

Cannibals of the Heart

Snapshots from the Stark Side

by Michael Olsen

ACT 1

FLOWERS

Reltec (M) (60s)

Dave (M) (30s)

THERAPY

Dr Botero (F)

Clark (M) (20s)

KEEPER

M (M) (30s)

P (M) (30s)

J (M) (20s)

CASA DIABLO

Tarpé (F) (20s)

Leo (M) (60s)

ACT 2

WYVERNNS (30s)

Tanya (F)

Pete (M)

Nick (M)

MIRRORS (20s)

Martin/David/Jason (M)

Louise/Clare/Zoe (F)

Mark/Steven (M)

Lucinda (F)

188 (30s)

Jim (M) (20s/30s)

Anna (F)

Kelly (F)

MINE (30s)

Tom (M)

Maria (F)

Possible Doubling-Up:

Reltec, Leo

Clark, Martin/David/Jason

M, Tom

Dave, P, Pete

J, Jim

Tarpé, Anna

Tanya, Kelly

Louise/Clare/Zoe, Maria

ACT 1**Flowers**

Lights come up on Reltec standing on one side of a bare hospital room. On one wall there are hand-drawn pictures of flowers, and a volcano. Centrestage there is a small pot of flowers. Reltec is staring intently offstage at flowers only he can see. Dave, a male nurse, enters.

DAVE: Mr. Reltec? *(Pause. There is no response from Reltec)* Mr. Reltec, they're ready for you now.

Reltec turns, and his face lights up.

RELTEC: Hello Dave. How are you?

DAVE: I'm fine, Mr Reltec. It's time for your Group 2 session. Are you ready?

RELTEC: Just a minute, Dave.

Reltec turns back to his imaginary flowers, facing offstage. Dave smiles, shakes his head.

DAVE: *(indulgent)* What are you looking at, Mr. Reltec?

Reltec points to the imaginary flowers offstage.

RELTEC: The flowers, Dave. Aren't they beautiful?

DAVE: What flowers? You mean these flowers? Here?

Dave points to the flowers centre stage. Reltec looks down at the flowers centrestage.

RELTEC: You've found some more! Wonderful! There just aren't enough flowers in the world, you know.

DAVE: *(getting annoyed)* Mr. Reltec.

RELTEC: You should never forget that flowers are the eyes of God. They watch over the house and the garden. They say good-bye to people at funerals. They say hello to lovers.

DAVE: Look, it's time we were going. You know what happened last time you were late.

RELTEC: The mind is a flower, too, of course, only . . . it rarely blooms.

DAVE: Well, save it and bloom in Group 2.

RELTEC: A mind is a very rare thing indeed. Every house has weeds, Dave, but not every house has flowers.

Therapy

Lights come up on Dr. Botero in her office. She is a large woman, and she keeps on rearranging things on her desk over and over, not satisfied with their placement. She is adjusting her dress when there is the sound of a knock at her door.

DR. BOTERO: *(calling out)* Just a minute. *(Dr. Botero finishes fixing herself up)* Come in.

Clark enters.

DR. BOTERO: Hello Clark. Have a seat.

CLARK: Thank you.

Clark closes the door and locks it.

DR. BOTERO: Why have you locked the door?

CLARK: Do you want me to leave it unlocked? Someone might come in.

DR. BOTERO: No-one will come in.

CLARK: I like to be private. I wouldn't want anyone to—you know—surprise us.

DR. BOTERO: As you wish.

Clark sits down.

DR. BOTERO: How are you feeling today?

CLARK: How do you think I should feel?

DR. BOTERO: I don't know. Why don't you tell me?

CLARK: I'm OK. A little tense, but OK.

DR. BOTERO: A little tense?

CLARK: Yes.

DR. BOTERO: Has something happened to make you feel that way?

CLARK: Yes.

DR. BOTERO: Do you want to talk about it?

CLARK: I don't know if I can.

DR. BOTERO: I'm listening.

CLARK: I've . . . I think I've fallen in love.

DR. BOTERO: That's wonderful!

CLARK: But I don't think she knows how strongly I feel for her.

DR. BOTERO: You haven't told her?

CLARK: No.

DR. BOTERO: And you want to?

CLARK: Oh yes. Very much so.

DR. BOTERO: What is it that's stopping you, do you think?

CLARK: I . . . I'm scared.

DR. BOTERO: What are you scared of?

CLARK: I'm scared she won't like me.

DR. BOTERO: That's a risk we all have to take. Unfortunately there's no way to avoid it. No-one can do it for you.

CLARK: But there has to be some way I can tell her.

DR. BOTERO: How do you know her?

CLARK: I've known her for a few months. I see her quite regularly.

DR. BOTERO: Is she attractive?

CLARK: In her own way. What can I say to her to get her to notice me?

DR. BOTERO: Why don't we play it out? Go through exactly what you want to say.

CLARK: Here? Right now?

DR. BOTERO: Yes. I'll pretend to be the woman—what's her name?

CLARK: Cindy.

DR. BOTERO: OK. I'll pretend to be Cindy and you say to me what you want to say to her.

CLARK: OK.

DR. BOTERO: Ready?

CLARK: Yes.

DR. BOTERO: OK.

CLARK: Um. You ready?

DR. BOTERO: Ready when you are.

CLARK: OK. Um . . . Hi.

DR. BOTERO: Hi Clark how are you?

CLARK: Good. Yourself?

DR. BOTERO: Very well thanks. You sounded very anxious to talk to me on the phone. Is there something you wanted to tell me?

CLARK: Yes, there is.

DR. BOTERO: You know you can tell me anything.

CLARK: Really?

DR. BOTERO: Of course.

CLARK: I didn't know.

DR. BOTERO: But I know you so well. I feel we're—close.

CLARK: Do you?

DR. BOTERO: Yes.

CLARK: I—

DR. BOTERO: Clark?

CLARK: I can't do it! I can't do it! I can't pretend!

DR. BOTERO: Yes you can. Let yourself go.

- CLARK:** No!
- DR. BOTERO:** I'm right here. I'll always be here for you. Just let it out.
- CLARK:** She's got great tits and Christ I want to—
- DR. BOTERO:** What do you want to do Clark?
- CLARK:** I want to rip her dress and—and—
- DR. BOTERO:** I'm right here Clark. I'm right here. Close your eyes. Here, put this on. *(From her dress pocket Dr. Botero pulls out a blindfold and puts it over Clark's eyes.)* Tell me what you want to do.

Keeper

Narrow strong spotlight comes up. J is standing under the light, cold and nervous. Two figures come up and grab him by each arm. J struggles, but the two figures lead him back out of the light.

Fadeout

Spotlight up. There is a large chair facing upstage. N's arm extends from the chair and gestures for J to come closer. J is pushed into the light. N gestures again. J shakes his head. N gestures again. J bends down to talk to N. J backs back, and shakes hands with N, nodding his head. J exits.

Fadeout

Spotlight up. A filing cabinet. J enters with a torch and a crowbar and uses the crowbar to break open the filing cabinet. He flicks through a packed drawer, pulls out a file, checks it, and exits.

Fadeout

Spotlight up. Again, N is in his chair, facing upstage. J hands the file to N, who then motions for J to come closer. J bends down and listens and nods to what N says.

Fadeout

Spotlight up. A figure shuffles into the light, looks around, furtively lights a cigarette. J enters, the figure steps back, but J grabs him, chats with him, puts his arm around him and then shoves a gun into his belly and fires a couple of times. The figure falls to the floor. J exits.

Fadeout

Spotlight up. A table. P and J are bent over it, looking at a map. J is explaining the plan to P. P doesn't like it and starts to back out. J grabs him and brandishes a gun.

Fadeout

Spotlight up. J is cleaning his gun. The phone rings. He answers it. He has an argument with the person on the other end of the phone (P). J checks his watch, then agrees with P. J hangs up and exits.

Fadeout

Lights come up on a gloomy warehouse. There is a table/slab centrestage upon which lies a body wrapped in black plastic. P is pacing, worried. J enters.

J: I got your message. You sounded worried. What's the matter?

P: It's the body. I think—I think it moved.

J: You bring me down here to tell me this guff?

P: It's true.

J: Don't be stupid. The doc checked out everything, signed a certificate, the works. Inside there's nothing but cold juice flowing around those veins. Here, maybe I should show you.

J grabs P's hand and shoves it under the covers. P screams. J laughs. P wrenches his hand free, wipes it.

J: It's only when they're alive that you have to worry. Only when they're alive.

P: You said I'd be finished by now.

J: Plans have changed. We have to hold on a little bit longer, that's all. It seems our customers are having what they call "second thoughts". Delivery has been moved back three hours.

P: Three hours! Why wasn't I told?

J: I'm telling you now.

P: So I can go at five then.

J: You will go when your services are no longer required, and not a second sooner.

P: Why do I have to be here? I mean, it's not going to run anywhere is it?

J: You're the one who said it moved.

P: It's giving me the bloody creeps.

J: You still have your piece, don't you? (*P pats the gun on his thigh.*) Well then, if it moves, shoot it.

J starts to leave.

- P:** Wait. I've been thinking about things down here. I don't like it. Babysitting a bod. It's unhealthy.
- J:** Why then you're just the man for the job.
- P:** That's not funny.
- J:** I wasn't being funny.
- P:** I don't reckon you're paying me enough.
- J:** We're paying you plenty.
- P:** It's taking longer than you planned.
- J:** Things change. Either you accept that, or you go under. Got it?
- P:** I don't know. I mean, I might be looking after an important person. Aren't dead important people more expensive to look after than unimportant people?
- J:** You seem to have forgotten our arrangement very quickly. I don't think you'd like me to remind you of the penalties for non-compliance. You do you remember what happened to O, don't you? It's incredible how someone can just disappear off the face of the earth, as if they never existed. Even memories of that person don't last forever.
- P:** It's all right, Mr J. I see your point.
- J:** It is wise not to forget one's station in life, P.
- P:** No, Mr J.
- J:** I have always thought it important to know exactly where one fits in. Very important. It is only when one knows exactly where one is that one can operate effectively and efficiently.
- P:** Yes, Mr J.
- J begins to leave.*
- P:** Ah, Mr J?
- J:** Yes P?
- P:** Mr J, what is that yellow stuff in there?
- J:** Preservative. Keeps things real fresh. Use it at home on your vegetables and stuff.

P: That's sick Mr J.

J grabs P very tightly by the throat.

J: I resent that. I resent that very much. Would you like to take it back?

P nods. J releases P.

J: I can see you're a man of reason, P. You know the limits. You know how far you can go. What you can say. What you can't. There always have to be limits, P. Boundaries. Otherwise where would we be? Back in the jungle with the monkeys and the tigers. Down here we know the monkeys from the tigers, don't we? (*P nods*) That's right.

The phone rings. P answers it.

P: Hello? Speaking. Yes. Yes I think it would have. Really? Are you sure? Very well. Right away. (*P hangs up*) That was M. There's been a change in the plan.

J: A change? What sort of change?

P: We have to get rid of the body.

Casa Diablo

We hear the sound of something zapping, sizzling, and then we hear the sound of Leo crying out. A pale red light comes up on Leo, a man in his late fifties, early sixties, standing with his wrists and ankles bound to a black frame, wearing only underwear and a head mask. There are numerous wires attached to his body. Standing a little way off is Tarpé, a woman in her thirties wearing a trim black uniform and holding a small black control box. Tarpé removes the head mask from Leo and holds his head up.

TARPÉ: Welcome to Hell, Mr. Newstead.

LEO: Who the hell are you? Where am I?

TARPÉ: You can call me Tarpé but names don't mean much down here. We usually change them after a century or two anyway.

LEO: My God.

TARPÉ: He won't do you any good here.

LEO: This is outrageous! Release me at once!

TARPÉ: Only the boss can do that. And he's not really interested in your case. It's only a D4 classification so you don't really mean much at all.

LEO: This is not hell and I am not dead. Let me go!

TARPÉ: You died in your sleep. Peacefully. There was even the hint of a smile on your face I believe. (*Tarpé consults the clipboard hanging on the side of the frame.*) Yes. Yes there was. Rather nice way to go, actually.

LEO: What?

TARPÉ: You had an embolism. A blood vessel burst in your brain. Painless because there are no nerves in the brain, you see. But there are in the body of course.

LEO: This can't be happening. I don't even believe in this stuff! Let me go!

TARPÉ: Believe, Mr Newstead. Believe your body. Believe the pain. They tell me the first 1000 years is the worst. After that, they review the torment and assign a new torturer. I'm still an apprentice, so please bear with me.

Tarpé zaps Leo. Leo cries out, sags against the frame. Tarpé tries to put the head mask back on Leo but he twists his head away.

LEO: (*Shouting feebly*) Get away! Stop it! Help! Help! Somebody help!

TARPÉ: (*Overlapping*) Who are you calling to Mr Newstead? No-one can hear you. Why don't you just accept things? Eternity doesn't last forever. Really. It just feels that way.

LEO: No! This isn't happening! Let me go goddamnit! Let me go!

TARPÉ: When will you accept your fate? What will it take, Mr. Newstead? Really, you are beginning to sound very tedious. I assure you my punishment isn't to be with you.

LEO: I'm sorry. Do you have any water? I'm very thirsty.

TARPÉ: This is Hell, Mr. Newstead. What use have we of water down here?

LEO: What have I done? Please tell me. Why am I here? Why? Why?

TARPÉ: Didn't they tell you?

LEO: No-one's told me anything. If this is a joke then it's not funny.

TARPÉ: A joke? Not at all. But didn't they tell you anything?

LEO: For goodness sake let me go!

TARPÉ: Usually they're very thorough. Very detailed. They go through everything: the hatred, the cruelty, the lying, the pain—the lot. Are you sure no-one's spoken to you?

LEO: Yes yes yes. Jesus Christ!

Tarpé zaps Leo again. Leo cries out.

TARPÉ: Don't make me do that again. If you keep saying things like that you'll be in trouble.

LEO: You bitch!

TARPÉ: That's better! I think we're going to get along really well. Yes. I think I'll enjoy this.

LEO: What have I done? Tell me! What have I done?

Tarpé moves around Leo.

TARPÉ: Are you ready?

LEO: No! Please—no!

Tarpé zaps Leo a couple of times. Leo again cries out. By now Leo looks in pretty poor shape. Tarpé ticks off some points on the clipboard.

LEO: *(feebly)* Why? Why? Why?

TARPÉ: Why what?

LEO: Why am I here? Please. Why?

TARPÉ: Don't you know?

LEO: No.

TARPÉ: Can't you guess?

LEO: Tell me—please!

Tarpé consults the clipboard again.

TARPÉ: I don't know if I should. I mean, it's not my job.

LEO: Please.

TARPÉ: You really are beginning to wear out that word, you know.

LEO: Please.

TARPÉ: Well, besides being cruel, vindictive, selfish and greedy—all rather minor vices, I think you'll agree—you raped a twelve year old girl.

ACT 2

Wyverns

Afternoon. Spotlight comes up on Pete, a lawyer. He is at his desk, sifting through some documents. The phone rings. He picks up the receiver.

PETE: Peter Hutnyk. Oh hi Max. What's up? Uh huh. I've got the proposal right here. Yep, can do. What? I thought Bill was handling that. He's the team leader. Wouldn't he be the best man to—Yes, but—Well, yes, I know but—Yes of course I know Nick Campbell. I told you that last week: I know him from Queen's. Yes Queen's College. It's one of the residential colleges of Melbourne Uni. Yeah. We were neighbours in first year, that's all. I told you all that. No I haven't seen him in years. I don't know if I'd call us friends anymore. OK, more than mere acquaintances. Why do you want me to see him? Isn't Bill—Look, I don't know if I can—Yes but—He might not even remember—Alright I'll do it. I'll ring him this afternoon. Yes. Right away. OK. 'Bye. *(Pete hangs up the phone.)* Asshole. *(Pete takes a breath and dials his secretary.)* Get me Nick Campbell of Bentleys.

Fadeout

Morning. Lights come up on a kitchen. Tanya is sitting at the kitchen table with a big drawing pad, designing a new outfit for her winter collection. Pete enters wearing an unbuttoned shirt. He's holding up two ties.

PETE: Which one do you think? Power red or office grey?

TANYA: *(without looking up)* The red one.

PETE: You don't think it clashes with the suit?

TANYA: No.

Pete grunts and exits.

TANYA: What's the matter? Big day at the office? The only time you ever ask me what to wear is when you've something important on.

PETE: *(voice off)* There's a contract with Bentleys for a team of international lawyers.

TANYA: Lots of travel involved?

PETE: *(voice off)* Uh huh: New York, Hong Kong, London. Lots of places.

- TANYA:** *(sarcastic)* Wonderful.
- PETE:** *(voice off)* I'm having lunch with the head of their International Division. Guess who?
- TANYA:** I don't know. Surprise me.
- PETE:** *(voice off)* Nick Campbell.
- TANYA:** Nick Campbell. Really.
- Pete enters wearing the red tie.*
- TANYA:** Nick Campbell? Working for Bentleys?
- PETE:** Yes.
- TANYA:** He has done well for himself, hasn't he? Has he been investigated by the Bar?
- PETE:** How the—How would I know?
- TANYA:** But you're not friends anymore.
- PETE:** This is all Max's idea. He thinks simply because I knew Nick that I've got what he calls "leverage." Bill Patterson should be the one doing the power lunching. He's the team leader. He's the one who put this whole proposal together in the first place.
- TANYA:** You and Nick can catch up on old times. *(Pete grunts.)* You'll have so much to talk about. Queen's and all that. You could find out how he got a job at Bentleys while you're still at McDonald and Scott. To be a fly on the wall.
- PETE:** My lovely Social Piranha.
- TANYA:** Don't call me that, Slugger.
- PETE:** Haven't heard that one in quite a while.
- TANYA:** You didn't need to hit that Senior. Your first day at college! I suppose it set the tone for the rest of your time there, didn't it?
- PETE:** Just give it a rest will you?
- TANYA:** You were just spoiling for a fight.
- PETE:** Like you are right now!
- TANYA:** If you haven't been trained you shouldn't be in the ring.

PETE: One day I'm really going to rub your nose in it.

TANYA: Are you really? Well I certainly hope so, because we definitely don't have much of it now.

PETE: Never bloodywell satisfied. That's your problem. You've always been the same. I don't know why I didn't see it at college.

TANYA: You were probably too busy trying to get into my pants.

PETE: Wasn't that a joke.

Pete moves off.

TANYA: Will you be home for dinner? (*Pete exits. We hear the sound of a front door slamming shut.*) 'Bye darling. Kiss.

Tanya sits back down and picks up her drawing pad again, but puts it down and thinks for a little while. She goes to the phone. She pulls out a phone book, thumbs through it to find the phone number of Bentleys, & dials a number.

TANYA: Good morning. I'd like to speak to Nicholas Campbell please. Thank you.

Fadeout

Lights come up on Nick sitting working at his desk. The phone rings. He answers it.

NICK: Nicholas Campbell. Good. Put him through. Morning John. Yes, I'm just reviewing the McDonald and Scott submission now. It looks very promising. They look like they've got the job. No, not yet. I'll still have to make a report to the partners about it, with my final recommendation. Yes. Yes. I'm having lunch today with their representative Peter Hutnyk. Yes. I know him from my college days. Yes, Queen's College. He was next door to me in first year. Yes, we did. No, I haven't seen him for years. No we weren't. Yes, alright. I will. See you.

Nick hangs up the phone. He settles back in his chair when the phone rings again. Nick picks it up again.

NICK: Nicholas Campbell. Who? (*Searching*) Tanya. Oh. Hang on. (*Pause*) Tell her I'm busy and could she call back in, say, an hour or so? Thanks.

Nick hangs up and smiles.

NICK: Hello Mrs. Tanya Hutnyk. I wonder what the Social Piranha wants now?

Fadeout

Mirrors

One male actor plays MARTIN / DAVID / JASON

One female actor plays LOUISE / CLARE / ZOE

One male actor plays MARK / STEVEN

One female actor plays LUCINDA

Louise is sitting in a chair reading a book. Martin enters, searching all over the room.

LOUISE: Looking for something?

MARTIN: What? No. Just—looking.

LOUISE: Right.

Martin continues to look around the room. He finally feels forced to ask Louise.

MARTIN: You haven't seen a notebook anywhere have you?

LOUISE: What?

MARTIN: A notebook. I seem to have lost it.

LOUISE: No.

MARTIN: Oh.

Martin looks around the room briefly, then exits. Louise continues reading. A moment later, Martin enters, more agitated than before.

MARTIN: I still can't find it.

LOUISE: What?

MARTIN: My notebook.

LOUISE: Oh.

MARTIN: You sure you haven't seen it anywhere?

LOUISE: What's it look like?

- MARTIN:** It's black. About so big.
- LOUISE:** Why are you so worried about it? I'm sure it'll turn up. It's only a notebook. Buy another one.
- MARTIN:** I can't.
- LOUISE:** Why not?
- MARTIN:** It's not just any old notebook.
- LOUISE:** (*sarcastic*) Oh right. It's a special notebook.
- MARTIN:** Yes it—(*reluctantly*) It's . . . it's got a new play in it.
- LOUISE:** Really? You never told me you were writing a play.
- MARTIN:** It's a surprise. I haven't told anyone.
- LOUISE:** What's it about?
- MARTIN:** Nothing really.
- LOUISE:** You wrote a play about nothing? Come on.
- MARTIN:** It's about relationships. Modern state of. Decay of. Future of. Why do we get involved in. That sort of thing.
- LOUISE:** Why the big secret?
- MARTIN:** Like I say, a surprise. Also I hate getting feedback on my stuff before I've got it all down on paper. To paraphrase Hemingway: great plays aren't written, they're re-written.
- LOUISE:** You think it's pretty good then.
- MARTIN:** I don't want to say. How good could anyone's first play be? But it's a start, and more to the point I've actually finished the bastard. It has a beginning, and an end, and there's stuff in-between. (*Loudly*) And I can't find the fucker! Shit!
- LOUISE:** I think it's awful.
- MARTIN:** What?
- LOUISE:** Your play. I think it's awful.
- MARTIN:** You've read it? Where is it?

LOUISE: I burnt it.

MARTIN: You're kidding.

LOUISE: No.

MARTIN: It took me four months to write!

LOUISE: It took me twenty minutes to burn.

MARTIN: My God!

LOUISE: Even though I'd read it, I didn't realize there were so many pages. It only hit me when I was tearing them out one by one.

Martin grabs Louise.

MARTIN: What the hell possessed you to do a thing like that?

LOUISE: Get your hands off me!

Louise pushes Martin away.

MARTIN: It was the only copy I had! That's it! It's gone! Four months of my life gone up in smoke!

LOUISE: What the hell gives you the right to write about me?

MARTIN: The characters are fictional for God's sake! I made them up!

LOUISE: What about the character "Lucy" and her sick brother? "Lucy's" father and his battle with cancer? "Lucy's" cute little tattoo above her pubic hair? "Lucy's" childhood—

MARTIN: So I borrowed a little. There's no harm in that.

LOUISE: Oh really? If I wanted my life story up there on the stage I would have phoned David Williamson. He at least writes better than you. I told you all these things about my life, my innermost secrets, my family—and you take them and you want to splash them all over some fucking stage!

MARTIN: If anything I thought you'd be flattered!

LOUISE: Flattered? You make Lucy out to be such a victim of her life—her uncle, her mother, drugs, boys. Is that how you see me?

MARTIN: Of course not.

LOUISE: I mean, you didn't even ask me. It's like you've just listened to everything I've said and then spewed it out all over the page. My God I really thought I could trust you. You know? I really thought "Louise, congratulations, here's someone you can depend on not to fuck you around." You have no idea at all what it means, do you? Trust. No idea what it means to me.

MARTIN: Louise!

LOUISE: I told you all that because I needed to share it with you. I needed to know you cared. That it made a difference that I made a difference. But it didn't mean anything at all did it? Did it! *(Pause)* I'm moving out tomorrow.

MARTIN: You can't be serious.

LOUISE: I've never been more serious in my life!

MARTIN: Please listen to me.

LOUISE: What for?

MARTIN: I love you!

LOUISE: *(quietly)* Really?

MARTIN: Of course.

Louise shakes her head.

LOUISE: You don't know the meaning of the word.

CLARE: Shit! This is not working for me guys I'm sorry.

Mark enters.

MARK: OK what's the matter now?

CLARE: It doesn't feel right to me. I really think Louise would go a lot further in the argument with Martin.

MARK: I see.

DAVID: I think it's fine. You've just got to make it work, Clare.

CLARE: Oh really? Well there's only so much I can do. Honestly, I feel ready to rip your head off, but the text just seems to cut me off in mid flight. Emotionally it's the highpoint of the act but I feel it just sort of short circuits.

DAVID: She's that kind of person, alright? Can't you just—

MARK: OK people. Let's be nice. Jesus. I thought we'd gone over this before. The reason she doesn't explode is because she's a very controlled person. OK? Given this situation she wouldn't respond the way you suggest. She keeps her feelings on a really tight leash.

CLARE: But emotionally it still doesn't feel right.

MARK: For you or for the character?

CLARE: Both. I know this pers—this character. She wouldn't do that. It just doesn't feel right

MARK: It's your job to make it feel right.

CLARE: And it's your job to help me.

MARK: Look. I think it's working very well. At this stage all you have to do is just concentrate on the core emotion that you feel the character has in each line. And this goes for you too, Dave.

DAVID: Right.

CLARE: But Mark, the way you've written this, I can't go anywhere.

MARK: Alright, if that's the way you feel maybe we should talk about it. Dave, unless you've got some problems about the scene, could Clare and I have a moment together?

DAVID: Sure. It's time to go anyway. I'll catch you tomorrow at five then, OK?

MARK: Yeah fine. See you then.

DAVID: 'Bye.

CLARE: 'Bye.

David exits.

MARK: What the hell is going on? We've been rehearsing for two weeks now and all of a sudden you think something doesn't work. What gives?

188

Lights come up on Anna cleaning and clearing out a small bedroom, and being very fastidious about it. Clothes are strewn everywhere, along with books and other paraphernalia. There is a chair to one side of the stage. There are cardboard boxes into which Anna is throwing all the gear.

JIM: (voice off) Hello!

ANNA: In here.

Jim, Anna's live-in boyfriend, enters.

JIM: What are you doing?

Anna snatches a kiss from Jim and continues to clean and tidy up.

ANNA: What's it look like?

JIM: You don't waste any time.

ANNA: Just being practical.

JIM: She's only been gone three days.

ANNA: I wasn't counting.

JIM: I just thought we could keep it for her. You know, till she comes back.

ANNA: She could be gone for months.

JIM: Months?

ANNA: The average stay in these sort of wards is three months. A friend of my father's, his daughter wound up in Larundel for six months. Thought she was Sylvia Plath. She'd go into libraries and pull Sylvia Plath's books off the shelves, saying, "They're mine! They're mine! They're all mine!"

JIM: Well I don't think Kelly's problem is anything like that.

Anna holds up a used condom.

ANNA: Neither do I.

JIM: Well she's gone alright? If it makes you feel any better, she is suffering.

ANNA: How do you know?

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- JIM:** I've just been to see her.
- ANNA:** Why didn't you tell me you were going?
- JIM:** Does it matter?
- ANNA:** She's my friend too you know.
- JIM:** I know that. It was just a spur of the moment thing. I was going through the city, so I dropped by.
- ANNA:** What happened?
- JIM:** Nothing much.
- ANNA:** Well, what was she like?
- JIM:** Very quiet, sort of awkward. She spoke really slowly, like it was difficult to find the words. The weird thing was I felt sort of reassured seeing her there. It was like everything she's done, everything she'd said since she moved in with us, made sense: she was sick, and here she was in hospital and she was going to get better. (*Looking at Anna's reaction*) You do think she's going to get better don't you?
- ANNA:** I don't know. She was OK before—she'll be OK again. It's only logical.
- JIM:** I suppose so.
- ANNA:** There's no point worrying.
- JIM:** I just don't like hospitals, you know? Ugly places. Probably make her worse.
- ANNA:** Do you have a better idea?
- JIM:** No.
- ANNA:** Well there you go.
- JIM:** It was just so weird seeing her in that room wearing that crazy blue outfit, you know the one, the one with the flowers on the—
- ANNA:** You mean you just walked in? You were in with the other patients?
- JIM:** Yeah. It was alright. I had visions of "One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest," people banging walls and that sort of thing, but it was just very . . . ordinary. People in their own clothes just doing things like playing cards, or trying to cook, you know. But so quiet.

- ANNA:** It doesn't sound too bad.
- JIM:** She doesn't want to be there.
- ANNA:** Jim, where else can she go? What other options does she have?
- JIM:** I know. I know.
- ANNA:** Her problem was bigger than either of us could tackle.
- JIM:** Bigger than you could tackle you mean.
- ANNA:** And what's that supposed to mean?
- JIM:** Doesn't matter.
- ANNA:** No tell me.
- JIM:** I think you overreacted that's all.
- ANNA:** Oh really. Well I didn't get much bloody help from you did I? You disappeared into that lab of yours at uni counting mouse droppings. I had to cope with her going crazy 'round the kitchen with flour bombs and bringing strangers home for dinner.
- JIM:** I just keep thinking there must have been something we could have done. I don't know. Earlier. Before . . .
- ANNA:** Before what? She wouldn't have listened. She was in her own world. No-one could talk to her. She was unbearable.
- JIM:** It'll be a lot quieter around here.
- ANNA:** Hallelujah.
- JIM:** I'm going to miss not having her fly through the house. She really lit the place up. (*Anna continues cleaning up and packing things away. She pulls some sheets off the bed and a small pile of papers comes out as well, from under the mattress. Anna bends down and picks them up.*) I mean, even if she was a bit much at times, well, all the time really, she was so open and friendly I mean you couldn't help but like her, could you? And she was generous too. She lent me money to pay for the repairs to the surfboard when I cracked it on the rocks down at Pt Lonsdale. There was something about her you just couldn't help liking. Some kind of spark that was infectious, electric, just a real buzz to be with.

Jim turns to look at Anna. Anna has read some of the poems and is smiling and shaking her head.

JIM: What's that?

ANNA: Some poems. Her love poems I think.

JIM: You're not reading them are you?

ANNA: God they're bad. Read this one. (*Anna hands a poem to Jim*) It's called "188"—the number of this place.

JIM: No.

ANNA: Go on. Read it. It sounds like it might be about us.

JIM: (*reading*) "Though her auburn hair [*the colour of Anna's hair*] comes between us / the colour of your heart holds the door of the future open / and when the night arrives with the smell of distant longing in its arms, / when I feel the movement of you wash inside me / when I feel your tongue against my skin / I hold you and the future unfolds its petals of possibility."

ANNA: She was really off the planet when she wrote that. "Petals of possibility" is really bad.

JIM: I think it's alright.

ANNA: You've gotta be joking. Some of the others are even worse. How's this one: "When in darkness you come and fill this well of emptiness / I find the moisture that trickles down your back / like memory lost in the night's warmth." Unbelievable.

JIM: They're private, Anna. Put them away.

ANNA: Come on we're just having a look.

JIM: Just put them away will you? Whatever Kelly's done doesn't mean she can't have some privacy at least.

Anna continues to look through the poems.

JIM: Anna.

Anna ignores Jim. Jim grabs the poems off Anna.

JIM: I said just leave them alone!

ANNA: Alright! What the hell are you so upset about?

Jim collects them all together.

JIM: You could just show a little more respect, alright?

ANNA: Respect? What respect did she ever show us? Can't we have our fun?

JIM: Don't be perverse.

ANNA: You seem more concerned about her than about us. Raving on about how nice she was, the buzz that lit the place up. Well it drove me mad. Or is your memory so short you can't remember that time she had friends around for a late night party and they ate and drank everything in the house? Or the time she stole that painting from the gallery around the corner? And the time—

JIM: OK OK will you just give it a rest?

ANNA: What is the matter with you? Why are you so touchy about all this? Anyone would think you're—

JIM: What?

ANNA: Nothing. You're not . . .

JIM: What are you talking about?

ANNA: You and Kelly.

JIM: What?

ANNA: You are aren't you!

JIM: What?

ANNA: That's what that one called "188" is about, isn't it? (*Anna grabs it back and looks at it.*) It's about the two of you.

JIM: Anna!

Mine

Lights come up on boxes and the collective possessions of a married couple.

TOM: *(handing Maria a collection of records)* Yours.

MARIA: *(handing Tom a bundle of books)* Yours.

TOM: *(handing Maria a box of glasses)* Yours.

MARIA: *(handing Tom a radio)* Yours.

TOM: *(handing Maria a rug)* Yours.

MARIA: *(handing Tom a few framed prints)* Yours.

Pause.

TOM: *(referring to the prints)* You can have them.

MARIA: I don't want them.

TOM: What am I going to do with them?

MARIA: I'll throw them out then.

TOM: Fine.

MARIA: They were ugly anyway.

Pause.

TOM: *(handing Maria a jewellery box)* Yours.

MARIA: *(handing Tom a backgammon set)* Yours.

TOM: *(handing Maria a silver dish)* Yours.

MARIA: *(handing Tom a cocktail shaker)* Yours.

TOM: *(handing Maria a tiny metal sculpture)* Yours.

MARIA: *(handing Tom a bottle opener)* Yours.

Pause.

TOM: You bought them for me you know.

MARIA: What?

TOM: The prints. At that little shop in Sydney.

MARIA: That was the rug.

TOM: Was it?

MARIA: That's just like you.

Pause.

TOM: I'm sorry I started.

MARIA: You should be.

TOM: Jesus will you just let it go?

MARIA: I'm just finishing it, alright?

TOM: I knew this was a bad idea.

MARIA: So why did you suggest it?

Pause.

MARIA: Let's just do this as quickly and as painlessly as possible. Then we can get out of each other's hair.

TOM: Fair enough.

MARIA: Good.

TOM: *(picking up a cushion)* Whose is this?

MARIA: That's mine.

TOM: Is it?

Lights fade

Lights come up on an empty wooden chair with no arms sitting alone centrestage. Suddenly, Tom and Maria rush in from opposite sides of the stage and each grabs one side of the chair.

TOM: Mine.

MARIA: Mine.

TOM: Mine.

MARIA: Mine.

TOM: Mine.

MARIA: Mine.

Pause.

TOM: You got the kids.

MARIA: You got the plasma.

TOM: You got the car.

MARIA: You got the house.

TOM: You got the fridge.

MARIA: You got the CD player—and the CDs.

Pause.

TOM: This is my favourite chair.

MARIA: You gave it to me as a birthday present.

TOM: You've never sat in it.

MARIA: You've always complained about it.

TOM: It's a part of my life.

MARIA: Well it's a part of mine too.

Pause.

TOM: We're not being adult about this.

MARIA: No you're not.

TOM: I hate the way you do that.

MARIA: Fighting fire with fire.

TOM: Typical woman.

MARIA: It's typical of you to say that.

Pause.

TOM: Alright. You can have it. See if I care.

MARIA: I knew you'd give in.

TOM: I am not giving in.

MARIA: You are. You just can't admit it.

TOM: I am not. It's just not worth it. Have it.

MARIA: OK.

Tom lets go of the chair and walks away a few steps.

TOM: Go ahead. Have a seat.

Maria sits down, and starts to fidget.

TOM: Comfortable?

MARIA: No.

TOM: See?

MARIA: OK. You have it. See if I care.

Maria stands up and walks away.

TOM: Don't you want it now?

MARIA: No.

TOM: Well neither do I.