriage dead in two words. "The girls are at Helen's" My mother's, not hers. That at least was decent of her. No mention of him. That priceless snippet came later. She rounded off with a short perfunctory sentence. "I'm sorry, but I don't love you anymore." I don't love you anymore. Why did she say sorry ? It's not her fault she doesn't love me anymore, is it ? It's not her fault she changed her mind. It's not her fault she broke a life time vow. It's mine. It must be mine. I have done something to make her stop loving me. It's not a small thing - losing love. It must have been me. She left me. Accept it. Walked out on me and our two children. Accept it. Ran off with a man half my age. Accept it. He is everything I am not. Young, handsome, virile. He can give her everything I failed to deliver. Accept it. The acceptance is all. He was my star pupil. I taught him Hamlet. If you can teach Hamlet. They met at one of the University drinks parties. Someone was giving someone a cheque and we were brought in to make up the numbers. Guzzle, chat, hob nob. I actually introduced them. "Simon, this is my wife." Perhaps I should've stressed "wife" a tad more. I didn't notice anything out of the ordinary. No bolt of lightning. No blinding flash. If I remember correctly, we chatted for awhile, not long. I was called off by the cheque givee to say a few words. A little later I glanced over and they were still chatting. Didn't look like much, some innocuous palare, but that's obviously where the seed was sown. So to speak. I didn't think anymore about it. Till I got the ... note. The Dear John. Or in my case, Dear Clive.

I often wonder just how it did happen ? The mechanics. Did he ring her up and ask her out on a date ? "Listen Katharine, I know your married to my tutor and all that but would you like to go and see a movie next Tuesday night ? It's half price." Or was she the one who sought him out ? Had I caused her to not love me so tremendously, that she needed to pursue a little outside adventure? A dangerous liaison that snowballed into something more. And exactly how long did it go on for ? How could I have been so blind? It seems this was a love somewhat out of the ordinary and those who are in engaged in a love of that magnitude often do not stop to consider the consequences, especially to other people. Witness Capulet. Romeo and Juliet, Act 3, Scene 5. Lines 206 to 275. A love like that just sweeps the lover up and takes them away. From children, a house, a husband, a life. That of course is one explanation. An other would be they just succumbed to a brief spasm of carnal lust. Where are they ? I don't have the faintest idea. Will she ever return ? I can't imagine so. Is our marriage over ? My opinion - yes. And this returns me to my original motif –

CLIVE: (CONT) acceptance. What good is becoming enraged? Railing against the world in blind fury? What would it achieve ? And if you were to give in to that surging emotion you might end up doing something quite regrettable. Seeking them out and wreaking retribution as they lay in their adulteress embrace. This is not a play or a novel. Life is never that cut and dried. The bad often get off Scot free and the good are left to deal with ... it.
It's just like that flash in the sky. People are so busy romanticising it, using it as the answer for every mystery in the universe they miss the fundamental point. The flash didn't change anything. Whatever it was ? Lightning, polar reflection, magnetic pulse, Shakespeare's heavenly displeasure at so many bad productions of his plays. It doesn't change anything. My wife still left me. Flash or no flash. But try as I might I just can't seem to turn the pain off. Lear, Act 2, Scene 3.
There is never anything so true as a woman in love. Never anything as cold as a woman disinterested, and never anything as fickle as a woman who changes her mind. Clive Richards. January 2002.
I wonder what Hamlet would do. Nothing probably.

CLIVE EXITS.

STEVE: The question I most ask myself is why can't I live ? I mean- live. Just live. It's like I'm playing a game and I don't know the rule but everyone else does.

RACHEL ENTERS.

STEVE: "Tiresias I do note,
Who semblance changed, when woman he became
Of male, through every limb transform'd"

6. PHONE CALLS:

RACHEL: People don't return my phone calls.
I'm a researcher. I predict future trends. Cancer probability, salination levels, sperm counts. But I can't predict when my phone will ring. I'm not sure when it started but a conspiracy is at work. A secret club that I am not a member of. I have become de-looped.
I'm not paranoid. I'm not. Some of their reasons are quite legitimate. But others, others I believe have made a conscious decision that I shall not be returned. I think about it often. Was it something I did ? Something I said ? Did I offend them ? Bore them ? Make them feel uncomfortable ? What is the reason ? One of them I do know. A couple of loose words, ill considered, went down badly. Now that one I can understand. But that's only one. What about the others ? And believe me. They're becoming quite numerous.

RACHEL HOLDS UP A CARDBOARD CHART.

RACHEL: I've started a chart. So I can keep up. "Unreturned calls." I write the name here, the date and time of the call here, and whether or not returned here. Andy, as you can see, is my most stubborn subject. Eleven calls to date and still no return. Him, I can not decipher. I thought we were friends. Obviously I erred.

John - seven calls to date - no reply. Perhaps a misunderstanding there. We dated once. He now has a girlfriend. He thinks I am still amorously inclined towards him. I am not. I just want him to return my phone calls. Harry - that's the one I spoke of, the loose words. That one is accounted for. I asked him about a girl I thought he was seeing. Evidently he was not. He became quite upset. I have not spoken to him since. Coincidence ? I think not. Connection? I think so. The lottery of human society. Then there's Tony with 5, Steve with 4, Sandra also 4, Gerry 3, Michaela 2, Boris 1, Fiona 1, Martine 1 and Karen 1 and a half. I've rung her twice but I think she only got one of my messages. Her voice mail is on the blink. Then there's Teresa with eight, but she's my sister so she doesn't count. Then there's this one - marked with a question mark. That night the phone did ring. I was sitting at the kitchen table working on my chart when I heard it. I put down my pink texta, leapt to my feet and bolted for the phone. But just as I reached it – the flash came. And it went dead. So that's a returned call that I need to allocate to somebody. But who ? (PAUSE) Hey. Where you going ?

Do you ever get the feeling the world is passing you by and you want to yell out stop. (SHE CALLS) Wait for me. (SOFTER) Wait for me.

RACHEL EXITS.

STEVE: "Fourth circle.
At this point, the steps led below
Arrived, there Plutus."

7. RECOVERY

Meeting. Lunchtime.

TOBY: My name is Toby and I'm an alcoholic. And I'm three years sober today.

APPLAUSE.

TOBY: Thanks. I wish I could sit here and tell you how great the last three years has been, how I passed my bar exams and how grateful I am to be sober, and I am, but I've got a few other matters that I need to talk about. I've had an ... interesting week. Got a little surprise. I'm adopted, I've shared about that before so most of you know that. It's not a big drama. I've known since I was eight. My parents were going to tell me when I was ten but they thought that I was a smart kid

TOBY: (CONT) and I might work it out before so they told me on my eighth birthday. Last week I turned twenty eight so they decided to give me another informative little gift. Again they were going to wait till I was thirty five, till I'd fully matured, but they thought I needed to know now. So last Sunday I go there for dinner and after the apple crumble birthday cake they hand me an envelope. I think - a cheque. How nice ? In it is a card and on the card a name and a number. "Thought you might want to know who your real parents were". I look up and Dad's smiling sweetly. Mum squeezes his hand. I look back at the card. Just who do they think they are to make that decision. It's a pretty big thing. Meeting your birth parents. Pretty traumatic. Who says that I'm ready for something like that or even that I want to meet them? Just what gives my mum and dad the right to choose.

I try to put it on the programme. Hand over. Let go let God. Okay maybe the time is right. Maybe my higher power is guiding me towards my birth parents for some reason. So, next morning, I ring the number. It's the agency. "My name's Toby Walsh. I'd like to be out in contact with my birth parents." They ask me to come in and see them. I go in that afternoon, listen to some spiel about being prepared, great shock, blah blah blah. Nod my head, look very serious and about half an hour later - a name and an address. Duffy. Maroubra. My name is Toby Duffy and I come from Maroubra. From the Walshs of Gordon to the Duffys of Maroubra. Okay so I guess I could write them a letter or look up their phone number - but that's not my style. Not dramatic enough. So the next night, Tuesday, I get in the car. Eventually I find the house. Drive past it three times. Finally I park the car. Look around for muggers and make a quick dash for the front door. Wait. Wait some more. Nothing. Just about to make a dash back to the car when ... There's a ... woman on the other side. "Clearly I must have the wrong house. I'm looking for the Duffy family." "Not here. Gone up north. Cairns." "Do you have their new address ?" "Come in." I'm led into a surprisingly comfy living room just off a well ordered kitchen. I've seen Court Houses messier than this. There's an old man sitting in a chair, listening to the radio. He smiles. The woman asks me if I want some tea. Strangely I say yes. She potters around in the kitchen for about ten minutes, leaves me to listen to the music with the smiling old man. Finally she comes back with the tea. Smells awful, not like any tea I've ever had, but tastes really good. She puts a photo into my hand. "Who's this ?" "That's who your looking for. Tony Duffy. He's our cousin." It's a blurry snapshot of a man standing in front of an old beat up car. Maybe the one they drove to Cairns in. He's wearing a yellow T-shirt, red shorts and thongs and as my eyes slowly adjust to the half light of the living room, I see more detail. His hair is thick and wavy, just like mine, his lips dark red, just like mine and his fingers long and skinny, just like mine. But there's something else. His skin is dry, you can tell even from the photo. Bone dry, creased and patchy. And unmistakably, one hundred percent, a very definite shade of black. I'm out of the house in a flash. Back in the car. I'm sitting there, my

TOBY: (CONT) head spinning. Trying to catch my breath. Next second - there's that bloody light in the sky. I jump so high I nearly hit my head on the car roof. Sit there in the dark. Wonder if Mr. Duffy's cousins have any candles in there house. Eventually, I drive home. Do you know how hard it is to drive across this city through pitch black ? I'm one-eighth Ningali. Nin-gali. I can't even say it. I'm humiliated, embarrassed, appalled. I look at my parents. My mother, serving the peas. My dad sipping his red wine. Did they know all along that I was one of them ? Or had they, like me, thought my dark skin was from somewhere else ?

I look at them sitting around our dining table. Suddenly I don't feel like this is home anymore. How did it go ?" says Mum. Dad looks up, anxiously. "Fine. Just fine." Dad nods. "That's good then. Juice?" All through dinner I consciously have to try and swallow each mouthful. Stop myself from puking up all over the antique white table cloth. So now I'm an alcoholic, aboriginal. Overnight I have become a cliché. Jesus. Next thing you know I'll lose my job.

What am I meant to do now ? Go and sit under a gum tree. Find the nearest corroboree. Indigenous. I feel about as indigenous as a Big Mac. I don't even like the bush. I can still taste that old woman's tea in my mouth though ? And why have I still got this photo ?

HE BRINGS OUT THE PHOTO.

TOBY: Thank god I'm sober.
Thanks for letting me share.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

STEVE: "Now draws near the City of Dis"

JANINE ENTERS.

STEVE: "To the gate she came, and with her wand touched it,
Whereat open without impediment it flew."

8. GOD:

Dormitory room. Night.

JANINE: I am to be ordained tomorrow. The service is set down for eleven. The laying on of hands will take place at exactly 11.45am. I am ... excited, of course. The training is nearly over. My years of devotion are reaching their climax. My work ... my life work can begin.

I'm nervous. Who wouldn't be ? But as Brother Ryan said if that is what I am feeling, then that is exactly how God wants me to feel. Everything is as it should be. Brother Ryan stressed to me clearly and often that single point. That God is in everything. Including me. God

JANINE: (CONT) guides everything. When we're in prayer, at work in the garden or even watching television at night - God is always there - watching - like the most benign and compassionate parent. Helping us live our lives, if we are willing to let him help us.

I received my calling relatively late but again that is how it should be. All my experiences up to this point have led me to this moment. People say that I am passionate. If I am passionate, then God has made me passionate. If I am ardent, as they also say, then God again has made me such. He made me and I am his. Of all the myriad of lessons I have learnt I believe that is the most important. God is everywhere. Even here, with us, right now. If we listen carefully, we may even be able to hear him.

SHE LISTENS.

JANINE: People say that religion is old fashioned. I say that it is beyond fashion. People say that religion is immature. The world has grown up, we don't need the crutch of God anymore. I say we need God now more than ever. People say God is obsolete in our post-modern society. I say that God is post-modern, pre-modern, non-modern, traditional, cutting edge, computer chipped and microwaved. God is all.

Once, when I was young girl, I saw a man standing at a corner, a sort of sidewalk preacher, and he was holding up a sign. The sign said: "God is love". At the time I did not understand what it meant. For many, many years I did not understand what it meant, but now I do understand. I understand one hundred percent with body, mind and spirit. That sign conveyed an absolute truth. God is love. And that burning, searing, all consuming love fills up my life. The light was always inside me but for years I fought it. Ego, self-will, the desire for control held me back. I constructed walls between myself and God and my life was shallow, hollow, meaningless. That was when I met Brother Ryan. He described life as a roller coaster. A magical mystery ride full of ups and downs, twists and turns, excitement and danger, and God was the track our little, fragile car ran upon. He would always be there, cradling us, guiding us, protecting us - so all we had to do was let go of the safety rail. The ride was ready to begin but I was clinging to the platform - stubborn, scared, full of doubts. I had to learn to trust God. To let go. To give in. To ask for his help. So one day, when all hope seemed lost, I finally did. And here I am.

There have been doubts. Just last week I once more stood on the precipice, my vocation waning. A decision had to be made. In or out. I had been praying in the chapel that night, and as I stepped out into the evening air - a flash of blinding white light, stretching across the sky, blotting out the stars, illuminating the face of heaven. Here was irrefutable proof. God was with me. It's like the words of a song. (SINGS, BADLY) "I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see."

JANINE: (CONT) God has given me a life and I will cherish every second of it. I will let go of the rail, sit back and enjoy the ride. Tomorrow I am to be ordained. Tomorrow my life's work can begin. Brother Ryan - pray for me.

JANINE EXITS. LIGHTS CHANGE.

STEVE STANDS IN FRONT OF THE WALL, CHALK IN HAND.

STEVE : Why am I angry ? Try who am I angry with ? (WRITES) Father. Mother. Sister. Wendy. (TO AUDIENCE) I hate them all. But I don't hate anybody half as much as I hate myself.

LIGHTS CHANGE. **STEVE WHEELS ON A TELEVISION.**

STEVE: "Hasten Medusa
Turn thyself round and keep
Thy countenance hid; for if the Gorgon dire
Be shown, and thou shouldst view it, they return
Upwards would be for ever lost."

9. TELEVISION MAN

TV Room. 6.15pm.

ADRIAN ENTERS. GAME SHOW THEME.

ADRIAN: Today I have watched eleven hours of television. Tonight I will watch six more.

ADRIAN BEGINS TO STRETCH.

ADRIAN: I'm on my break. It's important to have a break. A quick half an hour before the last of the game shows and the start of current affairs. I don't watch the news. Too depressing. So six o'clock is my break time. A quick snack and stretch and then it's back to the action. I prefer frozen foods. TV dinners. Or lunches as the case may be. Less interruptions that way. During one commercial break I take it out of the freezer and put it in the oven. Set the timer, then I come back a couple of commercial breaks later and whammo - instant satisfaction. No washing up either. I'm a Television Man. That's my job. I even write it on official documents. Last week I was sent a survey of some kind and where it said "Occupation" I filled in "Television Man". Notice, not "Television Repairman". But "Television Man". I'm a watcher. Not a fixer. Been that way since I did me back at the factory. On compo, you know. Bloke at Human Resources said "Find yourself a hobby. Can't just sit around doin' nothing all day. Develop a passion." So I did. I watch. I watch with a passion.

ADRIAN: (CONT) People look at you strangely when you tell them what you do, so mostly, I don't tell them. Except for that form. I didn't have to tell them, did I ? Not face to face. Just had to write it down. So I did. It's a full time job - watching. Seventeen hours a day. Tell me somebody else who works seventeen hours a day - seven days a week. 120 hours a week I'm in my chair, control in hand watching. Only time I'm not watching is when I'm in bed, or when I'm in the gents. Although I do try to restrict that to the commercial breaks. Got it well timed matter of fact. Number one's a breeze. Number two's a bit tricky at times. So I'm training to speed up, gradually. I used to eat three meals a day in front of the television, but now I've decided to leave my post for dinner. You do need a break, sad to say but you do. Nothing good on anyway. News. "Doom and gloom in your lounge room." Not for me, thank you very much. I'll grab my chance, take a break and stock up on some sustenance. 6pm to 6.30pm. Snack and stretch. That's my schedule and I'm sticking to it. There was one day I wasn't able to stick to the schedule. A most difficult day that day. A most difficult day indeed. The day of the flash. The television blew up.

PAUSE. **ADRIAN** CROSSES HIMSELF.

ADRIAN: I tell no lie. Right in the middle of All Saints. It was that bloody light in the sky. Sent a power surge through the whole grid. Blew my television up right in front of my eyes. Still I'm not complaining - an exploding television is almost as good as All Saints. But that night I was complaining. I was hollering, long and loud. A catastrophe. An absolute disaster. Quick as a flash I was on the phone . Two double eight one thousand. Two double eight one thousand. I remembered the number from the ad. Heard it often enough. Two double eight one thousand. Whacked a nine on the front and got straight through. But it was nine o'clock at night. Would anybody be there and more to the point would they be able to help in this time of dire emergency? A nice lady answered. Sounded young. "Need new telly. Quick. Don't care what type. Missing All Saints." Gave her the address. Half an hour later, and a dark half an hour it was too, but thirty minutes on the knocker, hey presto. Young fella, blue uniform, greasy hair. In his hands - what a glorious sight, holy majesty - a brand new magic box. Glistening, shiny, enchanting. Calling out to me - "Television man, Television man" - begging to be plugged in, longing to emit rays. I grabbed it and whacked it on, power was back on by then. Didn't even need tuning. "We do that at the shop" he says. All official like. As if I care. "It's on now - piss off." What a champion set. And the picture, what a glorious sight - overflowing greens and awe inspiring pinks. Just like the ad said. All Saints was still on. Just in time to see Georgie Parker save the life a desperate heroin addict. Don't know why she bothered. Still that's Georgie. "See you next week Nurse Terry."

ADRIAN: (CONT) Next commercial break, young fella's sneaking out with the old set. "Give her a nice funeral mate. She deserves it. Been through a lot me and the old Sanyo." Last look at the old trusty , quick goodbye – and then back to the new set before "Stingers" had even kicked off. Whole transaction took five minutes. What a glorious world we live in. The convenience of modern living. I guess it's true what they say. If you've got money you can get anything in this city. A week later - they even sent me a cheque. \$75 dollars. Trade in. Bonus.

Yeah, that was the night. The night telly mark 1 hit the dust. The coming of telly mark 2. Not a problem with it. Beautiful one day, perfect the next. The new magic box. Where would you be without it ? People tell me about videos. But I think, why bother recording when you can watch it as it happens. Live. I know what you're thinking. But what if there's two of your favourite shows on at the same time. What then ? I just switch over during the commercials. Get all the important stuff. Of course, you do miss some of the commercials that way. But then, you can't have everything. Besides, I'm too busy. When would I ever get a chance to watch a video. Hey maybe I should get a video. Tape a few shows on it and then keep it in reserve with a spare telly in case we get another one of those flashes. Not a bad plan. Anyway , must get back to it. Mike'll be waiting. Big night ahead. Couple of specials on two, then "All Saints" on seven, switching to "Charmed" on Ten during the commercials. Tough call that. Over to nine for "The West Wing", back to Ten for "Cops", then a late movie on SBS. French. What a life eh ? What a life. Well you know what they say - a man's work is never done.

Today I have watched eleven hours of television. Tonight I will watch seven more.

STEVE ENTERS.

STEVE 5: (SINGS) " The minute he walked in the joint
I could see he was a man of distinction
A real big spender"
(TO AUDIENCE) "From the profound abyss, behind the lid
Of a great monument we stood retired."

ADRIAN: Sssh. It's starting.

SOUND OF HOSPITAL TV SHOW. THEY WATCH THE TELEVISION.

LIGHTS FADE.

Interval.

Act 2. Ptolomea

STEVE : (ENTERING) Hi. Me again. You remember ? Silver Medallist in the Depression Olympics. Old head in the toaster. I should you know, I really should. Better for all concerned if one day I just popped off down to the laundromat one last time and never came back. Spun out in the spin dryer. Save everybody from all my crap. But I want to live. Me. I want to live. Maybe it's because I like reading the paper on the bus everyday on the way to work. I'm a Nurse at a Psychiatric Hospital. How's that for irony ? Or because I go crazy about a good Pizza Mexicana. Or because I just love the smell of coffee. Or maybe it's because this Sunday at the Florentine – I'm doing Shirley. Finally. (SINGS) "Goldfinger."

HE POINTS ACROSS STAGE. LIGHTS COME UP ON **LEONARD**.
STEVE BACKS AWAY.

STEVE: "In the sixth circle I arrive
Cerberus, cruel monster, fierce and strange
Through his wide threefold throat, barks as a dog
Over the multitude immersed beneath
His eyes glare crimson, black his unctuous beard."

STEVE EXITS.

10. SERIAL 1

Canteen. Lunchtime.

LEONARD: She's there every day. Always the same. Lines up for her tea, sits at her table, over in the corner, with her friends - Betty, Katie, Marjorie. Sits there, slurping her tea, giggling pretending I don't exist. It wasn't always like that. But now - I don't exist.
I manufacture headwear for uniforms. Policemen, nurses, fire chiefs. All the people who've been so busy of late. I'm at work at the moment. At lunchtime I sit over here, at the table underneath the window. I sip my tea and read my paper. But not really. Really I'm watching her. Watching her not watching me, waiting for that furtive glance that never comes. Waiting for the end of the ignoring. I sit and watch her , refusing to look at me, pretending I'm not here. Treating me like I'm nothing. An insect.
The day will come when she will not ignore me any longer. On that day, she who pretends I don't exist, will realise that I - am - important. That I will not be taken for granted any longer. I will be acknowledged . That day is not far away. The Day of Atonement for the crimes she has committed against me. I saw the signal.
I understood it immediately. I listen to the radio and the idiotic theories they put forward. But that's all they are. The light was a signal. To be

LEONARD: (CONT) patient. My day is coming. And on that day she will realise the terrible cost her ignorance has borne. She will realise that she is to blame and the tears will flow. Interesting word that, borne.
(SINGS) "If you go down to the woods today
You better go in disguise,
If you go down in the woods today
Prepare for a big surprise
Cause today's the day the
Teddy bears have their picnic."
My name is Leonard. and I am winning.

LEONARD EXITS.

STEVE ENTERS. HE CHECKS AROUND THAT LEONARD HAS GONE. KARLA ENTERS, CARRYING FLOWERS.

KARLA: (ENTERING) Shit, crap. Crap, crap, shit.

STEVE: "Francesca, your sad fate
Even to tears my grief and pity moves."

KARLA: I'm sorry you fell in love with me but people die. One minute they're just walking down the street and then - their head explodes. Their brain pops. Fried inside their skull by some fuckin' light in the sky. Sizzle sizzle. Leaking out their ears. That's what happens. Love's shit. Crap. Shit. Crap crap shit.
Who cares if you love me ? Does that dog care ? Over there, licking its ball. Does it care if you love me ? It doesn't. It doesn't ! Have you got a cigarette ? Oh man, don't look at me like that. That's pressure. You're pressuring me. Lindy's upstairs. You're girlfriend is just upstairs and you're pressuring me. Standing here with carnations in your hand telling me you love me. Well I don't fucking care. I can't handle it alright ? I'm not going to handle it alright ? It's abuse. It's emotional abuse. You're fucking abusing me.
They are carnations aren't they ? Weird carnations. They look green. Are they green ?
Don't do that. Don't cry. How dare you fucking cry ?
I'm the one who should be crying. My uncle's dead. My fuckin' Uncle. His head exploded as he was walking down the street. It wasn't his fault. He was minding his own business and then this fuckin' flash comes and goes right inside his skull. Fries his fuckin' mind. One minute he's alive, the next crack, pop, sizzle sizzle. Fried brains. I'm the one who should be crying. Not you. But you're telling me that you love me. Well I don't care. I don't fucking care. Don't love me alright. I'm telling you - don't love me. Love that dog. Love that ball licking dog.
Don't blame me. Don't blame me ! Did I ask you to fall in love with me ? Did I give you an order ? Did I write you a note saying you had to fall

KARLA: (CONT) in love with me or die ? Did I ask you to make up that stupid song and play it in front of Lindy on your stupid old guitar ? She's your girlfriend. She's the one you should be in love with. Write songs for her. I'm just me. Karla. I don't have anything to do with it. I never wanted you to fall in love with me. My Uncle was in love with me. My Uncle loved me. And now he's dead. That's what happens when you love someone. You die. One minute you're alive - next you get fried by the flash. Love sucks. Don't be fooled. Love kills.
 I gotta go. This is spinning me out. I gotta go. Stop abusing me okay ? Just stop fucking abusing me. You are abusing me. You are. You're telling me you love me. That's abuse. That's pressure. That's manipulation. You're trying to manipulate me. So stop it okay. Just fucking stop it. Abuse Lindy. Pressure her. Manipulate her.
 Have you got a cigarette ? I gotta go. Have you got a cigarette? Fuck it I'll get one from someone else then. Someone's who's not going to hassle me. Someone's who doesn't love me. Someone who's heads not about to explode. I don't care if you can't help it.
 I'm outta here. And stop fucking following me around alright? I'll tell Lindy. Follow her around. Or else ... or else the flash'll come. The flash'll come and fry your brain.
 Hey. Give your carnations to the dog.

SHE THROWS THE FLOWERS ON THE GROUND AND EXITS.

ROS ENTERS, CARRYING TWO LARGE HANDBAGS.

STEVE: "Know thou art now in the seventh circle
 And shalt be till thou come
 Upon the horrid sand."

A TOILET FLUSHES. A MOBILE PHONE RINGS.

STEVE: "Here the brute Harpies make their nest.
 Not all the gold that is beneath the moon,
 Or ever hath been, of those toil-worn souls,
 Might purchase rest for one."

12. DENIAL

Public Toilet. Afternoon.

ROS EMPTIES THE HAND BAGS, WHICH ARE FULL OF PILLS, ON TO THE FLOOR. A MOBILE PHONE SPILLS OUT AMONG THE PILL BOTTLES.

ROS: (ANSWERING PHONE) What !?!
 I have had a very busy morning. One could even class it as exhausting. I started out at Wilson but he has become, unfortunately,

ROS: (CONT) somewhat judgmental lately. Looks at me, over his glasses, concern in his eyes. "What do you actually want these for ? Perhaps we could discuss this further." "It's the flash. The flash. You stupid old fur-ball. Don't you understand that frigging flash is freaking me out." So I went to see Paramam. Much better. He understands what I'm going through. Didn't even have to use the flash story. Wrote me out a prescription – no problem. But I forgot the Percodon. I find the Librium makes me too lethargic with out the Percodon so I had to go to Russell. Dame Russell. Well I couldn't go back to Paramam could I ? That's stretching it a bit too far. Russell got all uppity too. "How many of these are you taking Ros ? How long have you been on them ?" So I went to see Edmed, just got in before lunch. I don't like going to him. Who does ? He just raves and on - but my options were quite reduced at this stage. But he gave me the Percodon and some Rohypnol as well. Bonus.

I was thinking of pushing for some Narconal too, I'm running a bit low, but I usually get that from Walsh and after some consideration I thought there's no sense risking it. Don't be greedy, grandma always used to say.

Anyway - mission accomplished - eventually. Except for the Tryptonal. Very hard to get at present. It's been taken off a list or something.

I'm not an addict.

I'm not ! I work. I have a job. I have a life. I've never stuck a needle in my arm. I've never ODeD. I have never bought any illegal drugs.

Never.

Yes, I have cheated on the odd prescription once or twice - that is true - but the drugs - if you can even call them drugs - the pills - the pills I take are one hundred percent safe. They are prescribed by doctors, not quacks - doctors. They know what's best for me. They have prescribed them for my nerves. It's not my fault I have bad nerves. I'm just going through a bad time, but when it passes I'll reduce my intake. I'll cut back.

A little.

My life is manageable. My life is manageable. It is. It's true I do occasionally double up. Occasionally. But that doesn't mean I'm an addict. It's just the only way I can get some - relief. Some respite from the never ending pressures of a busy life. Yes, I should get off them. Yes, they're probably bad for me in the long run. And I will - when I'm better. When I can cope better.

WE HEAR A LOW MOANING NOISE OFF.

ROS: Yes alright, things haven't been getting better for a long time, in fact they're probably getting worse, quite a deal worse, but that's got nothing to do with the medications. That's just because I'm not taking the right balance. I'm still finding the correct dosage. Once I do that - once I find the right mix I know - things will get better. The world will make sense again. What is wrong with that bitch ?

ROS: (CALLING) Would you shut the fuck up ?
Look at it rationally. If you have a problem and someone offers you a solution - safe, one hundred percent safe - you'd be mad not to take it. If you had cancer and someone offered you a cure - quick, effective, painless - you'd be insane to refuse it. I am merely availing myself of the best of modern medicine. I'm putting out my hand and accepting the offer of help. I have a problem and through taking a simple pill the problem can be removed. Completely removed. I ask you - what is wrong with that? It's sensible. Just plain sensible.

ROS SEARCHES, BECOMING MORE FRANTIC.

ROS: Shit ! Where's the Benzonal ?

STEVE : (ENTERS) I'm going to start up a blinding flash cult. "Guardians of the eternal light." We'll meet every full moon on different roofs around the city, hang out our smalls and chant for the return of the great light. "O come to us now - fast freaky flash." Maybe I can get a tie in with Kodak. We could all wear cute sponsored T-shirts. Maybe we can even bottle the flash. Sell it like some kind of elixir. "Fusion of Flash", "Essence of the ether."

LIGHTS UP ON **TRACEY**. SHE WIPES CUTLERY AND PLACES IT BACK IN A TRAY.

STEVE: "Now come we to the eighth circle, one but last
'Away corrupter ! Here women
Are none for sale !'"

13. BOOTS

TRACEY: I love my boots. I - love - my - boots.
I love their colour. I love their smell. I love their smooth leather trim, thick rubber soles, long black laces. I love the way they feel when I put them on. I love the shop near Kings Cross station where I bought them, the little bald man who sold them to me, the money I gave him in payment. I love the plastic bag he put them in. I love the way I carried them home on the train, smiling proudly like a new mum. I love the way they looked when I took them out of the box - shiny and fresh. I love the way they squeaked when I squeezed them on to my feet for the first time - the way they squeak when I put them on anytime. I love putting them on in the morning. I love putting them on at night. I love putting them on when it's raining. I love putting them on when it's not. I love putting them on.

TRACEY STRIDES AROUND THE STAGE.

TRACEY: I love the way they feel when I take that first step on to the footpath. The sound of the soles on the concrete, the toe cap glistening in the sun. I love striding off down the street, walking fast, my head held high, wind whistling past my cheeks. I love the way they make me feel tall, powerful, beautiful. I love the way they move about a little as I walk - just a little bit, not too much. I love the way other people look at them as I walk past. I love the way they stand out and announce to the world. "They are special and so am I." I love how little old ladies look at them and give me space, kids look at them and think I'm cool, men look at them and know I'm a girl you don't fuck with. I love stopping and having a chat in my boots, how I can rest easily - one sole on the ground, the other as thus. (SHE DEMONSTRATES.) I love how the people I chat to comment on my boots with an impressed look on their faces. I love the way they ask me how much they cost and where I bought them, how I can hear a trace of envy in their voice. I love waving goodbye to them and marching off down the street, knowing their watching my boots as I go.

SHE BEGINS TO HURL THE CUTLERY INTO THE TRAY.

TRACEY: I love taking big steps in them, small steps, running, stopping, just standing in them and watching the world go by. I love the way the world treats me with respect. I love the way I was missing something before my boots but now I feel complete. I love polishing my boots, scraping dirt off the soles, rubbing in the leather preserver with my fingers. I love the way I look after my boots and my boots look after me. I love the way my boots are my best friends, they'll never run away from me, they sit by my bed all night patiently waiting for me to wake up. My boots will always be by my side. My boots will stay with me to the end. I love my boots. I love my boots and my boots love me. Fuck the flash – I've got my boots.

SHE THROWS THE TRAY TO GROUND, CUTLERY SCATTERS ACROSS THE STAGE, AND EXITS.

STEVE: 'Me thus low down my flatteries have sunk,
Wherewith I never enough could glut my tongue.'
Alessio of Luca.

STEVE BRIEFLY EXITS AND RE-APPEARS AS ERIC.

14. WOMEN

ERIC: Women.
Big women. Little women. Tall women. Short women. Fat women. Thin women. Nice women Nasty women. Happy women. Sad women. Beautiful women. Ugly women. Young women. Mature women. Elegant women. Scruffy women. Sexy women. Plain women. Sultry

ERIC: (CONT) women. Conservative women. Voluptuous women. Curvaceous women. Buxom women. Model women. Playmate women. Wet T-Shirt women. Orgasmic women. Incredible women! Pious women. Religious women. Nun women. Doctor women. Nurse women. Lawyer women. Police women. Political women. Teacher women. Educated women. Intellectual women. Esoteric women. Philosophical women. Wise women. Caring women. Sensitive women. Women women. Proud women. Humble women. Demure women. Dominant women. Modern women. Corporate women. Business women. Powerful women. Overbearing women. Overpowering women. Arse kicking women. "Take no shit" women. Watch out women. Man hating women. Man loving women. Man eating women. Man cherishing women. Independent women. Co-Dependent women. Sober women. Drunk women. Healthy women. Addict women. Natural women. Artificial women. Made up women. Materialistic women. Flash women. Strong women. Weak women. Boring women. Interesting women. Blue eyed women. Brown eyed women. Green eyed women. Blonde women. Brunette women. Red haired women. Fair women. Tanned women. White women. Black women. Olive women. Yellow women. Freckled women. Nude women. Naked women. Flat chested women. Well endowed women. Covered up women. See through women. Belly dancing women. Erotic women. Alluring women. Beguiling women. Seductive women. Salacious women. Sinful women. Lithe women. Trim women. Athletic women. Agile women. Acrobatic women! Mother women. Daughter women. Sister women. Reserved women. Calm women. Healing women. Restoring women. Life saving women. Life nurturing women. Life affirming women. Life changing women. Life bearing women. Life giving women. Life creating women ! Life encompassing women. Women of the flash. Women.

LIGHTS CHANGE. **STEVE** GOES TO THE WALL AND CROSSES OUT THE LIST OF NAMES.

STEVE : Or maybe deep down, underneath all the mumbo jumbo, the anger, the depression, the attacks of silliness, maybe underneath all that, the deepest thing at the core of my being is this absolute burning fear that one day I'll meet someone who'll really love me. Love me. Just me. Who I am, not who I pretend to be or who I fantasise about being. Me. I might one day find something, somewhere, resembling love. Always was a romantic.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

STEVE IS SUDDENLY CAUTIOUS. HE BACKS AWAY, SHAKING.

STEVE: "A fiend is here behind , who with his sword Hacks us thus cruelly."

LIGHTS UP ON **LEONARD**, CARRYING A BACK PACK.

STEVE: “Approaching the ninth and final circle
Cerberus, cruel monster, fierce and strange
His eyes glare crimson, black his unctuous beard.
His belly large and clawed his hands with which
He tears the spirits, flays them and their limbs
Piecemeal disparts.”

STEVE RUNS OFF.

15. The Pool of Cerberus.

LEONARD: (SINGING) “If you go down to the woods today
You better go in disguise
If you go down to the woods today
Beware of a big surprise”
(CALLS) This area’s clear. We’ve checked all the way up to the ridge.
I’d start over there.

A HELICOPTER SWOOPS OVER HEAD.

LEONARD COMES FORWARD. HE PULLS AN OBJECT
WRAPPED IN A PLASTIC BAG FROM HIS BACKPACK. HE
TAKES OUT AN ORANGE, AND STARTS TO PEEL IT.

LEONARD: They've offered a reward. 500, 000 dollars for information leading to the arrest of. Half a million dollars. Not bad, considering. They' say he's the worse ever. No one else comes close . Seven bodies. And that's only the ones they've discovered.
It's me, Leonard, the bloke from the cap factory. I'm a volunteer. I'm helping out in the search.
(SINGS, TO THE TUNE OF “WALTZING MATILDA”)
“The only way he'll be discovered
Is when it suits him to be discovered.
There'll come a day when he'll reveal his identity
He's not quite ready to finish the game
There's still a few more cards left to play
A few more little preparations to make”
It's only the mistakes of a hot blooded man that lead his pursuers to him. His advantage is that he's not out of control. He won't kill again till it's safe. He'll probably even bury them in the same place, right under their noses. They're so wonderfully idiotic they won't even find them for another year. His reign will continue unabated, the count soaring ever upwards, until he and only he decides to stop. Do you know how many missing people are reported every month ? Don't ask me.
(HUSHED, INTENSE) Time is running out for her. The time to cut her down to size. When he'll have her whimpering at his feet. When he'll

LEONARD: (CONT) hear her saying she's sorry, asking for forgiveness, begging for mercy. His time will come and she will finally comprehend the meaning of the word terror. And then she will know that it was him all along. She will know who he really is and the power he possesses. Her eyes will grow red from futile weeping and her throat begin to ache with worthless sobs because she will realise she is to blame. And there will be no one she can tell, no one who will absolve her, no one she can cry out to for help. There will be nothing she can do because she will be making the same silent trek as the others - to the quiet forest and the final bed under the stars. He will be ignored no longer. The great ignorer will come undone.
(RELAXING) He revisits the scene of the crime every day in the guise of their silly blue caps. Idiots. Unbelievable idiots. Whoever would have thought so many idiots could've been brought together in the same place at the same time. He's not concerned. Not in the least. They'll never find him. They'll never even suspect him. How could they ? He makes their little hats for their stupid little heads. My name is Leonard, and I have almost won.

VOICES OFF. HE PACKS HIS BACKPACK QUICKLY.

LEONARD: (CALLS) Yeah. Coming.
(DEPARTING) "If you go down to the woods today
You better go in disguise,
If you go down in the woods today
Prepare for a big surprise."

STEVE ENTERS.

STEVE: Barbie, that's my psychiatrist, she's one of those boring people who think that the flash didn't mean anything. Electro magnetic pulse, dry lightning, natural phenomena. But I say it did. It had to mean something. Or else nothing means anything. That light was a key. A key to something.
(SINGS) Good lookin', so refined
Wouldn't you like to know what's goin' on in my mind ?"

STEVE WALKS ACROSS STAGE AMONG THE TRACES OF THE CHARACTERS WHO HAVE COME AND GONE.
LIGHTS CHANGE.

STEVE: Ninth circle.
"A lake, whose frozen surface liker seemed
To glass than water.
Look how thou walkest. Take
Good heed, thy soles do not tread on the heads
Of thy poor brethren. Thus low
Blue pinched and shrined in ice the spirits stood

STEVE: (CONT) Moving their teeth in shrill note like the stork
His face each downward held; their mouth the cold
Their eyes expressed the dolour of their heart.”

KARLA, DRESSED IN HOSPITAL GOWN, SHUFFLES SLOWLY ON
- AN UNLIT CIGARETTE IN ONE HAND, A CARNATION IN THE
OTHER.

STEVE BACKS UP AGAINST THE WALL.

STEVE: Francesca. “Love that brought us to one death.”

WE HEAR HER RECORDED VOICE.

16. LITHIUM.

KARLA: (BLANK, DULL) White. Everything is white. White and silent. There used to be so many colours - filling up my eyes. And noise, always noise, loud, angry, but now there's just white. Peaceful, silent white. I'm floating in a sea of white. The battle in my head has finished. I don't know who won but it's finished.

They give it to me every morning, after breakfast. The nurse calls out my name, I go up to her and she puts them in my hand. Little white pills that make everything white. I was on four at the start. Now only three. I take them with my orange juice. Sometimes, during breakfast, I get a little edgy. My head starts to make noises again and the colours come back. But soon enough there's Suzy or Penny with the tray and everything's alright once more. I'm back, floating in the white.

I can't remember what life was like before. I remember confusion. Sometimes I remember pain. But that doesn't matter anymore. Now I'm just in the white. Drifting in the white and everything is okay. It's nice, like that. Nice and quiet. Still.

I'll just sit here for a little bit longer and then I'll go inside.

KARLA HOLDS HER CIGARETTE UP. **STEVE** LIGHTS A LIGHTER BUT DOES NOT HOLD IT TO HER CIGARETTE.

KARLA SMOKES THE CIGARETTE AS IF IT HAS BEEN LIT. SHE LOOKS AT **STEVE**.

KARLA: (TO **STEVE**) Did you see the light in the sky ?

STEVE RACES OFF STAGE. HE RE-APPEARS MOMENTS LATER ON ANOTHER PART OF THE STAGE. AN ICY WIND HOWLS.

STEVE: “To the final point we come,
The banners of Hell's Monarch come forth
To meet us.”

A FIGURE STANDS IN THE SHADOWS.

STEVE: "Who is it frozen so in this stream of death."

LIGHTS UP ON **MASOOMA**.

17. The voice behind the fence

WE HEAR AN IRON GATE CLANGS SHUT.

MASOOMA: You ask me to tell you my story but every time I tell you my story I give away another little piece of myself. I will not tell you my story. I will tell you what I remember. What is burnt into my skull.

My name is Masooma Mohebbie. My number is one two six nine. Here my name is not important - only my number. I am not a refugee. I am a refugee applicant.

I have been moved. Unaccompanied woman, so I could be moved. Away from the numbing emptiness of the tin sheds - cooking ovens in the day and ice caves at night. I am one of the lucky ones.

Asif. He has suffered. He use to remind me of my husband, very intelligent and brave. One day he broke a fluorescent tube in the bathroom and started eating the glass. He had eaten glass and their answer was to take him from tin sheds and put him in jail. People are surprised a human being can be reduced to that. Three years in the tin sheds will do many things to a man. Or a woman.

I remember the announcements from the loud speaker. All day, all night. What do they say? What do they mean? If they do not stop I will go mad.

People go mad. Some for real, others for fake. Going mad is the only way of getting out from behind this razor wire. The other way is dying. I am not scared of dying anymore. I am only scared of going mad. Not to know. It terrifies me. I can not lose myself, it is all I have left. No one should have to go through this.

Do you know how desperate you have to be to get on a leaking boat with four hundred others ? I remember jumping into the water, holding onto my son, people jumping on top of us - my son's hand slipping from my ... No. I will not speak of that. I miss my dignity.

Everything they say in this country is a lie. I remember thinking that outside in this country it is always so hot but inside the people are cold. They have no hearts. The sun has burnt it from their chests.

They don't care if we die. But the voice - the voice did care.

It was the day of the light in the sky. Someone said a bus was just outside. We could hear a voice. A women's voice calling to us from behind the fence. "We know you have suffered. We welcome you."

When I heard this I am ashamed. These people are not cruel. They have a heart just like mine. The soldiers who pulled me from the water were from this country.

MASOOMA: (CONT) Then I remember other soldiers and the night I stood in front of my house and watched as they ... I have seen how they kill people in my country and I will not go back there !

Today. This morning it was very hot, one of the guards, Sandra, she brought us some extra water and a rag to wipe our foreheads. She said tomorrow she will bring a nice ribbon or some flowers to try and cheer us up. She calls me "Zoomy". So funny here how they add "y" to everything.

I remember another guard back in the tin sheds - an old man called Tony. He didn't say very much. One day I was crying and I couldn't stop. He said "Don't cry love, you don't understand. It's just the election." What type of human beings must we be that a man can win an election because he promised to keep us out of his country ? Do I need a document to prove my husband was murdered ?

I will not get angry anymore. Anger will only destroy me. Eat me up from the inside and I am the only one left. I will not go mad.

I remember the night after the flash - when we all lay on our beds in the dark. I don't sleep. If you sleep you dream. I thought of my friends in the tin sheds. I wonder - if they had seen the light in the sky and heard the behind the fence. That is what I remember. That is my story.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

STEVE'S FACE IS NOW MADE UP LIKE A CLOWN. KARLA STANDS NEARBY, SMOKING HER UNLIT CIGARETTE.

18. Shirley

STEVE: (SINGS SOFTLY) "The minute he walked in the joint,
I could see he was a man of distinction
A real big spender
Good lookin', so refined
Wouldn't you like to know what's going on in my mind ?"

19. Serial 3

LEONARD STORMS ONTO STAGE, MUTTERING ANGRILY TO HIMSELF - A HACKSAW IN PIECES IN HIS HAND. HE SITS ON THE GROUND AND TRIES TO ASSEMBLE IT.

MASOOMA APPEARS AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE. SHE WALKS FORWARD.

20. Blind City

MASOOMA: (OVER SINGING) It's the morning after the flash. I wake up and the house is strangely quiet. I'm not in the tin sheds anymore. It's my old house. I walk out on to the street. The sun is shining, it's a beautiful

MASOOMA: (CONT) clear morning but the street is deserted. No cars, no traffic. And deadly quiet. No sound at all. And then I see him. A little boy. He's groping along the footpath. His tiny little hands feeling his way through the dirt. And then I notice coming out of their houses - young couples, old men and women. The little girl from next door. They too have their arms out in front of them. Groping, feeling, crawling out onto the street. Banging into telephone poles, stumbling against the kerb. And then I realise. They're all blind. Everyone in the city is blind - except me. I go back into the house, calling for my husband. I know he's in the bedroom. When I find him he's on the floor, slowly feeling his way along the carpet. And he's calling my name. Softly. And I stop just in front of him and look down.

MASOOMA STRETCHES OUT HER HAND TOWARDS **STEVE**.
STEVE RAISES HIS HAND TOWARDS HERS.

WE HEAR A HUM BUILDING IN THE DISTANCE.

MASOOMA: I slowly put out my hand to touch his face. But just before my hand reaches him -

THEIR HANDS ARE JUST ABOUT TO TOUCH. THE HUMMING BECOMES LOUDER AND LOUDER.

MASOOMA: I wake up.

SUDDENLY THE HUM IS CUT OFF AND THE STAGE IS ILLUMINATED BY A BRILLIANT FLASH OF WHITE LIGHT. BLACKOUT.

BLUE SPOTLIGHT. **STEVE**, NOW MADE UP AS A CLOWN.

STEVE : “ By that hidden way
My guide and I did enter, to return
To the fair world : and heedless of repose
We climb'd, he first, I following his steps
Till on our view the beautiful lights of heaven
Dawn'd through a circular opening in the cave;
Thence issuing we again beheld the stars.”

SPOTLIGHT FADES.

End Play.

ADDITIONAL MONOLOGUES:

OLYMPIC CITY

HELENA: Sydney is a wonderful city. Even the rats are fat. (PAUSE) I saw one just the other night. It was crawling along the footpath, right next to the bus stop. It was creeping right up to people's feet then running back into the bushes. It was confident, playful. Happy. Rats where I come from are not happy. Their skinny and evil. They wait till you're asleep then they gnaw at your toes. They hide in the shadows, angry little eyes, long, sharp noses, bright, white teeth. They would kill you for a scrap of your crust. They are like my home, hungry. When you are hungry you will do things that you would never have thought possible just to eat. (PAUSE) At first I didn't think they'd let me come. I didn't have enough points. The system is very hard that way. But then, one Thursday, the papers arrived. Australian Residency. It was like winning the lottery a thousand times over. More. I can never remember being so happy. So much laughter. Everyone was so jealous. Especially the ones who had also tried to get in, but failed. "Why did they take you ?" they all said. "Why not us ?" "I don't know." I would say. "I am just lucky". But inside I knew. They took me because I need it more. Because I needed to come here more than anyone. Because if I could not come here I would die. I was lucky I did not try to come now. Or came from a little further East. Or I may not be standing here today. (PAUSE) I have a flat. Is that how you say - "flat" ? It's not very big, but quite clean. And not too many cockroaches. I have a job. I sew clothes, in a factory. I work hard. I never thought you could make so much money in one week. So much, all the time. What will I buy with it ? I am happy. Sometimes I miss my home, my family. I miss the people I have suffered with so much. But I am not sad. I am here - in the Olympic city. City of the flash. Everyone in the entire world wants to be here. Everyone is jealous of me. No bombs will fall on my house tonight. I can sleep, I can sleep, and I will not wake up till morning and nothing can be better than that. Over the last couple of years I am learning much about what is important and what is not and believe me sleep is important. Good sleep, long sleep, happy sleep. Happy sleep in a new world, dreaming sad dreams of the old. Such is life for us "immigrants." (PAUSE) I laugh when I hear people talk about the flash. So many theories, so many ideas. They do not understand. It was just the Olympic City saying hello. Welcome to your new arrivals. You are home. (PAUSE) Olympic city. City of the blinding light. Even the rats are fat.

BOREDOM

KATRINA: I'm bored. (PAUSE) I'm bored. (PAUSE) I am really fucking bored. (PAUSE) This is boring. This is fucking boring. This is tedious. I'm sitting here and I am bored by this tedious crap. (PAUSE) Disturbing, the press release said. Threatening, arousing. I can tell you, I am far from aroused. I am moved though. I am moved to go to the bar and get a drink. Two drinks, three drinks, anything to wash away any faint remnant of this boredom. (PAUSE) Is this theatre ? I ask you, is this theatre ? Theatre - this is not. This is not theatre. Three men, standing on a trampoline, talking about erections. I am not erect. I am slouching. I am slouched. My eyes are heavy. I want to go to sleep. I want release, release from this tedious, boring shit. You agree don't you ? You must agree. No one, I repeat no one, could find this anything but painful. You couldn't find one skerrick of interest. Not one. How could you ? In this lackadaisical mish mash. (PAUSE) "Lackadaisical mish mash." That's good . I like that. Excuse me for a moment. .

SHE TAKES OUT A PEN AND PAPER. SHE NOTES IT DOWN.

KATRINA: How do you spell lackadaisical ? Close enough. Make the subbie earn his money, that's what I always say. (PAUSE) Oh christ, he's still going on. I don't care how big it is. It doesn't affect me. I'm not interested. You couldn't like this. No one could like this. Except Tim. The bearded one. He could like it. He could like anything. He liked the lesbian fire eaters and no one, I repeat no one, liked the lesbian fire eaters, not even mega bitch in the third row. (PAUSE) Oh Christ. This is a nightmare. (LOOKS AT WATCH) There couldn't be long to go, could there ? There couldn't. It's impossible. We're about to hit the two and a half hour mark now. Please god, there couldn't be long to go. Oh no. There it goes.

WE HEAR A LOUD SIREN. SHE COVERS HER EARS.

KATRINA: The siren. They're blaring the siren, for the four hundredth time. Stop it. Stop it !!

THE SIREN STOPS.

KATRINA: Thank you. "The echoing vibrato of the fire horn rattled me to the core." (PUTS UP HAND) Excuse me Miss, can I go ? I need to go. I need to get out of here. (PAUSE) Perhaps I could leave. Perhaps I could just get up and walk out. No that's not as crazy as it sounds. I'm up the back. The door's just over there. No one would see,

KATRINA: (CONT) would they ? No one would notice. I could hide in the ladies and join them afterwards at the bar . No one would know the difference. No one would care. I'd be free. Free from this tedious, boring crap. I couldn't. I could. I couldn't. I could. (PAUSE) I can. I am. I'm leaving. I am going to leave. Just wait for the blackout. Wait for the blackout. Come on blackout. Come on. (PAUSE) There it is. Here we go. Quick. Head down and go for the door. Run. Run. (SHE STOPS) Oh shit. It's the publicist. It's the fucking publicist. She's sitting by the door. She did it on purpose. She knew it was boring crap, she knew people would want to flee, so she sat by the door on purpose. Fucking bitch. Fucking fat smiling old cow. It's inhumane. It's torture. You can't do it. You can't make people sit here and watch this tedious never-ending shit. There should be a law. She should be in court. She should be in prison - a life sentence. Cruelty to audiences ! (PAUSE) I don't care. I'm going. I'm going. I don't care if she rings my editor. I don't care if I get sacked tomorrow. I am not going to stay here for one more second and watch this boring crap.

SHE MOVES FOR THE DOOR. THE LIGHTS COME UP. KATRINA FREEZES.

KATRINA: Shit, what's happening now ? Shit, everybody can see me. Shit. Smile. Smile. Wave. Nod your head. Nod your head. What the fuck's going on ? What the fuck is going on ? What are the actors doing now ? They're bowing. Oh my god. It's the end ! It's the end ! It's over. I'm free. Yes. Yes. ! (SHE BEGINS TO APPLAUD.) I'm free ! Free !! Yes ! Yes !!! The flash.

SHE CLAPS LOUDER. LIGHTS FADE.

FIRST NIGHT BLUES.

KATRINA: Karen. How are you ? Great. Bob. Nice to see you. Fine. Peter. Hi. Can't complain. (ASIDE) I hate these things. Alice. I didn't know you were back. I'll call you. (ASIDE) I loathe these things. Jeremy. How's the show going ? Fantastic. (ASIDE) I hate and loathe these things. Susan. Well, you know. Busy busy. (ASIDE) I call these people my five minute friends. No, friends is too generous a term. Acquaintances. My five minute acquaintances. I see them nearly everyday of my life, every single day. They know my name and job and I know their name and job. Neil. Good to see you. (ASIDE) We nod politely, wave then quip scintillating snippets like "Fine. How are you ?" or "We must catch up" or the classic "Let's do lunch." Or , when time is of the essence, for maximum economy just the nod of the head plus the name, as in. (SHE NODS) Larry. (ASIDE) I see these people over one hundred times a year, I greet them like they're my long lost friends yet I don't know one fucking thing about them. Nor do I want to. And they don't want know one thing about me. Nor do they want to. We are a room full of hostile strangers, nodding and waving to people we don't like and most of the time don't even know. They could be axe murderers, they could be having an affair with your next door neighbour, or worse of all they could be a critic - like me. (SHE SIPS) Greg. You're still here. (ASIDE) The champagne is a disaster. Flat, warm and cheap. Moet it ain't. But if I drink enough of it, quickly enough, I might be able to, god forbid, relax and enjoy myself. Maybe it's just me. Maybe it's not them at all. Maybe I'm doing something wrong. Maybe I should try harder to communicate with my colleagues. Reach out the hand of friendship. We're all in the same business, I haven't slept with any of them, well maybe just a couple, we should be able to have a frank and open exchange of ideas. Helen. How are you ? Great. (PAUSE) Come to think of it. Why bother ? They're all a bunch of cunts. Most of them wouldn't stop and pull me off the road if I was about to be run over by a bus, and with a few exceptions, that director I slagged off last week. (RAISING GLASS) Robyn. (ASIDE) Pariah. Me or them ? Us. It's like standing in a room of one hundred people who are all going for the same job. You want to rip the person next to you's throat out but you don't want to be seen doing it. You don't want to be seen to do anything that might incriminate you. So, you just stand around, nodding and smiling, desperately biting your lip, praying you don't let the dork in the corner know exactly what you thought of his last drama, in inverted commas. And this is my life.

KATRINA: (CONT) Standing in a room of people with frozen smiles, empty glasses and sore bottom lips. And then what awaits you ? A cold computer screen aching for your latest diatribe. Waiting for me to unleash my bile about that loathsome piece of rubbish in only two hundred words. What will I write ? How can I possibly do that justice ? Jane. What did you think ? (PAUSE) Oh you liked it. Yes, I thought it was fine. See you. (ASIDE) She liked it. Dame Destroyer liked it. What's going on ? Look around, Katty. There's lot of smiles, people are shaking hands with the director, a little crowds gathered around the writer, hardly anyone's left. What does this tell us ? (PAUSE) They liked it. They actually liked that shit. Get with the programme. How could you like that ? Oh christ, that's impossible. (PAUSE) Bloody hell, they're all smiling. They're all laughing. Everybody else actually liked it. What do I do ? I can't be the odd one out. Very short trip to the dole cue. (PAUSE) I guess I better give it a rave. I can't give it a rave. How could I possibly give that a rave ? Not that. No. Look at Sir Robert. He's talking to the lead actor. He's laughing loved it. They all loved it. No. I can't do it. I can't do it. I've got to slam it. I've got to. I've got to stand up for what I believe in and I believe that was shit . (PAUSE) Think of your editor Katty. Remember "Echoes of a Friday Morning". You disagreed that time. You stood out, remember, and she didn't like it. First and final warning. (PAUSE) I can't. You can. I can't. Think of the money. You can. You've almost got enough for that holiday. But I can't. Yes, you can. (PAUSE) Buzz. Fine. And you ? Yes. I loved it. Great stuff. Very ... moving. (ASIDE) See that wasn't so hard now was it ? Another piece of soul flushed down the toilet. Couldn't even hear the splash. (SHE DRINKS) Henry. Superb. Provocative. Highly disturbing. (TO AUDIENCE) Well what are you looking at ? Yes of course, I make myself sick. You don't have to rub it in. Piss off and leave KATRINA: (CONT) me alone. Leave Miss Principles to wallow in her glorious hypocrisy alone. Go ? I can't go. Not yet. What have I got waiting for me ? A cold, empty bed and a strong nightcap. (PAUSE) Waiter. I'll have another. Fuck it - it's free. Terry. Congratulations. Super. Absolutely super. A triumph. I especially loved the scene on the trampoline. Cheers. What flash ? I was in this bloody play.

SHE RAISES HER GLASS.

AMERICANS.

DEBBIE: What Americans are like. 1. Americans Are Individuals
2. Americans Are Independent and Self-Reliant.
3. Americans Are Direct. Honesty and frankness are important. 4. Americans Are Very Informal. 5. Americans Are Generally Competitive but Americans Co-Operate. Teamwork is vital. 6. Americans Are Achievers.
7. Americans Are Friendly, But in Their Own Way.
8. Americans Ask a Lot of Questions. Some may seem pointless, uninformed or elementary, as in "How you doin' mate ?", but no insult is intended. 9. Americans Are Often Accused of Being Materialistic. "Success" is often measured by how much money a person has. You're telling me. 10. Americans are Time-Conscious and Value Punctuality. They keep appointment calendars and live according to schedules. "Oh shit. I'm late." 11. Americans Are Energetic. Not today. 12. Americans Tend to be Internationally Naive. "Australia. Isn't that in Europe?"
13. Silence Makes American Uncomfortable. (LONG PAUSE. DEBBIE IS UNCOMFORTABLE) Very uncomfortable. They would rather exchange in "small" talk, about the weather or the latest sports scores, for example, than deal with silence in a conversation, as in "Gee I don't like the Raiders chances with all this rain ?" 14. Many Americans Live by What is Known as "The Protestant Ethic". Old fashioned with a strong moral code. Boring.
15. Last one. Americans Are Open and Usually Eager to Explain. If you do not understand certain behaviour or want to know more about "what makes Americans tick", do not hesitate to ask. " The answer is sure to confuse you even more. 16. The flash did not happen in America thusly Americans do not understand the flash. (PAUSE) Tipping customs vary.

Night

MUSIC "MAC THE KNIFE". FADES. A PHONE RINGS. PHILLIP ANSWERS IT.

PHILLIP: Richard - I'm at home and it's after seven PM. What have I told you about calling me at home after seven PM. / Richard, calm down./ Richard - nothing is so urgent that it can not be dealt with tomorrow. I must have some time to myself. / Good night Richard./ Richard - good night.

HE HANGS UP THE PHONE.

PHILLIP: I must have some time to myself. I hold a prominent position in this society - one that I am very grateful and happy to hold but that does not mean I give myself to the position with exclusivity. I must have time to think, reflect, regenerate or else I'll be burned out by the time I'm sixty - and I'm in this for the long haul. In times of stress it is important to remain balanced. Keep a cool head. So I have structures and ordered time frame - only that way can I face everyday with the equilibrium required to do the best for my stakeholders. The electorate and my colleagues have placed an awesome responsibility in my hands and it is my responsibility to fulfil that role to the best of my ability. I can only do that by maintaining my equilibrium. Every day must have a structure and time out means time out. (PAUSE) I do acknowledge that this is a time of slightly increased stress. Everyday contains stress but of late days have contained more stress than is desirable. But nothing that I can not handle. Who do these people think they are ? They can not blackmail us with wilful acts of self-terrorism into acceding to their requests. Their are structures in place for dealing with these issues. Structures which have been derived from policies set in place by the Legislative Council of this country. A Legislative Council that is elected by the people of this nation in a free and fair ballot. They are given a mandate - entrusted with power - and they must be guided by the will of their electorate. We are the servants not the master. We are supplicant to the will of the public and they say no. We will not be blackmailed, we will not be harangued, we will not be hurried. We will chose who we allow to come to this country and we will do so on our own terms, working to our own time frame. There are structures and procedures in place to deal with issues such as this and it is my responsibility to make

PHILIP: (CONT) sure those procedures and structures are adhered to. It's pathetic. Hunger strikes, sewing their own mouths shut - what will they do next. Cut their toenails. Pathetic and abhorrent that they have forced children - some as young as fourteen - to participate in these vile acts. That they have wilfully maimed these innocent children. These are legitimate claims of child abuse. Rest assured what they have done is a criminal act - and there will be consequences. They have violated the laws of this country and their actions have been referred to the proper authorities. They will face punishment for this hideous and atrocious act. Forced to do it ? Never. No one forced them to do anything. They were not forced to come to this country illegally. They were not forced to queue jump. There are structures and procedures in place to deal with issues of immigration and they must follow them - no matter how desperate their specific situation may be. Other people have followed the procedures - they have served out the waiting period. Why should they be penalised ? Why should they give up their position in the line ? True our policy of detention has drawn comment. But our position remains very clear. If we're seen to bow to coercion and duress more people will think that's the way we deal with issues and that exposes us to far greater danger of loss of life. My view is that of the Prime Minister. The matter will resolve itself because there is a recognition that processing will occur. And here are legitimate safety concerns. Why do these people want to come so desperately to our country now ? To a country that is a highly ranked ally to the United States. The public - not us but the public - talking on reputable radio stations raised concerns of "sleeper agents" and fears of future terrorist acts. We have a duty of care to act on those concerns. To listen to the electorate. The Opera House, Uluru, Government House. These are real and vulnerable targets and they must be protected by whatever means necessary. It is our duty now and for the future. I hold no personal malice for these people. In fact I hold no feelings for them whatsoever. I am impartial, completely impartial as it is my duty to be. I must not allow emotion, bias or compassion cloud my judgement. I must do what is best for this country. What the people have instructed me to do. The polls point us in the direction we should take. The electorate has spoken and it is up to us to listen. One lunatic at the interview today - Reverend Ratbag actually suggested that flash in the sky was actually a warning of coming retribution for the way we have treated these

PHILIP: (CONT) people. Retribution ? What rot ! We have done nothing to warrant retribution. And that nonsense about making up that some of the detainees had thrown their children overboard. We didn't make up the report. It was given to us by highly ranked sources in the navy who strongly suggested that that is what took place. Demonising these people ? We are not demonising these people ? They are demonising themselves. The Poms talk of us as breaking the Geneva convention and these people being treated worse than Taliban prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. But they would ? Anything to bad mouth their formidable neighbour down South. Bitter about the latest pasting by our magnificent warriors on the cricket field. Do they forget ? That we share the same Queen. In the end I am completely content in the knowledge that we have done what the electorate wanted us to do - acted with a firm and even hand. Listened to our heads not our hearts. That is the genius of this Primeminister who I am proud to say is the greatest politician of our time. He is a barometer - a perfect bellweather on what the heartland of this country wants at any specific time and is quick to align our policies to those desires. He's like the perfect two up player - to use a great Australian analogy. The perfect player who never loses. Because he waits. He waits while the next man enters the ring. are hurls the coin into the air. He waits as the coins spin high above his head and fall back to earth with a dull thud. He waits until the sawdust settles and he can get a clear look and how they landed. And then and only then does he place his bet and call heads or tails. A genius. A true genius and the sole reason for this parties revival. And I am lucky enough to have served alongside him.

THE PHONE RINGS. HE ANSWERS IT.

PHILIP: Richard - I said it can wait. / Oh Primeminister. I'm sorry I thought it was someone else./No, no problem at all. Just catching up on the mail. How pleasant to hear from you. How can I be of service ?/ Oh you saw the interview. Can you believe that fool ? Retribution. What a farce ?/ I thought I handled it rather well./ I spoke along party lines./ I know he's a senior figure in the Church but what he said was ridiculous./ The interviewer mentioned the child abuse allegations not me./ Yes, I did use the word demonise but in context. We have been accused of late./ I realise it is not our policy to respond to accusations but I felt the question demanded an answer./ I acted in the best interests of the party following the structures of policy guidelines. A firm hand. / Polls indicate ?/

PHILIP: (CONT) Primeminister -/ Primeminister -(LONG PAUSE) I see. /
Yes I do wish to remain in Parliament. / Nine am then./ I
understand completely Primeminister. I remain firmly a
loyal member of this party./ Goodnight.

PHILLIP PUTS DOWN THE PHONE. LONG PAUSE.

PHILLIP: After my interviews it seems talkback switchboards
across the country lit up with indignation. That's what
Richard was trying to tell me I guess. Perhaps I should've
broken the seven PM at home rule on this occasion.
(PAUSE) Polls indicate a change in temperature. My
personal approval rating has reached critical. It would
seem I am becoming a liability that can not be carried
much further without the party suffering irreparable
damage and that must not be allowed to happen. A new
softer direction is required. A female face perhaps. The
electorate it seems has a heart after all. (PAUSE) A true genius. A bell
weather. The greatest politician of our time. Definitely. (PAUSE)

HE TAKES A COIN FROM HIS POCKET. HE FLIPS INTO THE
AIR AND CATCHES IT ON HIS HAND. HE LOOKS AT IT>

PHILLIP: Heads.

PHILIP STARES OUT AT THE AUDIENCE. SILENCE. THE
LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE.

Auckland

SHAHWALI: My name is Shahwali Basiri but you can call me Shah for short. You can also call me Wally but I would prefer Shah. I am thirty two years old. I have a wife Akimeh, and three children - two strong boys, Mahdi and Hadi, and a beautiful little girl, Lila. I come from Vardak. That is in Afghanistan. I am Hazari. I am also a Muslim. When the Taliban took our country in 1996 Hazaris were denounced as Heretics. The Taliban are fundamentalists and although we are also Muslims we were seen as too liberal. In 1998 in Kabul thousands of Hazaris were killed. Thousands more were beaten and tortured. They say you could hear the screams a hundred miles away. In Vardak we knew we were next. They gave us a contract which every adult male had to sign. It said we were safe for now but if anything did happen all the young men would be taken. In March that year something did happen. Fighting against the Taliban broke out and my brother Fahir was killed. We knew we were next so myself and my two remaining brothers went into hiding. They came to our house and beat my father but he did not tell them where we were. For three months we hid, my wife and children left at home. Alone. But for us to be killed, slowly, stage by stage. To leave my family without anybody to look after them. I decided to get out but finding a new life is expensive. To get money my father sold his house and some of his shops in Kabul. It was just enough to buy five hiding places on a lorry. Enough for me and my family and one of my brothers but my youngest brother was forced to stay behind. On the first night we hid in the back of the truck as we drove slowly to Kabul along the bumpy road. It was a warm, still night and we were very scared as we could see trucks passing by us full of Taliban fighters. If they stopped us it would mean instant death. We stayed in a house in Kabul the next night and then we were put into a minibus and driven to Jalalabad. This part was safer and with better roads but we were still in great danger. When we got to Jalalabad we were given false passports and the next day we walked across the border into Pakistan and away from the Taliban. When we realised we were no longer in Pakistan we cried for joy. I had no idea then how awful our journey would be and that we would face even more danger, greater even than the Taliban. The sea is a formidable foe. From Peshawar we travelled in an old bus right across Pakistan to Karachi, a trip that took many days. The children were

SHAHWALI: (CONT) tired and hungry. Then we were put on a plane to Kuala Lumpur and finally Jakarta. The agents had cleared our path very well. At no time in Pakistan or Malaysia were our travel documents ever questioned. In Jakarta we were taken to the countryside where we stayed for over three weeks. It seemed to be a popular holiday destination and it felt strange to walk along the beach - we escaped Hazaris - amongst the tourists and holidaymakers - enjoying their summer break. But there were a lot of people there from many different countries so they were not suspicious of my little family. Then, one Tuesday, we were suddenly dragged from our house around midnight. No warning was given. We climbed into eight buses and we and over four hundred others made the six hour journey to a beach on the western side of Indonesia's main island. Then we walked for a mile or so down a jungle track and there before us stood a little fishing boat - the KM Palapa. It sat quietly in the water, swaying gently from side to side, waiting to take us to the edge of death. The first day wasn't too bad. There was a bit of water coming into the boat but the sea was calm. The agent had told me it would take only thirty hours to reach Christmas Island. There was no food on the boat, and only a little water, so each family was told to bring enough food. Enough at least for such a short journey. But soon the food had run out and I began to realise the agent had lied. Then the engine stopped. We drifted for another day and another night. No food, no water. There was nothing left for us except waiting to die. Then the next day a plane passed overhead. We were hopeful. It went around two, then three times. Someone signalled with a red jacket. Someone else poured fuel on a white cloth and soon - a flame. But the plane did not return or any other planes. A day passed and the sun disappeared behind clouds. At first we were grateful to be spared the burning heat but now a storm was coming. The wind was wild and more and more water started to come in. We were praying but we thought we had no hope. We were sure the boat would sink and we would just go down. At the front of the boat some men tied their children to the mast to stop them being washed overboard. We huddled together in the rear of the boat with the captain and crew. They were now as helpless as us. Then someone shouted for us all to go down to the bottom of the boat and sit together on one side to stop the boat from tipping over. Everyone was now very scared. We were all praying, asking god to help us. There was no room to look after others. Everybody was just

SHAHWALI: (CONT) looking after their own family. Then some men broke up some pieces of wood to try to row the boat. I knew it would not help but I rowed to. It was just to give the other people some hope. The Captain kept saying: "Keep on going. We are getting closer." He was not too blame. He told me he had just got married and he too had been deceived. We were angry with the agents. They are cruel and don't care if you die. That boat had four hundred and fifty people on it. If there were less than three hundred - as they promised - we would not have got into trouble in the first place. On the fourth day, in the morning, we saw another plane. Quickly we made the word SOS on the deck with a large piece of cloth. The plane circled and every time it came back I took Lila up to the top and held her above my head so they could see that this was a boat with woman and children and they must help us. Then the plane disappeared. Again we were alone, waiting to die. But about an hour later we saw something in the distance. It was just a small thing on the horizon but it kept coming closer, growing bigger and bigger. Then it was along side us and we could read the name - Tampa. Everybody was congratulating everybody else for their new life. That little boat, at any time it could have sunk. There was no hope without the Tampa. A few hours later once everyone was safe another storm came and we stood on the side looking down, watching our little boat disappear into the waves. The captain asked us where we were going and someone said Christmas Island and he said he was going to Singapore. But if we wanted to go to Christmas Island then he would take us there. No one ever threatened him. He did it because he was a good man and he saw we needed help. So he changed course and we sailed towards our new home. I thought we would be there in a few hours and I was happy and relieved. There was talk of showers and hot food waiting for us when we got there. My family was safe. But we never made it to that Island. The Tampa was to become our new home. We stayed on that boat for ten days. Didn't they understand that for almost a week no one had anything to eat. Everyone was sick and tired. Some people were unconscious. This boat in the middle of the sea was not the place for them. I didn't believe that when they accept refugees for the humanitarian side they didn't accept us. We didn't believe that any human being wouldn't do something for the children. That they would reject them. From the beginning of our journey we knew we were going to Australia. We knew of Australia, that they believed in the humanitarian side of things. That

SHAHWALI: (CONT) they looked after people. We know people in Sydney. We have a letter. They say we can stay with them. Why won't they let us ? My daughter is sick. She can not eat or drink. She may die if we are not saved soon. She survived that journey but she can not last much longer. Please help me ! Will you let her die ? You have taken refugees from Afghanistan before. Why not us ? I remember when the soldiers came. They had camouflage paint and these huge rifles. Did they think we were going to attack them ? We all just lay there and watched. Everybody was too exhausted to even speak. But then at last - I saw the doctors. I picked up Lila in my arms and called: "Please ! My daughter ! She is very sick ! Please. " One of the soldiers turned towards me gun raised. He looked at me for a moment. Was he going to shoot me for asking for help for my child ? But then one of the doctors saw Lila. She walked straight passed the soldier, pushing his gun away. She took Lila from my arms. At last - my child would be safe. Then the exhaustion hit me like a wave and I passed out. (PAUSE) We live in West Auckland now. Before I left Vardak I had only heard of New Zealand in school. All I knew was there was a country off the side of Australia and that the Queen of England was also their queen. New Zealand has been very kind to us - they gave us this house and some money to get us started. They gave us official refugee status. Now we must try to help New Zealand. My wife and I take English classes and the children go to school. I am a shoemaker. Soon I hope to find work. I know our new life will not be easy and we will face some problems but if any opportunity comes along, we will grab it. People ask me if I will ever go back. If there is peace and if it is like the country it was before, then it is still our country. But we have lost everything. There is nothing left for us. The Taliban killed a lot of people. My brother was one of them. They have no respect for any human being. They say what they are doing is in the name of Islam but they are just giving Islam a very bad name. Then people say but haven't you heard ? They are defeated. Afghanistan is free. I smile and nod but I know the Taliban are not defeated. They are just hiding, waiting for their chance to come out again. I have heard nothing about my brother and father who are still in Afghanistan. I pray everyday that they are still alive. (PAUSE) In Auckland we did not see the flash. We heard about it and there was some amateur video on the TV. But you couldn't make it out very well. The light was so bright that the camera exploded. I guess it's like a lot

SHAHWALI: (CONT) of things you hear about Sydney. It sounded amazing, incredible, like the greatest thing in earth - but deep down your not really sure it's true cause you never saw it for yourself. Perhaps, one day.

Children of the flash

RUTH: In the beginning I wasn't the only one. In the days after the flash the papers were full of stories of others who had suffered the same fate. But theirs was only temporary. Gradually, after a few days or a week their darkness lifted. Until there was only two - myself and a six year old boy in Holroyd - Colin Douglas. He had been looking through a magnify glass at the sky when the flash hot - trying to get closer top the stars. I use to wonder what Colin was like. Fair hair or dark, olive skin or bright pink, slender or still carrying his baby fat. If he smiled. I could've asked somebody to describe him to me, god knows he was on television enough, but somehow I felt that would tarnish it. I preferred my very own Colin. At night my dreams would be full of images of him - running along the beach, playing on a swing, studying some ants with his magnifying glass. I wondered if he would ever be able to do those things again. I also dreamt of our meeting. The fatal day when we would somehow be brought brought together - the oddest of odd couples. The children of the flash. Then one morning I heard his mother's voice, Sarah Douglas, elated on the radio: "It's a miracle. A miracle. He can see. My boy can see." Colin had simply woken up one morning, blinked his eyes and seen his mother for the first time in over a month. So now I'm all alone, by myself, in the darkness. Of course there are hundreds, thousands of people like me, living perfectly normal lives. But it's not the same you see. Thy weren't blinded by the flash. Like me ... and Colin. (CHANGE) I was quite a celebrity when it was me and Colin. A cute six year old boy blinded by the flash was a terrible tragedy - the coverage was immense - and I tagged along for the ride. The networks felt an obligation to include number two - Colin Douglas and Ruth What's-her-name. When they wrote a heart warming story about Colin's trip to the zoo they would include a few paragraphs on me as well. Or if radio needed an interview and it was past Colin's bedtime my phone would b ringing hot. I thought, hoped, that one intrepid media person would one day do a story on me and Colin together - so I could meet him. Tearful shots of our tentative handshake in Centennial park. But sadly they never thought of that and I just couldn't bring myself to suggest it. Would Sarah have welcomed my call ? Once Colin got his sight back things were different. They quickly lost interest in me. A blind six year old boy is tragic. A blind woman approaching middle age, living alone, is just sad. I was placed in the too hard basket and too alleviate everyone's guilt rumours began to circulate - is she a spinster ? What happened to her husband ? Maybe she killed him. Is she gay ? Maybe she's a witch. Maybe she's a gay witch who killed her husband ? How come she got blinded anyway ? What did she do wrong ? Probably did it herself to get some attention. Why would God chose her ? (PAUSE) Pre-existing condition - that's what Dr Russell said. No magnifying glass required. Weakened retina. He was surprised I hadn't already noticed some deterioration. I would've definitely required surgery in a

RUTH: (CONT) few years if ... I hadn't seen the flash. It was the moon's fault. This extraordinary full moon, glowing, bright yellow, right above my flat. I'd just finished my dinner and was placing my plate in the sink when I glanced out the window and saw it. You couldn't miss it. The moon, drawing me, beckoning me onto the balcony. I'd never seen it so big, so magnificent and as it turned out - I never would again. I'd just reached the railing and craned my head up to take in the full beauty of the moon when the flash came. I remember it - so clear, so intense, so bright. Instantaneous. By instinct I turned away and shielded my eyes. A futile gesture as it turned out. I uncovered my eyes but everything was still black. I blinked, once - twice - but just black. I clambered back into the house, felt my way through the glass sliding doors. I wanted to call someone, anyone, but in my disorientated state I couldn't seem to find the phone. The flash had taken away my sight and my balance. I stumbled against a small table and fell. The carpet felt soft and safe so I stayed there. I crawled on my hand and knees and slowly felt my way into the bedroom. Eventually I found the bed, somehow I managed to pull myself up onto the covers and I flopped on to my back. I closed my eyes. Maybe they were already closed and to my surprise I was asleep. I woke up sometime later. I have no idea how long. Whether it was day or still night. I opened my eyes. I blinked. Blinked again. Black. Just black. Complete, empty, stretching out in front of me. Black. Sometime that day, I don't know when, I did find the phone. I called Barbara, my sister. Thankfully she was home. "Had I seen the flash?" "Yes. Yes I had." She arrived shortly afterwards and took me to the hospital. They were very kindly, very efficient, very understanding. They wrote down my name. I was official. A casualty of the flash. My new life could begin. (PAUSE) Rage. Do I feel rage? That's what everybody keeps asking me. Am I angry? Do I feel a need to blame? But I don't. There is no rage. Dr Russell says maybe I'm still in shock. I will feel anger - soon. So I sit here alone in the dark and wait for the rage to come. But who shall I blame? The moon. That big, bright, beautiful yellow moon hanging over my house one clear autumn night. How can I blame that? (PAUSE) The strangest thing -and I haven't even told Dr Russell this - before the flash I used to get this terrible pain in my lower back. Just about here. It felt like something was eating away at me from the inside. I was too scared to ask him about it. I thought it might be ... And now, since the flash, the pain is gone.

RUTH REACHES FOR HER CANE. SHE CAN'T FIND IT.

LEONARD APPEARS. HE WATCHES HER. SLOWLY HE APPROACHES. HE TAKES RUTH'S CANE AND HANDS IT TO HER.

RUTH: Thank you.

RUTH EXITS. LEONARD WATCHES HER GO.

PLAYER/COACH

SIMON and ALAN

TOGETHER: Everyone keeps talking about the flash but the flash doesn't matter.

ALAN: What matters is Saturday night and winning this game. We're one down. To lose this one would be unthinkable. For the players, for the stakeholders, for my employers. For me. I have a contract till next year. Air tight. Air tight until you lose a home series. Suddenly air tight's not so air tight anymore. This game is a must win. And all I keep hearing is him talking about the bloody flash.

TOGETHER: But the flash doesn't matter.

SIMON: That's what he says. The flash was important. The flash meant something. This little kid went blind. Some woman was cured of cancer. That means something. This game doesn't mean anything. It's just another game. People say I'm playing for my country. So what? It's still a game. I'm not going to war. It's not life and death. The flash happened in my country. The flash was -

ALAN: A matter of life and death. Strong words, but in a way it is. In terms of my career it is life or death. This game is what we call a "career ender." I lose and my career ends. Or let's just say my continued tenure in my current position would be seriously in doubt. My air tight contract contains an air tight performance clause. Win or your out. So lose tomorrow night and I'm on the dole queue. But I'm not panicking - yet. We can win. We will win.

TOGETHER: It all depends -

SIMON: On me. Can you imagine what that's like? Your whole team, the whole country - watching you. Depending on you. To make something happen. To make you win. Why should it all depend on me? We're a team - we're meant to be a team. I shouldn't matter as long as I play my role within the team. Do my bit. The rest shouldn't matter.

ALAN: But it does. He's been so special for so long. Done the impossible, the unimaginable - so many times - to pull us out of the crap. Win games that should not have been won. It's natural for the rest of the team to look to him for inspiration. A moment of brilliance. Something

ALAN: (CONT) to lift us above the normal.

SIMON: And the flash did that. The flash lifted all of us. It didn't matter who you were. Where you lived, what you did, whether you played or not. The flash treated us all equally. But the game's not like that. Everyone has a specific role. A task to perform. Every player's different.

TOGETHER: It's because of him. He's the problem.

ALAN: There's something not right. Up here. In the last few games I look into his eyes at half time and there's nothing there. It's blank. I feel like grabbing him by the shoulders and shaking him. Clicking my fingers in front of his face - saying "Wake up ! We need you out there." Maybe there's something else. Maybe his knee's -

SIMON: There's nothing wrong with my knee. My knee is fine. Well as fine as it's ever going to be after the second op. It's him. He looks at me at half time some games like I'm a bloody idiot. "Come on Si. We need something special out there. Spark it up." Spark it up ? What am I ? A bloody electrician. Doesn't he understand ? We had a spark. A great big one. Al lof us. He doesn't realise -

ALAN: Something's changed. It's those people he's been hanging around with since that bloody flash. Got inside his head. Messed him up. He's a natural. Simple. You can't complicate things with him. That's the answer. Keep it simple. Let him play. I asked the Doc to take him for a scan. Maybe the flash effected his motor-neurone system. His balance is off. No one who plays that well, could suddenly play that badly. All I need is -

TOGETHER: One more game.

SIMON: That's all I need. If I play that badly again he has to drop me. He can't keep me in the team. They'll have to get rid of me. Or him. That wouldn't be so bad. The next guy might understand me a bit better. Not come around to my room and kick my friends out because we're talking about the flash. He might understand what's going on. Know that the flash was important and see that I need time off. Go and talk to that little boy who lost his sight. Find that woman. Talk to other people who were affected by the flash. Understhand that it meant -

ALAN: Nothing. Nothing means nothing except winning this game. He' got to -

SIMON: Understand that.

ALAN: I've been good to him.

SIMON: One more loss.

ALAN: One more win. He owes me that.

SIMON: That's all I need.

ALAN: Next week doesn't matter.

SIMON: Then I'll be free.

TOGETHER: We've just got to win (lose) this game.