

LOST

a comedy

by

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(C) September 1993

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Characters

EDITH

VERONICA

THE STRANGER

GOD

Time

One Friday Night.

The present.

Settings

A City: A bar

A house in the suburbs

A road nearby

“God come down, if you're really there.
Well you're the one who claims to care.”

- Morrissey

LOST

was first performed by

Stageworks Theatre

at

Belvoir Street Theatre - Downstairs, Surry Hills, Sydney,

on the 3rd of July, 1992,

with the following cast:

EDITH **Pelagia Jordan**

VERONICA **Jennifer Coyne - O'Brien**

THE STRANGER **Michael Greer**

GOD **Ken Welsh**

The production was directed by **Nicholas Papademetriou**
and designed by **David Waller**.

SPOTLIGHT, DOWN CENTRE.

IN IT, **THE STRANGER**.

MID 40s, BUT TRYING TO LOOK MUCH YOUNGER, HE'S WEARING VERY FASHIONABLE, VERY EXPENSIVE, CASUAL GEAR - JEANS, JACKET, REEBOKS ETC. THE CLOTHES ARE BRAND NEW BUT IT'S HARD TO TELL DUE TO THE FACT THAT THEY ARE ABSOLUTELY FILTHY.

HIS LONGISH HAIR IS SLICKED BACK IN A PONYTAIL AND HE WEARS A PAIR OF DARK SUNGLASSES. A "5 O'CLOCK" SHADOW DARKENS HIS COMPLEXION.

THE STRANGER STARES INTO THE AUDIENCE BLANKLY. PAUSE.

HE STARTS TO SEARCH HIS POCKETS FOR SOMETHING. EVENTUALLY HE FINDS IT - A CIGARETTE. HE BRUSHES IT OFF AND STICKS IT IN HIS MOUTH.

HE STARTS TO GO THROUGH HIS POCKETS AGAIN, SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING ELSE - PRESUMABLY, A LIGHT. HE COMES ACROSS A SMALL BOTTLE OF VODKA.

WITHOUT TAKING THE CIGARETTE OUT OF HIS MOUTH HE OPENS THE BOTTLE AND TAKES A LARGE SWIG. HE PUTS THE BOTTLE BACK IN HIS POCKET. PAUSE.

NOW **THE STRANGER** CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR BEFORE HE FOUND THE VODKA (A LIGHT.) HE STARES AT THE AUDIENCE BLANKLY. PAUSE.

STILL WITH UNLIT CIGARETTE IN HIS MOUTH, HE LOOKS OFF LEFT. THEN HE LOOKS BACK TO THE AUDIENCE. HE LOOKS OFF RIGHT. THEN AGAIN BACK TO THE AUDIENCE. HE LOOKS OFF LEFT ONCE MORE.

PAUSE. **THE STRANGER** EXITS - RIGHT.

THE LIGHTS COME UP ON A HIGH BAR TABLE, DOWN LEFT. BESIDE IT TWO STOOLS.

Scene 1.
The Voodoo Bar. Friday 6pm.

EDITH SITS ON A STOOL AT A HIGH TABLE, LOOKING AROUND THE BAR ANXIOUSLY.

THREE EMPTY GLASS TUMBLERS SIT NEXT TO HER ON THE TABLE. A FOURTH, HALF FULL OF A STRANGE COLOURED LIQUID, IS IN FRONT OF HER. SHE IS QUITE DRUNK.

VERONICA: (OFF) Sleep with you. I'd rather go down on Hitler. Queenslander.

VERONICA ENTERS, **EDITH** SPOTS HER. SHE WAVES.

EDITH: Veronica.

VERONICA: (AT PACE) There you are ! I've been looking for you for the last twenty minutes. What is this place ?

EDITH: The Voodoo Bar.

VERONICA: Charming. If one more prick pinched my arse I was just about to - Why in the world did you want to meet here ?

EDITH: It's private. Sit down. (**EDITH** SITS **VERONICA** DOWN)

VERONICA: So what's the "big emergency" ?

EDITH: Did you get my note ?

VERONICA: I wouldn't be here otherwise. Well come on. What is it ?

EDITH Let me buy you a drink and I'll tell you.

VERONICA: Actually I'm in a bit of a rush.

EDITH: Just one. Please. My shout.

VERONICA: Alright. But make it quick.

EDITH STANDS. SHE FUMBLES IN HER PURSE FOR MONEY.
VERONICA ANNOYED AT THE WAIT, STANDS AND GRABS THE MONEY.

VERONICA: I'll do it. What are you having ?

EDITH: Wait a sec.

EDITH EMPTIES THE GLASS IN FRONT OF HER IN ONE GULP.

VERONICA: What was that ?

EDITH: A double.

VERONICA: A double what ?

EDITH: Screaming pygmy.

VERONICA: How many of those have you had ?

EDITH: Only four.

VERONICA: My God, that's a whole tribe. No wonder you're - I'll get you a mineral water.

EDITH: (DISAPPOINTED) Oh.

VERONICA EXITS. EDITH FUMBLES WITH HER BAG AND EVENTUALLY SITS. VERONICA RETURNS WITH THE DRINKS

VERONICA: (REFERRING TO DRINK) Idiot. A twist I said. A twist, no ice. Look what he gives me. No twist and ice. (SHE DRINKS) Yuck ! What kind of rocket fuel do they use in this place?

EDITH: (REACHING FOR GLASS) You're meant to slam it.

VERONICA: I don't think so. Now, I've got my drink. So what's all the fuss ? And the abbreviated version, please. Time is running out.

EDITH: Where you going ?

VERONICA: Well unlike some people, I do have a life. The other Account Managers and I are meeting Mr Ryegold for dinner, you know, the Bread Man. And it's something of a VIM.

EDITH: V I M?

VERONICA: Very Important Meeting. The Account Director's stepping down and we're all being given an equal chance to get our hands on the account. And guess what ? I've got the inside running.

EDITH: You do ?

VERONICA: I've got a secret weapon

EDITH: What ?

VERONICA: Tits ! The old sleaze bag can't keep his hands off me. (SHE LAUGHS) After dinner we're going to Karaoke, god knows why , fifty going on fifteen you know the type.

EDITH: Karaoke ?

VERONICA: Yes, Karaoke. Can't wait.

EDITH SUDDENLY BURSTS INTO TEARS.

VERONICA: It's not that bad ? They don't only do Elvis. (TRYING TO COVER UP) Evelyn. Evelyn, what's wrong ? Stop it Evelyn, people are looking. Evelyn !

EDITH: (STILL CRYING) Edith.

VERONICA: What ?

EDITH: My name is Edith.

VERONICA: Edith then. Look whatever you're name is just stop crying. You're making a scene.

EDITH: I'm sorry.

VERONICA: Don't apologise. Just stop crying.

EDITH TRIES TO STOP HER TEARS. SHE WIPES HER NOSE WITH HER HAND.

VERONICA: Don't do that. (PRODUCING HANDKERCHIEF) Here use this. Now get a hold of yourself. Anymore outbursts like that and I'm straight out the door.

EDITH HANDS THE HANKIE BACK.

VERONICA: No, you keep it. Now what is all this about ? (And make it snappy. Everybody else was stopping in at Nevada for a few stiff Stollis , but not me. I'm drinking Brand X, with Edith, the Temp, at the Voodoo Bar.

EDITH: You didn't have to come.

VERONICA: Don't remind me, but here I am - so make the most of it. Speak. Karaoke awaits.

EDITH AGAIN BURSTS INTO TEARS.

VERONICA: What is wrong with you ?

EDITH: I'm sorry. It's just that every time I hear that word -

VERONICA: Karaoke ?

EDITH ONCE MORE BEGINS TO CRY LOUDLY.

VERONICA: Edith, this is starting to get boring.

EDITH: (RECOVERING) I'm sorry. I'm better now. I won't cry anymore.

VERONICA: Let's hope so. And stop apologising. Sorry is for wimps. Now drink your mineral water. (**EDITH HESITATES**) Drink it !

EDITH DRINKS. PAUSE.

VERONICA: We all better ? Good. Now, nice and slowly, tell Auntie V what the problem is.

EDITH IS SILENT.

VERONICA: Come on. Big voice.

EDITH IS STILL SILENT.

VERONICA: I'm waiting.

STILL NO RESPONSE.

VERONICA: Edith !

EDITH: I can't.

VERONICA: What do you mean "can't". Can't does not exist. Can't is an unword. You can. You can tell me.

EDITH: I can't.

VERONICA: Edith, you are fast approaching the pain threshold.

EDITH: You have to come with me.

VERONICA: Come with you ?

EDITH: To my house. I have to show you.

VERONICA: And where, pray tell, is your house ?

EDITH: In Villawood.

PAUSE **VERONICA** LAUGHS.

VERONICA: Villawood ? Vill-a-wood ? You want me to go to Villawood ? Who lives in Villawood ? Refugees – that's who. Undesirables. Do I look like an undesirable ? Listen to me. Listen very carefully. Villawood does not exist in my universe. Villawood is an un-suburb. I can't, I repeat can't, go to Villawood.

EDITH: Can't is an un-word.

VERONICA: Tres clever. Score one for the typing pool, but it does not change the fact that this AM is not going to Villawood. It might, just might, have something to do with Villawood being ten miles past Timbuktu but it probably has more to do with the fact that I am running late for a major, that's major, dinner slash business meeting. (**VERONICA STANDS**) Now if you'll excuse me I really must dash. A certain middle aged hippy client and a certain million dollar account are ripe for the taking.

VERONICA STARTS TO LEAVE. **EDITH** THROWS HERSELF ON THE FLOOR AND GRAB'S **VERONICA'S** FEET.

EDITH: (BEGINNING TO CRY) Please.

VERONICA: (TO OTHER PATRONS IN THE BAR) Excuse us. She's co-dependent. (PICKING **EDITH** UP) Why did you have to pick me ? There's at least another hundred people at the agency, a couple of thousand on the street, why chose me ? Do I bear a striking resemblance to Mary McKillop?

EDITH: I didn't know who else to turn to. You always know what to do. You're so organised, you always say the right thing, you wear such nice clothes, and you fixed the coffee machine for me. –

VERONICA: And this is the thanks I get ? I mend the Cafe Bar for you and then I get Shanghaied at Voodoo.

EDITH: Please. Please come with me. You'll know what to do.

VERONICA: Look, this is all very flattering, but I really have got to go. Isn't there anyone else you can ask ? What about your friends ? In Villawood?

EDITH: I can't.

VERONICA: That word again. What about your parents then ?

EDITH: They're dead.

VERONICA: Uncles ? Aunts ? One legged step sisters ?

EDITH: I use to have an Uncle, Uncle Ken, but he disappeared.

VERONICA: Don't you have a boyfriend ?

EDITH BEGINS TO CRY ONCE MORE.

VERONICA: Oh my god. Listen. I'm sorry but I just don't have time for this. I'm just an AM, and if I ever want to be an AD I have to suck up to this eternal teenager tonight and get this account. It may seem tough, I know, but that's the way you've got to be in this day and age. Nice guys don't finish last, they're not even in the race. Thanks. It's been great. See you Monday.

VERONICA STARTS TO LEAVE AGAIN.

EDITH: I've got the photocopies.

VERONICA STOPS. **VERONICA** RETURNS.

VERONICA: What photocopies ?

EDITH: The ones of you and Mr Dalton.

VERONICA: I don't know what you're talking about.

EDITH TAKES A PIECE OF PAPER FROM HER BAG. SHE SHOWS IT TO **VERONICA**.

VERONICA: How did you get this ?

EDITH: I went to use the copier but the door was locked and there were strange noises coming from inside. I went back later and that was in the bin.

VERONICA: I told him to get rid of them. Edith, darling, how many copies of this do you have ?

EDITH: A few.

VERONICA: And what are you planning to do with them ?

EDITH: If you don't come home with me I'm going to stick them on the bulletin board.

VERONICA: Edith, are you trying to blackmail me ?

EDITH : Yep.

VERONICA: Sweet little thing aren't you ?

EDITH SMILES. VERONICA CONSIDERS.

VERONICA: Alright, alright. What plane do we catch to Villawood ?

EDITH: Thank you.

EDITH HUGS VERONICA. BLACKOUT.

SPOTLIGHT, DOWN CENTRE.

IN IT, ONCE MORE, **THE STRANGER**. HE STANDS FACING THE AUDIENCE, STILL WITH THE UNLIT CIGARETTE IN HIS MOUTH.

SLOWLY HE BECOMES AWARE THAT HE HAS SOMETHING IN HIS MOUTH. (HE'S FORGOTTEN ABOUT PUTTING THE CIGARETTE THERE.)

HE TAKES THE CIGARETTE OUT OF HIS MOUTH AND STARES AT IT BLANKLY. HE PUTS IT IN ONE OF HIS POCKETS.

THE STRANGER BEGINS TO GO THROUGH HIS POCKETS, SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING - PRESUMABLY, THE VODKA.

INSTEAD HE FINDS A CIGARETTE LIGHTER. HE STARES AT IT. HE BEGINS TO SEARCH THROUGH HIS POCKETS ONCE MORE. (THIS TIME FOR THE CIGARETTE.) HE FINDS THE VODKA.

HE OPENS THE BOTTLE AND STILL HOLDING THE CIGARETTE LIGHTER IN ONE HAND, TAKES A SWIG. HE PUTS THE VODKA BACK IN ONE OF HIS POCKETS.

NOW HE'S FORGOTTEN WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR BEFORE HE FOUND THE VODKA (THE CIGARETTE.) HE STARES AT THE AUDIENCE BLANKLY. PAUSE.

STILL WITH THE CIGARETTE LIGHTER IN HIS HAND, HE LOOKS OFF RIGHT. THEN HE LOOKS BACK TO THE AUDIENCE. HE LOOKS OFF LEFT. THEN AGAIN BACK TO THE AUDIENCE. HE LOOKS OFF RIGHT ONCE MORE.

PAUSE. **THE STRANGER** EXITS - LEFT.

THE LIGHTS COME UP ON A LARGE CUPBOARD, UP RIGHT.

Scene 2.**Edith's parent's bedroom, Villawood. One hour later.****EDITH** ENTERS. SHE LOOKS AT THE CUPBOARD ANXIOUSLY.

VERONICA: (ENTERING) We have arrived at the end of the earth. I just want you to know that Edith. You live at the end of the earth. Or maybe it's further. I'm sure we passed Pluto a couple of miles back.

EDITH: It's not that far.

VERONICA: The price of that cab would have fed a small film crew.

EDITH: We could've caught the train.

VERONICA: (LAUGHS) This AM does not catch the train, especially to Villawood and especially when she's running late for a VIM.

EDITH: I like the train.

PAUSE. VERONICA LOOKS AT **EDITH**.

VERONICA: Edith, you don't live in Villawood - you are Villawood.

EDITH: It would've been quicker.

VERONICA: Nonsense. Anyway it doesn't matter now. We're here. In Villawood.

EDITH: Villawood East actually.

VERONICA: Oh my god. I don't believe this. What am I doing here ? You go out for a quick drink after work and you end up in Villawood East.

EDITH: What have you got against Villawood ?

VERONICA: (UNEASY) Nothing. It's just a long way from where I should be at this moment in my life.

EDITH: Sorry.

VERONICA: What did I tell you ? Don't apologise. This just better be worth it. (LOOKING AROUND) Is this your room ?

EDITH: No. It was my parents'.

VERONICA: Love the wallpaper. What are they ?

EDITH: Frogs.

VERONICA: How ... unusual. What happened to them ?

EDITH LOOKS CONFUSED.

EDITH: The frogs ?

VERONICA: Your parents.

EDITH: They won the lottery.

VERONICA: Died from over excitement did they ?

VERONICA STARTS LAUGHING AT HER OWN JOKE.

EDITH: They went on a holiday. To America. Their plane crashed.

VERONICA STOPS LAUGHING.

VERONICA: (SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSED) How ... inappropriate. When did it happen ?

EDITH: About nine months ago. I haven't really done much since. Just been hanging around the house. Don't need to work, I got all the money. But Doctor Simmons, our doctor, he thought it would be good for me to get a job. Get out and meet people. That's how I ended up working at the agency.

VERONICA: How ... interesting. What time is it ?

EDITH: (SHEEPISHLY) Nearly eight.

VERONICA: Nearly eight ! E-dith and what time am I expected for dinner ?

EDITH: Eight ?

VERONICA: That's right. I guess I should ring the restaurant and tell them I'll be a little late.

EDITH: Guess so. The phone's in the hall.

VERONICA: Aren't they always ?

VERONICA PULLS OUT A SMALL MOBILE PHONE.

VERONICA: (DIALLING) I would've dialled in the cab but I was too distressed, watching my world slowly fade into the distance. (SHE LISTENS) Engaged. Could somebody please tell me what I have done to deserve this ?

SHE HITS THE RE-DIAL BUTTON.

VERONICA: (SHE LISTENS) Hello. Tadpool. V MacGregor here. I'm with the Big party. We're dining there tonight. (LISTENS) Not the big party. The "Big" party. (LISTENS) That's alright. (LISTENS) Oh, they're there already are they ? Who ever heard of being on time ? Could you ask Mr Dalton to come to the phone ? (LISTENS) The slimy one with the fake Italian suit and weedy little moustache. (LISTENS) That's him. (TO **EDITH**) Thanks to you I've probably already lost the account. (LISTENS) Dalton. V. (LISTENS) Great. And you ? (COVERING MOUTHPIECE) Wanker. (TO PHONE) Listen, I've been a bit held up. How's it going ? (LISTENS) Oh really. He's not there yet ? Damn shame. Oh well. Have a couple for me. Twist, no ice. See you shortly. (SHE HANGS UP) Saved ! Did you hear that ? He's not there yet. Dalton's shitting himself. Ryegold'll probably roll in about ten o'clock.

EDITH: You'll be on time then.

VERONICA: Don't get smart. Now let's get down to business. What is it exactly you have to show me ?

EDITH: (POINTING TO CUPBOARD) It's in there.

VERONICA: What's in there ?

EDITH: It.

VERONICA: And what is "it" ?

PAUSE. **EDITH** IS SILENT, THEN ONCE AGAIN STARTS TO CRY.

VERONICA: Not again. Edith stop crying. I'm warning you. Edith !

EDITH CONTINUES TO CRY. **VERONICA** SUDDENLY SLAPS **EDITH** HARD ACROSS THE FACE.

VERONICA: Stop crying !

EDITH CONTINUES TO CRY BUT NOW LOUDER. **VERONICA** SLAPS HER AGAIN.

VERONICA: Stop it you hear me !

EDITH CONTINUES TO CRY EVEN LOUDER. **VERONICA** SLAPS HER ONCE MORE.

VERONICA: Why are you crying ?

EDITH: (THROUGH HER TEARS) I'm crying because you keep hitting me.

VERONICA: Alright. I won't hit you anymore. Just stop crying.

EDITH SLOWLY STOPS.

VERONICA: Now what's in the cupboard ? (PAUSE) E-dith !

EDITH IS STILL RECOVERING.

VERONICA: I'll just have to take a look for myself then won't I ?

VERONICA GOES TO THE CUPBOARD. SHE IS ABOUT TO OPEN IT BUT STOPS. LIGHTS CHANGE.

VERONICA: Hold on. Think V. What are you doing ? You're in a strange house in the middle of nowhere with someone you hardly know about to open a cupboard without the slightest idea what is inside. This is not a good idea.

LIGHTS CHANGE. SHE GOES BACK TO EDITH.

VERONICA: Look Edith. I hate to sound suspicious, but what's in the cupboard ? I mean we've only really just met. They're could be a ten foot guerilla in there with a machine gun.

EDITH: Gorilla ?

VERONICA: A terrorist. I mean this is Villawood isn't it ? People disappear in Villawood and are never heard of again. Or it could be drugs. This place could be about to be raided at any second. There could be six garbage bags full of some illicit substance in there. You could be setting me up. I might be the fall guy for your racket - I mean, fall person.

EDITH: It's not drugs.

VERONICA: What about terrorists ? Is there some madman hiding in there, ready to pounce ? I mean just between you and me being kidnapped by Osama is not my idea of a fun Friday night. Do I have your word there are no Al Qaeda operatives in that cupboard ?

EDITH: You mean terrorists ?

VERONICA: Guerillas, terrorists, whatever. Do I have your word ?

EDITH: Yes.

VERONICA: Okay. At least we got that straight. Alright. Now pull yourself together V. You're just going to walk over there and open that cupboard. Then you're going to sort this all out and race back into town and win that account.

VERONICA WALKS OVER TO THE CUPBOARD.

VERONICA: Okay. One. Two. Three.

VERONICA TRIES TO PULL THE CUPBOARD OPEN BUT SHE CAN'T.

VERONICA: Try again. One. Two. Three.

SHE TRIES AGAIN BUT STILL CAN'T OPEN IT.

VERONICA: I seem to be having a little trouble here.

EDITH MOVES OVER AND STANDS BEHIND VERONICA. SHE GRABS HOLD OF VERONICA'S WAIST.

VERONICA: Alright now deep breathing and then we're going to open that door. Breathe in.

THE GIRLS BEGIN DEEP BREATHING.

VERONICA: Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out.

AS THE GIRLS BREATHE OUT THEY PULL THE DOOR OPEN. SLIGHT PAUSE. VERONICA CLOSSES IT.

VERONICA: Did I just see what I thought I saw ?

EDITH: Yes.

VERONICA: Oh my god.

EDITH: Oh my god.

VERONICA OPENS THE CUPBOARD AGAIN.

VERONICA: Oh - my - god.

EDITH: Oh - my - god.

SHE CLOSSES THE CUPBOARD.

VERONICA: (BEGINNING TO PANIC) This is not good. This is bad. This is very bad. This is very very bad. I've opened the cupboard. I'm implicated. I'm involved. I'm an accessory. Goodbye AD, hello L.B.

EDITH: L. B. ?

VERONICA: Long Bay. Edith you're a murderer !

EDITH: I'm not a murderer.

VERONICA: There is a dead body in your cupboard, that would seem to suggest otherwise.

EDITH: I'm not. Let me explain. It wasn't my fault.

VERONICA: Stop ! Stop right there. Don't say another word. I don't want to get involved any further. I wasn't here you hear me. I never came to Villawood. I never opened the cupboard. This has got nothing to do with me. I'm leaving. I'm walking out that door right this second. This never happened.

VERONICA HEADS FOR THE DOOR. EDITH QUICKLY STANDS IN FRONT OF IT BLOCKING VERONICA OFF.

EDITH: You're not going anywhere.

VERONICA: Oh my god. Oh - my - god. Now you're going to kill me. Oh no. I'm going to die in East Villawood.

VERONICA BACKS UP AGAINST THE REAR WALL. EDITH APPROACHES HER.

VERONICA: Why me ? Why did I open that cupboard ? Why did I ever come out here ? Why did I meet Edith the Temporary Receptionist in The Voodoo Bar ? Why ? Because I didn't know. I didn't know she was the Terrible Temp murderer.

EDITH: Veronica please. Listen to me. I'm not a murderer. I didn't kill him. It was an accident.

VERONICA: (FALLING ON TO HER KNEES) Take my money. Take my credit cards. Take my mobile. Just please don't kill me.

EDITH: Veronica I'm not going to kill you. Just listen to me.

VERONICA: (CLASPING HANDS) Dear God, if there is a God, when I'm gone please don't let Dalton get the Ryegold account. He's a stupid little jerk and he'll stuff it up completely. Also I'm sorry for raiding the Tuck Shop in Infants' School but I only took four Redskins. Honest. Jenny Tate stole the seven dollars and twenty three cents, not me.

EDITH: Veronica I'm not going to kill you.

VERONICA: And listen, I know I've been bumping up my Expense account but everybody else does it.

EDITH: Veronica !

EDITH SLAPS VERONICA ACROSS THE FACE. PAUSE.

VERONICA: (SHOCKED) You slapped me.

EDITH: You wouldn't shut up.

VERONICA: That hurt.

EDITH: I'm sorry. But would you just listen to me. I have to tell you what happened. I didn't kill him. Well, I didn't mean to. You see I haven't been going out much lately, I've been a bit upset because of mum and dad, so my friends talked me into going to see a band on Wednesday night. Just at a pub up the road, help cheer me up, The Hummingbirds. Anyway, I went and I was having a pretty good time and I met this guy. He seemed pretty nice and my girlfriends thought he was alright looking so we kind of got talking. Then at the end of the night he said he'd give me a lift home. Everyone said it would be alright, some of the other guys knew him, so I said okay. We got back home and he asked to come in for a coffee. I didn't think anything of it, I'm not very experienced with that type of thing. Anyway, after we had the coffee he just kept hanging around and I couldn't get rid of him. Then he started kissing me and trying to lift my dress up. I told him to stop it but he just kept saying "Come on baby, you know you want it". I tried to run but he grabbed me, so I pushed him and he slipped. He hit his head on the fireplace. I thought at first that he was just knocked out, but after awhile I realised he wasn't.

VERONICA: He tried to rape you ?

EDITH: I was going to call the police but I got scared. What if they didn't believe me ? So I put him in the cupboard until I could work out what to do. That's why I couldn't ask my friends from around here. They know him. That's why I had to come to you. I didn't mean to kill him.

VERONICA: Forget it. (SHE STANDS) He deserved it. I hate men like that. (HITTING CUPBOARD) Bastard.

EDITH: What are we going to do ?

VERONICA: Well, now that I'm here you'll just have to be strong. We've got to call the police.

EDITH: I don't think we can.

VERONICA: Why not ? They've got police in Villawood haven't they ?

EDITH HOLDS UP A POLICE BADGE.

EDITH: Not as many as they use to.

VERONICA: Oh my god. Oh my god. He's a cop. You killed a cop. Things just keep getting worse. It's like some terrible nightmare.

EDITH: It makes a difference doesn't it ? Him being a policemen. I don't think they'll believe me now.

VERONICA: And if they don't believe you they certainly won't believe me. "No officer. I'm just a friend from work. I didn't know she had Constable Bloggs in the cupboard." They'll think I masterminded the whole thing. I'll be convicted as an Al Qaeda Undercover agent-person. There'll do an expose on me on A Current Affair. Now don't panic. Think V. Think. You're a brilliant young Account Manager. You're resourceful. Intelligent. Not overawed by any situation. You make million dollar decisions everyday. Well, thousand dollar decisions. You can handle this hiccup. You can conquer this threat to your very existence. What to do ? What to do ? Think.

**VERONICA PACES UP AND DOWN. EDITH FOLLOWS HER. SUDDENLY:
LIGHTS CHANGE.**

VERONICA: I've got it ! There's only one thing to do. Dump the body !

EDITH: What ?

VERONICA: Dump the body.

EDITH: We can't.

VERONICA: Why not ?

EDITH: They'll know where he was. Everyone knew he was dropping me off.

VERONICA: That's alright. You just say he dropped you off, then he left.

EDITH: But they've got tests. They'll find out when he died.

VERONICA: They won't know where he died though will they ?

EDITH: But there'll be fibres from the living room carpet on his clothing, they'll find my hair on his jacket and there'll be traces of coffee.

VERONICA: How come you're so up on all this ?

EDITH: I watch a lot of police shows on television.

VERONICA: Well, you can say he came in for a coffee and then he went.

EDITH: But what about his car ?

VERONICA: Is that it in the drive way ? The electric green Torana ?

EDITH: I tried to hide it.

VERONICA: I was kind of wondering why it was covered with blankets.

EDITH: It was all I could find.

VERONICA: Well, we'll take that too. We'll just put him in the boot and push it off a cliff.

EDITH: Veronica we can't.

VERONICA: Why not ?

EDITH: There aren't any cliffs in Villawood.

VERONICA: What about a dump ? You've got to have a dump.

EDITH: It's down the road.

VERONICA: Perfect. We'll put him in the front seat. Make it look like he was driving. Like he had an accident.

EDITH: But it's wrong.

VERONICA: Edith, this is no time for morals.

EDITH: Maybe, but they'll be looking for the car. We'll be stopped.

VERONICA: Why ? Has it been reported missing ?

EDITH: Not yet. He said he was going away for a few days, wanted me to go with him. But if they see the car and us driving it ...

VERONICA: We'll take the backstreets then. They'll never spot us. Bastard tried to rape you. He deserves it.

EDITH: It'll never work.

VERONICA: Yes it will. It's a brilliant plan. It's my plan. (BRIGHTENING) This is quite exciting isn't it ? Maybe I could do this as an ongoing thing, a sideline. "V- the rescuer. Call V in your hour of need." That's got potential.

EDITH: Veronica.

VERONICA: Stop being so negative. And stop calling me Veronica. My name is V. It's short, sharp, to the point - just like me. Up to date, businesslike.

EDITH: Veronica's a nice name.

VERONICA: That's just it, I don't want to be nice. I made that decision when I was fifteen years old. From then on I was going to be V.

EDITH: I couldn't do it. "E" would seem kind of funny.

VERONICA: That's why I'm an Account Manager and you're the Temporary Receptionist. I've got the courage to live by my convictions.

EDITH: What does that mean ?

VERONICA: It means you've got to act now. Put that body in the car and drive it down to the dump.

EDITH: Veronica, I mean V, we can't.

VERONICA: Can't ? What is can't ?

EDITH: An un-word.

VERONICA: And un-words don't exist do they ? Yes we can. We can do this. Come on, let's get that body into the car.

EDITH: But -.

VERONICA: Edith, no buts. Trust me.

BLACKOUT.

SPOTLIGHT, THIS TIME UP CENTRE.

IN IT, AS USUAL, **THE STRANGER**.

HE STARES AT THE AUDIENCE BLANKLY. SLOWLY HE REALISES HE HAS SOMETHING IN HIS HAND. (THE CIGARETTE LIGHTER.) HE LOOKS AT IT. PAUSE. HE PUTS IT IN ONE OF HIS POCKETS.

HE BEGINS TO SEARCH HIS POCKETS FOR SOMETHING, PRESUMABLY THE VODKA. HE FINDS SOMETHING ELSE AND PULLS IT OUT. IT'S THE CIGARETTE. HE BRUSHES IT OFF AND PUTS IT IN HIS MOUTH.

THE STRANGER SEARCHES AGAIN, THIS TIME FOR THE LIGHTER. INSTEAD HOWEVER HE FINDS THE VODKA. PAUSE. HE OPENS IT AND WITH CIGARETTE STILL IN MOUTH, TAKES A SWIG. HE PUTS THE BOTTLE BACK.

AS HE DOES THERE IS A CLINKING SOUND. PAUSE. **THE STRANGER** REALISES THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE IN THE POCKET.

KEEPING THE FIRST HAND IN THE POCKET, HE REACHES OVER WITH THE OTHER HAND AND PULLS SOMETHING OUT. IT'S THE LIGHTER.

USING BOTH HANDS HE LIGHTS THE LIGHTER. AS HE BRINGS IT SLOWLY TO HIS MOUTH TO LIGHT THE CIGARETTE, HE STARTS TO FALL BACKWARDS. HE STOPS MOVING THE LIGHTER AND IMMEDIATELY STRAIGHTENS UP AGAIN.

HE TRIES AGAIN. ONCE MORE HE BEGINS TO FALL BACK. AGAIN HE LOWERS THE LIGHTER AND STRAIGHTENS UP.

THE STRANGER TRIES ONE FINAL EFFORT. HE RAISES THE LIGHTER SLOWLY. HE BEGINS TO FALL BACK YET AGAIN SO HE STOPS MOVING THE LIGHTER, BUT THIS TIME HE'S GONE PAST THE POINT OF NO RETURN.

HE CONTINUES TO FALL BACKWARDS AND SLAMS WITH A THUD ONTO THE GROUND, CIGARETTE STILL IN MOUTH AND LIGHTER STILL IN HAND.

SLOWLY THE LIGHTS COME UP

Scene 3.
On the road to the Dump.
Half an hour later.

EDITH AND VERONICA ENTER DOWNSTAGE, HUFFING AND PUFFING.

THEY CARRY BETWEEN THEM WHAT LOOKS LIKE A BODY, CRUDELY WRAPPED IN STRING AND BROWN PAPER. THEY DO NOT NOTICE THE STRANGER CONCEALED IN THE SHADOWS UPSTAGE.

THEY STOP.

VERONICA: Oh god, why didn't I ever learn how to drive a manual ?

EDITH: Don't stop now.

VERONICA: How much further is it ?

EDITH: Not far.

VERONICA: I thought you said it was just down the road.

EDITH: It's a long road.

VERONICA: I can't go on. I need a rest.

EDITH: We're almost there.

VERONICA: My arms are killing me.

THEY PUT THE BODY DOWN.

VERONICA: (TO BODY) Christ you're heavy.

EDITH: We should hurry.

VERONICA: Excuse me. I'm the one who's in a rush here.

EDITH: It's just that we have to get back and get rid of the car.

VERONICA: Uh, uh. No way. That's your department.

EDITH: But I can't drive at all.

VERONICA: My obligations finish with the disposal of the body. (LOOKING AROUND) I need to sit down.

PAUSE. VERONICA SITS ON THE BODY.

EDITH: What are you doing ?

VERONICA: What does it look like ?

EDITH: Don't sit on him.

VERONICA: I don't think he's going to mind. I can't sit on the road. Come on. You too. Rest your legs. (PATTING THE SPOT BESIDE HER) Edith.

EDITH RELUCTANTLY SITS BESIDE VERONICA.

VERONICA: Quite comfortable isn't he ? (REFERRING TO PAPER) Didn't you have anything else in the house ?

EDITH: Only some Glad wrap.

VERONICA: He looks like a big Christmas present.

EDITH: We could've pushed the car.

VERONICA: All this way. I don't think so.

EDITH PULLS OUT A PACK OF CIGARETTES.

EDITH: You want one ?

VERONICA: I've given up.

EDITH: Me too.

PAUSE. THEY BOTH TAKE ONE AND LIGHT UP.

EDITH: What am I going to do with the car ?

VERONICA: I don't know. Put some pillows and a sheet on it. Pretend it's a bed.

EDITH: V. Everybody knows it's his.

VERONICA: Look if you're really that worried we'll push it around the back and I'll get some one to come and pick it up on the weekend.

EDITH: But what will they do with it ?

VERONICA: Leave it by the side of the road somewhere. Cleaned of prints. They'll never trace it back to you.

EDITH: I don't know.

VERONICA: Hey, Edith, I haven't let you down so far have I ?

PAUSE. **EDITH LOOKS AT VERONICA.**

VERONICA: Have I ?

EDITH: No.

PAUSE.

EDITH: Veronica ? Can I ask you a question ?

VERONICA: How did I get to the top so quickly ? The three “bees”. Boobs, brains and “Bad luck mate, this is my job now.”

VERONICA LAUGHS. EDITH DOESN'T. VERONICA STOPS.

EDITH: No, it's just I heard you call Mr Dalton a (WHISPERS) “wanker” on the phone before.

VERONICA: That's because he is a (WHISPERS) “wanker”.

EDITH: Then how come you ...

VERONICA: Gave him a quick bonk in the photocopying room ?

EDITH NODS.

VERONICA: Well Edith, what can I say ? We'd just slam dunked the Dunkin' Donuts campaign and after a few Moets in the boardroom ... well, love moves in mysterious ways. And just between you and I so did Dalton. Anyway, that was before he linked up with Sherleen from Sales. Or was it Arleen from Accounting ? I always get those two mixed up.

EDITH: Arleen is in marketing. Sherleen runs Human Resources.

VERONICA: Well it was some floozy. And speaking of the “slime bag” Dalton guess I better try the restaurant again. Get the bad news.

EDITH: Good luck.

VERONICA PULLS OUT THE PHONE AND HITS THE RE-DIAL BUTTON.

VERONICA: (TO PHONE) Hello il Farto. It's V MacGregor here again. I rang earlier. (LISTENS) Could I speak to Mr Dalton again ? (LISTENS) Yes the “Big” party. (LISTENS) Listen we've done all those gags, just get him. (TO **EDITH**) Cross fingers.

EDITH CROSSES FINGERS ON BOTH HER HANDS. PAUSE. SHE CROSSES HER LEGS.

VERONICA: (TO PHONE) Dalton, it's me. (LISTENS) No, not Arleen. V. Listen I'm afraid I'm still held up, family dramas and all that, thought I'd just check in for a quick progress score. (LISTENS) What ? He's still not there ? (LISTENS) No phone call ? (LISTENS) Strange. Well, I guess I'm not missing anything then ? (LISTENS) Meet you later ? (LISTENS) Don't flatter yourself. It wasn't that good.

EDITH: He still hasn't showed up ?

VERONICA: No, he hasn't. This must be my lucky day. (SHE LOOKS AT THE BODY) Well, maybe not .

EDITH: Can we go now ?

VERONICA: Patience. I haven't finished my cancer stick yet.

EDITH LOOKS GLUM.

VERONICA: Hey, don't sulk. Smile. You look good when you smile.

EDITH: Do I ?

VERONICA: Yes, you do. You should smile more often. Come on. Chin up. Let me take a look at you.

EDITH HOLDS HER HEAD UP. **VERONICA** PULLS OUT ANOTHER HANKIE AND START'S WIPING **EDITH'S** FACE.

VERONICA: You've got a good face. You shouldn't cover it up with all this make up.

EDITH: Do you think I wear too much ?

VERONICA: Just a tad. You don't need to. You look fine without it. Same with your clothes.

EDITH: What about them ?

VERONICA: You look like a Sara Lee Cheesecake. Layer upon layer. Don't cover up your body. You've got a good body. Show it off.

EDITH: I'm fat.

VERONICA: No you're not. You're well proportioned. A couple of guys in the office have noticed it.

EDITH: Who ?

VERONICA: Never you mind, but people are interested. Less make up, snappier clothes and you'll be in the photocopying room making some photocopies of your own soon enough. We'll have to do something about that hair though.

EDITH: What's wrong with my hair ?

SUDDENLY THERE IS A LOUD GROAN.

VERONICA: Edith. Was that you ?

EDITH: No.

THERE IS ANOTHER LOUD GROAN. THEY FREEZE AND LOOK AT EACH OTHER. PAUSE. THEY SCREAM AND JUMP OFF THE BODY.

VERONICA: Oh my god. He's alive.

EDITH: No. He can't be. I'm sure he was dead.

VERONICA: Well he's not.

THERE IS ANOTHER GROAN.

VERONICA: I'm getting out of here.

EDITH: But he knows it was me. He'll come after me.

VERONICA: And after you, he'll come after me.

ANOTHER GROAN.

TOGETHER: Run !!!

THEY START TO RUN OFF. SUDDENLY THERE IS A LOUD FARTING NOISE. THE GIRLS STOP.

VERONICA: What was that ? Did you hear something ?

EDITH: It sounded like someone -

THERE IS ANOTHER FARTING NOISE.

VERONICA: Something smells fishy.

EDITH: (SNIFFING) Yes.

THE GIRLS TURN TO SEE **THE STRANGER** STAGGERING TO HIS FEET. HE GROANS, THEN FARTS.

EDITH: You bastard ! (MOVING TOWARDS STRANGER) How dare you scare us like that ? We thought you were him. We thought he was alive. How dare you !

THE STRANGER FARTS AGAIN.

EDITH: You're disgusting. I'll fix you.

EDITH STARTS TO HIT AND PUNCH **THE STRANGER**. **THE STRANGER** FALLS TO THE GROUND. **EDITH** DROPS TO HER KNEES AND CONTINUES TO RAIN BLOWS ON HIM.

EDITH: I hate you. I hate you. I hate you.

VERONICA GOES OVER TO **EDITH**.

VERONICA: (SOFTLY) Edith.

EDITH CONTINUES TO HIT THE NOW PROSTRATE **STRANGER**.

VERONICA: Edith. I hate to bring this up but you've already killed one man this week. We don't want another body to worry about. Edith ? Darling. Stop it !!!

EDITH STOPS. SHE STANDS.

EDITH: Sorry. Just got a little carried away.

THE STRANGER FARTS ONCE MORE. **EDITH** GIVES HIM ONE FINAL KICK.

EDITH: Pig !

VERONICA: Let's get out of here shall we ?

THEY MOVE QUICKLY OVER TO THE BODY. **VERONICA** BEGINS TO PICK IT UP. **EDITH** IS LOOKING OFF LEFT, ANXIOUSLY.

VERONICA: Come on. Pick him up.

EDITH LOOKS AROUND CONFUSED.

VERONICA: Edith. What's wrong ?

EDITH: Um ...

VERONICA: Let's go.

EDITH: I think we went past it.

VERONICA: What do you mean ? No we didn't.

EDITH: That's a dead end. (POINTING RIGHT) It must be back that way.

VERONICA: Edith, we didn't pass the Dump.

EDITH: Are you sure ? Maybe it's not on this road.

VERONICA: What road are we on ?

EDITH: I forget. What road is the dump on ?

VERONICA: How should I know ? I don't remember. Edith, what's going on ?

EDITH: (LOOKING LEFT) I'm sure it was down there.

VERONICA: Edith, what are you trying to tell me ?

PAUSE.

EDITH: We're lost.

VERONICA: Lost ? What do you mean lost ?

EDITH: Lost.

VERONICA: But we can't be lost. How could we possibly be lost ? We're carrying a dead body. We're travelling at the speed of two women carrying a corpse how could we possibly be lost ?

EDITH: I don't know. But we are. Funny, isn't it ?

EDITH LAUGHS. VERONICA STARTS PACING TOWARDS EDITH MENACINGLY. EDITH RETREATS.

VERONICA: Funny ? No it's not funny. It's hysterical. It's downright side splitting. Come here Edith. You were the navigator. It was your responsibility to take us to the dump. How could we possibly be lost ?

EDITH: Calm down V.

VERONICA: Calm ? I am very calm. And when I wring your neck I will still be calm. I will kill you in cold blood. I will strangle you very calmly indeed.

EDITH: V don't. This is scary.

VERONICA: Scary ? This isn't scary. I'll tell you what's scary. Being lost in East Villawood with a dead body, that's what's scary. I knew I should never have come back here.

PAUSE.

EDITH: What ?

VERONICA: Nothing.

EDITH: Come back here ?

PAUSE.

VERONICA: I used to live here.

EDITH: Really ?

VERONICA: Just around the corner. Derribong Street.

EDITH: You're kidding. Neighbours.

VERONICA: I even went to Leightonfield High. Class of '88.

EDITH: Class of '86. Schoolmates.

VERONICA: Don't push it. Now you know why I didn't want to come back here. I spent my whole life trying to get out of the place.

EDITH: It's alright.

VERONICA: Not for this AM it ain't.

EDITH: I guess you're pretty mad I dragged you out here then. And got you lost. With a dead body.

VERONICA: Mad ? Why should I be mad ? Come here Edith.

EDITH STARTS TO EDGE AWAY.

VERONICA: Little Edie ... come here !

VERONICA CHASES EDITH. SHE CATCHES EDITH AND BEGINS TO THROTTLE HER.

STRANGER: Hey.

VERONICA STOPS STRANGLING AND TURNS TO THE STRANGER.

STRANGER: Don't I know you ?

VERONICA: I don't think so.

VERONICA RETURNS TO THE STRANGLING.

STRANGER: Sure I do.

VERONICA: (TURNING TOWARDS **STRANGER**) Look, would you just -

VERONICA STOPS STRANGLING AND RELEASES HER GRIP AS SHE SUDDENLY REALISES WHO THE STRANGER IS.

VERONICA: Mr Ryegold !

EDITH: Mr Ryegold ?

VERONICA: Mr Ryegold, sir, what are you doing out here ?

RYEGOLD: Went to a function.

VERONICA: What happened ?

RYEGOLD: Got pissed. Got lost.

VERONICA: But we had a dinner engagement at eight o'clock.

RYEGOLD: You're late.

VERONICA: You don't seem to understand. I'm V. V MacGregor. From The Big Advertising Agency.

RYEGOLD: So what ?

VERONICA: We handle your account.

RYEGOLD: Oh. Well keep up the good work.

HE BURPS LOUDLY.

VERONICA: Mr Ryegold. Are you drunk ?

RYEGOLD: Drunk ? Course not. Few too many lemon squashes, that's all.
(PAUSE) Catch.

VERONICA: Catch what ?

RYEGOLD: Me.

RYEGOLD STARTS TO FALL. **VERONICA** CATCHES HIM.

VERONICA: Edith.

EDITH: Yes ?

VERONICA: Help.

EDITH RACES OVER TO **VERONICA** AND TOGETHER THEY MANAGE TO STAND **RYEGOLD** UP.

RYEGOLD: Thank you. (TO **EDITH**) Are you sure your name's Edith ?

EDITH: Positive.

VERONICA: Let me introduce you. Mr Ryegold, this is Edith, the Temp. Edith, this is Mr Ryegold. The man who made the most important nutritional discovery of the century. A loaf that restores health and improves mental faculties. "Ryegold - the bread that puts years on your life."

RYEGOLD: Horseshit. (PAUSE) Excuse me.

RYEGOLD FALLS AGAIN. THIS TIME **EDITH** CATCHES HIM. THEY STAND HIM UP ONCE MORE.

RYEGOLD: (TO **VERONICA**) What's your name again ?

VERONICA: V. I'm an AD. That's what the dinner was about. Whether you approved me taking over your account.

RYEGOLD: I thought the little whinger was doin' it.

VERONICA: Price. Yes he is but you're not happy with his performance.

RYEGOLD: I'm not.

VERONICA: No. That's why you specifically asked for me to take over.

RYEGOLD: I did ? What about the slimy one ?

VERONICA: Dalton ? What about him ?

RYEGOLD: I thought he was next in line.

VERONICA: No, no Mr Ryegold. V MacGregor. I'm the 2-I-C. I'm the one who'll be taking over.

RYEGOLD: Oh. Doesn't matter anyway.

VERONICA: Why do you say that ? Of course it matters.

RYEGOLD: No reason. Oops Here we go again.

RYEGOLD FALLS AGAIN. THEY CATCH HIM. EDITH STRUGGLES.

EDITH: I can't hold him.

RYEGOLD: Quick. Get him over there.

THEY DRAG HIM OVER AND SIT HIM ON THE BODY.

RYEGOLD: (TO **VERONICA**) So you're an AD then ?

VERONICA: Yes.

RYEGOLD: Got any drugs ?

VERONICA: Pardon me.

RYEGOLD: AD's always got drugs. Cocaine ? Ecstasy ? Speed ? What about an aspirin ? You gotta have an aspirin.

VERONICA: Nothing. Sorry.

RYEGOLD: Booze then. Tequila ? Scotch ? A beer ? You're not an AD.

VERONICA: Why don't you have some vodka ?

RYEGOLD: You got some ?

VERONICA: There's a bottle in your pocket.

VERONICA POINTS TO THE BOTTLE IN RYEGOLD'S POCKET.

RYEGOLD: Oh. Thank you.

RYEGOLD TAKES A LARGE SWIG.

RYEGOLD: That's better. (PAUSE) I gotta lie down.

RYEGOLD LIES DOWN ON TOP OF THE BODY. VERONICA SUDDENLY REMEMBERS WHAT RYEGOLD IS LYING ON.

VERONICA: Shit !

SHE GRABS EDITH AND DRAGS HER AWAY FROM THE BODY.

VERONICA: What are we going to do ?

EDITH: About what ?

VERONICA: The body. If Mr Ryegold finds out what it is I'm done for.

EDITH: He's too pissed to notice anything.

VERONICA: He maybe slightly intoxicated but he also happens to be a very important client and my ticket to a big promotion. So just button it.

EDITH: Is that all you care about ?

VERONICA: At the moment, yes.

EDITH: Well, let's just push him onto the ground. Let him sleep it off.

VERONICA: And why would we want to do that ?

EDITH: So we can take the body down to the dump.

VERONICA: Edith. What are you talking about ? I can't go anywhere. That's Mr Ryegold. Our biggest account. And he's all mine.

**RYEGOLD IS STARTING TO EXAMINE THE BROWN PAPER.
EDITH NOTICES HIM. SHE TAPS VERONICA ON THE SHOULDER.**

VERONICA: (SHE SEES **RYEGOLD**) Christ ! Do something.

EDITH: What ?

VERONICA: Get him away from the body. Please. Remember -schoolmates, neighbours. (PAUSE) Alright. I'll help you take it down to the dump.

EDITH: Promise ?

VERONICA: Promise. Just get him away from the body.

EDITH: How ?

VERONICA: I don't know. Get his attention. I'll try and hide it.

EDITH SMILES TENTATIVELY AT RYEGOLD. RYEGOLD SMILES BACK. VERONICA GESTURES FOR HER TO KEEP GOING.

EDITH: Mr Ryegold ?

RYEGOLD: Yo.

EDITH: (GESTURING **RYEGOLD** AWAY FROM THE BODY) Can I ... talk to you for a second ?

RYEGOLD: Sure.

RYEGOLD STANDS. JUST AS VERONICA IS ABOUT TO GRAB THE BODY, HE SITS AGAIN.

RYEGOLD: Coming.

RYEGOLD TRIES TO STAND ONCE MORE. VERONICA STARTS TO GRAB THE BODY BUT HE SITS ONCE MORE.

RYEGOLD: Won't be a sec.

RYEGOLD THINKS. PAUSE. HE ROCKS FORWARD ON TO HIS HANDS AND KNEES, AND CRAWLS OVER TO EDITH. VERONICA GRABS THE BODY AND STARTS TRYING TO DRAG IT OFF.

RYEGOLD: (REACHING **EDITH**) How may I be of service ?

EDITH: Ah, well ... I was wondering ...

RYEGOLD: Yes ?

EDITH: How do you make bread ?

RYEGOLD: How do you make bread ? (THINKS) Shit. I don't know. How do you make bread ?

EDITH: I'm asking you Mr Ryegold.

RYEGOLD: Right. (TO **VERONICA**) Hey you. She wants to know how you make bread.

VERONICA: (JUMPING IN FRONT OF BODY) Well, that's a secret Mr Ryegold. Only you and your carefully selected team of scientists know what goes into making a Ryegold loaf. It's classified information.

RYEGOLD: It is ?

VERONICA: Yes, Mr Ryegold.

RYEGOLD: Oh. (TO **EDITH**) It's a secret.

VERONICA: I'm just the receptionist. You can tell me.

RYEGOLD: I can ? (TO **VERONICA**) Hey. She still wants to know.

VERONICA HAS DRAGGED THE BODY TO THE SIDE OF THE STAGE.

VERONICA: (RETURNING) But you can't tell her Mr Ryegold. You can't tell anybody. Organisations all over the world want to know your

VERONICA: (CONT) special mix of healthy ingredients. She could be a spy, working for one of your competitors. She could destroy the good name of Ryegold bread. A name you've fought to protect all your life.

RYEGOLD: Who wrote that crap ?

VERONICA: Price sir. It was in your last campaign.

RYEGOLD: No wonder I'm getting rid of him. (TO **EDITH**) What were we talking about ?

EDITH: Secrets.

RYEGOLD: Oh yeah. (TO **VERONICA**) Are you sure you haven't got any drugs ?

VERONICA: Quite sure.

RYEGOLD STARTS TO LEAVE.

VERONICA: Mr Ryegold. Where are you going ?

RYEGOLD: Where am I ?

VERONICA: In ... Villawood sir.

EDITH: Villawood East actually.

RYEGOLD: Villawood. Hey, I know a dealer around here. I need to get really stoned.

VERONICA: But I've got some great ideas I'd like to throw at you. Re the new campaign.

RYEGOLD: Well why don't you come with me ? We could get loose together.

VERONICA: Sounds great.

EDITH: That's it. You're just going to walk off.

VERONICA: You got a problem with that ?

EDITH: Aren't you forgetting our ... position ?

VERONICA: Edith, the position has changed.

EDITH: Veronica !

VERONICA: Excuse me for a moment Mr Ryegold.

VERONICA GOES OVER TO EDITH.

VERONICA: What is wrong with you ?

EDITH: You said you were going to help me.

VERONICA: I lied.

EDITH: But you promised !

VERONICA: Listen, I think I've helped quite enough.

EDITH: Please.

VERONICA: I've brought him all this way. Can't you do anything for yourself ?

RYEGOLD HAS BEGUN TO SWAY DANGEROUSLY.

EDITH: You are such a bitch.

VERONICA: Thank you. Now if you'll excuse me. I've got some business to conduct.

VERONICA TURNS TO SEE RYEGOLD FALL WITH A THUMP ONTO THE GROUND.

VERONICA: Mr Ryegold !

VERONICA RUSHES OVER TO HIM. EDITH THINKS, THEN KNEELS.

VERONICA: Mr Ryegold, sir. Are you alright ? Mr Ryegold.

VERONICA PUTS HER EAR CLOSE TO RYEGOLD'S MOUTH.

VERONICA: Oh my god. Edith !

EDITH IS MOUTHING A SILENT PRAYER.

VERONICA: Edith ? What are you doing ? You've gotta help me.

EDITH: (EYES STILL CLOSED) I'm praying.

VERONICA: What ? This is no time for games.

EDITH: I've tried everything else.

VERONICA: Edith this is not Sunday School. It's real life.

EDITH FINISHES MOUTHING SILENTLY.

EDITH: Amen. (STANDING) Finished.

VERONICA: It's Mr Ryegold.

EDITH: Who cares about Mr Ryegold ?

VERONICA: He's my future.

EDITH: Some future.

VERONICA: Edith ! I think he's dead.

EDITH: Dead ?

VERONICA NODS. EDITH RACES OVER.

EDITH: Oh shit.

VERONICA: Oh my god. Now we've got two dead bodies.

SUDDENLY WE HEAR HEAVENLY MUSIC. THEY LOOK UP. THE LIGHTS CHANGE TO SUGGEST A TACKY NIGHTCLUB.

GOD APPEARS AS AN EXTREMELY DAPPER MIDDLE AGED MAN, CLEAN SHAVEN, HAIR SLICKED BACK AND DRESSED TO THE 'NINES'. HE IS WEARING A WHITE PANAMA HAT, WHITE GLOVES AND CARRIES A VERY SMART CANE. HIS DOUBLE BREASTED SUIT IS ALSO WHITE, AS IS HIS SHIRT, HIS SILK TIE AND HIS BELT. EVEN HIS SHOES ARE WHITE, GLISTENING BRIGHTLY. THE GIRLS ARE STUNNED. PAUSE. A MICROPHONE IS THROWN TO **GOD**. HE MOVES TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE, SINGING.

GOD: "You're just too good too be true
 Can't take my eyes offa you
 You feel like heaven to touch
 I wanna hold you so much
 You're just too good too be true
 Can't take my eyes offa you"
 (SPOKEN) Chorus.
 (SINGING) I love you baby
 And if it's quite alright I need you baby
 On a lonely night. I love you baby,
 Trust in me when I say. I love you baby !"

LIGHTS CHANGE.

VERONICA: Who the bloody hell are you ?

GOD: I'm God.

VERONICA: What do you mean god ? God who ?

GOD: Just God. The Holy Spirit to be exact.

VERONICA: Now I've seen everything. It's the Second Coming. In Villawood.

GOD: You said you needed my help, so here I am. What can I do for you ?

VERONICA: Listen here, whoever you are, I didn't ask for help. This girl can look after herself.

EDITH: V. It is God.

GOD: Yes.

EDITH: (TO GOD) Hi.

GOD: Hi.

EDITH: I always thought you'd look like that.

GOD: I have many different shapes and forms.

VERONICA: Oh my god.

GOD: Yes ?

VERONICA: I wasn't talking to you. So you're god ?

GOD: Yes.

VERONICA: Ha , ha. Very funny. Listen I don't know who you are, or what this is all about but we're kind of busy at the moment so why don't you just piss off ?

GOD: (BRIGHTLY) Alright. Good bye.

GOD STARTS TO LEAVE.

EDITH: No. Don't go. Wait. (**GOD STOPS.**) V, it is God.

VERONICA: What are you talking about ? God doesn't sing.

EDITH: When I was little I used to imagine what God looked like and he always looked just like that. And when I prayed just then I asked him to come down and help us. And here he is.

VERONICA: You prayed and he just appeared ?

EDITH: That's right.

VERONICA: Edith, it doesn't work like that.

EDITH: Why not ?

VERONICA: It's ridiculous. This whole thing is ridiculous. Alright, if you're really god, you know everything right ? I mean you see all ?

GOD: That's correct.

VERONICA: Alright then, what colour knickers am I wearing ?

EDITH: V!

VERONICA: No. It's a fair question. If he's really god then he'll be able to tell me. Got you now smarty pants.

PAUSE.

GOD: Pink.

VERONICA: Pink.

EDITH: Is he right ?

VERONICA: (TO EDITH) I don't know. I can't remember what I put on this morning.

EDITH: Well take a look.

VERONICA: Okay. Hold on.

VERONICA CHECKS.

VERONICA: Oh my god. He's right.

EDITH: See ? I told you he was God.

VERONICA: Lucky guess.

EDITH: V, it is God.

VERONICA: It can't be.

EDITH: Why not ?

VERONICA: It just can't.

GOD: Oh dear, you unbelievers are so boring.

VERONICA: God just doesn't appear.

GOD: Not usually, no.

VERONICA: Then why did you turn up now ?

GOD: Special occasion. Had a bit of spare time, saw three souls in need, so here I am.

VERONICA: What do you mean "three souls in need" ? I'm not a soul in need.

EDITH: (POINTING TO BODY) He's probably talking about him.

VERONICA: I should hope so. (PAUSE) Alright then, if you really are God, then bring Mr Ryegold back to life.

GOD: (SINGS) "Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, start all over again."

RYEGOLD CLICKS HIS FINGERS, TWICE. HE SITS UP.

RYEGOLD: Wow. That was extreme.

EDITH: Born again and he's still pissed.

VERONICA: You really are God.

GOD: Sure am. Hit it.

THE LIGHTS CHANGE AGAIN AND ANOTHER BACKING TAPE STARTS.
GOD GRABS THE MICROPHONE ONCE MORE

GOD: (SINGING TO AUDIENCE)
"On a dark desert highway ,cool wind in my hair
Warm smell of colitas, rising up through the air
Up ahead in the distance, I saw a shimmering light
My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim,
I had to stop for the night." (SPOKEN) Everybody.

RYEGOLD AND THE GIRLS JOIN IN THE CHORUS.

GOD: (SINGING) "Welcome to The Hotel California
Such a lovely place, such a lovely face.
Plenty of room at The Hotel California
Any time of year, you can find us here."

GOD FREEZES. LIGHTS CHANGE. **RYEGOLD** AND THE GIRLS APPLAUD.

GOD: Thank you.

RYEGOLD: Do you know any Beach Boys ?

LIGHTS CHANGE. BACKING TAPE.

GOD: (SINGING) " Ba - ba - ba. Ba - ba - baran.
"Ba- ba - ba. Ba - ba - baran.
(SPOKEN) I could do this all night, but -

MUSIC STOPS. LIGHTS CHANGE.

GOD: I've got a singing lesson in ten minutes.

RYEGOLD: (DISAPPOINTED) Oh.

GOD: Look, Edith, V, I'd love to stay and chat but I've gotta dash. What are we going to do about your little dilemma ?

VERONICA: What dilemma ?

GOD: Our friend in the brown paper.

VERONICA: How did you know about that ?

EDITH: V. He's God. (TO **GOD**) Am I in trouble ? Will I rot in the fires of hell ? Will I live in Eternal Damnation for all of eternity ?

GOD: Who told you that ?

EDITH: The nuns at Infants School.

GOD: Boy, have they got it wrong. No. Not all. Forget it. He was a scumbag. And I'll be talking to him about it later. Rehab.

VERONICA: You're condoning murder now ?

GOD: It was an accident. But still this is not the best way to go about things.

EDITH: Dumping the body ?

VERONICA: What's wrong ? I thought it was a good idea.

GOD: I won't say anymore. Now if you'll excuse me. Miracles to perform and all that.

VERONICA: That's it ? You're going ?

GOD: My business here is done.

VERONICA: But you can't just go. We can market this. "The meaning of life".

GOD: That'd spoil it. Better if you don't know. Goodbye Edith.

EDITH: Bye. Any tips ?

GOD: Just take it one day at a time. Try and do your best.

EDITH: (POINTING TO BODY) What about him ?

GOD: That's up to you.

EDITH: One more thing.

GOD: Yes ?

EDITH: My parents ...

GOD: They're fine. And they send their love.

GOD STARTS TO EXIT.

RYEGOLD: Hey. God.

GOD: Quickly.

RYEGOLD RUNS OVER AND WHISPERS SOMETHING IN GOD'S EAR.

GOD: (SMILING) Why not ?

GOD PICKS UP THE MICROPHONE.

GOD: Last one.

RYEGOLD: (GETTING OUT SUNGLASSES) Put these on.

GOD: (PUTTING THEM ON) Why thank you.

GOD SNAPS HIS FINGERS. LIGHTS CHANGE MUSIC.

GOD: (SINGING) "Well it's one for the money,
Two for the show,
Three to get ready - now go cat, go.
But don't you step on my blue suede shoes."

RYEGOLD: Blue, blue, blue suede shoes.

GOD: "You can do anything
but don't step on my blue suede shoes."

MUSIC STOPS. LIGHTS CHANGE.

GOD: Short but oh so sweet.

RYEGOLD: You do that very well.

GOD: I've been getting some inside help.

EDITH: Thanks for everything.

GOD: My pleasure. Cheerio. And V - see you soon. (EXITS.)

VERONICA: Oh my god - I'm gonna die.

GOD: (RETURNING) Just kidding. (EXITS)

VERONICA: (RELIEVED) Strange man.

EDITH HAS BEEN STANDING ALONE, THINKING. SHE APPROACHES VERONICA.

EDITH: Can I have the phone please?

VERONICA: (GIVING HER THE PHONE) What are you going to do ?

EDITH: Call the cops.

VERONICA: You sure ?

EDITH: You can go if you like.

VERONICA: Come this far. What are you going to tell them ?

EDITH: Tell 'em what happened. (TO PHONE) Police.
(TO **VERONICA**) Cross fingers.

VERONICA CROSSES HER FINGERS. **RYEGOLD** IS STILL STANDING, DAZED, LOOKING OFF TO WHERE **GOD** MADE HIS EXIT. **VERONICA** GOES TO HIM.

VERONICA: Mr Ryegold. What's the matter ?

RYEGOLD: God took my sunglasses.

EDITH: (TO PHONE) It's Edith. Edith Walker. I'm in Villawood, near the dump.
(LISTENS) We need some help. (LISTENS) A Policeman's been ... hurt.
(SHE HANGS UP.) They said they'll be here as soon as possible.

VERONICA: I'll bet. Mr Ryegold. Something's bugging me. You know before when we were talking about me taking over the account ? You said "it didn't matter anyway". Why was that ?

RYEGOLD: Something happened today. Something big.

VERONICA: You didn't sign up with another Agency ?

RYEGOLD: No. We went bust.

VERONICA: Bust ?

RYEGOLD: Ryegold is in Receivership.

VERONICA: But how did it happen ?

RYEGOLD: (LAUGHING) No dough.

VERONICA: Are you serious ?

RYEGOLD: (LAUGHING) Not a crust.

VERONICA: But you're our biggest client.

RYEGOLD: (STILL LAUGHING) I know.

VERONICA: God you're a jerk.

RYEGOLD: I know.

VERONICA: (MOVING AWAY) What a night. Edith. Do you think that really was God ?

EDITH: I don't know. What do you think ?

VERONICA: Somehow I just can't imagine God doing Elvis impersonations.

WE HEAR SIRENS IN THE DISTANCE. FLASHING BLUE LIGHT.

EDITH: That was quick.

VERONICA: (TO **RYEGOLD**) Well I'll be buggered if I'm going call you Mr Ryegold anymore. Ken.

EDITH: I used to know a Ken once.

RYEGOLD: I used to know an Edith.

THE PENNY DROPS.

EDITH: Uncle Kenny !

VERONICA: Uncle Kenny ?

RYEGOLD: (OPENING HIS ARMS) Little Edie.

VERONICA: Oh my god.

GOD: (APPEARING) Yes.

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP. ALL SING: "FROM A DISTANCE".

END PLAY.