



David Williamson 2013

*The Removalists*, David Williamson's multiple prize-winning black comedy, captured audiences first in 1971 with its passionate recognition of the bottled-up aggression inside Australian society. The basic authoritarianism, the confrontation between the sexes which so often passes for human relationships—these were the discoveries which audiences applauded in the young playwright. This was the first in a remarkable series of major plays—*Don's Party*, *The Department*, *The Club*, *Travelling North*—which have since established David Williamson as one of Australia's most important writers.

How deeply the violence he describes in *The Removalists* is rooted in the Australian characters is discussed in the first section of the book, where the eminent criminal lawyer Frank Galbally writes about the police, that acute observer of Australian mores, the late Ian Turner, writes on football and our social habits—and there is a glimpse of the convict history that made us what we are.



CURRENCY PRESS  
The performing arts publisher  
[www.currency.com.au](http://www.currency.com.au)

ISBN 978-0-86819-232-0



9 780868 190389 >

# DAVID WILLIAMSON'S **THE REMOVALISTS**



with comment on authority,  
violence and punishment by  
FRANK GALBALLY  
IAN TURNER

**PERUSAL COPY**

**THE  
REMOVALISTS**

## CHARACTERS

SERGEANT DAN SIMMONDS  
CONSTABLE NEVILLE ROSS  
KATE MASON  
FIONA CARTER  
KENNY CARTER  
ROB, THE REMOVALIST

## ACT ONE

*The play opens in a small inner suburban police station, built fairly recently, but already having an air of decrepit inefficiency. SERGEANT DAN SIMMONDS, fat and fiftyish, lounges at a battered old desk from which he surveys CONSTABLE NEVILLE ROSS, as if he were auditioning him for a crucial role in some play. ROSS is twenty. There is a long Pause.*

ROSS: Well. What would you like me to do, Sarge?

SIMMONDS: For a start you could stop bouncing up and down on your bloody toes.

*Pause.*

D'you think they'll stop your pay cheque if you're caught standing still.

ROSS: [*nervously*] The pay's not too bad these days, is it?

SIMMONDS: [*looking at a crossword puzzle he has been doing*] Magician in six letters, Ross.

*Pause.*

It's all right. I've got it.

*He writes something.*

The money is not good, Ross. The money could be good if you happened to be in the right place but this isn't one of them. No pay-offs here, boy. A few perks, but no pay-offs.

ROSS: A recruit under twenty-one gets full adult pay these days. Did you know that?

SIMMONDS: How old are you, Ross?

ROSS: Twenty.

SIMMONDS: Money's not important, boy.

ROSS: You've got to consider it.

SIMMONDS: You've got to consider your arsehole too. What's your old man do for a crust?

ROSS: My old man?

SIMMONDS: Is he still alive?

ROSS: Yes.

SIMMONDS: What's he do?

ROSS: [*embarrassed*] Er ... I'd rather not say.

SIMMONDS: [*irritated by ROSS's reticence*] God, he must be a nightman or something. Slingshit.

ROSS: He's a carpenter.

SIMMONDS: What's wrong with that? Christ was a carpenter. Shouldn't be ashamed of your old man because he's a carpenter.

ROSS: I'm not ashamed of him.

SIMMONDS: No? I thought I noticed a little bit of hesitancy in your voice, boy. I thought it sounded as if you were ashamed of him.

ROSS: I'm not ashamed of him.

SIMMONDS: Is he in the building trade?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: That's a pity. M'son's looking for a carpenter. He's sub-contracting his house. Are you going steady?

ROSS: Sort of.

SIMMONDS: Well, when you get married make sure you don't go to a project builder.

ROSS: Why not?

SIMMONDS: Well, just look at your project builder. What is he? Really?

ROSS: Dunno.

SIMMONDS: He's just a sub-contractor. Get me?

ROSS: I suppose he is.

SIMMONDS: Your project builder just hires your tradesman, and he isn't very particular about who he hires, either. No offence to your old man, Ross, but they've got carpenters working contract who couldn't drive a nail into a lump of fresh horse shit. M'son's worked it out that as well as being able to pick your tradesmen you can save yourself upwards of a grand.

ROSS: Sounds like a good move.

SIMMONDS: Like I say. It's better to save the stuff than to have to earn it. Pity your old man's not in the building game.

ROSS: Yeah.

SIMMONDS: Most of the carpenters I know are in the building game.

Does he make furniture?

ROSS: [*thinking*] Er ... no. Not exactly.

SIMMONDS: That's a pity. M'daughter's husband's looking for someone to knock up a few cupboards for him. They need 'em too. Five kids in seven years. Bastard's a mick. She's not but he's pretty strict. Ought to be kneed in the balls. So what if he's got to face the priest. She's the one who's got to have 'em. Can't stand micks. You a mick?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: My wife's a mick. It's not her fault and I respect her point of view.

*Pause.*

They're taking over the force, you know. Salmon sandwiches on Friday if you want to get to be a sergeant, Ross. I told m'daughter not to marry the bastard but she couldn't afford to be choosy. Not bad looking, mind you, and a good arse, but she's an irritable bitch. Her mother all over again.

*Pause.*

Pity your old man doesn't make furniture.

ROSS: Yes.

*Pause.*

SIMMONDS: If he doesn't make houses and he doesn't make furniture, then what in the hell does he make?

ROSS: Why... er... did you want to know?

SIMMONDS: Is he the one that gave you this thing of yours about money?

ROSS: I haven't got a thing about money.

SIMMONDS: Then why were you carrying on about the pay?

ROSS: I wasn't carrying on about the pay. I just said that you've got to consider it.

SIMMONDS: [*looking at ROSS as he takes a roll of notes out of his pocket*] See that?

ROSS: Yes.

SIMMONDS: What is it?

ROSS: Money.

SIMMONDS: Where did it come from?

ROSS: I don't know.

SIMMONDS: I can walk out of this station tonight, grab m'self a cray and half a dozen tubes, get home, sit m'self down in front of the box and watch the wrestling.

*He waves the money.*

D'you know where it came from?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: From my pay packet. That's where it came from. No pay-offs. No nothing. From my pay packet. D'you know why I'm never short of a dollar, Ross?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: Because I've never been stupid enough to mortgage m'self up to the hilt. Bought m'self a little weatherboard in Box Hill nineteen years ago. Know what my repayments are?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: Five dollars a week.

*ROSS whistles in admiration.*

Don't chase your arse, boy. Get me? There's a lot more to be got out of life than chasing your arse. There's a good life here for you in the force if you know how to organise yourself.

ROSS: It's a pretty good life, is it?

SIMMONDS: If you know how to organise yourself and get your priorities straight.

*Pause.*

Stuff the rule book up your arse. That's the first thing you've got to learn. Get me? Life's got its own rules.

ROSS: [*vaguely uncomfortable*] I... er... suppose this is a pretty busy station?

SIMMONDS: It could be if you let it be.

ROSS: How do you mean?

SIMMONDS: Just what I said. This district has got the highest incidence of crime in the metropolitan area.

*ROSS whistles.*

All your underworld is within a two-mile radius of this station.

*ROSS whistles again.*

Tough as nails around here, mate. I'd hate to think of the number of stiffies lying in shallow graves in the Dandenongs, courtesy of this district, boy.

ROSS: [*wide-eyed*] Really?

SIMMONDS: [*nodding*] I reckon this'd be about your city's geographical centre of crime.

*ROSS purses his lips.*

That's why they opened up this sub-branch.

*Pause.*

To help the main station.

*Pause.*

And we do.

*Pause.*

But there's only two of us here. Right?

*ROSS nods.*

And we can't handle anything big. Get me?

*ROSS nods doubtfully.*

Get me?

*ROSS nods doubtfully.*

We can't handle anything big because there's only two of us.

*Pause.*

We can handle anything small, but then again it's hardly worth the effort if it's small.

*Pause.*

The workload around here is very much a matter of how we see things, Ross. Something doesn't have to be very big before it's too big for us and, likewise, something doesn't have to be all that small before it's not worth worrying about. This is the best posting in the city, boy. Think yourself lucky.

ROSS: What do we do, then?

SIMMONDS: Anything that looks interesting. And if there's nothing interesting [*pointing to a television set*] we watch the midday movie.

There's an old Errol Flynn on today. Like Errol Flynn?

ROSS: How often do you get something that looks interesting?

SIMMONDS: Depends what sort of mood you're in. Some days just about anything's interesting. I thought perhaps your arrival might have been interesting.

ROSS: [*embarrassed by his lack of interest*] Oh, I... er...

SIMMONDS: Just joking, Ross.

*Pause.*

Got one boy posted out here who walked in and said, 'I've heard about you, you great fat heap of shit'. That was interesting.

ROSS: Why did he say that?

SIMMONDS: I hope you're not a young smart-arse, Ross, because there's no room for that here. There's one person in authority here and that's me. Do you understand, Ross?

ROSS: Yes.

SIMMONDS: Let's get that straight right at the outset.

*Pause.*

What's your father do?

ROSS: [*uncertain*] I don't think it's any of your business.

SIMMONDS *gets up and circles* ROSS.

SIMMONDS: I thought we just had this out. Who's in authority here?

ROSS: I just don't think it's any of your business.

SIMMONDS: [*loudly*] Look, Ross. I'm in authority here and I'll decide what's my business and what isn't my business.

*Pause.*

You're a bit of a rebel in your own quiet way. Aren't you? Makes you feel good?

ROSS: [*defensively*] No.

SIMMONDS: Doesn't make you feel good?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: What? You just like being a rebel for the sake of being a rebel?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: [*ominously*] I hope you're not going to turn out to be a smart-arse, Ross. You'll go for a row of shitcans if you try anything smart with me, boy.

ROSS: [*surly*] I just didn't think it was any of your business what my father does.

*Pause.*

SIMMONDS: How long have you been in the force, boy?

ROSS: A year.

SIMMONDS: Not in training. In the force. In it.

ROSS: This is my first posting. You know that.

SIMMONDS: [*looking at his watch*] Half an hour. That's how long you've been in the force, boy. That's how long. Half an hour and you think you know what's my business and what's not.

ROSS: I don't think that at all.

*Pause.*

SIMMONDS: Fail your Leaving?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: We're starting to get a lot in who failed their Leaving. Got your Inter?

ROSS: [*embarrassed*] Got my Leaving.

SIMMONDS: [*raising his eyebrows*] Is that a fact? Don't get many who've got their Leaving. [*Sarcastically*] You'll rocket to the top, boy. You'll be a sergeant by the time you're fifty-five. Why'd you join the force?

ROSS: Don't really know.

*Pause.*

I just thought I'd like to be a policeman.

SIMMONDS: So you joined the force? That's pretty smart, Ross. I can't think of many better ways of becoming a policeman than joining the force. I can see why you got your Leaving. [*Pause.*] You don't come from a broken home, by any chance?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: Last bloke who came here with his Leaving was from a broken home. Had a bit of trouble with him. [*Stating*] You're not from a broken home.

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: Yes. If your father's a carpenter he'd be pretty stable. People who work with their hands are always pretty stable. It's us bastards who work with our heads that go off.

*Pause.*

Yes. I tend to find that there are two types who join the force, Ross.

Bums and very smart men. And when I'm talking about smart, I'm talking about the type of smart you've got if you can think on your feet, not the type of smart that gets you good marks in arithmetic. Get me?

ROSS: [*nodding*] I think so.

SIMMONDS: Bums and very smart men. I'm trying to work out which category you fall into, Ross. Why'd you join, boy?

ROSS: I just wanted to join.

SIMMONDS: All right. I'll just have to watch and find out because it's an important thing to know. It's important that I know as much about you as possible because then I won't make mistakes. Will I? Eh?

ROSS: I suppose not.

SIMMONDS: We've got to work as a team, Ross. There'll be times when we've got to operate like a well-oiled machine and that's the sort of thing they can't prepare you for in training. What did they teach you in training school? How to shoot a pistol. Is that the sort of crap they taught you? Did you learn that? Eh?

ROSS: Yeah. We did a bit of shooting.

SIMMONDS: And you shot at dummies. Eh? Ten points for the heart, six for the liver. Bloody stupidity.

ROSS: You have to know how to shoot a pistol.

SIMMONDS: Next time you see a crim standing stock still with a target painted on his heart you tell me, Ross. They don't prepare you for the realities. That's what I'm saying.

ROSS: We learned unarmed combat too.

SIMMONDS: What? They teach you how to shoot people then beat 'em up as well?

ROSS: You've got to be prepared for all eventualities. That's what I reckon.

SIMMONDS: That's what you reckon, eh?

ROSS: That's what I reckon. You've got to be trained for all eventualities in this 'rapidly changing world'.

SIMMONDS: [*laughing*] Rapidly changing world. Did you swallow the brochures they gave you, Ross? Nothing changes in this world, boy.

ROSS: [*earnestly*] I think we have to be prepared for change in this day and age. I think our minds should be receptive to new ideas and new ways of doing things. I think that's most important.

SIMMONDS: [*slightly menacing*] Listen, bonebrain. I have never drawn a gun in all my twenty-three years as a policeman. Never. If you ever let yourself get into a situation where you have to draw a gun, then you may as well get out of the force. What else did they teach you, Ross? How to make an arrest. Eh? How to make an arrest?

ROSS: [*sullen*] Yes. We learned that.

SIMMONDS: I have never made an arrest in all my twenty-three years in the force, Ross. If you ever get yourself into a situation that you can't handle without making an arrest, then you may as well get out too.

ROSS: [*aggressively*] What in the bloody hell do you do, then? You never draw a gun, you never make an arrest. What in the bloody hell do you do?

SIMMONDS: [*menacing*] Don't yell at me, boy.

ROSS: Well, what in the bloody hell do you do?

SIMMONDS: [*louder*] Don't yell at me, boy.

*Pause.*

That's better.

*Pause.*

Now I want you to listen to me very carefully. Right?

ROSS *nods sullenly*.

Right?

ROSS: [*grudgingly*] Right.

SIMMONDS: You don't know a bloody thing. Right?

*Pause.*

You don't know a bloody thing. About life, about the force, about yourself. You don't even know why you joined up.

*Pause.*

I've been round on this earth about thirty years longer than you have, Ross, and in that time I've learned a lot of things. If you want to go on staggering through life like a blind man in a brothel, then that's your business. If your pride won't let you accept a little bit of hard-earned knowledge, then fair enough. You can go on staggering around for the rest of your life for all I care. Everybody's fool. Is that what you want?



ROSS: [*grudgingly*] No.

SIMMONDS: Good. We're getting somewhere. I'm glad you haven't got the sort of pride that won't accept a little bit of help. I'm glad you feel you can accept a little bit of advice.

ROSS: I'm always ready to accept advice.

SIMMONDS: Then how come you wouldn't tell me what your father does?

ROSS: I didn't think it was any of your business.

SIMMONDS: [*acting puzzled*] I don't understand you, Ross. You want my help. You want the benefit of my experience. You want to learn in a few years what it's taken me twenty-three and yet you won't—you will not—give me one simple straightforward bit of information about yourself. [*Acting angry*] How in the hell do you expect me to help you if I don't know anything about you?

ROSS: [*stubborn, sullen*] I didn't think you needed to know that.

SIMMONDS: [*emitting a long, weary sigh*] Yes. It probably seems irrelevant. Let me tell you a little story, Ross. A few years ago they sent me a young lad straight out of training—not unlike yourself. Wouldn't tell me anything. Fair enough. Either a person wants to tell me something or they don't. Two weeks after he arrived we got this hysterical little tart fronting into the station yelling: 'Rape'. Quite common around here in the summer. At any rate, we give her an aspirin, jump in the divvy wagon and cruise round a bit, and bugger me dead, the lads in question were there, large as life, in the local hamburger joint. Well, before I could stop him, the young fella's out the door and into 'em. Laid out three before I had time to park the car. Turned out the tart was the biggest bike in the district. They'd all been through her—no worries—but the only reason she'd stacked on an act was because the young idiots had left her out in the bush for a joke because they knew her husband was due home from night shift. Silly bitch panicked and thought she could square it with her old man by dobbing them in.

ROSS: What happened to the...?

SIMMONDS: To the young fella?

ROSS *nods*.

Sued for assault. Out of the force like a shot. Wasn't anything I could do about it, Ross. Do you know why he snapped, Ross?

ROSS *shakes his head*.

His young sister was raped by a pack of bikies a few years before. At least that's what he was told, although personally I think there was something a bit fishy there too; but nevertheless the point is, Ross, that if he'd only confided in me it would never have happened. I would have been on the alert. Do you understand now why I have to know these things about you?

ROSS *nods*.

What does your father do?

ROSS: [*sullen*] He works for an undertaker. He makes coffins.

SIMMONDS: [*trying to suppress his laughter*] Coffin maker, eh? What's wrong with that? What's bloody wrong with that? I mean where would we be without coffin makers? Building a box to die in is every bit as important to the community as building a box to live in, in my estimation. Probably a bloody good craftsman to boot. People won't tolerate a shoddy coffin, I can tell you that. Jerry-built houses—okay; but not a shoddy coffin. Why the hell were you ashamed of telling me that?

ROSS: I wasn't ashamed. I just didn't want to tell you.

SIMMONDS: Why? Because he deals with the dead?

ROSS: [*indignantly*] No.

SIMMONDS: [*insistent*] Because he deals with the dead?

ROSS: [*sharply*] No.

SIMMONDS: Everyone doesn't see the world the same way as you do, Ross. That's one of the first things you've got to learn. Everyone doesn't think there's something odd about a man who makes coffins. Hardly anyone thinks that. It's just a quirk of your mind, boy.

ROSS: [*sullen*] I just didn't want to talk about him.

SIMMONDS: You've got your problems, haven't you? Bit touchy about certain things, eh?

*SIMMONDS stares thoughtfully at ROSS and doesn't at first notice that two young women have entered the station. The elder of the two, KATE MASON, is more expensively dressed and more elegant than her younger sister, FIONA CARTER; but FIONA has an easy and innocent sensuality about her that is most attractive and takes the edge from her sister's more conventional beauty.*



KATE *tends to be tense and affected. FIONA is more relaxed and natural. The two policemen notice them. SIMMONDS scrutinises them. There is a Pause.*

Well. What can I do for you, ladies?

KATE: [*smiling*] My sister and I have come to report an offence, Sergeant.

SIMMONDS: [*pulling a notepad indolently towards himself as he studies her*] Names?

KATE: I'm Kate Mason and this is my sister, Fiona Carter.

SIMMONDS: [*writing this down*] All right, ladies. [*Grinning lecherously*] Let's have it.

KATE: We've come to report an offence.

SIMMONDS: Against person or property, as they say?

KATE: Against my sister.

SIMMONDS: I see. What was the nature of this offence, Mrs [*checking the notepad*] Carter?

FIONA: [*calmly, matter of fact*] I was beaten by my husband.

SIMMONDS: [*putting down his pen and looking at ROSS*] Ross. This is Mrs Mason and this is Mrs Carter. Ladies, this is Constable Ross. He's just arrived from training school. I wonder if you'd mind if Constable Ross handled your case? Not because I think it's trivial, in fact just the reverse. I want Ross to get his teeth stuck into something substantial as early as possible. I tend to think it's a great mistake to throw a lad onto routine paper-work when he comes to you willing and eager.

KATE: [*smiling*] I would prefer to deal with the person in charge.

SIMMONDS: [*with mock surprise*] Are you expressing a lack of confidence in Constable Ross, Mrs Mason?

KATE: [*with a forced smile*] Not at all, Sergeant...

SIMMONDS: Constable Ross is a product of the finest police training in the southern hemisphere, Mrs Mason. You've been thoroughly trained, haven't you, Ross?

ROSS: [*hesitantly*] I've been trained.

SIMMONDS: The boy's modest. Where did you come in your class, Ross?

ROSS: I did reasonably well.

SIMMONDS: Isn't he sweet? Where did you come, Ross?

ROSS: Ninth.

SIMMONDS: Out of how many?

ROSS: Eighty.

SIMMONDS: [*to KATE*] Top ten percent. [*Re-calculating*] Almost. Pity you didn't come eighth, Ross. [*To KATE*] I think you'll find the constable a very capable man.

KATE: [*with a forced smile*] I'm sure he is but—

SIMMONDS: I've judged Constable Ross competent to deal with your case, Mrs Mason, and in a way your objection to him is a reflection on my judgement.

KATE: It's just that—

SIMMONDS: Constable Ross has been prepared for every eventuality. Isn't that right, Ross?

ROSS *looks embarrassed.*

Isn't that right, Ross?

ROSS: Yes.

SIMMONDS: However, I can understand your doubts and I feel that you're entitled to express them. After all, we are public servants. Servants of the public. I'll take charge. [*To ROSS*] I'm taking over, Ross. Two paces backwards and learn. Look and learn. [*To the women*] Right ladies, I'm all yours.

KATE: We appreciate your dealing with our case personally, Sergeant. My sister's rather upset over the whole business.

SIMMONDS: Yes. It's pretty terrifying when the family unit becomes a seat of violence.

KATE: [*fumbling in her handbag*] We've got a medical report from a doctor.

SIMMONDS: [*taking it and looking at it*] Your lawyer told you to get this, I presume?

KATE: Yes, he did.

SIMMONDS: Then to come to us?

FIONA and KATE *nod.*

I doubt if you'll get a conviction on the strength of this report, ladies.

KATE: It was quite a nasty bashing.

SIMMONDS: I'm sure it was, but there's a saying in the trade: 'Never arrest a wife basher if his missus is still warm'. We don't like to stick our necks out on domestic issues for the simple reason that the wife invariably doesn't proceed. We could take him in for questioning.

KATE: Our lawyer said that even if you didn't arrest him you would make a report.

FIONA: Yes. We didn't so much want you to arrest him. We just wanted a report.

KATE: He said it was a pretty standard procedure.

SIMMONDS: [*not impressed with these references to the lawyer*] Yes, I bet he did.

KATE: [*still polite*] It will be all right, won't it—?

SIMMONDS: Yes. Your lawyer's quite right.

KATE: Thank you, Sergeant.

*SIMMONDS takes a piece of paper, inserts it in the typewriter and shakes his head.*

SIMMONDS: Pretty standard procedure. Sometimes I wonder about lawyers.

*He bashes a few letters.*

I suppose their training makes them detached to a certain extent, but I can't help wondering sometimes.

*He taps a few more letters.*

Your average lawyer's in love with procedures, I'm afraid. At this end of the law we're more interested in people. You'd be amazed at the range of our duties, Mrs Mason. Your policeman isn't a numbskull flat-foot these days. He's a social worker, a marriage counsellor, a psychologist, a friend—you name it. There's an awful lot of cases that'd never go to court if the public trusted their police force a little more. Wouldn't you say, Ross, that the whole emphasis of a policeman's training these days is to enable him to handle human problems?

ROSS: Yes... well... we did do a subject called Practical Psychology for Policemen.

SIMMONDS: Exactly. Did you find it helped your understanding of the human mind, Ross?

ROSS: [*shamefaced*] I was sick that week.

*SIMMONDS scowls at him and turns back to the ladies.*

SIMMONDS: The point about all this, ladies, is that I don't want to think I'm in the type of job where someone with a serious human problem

can come in and all the help they'll get from me will be a few words typed out on a sheet of paper. I'd like to think that if there was something I could possibly do for them, I'd do it. There's been a lot of broken marriages through this office, ladies, and the only good thing about that is that perhaps I've learned something that may be of assistance to someone else.

KATE: Well, thank you very much, Sergeant, but I think perhaps that the report would be the most useful thing at the moment.

SIMMONDS: We don't always stick strictly to the letter of the law where human problems are involved, Mrs Mason. There may be some way we can help.

KATE: [*looking at FIONA*] Well, we... er... do actually have one small problem...

SIMMONDS: You tell me.

KATE: Well... er... Fiona has some rather gorgeous furniture that she went back to work to help pay for.

FIONA: That's not why I went back to work. I was bored stiff.

KATE: Nevertheless, you did substantially pay for the furniture yourself—

SIMMONDS: Look, I'm sorry, ladies. Perhaps if we could start from the beginning. Where did you first meet your husband, Mrs Carter?

FIONA: [*looking at KATE who motions her almost imperceptibly to proceed*] In Germany.

SIMMONDS: Is he a foreigner?

FIONA: No. He's Australian.

SIMMONDS: I see. I take it you went overseas?

KATE: On impulse, Sergeant. She didn't even check to see whether she could get a job. When the whim took her, she went.

FIONA: [*calmly*] That is not true, Kate. I'd planned to go for years and there were plenty of jobs around in England.

KATE: [*to SIMMONDS*] She ran out of money.

FIONA: It was stolen.

KATE: Well, you didn't cable me for more.

FIONA: Yes, well, I know what Ralph thinks of me.

KATE: Yes, well, Ralph knows what you think of him. Nevertheless, he would have sent it.

SIMMONDS: Ralph's your husband?

KATE: [*nodding and smiling*] Despite what my sister says, Sergeant, the fact is that she did not think the whole thing out. She's always been a bit impulsive, I'm afraid.

SIMMONDS: [*who has moved close to FIONA and is ogling her*] Well, that can be a delightful fault at times, Mrs Mason. Are you a little bit impulsive too?

KATE: [*noticing SIMMONDS' attention towards FIONA, and starting to compete*] I'm afraid I am, a little bit.

SIMMONDS: [*savouring the possibilities*] Hmm. [*To FIONA*] And you met your husband in Germany, Mrs Carter?

FIONA: [*nodding*] In Munich.

KATE: At the beer drinking festival.

SIMMONDS: Yes. I've heard of it.

KATE: Hundreds of Australians drinking themselves into a stupor. I don't know why they bother to go abroad. It's exactly the same as what they do back here.

SIMMONDS: [*to FIONA*] You met your husband at the festival?

FIONA: Yes. That's where my money was stolen. He was very kind to me.

KATE: Kind to you? He took full advantage of the situation.

SIMMONDS: [*ogling FIONA*] He... er... helped you?

FIONA: [*matter of fact*] Yes. We lived together in London and got married just before we came home.

*Pause.*

I was pregnant.

*She smiles.*

My pills were in the same handbag as my money.

KATE: [*irritated at being ignored*] It would've never occurred to her to abstain for a few days, Sergeant.

*She smiles at him knowingly.*

FIONA: [*smiling*] Kenny told me he was clever.

SIMMONDS: [*ogling KATE*] What does your husband do for a living, Mrs Carter?

KATE: [*determined to keep SIMMONDS' attention*] That's a good question, Sergeant. Over there he was an overseas correspondent for the Herald. Back here it turns out that he's a mechanic who does

the maintenance on their presses. Not that I object to his occupation. Just the lies.

FIONA: [*smiling*] I had a fair idea he was lying. He could hardly spell his name.

SIMMONDS: [*his eyes still on KATE*] And now he beats you?

KATE: You should see her bruises.

SIMMONDS *looks at ROSS.*

SIMMONDS: Actually that may not be a bad idea.

FIONA: [*dubious*] Is that necessary? We've got the medical report.

SIMMONDS: It could still help. If we can include in the report that the bruises were obvious even to the medically untrained eye, it could lend a lot of weight.

KATE: Show the sergeant your bruises, Fiona.

FIONA: [*still dubious*] The largest one's on my back.

SIMMONDS: Let's have a look, then.

FIONA *hesitantly rolls up her sweater. SIMMONDS inspects her hips and back very slowly, prodding her flesh slowly and lasciviously.*

Tender?

FIONA: [*flinching*] Yes.

SIMMONDS: [*prodding*] There?

FIONA: Yes. There.

*She flinches.*

SIMMONDS: Yes. I can see the discolouration. One of these braless birds, eh?

KATE: Nature didn't intend us to wear bras, Sergeant.

SIMMONDS: Indeed nature did not. [*Putting an arm around FIONA*] I'll tell you this much, Mrs Carter. If I had a wife like you I wouldn't be beating her. [*Inspecting her closely*] Buggered if I'd be beating her.

KATE: She's got another bruise on her thigh.

SIMMONDS *bends down and hoists FIONA's skirt up a little.*

SIMMONDS: Bit hard to see that one. Ah, there it is. Ross. Get out your notebook. [*To KATE*] We'd be on much firmer ground if we got a bit of a sketch or something. No. Look. I'll tell you what. Get out the Polaroid, Ross. [*To FIONA*] I wonder if I could get you to roll up

your sweater and skirt for a second while Ross gets a snap of the bruises.

*FIONA looks doubtfully across at KATE, who gives her an almost imperceptible all clear. It is a betrayal. KATE wants the situation to continue for her own amusement.*

ROSS: Where do you keep the camera?

SIMMONDS: Do you know how to use it?

ROSS: [*smug and eager*] They taught us in training.

*ROSS finds the camera and begins to take photographs. SIMMONDS moves across and sits next to KATE, who is now sitting on the table. He puts his arm around her.*

SIMMONDS: Domestic strife is an unpleasant business for everyone concerned. [*To ROSS*] Do you think you can handle it, Ross?

*ROSS catches the air of sensuality and tries a heavy-handed pun.*

ROSS: Handle what?

*He laughs raucously at his joke.*

SIMMONDS: [*tersely*] Take a close-up of the one on the thigh.

[*To KATE*] I take it, then, that your sister is going to use this evidence as grounds for divorce?

KATE: She will if she's got any sense at all.

FIONA: I just want a separation at the moment.

*ROSS finishes taking the photographs and goes off to see how they've turned out.*

SIMMONDS: You're storing this evidence up for the future then, Mrs Carter.

KATE: Or for the present if he tries to make trouble.

SIMMONDS: I see. [*To FIONA*] He's threatened reprisals if you leave, has he?

KATE: I'm sure he will.

FIONA: [*adjusting herself, speaking flatly*] I don't think he will.

SIMMONDS: Doesn't he know that you're leaving yet, Mrs Carter?

FIONA: No, he doesn't. I just decided.

KATE: We don't want him getting access to Sophie.

FIONA: [*to KATE*] I don't mind him getting limited access.

SIMMONDS: Sophie's your daughter, Mrs Carter?

KATE: Yes. She's a gorgeous child, Sergeant. Kenny scarcely knows she exists. We've found a charming little two-bedroom flat in South Yarra for Fiona and the back room is just perfect for Sophie.

SIMMONDS: Sounds very nice.

KATE: Yes, it's beautiful. The only reason we got it is that Ralph's a personal friend of Charles Weller, the estate agent.

SIMMONDS: They're a very big firm, Wellers.

KATE: Ralph does his teeth.

SIMMONDS: Your husband's a dentist?

KATE: That's right.

SIMMONDS: Well, I wasn't far out. I had you tabbed as a surgeon's wife. Same money. More prestige.

KATE: I wouldn't say that.

SIMMONDS: No, I'm afraid people think more of someone who whips out their gall-stones than some-one who does likewise with their teeth.

KATE: Yes, well, we were very lucky to get the flat. The only bother is the... er... matter we were mentioning before.

SIMMONDS: The furniture?

KATE: That's right. It's gorgeous, Sergeant, but we're afraid that Kenny will try and hang onto it.

SIMMONDS: Do you think he will, Mrs Carter?

FIONA: I think so.

KATE: If he's forced to share it up he'll most likely sell the lot for a quarter of its replacement value, split the money and drink himself stupid for a week. We'd offer him a reasonable price for his half, but we know he'd refuse. He's that sort.

SIMMONDS: [*to FIONA*] Come here, Mrs Carter. Sit down.

*He motions her to sit down on his free side. She does so with a little hesitation. SIMMONDS now has an arm around both of the sisters. He assumes a fatherly air.*

Does your husband like the furniture, Mrs Carter?

KATE: Like it? Tell the sergeant about the nights he came home drunk and said it made him want to vomit.

FIONA: [*with a half smile*] He usually did, too.

SIMMONDS: Ross.

ROSS *approaches*.

ROSS: I think we'd better do these photographs again, Sarge. The bruises didn't show up too well.

SIMMONDS: [*sharply*] Just put a circle round 'em, Ross. What I want you to tell me is what you'd think of a man who disliked certain items of furniture to the point of regurgitation and yet would sell them up rather than accept a generous cash payment for them.

ROSS: [*puzzled*] I don't know.

SIMMONDS: Well, unlike yourself, Ross, I haven't had the benefit of Practical Psychology for Policemen, Part One, but my native wit tempts me to attribute it to spite. Do you think it could be spite?

ROSS: [*shrugging*] I suppose so.

SIMMONDS: [*to KATE*] Ross is just feeling his way. Is there any particular night of the week when you can be reasonably sure that your husband won't be home, Mrs Carter?

FIONA: [*with some surprise*] Tonight. Friday's his drinking night.

SIMMONDS: Hmm. I think that we could get that furniture for you, Mrs Carter.

FIONA: [*looking dubiously at KATE*] Oh?

SIMMONDS: Suppose that Constable Ross and I organised a removalist to turn up at your flat tonight, helped you load the furniture, took you across to your new flat, helped you set it up, then went back and... er... pointed out to your husband that he's in no position to create any trouble because he's in great danger of being arrested for assaulting you.

KATE: [*looking at FIONA*] That would be marvellous. We wouldn't be putting you to too much trouble, Sergeant?

SIMMONDS: No trouble at all.

FIONA: [*dubious*] Kenny's pretty bad tempered.

SIMMONDS: I think Constable Ross and I can handle that aspect. I'll drop in on you both from time to time after the shift to make sure Kenny isn't making a nuisance of himself, if you like.

KATE: I'd appreciate that, Sergeant.

SIMMONDS: [*looking at KATE*] Fine. Could we have your present address then, Mrs Carter?

FIONA: Flat three, fourteen Haughton Street, North Fitzroy.

SIMMONDS: Ah. Just round the corner. What time does your husband usually arrive home tonight, Mrs Carter?

FIONA: Never before eleven.

KATE: And never sober.

SIMMONDS: [*to KATE*] I take it you'll be there to help your sister, Mrs Mason?

KATE: Yes. I'd like to help her.

SIMMONDS: Good. I'll have the removalist get there early, say six-thirty or seven, and that'll give us time to have a little bit of a flat-warming celebration before Constable Ross and I go back to speak to Kenny.

KATE: That would be fine.

SIMMONDS: Well, Ross. How does that sound? Are you free to give the ladies a hand tonight?

ROSS: [*embarrassed*] Well, er...

SIMMONDS: [*sharply*] Well, are you?

ROSS: Well, I'd... er... like to help but I'd... er... arranged to, er...

SIMMONDS: To what?

ROSS: I've... er... got something on.

KATE: [*not meaning it*] Oh, we don't want to interfere with the constable's arrangements, Sergeant.

ROSS: [*blurring it out*] I wouldn't mind normally, but it's me girlfriend's firm's night out. We're on the same table as the General Manager.

SIMMONDS: [*wearily*] Ross.

ROSS: [*quickly*] I wouldn't mind normally but Marilyn, me girlfriend's, getting her hair set and I've paid a deposit on the tickets.

SIMMONDS: [*wearily*] Ross. One of the first things you've got to learn—

KATE: [*falsely*] We don't want to mess up the constable's arrangements.

SIMMONDS: [*to KATE*] He's got to learn that the force is not a nine-to-five job, Mrs Mason.

*He turns to ROSS and tries to make him aware of the sexual possibilities in the arrangement.*

Some of our most interesting work is done after hours, Ross. I'm afraid you're going to have to disappoint your young friend.

ROSS: [*thinking*] Will we get paid overtime?

SIMMONDS: [*wearily*] Yes, Ross. We will.

ROSS: *[more cheerful]* Might be all right, then. She won't be as shitty if she knows I'm getting paid. *[To the women]* We're saving for the deposit on a house.

KATE: *[with a false smile]* How nice.

SIMMONDS: Well, ladies. That's it, then, until tonight.

KATE: We appreciate this very much, Sergeant.

SIMMONDS: *[shepherding them to the door, an arm around each]* Glad to be of help.

KATE: Until tonight, then.

SIMMONDS: Until tonight.

FIONA: *[fairly flatly]* Thank you, Sergeant.

SIMMONDS: Glad to be of help.

*The women go. SIMMONDS looks at ROSS.*

You stupid bloody nong, Ross.

ROSS: *[confused]* What've I done?

SIMMONDS: You stupid great arse. You nearly ballsed that. We'll be in like Flynn there tomorrow night. We'll thread the eye of the old golden doughnut—no worries.

ROSS: *[agape]* Do you think...?

SIMMONDS: Do I think? All I can say, Ross, is that you better start conserving your energy right now. I'm having the dentist's wife.

Snooty bitch, but she goes for it. No worries.

ROSS: *[gravely]* Gee. I hope Marilyn doesn't find out.

## END OF ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

*If an intermission is required it can be taken here. If not, slides of the family life of ROSS and FIONA can be shown. ROSS with his proud family in his uniform, ROSS with Marilyn at last year's company ball. FIONA with KENNY and the babies, KATE holding Fiona's baby, etc., as the scene is now KENNY's and FIONA's flat. The time is six-thirty that evening. FIONA is ironing in preparation for the shift. A large stack of cardboard boxes, in which she will pack small articles, are nearby. There is a bash on the door and KENNY comes in, singing boisterously, carrying half a dozen beer bottles under his arm. FIONA looks up in alarm. KENNY goes to her and gives her a long gropey kiss, which he evidently enjoys more than she does.*

FIONA: *[edgy]* What are you doing home?

KENNY: Well, that's a lovely welcome. I do live here, don't I?

FIONA: You don't usually come home on Friday nights.

KENNY: Unpredictable. That's part of my charm. *[He looks at her.]* What's wrong with you?

FIONA: Nothing.

KENNY: Well, how about a bit of a smile, then?

*FIONA tries a weak smile.*

KENNY: Christ. If that's the best you can do, I'm going to watch the box.

*He takes his bottles across to the couch, puts them down, flops down himself, reaches for the remote control and switches on the television. He watches for a couple of seconds, then turns around to FIONA.*

Chuck us the bottle opener.

*FIONA goes to a drawer in the kitchen.*

And a glass.

*She takes a bottle opener out of the drawer and reaches for a glass. She hesitates.*

FIONA: Er... I... er... wasn't expecting you home, so I haven't cooked any tea. Why don't you go and have a counter tea with the boys?

KENNY: Just knock us up a quick steak or somethin'. [*Irritated*] Where's that bloody opener?

FIONA *takes him the glass and the opener.*

FIONA: Why don't you go and have a counter tea with the boys?

KENNY: [*looking at her with irritation*] I said knock us up a steak.

FIONA: I can't. I'm ironing.

KENNY *has another drink and watches the television for a second. He gets up and moves across to FIONA, who irons nervously.*

KENNY: My God. You are ironing. Something must be wrong.

*He picks up something she has ironed.*

My God. [*Looking at the ironing she has done*] Don't notice anything of mine here, but I shouldn't complain. It's amazin' to even see you with an iron in your hand. Last time you ironed one of my shirts was two days before we were married.

FIONA: Why don't you go off and have a counter tea with the boys?

KENNY: [*angrily*] What is this? Are you tryin' to get rid of me? A bloke decides to do the right thing and come home to his missus and he's no sooner in the door than you're tryin' to get rid of him. [*Suddenly suspicious*] Are you on with some other bloke? Is that why you want to get rid of me?

FIONA: Of course not.

KENNY *moves across and rummages through a pile of washing nearby.*

KENNY: Hey! Whose underpants are these?

FIONA: They're yours.

KENNY: [*belligerent, suspicious*] They are not mine.

FIONA: Don't be so stupid.

KENNY: [*taking the underpants across to FIONA*] They're not even my size.

FIONA: [*looking*] Yes they are. They're thirty-fours.

KENNY: Is that my size?

FIONA *nods and goes back to her ironing. KENNY still looks suspicious. He unbuttons his pants and pulls the tag on his present underpants into view.*

[*Triumphantly*] These are thirty-sixes!

FIONA: [*wearily*] They're the pair your mother brought you.

KENNY: [*deflated*] Aw.

KENNY *buttons up his pants and goes back to the television. He watches it for a few seconds then turns around.*

Knock us up a bit of steak, love.

FIONA: [*edgy*] Go and have a counter tea.

KENNY: [*getting up and moving to her, roaring*] Get out into the kitchen, open the fridge, get out a piece of sliced cow and put it under the griller, you lazy bitch.

FIONA: [*adamantly*] Go and have a counter tea.

KENNY: [*snaky*] No. You haven't got any man comin' in. It's just that you're too bloody lazy. That's what it is. Bloody slut.

*He sees the stack of cardboard boxes.*

What's these?

FIONA: [*nervously*] Boxes.

KENNY: [*roaring*] I can see that, you dumb twit.

*He kicks them, scattering them over the room.*

What are they bloody well here for? As if we haven't got enough mess already. What're they here for?

FIONA: [*nervously*] The... er... supermarket was getting rid of them. I thought they might come in handy.

KENNY: Handy for what?

FIONA: [*thinking*] For Sophie to play with.

KENNY: You're joking.

FIONA: She'll build houses and things with them.

KENNY: She'll rip 'em to bits like she ripped me bloody car manual.

FIONA: That was over a year ago.

KENNY: [*aggrieved*] They're out of print now. E.H. manuals. Can't get your hands on one for love nor money. Where is the little bugger?

FIONA: [*nervously*] She's over at my mother's.

KENNY: [*indignantly*] That old bitch has always got her.

FIONA: She hasn't had her for a fortnight.

KENNY: I was going to have a bit of a play.

FIONA: I'm sorry.

KENNY: I always have a wrestle with her when I get home.



FIONA: [*blowing up*] You're never home on a Friday.

KENNY: That old bitch does nothing but pump the poor kid full of social graces.

FIONA: Don't be stupid.

KENNY: Last time she was over there, when she came home she was running around saying, 'Thank you. Please', like a little parrot, until I straightened her out.

FIONA: [*gritting her teeth*] For Christ's sake, will you go down the pub with your mates!

KENNY: [*getting up from the television and moving to her with an air of conciliation*] Anyrate, let's not argue. I didn't come home to argue.

*He feels her bum. It is obvious what he has come home for. She doesn't react.*

How about coming and watching some television?

*He feels her breasts and bum. She doesn't react.*

Come on. Might develop into somethin'?

FIONA: [*edgy*] I'm not in the mood.

KENNY: [*still feeling her*] You were last night.

FIONA: [*flaring*] Yes, and then you bash me up straight afterwards.

KENNY: It wasn't straight afterwards, and it was about something completely different, and I didn't hit you that hard.

FIONA: Well, it hardly inspires confidence when you're made love to one minute and bashed up the next.

KENNY: [*taking his hands off her*] Look. I'd been warning you about that kitchen tidy for two days.

FIONA: Why didn't you empty it out yourself?

KENNY: [*indignantly*] That's your job. I can't understand how a mother could let the kitchen tidy get in that state when she's got a young daughter whose health might be endangered.

FIONA: What rot.

KENNY: Rot's the word. Apart from anything else, the bloody thing stunk.

*Their noisy argument is interrupted by a knock at the door or a doorbell ringing. FIONA is anxious. She thinks it is the removalist. KENNY stomps across to the door and throws it open. KATE comes in. She is surprised to see KENNY there and looks anxiously across at FIONA.*

Migod. It's the ugly sister. To what do we owe this unexpected pleasure?

KATE: [*ignoring him*] Hello, Fiona. Just dropped by to see how you were.

KENNY: She's fine. Now piss off.

FIONA: [*to KATE*] Good to see you. Would you like a cup of tea?

KENNY: Yes, and a bit of steak as well.

*KATE sees he's been watching the television.*

KATE: [*trying to be pleasant*] What's that you're watching?

KENNY: Television. It's a new electronic wonder that's just filtered down to the lower classes. Keeps their brains nice and soggy.

KATE: [*still even*] I thought you went out on Fridays.

KENNY: I heard you were coming so I stayed home.

*KENNY gets up, storms past FIONA into the kitchen, grabs a tin of baked beans and a can opener and a packet of sliced bread. He opens the can and stuffs beans and bread into his mouth, deliberately trying to disgust KATE. He washes the food down with generous draughts of beer from the bottle. He glares at KATE.*

Don't you like my manners?

KATE: [*coolly*] You'll get indigestion if you bolt your food like that.

FIONA: [*to KATE, giving frantic eye signals*] I told him he ought to have a counter tea down at the pub.

KATE: It would certainly be more nutritious than that junk.

KENNY: I've had about as much of this as I can stand. I think I will go down the bloody pub.

*He gets up and puts on his jacket. There is a rather imperious knock at the door, or a repeated bell ring. KENNY mutters and goes to answer it. A self-assured REMOVALIST in a dust coat enters. The dustcoat is emblazoned with the emblem 'Aussie Removalists'. The two sisters look at each other in alarm. FIONA retreats toward the kitchen, followed by KATE. They busy themselves making cups of tea.*

What do you want?

REMOVALIST: What d'you think?

KENNY: How the bloody hell would I know?

REMOVALIST: Well, read me bloody dustcoat.

KENNY: [*reading*] Removalist. I don't want no bloody removalist.

REMOVALIST: [*he has heard this story before*] Look, boss, I just get me orders. I ring in and get me orders and this is where the girl sent me. I checked the address.

KENNY: Well, check it again.

REMOVALIST: I checked it again.

KENNY: Well, check it again, because I don't want no bloody removalist.

REMOVALIST: [*getting irritated*] Look. Don't take it out on me, boy. I just ring in and get me orders. This is where I been sent and this is where I came. If you've changed your mind, then be man enough to admit it and pay me me five dollars cancellation fee.

KENNY: [*scornfully*] Five dollars?

REMOVALIST: Give us five dollars and we'll call it quits.

KENNY: Don't be funny, mate. I don't want no removalist. Piss off.

REMOVALIST: I'm gonna do one of two things. I'm gonna take me five dollars and leave or I'm gonna start shiftn' furniture.

KENNY: [*getting angry*] Look. How many times do I have to tell you, mate? I didn't call no removalist.

REMOVALIST: We've had trouble like this before, mate. If you've changed yer mind and you don't want a removalist, then give us your five dollars and I'll go. I've got ten thousand dollars worth of machinery tickin' over out there in the drive, and if it ain't bein' utilised then that's money I've lost. Get me?

KENNY: [*losing patience*] Look, mate. You've made a mistake. Go and check it out. I'm countin' to three and if you're not—

REMOVALIST: [*heated*] I know what's happened. It's happened to us before. One of them wog bastards has underquoted us, haven't they? They're cuttin' their own bloody throats, those wogs. Some of 'em work twenty hours a day, seven days a week, and if they're shiftn' you, you better make sure you're insured to the hilt, because they 'aven't any respect for your property, mate. None at all. I've seen 'em reduce an antique dresser to kindling more than once. All haste and no speed.

KENNY: [*ominously*] Finished?

REMOVALIST: Just warnin' you, mate.

KENNY: Well, I ain't been underquoted by no one for the simple reason that I ain't had no quotes for the simple reason that I don't want nothin' shifted.

REMOVALIST: Well, I'm sorry, mate, but we just don't make mistakes like this. Everything is double checked at both ends, and I ain't leavin' without me five dollars and I've got the Transport Board regulations to back me up.

KENNY: [*fed up*] Look. Piss off or I'll spray the back of your throat with teeth.

REMOVALIST: Are you threatening me?

KENNY: No. I'm doin' a line for you, you thick bastard.

REMOVALIST: Go on. Take a swing, mate. See what happens. Take a swing.

*KENNY snorts in disgust, slams the door, walks back to the centre of the room.*

KENNY: [*to FIONA*] Did you hear that nut?

FIONA: [*lying*] No. What did he want?

KENNY: You heard him, didn't you?

FIONA: [*nervously*] No, I was... er... talking to Kate.

KENNY: [*still amazed*] Bloody removalist. Wanted to shift our furniture out. Bet I know what's happened too. Little tart who gives 'em the jobs is gettin' back at him for doing the dirty on her. Or his mates have played a joke on him and he's too thick to catch on.

*The knocking at the door, or the bell ringing, starts again with renewed vigour.*

KENNY: [*pointing at the door, genuinely surprised*] There's the mad bastard back again. [*Calling out*] Piss off, you idiot.

*The women look at each other, embarrassed.*

[*To the women*] I'm gunna hammer the bastard this time, I'm afraid.

KATE: Look, I'll go and... er... talk to him.

KENNY: [*motioning her back*] No. Stay there. He's an idiot. No tellin' what he might do. You stay there.

*There is a crash as the door is burst open by SIMMONDS, whose momentum carries him on past a rather surprised KENNY. ROSS follows close at SIMMONDS' heel and practically comes face to face with KENNY and, despite his keenness, shows some embarrassment. The REMOVALIST follows ROSS, looking very nonchalant.*

Hey. What's all this about?

SIMMONDS: All right, Ross. Handcuff the bastard.

*ROSS is obviously nervous and excited at what is his first taste of action. He clips the handcuffs on the bewildered KENNY, but, in his excitement, clips the other cuff to his own wrist.*

[Loudly] Don't cuff him to yourself, Ross.

*ROSS fumbles with his free hand to find the key, but without success.*

KENNY: [bewildered, angry] Hey. What's all this about?

SIMMONDS: It's about beating your wife, Carter.

KENNY: [looking at FIONA with surprise] Beating my wife? All I done was give her a bit of a shove. You can't arrest a man for that. Never even hurt her.

ROSS: [to SIMMONDS] I think the key's in me back pocket.

*He sticks out his bum in SIMMONDS' direction. SIMMONDS considers this manoeuvre as being below his dignity and turns to KATE.*

SIMMONDS: I wonder if you'd mind getting the key out of Constable Ross's back pocket, Mrs Mason.

*KATE does so, looking at FIONA. They are both a little nonplussed. ROSS takes the key, undoes his handcuff, and handcuffs KENNY, who is still protesting, to a chair.*

KENNY: Christ, I only gave her a shove. She tripped and fell against the cabinet herself. You can't arrest a man for something she done herself. How would you like a kitchen full of stinking rubbish?

SIMMONDS: [loudly] Don't cuff him to a chair, Ross.

ROSS: [defensively] He can't get far with a chair.

SIMMONDS: [tersely] He can pick the bloody thing up and clobber you with it, bone-brain. Whack it on that table leg.

KENNY: Listen, fellas. A joke's a joke. I won't shove her again.

*ROSS pulls KENNY down in order to cuff him to the leg of a coffee table. KENNY stands there awkwardly, with a bent back. Eventually he sits down.*

Listen; fair go, fellas. What's the charge?

SIMMONDS: Resisting arrest, and two separate charges of assault.

KENNY: [indignant] Resisting arrest?

SIMMONDS: You assaulted this gentleman here [indicating the REMOVALIST] then repeatedly refused to answer the door.

KENNY: [incredulous] Assaulted him? You ought to get your facts straight. He's some kind of nut. If you're looking for someone to arrest, then go him. Tried to con me out of five dollars. Mad as a bloody snake. I thought it was him at the door again.

SIMMONDS: I said, 'Police here', twice, and you chose to ignore it.

KENNY: I only heard the banging.

SIMMONDS: [to KATE] Did you hear it?

KATE: [flustered] We were in the kitchen, Sergeant.

KENNY: [to FIONA] You bitch! Go and dob me in because I gave you a bit of a shove. [To KATE] I bet you've got somethin' to do with it, ferret features. What are you stickin' your nose in for?

SIMMONDS: [kicking KENNY in the thigh] That's enough of that kind of language, fella. [To ROSS] Book him for resisting arrest and using indecent language.

KENNY: What? 'Ferret features'? That's not indecent.

SIMMONDS: Book him, Ross.

KENNY: [outraged] Cut it out. You can't walk into a man's house and kick him.

SIMMONDS: Book him, Ross.

ROSS: [concentrating fiercely] I am placing you under arrest on charges of resisting arrest, two separate instances of assault, and using abusive, insulting and obscene language. I must warn you that anything you say may be taken into account and used against you. I would advise you, therefore, to follow me quietly to the station where you will be given the opportunity to seek legal advice.

KENNY: [to ROSS] All right. Take me to the station, you young berk. Take me. I'll have your balls. The two of you. I'll get Galbally and sue the arse off you.

ROSS: [highly excited] Don't talk to me like that, fella. I'm warning you. I'm an officer of the law. Don't talk to me like that. You come quietly, fella, I'm warning you.

*He unlocks KENNY and is about to cart him off. KENNY is protesting volubly with such phrases as 'Jesus', 'This is supposed to be a free country isn't it', 'Why don't you spend your time*

*catching real criminals for a change and get the bloody crime rate down'. The dialogue is rather confused at this point, with lines overlapping and people talking at cross purposes.*

SIMMONDS: Ross, you idiot. We haven't finished here yet.

KENNY: *[to KATE]* You've worked this all up, haven't you, you bloody tight-arsed, would-be socialite.

SIMMONDS: *[loudly]* Don't cart him off yet, Ross. Cuff him to the door handle.

KENNY: *[still talking to KATE]* You—what in the hell entitles you to go round stickin' your nose into other people's affairs? And get that look off your face.

*ROSS and SIMMONDS force him over to the door and handcuff him to it.*

You may think it makes you look superior, but you can take it from me that you're a dead ringer for a nun with a big one up her.

*SIMMONDS punches KENNY in the gut for his blasphemy. KENNY doubles up, winded. FIONA looks alarmed.*

FIONA: Please, Sergeant. There's really no need—

SIMMONDS: I'm sorry, Mrs Carter, but I won't tolerate that sort of thing. I won't tolerate ladies being spoke to as if they're sluts from the gutter.

FIONA: It doesn't worry us, Sergeant. Really. We're used to it.

SIMMONDS: I'm sorry, Mrs Carter. You must let me handle this in my own way. *[To the REMOVALIST]* Mrs Carter will tell you what to take. Give him a hand, Ross.

KENNY: *[agitated]* Hey. Just a minute. What's this in aid of?

SIMMONDS: *[terse]* Shut up, Carter.

KENNY: *[to FIONA]* What? Are you leaving? Just because I give you the occasional odd shove?

SIMMONDS: *[louder]* I'm warning you, Carter.

KENNY: Fair's fair, Sergeant. That's my furniture. I paid for it.

SIMMONDS: *[grabbing him by the shirt-front]* Shut up.

KENNY: I only gave her a bit of a shove and, by Christ, she deserved it. She can't just walk out with my property.

SIMMONDS: *[releasing KENNY]* I'm led to believe that you don't even like this style of furniture, Carter.

KENNY: What's that got to do with it? I paid for it.

*He looks at FIONA and flares suddenly.*

Worked overtime to get it for the bitch and it was all she could do to spread the legs for me occasionally.

FIONA: *[flaring]* You've never worked overtime in your life. It was my money that paid for that furniture.

SIMMONDS: *[shaking KENNY]* I'm warning you, boy. I'll crack your bloody skull if I hear any more of that type of language.

REMOVALIST: *[impatient to get started]* That coffee table to go, Missus?

FIONA: *[calming]* Thank you.

*The REMOVALIST motions ROSS, who bounds over and takes the coffee table out single-handed. The REMOVALIST saunters after him.*

KENNY: *[to FIONA]* What? You're really leaving. You give a man a hell of a lot of warning, don't you? Use me up when it's convenient and piss off when it suits you. Well, I'll tell you what. I'm no fool. These bastards can't come in here, beat me to a pulp and take me bloody furniture. *[Suddenly anxious]* Hey! What about Sophie?

FIONA: You can see Sophie.

KENNY: *[genuinely outraged]* See her! She's my bloody kid! You can't just take her away like that!

KATE: Well, you wouldn't think we'd leave her here, do you? Just look at the way you live.

*She indicates the beer and sliced bread.*

KENNY: *[hurt, outraged]* There's nothin' wrong with the way I live, you bitch. *[To FIONA]* That little kid loves me. Follows me round like a little dog. We have a wrestle every night.

FIONA: *[guilty]* You can see her on the weekends.

KENNY: *[outraged]* I go to the footy on Saturday. You know that! You must be mad. How'd you think you're going to support yourself?

FIONA: I've got a job.

KENNY: By Christ. All I've done for you and this is me reward. If I hadn't looked after you in Munich you'd probably be still over there and peddling your twat to boot.

*SIMMONDS punches KENNY in the gut. He is in command of the situation and enjoying it.*

SIMMONDS: Didn't I tell you something about your language, Carter? Are you deaf or something?

KENNY: [*furious, winded, struggling*] You can't treat me like that, you bloody ape. I'll sue you for every penny you've got.

SIMMONDS: Well, if that's the case I'd better give you something to complain about.

SIMMONDS *punches KENNY in the gut again as the REMOVALIST and ROSS return.*

FIONA: [*alarmed at the violence*] Sergeant—

SIMMONDS: I'm sorry, Mrs Carter. I hate using violence on anyone, but there's one thing I won't tolerate and that's a man with no respect for womanhood.

REMOVALIST: Do the bastard good. What next, ladies?

FIONA: Oh, er...

KATE: The cocktail cabinet, thank you.

KENNY: Hey. Just a minute. I use that.

KATE: What? To store your beer glasses.

KENNY: I've got some of my stuff in there.

SIMMONDS *moves to the cabinet and takes out some beer glasses.*

SIMMONDS: [*reading*] Croxton Park Hotel. Are they selling their beer glasses these days, Carter?

KENNY: A mate gave 'em to me.

SIMMONDS: We'll book you for receiving stolen property, then.

*He pulls out a tray.*

They don't make a habit of giving away their trays at the Croxton Park either. Not to my knowledge. Put 'em in the corner and hold 'em as evidence, Ross.

ROSS *puts the items in the corner and he and the REMOVALIST take out the cabinet.*

KENNY: Fair go. Everyone pinches a few glasses.

SIMMONDS: You tell that to the magistrate.

KENNY: You better be sure of your facts.

SIMMONDS: [*pushing him hard against the door*] I what?

KENNY: That badge don't allow you to do anything you like.

SIMMONDS: [*pushing him heavily against the door again*] I'd keep quiet from now on if I were you, Carter. I could get you for assaulting an officer of the law, and you know what that would mean.

KENNY: I haven't touched yer.

SIMMONDS: We don't cuff people to the door for nothing, Carter. Constable Ross was only doing his duty and you bloody went berserk.

KENNY: [*indignant*] Went berserk? [*Pointing to ROSS*] He's the one who went berserk. All I did was drag me feet.

SIMMONDS: If that was dragging your feet, I'd hate to see you punching someone up, Carter.

KENNY: Well, Christ almighty. You come in here—

SIMMONDS: I'd keep quiet from now on if I were you, Carter. If you go up for assaulting an officer, then Mrs Carter could have you barred from your kid.

KENNY: [*worried*] Bullshit.

SIMMONDS: It's no bullshit, Carter. Your wife could get a court order as easy as snapping her fingers. Undesirable influence.

KENNY: You think I'm a bloody fool, don't you? I'm going straight to a doctor to get a certificate about me bruises.

SIMMONDS: You'd be wasting your money. I haven't left a bruise in twenty-three years.

KENNY: I'll get Galbally.

SIMMONDS: Well, if you can afford three hundred dollars a day, then I can't see why you're getting upset about your wife having some of the furniture.

*Pause.*

KENNY: [*to KATE*] Had a dream about you last night.

SIMMONDS: [*drawing his arm back in warning to KENNY*] Watch it, Carter.

KENNY: Dreamt you were makin' love to a gorilla.

KATE: [*coolly*] Very amusing.

KENNY: Full of remorse afterwards of course. Said you thought it was a police sergeant.

SIMMONDS: [*punching him in the gut*] All right, Carter. Apologise.

KENNY: Who to? You or the gorilla?

SIMMONDS *punches him again. FIONA is upset and goes to intervene, but turns and goes out to the kitchen. The REMOVALIST and ROSS return in time to witness this last act of violence.*

SIMMONDS: They don't bruise, Carter. You'd think they would, wouldn't you, but you can take my word for it. *[To ROSS]* That's something they didn't teach you in training school, eh?

REMOVALIST: Hate to interrupt, mate, but I've got ten thousand dollars worth of machinery tickin' over out there in the drive.

SIMMONDS: *[irritated]* Have you left the bloody engine running?

REMOVALIST: Just a figure of speech.

SIMMONDS: *[tersely]* Take an armchair each. Right, Mrs Carter?

FIONA, *still in the kitchen, indicates that this is right.*

REMOVALIST: No need to get shirty with me, mate. You can punch up that bastard all you like, but I've got me job to do.

SIMMONDS: All right. Do your bloody job and take those chairs.

REMOVALIST: Nobody speaks to me like that, mate. *[To ROSS]* We'll take the couch.

SIMMONDS: *[tersely to ROSS]* Take a bloody chair.

REMOVALIST: *[tersely to ROSS]* Grab the end of the couch.

SIMMONDS: *[loudly, to the bewildered ROSS]* Take the bloody chair!

REMOVALIST: *[in a cold fury]* The captain is master of the ship. Right?

SIMMONDS: Right what?

REMOVALIST: You can do what you like in here, mate, but once I'm in the back of me truck, my word is law. Right? I've been packing trucks for a long while and it's an art. You don't just throw the stuff in. Right? The logical thing to go next is the couch. Right?

SIMMONDS: *[exasperated]* Take the bloody couch, Ross.

REMOVALIST: *[condescending]* I don't want to seem like I'm making an issue of it, mate, but you get a bit fed up with the general public after a while, because not many of them realise that there's a bit more to it than lugging furniture.

ROSS and the REMOVALIST *take out the couch.*

SIMMONDS: *[turning on KENNY]* We haven't heard your apology to Mrs Mason yet, Carter.

KENNY: You're not likely to either.

SIMMONDS: *[menacing]* You just make trouble for yourself, don't you?

KATE: Don't worry about it, Sergeant. I've had much worse than that from him before.

KENNY: Take off this handcuff and see whether you're such a big man then, copper.

SIMMONDS: I'd love to do that, Carter, because then I could let you have what you deserve and not hold anything back.

KENNY: Go on then. Undo the cuff.

SIMMONDS: You're really tempting me, boy.

KENNY: Go on, undo it.

SIMMONDS: You really want to have a go, do you?

KENNY: Bloody oath.

KATE: Don't let him off, Sergeant. He's done a bit of boxing.

KENNY: Go on. Undo it.

SIMMONDS: I'd love to, Carter, but a good policeman never indulges himself.

KENNY: You're yellow. Come on. Uncuff me.

SIMMONDS: Listen, boy. I've won more fights than you've had breakfasts.

KENNY: You are yellow, you bastard.

SIMMONDS: I've already told you once that it'd only take one punch to land on Ross or I and you could forget your daughter. Is that what you want?

KENNY *scowls at SIMMONDS and yells out to FIONA.*

KENNY: I hope you realise what you're doing! I hope you realise that the minute you walk out of this door, that's it! I'm not havin' you back!

FIONA: *[coming out of the kitchen]* I don't intend to come back.

KENNY: You'd be hard put to find another man as good as me. I'll tell you that. *[As an afterthought]* And if you have, you won't keep him long because good men are in short supply and they're not all as stupid as me.

FIONA: I haven't got another man.

KENNY: *[indicating KATE]* She's jealous. She's put you up to this because she's jealous.

FIONA: Kate didn't put me up to anything. I made up my own mind.

KENNY: *[scornfully]* Yeah.

FIONA: I did.

KENNY: Why didn't you have the guts to come and tell me yourself instead of letting your sister do the dirty work?

KATE: Fiona made up her own mind. She asked me along for moral support.

KENNY: [*sardonically*] Moral? Moral ain't the right word for you, you bloody trollop. The nymph of North Balwyn. Bangs like a buggered tappet.

SIMMONDS *moves towards him, but stops to watch KATE's reaction.*

KATE: [*angrily*] You make me sick.

KENNY: Well, who are you to be handing out advice to Fiona? You'd be the greatest twat flasher in Melbourne bar none.

KATE: [*viciously*] You're a boorish, loud-mouthed, sickening little swine, and the sooner Fiona gets out of here the better. [*To SIMMONDS*] I think you can see why my sister has to leave.

KENNY: It's your bloody sister that tells me.

KATE *looks murderously at FIONA.*

KATE: [*to FIONA*] What have you been telling him?

FIONA: Nothing.

KENNY: [*to KATE*] What about your car salesman? Amongst others.

KATE *looks murderously at FIONA. The REMOVALIST and ROSS re-enter. There is a pause. The REMOVALIST directs ROSS to take one of the lounge chairs. He takes the other.*

KATE: For God's sake. All this fuss about an affair. My God. This is the twentieth century, isn't it? Anyone would think I was a nymphomaniac.

FIONA: [*to SIMMONDS*] She isn't.

KATE: [*sensing that her sister is gently sending her up*] My private life may not be spotless, Sergeant, but I want you to know that I'm very fond of my husband.

SIMMONDS: You don't have to offer me an explanation, Mrs Mason.

KATE: [*looking murderously at FIONA*] They laugh at Ralph behind his back, but he's a very fine man. He's provided a good life for me and my children and he's a fine man.

KENNY: If roots were hamburgers, you could feed a bloody army.

SIMMONDS: Watch it, Carter.

KENNY: I'm speaking from experience, Sergeant. [*To KATE*] Tell the sergeant about our last Christmas barbecue.

KATE: Don't try and use that against me, you pig. I've told Fiona about that. She knows what happened.

KENNY: Come on. You tried to rip my bloody daks off until I told you to wake up to yourself.

KATE: I've told Fiona exactly what happened.

KENNY: Did you tell her what you did with me mate, Billy McMaster, later in the evening?

KATE: [*floored*] I...

*She turns to SIMMONDS.*

KENNY: [*to SIMMONDS*] She just can't resist a well-packed fly.

SIMMONDS *slams KENNY against the door.*

SIMMONDS: That's enough from you, Carter.

KATE: [*to FIONA*] I was very drunk that night. I can't remember much about it.

FIONA: I wouldn't worry.

KATE: [*angrily*] And I don't care what he says. Your husband wasn't plying me with whisky for nothing.

KENNY: Bloody oath I wasn't. I was hoping you'd pass out.

KATE: [*angrily*] You egged me on till I made a fool of myself, then deliberately humiliated me.

*Pause. She turns to FIONA.*

I've left the children with a babysitter. If you don't mind I'll call a taxi.

SIMMONDS: [*narrowly*] Aren't you going to help your sister unpack, Mrs Mason?

KATE: No. I'm afraid I'll have to get home, Sergeant.

SIMMONDS: I see. Well, don't call a taxi. I'll give you a lift. Ross and the removalist [*indicating the pair who have just returned*] can take care of the unpacking.

KATE: No. Thank you all the same, Sergeant. I'll call a taxi.

*She goes into the kitchen. SIMMONDS glares at her as she goes.*

KENNY: [*to FIONA*] Where are you moving into?

FIONA: A flat.

KENNY: And the lads here were going to help you shift in? I see.

SIMMONDS: [*menacing*] Shut up, Carter.

KENNY: Pity about Kate, Sergeant. You would've been in like Flynn.

SIMMONDS *slams KENNY against the door again.*



REMOVALIST: [*looking at his watch*] Excuse me, people. What's next on the agenda?

FIONA: [*hesitantly*] The television.

KENNY: [*explosively*] Now wait a minute!

SIMMONDS: [*yelling*] Shut up!

KENNY: At least you could leave us the bloody tube.

FIONA: Sophie watches 'Sesame Street'.

KENNY: I watch every bloody thing.

SIMMONDS: [*to the REMOVALIST*] Take it away.

*ROSS and the REMOVALIST go towards it.*

KENNY: [*who has been watching the television intermittently*] Leave it on for a few more minutes. I want to see if the brother has a go at the wife.

*The REMOVALIST looks at him as if to say: 'You must be joking', and unplugs it. He watches as ROSS winds up the lead and prepares to take it out.*

SIMMONDS: [*still snaky*] Did they teach you how to shift furniture in training, Ross?

ROSS: [*sullen*] No.

SIMMONDS: [*to the REMOVALIST, noting his inclination to take things easy while ROSS does the work*] I hope you're finding Ross satisfactory?

REMOVALIST: [*not picking the sarcasm*] I wouldn't hire the bastard.

SIMMONDS: Why not?

REMOVALIST: No experience. Lifts with his back. Jerks instead of easing. You've gotta know how to pace yourself. I can keep going all day.

SIMMONDS: Yes. I reckon you could.

REMOVALIST: Some bastards reckon that any fool can shift furniture, but I'll tell you what: I've been at it for years and I'm still learning.

SIMMONDS: Well. There you are, Ross. You're picking up a trade. That's what the force does for you.

REMOVALIST: It is a bloody trade, I'll tell you. I can pack a load that'll hold fast over the worst bullock track in Australia, and you don't learn that overnight, and you don't learn it out of no books, either.

*While this dialogue continues ROSS staggers towards the door, carrying the television set.*

I was shiftn' some stuff for this big noise the other day and when I'd got it packed he wandered up for a bit of a look and said to me, 'That's really neat'. 'Just learned how to do it yesterday,' I said. 'Really,' he said, and raised his eyebrows. 'You've picked it up remarkably quick'. Stupid prick. You wonder how some of those bastards make their money.

*He follows ROSS out.*

KENNY: [*to FIONA*] Are you going to leave me anything? You've taken me TV. May as well have the fridge. And the washing machine. Take everything.

FIONA: There's a washing machine supplied.

KENNY: [*exploding*] You're not havin' the fridge.

FIONA: You only use it for beer.

KENNY: I do eat occasionally, you know.

*Pause.*

You'd better let me see Sophie.

FIONA: [*flaring*] I told you you could see Sophie!

KENNY: At least once a week.

FIONA: All right!

KENNY: If I find you're setting yourself up for some man, I'll come and do the both of you and take Sophie.

FIONA: For Christ's sake. I am not setting myself up for anyone.

KENNY: I wouldn't put it past you. Sounds like you were all set up to pay off your obligations tonight. Which one was yours? The old fossil here? [*Indicating SIMMONDS*] Looks like he couldn't raise the bus fare to Balwyn.

FIONA: [*angrily*] That's how your mind works, doesn't it?

KENNY: Probably a twat flasher like your bloody sister.

*SIMMONDS slams KENNY against the wall and enjoys doing it.*

[*Angrily, to FIONA*] Call your bloody thug off.

*FIONA, distressed by the violence and by KENNY's accusations, retreats into the kitchen.*

You're really a big man, aren't you? Handcuff a man to the door and beat him. I'll get you one day, copper.

*SIMMONDS glares at him. ROSS and the REMOVALIST return.*

[*In a softer voice*] How would you like to know something about me private life, Sergeant?

SIMMONDS: [*tight-lipped*] I'm not interested, Carter.

KENNY: I came home last night after a long day's work and my sweet wife, as sometimes happens, was very friendly. She came five times in the one grapple, Sergeant. [*Yelling in SIMMONDS' face*] And the next bloody day she's leavin' me!

*SIMMONDS goes berserk. It is as if KENNY's words have found the trigger to switch him from controlled to uncontrolled violence. He beats KENNY about the face. ROSS is alarmed. KENNY is shaken. The REMOVALIST watches with interest. The two women come out of the kitchen in time to see the latter part of the violence and are too shocked to intervene.*

You've done your dough now, copper. That'll show up for sure. Do it again and really get yourself in the shit. Come on. Do it again. [*To FIONA*] Why don't you tell the sergeant yourself? I might be a beer-swilling slob but you squeal like a stuck pig for me in bed. Don't you? Go on. Tell the bastard. Tell him how you can't get enough of it sometimes.

*SIMMONDS knees him in the gut. He breathes heavily. His voice is loud and jagged with emotion.*

SIMMONDS: What d'you think that proves, Carter? D'you think that's the test of a man? D'you think that's the test? Self control is the test of manhood, Carter. Self bloody control. My wife had twenty-seven kidney fits having our son, Carter. Bloody near died. Both of them. I couldn't go near her for five bloody years after that because she wasn't allowed to get pregnant again. [*Roaring*] There's your manhood for you, Carter. Self bloody control!

*There is a pause. Everyone is shocked at SIMMONDS' odd outburst. FIONA is dumbstruck, but KATE moves towards SIMMONDS to calm him. ROSS and the REMOVALIST take the refrigerator out.*

KATE: Twenty-seven kidney fits. That's terrible.

SIMMONDS: [*breathing heavily*] Yes. We gave her up at one stage.

KATE: Your... your boy. He was all right?

SIMMONDS: Fit as a fiddle. Training with Preston next year.

KATE: But it... er... meant you couldn't have any more?

SIMMONDS: We had another one. A daughter. Got five kids of her own now. One a year.

KATE: Your wife went ahead and risked it?

SIMMONDS: The doctors said she shouldn't, but she came through with flying colours.

KATE: That's marvellous.

SIMMONDS: Yes. It turned out pretty well in the end, but you never know at the time. Have you got any kiddies yourself?

KATE: Yes. The eldest started third grade this year.

SIMMONDS: What school?

KATE: Grammar.

SIMMONDS: Melbourne?

KATE: Geelong.

SIMMONDS: Fine school. I'd like a penny for every notable that's been educated there. I wanted my boy to go to a private school but I couldn't see my way clear on a policeman's salary.

KATE: Yes. The costs are scandalous these days. It's not helping our budget, I can tell you.

SIMMONDS: It's not so bad if your salary's high. Educational expenses are tax deductible.

KATE: [*feigning ignorance*] Are they? That probably explains why we're still solvent.

*SIMMONDS looks narrowly at KATE. KENNY breathes heavily on the floor, scared for the first time by SIMMONDS' violence. ROSS and the REMOVALIST return.*

REMOVALIST: Anything else to go?

FIONA: The cot from Sophie's room.

KENNY: [*mildly, to FIONA*] What about when she visits me?

SIMMONDS: [*hoisting KENNY to his feet and speaking with menace*] I don't think we want to hear your voice any more, Carter, in fact I'm sure of it, in fact if I hear it one more time I'll split your skull and be damned to Galbally. Get me?!

*KENNY, genuinely afraid, doesn't say a word.*

[*To ROSS*] Get the cot.

FIONA: No, actually it can stay here. Kate's going to give me her old cot. I'd forgotten.

KATE: Yes. I'm hoping I won't need it any more.

SIMMONDS: [*flatly*] Please yourself.

FIONA: [*to the men*] Perhaps if you could take the double bed from our bedroom.

ROSS and the REMOVALIST move offstage.

KATE: [*to FIONA*] Well, that... er... taxi should be here any minute. I'm sorry I couldn't help you shift in.

FIONA shrugs.

SIMMONDS: How many children have you got altogether, Mrs Mason?

KATE: Three.

Pause. SIMMONDS keeps looking at her.

Mark's the eldest. He's eight. Dionne is six and Anthony's five.

SIMMONDS: Well spaced.

KATE: Too well spaced, but they're all at school now, thank God.

SIMMONDS: Gives you more spare time, I suppose.

KATE: Yes. It does give me a bit more breathing space.

SIMMONDS: [*flatly*] I hope you're using it to good advantage.

KATE: Yes. I'm able to get out and about a bit these days.

SIMMONDS: You're doing a bit of shopping, I take it?

KATE: That's right.

SIMMONDS: For cars?

There is an awkward pause. ROSS and the REMOVALIST walk through with the bed.

KATE: [*stiffly*] Not really.

SIMMONDS: I was wondering how you met your friend?

KATE: What friend?

SIMMONDS: Your car salesman friend.

KATE: [*embarrassed*] Oh. Eric. Oh. He isn't really a car salesman in that sense. He's the Marketing Manager of one of our largest car manufacturers.

SIMMONDS: That's a very responsible position.

KATE: Yes. It is.

SIMMONDS: I wouldn't have thought that a man in a position like that would have very much spare time.

KATE: No. He's kept very busy.

SIMMONDS: I wouldn't have thought he'd have very much spare time at all.

Pause.

Is he married?

KATE: [*warily*] Eric?

SIMMONDS: Mmm.

KATE: [*defensively*] Yes. He is.

SIMMONDS: Children, I suppose?

KATE: [*defensively*] Yes. Three boys.

SIMMONDS: Private schooling, I suppose?

KATE: As a matter of fact, yes. His eldest's at uni now, studying law.

SIMMONDS: Law, eh?

KATE: He's doing very well.

SIMMONDS: I bet he is. It's much easier studying law than administering it.

Pause.

Do his children know he's an adulterer?

KATE: [*shocked*] If you don't mind!

SIMMONDS: Do your children know you're an adulterer?

FIONA: Sergeant! I don't think—

SIMMONDS: [*a hard edge in his voice, indicating KENNY*] I can understand the likes of this bastard behaving like that. But I can't understand it from people in responsible positions, Mrs Mason. I can't understand that at all.

KATE: I don't think my private life is any of your business, Sergeant.

SIMMONDS: I didn't say it was, Mrs Mason. I am merely expressing an opinion.

ROSS and the REMOVALIST enter.

KATE: [*icily*] I'm not interested in your opinion, Sergeant.

SIMMONDS: [*loudly*] I couldn't care less whether you are interested in my opinion or not, Mrs Mason. I am certainly entitled to express it. In my opinion people in responsible positions have a duty to ensure that their behaviour is beyond reproach. Does your husband know about this?

KATE: If you don't mind, I think I'll wait for my taxi outside.

SIMMONDS: [*loudly*] A position of privilege carries certain responsibilities, Mrs Mason. A man who occupies a position of leadership in industry should not abuse that responsibility. I hope he doesn't work for Ford. I drive a Ford.

KATE: [*leaving*] Excuse me.

SIMMONDS: [*following her and talking loudly*] Some of you people think you can do anything. Do you ever spare a thought for your husband? Working to give you and your children a better life. It can't be much fun peering into other people's mouths, fiddling with their bloody molars, half of them with bad bloody breath. Why don't you try being grateful for a change, instead of cheating on him behind his back with a man who's got a family of his own?

*The voices become indistinct offstage as SIMMONDS systematically humiliates her. FIONA looks at KENNY and the other two men and follows SIMMONDS and KATE offstage, hoping, presumably to aid her sister.*

REMOVALIST: [*to ROSS*] What goes next?

ROSS: [*to KENNY*] What goes next?

KENNY: [*sharply*] How in the hell would I know, you great berk?

ROSS: [*hurt, angry*] I was only asking.

*Pause.*

REMOVALIST: [*insistently*] What goes next?

ROSS: I'll... er... go outside and ask.

*ROSS leaves.*

KENNY: Do us a favour, will you?

REMOVALIST: Me business is shiftin' furniture, mate. Not doin' favours.

KENNY: Just do us one small favour.

REMOVALIST: What?

KENNY: Ring the cops.

REMOVALIST: [*indicating offstage*] They do happen to be the cops, you know.

KENNY: Ring Russell Street.

REMOVALIST: Why?

KENNY: That sergeant's going to beat shit outa me. He's as mad as a bloody snake.

REMOVALIST: What makes you think that?

KENNY: You saw the bastard. He's off his nut.

REMOVALIST: You provoked him.

KENNY: [*incredulous*] Provoked him? I didn't provoke him just then, did I?

REMOVALIST: I reckon she's a bloody trollop too.

KENNY: Yeah, but you don't go round screamin' at her. Do you?

REMOVALIST: Yeah, but I'm not a cop.

KENNY: That's not the bloody point.

REMOVALIST: [*thinking*] Yeah, well, what about you? You screamed at her before.

KENNY: [*getting desperate*] Yeah, but I had good cause.

REMOVALIST: Well, maybe he thinks he had good cause.

KENNY: Look, for Christ's sake be a good bloke and ring Russell Street.

REMOVALIST: You must be mad. Do you think they'd come down and collar their own mates?

KENNY: All right, then. Will you ring some of my mates as well?

REMOVALIST: How many bloody phone calls do you want me to make?

KENNY: It won't take you a minute.

REMOVALIST: [*shaking his head*] I can't afford to get involved, mate. I've got ten thousand dollars worth of equipment tickin' over out there in the drive.

KENNY: Jesus! It wouldn't take much effort.

REMOVALIST: Sorry, mate. I've got a pretty simple philosophy. If there's work I work, and if nobody interferes with me, then I don't interfere with nobody.

KENNY: [*agitated*] For Christ's sake—

REMOVALIST: I mind me own business if other people mind theirs, and that's the way I play the game. Get me?

*ROSS comes back inside. He has been abused by SIMMONDS and is irritated and angry.*

[*To ROSS*] What else has got to go?

ROSS: [*surly*] I don't know.

REMOVALIST: Didn't you ask someone?

ROSS: [*irritated*] They're still shouting at each other.

REMOVALIST: Look. I've got ten thousand dollars worth of machinery tickin' over out there.

ROSS: [*angrily*] Shut up!

REMOVALIST: That's all right about you. It's my living, isn't it?

ROSS: Shut up!

REMOVALIST: What? Am I supposed to sit here while your boss argues sin and damnation with the ladies?

ROSS: [*sharply*] Just shut up. [*To KENNY*] Look you. What else has got to go?

KENNY: [*looking at him in amazement*] How would I know?

ROSS: You're her bloody husband.

KENNY: I only found out she was leavin' tonight!

ROSS *moves offstage in a fury.*

ROSS: [*offstage*] Would she want this dresser in the bedroom?

KENNY: [*irritated*] Jesus, mate!

ROSS: [*reappearing*] Well, does she like it?

KENNY: [*sarcastically*] I'm sorry, Constable, but my wife and I didn't spend much time discussing her inner-most feelings for the dresser. It's something we've been meaning to do for a long time, but we just keep putting it off. D'you think that could have something to do with the failure of our marriage?

ROSS: [*nervy and agitated*] Look. I haven't hit you, Carter. I haven't hit you, so there's no need to get funny with me. This gentleman can't be expected to hang around all day.

REMOVALIST: [*sagely*] That's right, fella. I've got ten thousand dollars worth of machinery tickin' over out there.

KENNY: If I hear you say that once again, mate, I'll piss in your radiator and shit in your gearbox.

REMOVALIST: [*defensively*] That's all right for you. You wage-earners don't realise that time is money and money is time.

ROSS: I thought you were being paid by the hour.

REMOVALIST: [*touchy*] That's not the point. That's not the point at all. If I can get this job wrapped up early, I might be able to pick up a late job before I knock off.

ROSS: All right, then. Take the bloody dresser.

REMOVALIST: On who's authority?

ROSS: On my authority.

REMOVALIST: [*sitting down and taking out a smoke*] I want to get movin'. Fair enough. But I'm not going off half-cocked.

ROSS: Go to buggery, then.

ROSS *sits down.* SIMMONDS *strides back in and sees the two of them sitting around.*

SIMMONDS: [*loudly*] What's all this? A bloody smoko?

REMOVALIST: If one knew what item one was dealing with next, one might bloody well get on with it.

SIMMONDS: [*walking offstage*] Take this dresser in here! [*Coming back*] Why didn't you use your bloody initiative, Ross?

ROSS: [*protesting*] I did.

REMOVALIST: [*to SIMMONDS*] How d'you know the dresser's got to go?

SIMMONDS: [*ominously*] Take the bloody dresser!

*They move off to get the dresser. SIMMONDS calls after ROSS.*

Why couldn't you have done that?

ROSS: [*turning, in protest*] I did. I told him to take the dresser.

SIMMONDS: Then why didn't you boot him up the arse? Now go on. Jump to it!

ROSS *and the REMOVALIST move off.* FIONA *returns from outside and stands there hesitantly.* SIMMONDS *stands looking at her.*

FIONA: Perhaps the dresser in the bedroom could go next.

SIMMONDS: They're getting it.

KENNY: [*to FIONA*] You haven't even thought this all out, have you?

FIONA: [*defensively*] Yes I have.

KENNY: [*with a sudden thought*] Is your mother going to give you money?

FIONA: [*edgy*] No.

KENNY: [*pressing*] She's giving you money, isn't she?

FIONA: She gave me the deposit on the flat. That's all!

KENNY: How in the hell do you think you're going to live on your salary?

FIONA: You'll be paying me something.

KENNY: [*indignant*] Like hell I will! You're the one who's leavin' me. I don't have to pay a thing!

SIMMONDS: You're obliged to contribute to the upkeep of your daughter, Carter.

KENNY: [*indignant*] Come off it. She's leavin' me. Why should I pay? Her mother's filthy rich.

SIMMONDS: You're obliged to pay for the upkeep of your daughter, Carter.

KENNY: [outraged] But she's walkin' out on me!

SIMMONDS: You beat her up! She's got a medical certificate!

KENNY: [exasperated] Christ! What's the bloody world comin' to?! In the old days, if a man didn't give his wife a thrashing every week or so, she wouldn't respect him. Nowadays, you give 'em a love pat and they shoot through on you.

SIMMONDS: [to FIONA] I'm sorry I lost my temper with your sister, Mrs Carter.

FIONA: [embarrassed] You did make her quite upset.

SIMMONDS: Yes. I'm a man of strong convictions, I'm afraid.

FIONA: I don't really think there was any need to speak to her like that.

SIMMONDS: Don't you think there's a place for a little bit of honesty in the world, Mrs Carter?

FIONA: Yes, but if you saw her husband, Ralph, you might understand.

*FIONA grins at KENNY, but he is in no mood to respond to their long-standing private joke. She realises the valuable aspects of her relationship with KENNY are no longer available to her and feels vulnerable.*

SIMMONDS: I'll still help you move that furniture into the flat if you'd like me to, Mrs Carter.

*KENNY glares at SIMMONDS. He knows what SIMMONDS is about. SIMMONDS knows that KENNY knows and is enjoying FIONA's confusion and KENNY's anger.*

FIONA: Well... er... [Looking at KENNY] Look, don't bother, Sergeant. It should be all right.

SIMMONDS: Is your flat on the ground floor, Mrs Carter?

FIONA: No, it's a first floor flat.

SIMMONDS: Yes, well, you'll need another man. Won't you?

KENNY: Lay off her, copper.

SIMMONDS: You'll have to get used to the fact that your wife will need assistance from other men from time to time, Carter.

KENNY: [to FIONA, flaring] You think this's going to be one great big ball, don't you? You're in for a bloody great shock. One in every three men is a premature ejaculator. Did your sister ever tell you that?

One in three's got a bloody weak back. You ask her! You've been dying to try it all out for years, haven't you? Well, don't come crawlin' back to me. That's all I'm sayin'. Don't come crawlin' back to me!

FIONA: [flaring] For God's sake! The thing I'm looking forward to most is a rest!

*ROSS and the REMOVALIST enter again.*

REMOVALIST: What's next?

FIONA: [still shaken] If you could take the cupboard in the baby's room, that would just about be it.

*The REMOVALIST nods. He and ROSS move off. KATE enters, still furious.*

KATE: [to FIONA] The taxi's arrived, Fiona. Do you want to come with me?

FIONA: [confused] Where to?

KATE: To the flat.

SIMMONDS: [to KATE] You can go home, Mrs Mason. I'll help Mrs Carter and the removalist.

KATE: [through clenched teeth] Oh, no you won't. You won't go near that flat tonight or any other night. For all your moralising, you're nothing but a pervert, Sergeant. I know your type. I saw the look on your face when you were fondling Fiona's thigh down at the station.

SIMMONDS: [livid] Get out!

KATE: Don't threaten me!

SIMMONDS: [loudly] Get outside!

KATE: What will you do if I don't? Chain me to the bloody door and rape me?

SIMMONDS: [advancing on her] Get outside!

KATE: Tell us all what happened down at the station, Sergeant. Tell us!

*The REMOVALIST and ROSS re-enter carrying the cupboard.*

REMOVALIST: [looking at his watch] This is the last thing, then?

SIMMONDS: [to KATE, a little hysterical himself] You're a liar, woman. A bloody liar and you're not fooling anyone.

*Pause.*

The truth of the matter is that you tried your best to seduce us from the word go. [Pointing to ROSS] A young boy straight out of training school. Could've scarred him for life!

REMOVALIST: [*to FIONA*] This is the last item, then?

FIONA *nods*.

KATE: [*to the REMOVALIST*] Can you find another man at short notice, removalist?

REMOVALIST: Another man to help unload?

KATE *nods*.

Well, that's a bit tricky, Missus. I was contracted out under the understanding that another man would be supplied by the hirer.

FIONA: [*agitated*] I'll help.

REMOVALIST: It's not the sort of work for a lady, love.

KATE: [*tight-lipped*] Could you find another man?

REMOVALIST: Well, probably. Yes. It'll cost you double time, though.

KATE: I don't care what it will cost. Have you got the address?

REMOVALIST: Indeed I have, Ma'am.

KATE *nods and takes FIONA's arm. She goes to move outside.*

FIONA *turns to KENNY, but he has already started to talk to SIMMONDS.*

KENNY: Look, they've got all the furniture. You can let me go now.

FIONA: [*to KENNY*] Look, I'll get in touch tomorrow about Sophie.

KENNY: Could you tell him to let me go now?

FIONA: Could you let him off the handcuffs now, Sergeant?

SIMMONDS: Mr Carter was not handcuffed for your convenience, Mrs Carter. Mr Carter is being detained pending arrest for offensive behaviour.

FIONA: I'm not intending to press charges against him.

SIMMONDS: [*with relish*] I'm afraid the matter is out of your hands, Mrs Carter. The offences have been committed against myself and Constable Ross.

KATE: [*sharply*] Are you coming, Fiona? The taxi won't wait around all day.

KENNY: He's going to beat shit out of me, Fiona.

KATE: [*sharply*] Don't be so ridiculous!

KATE *drags a bewildered FIONA out to the taxi. ROSS returns. There is a Pause.*

SIMMONDS: [*ominously*] Why would we beat shit out of you, Carter?

SIMMONDS *walks up to him, pushes his head against the door and looks into his eyes.*

Why would we do that? [*To ROSS*] Can you think of any reason why we'd do that, Ross?

ROSS: [*sullen*] No.

SIMMONDS: What's wrong with you, Ross?

ROSS: [*sullen*] Nothing.

SIMMONDS: You've been stomping around like a constipated bear since we arrived, Ross. If you've got something to say, then get it off your chest. Have you got something to say?

ROSS: [*sullen*] No.

SIMMONDS: I'll tell you what, Ross, if your attitude doesn't show a marked improvement, I'm going to give you a rocket in your first report. [*Loudly*] If you've got a chip on your shoulder, then knock it off, Ross, and knock it off right now or I'll turn it into a bloody great log. Now knock it off, Ross. [*Bellowing*] Knock it off! Get me?!

ROSS *sulks. There is a long Pause.*

What d'you think of Ross's potential, Carter? Think he's going to make a good cop? Got what it takes?

KENNY *remains silent.*

Well. What d'you think?

KENNY: [*quietly*] Look, how about undoing these cuffs?

SIMMONDS: I asked you a question, Carter. Do you think Ross's going to be any great shakes as a policeman?

KENNY: I've got me doubts.

SIMMONDS: So have I. What d'you think are his main weaknesses?

KENNY: Bit hard to know where to start.

SIMMONDS: Take your time.

KENNY: [*trying to pass it off*] It's a bit hard to say on the spur of the moment.

SIMMONDS: [*feigning irritation*] I only want an opinion, Carter. I'm not asking for your balls, now am I? What do you think it is that Ross is lacking?

KENNY: He seems a bit slow up top.

SIMMONDS: Initiative, perhaps. Do you think he's lacking in initiative?



KENNY: Yeah. I had noticed that.

SIMMONDS: *[to ROSS]* Do you think we should beat the shit out of this bastard, Ross?

ROSS *doesn't answer.*

*[Loudly]* For Christ's sake, Ross. Show a bit of initiative. Should we beat the shit out of this bastard?

ROSS: *[loudly]* No!

SIMMONDS *gives a mock sigh of relief at ROSS's display of initiative.*

SIMMONDS: Very good, Ross.

*Without warning SIMMONDS hits KENNY savagely in the groin with his knee. KENNY doubles up in pain.*

I think you're right, Ross. We shouldn't beat him up. He's not worth the effort.

*He adjusts his hat.*

Get your handcuffs.

ROSS *unlocks KENNY, avoiding his eye.*

All right, Ross. Let's go.

*They turn to go. As they walk towards the door, KENNY raises himself on his elbow and yells venomously after SIMMONDS.*

KENNY: *[still in pain]* You dead cunt!

SIMMONDS: We don't want any more trouble from you, Carter.

KENNY: I'll get you one day, boy. I'll get you, you animal. I've got a lot of mates.

SIMMONDS: Think yourself lucky I didn't charge you, Carter. Don't push your luck.

KENNY: Get out! Go on. Get out, you animal. You'll step out of your house one dark night and you'll get it, boy. Kenny Carter doesn't forget somethin' like this. Now, piss off to your police station and crawl back into the woodwork!

*Pause.*

SIMMONDS: Book him, Ross. Abusive and threatening language.

ROSS *hesitates.*

Book him!

*ROSS walks over towards KENNY, who picks up a chair and threatens him.*

KENNY: *[menacing]* Don't you come any closer, shithead!

ROSS: I'm placing you under arrest for abusive and threatening language, Carter. I must warn you—

KENNY: *[advancing on him]* Get out of my house, you bloody great halfwit. You've had your fun, now get out!

ROSS: *[backing away]* I would advise you that any attempt—

SIMMONDS: Add deliberate obstruction and menacing behaviour, Ross.

ROSS: In addition to the earlier charges I am... *[backing away as KENNY advances]* charging you with deliberate—

KENNY: *[steamed up and sensing ROSS's fear]* Do you think that uniform makes you a big man or something? Eh? Christ. A hundred bloody uniforms wouldn't do anything for you, boy. You're the bloody dregs. There's no bloody doubt about it. I've seen some cowardly fuckwits hiding behind their uniforms in my time, but without a doubt you're the bottom of the bloody barrel.

*ROSS can take it no longer. He goes temporarily berserk and launches himself at KENNY, who is taken by surprise and drops the chair. ROSS knocks him to the floor, punches him and starts to bash his head against the floor. KENNY breaks free and backs away in terror at the ferocity of ROSS's attack. He breaks away and moves out into the kitchen, which is offstage. ROSS chases him. There are crashes and blows offstage. SIMMONDS grins to himself. There is silence, and after a pause, ROSS comes back. He is panting and has blood on his face.*

SIMMONDS: Did you let him get away?

ROSS *is out of breath. He seems dazed.*

Did you let him get away?

ROSS *is frightened. He looks at SIMMONDS.*

ROSS: *[softly, hoarse]* I've killed the bastard, Sarge.

SIMMONDS: *[amused]* Come on, Ross. Haven't you ever knocked a man out before?

ROSS: *[frightened]* I think I've killed him.

SIMMONDS: You better not have bruised him, boy. I hope it was a nice clean punch on the chin.

ROSS: [*frightened*] No, look, I really think I killed him.

SIMMONDS: Yes, well, I'm afraid I'm going to have to report this incident to cover myself in case anything does blow up, but if you hit him on the chin, you should be right.

ROSS: I lost control, Sarge. I just lost control.

SIMMONDS: Control is something you're going to have to learn, boy. Control is the essence of the law.

ROSS: I just couldn't stop myself.

SIMMONDS: Whenever you hit a man, Ross, you should know exactly how hard you're going to hit him a full minute before you land the blow. That's a good little rule to remember.

ROSS: [*agitated*] Christ, Sarge. What's going to happen to me?

SIMMONDS: Don't worry, boy. I've got to hand in a report but I'll word it as gently as I can. I'll say that while I thought you used excessive force to detain the prisoner, it is my opinion that this mistake was almost entirely due to inexperience and certainly not to any defect of personality or the like. It'll be a good chance to have a bit of a dig at the police school. I'll point out how inadequately they prepare recruits for the reality of their vocation.

ROSS: [*loudly*] Look, for Christ's sake, Sarge. I killed him. I really killed him!

SIMMONDS: Come on, Ross. The human being is a hell of a lot tougher than most people give him credit for. Most recruits get in a panic after their first KO.

ROSS: [*loudly*] Go in there and have a look!

SIMMONDS: I've thrown a man down a flight of concrete steps, Ross, and seen him land on his bloody head. Ten minutes later he got up and walked away. Pretty Neanderthal-looking specimen admittedly, but there you are. The only thing you've got to worry about is that Carter might rake up a bit of money and follow this through, but unless they're filthy rich, they usually think twice about that one when they cool down.

ROSS: For Christ's sake, go in there and have a look, Sarge!

SIMMONDS *shrugs and walks into the kitchen. He comes back with a worried look on his face.*

SIMMONDS: [*angry*] What'd you do to him?

ROSS: [*scared*] Is he dead?

SIMMONDS: He's pretty bloody white. What in the hell did you do to him?

ROSS: [*agitated*] I lost control.

SIMMONDS: What in the hell did you do? Hit him when he was down?

ROSS: No.

SIMMONDS: You didn't kick him, did you? You didn't kick him in the head?

ROSS: No. I never kicked.

SIMMONDS: But you hit him when he was down, didn't you?

ROSS: I might have. I lost control.

SIMMONDS: You idiot, Ross. You never hit a head that hasn't got some freedom of movement. For Christ's sake. Don't you know anything?

ROSS: Is he dead?

SIMMONDS: Well, he's looking pretty white.

ROSS: Why didn't you feel his pulse?

SIMMONDS: Because I came out to find out what you did to him.

ROSS: Well, for Christ's sake, go and feel his pulse.

SIMMONDS: Don't order me around, boy.

ROSS: Go and feel his pulse.

SIMMONDS: I tell you what, Ross. You'll go, if he's dead. I can't help you much if he's dead.

ROSS: [*wildly*] We could make it look like he committed suicide.

SIMMONDS: [*talking fast and sternly*] What? Why in the hell would we say that? To protect you? Drag myself in to protect you? Do you think we'd get away—look, his wife, the sister, the removalist—do you honestly think we'd get away with a thing like that? Headquarters may be pretty dense, but I tell you what, I'm not sticking my neck out to cover up for your mistakes, Ross—your bloody lack of control. What's the training school sending out these days? Punchies? Too much adrenalin or something?

ROSS: [*hysterical*] They'd believe it, Sarge. He's had a hell of a day. You'd have to admit that. Wife walks out on him without a word of warning. Takes his television and his fridge. Just imagine if it happened to you, Sarge. Just imagine. It'd hit you right in the gut, wouldn't it? I mean to say, he had no bloody warning, the poor bastard. Did the right thing by his wife in bed the night before, loves his daughter, and we didn't even let him see the end of the movie he was watchin'. I tell you he's had a bad day. If I was him, I'd be thinkin' of the best way to kick it right now!

SIMMONDS: [*pushing him away, starting to show signs of panic himself*] You're mad, Ross. You've gone right off. Do you think anyone commits suicide by beating himself to death? Gets all depressed and starts swingin' uppercuts at himself? You're in the shit I'm afraid, Ross. There's no two ways about it and it isn't going to help you one little bit to lose your head and come up with crazy stuff like that. You're in real strife, boy, and I'm afraid—

ROSS: [*starting to forage around in the cupboard*] We could hang him. Find a bit of rope and make it look as if he bloody hung himself.

SIMMONDS: [*fast and agitated*] Don't be so bloody stupid. What about the bruises and the blood? How're you going to explain that? I've been in the force twenty-three years now, Ross, and I know what you can get away with and what you can't; and I'm telling you for sure—you won't get away with a stunt like that. Not a hope in high heaven. You've gone too far, boy, and I'm afraid you're going to have to face the consequences.

ROSS: [*wildly, loud*] I'll say that you did it!

SIMMONDS: [*staggered*] You'll what?

ROSS: [*wildly*] I'll say that you did it!

SIMMONDS: [*aghast*] You can't lie about a thing like this, Ross!

ROSS: You were the one who was hitting him. They all saw that. They'll believe me, for sure.

SIMMONDS: [*anxiously*] They all saw that I was in control, Ross. That's what they all saw. I know how hard to hit a man. That's what they all saw.

ROSS: I'll say that as soon as they left you went berserk and killed him.

SIMMONDS: [*anxiously*] No, Ross. I'm in control and people know it. They can call me all kinds of bastard, but they know I'm always in control, Ross. That's my strength, Ross, and that's been my strength for years and nobody's going to believe otherwise because that's the work of a raw young hot-head if ever I saw it and other people are going to see it that way too, Ross, whether you like it or not, and that's something you're going to have to face up to instead of trying to shift the blame to an area where it doesn't rightly belong and where nobody in their right senses would ever see it as belonging. I think you must be mad to think that anyone would—I think you'd best come down to the main station and confess straight away before you go getting yourself into real trouble.

ROSS: [*wildly*] No, bugger you. I'm going to lie. I'm really going to turn it on. I'm going to lie and lie and lie and lie. You wait and see. I'm sorry, Sarge, but I'm scared. I'm shit scared.

SIMMONDS: [*hysterical*] For Christ's sake, don't get hysterical. Pull yourself together, man!

ROSS: I'm sorry, Sarge, but I'm scared. Shit scared.

SIMMONDS: Well, getting hysterical isn't going to help!

ROSS: They'll lock us up, Sarge! They'll lock us up for life!

SIMMONDS: They won't lock me up! I've got nothing to do with it!

ROSS: They won't put us in for life, will they, Sarge? They never put us cops away for as long as ordinary blokes, do they? [*Remembering*] Ooo, Jesus! Yes they do. Remember those two guys who knocked off the TAB? I'm sorry, Sarge, but I'm going to lie. After all, you were in charge.

SIMMONDS: [*exploding*] I didn't tell you to kill him, Ross. I didn't tell you to kill him!

ROSS: I'm no killer. I didn't join the force to kill people. [*A sudden idea*] Let's leave a suicide note and blast his head off with a shotgun. They won't find the bruises then.

SIMMONDS: [*yelling*] Shut up, you crazy bastard!

KENNY, battered and bleeding, crawls into the room, unseen, and hoists himself onto one of the few remaining chairs, lighting himself a cigarette and taking a deep draw.

ROSS: [*yelling back*] Well, good God, wouldn't you be depressed if your wife just walked out on you without a word of warning? If we blow his head off with a shotgun, I won't have to lie about who killed him!

SIMMONDS: For Christ's sake, shut up and pull yourself together! It isn't going to do you any good to lie. They'll find bloodstains on your uniform and things like that. The best thing you could do would be to own up. The worst you'll face is manslaughter—officer in the course of his duty—and I wouldn't mind betting you'll get off on the grounds of inexperience. Yes. Loss of control due to inexperience. I'll testify to your inexperience. They probably won't let you stay in the force, but if you play your cards right you'll get your full superannuation entitlements on the grounds of psychological instability, and they can't take that away from you,

KENNY: How did I get like this, eh? Run into a bloody door?

SIMMONDS: Went down the pub to drown your sorrows, I'd say. Got a bit sorry for yourself and started to throw your weight around.

KENNY: Fiona'll testify.

SIMMONDS: What? That I gave you a few love pats.

KENNY: She knew I was going to get bashed.

SIMMONDS: Without a doubt, Carter, you'd be the last of the world's great optimists. Your wife ups and leaves you without a word of warning and you think she'll get up and testify for the sake of a few of your bruises.

KENNY: She'll testify.

SIMMONDS: Look, Carter, I'll strike a bargain. If I had anything of the gambler about me, I wouldn't. Believe me. The odds are with us, boy, make no mistake about that, because it takes an awful lot of bruises for the SM to take the word of a shitkicker like you against two members of the force. Nevertheless, I'll strike a bargain.

KENNY: Not interested.

SIMMONDS: Believe me, Carter, if I had the trace of the gambler in me make-up, I'd walk out right now. Do you want to hear me out?

KENNY: No. Bugger you. I'm going to the doc in the morning.

SIMMONDS: Suit yourself. I was going to offer you something well worth considering.

KENNY: What?

SIMMONDS: If you're going to the doctor's in the morning then there's no sense discussing it.

KENNY: Don't get smart, copper.

SIMMONDS: The point is, Carter, that I'm in a position to offer you something you may be needing in the next few months.

KENNY: What?

SIMMONDS: Companionship.

KENNY: [*looking at him incredulously*] Companionship?

SIMMONDS: [*realising he has been misunderstood*] Female companionship.

KENNY: [*still incredulous*] What?

SIMMONDS: Female companionship.

KENNY: You must be joking. I'm bloody near dead.

SIMMONDS: Think ahead a couple of weeks, Kenny. You've been used to getting it regularly for years.

KENNY: I can get me own women, thank you very much.

SIMMONDS: This is just to tide you over.

*Pause.*

KENNY: What sort of women?

SIMMONDS: Well... er... there's a group of very attractive young girls a block or two from the station who... er... well, the fact is that they're very high-class... er... callgirls—

KENNY: [*disgusted*] Prostitutes!

SIMMONDS: [*indignant*] No. There's a world of difference between your streetwalker and your callgirl, Carter. No chance of disease for a start. Safer with them than with your average wife.

KENNY: Come off it.

SIMMONDS: It's a fact.

KENNY: What? And you can get 'em for free?

SIMMONDS: I believe in well-run prostitution, Carter. It's better that they're doing it there than raping little girls in the streets.

KENNY: What? You turn a blind eye and you get paid off in kind?

SIMMONDS: The girls are grateful to me because I realise their value to the community.

KENNY: You must be pretty worried to make this sort of an offer, copper.

SIMMONDS: I don't like a big stir, Carter. That's all.

KENNY: [*bitter*] Yeah, well, I'll tell you something. I'm not going to let you pair of bludgers beat me to a pulp and get away with it. You can sweat it out. Now, piss off. I'm going to the doctor's tomorrow.

SIMMONDS: You're a fool, Carter. Ever had a high-class callgirl?

KENNY: What's so special about a harlot?

SIMMONDS: They're real performers, Carter. Real performers.

KENNY: Piss off. You make me sick.

SIMMONDS: I can understand you wanting to get back at me, Carter. I was playing the tough cop for the ladies and I can understand you wanting to get back at me; but when it's all said and done, revenge is a mug's game, Carter. You've got nothing to show for it in the end.

KENNY: Except satisfaction.

SIMMONDS: Satisfaction doesn't get you women, Carter.

*Pause.*

KENNY: How often could I get it?

SIMMONDS: Well, I'd have to see the girls, but I'd reckon twice a week.

I reckon they'd come at that.  
 KENNY: For how long?  
 SIMMONDS: As long as you need. Within reason.  
 KENNY: What if Fiona comes back?  
 SIMMONDS: I'm sorry, Carter. I don't follow.  
 KENNY: Well, what if Fiona comes back next week? Some deal it'd be then. I'd really miss out, wouldn't I? Beaten to a pulp and nothin' to show for it.  
 SIMMONDS: What're you getting at, Carter?  
 KENNY: Do they normally come to you or do you go to them?  
 SIMMONDS: They come to you.  
 KENNY: Yeah, well, I want to go to them. Then it wouldn't matter if Fiona came home or not.  
 SIMMONDS: They don't like working at home, Carter.  
 KENNY: Well, that's what I want.  
 SIMMONDS: You're pushing it a bit, Carter.  
 KENNY: Well, what'd you expect?  
 SIMMONDS: *[after a pause]* All right. I'll fix it.  
 KENNY: Starting Friday.  
 SIMMONDS: You won't be fit by Friday.  
 KENNY: You fix it for Friday. Takes more than a couple of mug cops to stop Kenny Carter raising the old bull moose.  
 SIMMONDS: Pretty quick recovery for a man who was screaming for a doctor a couple of minutes ago.  
 KENNY: You just fix it. Right?  
 SIMMONDS: All right. I'll fix it.  
 KENNY: And I'm no bloody fool either. I'll be along to the doc in the morning to get me a full report, and if there's the slightest hint that you're reneging on the deal, then it goes straight off to Truth, complete with story.  
 SIMMONDS: *[grimly]* I always keep my word, Carter.  
 KENNY: *[looking at ROSS]* What's your mate all goggle-eyed at?  
*[Laughing with some effort]* Can't work out how I'm still alive, eh? You'd have to be a bloody tough man to stop me, fella.  
*[To SIMMONDS]* What's your mate all goggle-eyed about?  
 SIMMONDS: *[relaxing—the hard bargainer at the conclusion of a successful deal]* It's his first day out of college. Isn't it, Ross?

*[To KENNY]* Still pure at heart.  
 KENNY: Siddown, Ross.  
 ROSS, *bewildered, doesn't.*  
 Well, if you're not going to sit down, them make your-self useful. Grab a bloody beer from the kitchen. It'll be as hot as buggery, but that's your fault for lettin' them take the fridge.  
 SIMMONDS: Get a beer, Ross. *[Loudly]* Get a beer!  
 KENNY: *[wincing]* Not so loud, you bastard. Me head's still ringin'.  
 SIMMONDS: Sorry, mate.  
 ROSS *goes out into the kitchen and returns with three cans of beer. He hands one to SIMMONDS and one to KENNY, who accepts it even though he looks anything but fit for drinking. SIMMONDS takes the top off his can and takes a long swig.*  
 Ahh. A bit warm, but not too bad. *[To KENNY]* What d'you think of Ross's potential?  
 KENNY: What as? A welterweight?  
*He laughs with some difficulty at his own joke, but cannot bring himself to drink.*  
 SIMMONDS: Bit worried about him actually. Should be all right. Comes from good solid stock. His father's a coffin maker.  
*They both laugh.*  
 KENNY: Knocks up the stiff?  
*They both laugh.*  
 SIMMONDS: Don't know where he gets his temper from. Should be dead calm.  
 KENNY: Had a bloke like him in the district reserves. Used to play ruck and forward pocket. Good player but bloody uncontrollable. Mad Dog, we called him. The vice-captain had to tag him some days in case he went off. Gentle as a lamb off the field, but bloody lethal when he went off. Three of us would leap on the bastard. 'Cool it, Mad Dog. It's all right.' Had to talk to him like he was a baby. Something used to click inside his head, like your mate here.  
 SIMMONDS: Ever gone off your head before, Ross?  
 ROSS: *[shyly pleased at his new notoriety]* Always had a pretty quick temper.

SIMMONDS: You'll have to watch it in future, boy. You nearly got us in the shit today.

ROSS: I'll tell you what. I've never been so scared in my life.

SIMMONDS: Well, what do you think of the law in action? Eh, Ross?

KENNY: *[laughing]* He's a bit dubious about our deal.

SIMMONDS: Are you a bit dubious, Ross?

ROSS: *[offhand]* No.

*He takes a swig of his beer.*

KENNY: He's waxy that you haven't lined up something for him.

SIMMONDS: Would you like that, Ross?

ROSS *shrugs coyly.*

*[To KENNY]* He's a bit scared that his girlfriend will find out.

KENNY: Ah. Going steady, is he?

SIMMONDS: Oh, yes. Lovely girl, I believe. What's her name again, Ross?

ROSS: *[bashful]* Marilyn.

KENNY: Marilyn, eh? I knew a Marilyn once. Biggest knock in Footscray. Got your end in yet?

ROSS *shrugs.*

SIMMONDS: Won't she come across, Ross? Would you like a go at the callgirls?

ROSS *shrugs, smiles and swigs.*

KENNY: Never turn down a knock, Rossy boy. Tomorrow you might get run over by a tram.

SIMMONDS: I think we've embarrassed the boy. Are you a bit confused by it all, Ross?

ROSS *shakes his head.*

Wouldn't really blame you if you were. You've crammed a lot into your first day, haven't you? Learned more today about the law and about life than you did in a whole year at college. Eh?

ROSS *shrugs.*

What you saw today's the real law, Ross. A compromise between human follies and human desires. The world is full of human beings, Ross. Remember that and you'll make a good policeman.

ROSS *looks sheepish.*

KENNY: His head's still full of those harlots.

SIMMONDS: I think the first thing you've got to do, Ross, is to take stock of your weaknesses and face up to them. I think it's just as well we've discovered this flaw in temperament of yours at an early stage, because now that we know about it, we can be sure that we won't place you in a situation in which you'll lose control. At least, not until we know you've got it beaten.

*During SIMMONDS' speech ROSS's eyes pass to KENNY and they fix in horror as he sees that KENNY is sitting bolt upright with a frozen look of terror and pain in his eyes. He has just suffered a massive and catastrophic cerebral haemorrhage as a result of his injuries. His can drops to the floor. ROSS gets to him just as he topples off his chair, and lowers him to the floor. ROSS and SIMMONDS are thrown into a state of panic akin to, but worse than, the previous one. Worse still, because they enter it from the almost soporific sense of relief that KENNY's death has just shattered. For the rest of the play ROSS is hysterical and SIMMONDS borders on this condition.*

ROSS: Jesus, Sarge. He's dead. He's really dead this time. You can tell. Oh, Jesus!

SIMMONDS: You've done it now, Ross. He's really dead. I didn't like the sound of it when he mentioned his eye. Pressure at the back of the eye is bad news, Ross. I thought we might've been in trouble.

ROSS: Why didn't you take him to the hospital, then? Why didn't you take him to the hospital if you knew that?

SIMMONDS: They couldn't've done anything for him, Ross. Not a man who dies as quick as that. You must've hit him with a bloody pile driver. He's dead, Ross. There's no doubt about it. He's dead!

ROSS: I know he's dead! Look at the poor bastard's eyes. He was scared out of his mind. Look at his bloody eyes! We should've taken him straight to hospital, Sarge!

SIMMONDS: *[defensively]* They couldn't've done a thing for him. I can tell you that right now. Couldn't've done a thing! Not for someone who dies as quickly as that. He was either very bad or okay, Ross, and if he's very bad, then there's no sense taking him to hospital. Get into Casualty with a body on your hands? I'm not crazy, Ross. I'm not callous but, then again, I'm not stupid and there's an important distinction there.

ROSS: Let's get a shotgun and make it look like suicide. Shoot his head off. Shoot out his bloody eyes.

SIMMONDS: For Christ's sake, Ross. Don't start that again. You're going to have to face the consequences, I'm afraid. You're going to have to face the consequences.

ROSS: You've got to help me, Sarge! I'm no killer. I didn't join the force to kill.

*ROSS pleads, grabbing SIMMONDS by the collar.*

For Christ's sake, Sarge! You've got to help me!

SIMMONDS: [*backing away*] I'm not helping anybody, boy. You did it!

ROSS: [*pleading, hysterical*] You're in it too, Sarge! You're in it too! You let him die.

SIMMONDS: [*shouting*] He would've died in any case!

ROSS: [*advancing on SIMMONDS and pleading*] You're in it too, Sarge!

You've got to help me!

SIMMONDS: [*hysterical too*] I've got nothing to do with it!

*He pushes ROSS away vigorously.*

I've got nothing to do with it!

*ROSS stands there, momentarily calmed by SIMMONDS' violence.*

*Suddenly he runs up to SIMMONDS and hits him.*

ROSS: [*hysterical*] Sorry, Sarge, but you're in it too!

SIMMONDS: You mad bastard! What do you bloody think you're doing?

ROSS: [*hitting him again*] If we both get smashed up, it'll look like

Kenny went berserk!

SIMMONDS: [*trying to get away*] You bastard, Ross! You cowardly bastard. You'll get a shit of a report from me. Mark my words!

ROSS: [*hysterical*] Hit me back, Sarge! Hit me back! We'll get off!

Kenny went mad and beat us both to a pulp. Hit me where it bruises.

Go on, Sarge! You know how to bruise a man! Go on!

*ROSS advances on SIMMONDS, attacking him viciously.*

*SIMMONDS fights back. As the play closes the fight almost takes on the air of a frenzied ritual of exorcism.*

THE END