

Don's Party was first performed by the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory, Melbourne, on 11 August 1971 with the following cast:

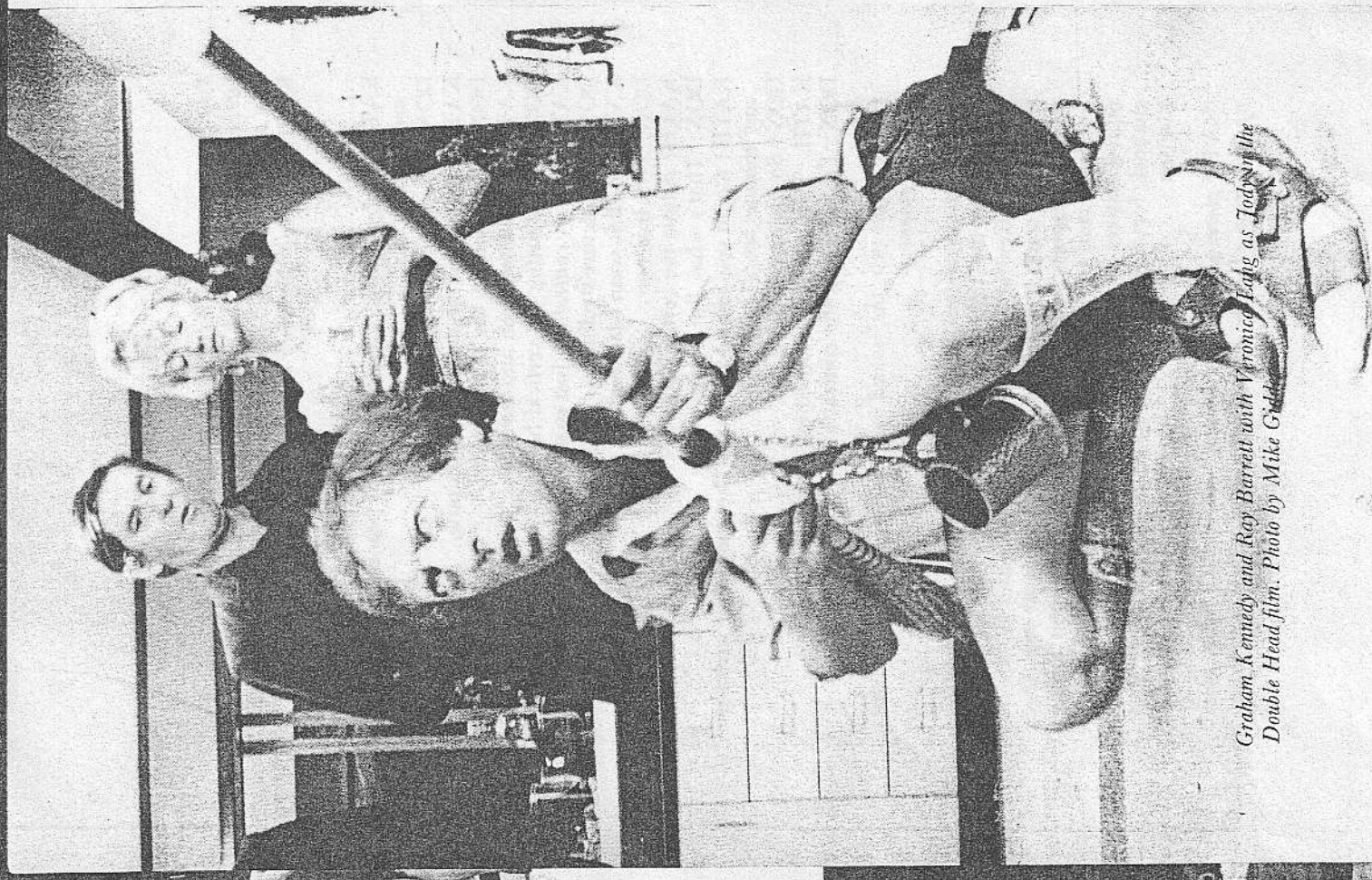
DON	Wilfred Last
KATH	Evelyn Krape
SIMON	Tony Taylor
JODY	Yvonne Marini
MAL	Bruce Knappett
JENNY	Lindy Davies
MACK	John Smythe
EVAN	Graham Hartley
KERRY	Ros Horin
COOLEY	Rod Moore
SUSAN	Kerry Dwyer

Setting designed by Craig Haire
Directed by Graeme Blundell

A revised version of the play was presented at the Jane Street Theatre, Sydney, opening on 29 June 1972 with the following cast:

DON	Martin Harris
KATH	Pat Bishop
SIMON	Mervyn Drake
JODY	Wendy Blacklock
MAL	Allan Lander
JENNY	Judith Fisher
MACK	James H. Bowles
EVAN	Ken Shorter
KERRY	Darlene Johnson
COOLEY	John Ewart
SUSAN	Barbara Stephens

Setting designed by Lindsay Megarity
Directed by John Clark



Graham Kennedy and Ray Barrett with Veronica Edg as Toddy in the Double Head film. Photo by Mike Giddens

CHARACTERS

DON
KATH
SIMON
JODY
MAL
JENNY
MACK
EVAN
KERRY
COOLEY
SUSAN

All characters are in their early to middle thirties, with the exception of SUSAN, who is in her early twenties.

SETTING

The action of the play takes place in the home of Don and Kath Henderson in the Melbourne suburb of Lower Plenty. The set is constructed in such a way that the living room and kitchen of the house can be viewed simultaneously. The living room is spacious, with trendy décor. The walls are hung with abstract prints and large, ceiling-high bookshelves and stacked with books.

The date is 25 October 1969: election night.

ACT ONE

8.40 p.m. *Guests are expected any minute. DON is in the kitchen. He plugs in the television set and begins to adjust it. The audience can't see the screen but can hear the soundtrack. KATH is tidying the living room.*

KATH: (*edgy, preoccupied*) Put the peanuts and crisps around will you?

DON: I'm tuning in the television.

KATH: People will be arriving any minute.

DON: I'm tuning in the television.

KATH: Just switch it on and leave it.

DON: I'm adjusting the vertical hold.

KATH: (*barely controlled*) Just switch it on and leave it.

DON: The picture's rolling.

KATH: Well it wasn't last night.

DON: Well it is now.

KATH: Adjust the vertical hold.

DON: That's what I'm doing.

KATH: Could you come back to it? The guests'll be arriving any minute now.

DON: So fucking what!

KATH: They might like something to eat!

DON: I'm adjusting the contrast.

(DON turns up the sound on the TV. We hear this announcement:)

TV: Polling closed tonight at eight o'clock and the counting of votes for the 1969 Federal Election has begun. We are now in the Central Tally Room in Canberra and as soon as the results come to hand we will bring them to you. Our panel of experts is standing by ready to interpret voting trends for you, and will be conducting interviews with party representatives throughout the evening. Stay tuned to this channel for a complete coverage of the 1969 Federal Election.

(KATH glares at him, puts down whatever she's doing, picks up the trays of chips and twisties, and starts distributing

them herself in the living room, banging the trays down unnecessarily hard to give vent to her annoyance. DON stands back from the television set, satisfied that it's working.)

DON: There's no need for you to do it.

KATH: I've done it.

DON: I would've done it.

KATH: (*sharply*) Try and act like a host tonight will you?

DON: (*complaining*) Cut it out.

(*DON turns down the sound.*)

KATH: It wouldn't take much effort.

DON: Since when have I been rude to guests?

KATH: You usually point them in the direction of the fridge and that's it.

DON: That's all my friends need.

KATH: I can't see the point of coming to a party with the sole intention of drinking yourself into a stupor.

DON: That's not the intention.

KATH: Hmm.

DON: There's a bloody important event on the television tonight. Or perhaps you haven't heard.

KATH: It's just an excuse for a booze-up.

DON: (*flaring*) A booze-up? That's why I've been out there all day handing out how-to-vote cards? Just an excuse for a booze-up?

KATH: I've never noticed Cooley showing much interest in politics.

DON: (*indignant*) Cooley's left of centre!

KATH: The only thing Cooley's left are a trail of used up women and more empty beer bottles than any one else in Australia.

(*Pause.*)

Who's he bringing tonight?

DON: (*surely*) I don't know.

KATH: Is he bringing that air hostess?

DON: No.

KATH: What happened to her? She was nice.

DON: I don't know.

KATH: Probably got too serious.

DON: Probably.

KATH: Who's he bringing then?

DON: I told you. I don't know. He just flew down from Sydney yesterday.

KATH: Could you tell him to leave his gymnastics until he gets back to the motel. He woke Richard last time.

DON: He didn't wake him. The air hostess did.

KATH: It's frightening for a young child.

DON: It was probably frightening for the air hostess. Would you like a drink?

KATH: I can't. I'm on tablets.

DON: They were supposed to make you happy. Bloody shit-house tablets.

KATH: (*sharply*) Lay off. And try and show me a little bit of affection tonight will you?

DON: (*irritably*) You don't have to ask.

KATH: I don't think you've ever kissed me in public once in our married life.

DON: I show you a lot of affection. You just don't notice it.

KATH: Neither does anyone else.

(*Pause.*)

I'm not looking forward to this party.

DON: I'd never have guessed.

KATH: If you want the honest truth, I think that your friends are the biggest bunch of pricks I've ever met.

DON: Yeah . . . well it would be a pretty sparse party if we threw one for your friends.

(*Pause.*)

Unless we invited the pottery class.

KATH: Why did you marry me if I'm so bloody mundane?

DON: I didn't want my personality swamped.

(*DON moves to the record player and puts on the Beatles' 'When I'm 64'.*)

KATH: As well as filling up the odd beer glass, try and make sure everyone mixes.

DON: Everyone knows each other.

KATH: Jody and Simon don't know anyone.

DON: That was a brilliant move, that was.

KATH: What?

DON: Inviting Simon and Jody.

KATH: Wasn't I supposed to invite any of my friends?

DON: Inviting those two to an election night party with my friends is equivalent to inviting Cooley to a Women's Liberation meeting.

KATH: You just make sure you don't try and score points off them.

DON: *(singing)*

Will you still need me

Will you still feed me . . .

(The front doorbell rings. KATH goes to move.)

When I'm 64 . . .

(He goes to the door and ushers in SIMON and JODY.)

(Jovially) Simon. Jody. Long time no see. Can I take your coat?

(DON takes JODY's coat. SIMON is immaculately dressed and good looking, but his hair is fluffed up and set so perfectly that the effect is a little bit too effete and prissy. He has a cultivated confidence and bonhomie that covers a certain unease. This becomes more evident as the play progresses. JODY is attractive and socially confident. She has a conservative upper middle class background, which sometimes emerges as a trace of arrogance. She is very fashionably dressed.)

As a matter of fact we were just talking about you.

SIMON: Nothing bad I hope?

DON: On the contrary. We were saying that you'd both add a touch of refinement to the gathering. There'll be some pretty grotty types here.

JODY: I hope I haven't overdressed.

DON: No. You'll be right. Come and I'll get you a drink.

SIMON: *(handing DON two bottles of beer in the normal brown paper bag)* Whack these in the Westinghouse.

DON: Take them in yourself mate. I've just had a domestic with the wife.

(SIMON holds up a finger, the gesture suggesting that he knows the situation perfectly. He goes into the kitchen and ad libs a quiet conversation with KATH as he puts the beer into the fridge. The focus remains on DON and JODY.)

JODY: I have overdressed haven't I?

DON: *(grinning)* For Christ sake woman, no one's going to give a stuff how you're dressed.

JODY: I've got plenty of casual gear in the wardrobe but I just didn't think. What sort of people are coming?

DON: Mainly friends of mine.

JODY: I know what they'll think.

DON: What?

JODY: Will they all be Labor?

DON: They'll all be left wing.

JODY: I should have worn my casual gear.

DON: *(good humoured)* For Christ sake. If you say another word about your gear I'll do something drastic.

JODY: It's important for a woman to feel she's dressed appropriately.

DON: Right!

(DON walks offstage toward the area of the bedroom.

SIMON walks back into the living room.)

SIMON: Where's Don going?

JODY: I don't know.

SIMON: Did he get you a drink?

JODY: No.

SIMON: No. He didn't get mine either.

KATH: *(from the kitchen)* Did Don get you a drink?

SIMON: No. I don't think he did.

KATH: Don. Would you pour your guests a drink?

JODY: He's not here.

KATH: *(muttering)* Where is he?

JODY: He went off towards the bedrooms.

KATH: *(annoyed)* I'll go and get him.

SIMON: I'll pour the drinks. It's no bother.

KATH: *(resuming her food preparation)* Would you Simon? Thanks very much.

(SIMON walks back into the kitchen.)

You know what Don's like.

SIMON: *(pouring drinks)* Sometimes I think it's better to be a casual host.

KATH: Better for the host but not for the guests.

SIMON: I'm always so careful to be a good host that I miss all the action.

KATH: I wish Don would take a few lessons from you.
SIMON: Were you at our last barbecue?

KATH: No. I don't think we were.

SIMON: (*thinking*) I think we asked you . . . didn't we?

KATH: I think you did. I think Don had something on.

SIMON: That's right. He did. Pity you couldn't come.

KATH: You had good weather that day didn't you?

SIMON: We did in the morning but it rained in the afternoon. It didn't matter though. I had the barbecue under canvas just in case and the guests went inside.

KATH: Don wouldn't think of taking precautions. He'd just look at the rain and say: 'Well that buggers that up, doesn't it.'

SIMON: The bureau forecast rain so it wasn't exactly unexpected.

KATH: But it was very successful despite the rain?

SIMON: Well everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, but as I was saying before, I spent so much time being a good host that I didn't get a chance to eat anything myself. (*Raising his voice*) Vermouth and dry, Jody?

JODY: Please.

SIMON: Will you have something to drink Kath?

KATH: No thanks. Not just yet.

SIMON: (*fidgeting*) Er . . . Kath . . .

KATH: Are you having trouble finding something?

SIMON: The dry . . .

KATH: (*blackly*) I told him to get dry.

SIMON: Look it doesn't matter. (*Raising his voice*) Would you prefer a gin and bitter lemon, Jody?

JODY: Isn't there any vermouth and dry?

KATH: (*calling out sharply*) Don!

DON: (*offstage*) What?

KATH: Did you get the dry ginger?

JODY: Look it doesn't matter. Gin will be fine.

DON: (*offstage*) There's dry ginger there!

KATH: Where?

DON: (*off*) In the fridge.

KATH: Whereabouts in the fridge?

DON: (*off*) Try the meat tenderising compartment.

KATH: Why did you put it in there?

DON: (*off*) I wanted to leave some space for the beer.

KATH: Is it cold enough?

SIMON: (*feeling the dry ginger bottle*) Feels cold. A little bit of vermouth and a lot of dry for Jody.

(*He pours a vermouth and dry and gives it to JODY.*)

Cold enough?

JODY: It's fine. How are you Kath?

KATH: Fine. How are Sophie and Dalton?

JODY: Fine. How's Richard?

KATH: Fine. I'm sorry about this. I'll socialise a bit more when I get these done.

JODY: Home-made pizzas?

KATH: Mmm. Nothing very special.

JODY: They look delicious.

SIMON: We must try some of those for our next barbecue.

JODY: You'd have to bake them wouldn't you?

SIMON: You could bake them inside.

JODY: What's the point of having a barbecue if you're going to bake things inside?

SIMON: Just because it's called a barbecue doesn't mean you have to barbecue everything.

KATH: They're very convenient for a party.

SIMON: I suppose you could cook them now and then reheat them.

KATH: That's what I do. (*Looking round*) What's Don doing?

JODY: I don't know. He went inside.

KATH: Are you still doing a lot of cooking Simon?

JODY: He's gone on a cheesecake kick just lately.

SIMON: I was going to bring one.

JODY: Very nice but bad for the waistline.

(*DON walks into the living room. He has changed into a dinner suit, complete with dress shirt and black tie. He still wears brown casual shoes.*)

KATH: What's that in aid of?

DON: I've decided to embarrass everybody.

KATH: Take it off.

DON: No. I'm going to stand at the door and say: 'My dears, didn't you know it was formal?'

KATH: Take it off.

DON'S PARTY

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DON: I say Simon old chap, where's your pornographic object?

SIMON: Where's my what?

DON: Where's your filthy object. Everyone had to make one—it was on the invitation.

SIMON: It's in the car. I'll get it.

(SIMON goes out.)

KATH: You can't stay dressed like that. Take it off for God's sake.

DON: Jesus you're a humourless bitch.

He puts on an inappropriate record: 'Mr Wonderful' by Mantovani.

JODY: (smoothing over) He just did it to keep me company. I'm afraid I overdressed.

KATH: (suddenly noticing) What a gorgeous dress. Where did you get it?

JODY: Prudence of Parkville.

KATH: It's, er, gorgeous.

JODY: I was going to wear something casual.

KATH: I should have warned you; but for God's sake don't worry.

JODY: Do you think I ought to go home and change?

KATH: No I don't. Don's friends are nothing to worry about, I can assure you.

(JODY looks thoughtful. SIMON returns carrying a glued balsa structure that is vaguely phallic.)

DON: Migod! What's that?

SIMON: I couldn't think of a name.

DON: It's supposed to be mind-polluting. (Looking at it) It might get a wood-borer horny but it doesn't do much for me.

SIMON: It's an ambiguous stimulus. You read your lust into it.

DON: (doing so) I must be a bit short on lust.

(The doorbell rings.)

Excuse me a second Simon.

(DON goes to the door. The new arrivals are MAL and JENNY. MAL is tall, good looking, urbane and is dressed casually but thoughtfully. JENNY is attractive but has a biting quality of resentment about her, which often underlies her dialogue. MAL sees DON's dinner suit.)

Come in.

MAL: (commenting on the dinner suit and turning as if to go) We must have the wrong address. What's the idea?

DON: I'm keeping my options open.

JENNY: If you're going to look like a gentleman, act like one.

(DON looks at her, not comprehending.)

Take my wrap.

(DON bangs himself on the forehead as if to say, 'I knew there was something I should have offered to do', and helps her off with her wrap.)

DON: (to MAL) How're things?

MAL: They'll be better after tonight.

DON: D'you think Gorton's going to go?

MAL: The Liberals are going to get it in the arse. Did you see the latest Gallup poll?

DON: It's going to be pretty close.

MAL: It's going to be a landslide boy. The last poll was taken three weeks ago and that only caught the start of the swing.

DON: I hope you're right.

MAL: I had a few beers with Whitlam's press secretary last Friday and he reckons Morgans took another poll last weekend that gave Labor fifty-two percent. They were told to keep it quiet.

DON: Morgans?

MAL: Shit yes. They do most of their work for the big dailies.

DON: That's incredible.

MAL: Some of the big boys are shitting themselves. Don't worry. Hello Kath.

(DON has been tagging behind MAL, carrying JENNY's coat as they both step into the living room.)

DON: Mal. Jenny. I'd like you to meet Simon and Jody.

(*They exchange perfunctory greetings.*)

MAL: (*talking to DON and ignoring the others*) Did you read that Gorton said that his low personal popularity was due to a well-organised smear campaign against him.

DON: (*grinning*) You wouldn't need to be much of an organiser. Didn't he say that the people responsible were nothing better than sewer rats?

MAL: 'Little white, frog-bellied things which hop around in sewers.'

DON: (*laughing*) That's pretty good imagery isn't it! I'll get you both a drink. Beer Jenny?

(*He hands KATH the coat.*)

JENNY: Please.

DON: I wonder if you'd mind . . .

(*KATH exits with coat. DON goes, leaving MAL and JENNY and SIMON together. There is an awkward pause.*)

JENNY: That's a lovely dress . . . Jody wasn't it?

JODY: That's right.

JENNY: I'm terrible with names.

JODY: I should've worn something more casual.

JENNY: (*shrugging*) Why? Looks fine.

SIMON: (*after a pause, to MAL*) I take it you'll be barracking for Labor tonight?

MAL: (*looking at him*) Well I don't anticipate yelling myself hoarse, but I'm certainly hoping for a change of government. I take it we all are?

SIMON: (*looking embarrassed*) Well . . . er . . . I'm . . . er . . . fairly neutral.

(*KATH returns.*)

KATH: (*breaking the silence*) How are the children Jenny? (*To SIMON and JODY*) Jenny's got four.

JENNY: The kids are fine. It's their father who's the pain in the arse.

JODY: (*to KATH*) I've been told that he's an intellectual. Do you think I could touch him?

JENNY: You can do what you like with him.

(*JODY touches MAL on the arm.*)

MAL: I'm touched.

(*DON returns with the drinks.*)

DON: Here we are.

(*MAL and JENNY thank him.*)

Simon? Jody?

(*JODY shakes her head.*)

SIMON: Not just at the moment thanks.

DON: (*to MAL and JENNY*) Jody actually admits to voting Liberal but Simon here claims that he is strictly neutral.

SIMON: (*smiling*) I'm a swinging voter.

MAL: Could have fooled me. Which way did you swing today?

SIMON: That, as they say, is between me and the ballot box.

MAL: (*to JODY*) And what about you Jody? Are you a genuine Liberal?

JODY: That's right.

MAL: It's one thing to vote Liberal but another thing to admit it. I think you've very courageous.

JODY: That finishes me doesn't it?

MAL: (*looking her up and down*) Not at all. It makes you very interesting.

(*He taps a large roll of paper he's carrying under his arm.*)

Does anybody mind if I unroll my pornographic object?

JENNY: You'd all better laugh. He spent all afternoon on it.

MAL: (*as he unrolls it*) Charming wife I have.

(*The poster is a huge hand drawn copy of a Playboy cartoon showing an actor and an actress sitting naked on a bed in front of a large audience. The prompt is making frantic gestures. He is holding the thumb and forefinger of his left hand in a circle and reciprocating the forefinger of his right hand through this circle. Everyone laughs when they see it.*)

JENNY: He copied it from *Playboy*.

MAL: I was going to tell them that. (*Catching sight of SIMON'S contribution*) What's that?

SIMON: It's er . . . my contribution.

MAL: What is it?

DON: It's Simon's ambiguous stimulus. It gets very provocative when you've had a few beers.

MAL: (looking at DON with a trace of a smirk) Really? Hmm.

(The door bell rings.)

Have you got the television going?

(MAL pins up his poster on the back wall. The door bell rings. The new arrival is MACK, a dishevelled little man carrying a large poster and numerous bottles.)

G'day shithead. Where's that bitch of a wife of yours?

MACK: I've left her.

MAL: (embarrassed) Oh I'm sorry . . . what . . . er . . . why . . . ?

MACK: Why did I leave her? G'day Don, Kath. (Seeing JODY) Who's this gorgeous woman?

DON: Oh . . . er, Simon and Jody. I'd like you to meet Mack. He's just left his wife.

SIMON: (extending his hand) I'm sorry to hear that.

MACK: (shaking his hand) Shit, I'm not.

(He unrolls his poster. It is a large photograph of a nude woman in a provocative pose. KATH glares at DON.)

SIMON: Who's that?

MACK: My wife.

(SIMON looks at JODY.)

You wouldn't think she's a librarian would you?

DON: (explaining to SIMON and JODY) Mack's a camera fanatic.

(MAL and MACK pin up the photograph.)

KATH: I'm not sure Ruth would like herself pinned up on our wall.

MACK: I don't care what she'd like.

MAL: You've really left her?

MACK: I've left her.

DON: When?

MACK: Three days ago.

KATH: Where are you living?

MACK: (embarrassed) I'm still at home.

(Pause.)

It was easier for her to shift out than me.

(Pause.)

She's got a job in Queensland.

(Pause.)

That Uni up Townsville.

(Pause.)

Hope she gets stung by a sea wasp. (Rubbing his hands together as if to signal 'Don't feel sorry for me') Any results through?

DON: (having had a quick look when he was out there pouring drinks) Early signs of a swing but it'll be a while yet before you can really start to make predictions.

MACK: Have you been listening to Gair?

DON: When?

MACK: Any time that he comes on the box.

DON: I thought you meant tonight.

MAL: Did you read his bit on the Universities?

DON: About the external agitators?

MAL: Not so much that. The bit about academics brainwashing the students into radicalism.

DON: Did he say that?

MAL: Bloody oath he said it. He says a lot more in private too.

MACK: What?

MAL: Well among other things that we shouldn't teach courses in sociology or politics because this is where the bulk of the activists come from.

MACK: Shit. Who was telling you that?

MAL: A reporter mate of mine who's covering the elections.

DON: That's incredible.

JODY: You must admit it's getting a bit much.

MAL: What is?

JODY: When I went to the University I went there to learn, not to take over the place.

MACK: Look, I don't mean to be offensive, but you sound like a Young Liberal.

DON: Jody's a self-confessed right winger.

MACK: Come on. I've never met a person who voted Liberal in my life. Can't think why they keep winning.

JODY: Oh for heaven's sake. (To DON) Is there some more vermouth in the kitchen?

DON: (following her) Look I'll . . . er . . . get it.

JODY: (good naturedly) I may as well learn where it is. You're not the most reliable of hosts.

MAL: Went there to learn? Is she serious?

MACK: (nodding) She needs a long hard . . . talking too.

(They look at each other, nod and go off after her. DON pours JODY's drink and the four of them engage in sporadic conversation. MACK and MAL try to get a response from JODY but she prefers to look at the election results being posted on the tally board. The focus however, remains with SIMON, JENNY and KATH and during their interaction JODY is gradually drawn into conversation with the three males in the kitchen.)

JENNY: (breaking the awkward pause) What do you do Simon?

SIMON: Well, er . . .

KATH: Simon's an accountant.

JENNY: Oh yes.

SIMON: An industrial accountant.

JENNY: Oh yes. Is it interesting work?

SIMON: It can be quite absorbing. There's a lot of the humdrum in it of course, but that's true of any job.

JENNY: What's your firm make?

SIMON: Plastic extrusions and polystyrene slabs.

(Pause.)

JENNY: (trying to make a joke) I've never seen plastic extruded.

(The joke falls flat.)

SIMON: What's your husband do?

JENNY: He's a professional bullshit artist. (As SIMON opens his mouth then shuts it again) A management consultant. (Wincing and holding her forehead) I think I'm getting a migraine.

KATH: Could I get you some aspirins?

JENNY: No thanks dear. The only thing for these is to sit down and keep still. Will you excuse me?

(She goes and sits down.)

SIMON: That's rotten luck. Does she often get migraines?

KATH: Only at our parties.

SIMON: (trying to ignore the implications) It could be the noise.

(MACK sticks his head into the living room.)

MACK: Simon old cock. Do you mind if we tell your wife a dirty story?

SIMON: (affably) She's used to it.

MACK: (to JODY) He says you're used to it.

JODY: (in mock indignation) The bloody liar.

MACK: (to JODY) Have you heard the duck-hunter?

JODY: (innocent) No.

DON: Come on. Give us the duck-hunter, Mack.

MACK: No. (Coy) It's too rude.

JODY: Go on.

MACK: No.

JODY: What's it about?

MACK: It's a story about a duck-hunter.

JODY: I gathered that.

MACK: With actions.

MAL: I don't want to see anything disgusting.

MACK: (remembering) I've got to have a broom.

(He looks around.)

JODY: (giggling) A broom? (As MAL goes off to get a broom) Is it one of those jokes with actions?

MACK: Sort of. Have you ever been duck-hunting?

JODY: No.

(MAL hands MACK the broom.)

MACK: That's my rifle.

MAL: Duck-hunters use shotguns, you poor shit.

MACK: Yes, well I like to give the ducks a chance.

(MAL hands MACK a roll of toilet paper.)

JODY: What's that?

MACK: That's my roll of toilet paper. All right. (*Pocketing the toilet paper*) You've never been duck-hunting?

JODY: No.

MACK: Well you often have to wade through shallow lakes, so here's the duck-hunter in big rubber boots, wading through the shallows, rifle at the ready, itching for a duck.

(*He fills out his story with appropriate actions.*)

Suddenly! Suddenly! He gets a feeling that he'd like to unburden himself, so he puts the shotgun under his arm, undoes his belt, (*doing so*) and eases off his trousers.

(*Doing so, then hesitating*) No it's too rude.

MAL: (*ushering them out of the kitchen*) We'll move to the privacy of the bedroom.

JODY: Migod. It must be foul.

(*She goes along nonetheless. MACK leads them, trousers still at half mast.*)

MACK: We'll just duck off to the bedroom. Single file.

(*The others follow him in single file.*)

Wading, wading, wading, wading.

(*They all make wading actions. SIMON, JENNY and KATH look at this procession with some disquiet. The three men usher JODY towards the bedroom, still wading. Just as they are reaching the top of the stairs JENNY yells.*)

JENNY: Mal!

(*The duck-hunters pause.*)

MAL: (*irritated*) What?

JENNY: Have you got a match?

MAL: (*pating his coat pocket perfunctorily*) No.

SIMON: (*getting the courage to throw in his bit*) Jody.

JODY: (*irritated*) What?

SIMON: I wonder if you could give the babysitter a ring to check whether the children are all right.

JODY: Ring her yourself.

SIMON: You know her better than I do.

(*The embarrassing moment is broken when the front door-bell rings. DON goes to answer it.*)

DON: The phone's in the hall.

MACK: (*as a disgruntled JODY rings the babysitter*) I'll tell you the rest later.

DON: Kerry darling . . .

(*The new arrivals are EVAN and KERRY. EVAN is well groomed and subdued, almost brooding. KERRY is very attractive and has a touch of affectation in her voice. She tends to overreact emotionally. A touch of hysteria.*)

KERRY: (*noting DON's dinner suit*) Migod! Have we all gone formal?

DON: I'm trying to embarrass my guests. G'day Evan. Good to see you both.

KERRY: Good to see you.

EVAN: How's the election going?

(*He hands DON a bottle of scotch.*)

DON: Looks like there's quite a swing. We're all keeping our fingers crossed. (*To KERRY*) Can I take your coat?

KERRY: Have you been listening to some of Gair's comments over the last couple of weeks?

DON: Mad Fascist bastard. We were just talking about him before.

EVAN: (*sourly*) Gorton's bad enough: 'A Labor government would make us falter in our steps towards greatness.'

DON: I thought we'd stopped already.

(*They move towards the other guests.*)

KERRY: What is the idea of the dinner suit?

DON: (*shrugging*) Just a gimmick.

KERRY: Hello Kath.

KATH: Hello Kerry, Evan.

DON: I don't think you know the other people here do you?

(*KERRY and EVAN shake their heads.*)

Kerry and Evan . . . Simon, Mack, and Jenny over there in the chair. Simon's wife Jody is ringing up their babysitter and Jenny's husband Mal is out in the kitchen watching the election telecast. Come and meet Mal while I pour you a drink.

(DON, KERRY, EVAN and MACK move to the kitchen. SIMON, for want of something to do, looks through the record collection.)

Mal . . . Kerry and Evan.

MAL: Hullo Evan . . .

(He turns from the television to look, and is obviously knocked out by KERRY.)

Kerry was it?

(He indicates the television: the sound isn't turned up, he is just watching the tally board.)

Looks good at this stage. (To DON) They are the right political shade I hope?

DON: (grinning) No worries.

MAL: Well after that other pair I'm a bit wary.

DON: They're Kath's friends.

KERRY: (looking at the screen) Malcolm Mackay's in trouble.

DON: Thank Christ for that.

MAL: Lilley's going to be a cliff-hanger.

DON: Who's the sitting member there?

MAL: Kevin Cairns. If Mackay and Cairns went, the Liberals would lose their extreme right wing in one hit.

(JODY walks back from the phone and sits down at a distance from SIMON, with whom she is still furious. MAL turns up the TV.)

TV: With less than ten percent of the votes counted so far it is not yet possible to form an accurate picture of the likely state of the parties.

(The remainder of the announcement overlaps the subsequent dialogue.)

Early votes have come to hand from the ACT, Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania and some of the Queensland seats. Polling in South Australia closed only a half an hour ago and no results have come through yet from that state. As Western Australian time is two hours behind Eastern Standard Time results are not expected from Western Australia until about ten o'clock tonight. (A new voice)

We are now back in the Sydney studios. Today, October 25 1969, more than six million Australians will have passed judgement at the ballot box and by midnight it will be fairly certain as to which way their judgement will go. It will take a swing of between seven percent and nine percent to seriously affect Liberal/Country Party's grip on office, and a swing of at least nine percent to put Labor into power. No party can count on a uniform nationwide turn in voting. Back in 1966, when the choice between the two parties was so stark and the general swing so large, one whole state, Western Australia, entirely resisted the trend away from Labor.

KATH: I don't think you've been here since we moved in have you?

KERRY: No. (Realising it is expected of her) I'd love to look over the place.

KATH: I'll show you round. Would you like to see the house Evan?

EVAN: (watching the telecast) I'll have a wander round later thanks Kath.

(KERRY and KATH go.)

KATH: It's nowhere near as interesting as your place, but we're starting to get it into some sort of shape at last.

KERRY: Sometimes I think we would have been better going into a new house. The plumbing in old houses is terrible.

(They disappear into the back part of the house.)

MAL: Bloody women.

(He turns down the TV.)

MACK: Ruth was just the same. I could never care less. As long as I had a roof over my head and the rain didn't come in I couldn't care less.

MAL: Right.

MACK: I know a couple who spend all their time doing renovations to their house. Crazy.

EVAN: I like renovating.

MACK: Well if you like it, fair enough.

EVAN: I like it.

DON: (trying to cover up the awkward silence) You've, er, really done something with that place Evan. It was a complete bloody wreck when you started.

EVAN: (*flatly*) Yes, it's coming on.
 DON: Have you finished building Kerry's studio yet?
 EVAN: Yes. Just last week.
 MAL: What do you do when you're not renovating, Evan?
 EVAN: I'm a dentist.
 SIMON: Which is another form of renovating really.

(*His attempted joke falls very flat.*)

EVAN: What about you?
 MAL: I'm a psychologist.
 EVAN: Private practice?
 MAL: Management consultant. Does Kerry renovate?
 EVAN: When she's got time. She paints.
 MACK: Dabbles a bit in the oils?
 DON: Dabbles? She's had three major exhibitions.
 EVAN: Four. She had another down at the Leveson Gallery last month.

DON: (*embarrassed*) That's right. I must apologise to her. She got very good critics didn't she?

EVAN: Not really.

DON: (*embarrassed*) Oh, I, er, heard somewhere it was very successful.

EVAN: She sold a lot of stuff. She's very fashionable at the moment.

MAL: Do you find it a bit hard to keep up with the jargon?

DON: (*covering*) Evan is doing fine arts at the Uni as a single subject to get a bit of background.

MAL: Do you find it's helpful?

EVAN: (*tense*) I gave it up.

MAL: I've heard it's a pretty tough course.

EVAN: (*tenser*) It crapped me. Look, I forgot to bring in our party contribution!

DON: Not to worry. It was only a gag to get the party moving.

EVAN: No, look . . . I'll go and get it.

(*He leaves.*)

MACK: Who brung him?

MAL: What a superb woman.

DON: And doesn't she know it.

MAL: He'd have his hands full keeping her in check wouldn't he?

DON: He doesn't.

MAL: She plays a bit?

DON: (*with a trace of bitterness*) As long as you're in the top ten in some branch of the arts.

MACK: (*to MAL*) Stick a paintbrush in your arsehole and see how you go.

MAL: (*to DON*) Have you ever had a go at her?

DON: What do you reckon?

MAL: No luck?

DON: Depends what you mean.

MAL: Come on. Yes or no?

DON: Yes. . . . And then no.

(*They jostle DON and jeer at his lack of success. DON takes a beer bottle and goes into the living room to act the host. MAL turns up the TV.*)

TV: The most significant trend to emerge from the early counting has been the marked swing to Labor.

(MAL and MACK cheer.)

Eight percent, the biggest since the present party system came into operation. If this trend continues to midnight Labor will form the new Government.

(*Another cheer. KERRY and KATH come back from the bedrooms. The remainder of the TV announcement overlaps the subsequent dialogue.*)

On the present figures Labor is ahead and could possibly wrest the following seats from the Government: Eden-Monaro, Barton, Hughes, Robertson and Saint George in New South Wales; Lawler and Marybnyong in Victoria; Bowman and Lilley in Queensland; Adelaide, Gray and Kingston in South Australia; Canning, Forrest, Perth and Swan in Western Australia; and Denison and Franklin in Tasmania.

KERRY: (*re-entering with KATH*) It's a very convenient layout.

KATH: It's so flimsy compared with an old place.

KERRY: You ought to try cooking in my kitchen.

KATH: Yes it is a bit small.

KERRY: Evan's knocking out the whole back part and remodelling it. It's his next project.
 KATH: That'll make things easier.
 DON: Drink, Kerry?
 KERRY: I'll go and get it.

(*She goes towards the kitchen. MAL turns down the TV.*)

MAL: Hullo Kerry. I hear that you're very creative.
 KERRY: Thank you. Are you interested in art?
 MAL: (*lying*) Very much.
 MACK: (*looking at MAL as if to say, 'you bloody liar'*) I do a lot of photography.
 KERRY: I've seen your photography.
 MACK: It was worth a try. (*Taking her aside*) Is your husband the jealous type?
 KERRY: He's more the brooding type. Why?
 MACK: To be quite frank, certain men at this party are going to offer themselves to you tonight.
 KERRY: Well I'm afraid that certain men are going to be disappointed.
 MACK: Which ones?

(*SIMON puts on a record. He puts it on too loud; the needle jumps and slides along the disc. There is some consternation. SIMON is embarrassed. EVAN returns carrying a rather good abstract print. It does not appear to be very pornographic.*)

EVAN: I forgot to bring in our contribution.
 KATH: Look, you shouldn't have done anything like this.
 EVAN: It should go with your colour scheme.
 DON: That's not pornographic.
 EVAN: It wasn't meant to be.
 MACK: What have you got against pornography?
 EVAN: What have you got against art?

(*MACK cannot find an answer.*)

KATH: We'll hang it in our bedroom. Come and have a look.
 EVAN: (*to DON*) After you.
 DON: (*who hadn't intended to go*) Right.
 (*They move off towards the bedroom.*)

KATH: You won't believe this, but I've been scouring the place for a print to hang over the bed. All we've got there now is a photo of our marriage. Were you there that day?
 EVAN: No. I don't think we knew you then.

(*KERRY, who has left MACK to look at the exhibits, has now moved on into the kitchen.*)

KERRY: (*to MAL*) Who did that cartoon?
 MAL: I did.
 KERRY: It's very funny.
 MAL: Thanks. What did you contribute?
 KERRY: We didn't have time. (*Pointing to the TV*) How's it going?
 MAL: (*academic, impressive*) Touch and go, but I'd have a dollar or two on a new government by midnight.
 KERRY: Really? That's super.
 MAL: I was speaking to Gough last week. He said if we get Evans, we've got the lot.
 KERRY: What do you do?
 MAL: Executive selection. I'm a psychologist.
 KERRY: I've always been interested in psychology. Do you find that you're always analysing people?
 MAL: (*enjoying playing the big psychologist*) All the time. It's an occupational hazard.
 KERRY: What can you tell about me?
 MAL: As a psychologist, I can't help feeling that your physical beauty would bring its problems.
 KERRY: In what way?
 MAL: Well speaking fairly brutally, your attractiveness constitutes a sought-after commodity.
 KERRY: So?
 MAL: So you'd have no shortage of alternative offers which could place your marriage under some strain.
 KERRY: I know a lot of attractive women who have stable marriages.
 MAL: Of course, of course. It depends on the woman.
 KERRY: In what way?
 MAL: Well, to some women—perhaps those who aren't very highly sexed—there's no sense of loss in turning down a potential lover. For other women it's a very real cost to deny themselves the excitement of a new affair.

KERRY: I suppose you're right.

MAL: It's very clear to me that you're the type of woman who would resent being unable to act on her emotions.

KERRY: How do you deduce that?

MAL: It's a feeling I've got.

KERRY: A feeling?

MAL: I feel certain, for instance, that if I said to you that I'm very attracted to you and I'd be delighted if we arranged to have an affair, that you wouldn't reject it out of hand, but that depending on how you felt about me, you'd consider it.

KERRY: I would.

(Pause.)

MAL: You know of course that I would like to have an affair with you, so I'll be frank and say just that.

KERRY: That you'd like to have an affair with me?

MAL: Yes. How does that appeal to you?

KERRY: I'm afraid it doesn't.

MAL: Well that's . . . er . . . very frank of you.

KERRY: That reminds me. I must go and ask Evan whether he made up those frames today. Could you excuse me a second.

(She goes.)

MACK: *(cheerfully)* Can't win 'em all.

MAL: The night isn't over yet boy.

MACK: *(looking at the television)* We won't get Evans. Look at the DLP vote.

MAL: Look at the Australia Party vote.

MACK: Yeah, but their preferences aren't as tight.

MAL: How do you know?

MACK: They'll be mainly disaffected Liberals.

MAL: Crap.

(They watch the box in silence. The door bell rings. DON emerges from the back of the house to answer it, followed by KATH and EVAN.)

DON: Here comes the floorshow.

(The new arrivals are COOLEY and SUSAN. COOLEY

is very well dressed, but has the air of a larrikin about him. SUSAN is warmly attractive and much younger than COOLEY. COOLEY is carrying what appears to be an enormous carton of grog.)

COOLEY: *(to DON)* G'day cunt features.

DON: *(looking a little alarmed, glancing at SUSAN for her reaction)* That's a nice way to greet an old friend.

COOLEY: A cunt is an object of joy. This is Susan.

(He points at DON's dinner suit and laughs raucously.)

Who are you trying to fool?

(COOLEY has already barged on past DON to deposit the large carton on the floor. He withdraws two bottles of beer from it. He chuckles at his joke and hands the beer to DON. DON nods at SUSAN, she at him.)

(Surveying the gathering) Weak looking bunch of poofters. Where's Mack?

DON: In the kitchen.

COOLEY: Is Ruth with him?

DON: He's left her.

COOLEY: Yeah? *(Seeing KERRY)* Hey. She's all right. Might have a go at that later.

(DON looks anxiously at SUSAN, who must have heard this, but she smiles benignly.)

DON: Er, did you bring a pornographic object?

COOLEY: *(patting SUSAN)* Why of course. Here she is. Where's Mal?

DON: In the kitchen.

COOLEY: *(seeing JENNY)* G'day Jenny, you old fishwife. Cracked it for another migraine?

JENNY: I hope you get one one day.

COOLEY: *(looking at SIMON)* Who's the poofter with the poker up his arse?

DON: Simon Bascombe. That's his wife Jody.

COOLEY: *(appraising her)* Slight stir of the brooding monster.

(MACK has heard COOLEY's entry. He enters the living room. MAL follows a short while later when the greeting ritual is under way.)

MACK: (disguising affection with coarseness) It had to be Cooley.

COOLEY: My God. It's Mickey Mouse. How are you, you little prick?

MACK: None the better for seeing you, you great turd.

DON: (to SUSAN) Charming language when these two get together.

(SUSAN merely smiles warmly.)

COOLEY: Shitting, shagging and shaving. Same old routine.

MACK: Life gets a bit monotonous doesn't it?

(MAL appears.)

MAL: Don't tell me.

COOLEY: There's a bullshit artist at every party and this one's no exception.

MAL: There goes that flashing wit again.

DON: Come and I'll introduce you.

COOLEY: I'll introduce myself. Just get me a beer. What about some music? Susan wants to get her gear off. What do you want darling?

SUSAN: 'Satisfaction'!

COOLEY: You should complain? (Striding over to the record player and putting the record on) This is more like a morgue than a party. Let's hear it.

(SUSAN looks up at DON and begins to take off her coat. He realises she wants him to help her out of it and jerks apologetically into action. COOLEY is doing a solo by himself and singing the words to boot. SUSAN smiles at DON, who out of politeness asks KATH to dance. MAL out of lechery goes up to KERRY, but EVAN has beaten him to it. He goes and dances with JODY. SIMON, out of politeness, goes and asks JENNY, but she pleads headache. He stands there uncertainly, puffing his pipe during the number.)

Don! Where's my beer!

DON: (in the kitchen) I'm looking at the telecast.

COOLEY: (feigning innocence) Is something on the television?

KERRY: How's it going?

DON: It's still looking very good, very good. Come and have a look. Hey, it's very close—it's in the balance. Come and have a look, everybody. It's touch and go.

(The others move to the kitchen to watch, with the exception of JODY.)

Turn it down, Mal.

(MAL turns down the record.)

TV: The outcome of the 1969 Federal Election hangs in the balance. At the present stage of counting the Liberal/Country Party Coalition is certain of winning 53 seats and the ALP 54 with 18 of the 125 seats in doubt. The doubtful seats include eight in New South Wales, four in Queensland, two in Victoria and one each in Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The final result is certain to be decided by the allocation of preferences. Although the ALP has been receiving 50 per cent of the preferences in the electorates of Denison and Hume, the trend in Queensland has been solidly anti-Labor. The Australia Party preferences earlier expected to strongly favour Labor are at present only slightly favouring Labor in key electorates. The DLP vote though it has fallen from 7.3 percent to 5.8 percent of the total may well be crucial in deciding the outcome in Victoria and Queensland.

(While the others listen to the TV announcement, MAL puts on a softer, more lyrical record. He returns to JODY and asks her to continue dancing. The sound from the TV set and the light in the kitchen fade.)

MAL: You really do vote Liberal?

JODY: Mmm.

MAL: (dancing close to her) Why?

JODY: It's a purely emotional thing. I associate Labor with coarse men in overalls.

MAL: Labor's not just a trade unionists' party any more.

JODY: I know. It's just an emotional thing.

MAL: (*hand stealing down onto her bum*) You tend to follow your emotions?

JODY: Yes. Would you mind taking your hand off my bottom?

MAL: (*moving closer, speaking intimately*) What'll you do if I don't?

JODY: Kneee you in the balls.

MAL: I'm sure you wouldn't.

(*She does. MACK has just left the kitchen and sees it. MAL, angry and in pain, retreats to the patio.*)

MACK: (*laughing*) I saw it all boy. You were feeling her arse. (*To JODY*) Dance with me. I'm not nearly as offensive as him. (*Dancing close*) Nice music to dance to.

(*He puts his hand on her bum.*)

JODY: Take it off.

MACK: (*not taking his hand off*) Very pleasant music isn't it?

JODY: You saw what happened to him.

MACK: I think you should take things into account.

JODY: What things?

MACK: (*still with his hand on her bum*) Well my . . . (*shrugging*) wife.

JODY: What's that got to do with your hand on my bottom?

MACK: When you've had an emotional shock you need something tangible to hang on to.

(*JODY looks at him bemused, takes his hand and shifts it to halfway up her back. For the rest of their interaction, however, it slips back to its original position—after a reasonable time-lapse. JODY makes no objection.*)

(*Becoming serious*) I suppose it had to come. There was something a bit unhealthy about our relationship.

JODY: What do you mean?

MACK: To be quite honest, I've got to accept a lot of the blame for the failure of our marriage.

JODY: You're being very fair.

MACK: I'm being more than fair. She's a bitch. Did you know I take photographs?

JODY: Yes. I've seen the picture of your wife.

MACK: Quite honestly, I've got to shoulder a lot of the blame for the failure of our relationship.

JODY: You just said that.

MACK: No, in all seriousness, I'm a little bit off.

JODY: How do you mean?

MACK: About sex.

JODY: We're all a little bit off if only we faced up to it.

MACK: Do you think so?

JODY: I think we'd all be surprised at the sort of things Mr and Mrs Average do in the privacy of the bedroom.

MACK: Do you and Simon . . .

JODY: I'm sure they do.

MACK: I still think I'm a little bit off.

JODY: Nonsense.

MACK: I used to take a lot of suggestive photos of my wife.

JODY: She should have been flattered.

MACK: I used to hang them all round the walls of our house.

JODY: Sort of bra and panty photos?

MACK: Some.

JODY: What else?

MACK: You'll think I'm off.

JODY: No I won't.

MACK: I wanted her to seduce my friends.

JODY: (*a little taken aback*) Really!

MACK: That's unusual, isn't it?

JODY: (*doubtfully*) No . . .

MACK: And take photos from the cupboard . . . without their knowing.

JODY: Did she do it?

MACK: (*in his defence*) Yes . . . but she wouldn't let me take the photos.

(*Pause.*)

JODY: I'd be . . . flattered if Simon wanted . . . er . . . to take some photos of me.

(*Pause.*)

MACK: Has he got a camera?

JODY: No.

MACK: Well . . . he could borrow mine. I won't be using it for a while.

(During the last part of this dialogue SIMON has emerged from the kitchen and stands there puffing on his pipe. He notes the position of MACK's hand. MACK and JODY don't notice him until he moves closer and they almost bump into him.)

SIMON: *(coughing)* Hello there.

MACK: *(embarrassed, moving his hand)* Hello. Did you want to dance with your wife?

SIMON: No. Go ahead.

(Embarrassed silence. MACK and JODY begin to dance again. But he stays there.)

JODY: *(annoyed by his presence)* Did you want something?

SIMON: Did the children go down all right?

JODY: *(tersely)* Yes. *(To MACK)* Would you excuse me for a moment.

(She leaves. SIMON and MACK stand there awkwardly.)

SIMON: What . . . er . . . do you do for a living?

MACK: I'm a design engineer.

SIMON: Really?

MACK: What about you.

SIMON: I'm one of those chaps who keeps a watchful eye on you.

MACK: Are you from ASIO? *(Seeing SIMON's look)* Just joking.

SIMON: I'm an industrial accountant.

MACK: *(uninterested)* Oh yes.

SIMON: *(rising to the balls of his feet and trying to think of something to say)* Did you get along to the film festival this year?

MACK: No.

SIMON: *(embarrassed)* I, er, thought, with your interest in photography, you might have gone.

MACK: I, er, only take still stuff. Different sort of thing.

SIMON: Yes. *(Looking at MACK's photo of his wife)* I suppose in a way you could say that a movie was nothing but a series of stills.

MACK: Yes, well . . . they both use a lens. It's just that the, er, movie keeps, er . . . *(making hand motions)* moving. Look . . . this bloody beer mug of mine . . . whenever it runs dry, it rears up and drags me to the kitchen.

(MACK moves to the kitchen. The TV fades up. The following commentary is just audible during the following scenes.)

TV: We're back in the Tally Room at the Lynham High School in Canberra where the ACT representative Jim Fraser has even at this stage captured 50 percent of the total vote. He looks a certain winner, being over 20,000 votes ahead of his nearest rival, the Liberal candidate Mr. Maher. The Capital Territory has long been a firm Labor stronghold which 'Big Jim Fraser', as he is known locally, has been able to build up by sheer hard work. In the Northern Territory seat, Mr. Robertson ALP is safely holding at bay the sitting Country Party member, Mr. Calder, but because of the scattered nature of the electorate and the large proportion of postal votes, a result in this seat is not expected until late next week. We will now run down the tally board for the South Australian constituencies where 20 percent of the votes have been counted. In the seat of Adelaide, Mr. Hurford ALP on 1,458 votes is leading the sitting member Mr. Andrew Jones on 984. Then follows Mr. Hasisons DLP, with 116 votes; Mr. McMenamin Australia Party 42; and Mr. Chischko Independent 26. In Angus, Mr. Giles Liberal with 1,806 is leading the ALP representative Mr. McLaren on 1,500 and Mr. Critchley DLP on 188. In the seat of Barker, the sitting member and cabinet representative, Dr. Forbes Liberal on 1,738 votes is slightly ahead of the ALP candidate Mr. Cornwall on 1,642. In Bonython, Mr. Nicolls ALP is leading with 3,602 votes, then follows Mr. Masapust Liberal on 1,314, Mr. Lawrence Social Credit Party on 402, and Mr. Meredith DLP on 94. The sitting member for Boothby, Mr. Macleay is a clear leader in that constituency with 3,940 votes. The ALP representative Mr. Sumner 2,728. Mr. Farrell DLP has 250 votes followed by Mr. Thompson Australia Party 174 and Mr. Lillington Independent 140. The ALP representative in Grey, Mr. Wallis 2,528 votes is holding a clear lead over

the sitting member Mr. Jessop on 1,506, the DLP candidate Mr. Barnes 118 and Mr. Manthorpe Australia Party 62. In the new electorate of Hawker Mr. Jacobi ALP 4,016 is leading Mr. Higgenbotham Liberal on 2,274. Mr. Anderson DLP has polled 252 and the Australia Party candidate Mr. Hawkins 160. Mr. Clyde Cameron, ALP member for Hindmarsh, is 4,400 votes and he is far ahead of his closest rival Mr. Cusack Liberal on 1,914. Then Mr. Hubert DLP is following with 182 votes and Mr. Gazecimeon 28. In Kingston, Mr. Gun ALP on 4,218 votes leads the sitting member Mr. Brownbill Liberal on 3,393 and Mr. Bishop DLP on 286. The progress tally for Port Adelaide shows Mr. Birell with 2,052 votes almost tripling the Liberal candidate Mr. Appelkamp's score of 1,456. The Social Credit Party representative Mr. McEvay and the Communist Party candidate Mr. Moss have polled 170 and 98 votes respectively. In Sturt, Mr. Foster ALP on 3,938 leads the sitting member Mr. Wilson on 3,236 and Mr. Hubert DLP on 148. With the seat of Wakefield, we come to the end of the list of the South Australian constituencies: Mr. Kelly, the sitting Liberal member with 1,404 votes is leading Mr. Chatterton ALP on 976 and Mr. McMahon DLP on 106.

(KERRY moves out of the kitchen. MAL returns from the patio and goes to her.)

MAL: (to KERRY) We meet again.

KERRY: So I see.

COOLEY: (joining them) Why don't you introduce me, Malcolm?

MAL: (glaring at COOLEY) Kerry. This is . . . er . . . Grainger Cooley.

COOLEY: (to KERRY) You've heard of me no doubt?

KERRY: (smiling) I'm afraid I haven't.

MAL: You should've heard of Kerry.

COOLEY: Why? What's she do?

MAL: She's an artist.

COOLEY: So's Susan.

KERRY: Does she paint?

COOLEY: No. She strips. She's really good.

MAL: A stripper?

COOLEY: Part time. She's an arts student at Sydney Uni. How about that! Brains and body.

MAL: (to KERRY) Grainger's got a very exotic taste in women.

COOLEY: She's working her way through college.

KERRY: It must be pretty exhausting for her.

COOLEY: It is. Specially since she met me.

(MAL looks towards the ceiling as if to say 'My God'.)

(To KERRY) What sort of things do you paint?

KERRY: I'm getting very interested in texture.

COOLEY: Texture eh? Well, I'll see you again later. Got to have a word with the little man over there.

(COOLEY moves across to speak to MACK)

They tell me you've left your wife?

MACK: She left me.

COOLEY: Yeah? Well you're better off without her. With all due respect boy, and I've never said this up to now, but your wife is one of the great bourgeois monsters of our time.

MACK: Bourgeois? She let herself be photographed in the nude and hung up all around the house. That's bourgeois?

COOLEY: Now come on. Don't get nostalgic about the bitch. MACK: It's all right for you mate.

COOLEY: Well what do you want to do? Build her a shrine? MACK: Well, bugger me, she was pretty tolerant.

COOLEY: Tolerant? She was tolerant all right. Under normal circumstances I'd never tell you this, but if you're going to go around eulogising her I might as well tell you that she screwed me, and I use the word advisedly. I was bloody near dragged to bed.

MACK: (dully) Yeah.

COOLEY: (nodding his head in a self-satisfied way) Digest that!

MACK: You digest this. I've got a whole roll of film of you performing, taken on my hundred and twenty millimetre Hasselblad, on triple-X Kodak, using available light.

COOLEY: (taken aback) Wha—Di—

MACK: They came up a bit grainy when I enlarged them, but you've got to expect that with a super-fast film.

COOLEY: (angry) You better be joking.

(JODY returns.)

MACK: (to JODY) Glad you called. This is a very old and a very bad friend of mine: Grainger Cooley, Jody . . . Grainger.

(COOLEY smiles at her and nods, but he is still pre-occupied with MACK's confession about the photographs.)

MACK: Were you looking for me?

JODY: I was actually.

MACK: Well I hope it's nothing important because we've got no hope of getting rid of Cooley here. His pride has been wounded.

JODY: No. I just came for a bit of a natter.

COOLEY: (blackly) Did you really take photographs?

MACK: Don't come on all pious, cock. You were screwing my wife.

COOLEY: For Christ's sake! You don't need to discuss it in public.

JODY: I'll come back later.

MACK: You stay right here.

COOLEY: A joke's a joke. But you don't set a friend up like that.

MACK: Shut up or I'll name you as co-respondent.

(He moves off. EVAN has rejoined KERRY. MAL has moved off. COOLEY nods to KERRY and EVAN, intending to pass, but KERRY speaks to him.)

KERRY: Oh, er, Grainger. Have you met my husband, Evan?

COOLEY: No. I haven't. How are you?

EVAN: Fine. I believe you're a lawyer.

COOLEY: Some of my clients don't. What about you?

EVAN: I'm a dentist.

COOLEY: (nodding) I've been hearing that your wife's very creative.

KERRY: I wish the critics thought so.

COOLEY: Why, have they been panning you?

KERRY: Faint praise.

EVAN: Moderate praise.

COOLEY: (ogling KERRY) If I was a critic you wouldn't be getting faint praise. What are they all? Poofers?

KERRY: (smiling) Not exactly.

COOLEY: Do they ever proposition you?

KERRY: The critics?

COOLEY: Yeah.

EVAN: It's not really as corrupt as all that.

COOLEY: If I was a critic and I came to review some hot young chick's etchings, it'd be a case of 'No root, no review'.

EVAN: You must conduct an interesting law practice.

COOLEY: (shaking his head) I'm taking a hammering tonight. I'll just go over and see Jenny. I can't lose that one. (Going to JENNY) On my right, sour as a crab-apple jelly, we have . . .

JENNY: (grinning despite herself) You took long enough to come and speak to me.

COOLEY: You're lucky I came to speak to you at all.

JENNY: Why's that?

COOLEY: I don't make a habit of speaking to hostile bitches in corners.

JENNY: Well I don't make a habit of speaking to incorrigible lechers.

COOLEY: (grinning) Any man who isn't married with four kids is a lecher in your book, you flop-bellied, breast-sucked old lubra.

JENNY: Honestly Grainger, your taste in women is becoming more adolescent as the years go by.

COOLEY: (indignant) Now just a minute. Susan is very intelligent.

JENNY: Come on. Big tits. Cow eyes. Vacuous chatter. I think you've started your middle-aged virility fantasies already. What happened to your air hostess? She was nice.

COOLEY: She had what they call a virgin cortex. No original thought had ever penetrated.

JENNY: (laughing) Grainger!

COOLEY: And then there was a beautiful socialite.

JENNY: What was wrong with her?

COOLEY: Her friends told her I was uncouth and boorish. Me? Two terms at Melbourne Grammar!

JENNY: The older you get, the younger your women get.

COOLEY: (thinking) When I was seventeen I stuffed a fifty year old barmaid in my old man's pub. It was pretty sordid but she just kept saying 'Thank you, thank you' right through. How's your old man treating you?

JENNY: A lot of it's my fault. I'm a real bitch to him sometimes.

COOLEY: Mmm.

JENNY: Aren't I?

COOLEY: I'm neutral.

JENNY: He's been following that Kerry woman around like a puppy dog.

COOLEY: I wouldn't worry.

JENNY: All I'm worried about is him making a fool of himself. Her husband's in a real shit.

COOLEY: There's nothing to worry about. It's the bastards that smile and shake your hand as you tickle their wives' arses that you've got to watch.

JENNY: Well you'd know.

COOLEY: *(patting her affectionately on the shoulder)* I'll just go and get myself a beer.

(He walks off. The TV has faded out. A record is playing.

DON, who has been acting the host and filling up beer glasses, has also been gathering the courage to go and sit next to SUSAN. He does so just as COOLEY leaves
JENNY.)

DON: Have you, er, known Cooley long?

SUSAN: No, not long.

DON: He's a funny guy. He always puts on a turn at parties. I've known the bastard for fifteen years and every bloody party we're at, he ... always puts on a turn ...

SUSAN: *(looking at him)* Mmm.

(Pause.)

I'm a full-time student and a part-time dancer. Is that what you were going to ask?

DON: I'm a teacher.

SUSAN: Are we going to sit round all night or are we going to be honest?

DON: *(embarrassed)* Let's, er, be honest.

SUSAN: Right.

DON: Are, er, you going to be in town long?

SUSAN: *(shaking her head)* I'm flying back tomorrow.

DON: You're only here for the night then?

(SUSAN nods her head with a half smile on her face.)

(Seeing her smile) I'm not very good at this sort of thing am I?

SUSAN: What are the ground rules around here?

DON: What do you mean?

SUSAN: What would happen if we were open about it?

DON: Who to?

SUSAN: Your wife.

DON: *(looking worried)* Jesus.

SUSAN: What if I said to her that there was some chemistry there. It's purely physical. I'm flying back to Sydney in the morning. No worries.

DON: *(worried)* I think she's a bit insecure.

(MAL, still trying to get his hands on something, comes up to them. DON, a little relieved to have someone else in the conversation, introduces him.)

DON: Susan. This is Mal.

(SUSAN nods her head.)

MAL: You came with Cooley?

SUSAN: That's right. I came with Cooley. No more, no less. Who did you come with?

MAL: My wife. She's the bitch in the hostile stupor over there in the corner.

DON: She doesn't look quite herself tonight.

MAL: *(to DON)* One thing that really shits me about you boy, is your compulsive politeness. My wife looks exactly herself tonight.

SUSAN: *(to DON)* She looks as if she could bite the balls off Mohammed Ali. I just love her. She's really fierce.

MAL: You ought to be married to her.

SUSAN: Why is she like that?

MAL: Don't ask me.

SUSAN: She's probably frustrated.

DON: That's what the problem is, Mal!

MAL: I didn't come here to have aspersions cast on my masculinity. I came here to admire Susan at close range.

DON: *(embarrassed, getting up to leave)* Well I'll ... er ...

SUSAN: *(putting a gentle but restraining hand on DON's knee)* Stay here.

MAL: We don't need him.

SUSAN: I need him.

MAL: What's he got that I haven't?

SUSAN: The nod.

MAL: You're joking.

SUSAN: I think he's beautiful. Don't you?

MAL: No.

SUSAN: Fair enough. Let's face it. If one person turned everybody on and another person turned nobody on then things would get a bit grim emotionally. Wouldn't they?

MAL: Kath will kill him.

(He goes to the kitchen.)

SUSAN: I don't see why she should. If the whole thing's made clear and open then I don't see why she should.

(To DON) Which one's your wife?

(DON points her out.)

Let's try it.

DON: I think she's a bit insecure.

SUSAN: Have you ever tried simple honesty with her?

DON: No I, er . . .

SUSAN: I bet you've crept away and done it on the sly though.

DON: Well I've, er, yes, I've had affairs.

SUSAN: Have you felt good about it?

DON: No.

SUSAN: Well let's try.

(She gets up and goes across to KATH. DON follows her nervously and reluctantly.)

Kath. My name's Susan.

(SUSAN looks at DON, who looks away, and back at SUSAN and nods. MAL savours the situation in the background.)

I was just admiring your décor.

KATH: It's a bit *House-and-Gardenish*.

SUSAN: Not really.

KATH: The trouble with décor is that if your tastes change after you've done it then you're stuck with it.

(DON, unable to face the situation, moves off to a distance and shuffles through the records.)

SUSAN: I'd probably go for something a bit simpler myself, but in this sort of thing it's all a matter of taste.

(Pause.)

I've, er, been talking to Don.

KATH: Yes. I saw.

SUSAN: He's a nice guy.

KATH: Sometimes.

SUSAN: I think you're really lucky.

KATH: We have our bad times.

SUSAN: Are you, er, very jealous of him?

KATH: No.

SUSAN: I'm, er, flying back with Cooley tomorrow. Don and I, er . . .

KATH: Yes?

SUSAN: Look, it's purely physical. I'll, er, be gone tomorrow.

(Long pause.)

KATH: Don?

(SUSAN nods.)

You'd better ask him hadn't you?

SUSAN: I thought I'd like to find out how you felt.

KATH: *(a trifle tersely)* It's nothing to do with me. He'll have to make up his own mind.

(She moves away. SUSAN goes across to DON.)

DON: What'd she say?

SUSAN: She said it was your decision.

DON: How did she take it?

SUSAN: I don't think she was wrapped.

DON: She's on anti-depressants.

SUSAN: Why didn't you tell me?

DON: I suppose I should've.

SUSAN: You'd better go and talk to her.

DON: Yes I, er, will.

(DON goes to approach KATH but she gives him a most pronounced cold shoulder. He hasn't the courage to persevere and goes to the television set where EVAN and SIMON have gravitated.)

How's it going now?

EVAN: I think everything hinges on Western Australia.

DON: When will the first results come through from there?

EVAN: Another half hour or so. If the ALP goes down it'll be Victoria that does it.

DON: How's the DLP vote running?

EVAN: In Victoria?

(DON nods.)

Over ten percent.

DON: (sourly) Shit.

(DON wanders out with a bottle of beer in his hand.)

SIMON: Do, er, you know many people here Evan?

EVAN: Only Don and Kath.

SIMON: Yes, er, so do we. Are the others mainly, er, Don's friends?

EVAN: Apparently.

SIMON: They're, er, very, er, extroverted types aren't they?

EVAN: I think they're a bunch of shits.

SIMON: (brightening visibly) Well I'm glad somebody else feels that way. Are you very interested in this election?

EVAN: Not much.

(SIMON turns down the TV.)

SIMON: (even brighter) I can't get up much enthusiasm about it either.

EVAN: If Labor gets in we might get a slightly better health scheme, slightly better social services and that's about it.

SIMON: And you're never sure how they're going to pay for it.

EVAN: They could take some more money from us for a start.

SIMON: What, more tax?

EVAN: I don't know what you're earning, but I pull in over twenty thousand dollars a year clear. On that sort of salary I can send my kids, (ruefully) if ever I have any, to the best schools, I can take out oodles of assurance, and because

it's all tax-deductible it costs me about half the price of someone on a low wage. That's not bad for extracting the odd molar is it?

SIMON: Are you a socialist?

EVAN: Yes. Aren't you?

SIMON: (not wishing to lose his newly found friend) Well I think all of us are socialists at heart.

(Pause.)

Unfortunately it seems that the old profit motive seems to keep the economy moving.

EVAN: I think we better stop discussing politics or I'll end up landing you one on the jaw. (Offering a bottle) Would you like a beer?

SIMON: (accepting it) Thanks.

(They watch the television in silence. Even though it is only of mild interest to them they find it preferable to facing the party again. MAL, returning from the toilet, makes his way towards JODY and MACK. He is in the mood for a fight.)

MAL: (to JODY) I'm afraid your party's in trouble.

JODY: I suppose a change of government wouldn't do any great harm.

MAL: It might even do some good. (Tossing his hand) Oh only in small things like health, education . . .

MACK: Shut up shithead.

MAL: (showing the effects of alcohol) What? I can't have a serious political discussion. Is that a rule of the house is it? I'm sorry. I forgot. A party is for frivolity and fun. Did you hear the one about the Grenadier Guardsman and the tourist lady?

MACK: (to JODY) How old is your youngest?

MAL: (to JODY) The thing that gets me about you people is the way you never think about what you're doing in life.

JODY: We've got a very clear idea of what we're doing.

MAL: You've got clear ideas (tapping his skull) planted straight into your skulls by some advertising copywriter.

JODY: Rot.

MAL: Would it be true to say that you are just about to sell your thirty thousand dollar house and take out a mortgage for a fifty thousand dollar house?

JODY: We've been thinking about it. How did you know that?

MAL: (*waving his finger tipily*) Never mind. What are your motives for this particular piece of insanity!

MACK: (*to JODY*) Do you want me to hit him with my beer mug?

JODY: (*to MAL*) I'm thinking of having another baby.

MACK: (*to JODY*) You don't have to answer him.

JODY: I'll answer him.

MAL: Can't you get pregnant in a thirty thousand dollar house. Too cheap and nasty?

JODY: If we end up with three or four children we want plenty of space.

MAL: Haven't you got three or four bedrooms already.

JODY: It's not just the bedrooms. We'd like a music room and a play room and a study for Simon.

MAL: A music room and a play room and a study for Simon . . . !

JODY: If one child wants to play the piano and the other wants to play the radiogram we'd like them to be able to do it.

MAL: And if one of them wants to fly to the moon you'll have a spaceship there in the back yard. What kind of logic is that. It's all bullshit in any case. There is one reason and one reason alone why you are moving from a thirty thousand dollar home and that is status. S.T.A.T.U.S.

MACK: My God. He can spell.

MAL: (*to MACK*) Look you! If you want to contribute to this debate contribute! If not piss off!

MACK: Debate? This isn't a debate, it's a bloody lecture! Sociology I!

JODY: It's got nothing to do with status!

MAL: Like hell it hasn't.

JODY: (*steamed up*) Are you usually as rude to people as you are at the moment?

(MACK nods 'Yes' in the background, not to anyone in particular.)

MAL: What do you expect when you come here trumpeting your conservatism as if God should kiss your arse for it?

JODY: I didn't trumpet it!

MAL: At least Simon had the grace to lie that he was neutral.
SIMON: (*indignant*) I wasn't lying!

(*The argument is attracting spectators. DON watches with interest, ignoring KATH's eye-signs to go and break it up.*)

MAL: I'm sorry. I take that back.

SIMON: I mean it. I wasn't lying!

MAL: All right! All right!

SIMON: When somebody calls me a liar I believe I'm entitled to object.

MAL: That's right. Perfectly entitled. Now shut up. I'm arguing with your wife. (*To JODY*) It would never occur to you to scale down your level of personal consumption. Earn less money and enjoy life more! (*Steinging around to SIMON*) Peabrain!

JODY: (*to DON*) I'm sorry Don, but when discussion degenerates to the level of personal abuse it's time to leave.

MAL: Personal abuse?

SIMON: What do you think calling me a peabrain is!

MAL: Accurate!

DON: (*to MAL, trying hard to keep back the trace of a grin*) Cut it out shithead!

MAL: Well he is a fucking peabrain.

SIMON: Cut that out!

MAL: What?

SIMON: If you have to resort to bad language to express yourself then you can't have much of a vocabulary!

MAL: Vocabulary? I've forgotten more words than you've ever learned! What's the meaning of evanesce?

SIMON: Really.

MAL: Pendulous, coruscate, ochlocracy, paplionaceous.

SIMON: I don't have to indulge in word games.

MAL: What's the meaning of didactic?

SIMON: In the manner of a teacher.

MAL: Aha! Teased you out with an easy one.

SIMON: What's the meaning of obfuscate?

MAL: Come off it.

SIMON: Don't you know it?

MAL: Of course I do. I'd be very surprised if you did though.

SIMON: Of course I know. I asked it.

MAL: What's it mean then?