

The Body in the Basement

A Suburban Comedy

By

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Characters

MAX

EILEEN

THE MAN IN BLACK/THE SOLDIER

THE WOMAN

Setting

The dining room of Max and Eileen's well appointed, somewhat old fashioned home in a well off suburb in Sydney. A door leads off right to the kitchen and a passageway off left leads to the front door.

There is also a door in the middle of the back wall amongst the ornately framed pictures and other bric a brac. We will discover later this leads to the basement.

The centrepiece is a well looked after antique dining table with two equally well looked after antique chairs.

Time

A Thursday evening. The present.

Lights up on EILEEN making the final adjustments to the lavishly set Spanish themed dinner table with two places. She hums happily to herself as she goes about her work.

She exits to the kitchen and returns moments later with some fresh red roses, which she places in the vase on the middle of the table.

Moments later we hear a key turning in the door off left. EILEEN's head snaps up.

EILEEN: Wait just a moment.

MAX: (OFF) I'm home.

EILEEN: I heard but just wait.

MAX: What ?

EILEEN: I'm not quite ready.

PAUSE.

MAX: (EXCITED) Oh.

EILEEN FINISHES PLACING THE ROSES IN THE VASE.

SHE QUICKLY RACES BACK TO THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM AND TAKES UP HER POSITION – ARMS CROSSED, HEAD RAISED, EYES ABLAZE.

EILEEN: Ready !

SHE PLACES THE LAST REMAINING ROSE IN HER MOUTH AND BITES DOWN BARING HER TEETH.

MAX ENTERS CARRYING HIS BRIEFCASE AND COAT. HE STOPS SUDDENLY WHEN HE SEES EILEEN.

MAX: Goodness me.

EILEEN: Are you ready ?

MAX: Should we – before dinner ?

EILEEN: Yes !

MAX: But I haven't even had anything to drink. You know I'm not very good at it when I haven't had anything to drink.

EILEEN: I don't care. We must do it. Now.

EILEEN RAISES HER ARM DRAMATICALLY AND POINTS ACROSS THE ROOM.

MAX: But –

EILEEN: Now !

MAX: (EXCITED BY EILEEN'S FIRMNESS) If you insist.

MAX GOES OVER TO AN OLD FASHIONED RECORD PLAYER IN THE CORNER. HE PLACES THE NEEDLE DOWN ON THE RECORD.

MAX RACES BACK TO EILEEN AND ASSUMES HIS POSITION, STANDING BEHIND HER ARMS AROUND HER WAIST.

SUDDENLY THE MUSIC BEGINS AND PERFECTLY IN UNISON MAX AND EILEEN'S HEADS SNAP BACK, THEN FORWARD AND THEY BEGIN TO TANGO – QUITE EXPERTLY.

THE MANY LONG NIGHTS OF TANGO LESSONS HAVE PAID OFF AND THEY DANCE WITH FIRE, PASSION AND SOME SKILL.

THERE ARE TWISTS AND TURNS, DIPS AND SPINS – A TOUR DE FORCE OF TANGO-ING.

THE DANCE ENDS AS THE MUSIC CLIMAXES WITH MAX RIPPING THE ROSE FROM EILEEN'S TEETH AND SPITTING IT TO THE GROUND.

HE THEN DIPS HER LOW AND KISSES HER PASSIONATELY ON THE LIPS BEFORE HIS HEAD SNAPS BACK UP AND HER ARMS DROP TO THE FLOOR, AGAIN IN PERFECT UNISON, AS THE MUSIC HITS ITS FINAL NOTE.

THERE IS A DRAMATIC PAUSE, THEN:

MAX: That was pretty good.

EILEEN: It was fantastic.

MAX: I think I stepped on your toes.

EILEEN: I hardly noticed.

MAX: But I'm sure I did. Twice.

EILEEN: Stop it.

MAX: It was when we –

EILEEN: Please. Stop. You know I can't stand it.

MAX: Sorry. (COVERING HIS MOUTH) Oops.

EILEEN: You can't help yourself.

MAX: Sorry. I mean – I'm not sorry. I mean sorry for saying I'm sorry. I mean I'm not sorry for saying I'm sorry. (SLIGHT PAUSE) Sorry.

EILEEN: I can't believe you.

MAX: Sorry. (COVERING MOUTH) I did it again.

EILEEN: Why can't you just be like when you are when we dance ? Strong, masculine, silent. (COVERING HIS MOUTH) Don't say it. Why do you always have to go and spoil it ?

MAX MUMBLES THROUGH EILEEN'S HAND.

EILEEN: By opening your mouth. I hate it.

MAX MUMBLES THROUGH EILEEN'S HAND.

EILEEN: (REMOVING HER HAND) The fact that you are someone who would say sorry. The person you are when we dance would never think of saying that word.

MAX: Not even if he stepped on your toes.

EILEEN: Never.

MAX: Not even if he did it twice ? (EILEEN SHAKES HER HEAD) Three times ? (EILEEN SHAKES HER HEAD) Five times ? (EILEEN SHAKES HER HEAD) Ten times ?

EILEEN: Not even if he trampled on my toes till they bled all over the floor like a vat of Andulasian Gazpacho.

MAX: Not even then ? Goodness.

EILEEN: *Débil, pathetic, desesperado.*

MAX: Sorry ? I mean – pardon ?

EILEEN: You heard me: "*Débil, pathetic, desesperado.*"

MAX: Is it a song title ?

EILEEN: Weak, pathetic –

MAX: I got that one.

EILEEN: Hopeless. *Desesperado* – hopeless.

MAX: I don't think you're being very nurturing.

EILEEN: *Fuerte, de gran alcance, masculino.*

MAX: That doesn't sound too great either.

EILEEN: That's what you should be. *Fuerte, de gran alcance, masculino.*
Strong, powerful, masculine.

MAX: Your pronunciation has really come on, hasn't it ?

EILEEN: Instead you're "*Débil, pathetic, desesperado.*" Say it. Go on – say it.
Debil.

MAX: *De-bil.*

EILEEN: No *Debil.*

MAX: *Debil.*

EILEEN: Good. *Pathetic.*

MAX: *Pathetic.*

EILEEN: Too easy. *Desesperado.*

MAX: *Desesperado.*

EILEEN: Excellent. *Desesperado.* Hopeless. Absolutely hopeless.

MAX: You're giving me quite mixed messages here aren't you ?

EILEEN: Deal with it.

EILEEN LEANS IN CLOSE TO MAX, PROVOKING HIM.

MAX: If you say so dearest.

EILEEN: And don't call me dearest !

MAX: As you wish dear (CORRECTING HIMSELF) - ling.

EILEEN LETS OUT AN EXASPERATED SCREAM.

MAX: So what's for dinner ?

EILEEN: You don't deserve dinner.

MAX: I did dance well.

EILEEN: But then you spoiled it by ...

MAX: By saying that word ?

EILEEN: No. You spoiled it by being ..

MAX: Being what ?

EILEEN: You.

MAX: Oh. Well, I'll try not to do that next time.

EILEEN: A very good idea. You should try be less "you" on a more regular basis.

MAX: Point noted.

EILEEN: Sorry to be blunt.

MAX: You're using that word.

EILEEN: But I am. Sorry.

MAX: It's okay to be blunt – as long as it's done in a nurturing environment.

EILEEN: And you know I always provide that.

MAX: Next time I stand on your toes – I won't give a damn.

THE LIGHTS CHANGE TO DRAMATIC BLOOD RED.

EILEEN: That's it.

MAX: I'll just stamp and stamp and stamp. Like I was a Matador in the *anillo de Bull*.

EILEEN: *Fuerte*.

MAX: I'll stamp on your little toes like they were little blood oranges – ready to pop. And even if you scream in pain I won't stop.

EILEEN: *Masculino*.

MAX: (STAMPING HIS FEET LIKE A MATADOR) I'll stamp and stamp and stamp as they pop and pop and pop.

EILEEN: *De gran alcance*.

MAX: And afterwards, when you're lying there dripping blood –

EILEEN: Yes ?

MAX: Like the blood dripping from St Josephs coat in that painting by the great Diego Velazquez –

EILEEN: What will you do ?

MAX: I'll look down at you, fading on the floor -

EILEEN: Like a wilting rose

MAX: My lips slightly parted –

EILEEN: Full red lips –

MAX: Eyes on fire

EILEEN: Dark black eyes –

MAX: Hair raging in the wild wind –

EILEEN: Long dark locks

MAX: And I'll say –

EILEEN: Yes, my darling

MAX: I'll say –

EILEEN: Whisper it to me my love.

MAX: I'll say – nothing.

EILEEN: (IN RAPTURE) Ah.

MAX: I'll just stomp on your hands – twice – each – and storm out of the villa, slamming the door behind me.

EILEEN: *Estoy en éxtasis erótico.*

MAX: Isn't that better than saying sorry ?

EILEEN: Oh yes ! Yes my sensuous Matador !

MAX: Now –

THE LIGHTS CHANGE BACK TO NORMAL.

MAX: (VOICE RETURNING TO NORMAL) What's for dinner ?

EILEEN IS FLUSHED AND BREATHLESS, SHE TAKES A MOMENT TO RECOVER.

EILEEN: Just give me a moment.

SLOWLY SHE GETS TO HER FEET.

EILEEN: I'll just go and check on the ... ham bone. I mean - *jamon serrano*.

SHE MAKES HER WAY OFF STAGE AND IN TO THE KITCHEN.

MAX SITS DOWN AT THE TABLE. HE REPLACES THE ROSE NEATLY IN THE VASE AND ADJUSTS THE CUTLERY AND SETTINGS SLIGHTLY, PERFECTING THEM.

WE HEAR POTS AND PANS CLANGING OFF, CONTINUES THROUGH FOLLOWING.

MAX: (OVER CLANGING) How was tennis ?

EILEEN: (OVER CLANGING) Say what ?

MAX: (OVER CLANGING) I said 'How was tennis ?'

EILEEN: (OVER CLANGING) I can't hear you.

THE CLANGING SUDDENLY STOPS.

MAX: I was merely enquiring as to how tennis went today ?

EILEEN: Good.

MAX: Who won ?

EILEEN: Can't really remember.

MAX: You played your usual pro-set Round Robin format ?

EILEEN: I think so.

EILEEN RETURNS WITH A TRAY FULL OF LITTLE BOWLS. SHE PLACES THEM ON THE TABLE.

MAX: Ah the Tapas. Perfect way to start *la cena - el menú del día más grande*. Dinner - the great meal of the day.

EILEEN: (PLACING DOWN THE BOWLS) I must say you're pronunciation is also excellent.

MAX: It's all in the "c's" and the "u's". *La cena. El menu.*

EILEEN: Very impressive.

MAX: So there's one thing I do well at least.

EILEEN: Two.

MAX: (PROUDLY) And what would the second one be, darling ?

EILEEN: Dancing – of course.

MAX: (CRESTFALLEN) Of course.

EILEEN: Except when you say that word.

MAX: Yes. Now – let's see ? What have we got ?

EILEEN: I'm not going to tell you. I want to guess.

MAX: Oh lovely – an appetising game. (PICKING UP A BOWL) Okay, this first one is easy. Little cubes of potato – excellently cut if I might add –

EILEEN: Thank you – and smell.

MAX: (SMELLING) With tomato and spices. That's *Patatas Bravas*.

EILEEN: Correct. (HANDING HIM ANOTHER BOWL) And now -

MAX: That's prawns.

EILEEN: But what kind ?

MAX: It looks like –

EILEEN: Smell.

MAX: (HE TAKES A SNIFF) Garlic. *Gambas al Ajillo* – or we might call it - garlic prawns.

EILEEN: Another tick – and prawns brought fresh today.

MAX: I can almost smell the sea.

EILEEN: (HANDING HIM ANOTHER BOWL) Don't get cocky. They get harder.

MAX: Now this looks like a real delicacy.

EILEEN: Oh it is.

MAX: It's an omelette.

EILEEN: What kind ?

MAX: With potato and ...

EILEEN: Close your eyes.

MAX: (CLOSES HIS EYES AND SMELLS) Onion.

EILEEN: You got it.

MAX: *Tortilla de Patata.*

EILEEN: Oh, it's too easy.

MAX: No, I'm just too good.

EILEEN: Stop it Max, you're preening. (HANDING HIM A BOWL) Try this one.

MAX: Spanish Meatballs.

EILEEN: In ?

MAX: A spicy tomato sauce.

EILEEN: Which makes it ?

MAX: *Albondigas.* Didn't even need to smell that one.

EILEEN: Too clever for his own good. (HANDING ANOTHER BOWL) Okay – last one.

MAX: Going for the perfect score. (LOOKING AT THE BOWL) This looks very similar.

EILEEN: But it's not.

MAX: Okay ... (CLOSES EYES, SMELLS) There's tomato, garlic and meat.

EILEEN: But what kind ?

MAX: Smells like beef. No chicken.

EILEEN: Are you sure ?

MAX: It's rabbit ! Rabbit stew !

EILEEN: Which is ?

MAX: *Estofado de Conelo.*

EILEEN: Is that your final answer ?

MAX: Yes.

EILEEN: No ! Wrong, wrong, wrong. Ha, ha – I got you. Lined him up and knocked him down. Just like that bitch Renee today.

MAX: I did get four right.

EILEEN: She thought she had me but I – I smashed her. Over weight, BMW driving – fake redhead. Should've seen her reaching for my swerving serve. Like a whale. A beached whale, with little flippers. Face bright red, like her hair, tits almost flopping out of her stupid white dress. She wearing white – yeah right. Little porky flippers flailing around. (MAKING WHALE SOUND) Arp, arp, arp.

MAX: Eileen.

EILEEN: You know I heard she had an affair with boy who came to fix her oven. He fixed more than that. The oven boy. And he was Lebanese ! Ugh !

MAX: (LOUD) Dearest !

EILEEN IS SILENT.

MAX: I'm happy for you to re-live today's grand triumph but I must know – (HOLDING UP BOWL) what is it ?

EILEEN: Oh, sautéed beef, chicken and chorizo with a slightly sweet tomato sauce.

MAX: *Ropa Vieja.*

EILEEN: Too late skinny. The rabbit has flown.

MAX: I'll know next time.

EILEEN: Next time is for losers – which you are ! Ha, ha, ha !

EILEEN IS ONCE AGAIN INCHES FROM MAX'S FACE.

MAX: Uh, darling ?

EILEEN: Yes darling.

MAX: You do seem very ...

EILEEN: Yes.

MAX: Excitable tonight.

EILEEN: Must've been that hot and heavy tango. Got me all worked up. So what are you going to do about it ?

MAX: Dinner is on the table.

EILEEN LIES DOWN ON THE TABLE, SQUEEZING HERSELF BETWEEN THE BOWLS.

EILEEN: So what ?

EILEEN STICKS HER HAND INTO ONE OF THE BOWLS AND COMES UP WITH TOMATO SAUCE DRIPPING DOWN HER FINGER. SHE HOLDS THE FINGER UP IN FRONT OF MAX'S FACE AND STARTS LICKING OFF THE SAUCE.

EILEEN: What's the matter ? Aren't you hungry ?

SUDDENLY THE PHONE RINGS.

EILEEN: Leave it.

MAX STARTS TO GET UP.

EILEEN: (GRABBING HIM) I said – let it ring. We're busy.

THE PHONE RINGS AGAIN.

MAX: (WRESTLING FREE) It could be important.

EILEEN LETS OUT A FRUSTRATED GROAN. MAX GOES TO ANSWER THE PHONE.

MAX: (ANSWERING) Hello./ Oh hello Yazz.

EILEEN FRANTICALLY MAKES SIGNS FOR MAX NOT TO TELL THE CALLER SHE'S HOME.

MAX: Just having dinner. /Yes she's here. Would you like me to get her ?

EILEEN CONTINUES TO MAKE SIGNS SHE DOESN'T WANT TO TALK.

MAX: Darling, it's Yasmine.

STILL MORE SIGNS FROM EILEEN.

MAX: (TO PHONE) Hold on Yazz. Your mother is trying to tell me something. (TO EILEEN) What is it darling ?

EILEEN: Never mind.

EILEEN RELUCTANTLY COMES FORWARD AND TAKES THE PHONE.

EILEEN: Hello darling. What have I told you about calling us at this time ?/ We're in the middle of dinner. And what if we were entertaining ? Very awkward. You know we've asked you to be more considerate./ When do we leave ? Next Tuesday. Why ?/ You and Rodney want to come with us, what a lovely idea. But sadly that won't be possible darling. They're fully booked./No completely. Somebody else tried to book last month and they told them to (YELLING) "piss off."/No darling, there's nothing they can do. They only have a certain number of seats that's why they toldf that couple to (YELLING) "get lost."/Yes it is going to be wonderful. Don't worry. We'll send you a postcard./ Why don't you try Bali ? I hear it's very cheap these days since all those people got blown up./ (MAKING HISSING AND POPPING SOUNDS) What's that darling ? Sorry I can't hear you. I think the *paella*'s boiling over. (MORE HISSING AND POPPING) Gotta run. Love to Rodney. (ANOTHER HISS AND POP) Bye bye.

EILEEN HANGS UP THE PHONE. SHE GLARES AT MAX.

MAX: Sssss –

EILEEN: Don't you dare say it.

MAX: You know I find it very hard to lie.

EILEEN: Who are you ? John Howard.

MAX: And we do hear from her so seldomly.

EILEEN: You mean - you. She rings me three times a day. Every day.

MAX: What did she want ?

EILEEN: Oh nothing.

MAX: Sounded like something.

EILEEN: Well it wasn't. Now eat up – your *Tortilla* is getting cold.

MAX: Darling please – I want you tell me what she said.

EILEEN: (DEAD PAN) Oh I love it when you get aggressive. She wants to come on the trip.

MAX: Really ? How wonderful.

EILEEN: Are you kidding ? I don't want her tagging along – whining up and done the *Costa Blanca*.

MAX: Why ever not ?

EILEEN: Because this trip is for me. I mean – us. So we can have some quality time – alone. No issues or problems.

MAX: It's only ten days.

EILEEN: Ten days of hell with her droning on.

MAX: It's just that I get to see her so –

EILEEN: As you said.

MAX: Can't we just consider it.

EILEEN: No ! N-o. If you want them to go then you can go alone. I'm staying right here.

PAUSE.

MAX: I just thought it might be nice.

EILEEN: Well you were wrong. Now shut up and eat your spicy meatball.

MAX BEGINS TO EAT. PAUSE.

MAX: I guess you're right. After all, where did they suddenly get the money ?

EILEEN: What ?

MAX: To afford the trip. Very sudden isn't it ?

EILEEN: Oh Rodney always has money.

MAX: Yes but where does he get that money from ?

EILEEN: Well he works very hard.

MAX: Doing what ?

EILEEN: I don't know. Ask Yasmine. Making deliveries.

MAX: Yes but delivering what ? And to whom ?

EILEEN: What are you insinuating tiny ?

MAX: I'm not insinuating anything.

EILEEN: No, I know that tone of voice. You are definitely insinuating.

MAX: I'm just querying whether you know any other "delivery man" who can suddenly lay his hands on twenty thousand dollars for an overseas trip ?

EILEEN: Maybe he's been saving up.

MAX: Since when ? They went to Byron Bay last month. The Gold Coast the month before that.

EILEEN: He's obviously got a good contract.

MAX: Yes – but with who ? Or maybe those trips weren't holidays. Maybe he was making some interstate deliveries.

EILEEN: On his holiday ? I don't think it works like that.

MAX: No ? Driving some small brown packages interstate ?

SILENCE. EILEEN GIVES MAX AN ICY STARE.

EILEEN: It's only recently I've begun to notice how small and cruel you've become. Small and cruel.

MAX: It's the only thing that makes sense.

EILEEN: In your *pathetic* little mind. *Pathetic*.

MAX: You just don't have that kind of cash lying around.

EILEEN: *Débil*

MAX: Unless you're – You said yourself once your hairdresser thought Rodney –

EILEEN: *Desesperado*.

MAX: Thank about it.

EILEEN: I'll think about it if you want ? Think that the man who our only daughter is living with could be a drug courier. Think that she is living off his ill gotten gains. Think that she may have to move out of his million dollar apartment overlooking the beach in Bondi. Think that she may have to come back and live with us !

PAUSE.

MAX: You're right. He's just works for a very good company.

EILEEN: Excellent company.

MAX: Pay rises every month.

EILEEN: And holidays.

MAX: Healthy bonuses.

EILEEN: Very healthy.

MAX: Lucky Rodney

EILEEN: To have such generous employers.

MAX: Lucky Yasmine.

EILEEN: Lucky us. More *Sangria* darling ?

MAX: Don't mind if I do. And may I once again congratulate you on this excellent *Ropa Vieja*. Truly delicious.

EILEEN: Thank you darling. Means a lot to hear you say that.

MAX: My pleasure.

EILEEN: No, no. All mine. All mine.

MAX: Perhaps we can go over our itinerary again later.

EILEEN: Great idea.

MAX: We have the option of a day trip to *Toledo* or *La Mancha* on day five.

EILEEN: Tough choice.

MAX: Very.

EILEEN: Weight it up for me ?

MAX: Well *Toledo* has the exquisite Cathedral and the Church of *Santo Tome*, home of El Greco's masterpiece "*El Entierro del Conde de Orgaz*".

EILEEN: "*Orgaz*". Sounds unmissable.

MAX: But then if we take a train to *La Mancha* – that of course is the famous setting of Cervantes epic novel – "*Don Quixote*".

EILEEN: That's the one with – (GESTURES)

MAX: The old knight who goes mad.

EILEEN: Yes and the ... (GESTURES AGAIN)

MAX: Windmills.

EILEEN: And the ... (AND AGAIN)

MAX: The little donkey.

EILEEN: Tough choice.

MAX: Very.

EILEEN: Isn't it nice that despite our little differences of opinion –

MAX: Which there are many.

EILEEN: We still have one deep unifying bond.

MAX: Yes.

EILEEN: An absolute hatred of our children.

MAX: Let's say a desire for them to become independent.

EILEEN: To live on their own two feet –

MAX: Find their own path.

EILEEN: And not to come home.

MAX: Under any circumstances.

EILEEN: I love you darling.

MAX: And I love you.

EILEEN: Cheers.

THEY CLINK GLASSES AND DRINK.

MAX: This *Tortilla* is delicious. Scrum – tilli – ump – tious.

EILEEN: Eat up. There's plenty more.

MAX: I don't know where you find the time to cook up such a feast. What with tennis and -

EILEEN: Tennis.

MAX: And -

EILEEN: Tennis. Oh you know ? I squeeze it in. And tell me darling – how was your day ?

MAX: Busy, busy.

EILEEN: And productive ?

MAX: Very. I've been practising with people on the train.

EILEEN: Practising ?

MAX: My pronunciation.

EILEEN: Really ?

MAX: Yes.

EILEEN: Isn't that a little odd ?

MAX: Not at all. Spanish is a very popular language. You'd be surprised how many people know a few words.

EILEEN: So what do you do ?

MAX: Well I just pick out someone who looks like they might know a bit.

EILEEN: Of Spanish ?

MAX: That's right.

EILEEN: Where ?

MAX: On the train.

EILEEN: There are some ?

MAX: Usually.

EILEEN: How ... multi-cultural we have become.

MAX: Then I just plonk myself down next to them, say a few words and there you go.

EILEEN: Now let me get this right. You just pick out some poor unsuspecting bystander on the train who looks vaguely –

MAX: European.

EILEEN: And you just sidle up to them –

MAX NODS

- EILEEN: And then whisper a few phrases into their nearest lughole ?
- MAX: Works surprisingly well.
- EILEEN: I'm surprised you don't get punched on the noggin'.
- MAX: European people are very friendly. Social. They're used to it.
- EILEEN: You mean people just starting conversations with them – on trains ?
- MAX: Yes.
- EILEEN: Blimey.
- MAX: Blimey ! I've had the most fascinating interchanges. Just today I was talking to a Portuguese man –
- EILEEN: Portuguese ?
- MAX: Very similar to Spanish – it's right next door - and we had this extraordinary discussion about the anniversary.
- EILEEN: Anniversary ?
- MAX: Yes – it was today. In Madrid.
- EILEEN: The Anniversary of what ? Independence, the Civil War.
- MAX: No much more current. The bomb blast. The whole country stopped in a solemn -
- EILEEN: (SHOCKED) The what ?
- MAX: Bomb blast. On the train. In Madrid. It was a year ago today.
- EILEEN: How big was this ... blast ?
- MAX: Oh very big. Terrible in fact. Over one hundred people died.
- EILEEN: In the bomb blast ?
- MAX: On the train. I just hope they weren't on the way to *La Mancha*.

MAX LAUGHS. PAUSE.

- EILEEN: Hee, hee. I just can't believe I wasn't told about this.
- MAX: It was big news at the time. In all the papers.

EILEEN: You know I don't read the papers. Too depressing.

MAX: And the TV.

EILEEN: And you know I don't watch the TV. I like to keep nicely isolated.

MAX: And the radio.

EILEEN: I don't listen to the radio either.

MAX: You listen to Alan Jones every morning.

EILEEN: That doesn't count. That's Alan Jones.

MAX: I guess the incident didn't rate a mention with Alan.

EILEEN: He knows what we like to hear.

MAX: Don't want to hear about big world events like that.

EILEEN: Absolutely.

MAX: Spoil your pro set.

EILEEN: Completely.

MAX: Put you off lunch.

EILEEN: Very off putting.

MAX: Ruin your day.

EILEEN: He knows better than that.

MAX: Just like that bomb ruined the day of the people on that train.

EILEEN: Don't be smart. It really doesn't suit you. (PAUSE) I just can't believe you didn't tell me. When were you going to let me know this slight detail ? As we were boarding a train – to Madrid.

MAX: I really thought you knew.

EILEEN: Well I didn't. And next time I would appreciate you not omitting such important historical details.

MAX: Like an update on World War Two ?

EILEEN: Heard about that thanks.

MAX: I think there was a World War One as well.

EILEEN: Stop being so flippant. I just need to know about things that effect my safety. Especially in countries where people get blown up on trains. (STANDING) I wonder if it's too late to change our trip. I think they have a seven day Swiss Alps adventure that sounds good. Any trains blow up there recently ?

MAX: Eileen. It doesn't affect your safety.

EILEEN: Not what the passengers on that train said as their seats disappeared up their behinds.

MAX: It was one bomb on one train and it was just because a terrorist group wanted Spain to pull their troops out of Iraq which they did when the Government changed so there shouldn't be any more bombs on trains now.

PAUSE. EILEEN LOOKS AT MAX.

EILEEN: Okay – now in that sentence – the totality of which I did not completely catch – but what I did catch – was in that sentence there was a number of rather emotive words. These words were – terrorist, Iraq, bombs, trains, Spain. Did I mention terrorists ? I thought I was going to the *Costa Brava* for a fiesta followed by a Siesta in a Villa in sleepy, succulent Spain – now I discover I'm off to one of the world's "hot spots" to chance my life with a thrill ride on a booby trapped train with terrorists from Iraq.

MAX: The terrorists aren't from Iraq darling. They're from Spain.

EILEEN: And that makes it better. The fact that it's not Osama bin Laden who'll be blowing me up. It's his brother - Sanchez. I'll make sure to remember that as my head is being separated from my shoulder blades.

MAX: Please darling, you really are over reacting.

EILEEN: How can I be over reacting ? In eight days I'm going to be sitting on a seat that a few days earlier was sent on a one way trip to the moon – complete with its passengers bottom half. I am not over reacting !

MAX: Please, calm down. Come and sit down. Come.

MAX USHERS EILEEN OVER TO SIT DOWN.

MAX: Have some *Sangria*.

EILEEN: No, no more *Sangria* for me. *Chianti*, only *chianti*.

MAX: Have some *Tapas* then.

EILEEN: No, no *Tapas*. A doughnut. A nice juicy jam doughnut.

MAX: Some bread.

EILEEN: No – it's a Spanish loaf.

MAX: Mineral water ?

EILEEN: From Seville.

MAX: Orange ?

EILEEN: Valencia.

MAX: Butter ?

EILEEN: Don't be stupid. I can't eat butter. Think of my cholesterol.

MAX: Okay then – don't eat anything. Just sit there and listen to me. Very carefully. Now you know – I always tell the truth. Always. I find it very hard to lie.

EILEEN: You do.

MAX: A lie is something I just can not bring myself to utter.

EILEEN: Honest Max.

MAX: So I am going to explain to you honestly the safety situation in Spain and if you still have any more doubts – any fears at all – then we will cancel the trip - at great expense may I point out - and go to Italy instead.

EILEEN: No. Italy's too near Spain. Sweden. I want to go to Sweden. Nice and cold. Too cold for terrorists Sweden. Lots of snow.

MAX: Just hear me out first !

EILEEN: You don't have to shout.

MAX: Okay – I'm not shouting. I'm speaking in a very calm and rational voice and I'm explaining why it's safe enough for us to go to Spain. (PAUSE) Alright, now several years ago there was a conservative government in Spain –

EILEEN: Good choice, very wise.

MAX: Who supported the war in Iraq –

EILEEN: So they should have – very good idea. Saddam Hussein was a maniac.

MAX: Well they supported it and sent troops.

EILEEN: Like we did. Our brave boys. Fighting the good fight.

MAX: Exactly – now there were some people in Spain –

EILEEN: Terrorists ?

MAX: Spanish Terrorists who didn't support the war in Iraq.

EILEEN: Why not ?

MAX: I'm not sure – don't believe in war, or thought it was just about oil, or thought Spain should mind its own business.

EILEEN: Wimps.

MAX: So they - blew up a train.

EILEEN: Well that makes sense. You don't believe in violence so you blow up a train.

MAX: Well they are –

EILEEN: Terrorists.

MAX: Anyway now this bomb blast upset a lot of people –

EILEEN: Like wives who were making their husbands a nice dinner and then suddenly find they won't be coming home because their head's in Madrid and their legs are in Cordoba.

MAX: And there was an election coming up and the people began to blame the Government.

EILEEN: It wasn't there fault.

MAX: They felt the investigation afterwards was badly handled. There was rumours of a cover up.

EILEEN: Who listens to rumours ? Unless of course they're about Renee which in that case they're probably true.

MAX: So they voted the Government out at the next election and voted in a new Government.

EILEEN: Which Government ?

MAX: I'm not sure – I think they're Socialists.

EILEEN: Socialists !

MAX: And due to more public pressure they pulled the troops out of Iraq, which made the terrorists happy I guess – or maybe they just caught them – and so no more bombs. On trains. Anymore.

EILLEN LOOKS AT MAX. PAUSE.

EILEEN: And you want me - to go to this ... country - on holiday ? Not only are they run by socialists and have terrorists roaming the streets – not to mention the trains – but they then give in to these terrorists and take their troops out of bad countries like Iraq so maniacs like Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden can get off scot free and get more terrorists to come to good countries like ours and blow up more trains so more wives' husbands' don't come home for the dinner she spent one hour and fifty six minutes making. Enough ! Give me the phone – we're switching to Sweden.

THERE IS A SOUND OF SCUTTling BENEATH THEM. EILEEN'S HEAD SUDDENLY JERKS TOWARDS THE BACK WALL.

EILEEN: What was that ?

MAX: What ?

EILEEN: That noise. It sounded like a little scuttling.

SCUTTling AGAIN.

EILEEN: There it goes again.

MAX: I didn't hear anything.

EILEEN: Yes. A distinct scuttling.

MAX: I still can't hear it.

EILEEN: You going deaf as well ? We need to get your ears checked.

THE SCUTTling GETS LOUDER.

EILEEN: Bloody hell ! That was loud. I think it's coming from the basement.

MAX: I didn't even know we had a basement.

EILEEN: Well we do – and there's something down there. Something that scuttles.

MAX: Funny I didn't know about this basement. Where is it ?

EILEEN: You idiot. It's a basement. Where do you think it is ? It's in the basement.

AGAIN LOUD SCUTTling.

- EILEEN: Stop it. Stop it down there. Stop that scuttling.
- MAX: No, I mean how do I get to it ? Have you ever been down there ?
- EILEEN: Are you kidding ? It's a basement. I'm not going into a basement. It's cold and damp and there's things growing in it.
- MAX: Pity I didn't know about this basement before. I could've turned it into a nice wine cellar. Rather than putting all those racks in Jeremy's old room.
- EILEEN: (WHISPERING) Quiet. Stop talking. The scuttling thing might hear us.
- MAX: And what ?
- EILEEN: It might come up and attack us.
- MAX: Well what do you want me to do ?
- EILEEN: What do you think ? I want you to go down there and kill it.
- MAX: But how ? If you've never been down there and I didn't even know we had one – how do I get into it ?
- EILEEN: (POINTING TO DOOR IN BACK WALL) Don't be so stupid. Through that door. Between our Arthur Boyd landscapes.
- MAX: How do you know that ?
- EILEEN: The power man came one day to check the meter. He went through that door. Come to think of it I can't remember him coming up. Maybe he's still down there. (CALLING) Hey you – get out of there. I think you've had plenty of time to check that meter by now.

MORE SUBTERRANEAN SCUTTLING, AGAIN LOUDER.

- EILEEN: Woah ! Listen to that scuttling. We've got it mad now. It's sure to come and attack us.
- MAX: I still can't hear it.
- EILEEN: You must've heard that.
- MAX: It's probably just a spider.
- EILEEN: Pretty big spider.
- MAX: Well, I guess I better go and check it out. (EXITING) Back in a moment.
- EILEEN: Stop. Where are you going ?

MAX: I'll need a torch. As you said – it's dark down there. There's one in the garage.

EILEEN: You're not going out to the garage and leaving me in here with that – scuttling - thing.

MAX: What's the point of going down there if I can't even see what it is when I find it ?

EILEEN GOES TO THE TABLE AND LIGHTS A CANDLE.

EILEEN: Here – take this.

MAX: It's not really what I had in mind.

EILEEN: Take it.

MAX TAKES THE CANDLE.

EILEEN: (GRABBING BUTTER KNIFE) And this.

MAX: What are you doing ?

EILEEN: You're not going down there unarmed.

MAX: How can I arm myself when I don't even know what I meant to be arming myself against ?

EILEEN: Take it. All we know is it's a thing that scuttles. Knives are good against scuttling things.

MAX: (TAKING KNIFE) Especially if I want to make them a sandwich.

EILEEN: Now stop procrastinating and go down there and kill it.

MAX: It might be a possum or a cat.

EILEEN: Then kill it anyway. And whatever it is - make sure it hasn't had babies.

MAX: And what is it have ?

EILEEN: Then kill them as well. Don't want an infestation.

MAX: You're very ruthless.

EILEEN: I'm learning.

MAX: (GULPS) Okay. I'm going.

HE DOESN'T MOVE.

EILEEN: Then go.

MAX: Yep. I'm going. (STILL DOESN'T MOVE) Maybe you can give me a little push.

EILEEN PUSHES MAX TOWARDS THE DOOR.

THEY REACH THE DOOR AND EILEEN STEPS BACK. PAUSE.

MAX: Funny. I've never even noticed this door was here before.

EILEEN: Stop procrastinating.

MAX: (STILL NOT MOVING) Okay – here I go. Opening the door.

EILEEN: Then open it.

WITH A SHAKING ARM MAX REACHES OUT AND OPENS THE DOOR. IT CREAKS OPEN.

MAX: Must get some oil for that.

EILEEN: Stop talking ! Just get your bony arse down there.

SLOWLY MAX STEPS INTO THE DARKNESS INSIDE THE DOOR.

EILEEN: And close the door behind you.

MAX: Do I have to ?

EILEEN: Do you want it scuttling it's way up here ?

MAX: (WITH DREAD) I suppose you're right.

MAX SLOWLY CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.

EILEEN HEAVES A HUGE SIGH OF RELIEF. SHE GOES AND SITS DOWN.

SHE LOOKS DOWN AT ONE OF THE BOWLS NEAR HER. SLOWLY SHE REACHES OUT AND PICKS UP THE BOWL. SHE LOOKS DOWN AT THE FOOD INSIDE AND SMELLS IT.

SHE LIKES THE SMELL AND GRABS A FORK. SHE TASTES THE FOOD. SHE LETS OUT A SMALL SIGH OF PLEASURE AND BEGINS TO WOLF THE FOOD DOWN.

SOON SHE EMPTIES THE BOWL AND GRABS ANOTHER ONE.

SUDDENLY THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN SLIGHTLY.

EILEEN: Back so soon.

THE DOOR STOPS MOVING. EILEEN FREEZES IN TERROR.

EILEEN: Max – is that you ? (SILENCE. EILEEN GULPS) Max ?

THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN TO REVEAL MAX STANDING IN THE DOORWAY, KNIFE STILL IN HAND BUT NOW CANDLELESS.

HE STANDS STILL FOR A MOMENT THEN TRUDGES SLOWLY INTO THE ROOM.

EILEEN: Close the door ! Close the door !

MAX TURNS SLOWLY AND CLOSES THE DOOR.

EILEEN: So did you kill it ?

NO RESPONSE FROM MAX.

EILEEN: Max – there's nothing on your knife. Did you squash it with your feet ? Show me your soles.

MAX STILL DOES NOT RESPOND.

EILEEN: Max, darling. Speak to me. What is it ?

MAX: There's something down there.

EILEEN: No kidding but the question is what is it ?

MAX: I'm not sure.

EILEEN: You mean you went all the way down there and you didn't find out what it was.

MAX: It's some kind of animal – I think.

EILEEN: How do you know that ?

MAX: I got about halfway down the stairs and I heard a ...

EILEEN: A scuttling ?

MAX: No. I heard a ...

EILEEN: A what ? (GRABBING KNIFE AND HOLDING IT TO HIS THROAT) For God's sake tell me what you heard.

MAX: A ... whimper. I was so surprised I dropped the candle.

EILEEN: Dropped the candle ? You mean we're all going to burn to a crisp now.

MAX: It bounced down the stairs and went out. It was so dark I couldn't see anything – so I decided to come back upstairs.

EILEEN: Mission unaccomplished.

MAX: Give me a moment and I'll go back down again.

EILEEN: What whimpers ? Cats, dogs. Do spiders whimper ?

MAX: I don't think so.

EILEEN: Maybe really big ones. Maybe a really big one whimpering because it hasn't had anybody to eat in a week or so.

MAX: I don't think it was a spider. It sounded ...

EILEEN: Like an animal, you already said that.

MAX: No it sounded ... It sounded –

EILEEN: (HOLDING UP KNIFE AGAIN) Spit it out.

MAX: Human.

EILEEN: I told you it was the electricity guy.

MAX: I don't think it's the electricity guy.

EILEEN: Then it isn't human. No one else has ever been done there.

MAX: But it's not the electricity man.

EILEEN: How do you know ?

MAX: Because it – Do I really have to go back down there ?

EILEEN: In a word - yes. And don't look at me like that. If you'd done it right the first time I wouldn't need to be sending you back behind enemy lines.

MAX: You make it sound like some secret mission.

EILEEN: It is. A secret mission in to our basement, where no man before has ever braved to go. Except the Electricity man.

MAX: And me.

EILEEN: Exactly. So are you going to let the mission go unaccomplished. No !
Get back down there !

MAX: (SLIGHT PAUSE) Can I have a bit of omelette before I go back down ?

EILEEN: Oops ! Sorry – ate it all. There’s still a few garlic prawns.

MAX: Just some water.

EILEEN HANDS MAX A GLASS. HE DRINKS.

MAX: Thank you. Candle.

EILEEN LIGHTS ANOTHER CANDLE AND HANDS IT TO MAX.

EILEEN: Check. Knife ?

MAX: (HOLDING UP KNIFE) Check.

EILEEN: Now – go get ‘em. Tiger.

MAX SLOWLY TRUDGES TOWARDS THE DOOR. ONCE HE
REACHES IT HE TRANSFERS THE KNIFE AND CANDLE TO THE
SAME HAND AND OPENS THE DOOR.

IT CREAKS SLOWLY OPEN.
MAX STEPS THROUGH THE DOOR AND LOOKS BACK AT EILEEN.

EILEEN: Good luck. Oh, and don’t drop the candle this time. That’s the last one.

MAX CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.

EILEEN TOYS WITH THE BOWL OF GARLIC PRAWNS. SHE POPS
ONE IN HER MOUTH.

EILEEN: Er. Too oily.

SHE PUTS THE BOWL DOWN. SHE BEGINS TO HUM THE MUSIC
THAT THEY DANCED TO EARLIER.

SLOWLY SHE STANDS AND STARTS GOING THROUGH THE TANGO
STEPS, HUMMING TO HERSELF AS SHE DOES.

SUDDENLY SHE STOPS AS IF HEARING SOMETHING.

SHE TIPTOES OVER TO THE MIDDLE DOOR AND PRESSES HER EAR
AGAINST IT. SHE LISTENS INTENTLY, MOVING HER EAR AROUND
THE DOOR AS IF FOLLOWING SOUNDS.

MAX ENTERS FROM THE KITCHEN, AGAIN WITHOUT THE CANDLE BUT HOLDING THE KNIFE.

HE WATCHES EILEEN FOR AWHILE THEN:

MAX: I'm back.

EILEEN SPINS AROUND SUDDENLY AND IN DOING SO LOSES HER BALANCE AND TUMBLES TO THE FLOOR.

MAX COMES OVER AND HELPS HER UP.

EILEEN: So ?

MAX DOES NOT REPLY, HE GOES OVER TO THE TABLE AND SITS. HE POURS HIMSELF A GLASS OF WATER.

EILEEN: Did you find anything ?

MAX NODS.

EILEEN: (BURSTING WITH SUSPENSE) What is it ?

MAX: It's not an "it."

EILEEN: Well, what is it then ?

MAX: It's a she.

EILEEN: I knew it. A local alley cat is it – on heat – crawled into our basement to fart out its little rodents.

MAX: It's not a cat.

EILEEN: One of the local bitch mongrels then. I told the council they should've rounded them up and gassed the lot.

MAX: No.

EILEEN: It's not a rat is it ? A filthy grey she rat chugging out its evil spawn.

MAX: I'm afraid not.

EILEEN: Then what the hell is it ? A pigmy hippopotamus, crawled up out of the sewer.

MAX: It's a woman.

EILEEN IS STUNNED. SHE REELS BACKWARD SLOWLY AND SITS ON A CHAIR.

- EILEEN: A ... A ... wo - ... Wo - man ?
- MAX: Yes.
- EILEEN: Well who is she and how did she get in our basement ?
- MAX: I don't know. She didn't speak. I think she was too frightened.
- EILEEN: I'd be frightened down there as well. Well what did she look like ?
- MAX: Hard to say. I could only see her face. She seemed quite young, mid-thirties, but her eyes seemed old - like she had a great sorrow.
- EILEEN: Being stuck in our basement would cause anyone great sorrow. But what do you *think* ? Is she some local dero ? Although I must say I didn't think they were that common around these parts. Is she an addict ? A neighbours dark secret, the lost daughter gone off the rails. Wouldn't put it past some of them. (SUDDENLY) Jesus ! She's not a ... Not a ...
- MAX: A what ?
- EILEEN: It's so terrifyingly terrifying I can't even say the word. (WHISPERS) A terrorist ?
- MAX: I don't think so.
- EILEEN: Yes but how do you know. How do we all know ? Did those socialists on that train in Spain know ? Although now that I know they were Socialists there death does seem somewhat less consequential. She could have a (WHISPERS) bomb.
- MAX: A what ?
- EILEEN: (LOUD) Bomb ! If she's got a bomb tell her this is the wrong place. The train station is two blocks down on the left. Or tell her to go and blow up Renee's place. I'll give her the address. (GRABBING A PENCIL) In fact I'll even draw her a map.
- MAX: I don't think she's a terrorist and I don't think she has a bomb.
- EILEEN : Yes but how do you know ?
- MAX: It was just a feeling I had while I was down there - near her.
- EILEEN: How near ?
- MAX: Near enough. I don't think she wants to hurt us.

- EILEEN: Yes but how do you know – for sure ? You’re not going mushy on me now Max ? You know what happens when you go mushy. People take advantage. You get used, abused and then murdered. Or blown to bits with her bomb.
- MAX: It was just a feeling.
- EILEEN: And since when have you had “feelings” ? So what did you tell her to do ? “Hit the road Sister.” “On yer bike.”
- MAX: I didn’t say anything. I’m not sure if she speaks English.
- EILEEN: She’s a foreigner. Well then it’s settled – she definitely is a terrorist.
- MAX: Would you stop saying that ? She’s not a terrorist.
- EILEEN: Says you.
- MAX: She’s just a very terrified woman who is obviously in some need. I came down the stairs, slowly this time, making sure not to drop the candle. I reached the bottom and looked around, holding the candle up to try and illuminate the room. It’s a very large space down there. Must run right under the whole house. I’m amazed I never knew it was there.
- EILEEN: Yes, yes – you were raising the candle.
- MAX: Then I saw her – over in the corner. A large black object, shuffling.
- EILEEN: Ha, ha. Scuttling. I told you it was scuttling.
- MAX: At first I thought it was a dog or maybe a wombat.
- EILEEN: A wombat ?
- MAX: I wasn’t thinking straight. My heart was pounding so fast. I thought I was going to die.
- EILEEN: (ASIDE) No such luck.
- MAX: What ?
- EILEEN: (TURNING BACK WITH A SMILE) Continue darling.
- MAX: But whatever it was I knew I had to find out. Couldn’t come up again without knowing could I ?
- EILEEN: Too right, because then I would’ve killed you.

- MAX: So I pressed on. Small steps – one after the other – towards the corner. Then as I got closer I heard a sound. At first I thought it was a whimper like the dog –
- EILEEN: Don't you mean wombat ?
- MAX: Was hurt in some way. I was petrified now but I kept going –
- EILEEN: So brave.
- MAX: And then I realised the sound wasn't a whimper. It was a voice – a human voice – whispering – in a language I didn't understand.
- EILEEN: See ! She is a terrorist.
- MAX: Then I realised the whisper wasn't a whisper – it was a prayer. She was praying.
- EILEEN: To the Dark Lord. There's probably a trap door to hell down there.
- MAX: I suddenly realised I was still holding the knife. Stupid. If she saw that, what would she think ? It would scare her more. So I put down the knife.
- EILEEN: Even though you didn't even know it was a woman at this stage, even though it could've been Sanchez Bin Laden himself.
- MAX: So I put down the knife and raised the candle up in front of my face so she could see my eyes. That's the way you communicate when you can't use words. Through your eyes.
- EILEEN: You could've held up a sign – “Terrorist – Go Home !”
- MAX: Then it happened. The candle was in front of my face, lighting up my eyes. She must've sensed something about me too – something peaceful –
- EILEEN: *Debil.*
- MAX: And she suddenly raised her head and looked at me. Our eyes met – and in that moment the communication flowed between us – much more than words could ever hope to contain.
- EILEEN: You sound like you fancy her.
- MAX: “Don't be scared. I'm not going to hurt you.” That's what my eyes said. “I am frightened. I need help” her eyes replied.”
- EILEEN: What are you talking about ? Stupid man.

- MAX: Our eyes. We were speaking through our eyes. "I am a friend. I will help you."
- EILEEN: Never heard such nonsense.
- MAX: All conveyed in that millisecond of meeting eyes.
- EILEEN: You do fancy her.
- MAX: Then there was nothing more to be said. We had said enough. She understood me and I understood her. So I put the candle to leave her with some light –
- EILEEN: And something to burn down the house.
- MAX: And came back up here.
- EILEEN: Like the snivelling scumbag you are.
- MAX: What else was I meant to do ?
- EILEEN: Be a man. *Fuerte, de gran alcance, masculino*. Grab her by the ear and turf her out on the street.
- MAX: But why ? What has she done ?
- EILEEN: She's in our basement – and she shouldn't be.
- MAX: (STARTING TO POUR TAPAS BOWLS OUT ON TO A PLATE)
She's scared and vulnerable.
- EILEEN: Perfect for you to take advantage of.
- MAX: She needs food and shelter. A touch of human kindness.
- EILEEN: Weak, weak, weak. Kick her out on her arse.
- MAX: I'm not going to kick her out on her arse – or any other part of her body.
- EILEEN: What are you doing ?
- MAX: I'm taking her down some food and water.
- EILEEN: No you're not. (GRABBING KNIFE) If you're not man enough to get rid of her – then I will.
- MAX: I'm not kicking her out – and neither are you.

EILEEN: Yes I am. Scrounging around in our basement – we’ve got to get rid of her. It has to be done and I’m going to do it.

MAX: Eileen – please !

EILEEN: Just you try and stop me.

SUDDENLY THERE IS A LOUD KNOCKING AT THE FRONT DOOR.

EILEEN: Are you expecting anyone ?

MAX: No.

EILEEN: Maybe it’s her terrorist co-conspirator making a frontal assault.

MAX: Don’t be ridiculous. In Lindfield ?

EILEEN: First she infiltrates through the basement to lull us into a false sense of security and then they try to surprise us around the front.

MAX: If they want to surprise us then why are they knocking ?

EILEEN: It’s all part of their cunning and devious plan.

THE KNOCKING AGAIN.

MAX: I’ll get it.

EILEEN: Let ‘em knock. Cunning and devious.

MAX: Look, she’s not a terrorist. Neither is whoever is knocking at our front door.

EILEEN: How can you be sure ?

MAX: How can you ? Be rational.

EILEEN: These are irrational and dangerous times.

MAX: Think of the odds then. The odds of it being someone we know – like Renee or Mr Reed from next door or even Jeremy –

EILEEN: What would he be doing coming here ?

MAX: He is our son.

EILEEN: We kicked him out – six months ago. Lazy layabout.

MAX: We’ll maybe he’s popping by for dinner.

EILEEN: Another good reason not to open the door.

MAX: Okay. It's probably not Jeremy.

EILEEN: So you agree – it is terrorists.

MAX: Okay – we won't open the door.

EILEEN: Exactly. We'll just sit here nice and quietly and wait till they go away – then we'll go down to the basement and slit that bitches throat.

KNOCKING AGAIN.

MAX FLINCHES AS IF ABOUT TO DART FOR THE DOOR. EILEEN BLOCKS HIS PATH. MAX FLINCHES THE OTHER WAY. EILEEN QUICKLY MOVES TO BLOCK HIM OFF AGAIN.

MAX FLINCHES THE FIRST WAY AGAIN. EILEEN MOVES ACROSS AGAIN AND AS SHE DOES MAX LEAPS THE OTHER WAY AND DARTS FOR THE DOOR.

EILEEN IS TOO FAST FOR HIM AND BLOCKS HIM OFF. MAX TRIES TO EVADE HER AND EILEEN LUNGES AT MAX WITH THE KNIFE.

MAX KNOCKS HER ARM AWAY AND EILEEN LUNGES AGAIN. THIS TIME MAX GRABS HER ARM AND TWISTS IT BEHIND HER BACK BEFORE KNOCKING THE KNIFE OUT OF HER HANDS.

HE THEN TOSSES HER TO THE GROUND.

EILEEN: Wow ! Those State Rail Self Defence Classes are really paying off.

MAX: (HUMBLE) Thanks.

MAX GOES FOR THE DOOR.

BEFORE MAX REACHES THE EXIT THE MAN IN BLACK ENTERS. HE IS DRESSED, AS HIS NAME WOULD SUGGEST, COMPLETELY IN COMBAT BLACK.

SHINY BLACK BOOTS, PANTS, TIGHT FITTING SKIVVY, GLOVES AND CARRIES A BLACK BAG. HIS HAIR IS SLICKED BACK AND THERE IS BLACK CAMOUFLAGE PAINT ON HIS SKIN.

MAN IN BLACK: Sorry. Got tired of waiting so I kicked the door in. Hope you don't mind.

MAX: Who are you ?

MAN IN BLACK: I am the Man In Black.

EILEEN: Well you couldn't really be the Man in Lime Green could you ?

MAN IN BLACK: My name is not important. Your situation is.

EILEEN: You've heard about our situation.

MAN IN BLACK: You should've reported it immediately.

EILEEN: We only just found out.

MAN IN BLACK: There's no excuse Mister – but don't fear. I am here.

EILEEN: Why are you are dressed like a Mutant Ninja Turtle ?

MAN IN BLACK: (BRIGHTLY) This is my riot gear.

EILEEN: Where's the riot ?

MAN IN BLACK: In your basement apparently.

MAX: I am sorry, but what -

EILEEN: And he did it again. Someone breaks down your door and you say sorry. *Pathetic.*

MAX: I didn't say "sorry" in terms of "sorry". I said it in terms of "pardon".

EILEEN: Well if you mean "pardon" then just say "pardon".

MAN IN BLACK: Excuse me but we don't have time for this petty domestic bickering –

EILEEN: Says you.

MAN IN BLACK: You have a situation – and I am here to sort it out.

MAX: And pardon me –

EILEEN: That's better.

MAX: But your name is ?

MAN IN BLACK: Names are not important – I'm the man whose come to sort out your situation. Call me the "Situation Sorting Man". Or "Sitsortman" for short.

EILEEN: Did he say "sortsit ?

MAX: No "sitsort". And what situation exactly would that be ?

MAN IN BLACK: Don't play games with me Max. You know very well what situation. You've had first hand contact with the U.I.F. We believe she could be a P.T.

MAX: U.I.F. ? P.T. ?

MAN IN BLACK: Unidentified female. Potential Terrorist.

EILEEN: See. I told you. (TO MAN IN BLACK) I told him.

MAX: But how do you know she's a P.T. ?

MAN IN BLACK: Sir, in these dangerous and irrational times –

EILEEN: Hey, that's what I said too.

MAN IN BLACK: Everybody could be a terrorist. We must remain alert and alarmed.

EILEEN: I thought we were meant to be relaxed and comfortable.

MAN IN BLACK: Except when you're alert and alarmed.

MAX: Stop it ! So if everybody could be a terrorist then it must follow that we could be terrorists.

EILEEN: Max. What are you saying ?

MAX: Or for that matter – you could be a terrorist.

MAN IN BLACK: Let me warn you sir, you are beginning to sound distinctly un-Australian ?

EILEEN: (SHOCKED) Un-Australian !

MAX: Let me assure you sir, I am as un-Australian as you are.

MAN IN BLACK: Ha ha ! So you admit it ?

MAX: Admit what ?

MAN IN BLACK: That you been partaking in un-Australian activities.

MAX: Like what ?

MAN IN BLACK: Like colluding with the P.T. in your basement ?

MAX: I'm not colluding.

MAN IN BLACK: Or indulging in other subversive activity ?

MAX: I'm not indulging.

EILEEN: Well I did eat three garlic prawns.

MAX: Quiet Eileen. I'm just following your logic.

MAN IN BLACK: Sir, we live in a Constitutional Monarchy. There is no logic. There is only one question – are you a Terrorist ?

MAX: No.

MAN IN BLACK: (MOVING TOWARDS EILEEN) What about this U.I.F. ? Is she a terrorist ?

EILEEN: (A LITTLE EXCITED) Depends on who's asking.

MAX: That's my wife.

MAN IN BLACK: Are you sure she's not a terrorist ? She has the sultry eyes and tanned skin of a terrorist temptress.

EILEEN: Thanks – I play a lot of terrorist. I mean – tennis.

MAN IN BLACK: She could be working undercover for *subsurgent inversives*. I mean *insurgent subversives*.

EILEEN: No it's just tennis.

MAN IN BLACK: Quiet !

EILEEN: Gosh, that's very forceful. *De gran alcance*.

MAN IN BLACK: What language is that ? It sounds Spanish. As in the language spoken in a country governed by Socialists.

EILEEN: No it wasn't Spanish. I hate Spanish. I'd never speak Spanish.

SHE BEGINS SPITTING AS IF RIDDING HER MOUTH OF THE WORDS.

MAN IN BLACK: I may need to take this U.I.F, in for questioning.

MAX: What questioning ?

MAN IN BLACK: Don't worry. (SMILING) It's just procedural.

MAX: Look, this is my wife Eileen Bortam. I am Max Bortam – her husband and this is our house. She is not a U.I.F. The U.I.F. is in our basement.

MAN IN BLACK: Ah ha ! So you do have a U.I.F. on premises ?

MAX: Yes but she's only a U.I.F. because we don't know who she is yet.

MAN IN BLACK: Are you sure she's not a P.T. ?

MAX: Yes.

MAN IN BLACK: How sure ?

MAX: Very sure.

MAN IN BLACK: One hundred percent sure ?

MAX: One hundred percent.

MAN IN BLACK: One hundred percent – one hundred percent ?

MAX: No of course not one hundred percent – one hundred percent. But it is extremely unlikely.

MAN IN BLACK: Good enough for me.

THE MAN IN BLACK PUTS DOWN HIS BAG AND UNZIPS IT. HE BEGINS TAKING OUT A FEW OBJECTS.

MAX: What are you doing now ?

MAN IN BLACK: Preparing my equipment. Getting ready for a little 'Shock and awe'.

THE MAN IN BLACK TAKES OUT A CRICKET BAT.

MAX: It's a cricket bat.

MAN IN BLACK: This is a registered T.T.

EILEEN: T.T. ?

MAN IN BLACK: Terrorist Terminator.

MAX: (INDICATING A COAT HANGER) And what about that ?

MAN IN BLACK: I.I. ?

EILEEN: I'm all ears.

MAN IN BLACK: Insurgent Identifier.

MAX: No it's not. It's just a coat hanger.

MAN IN BLACK: Don't be deceived, you turkey.

EILEEN: That's telling him.

THE MAN IN BLACK PULLS OUT AN EGG FLIPPER.

MAX: Oh come on – that's just an egg flipper.

MAN IN BLACK: This – my leftist leaning sewer sucking scumbag is a patented S.S.

MAX: S.S. ? That sounds more like it.

EILEEN: (SWEETLY) Don't mind him. Which stands for ?

MAN IN BLACK: Subversive Swatter.

MAX: Now you're just being silly.

MAN IN BLACK: I can assure you Sir. I am as far from silly as silly can be, Now
– to work.

THE MAN BLACK PICKS UP THE EGG FLIPPER, COAT HANGER AND
CRICKET BAT.

MAN IN BLACK: Which way to the U.I.F. ?

EILEEN POINTS HELPFULLY TO THE BASEMENT DOOR.

MAN IN BLACK: Thank you, Ma'am. I will enjoy more of your company on my
return.

EILEEN: (PURRING) Looking forward to it.

MAX RUNS TO THE DOOR AND BLOCKS THE MAN IN BLACK'S PATH.

MAX: No. I'm not going to let you use that stuff on her. She's done nothing.

EILEEN: Forget him. He's just got the hots for her.

MAN IN BLACK: Sir, you are acting in an inflammatory and obstructive manner.

EILEEN: No, he lost both the candles.

MAX: And hitting her with a cricket bat is in some way helpful ?

MAN IN BLACK: Sir, you fail to grasp the subtle complexities of this situation.

MAX: Which are ?

MAN IN BLACK: Using the most intricate form of subterfuge this U.I.F. has
insinuated herself into said location (i.e. your basement) and

MAN IN BLACK: (CONT) utilised your highly charged emotional state to take advantage of your kindly, if naïve, human nature.

EILEEN: He said that so well.

MAX: Which means ?

MAN IN BLACK: Get out of my way so I can kill the bitch.

EILEEN: He does have a way with words.

MAX: (BARRING THE DOOR) No. I won't let you.

MAN IN BLACK: Sir, let me assure you that if you continue to block me from achieving my objective I will have absolutely no hesitation on using this T.T. on you first.

EILEEN: He means the cricket bat.

MAN IN BLACK: I know what he means.

PAUSE. MAX RELUCTANTLY STEPS ASIDE.

MAN IN BLACK: Thank you.

EILEEN: Good luck our brave hero. We'll be praying for you.

THE MAN IN BLACK GOES THROUGH THE DOOR AND CLOSSES IT.
EILEEN RUSHES TO THE DOOR TO HEAR.

THIS TIME WE HEAR THE MAN IN BLACK'S HEAVY BOOTS
CLOMPING DOWN THE STAIRS. THEN THERE IS AMOMENT OF
SILENCE.

THEN WE HEAR THE MAN IN BLACK SCREAM AS HE BEGINS HIS
ASSAULT. WE HEAR THE BAT CONNECTING WITH SKULL, BONE
AND SKIN, INTERSPERSED WITH SLAPS OF THE EGG FLIPPER AND
THE TWANGING OF THE COAT HANGER – ALL DELIVERED AT
DEVESTATING SPEED.

MAX: He's killing her.

MAX RUNS TO THE DOOR AND TRIES TO WRENCH IT OPEN.

MAX: He's locked it. (TO EILEEN) Help me.

EILEEN: Quiet. I'm trying to listen.

SUDDENLY THERE IS ONE LOUD FINAL BELLOW FROM THE MAN
IN BLACK AND THE SOUND OF A TERRIFYING CRUNCH.

EILEEN: Ooooh – that’s gotta hurt.

SILENCE.

MAX: It’s over.

EILEEN: Well – that showed her.

MAX STAGGERS AWAY FROM THE DOOR.

THE DOOR TO THE BASEMENT SWINGS OPEN ONCE MORE AND THERE STANDS THE MAN IN BLACK – ALTHOUGH IT IS NOW MORE THE MAN IN RED AND BLACK.

HIS CLOTHING AND FACE ARE NOW SPATTERED WITH BRIGHT RED BLOOD. BLOOD ALSO DRIPS OFF THE CRICKET BAT AND COATHANGER IN HIS HANDS, AND THE EGG FLIPPER TUCKED INTO HIS BELT.

EILEEN: (SWOONING) The conquering hero returns !

MAX: What have you done ?

MAX PUSHES PAST THE MAN IN BLACK AND DISAPPEARS DOWN INTO THE BASEMENT.

EILEEN: (MOVING TOWARDS TABLE) Care for some post-battle treats ?

THE MAN IN BLACK MOVES OVER TO THE TABLE. HE SITS.

EILEEN OFFERS HIM THE PLATE OF TAPAS AND A LARGE GLASS OF SANGRIA. THE MAN IN BLACK SHOVELS THE FOOD IN TO HIS MOUTH WITH HIS HAND, THEN TAKES A HUGE GULP OF THE SANGRIA.

EILEEN: Oooh, you’re all covered in sweat and ... what’s that red stuff ?

MAN IN BLACK: (PROUDLY) Blood.

EILEEN: Blood and sweat. How neo-conservative !

THE MAN IN BLACK SHOVELS IN SOME MORE FOOD. HE SMILES LACIVIOUSLY AT EILEEN. EILEEN GIGGLES AND HANGS OFF HIS SHOULDER, RUNNING HER FINGERS THROUGH THE BLOOD ON HIS FACE.

EILEEN: Strong, masculine, silent. (OFFERING FRUIT) Here, try these freshly cut melons. And ripe fig.

MAX REAPPEARS AT THE OPEN DOOR TO THE BASEMENT. HE STAGGERS BACK INTO THE ROOM. SILENCE EXCEPT FOR THE SOUNDS OF THE MAN IN BLACK, SLURPING AND GUZZLING.

MAX: (EVENTUALLY) She's dead.

EILEEN: Uh der. What did you expect ? He was going down there to bowl her a few googlies.

MAX: What happens to her now ?

EILEEN: Who cares ?

MAX: We can't just leave her down there. We have to bury her.

THE MAN IN BLACK LOOKS UP.

MAN IN BLACK: Max, you're not going a bit mushy on us now are you ?

EILEEN: I said the same thing.

MAN IN BLACK: These are complex times Max. Complex times. What are required are hard heads and cold hearts.

MAX: Don't you mean cold heads and hard hearts ?

MAN IN BLACK: That too. The last thing we can afford is people going mushy.

MAX: But there is a dead woman in my basement.

MAN IN BLACK: That – as they say – ain't my problem. Thanks for the grub. I'm outta here.

THE MAN IN BLACK STANDS SUDDENLY. EILEEN, WHO HAS BEEN HANGING OFF HIM, SLIPS TO THE GROUND.

MAN IN BLACK: I'm outta here. Thanks for the grub.

EILEEN: No. Don't go. We haven't ... shown you how grateful we are.

MAN IN BLACK: No need for gratitude. (TO MAX) Just let this be a lesson to you.

MAX: A lesson in what ?

MAN IN BLACK: That's for you to know and me to find out.

EILEEN: My pleasure and our honour.

THE MAN IN BLACK HEADS FOR THE DOOR. HE STOPS.

MAN IN BLACK: One more thing.

HE GOES TO THE RECORD PLAYER AND DROPS THE NEEDLE.

THE MAN IN BLACK PUTS THE EGG FLIPPER BETWEEN HIS TEETH, A-LA THE ROSE, AND CLICKS HIS FINGERS AT EILEEN.

EILEEN FLIES TO HIM. THE MUSIC STARTS AND THEY TANGO.

THIS ONE IS MORE SEXY AND PASSIONATE THAN EILEEN AND MAX'S EARLIER EFFORTS. A DANCE OF LUST AND HEAT.

EILEEN GRABS EVERY CHANCE TO RUB HER BODY AND HANDS UP AGAINST THE MAN IN BLACK SO SHE TOO BECOMES COVERED IN BLOOD.

THE DANCE ENDS WITH THE MAN IN BLACK LOWERING EILEEN IN A DIP. HE TAKES THE EGG FLIPPER FROM HIS MOUTH.

MAN IN BLACK: I'll leave this with you.

HE JAMS THE EGG FLIPPER INTO HER MOUTH.

MAN IN BLACK: Just in case.

THE MAN IN BLACK NOW GIVES HER A LONG, SMOOCHY KISS.

MAX: That's my wife !

MAN IN BLACK: You're a lucky man.

THE MAN IN BLACK LIFTS EILEEN UP AND SPINS HER ACROSS THE ROOM. SHE STOPS, SPRAWLED AGAINST THE WALL, HER BREATHING LOUD AND HEAVY.

MAN IN BLACK: Now – fuck off.

THE MAN IN BLACK WINKS AT HER AND EXITS. EILEEN SLOWLY SLIDES DOWN THE WALL, FLUSHED AND GASPING.

MAX: Enjoy yourself ?

EILEEN: Absolutely.

MAX: When you stop creaming your panties come down and give me a hand. We'll bury her in the garden.

EILEEN: I'm not touching that filthy whore.

MAX: That's the pot calling the kettle.

EILEEN: And what exactly does that mean ?

MAX: Never mind.

MAX MOVES TOWARDS THE BASEMENT DOOR. THERE IS THE
FAINT DISTANT SOUNDS OF BATTLE.

MAX: (STOPPING) What's that ?

EILEEN: Sorry, it's just my quivering thighs.

MAX: No, listen it sounds like ...

THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE GROW.

EILEEN: I can't hear anything.

MAX: Then stop talking and listen.

SUDDENLY THE BACK WALL AROUND THE BASEMENT DOOR
CRUMPLES FORWARD ON TO THE STAGE.

THE BATTLE SOUNDS INTENSIFY – SINGLE GUNSHOTS.
ARTILLERY FIRE, CRIES OF THE WOUNDED, EXPLOSIONS.

SMOKE POURS ON TO STAGE WHERE THE WALL ONCE WAS,
FILTERING DIM GREEN LIGHT. THROUGH THE SMOKE WE CAN
SEE THE CHARRED REMAINS OF A BATTLEFIELD – TREES,
TRENCHES, BODIES AND MACHINERY.

EILEEN: (OVER BATTLE SOUNDS) What happened to the basement ?

MAX EDGES FORWARD AND PEERS INTO THE MURKY, GREEN LIGHT.

MAX: I don't know.

EILEEN: And what's that, in the garden ?

MAX: It looks like a beach and a rocky hill.

EILEEN: What happened to the Gazebo ??

MAX: I don't know.

EILEEN: Do you think our insurance covers this ? I wonder if they class this an
"An Act of God" – "Battlefield suddenly appearing in living room."
(COUGHING) And what about all this smoke ? Smells like ...

MAX: Gunpowder.

EILEEN: I was going to say burning flesh.

MAX: Sssh ! Someone's coming.

EILEEN: Or maybe gunpowder mixed with burning flesh.

MAX: Quiet, I think it's ...

A FIGURE IS EMERGING THROUGH THE SMOKY BATTLEFIELD TOWARDS THEM.

MAX: Look, it's ... It's ...

THE FIGURE IS COMING CLOSER. WE CAN NOW SEE IT IS THE MAN IN BLACK BUT NOW DRESSED AS A YOUNG SOLDIER.

HE IS DRESSED IN THE ANZAC UNIFORM OF WORLD WAR ONE. HE WEARS A TIN HAT.

HE LIMPS ON ONE LEG, THE OTHER LEG IS BLACK AND BLOODIED BY A WOUND AT THE KNEE. IT HANGS LIMPLY. HE USES HIS RIFLE AS A CRUTCH TO HOLD HIMSELF UP.

HE KICKS THE RUBBLE OF THE WALL OUT OF THE WAY AND ENTERS THE LIVING ROOM. THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE FADE.

THE SOLDIER LOOKS AROUND. HE REMOVES HIS TIN HAT AND LOOKS AT MAX.

MAX: Jeremy ?

THE SOLDIER PUTS DOWN HIS RIFLE AND GOES TO MAX AND EMBRACES HIM.

SOLDIER: Dad.

EILEEN: When did Jeremy join up ?

THE SOLDIER RELEASES MAX AND GOES OVER TO EILEEN.

MAX: Last time I saw him he was working in the Video Ezy down by the station.

THE SOLDIER EMBRACES EILEEN.

SOLDIER: Mum.

EILEEN: I didn't know he was working there.

MAX: He asked me not to tell you.

EILEEN: Why not ?

MAX: He thought you'd think he was a failure.

EILEEN: I already thought he was a failure.

MAX: He thought you'd think he was more of a failure.

EILEEN: That would be pretty hard.

SOLDIER: They're all dead.

MAX: What's that son ?

SOLDIER: All of them. Dead.

THE SOLDIER SITS ON THE FLOOR. HE TAKES OUT HIS CANISTER AND OPENS IT.

EILEEN: (REFERING TO CANISTER) Don't drink from that. Disease central. Let me get you a glass.

EILEEN GOES TO THE TABLE AND POURS THE SOLDIER A GLASS OF MINERAL WATER.

MAX: Who's dead son ?

SOLDIER: Jimmy, Terry, Tall Pete.

EILEEN: Who are they ?

MAX: Must be school friends.

EILEEN: Or druggies from the Video Store.

EILEEN OFFERS THE SOLDIER THE WATER. HE KNOCKS THE GLASS OUT OF HER HAND AND ON TO THE FLOOR.

SOLDIER: (KNOCKING THE GLASS) We was set up !

EILEEN: He must've heard about the socialists too.

MAX: Who set you up ?

SOLDIER: Get down !

THE SOLDIER GRABS MAX AND DRAGS HIM DOWN TO THE FLOOR.

SOLDIER: They knew we were coming I tell you. They knew ! Bloody Pommy bastards. They set us up.

EILEEN: Maybe he's been playing too many Video Games. They say that Halo 2 is pretty full on.

MAX: (TO EILEEN) Sssh ! (TO SOLDIER) Go on son.

SOLDIER: Johnny Turk was up on the hill, waitin' for us.

EILEEN: Did he say Turks ? I thought they lived in Turkey.

SOLDIER: We were like sittin' ducks. Comin' off the boats, trippin' each other up, fallin' over in the sand. They picked us off, one by one. I watched 'em die, all of 'em. Took one below the knee. Can't feel it. Do you think they'll cut it off ? I heard if you can't feel it they cut it off.

EILEEN: Are Turkey siding with Saddam ?

MAX: Be quiet will you ? Go on Jeremy.

SOLDIER: But I kept goin'. Crawled along the beach, draggin' my dead leg behind me. Kept me head low. Bullets were poppin' in the sand all 'round. Got past bodies. Blokes with their legs blown off. Heads smashed open. Blood and brains everywhere. After 'while the bullets seemed to come less and the artillery got a bit quieter. Then the bullets stopped. I got up to me knees and looked back – the beach was full of bodies. Me mates. Blown to hell. I wasn't goin' back there you hear me. I wasn't goin' back !

THE SOLDIER IS OVERCOME WITH TEARS. HE HUDDLES INTO MAX.

EILEEN: I think I saw that battle on CNNN.

MAX: Will you shut up ?

SOLDIER: So I just crept goin' till I crawled right off the beach. Never looked back. Just kept inchin' me way till finally it was night and I was a long way away from there.

MAX: Jeremy, are you saying you deserted ?

EILEEN: Told you he was no good.

SOLDIER: You can't call it that. They were dead. Don't you understand ? All of 'em. If I kept going I'd be dead too. Just 'nother dead cove face first in the sand. What's the good n'that ?

MAX: Listen son, I know it's hard but when you joined up – whenever it actually was that you joined up - you promised to serve your country – no matter what. Through the ups and downs, good times and bad.

EILEEN: Just like being married.

MAX: You can't just abandon that when things get a bit tough.

EILEEN: Well said Max ! (TO SOLDIER) And you listen to him you little shit or will get the Terrorist Terminator on to you.

MAX GESTURES FOR EILEEN TO SHUT UP.

SOLDIER: Don't make me go back there. You can't make me go back !

MAX: Son, what you've done is called desertion. If they find you -

EILEEN: And they will cause we'll tell them where you are.

MAX: They can court marshal you and even execute you. Is that how you want to be remembered ?

EILEEN: Think of your father and I's reputations. We'll never be able to raise our heads at the Bridge Club again.

SOLDIER: You can't send me back. I'll kill you if you send me back.

THE SOLDIER GRABS THE RIFLE AND POINTS IT AT MAX,
BACKING HIMSELF UP AGAINST THE WALL.

MAX: Jez, listen to me.

SOLDIER: Na Dad. I swear. I love you but you can't send me back.

EILEEN: What about me ? You don't love me. So get your chicken shit arse out of here.

SOLDIER: You too Mum. I love ya but I'll kill ya if I have to.

EILEEN: He just said he loved me. Kill him. That's not Jeremy. It's an impostor.

MAX: (STEPPING TOWARDS THE SOLDIER) Put the gun down. You're not going to kill us.

SOLDIER: Stay away from me.

EILEEN: (HOLDING UP THE EGG FLIPPER) Maybe I should use the Swatter on him.

MAX: (TO EILEEN) Put that away. It's okay son. We understand.

EILEEN: No we bloody well don't. You get back to the war buster ! Or else I don't know how this thing works but once I figure it out I'll - I'll whack you.

MAX: Eileen, quiet. We do understand. (EDGING TOWARDS THE SOLDIER) Now just lower the ...

EILEEN: (TO MAX) Oh I get it. (EDGING TOWARDS THE SOLDIER) That's right darling. We understand. It's just like your first day at school. You're first big battle. Very terrifying.

SOLDIER: Stay back.

MAX STOPS BUT EILEEN KEEPS GOING.

EILEEN: We understand son. We wouldn't send you back there to get hurty-wurty. We'll keep you here, safe and warm. We'll cook up some googy eggs and baked beanies. You always loved those. And some little Vegemite Soldiers – just like you.

EILEEN REACHES THE SOLDIER AND SHE BEGINS TO RUB HIS FACE AND HAIR, SOOTHING HIM.

EILEEN: There we are. You've with mummy-wummy now. Safe and warm. That nasty Johnny Turkey can't maimy-waimy you anymore. Ah ha !

EILEEN SUDDENLY GRABS THE GUN AWAY FROM THE SOLDIER AND POINTS THE GUN AT HIM, EXCEPT SHE HAS THE BUTT POINTING TOWARDS THE SOLDIER AND THE BARREL AT HERSELF.

EILEEN: Now get back to the war buster !

MAX: Eileen – don't pull the trigger.

EILEEN: Where's that ?

MAX: Just don't move for one second.

EILEEN IS VERY STILL. MAX GOES TO HER AND TAKES THE RIFLE FROM HER. HE TURNS THE RIFLE AROUND AND PUTS IT BACK IN HER HANDS, NOW AIMING THE RIGHT WAY.

EILEEN: Okay – so can I shoot him now ?

MAX: Well, he is our son.

EILEEN: Maybe. Always wanted to shoot someone – just to feel what it was like. Just like that song by that guy.

MAX: Which guy ?

EILEEN: Johnny ...

SOLDIER: Johnny Turk ? You're schemin' with him.

EILEEN: No silly, not Johnny Turk. Johnny ... something to do with money. Old guy but his hair's still jet black. Must dye it.

MAX: Cash.

EILEEN: Johnny Cash that's it. (SINGING) "I shot a man in Reno, just to watch him die." Or in my case (SINGING AGAIN) "I shot my son in the living room just to see how it feels." What do you reckon ?

SUDDENLY THERE IS A LOUD THUMP FROM BELOW THE STAGE.

EILEEN: What the crap was that ?

SOLDIER: They've found me. You told them where I was.

MAX: I don't think that was artillery Jez.

ANOTHER LOUDER THUMP FROM BELOW THE STAGE.

EILEEN: Sounds like it's coming from the basement.

MAX : But we don't have a basement any more.

THE THUMP AGAIN, LOUDER ONCE MORE.

SOLDIER: Take cover.

THE SOLDIER CRAWLS ACROSS THE FLOOR AND HIDES UNDER THE TABLE.

EILEEN: Sounds like someone's coming up the stairs.

MAX: Yes, but who ?

THUMP AGAIN, STILL LOUDER.

EILEEN: Maybe she's not ...

MAX: No, she was definitely ... her body was in that corner, her head was in the other and her legs were (POINTING UP) ...

EILEEN: Spare me the details please.

THUMP AGAIN, EVEN LOUDER.

SOLDIER: You won't get me you bastards. I ain't dying for those Pommie traitors.

THE SOLDIER BEGINS TO SING “WALTZING MATILDA” QUIETLY TO HIMSELF.

EILEEN: What ever it is it’s getting closer.

THUMP AGAIN, NOW VERY CLOSE. THE DOOR FRAME TO THE “BASEMENT” HAS BEGUN TO SHAKE.

MAX: Maybe she wasn’t ...

EILEEN: Let’s hope she was – or she’s going to be very, very pissed.

THUMP AGAIN, VERY LOUD AND CLOSE. THE DOOR FRAME SHAKES AGAIN.

MAX: It’s almost here.

EILEEN: Don’t worry. I’ve got her number.

EILEEN AIMS HER GUN AT THE DOORWAY.

EILEEN: (SINGS) “I shot a black bitch in the living room, just to see how she bleeds.”

A FINAL THUNDEROUS THUMP. THE WHOLE STAGE SEEMS TO SHAKE.

SILENCE EXCEPT FOR THE SOLDIER’S SONG.

THE WOMAN APPEARS IN THE DOORFRAME. SHE IS INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN IN HER MID-THIRTIES BUT SHE WEARS A BLACK CHADOR FROM HEAD TO FOOT.

THE ONLY SKIN WE SEE IS HER FACE, WHICH IS COVERED IN BLOOD STREAMING DOWN FROM A WOUND ON THE TOP OF HER SKULL.

SOLDIER: (SCREAMING) Jesus and Mary save us.

EILEEN: Well blow me, the stupid bitch is still kicking.

MAX: How ? I saw her ...

EILEEN: Clearly you didn’t.

THE WOMAN TURNS HER HEAD SLOWLY, SCANNING THE ROOM.

EILEEN: (AIMING GUN) That’s far enough, love. Now git back down there where you came from.

THE WOMAN TAKES A STEP TOWARDS THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM.

EILEEN: I'm warning you. Don't take another step. This is a gun all the way from Gallipoli and I know how to use it – now.

THE WOMAN TAKES ANOTHER STEP.

MAX: Ah darling, she took another step.

EILEEN: I know, I know. (TO WOMAN) This is your last chance. Git back down there.

THE WOMAN TAKES ANOTHER STEP.

MAX: Maybe she –

EILEEN: Quiet – I'm working here ! (TO WOMAN) This is your final warning.

THE WOMAN TAKES ANOTHER STEP.

EILEEN: Okay – now don't you forget – you brought this on yourself. Steady my hand Johnny !

EILEEN CLOSES HER EYES AND PULLS THE TRIGGER. THE GUN FIRES LOUDLY, SHOOTING THE WOMAN.

THE SOLDIER COVERS HIS EARS, COWERING UNDER THE TABLE, TRAUMATISED BY THE GUN SHOT.

THE WOMAN SEEMS UNAFFECTED. SHE TAKES ANOTHER STEP.

EILEEN: What happened ?

MAX: I think you missed.

EILEEN: I didn't miss.

MAX: Maybe she's already dead.

EILEEN: Meaning what ?

MAX: You can't kill her if she's already dead.

EILEEN: If she's already dead then what's she doing in our living room.

THE WOMAN TAKES ANOTHER STEP.

EILEEN: Sugar ! She's coming closer. (SHE PULLS THE TRIGGER AGAIN. NOTHING HAPPENS.) Why isn't it working ?

MAX: You have to re-load.

EILEEN: How do I do that ?

MAX: Pull the thing-a-me back.

EILEEN: The what ?

MAX: The thing-a-me.

EILEEN: Stuff this. (SHE DROPS THE GUN AND BRANDISHES THE EGG FLIPPER) I'll use the Swatter.

THE WOMAN NOW RAISES HER ARMS, PALMS FACING UPWARDS TOWARDS THE SKY.

EILEEN: What's she doing now ?

MAX: I don't know.

EILEEN: Hey honey, pretty poor impersonation of a clothes line.

NOW THE WOMAN BEGINS TO TURN SLOWLY IN A CIRCLE. SHE BEGINS TO CHANT A SONG SOFTLY – THE LANGUAGE IS HARD TO IDENTIFY. IT MIGHT BE IN ARABIC, OR AGAIN IT COULD BE AN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE.

EILEEN: What's she doing now ?

MAX: Singing. I think.

EILEEN: Bloody awful song. (A HOLLER) Stop this you hear me. You are making our evening unpleasant !

MAX: Quiet.

ANOTHER PAUSE.

EILEEN: No Ma'am. Ain't gonna stand here and listen to this terrorist tra-la-la. I'm going to pull out the heavy artillery, given to me by the Man in Black himself –

EILEEN GRIPS THE EGG FLIPPER FIRMLY IN BOTH HANDS.

MAX: What are you doing ? She'll see you.

EILEEN: No guts. No glory.

SUDDENLY EILEEN LETS OUT A BELLOWING WAR CRY AND CHARGES TOWARDS THE WOMAN.

SHE REACHES HER AND BELLOWS AGAIN THEN SWATS THE WOMAN ON THE BACK AND SIDES WITH THE EGG FLIPPER SEVERAL TIMES.

MAX: Well, that didn't work.

THE WOMAN SUDDENLY STOPS SINGING. SHE LOWERS HER ARMS.

MAX: Oops ! She's stopped singing. I don't think that can be a good thing.

THE WOMAN TURNS SLOWLY AND FACES EILEEN.

EILEEN QUICKLY THROWS AWAY THE EGG FLIPPER.

EILEEN: (POINTING TO MAX) It was him. It was him !

THE SOLDIER HAS STOOD DURING THIS AND HE CALLS TO THE WOMAN, AGAIN THE LANGUAGE IS DIFFICULT TO DISCERN.

SOLDIER: Wife. Lover. Sister.

EILEEN: Now Jez, you stay out of this.

THE WOMAN TURNS TO FACE THE SOLDIER. SHE ANSWERS IN THE SAME LANGUAGE.

WOMAN: I dreamt of you and now you have returned.

SOLDIER: Your memory kept me alive.

EILEEN: Oi, what's that funny language you're speaking ?

THE SOLDIER GOES TO THE WOMAN. HE EMBRACES HER AND THEY KISS PASSIONATELY.

EILEEN: (WATCHING ON) Er ! I don't think that's very healthy. Do you know how many different types of diseases she probably has ?

THE KISS FINISHES AND THE SOLDIER AND WOMAN TURN.

WOMAN: Come brother I will lead you.

SOLDIER: I will follow.

THE WOMAN SUPPORTS HIM AND TOGETHER THEY WALK SLOWLY OFF THROUGH THE BATTLEFIELD.

EILEEN AND MAX WATCH THEM GO. AFTER AWHILE:

EILEEN: (CALLING AFTER THEM) Don't forget to use a condom.

THE WOMAN AND SOLDIER DISAPPEAR INTO THE SMOKEY BATTLEFIELD.

EILEEN AND MAX STAND STILL FOR QUITE AWHILE.

MAX: Well that's that.

EILEEN: Yep. That's that.

MAX: And at least he found a nice girl.

EILEEN: Yeah, she might be dead, a terrorist and speak some weird bloody language – but hey, no one's perfect.

SLOWLY THEY TURN AND PICK UP THE CHAIRS. THEY BOTH SIT AT THE TABLE.

EILEEN: Sangria.

MAX: Ta.

EILEEN POURS TWO GLASSES OF SANGRIA. SHE HANDS ONE TO MAX, THEY RAISE THEIR GLASSES AND CLINK THEM.

EILEEN AND MAX: Cheers.

THEY DRINK.

MAX: So what do you think ?

EILEEN: About ?

MAX: The day trip ? Toledo or La Mancha ?

EILEEN: Hey, wait a sec. Look out there. Through the garden. The rocks, the beach.

MAX: What about it ?

EILEEN: Cancel the Spanish Fiesta and ring the real estate. Our price just doubled. We got water views !

TANGO MUSIC. MAX AND EILEEN EMBRACE IN TANGO POSE.

MAX: I love you Eileen.

EILEEN: And I love you Max.

THEY KISS AND FREEZE. THE LIGHTS ON THEM FADE.

BEHIND THEM THE SMOKEY BATTLEFIELD GLOWS A GHOSTLY GREEN, ACCOMPANIED BY THE TANGO MUSIC.

THE LIGHTS ON THE BATTLEFIELD SLOWLY FADE.

BLACKOUT. END PLAY.