

# ROARING

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an immersive theatrical experience

By Fleur Murphy

with Molly England & Alysha Jane

## **PLEASE NOTE: CONTENT WARNING**

**This work contains: adult themes, some coarse language, references to women's health such as miscarriage, death, sexual assault, intimacy and consent, physical violence.**

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**CHARACTERS:**

Tommy O'Connor

'Carji' Greeves

Esther Kelly

May Firth

Joe

Alice Anderson

Dr Mary De Garis

J.C King

Margaret King

Howard Hitchcock

**SCENES:**

As multiple scenes will be happening simultaneously, scenes have been marked so that all scenes with the same number are to happen at the same time. The letter (a,b,c etc) represents the different sub-scenes.

Scene 1.A, 1.B

Scene 2.A, 2.B

Scene 3

Scene 4.A, 4.B, 4.C, 4.D

etc etc

Note that the show is currently structured in a way so that the audience will either start at the 'front' of the venue with all of the 'invited guests,' or at the 'back' of the venue through the 'staff entrance' - so either 1.A or 1.B.

The aim is that all guests will meet and gather for scene 3, then they can continue the rest of the show following whatever path/character/action they desire, before they are all brought back together again for the final scene.

**SCENE 1.A**

*Characters: Esther and Alice*

*Location: The foyer*

*Alice and Esther are waiting in the foyer, (near or on the staircase?)*

**ALICE:** The seagulls are gathering.

**ESTHER:** I see.

**ALICE:** They look hungry. Is there food at this thing?

**ESTHER:** I don't think I'm up for their squawking.

**ALICE:** You can't hide in the foyer all night.

**ESTHER:** Neither can you.

**ALICE:** Watch me try.

**ESTHER:** No, you can't! Arggh, these people are insufferable. Margaret King was stuck to me like a barnacle at last week's debutante ball. "What a ghastly gown! Too many bows. Those diamonds are fakes. Her parents lost all of their money. That one just returned from a nine-month 'holiday'. Those pearls are unfashionably long."

**ALICE:** She's a handy source for your gossip column.

**ESTHER:** Thank god I can finally let that go. No one would take me seriously as editor-in-chief if I'm still commenting on how many bows Lilly McPherson has on her gown, or whether the caviar was orange or black.

**ALICE:** So get in there. Go. Get the scoop on the rumours that JC King is going to run for mayor.

*Esther doesn't move.*

**ALICE:** Go! Come on, you love sniffing out a good story.

**ESTHER:** What I'd love is a night off, at home with... *(Esther moves a step closer to Alice.)*

**ALICE:** What are you doing?

**ESTHER:** Can't we just go for a drive? Take me for a lesson instead?

**ALICE:** Not at night.

**ESTHER:** Why not? I need tolerant in all conditions, right? Anyway, I think I'm getting the hang of it now - I want to hear the roar of the engine as I put my foot to the floor.

*Esther is carried away and mimics driving.*

**ALICE:** People can see you -

**ESTHER:** *(Waving to guests)* Oh, hello Mr and Mrs "SURNAME". Lovely night for a soiree!

**ALICE:** Stop. Go in already. Get your work done and then maybe...

**ESTHER:** What?

**ALICE:** Maybe we'll have time for a quick midnight drive.

**ESTHER:** Do you still promise to meet me inside?

**ALICE:** How? They're checking invitations at the door.

**ESTHER:** Servants entrance. It will be easy. You can slip in amongst all the hustle and bustle. No one will notice. I used to do it before I started receiving invitations. Take this, if you need to bribe someone. *(She tries to hand Alice a few \$'s)*

**ALICE:** I don't need it.

**ESTHER:** Ok ok. Maybe I can borrow some from you if I blow it all on black.

**ALICE:** Not feeling lucky?

**ESTHER:** I'm not sure yet. Oh, find Carji on your way and send him to me. The scandal, if I enter alone. What will they say?

**ALICE:** What if he's not here yet?

**ESTHER:** He'll be here. Tommy owes him some money so no doubt he's around the back trying to double it.

*A pause.*

You'll meet me? Inside?

**ALICE:** -

**ESTHER:** Come on, I need my friend in the shadows. Who knows what delicious information you might discover on your way.

*Alice goes to leave.*

**ESTHER:** Give me a light before you go.

*Alice lights Esther's cigarette and then lights her own. A pause as Alice considers where she should go.*

**ESTHER:** Round the back. Scoot.

**ALICE:** I don't know why I let -

**ESTHER:** Yes you do.

**ALICE:** That's a dirty habit for a lady. You should give it up.

*Alice exits and heads to the servant's entrance, around the back of the venue. Esther is alone. She smokes while she waits for Carji to appear. She practises interview questions / or perhaps she interviews and chats with some of the audience?*

**ESTHER:** Come on Esther, you've got this. Head high. Shoulders back. Smile. Glide. Oh for fuck's sake I hate these shoes. Come on Esther... Esther Kelly, editor-in-chief of the Geelong Star... Esther Kelly... Miss Esther Kelly of the Geelong Star. Lovely to meet you. (FILL THIS OUT)

**SCENE 1.B**

*Characters: Joe, Tommy and Carji*

*Location: Outside / back door of the servant's entrance/kitchen*

*Joe, Tommy and Carji are gathered near the servant's entrance to the venue. Impro a game of cards/two-up while the audience arrives. Then, when they've just finished their game....*

**TOMMY:** Set up the next one Joe, I'm feeling lucky.

**JOE:** That's it I gotta go in.

**TOMMY:** A quick one.

**CARJI:** Real quick.

**JOE:** I can't.

**TOMMY:** Joe, you can, come on. They've got 50 staff on this do, they're not missing ya right now.

**JOE:** It's not 50. That's ridiculous -

**TOMMY:** How much ya wanna bet that there's at least 30 staff.

**CARJI:** So it's 30 now?

**JOE:** I've gotta get back Tommy. They'll be getting ready for welcoming drinks.

**TOMMY:** Bet ya there's 25 staff on tonight.

**JOE:** No -

**TOMMY:** You've got an upper hand, you may have seen the list. Know how many?

**CARJI:** I'm going to say 24 staff, including the kitchen. It's a smaller affair. Very exclusive invite.

**TOMMY:** That's too close to my 25.

**CARJI:** It's the closest without going over, yes?

**TOMMY:** That's too close -

**CARJI:** Put your money where your mouth is.

**JOE:** Boys, I've got to go in. You can keep squabbling over staff numbers and betting on feeble things but I gotta work or I'll have no money to play with you next time. See you inside Carji.

**CARJI:** Yeah.

*Joe exits inside. Tommy packs up his cards/two-up.*

**TOMMY:** He's no fun these days.

**CARJI:** Did you forget?

**TOMMY:** What?

**CARJI:** What you owe me?

**TOMMY:** What?

**CARJI:** You know -

**TOMMY:** No.

**CARJI:** Yeah -

**TOMMY:** No?

**CARJI:** My aim has been unusually off these last few games.

**TOMMY:** The great Carji! Mustn't be eating all your greens or something.

*Carji does a movement like he's kicking an invisible football that trails off to one side, like it's missed the goal posts*

**CARJI:** Unusually off.

**TOMMY:** Must be your shoes or something.

**CARJI:** They're talking. I can't keep it up. It's ok for a couple of games, but if I keep performing the way I am then they're gonna bench me.

**TOMMY:** What do you want me to do?

**CARJI:** Pay up and let me go back to playing how I play.

**TOMMY:** I need one more, maybe two.

**CARJI:** I can maybe do one more, but that's it. I'm out.

**TOMMY:** I can make it very worth your while if I can get two.

**CARJI:** One. That's it Tommy.



*Alice arrives sometime during the next lot of dialogue. Hides nearby and watches and listens to their conversation...*

**TOMMY:** I reckon I could get you something very, very nice. Something fat and juicy. I like you. I want to see you succeed, beyond the field.

**CARJI:** Well exactly, I've got to think long-term. This, if I keep going the way I am then there won't be any 'Great Carji'. I'll be out. I can't let it go too far. It was ok a few times -

**TOMMY:** The cash is handy -

**CARJI:** It's, yes, handy, but...

**TOMMY:** Two more. Come on, I'll get you something good.

**CARJI:** Unless I can get something now I don't think I can....

**TOMMY:** -

**CARJI:** -

**TOMMY:** You're lucky I did so well sucking Joe dry before.

*Tommy takes out some notes and counts out a few. He rolls them up and hands them to Carji.*

**TOMMY:** Here, that's a start.

**CARJI:** Yeah it's a start. Keep going. I know you can.

**TOMMY:** -

**CARJI:** *(Notions to Tommy's black eye.)* You want a matching pair?

*Tommy thinks. He reaches into another pocket in his jacket. Pulls out some notes. Counts them. Gives them to Carji.*

**TOMMY:** Good?

**CARJI:** A matching pair and a ruby red nose? Keep going.

*Tommy reluctantly takes one of his shoes off and pulls out a few more notes. He hands them to Carji. Carji is reluctant to take them. Tommy throws them at him.*

**TOMMY:** I put clean socks on this mornin'. Stop razzin' me.

*Alice clears her throat loudly to signal she's coming. She calls out...*

**ALICE:** Carji?

**CARJI:** Alice.

**ALICE:** Esther's just arrived. She's waiting for you out the front entrance.

**CARJI:** I'll go meet her. Thanks Alice.

**ALICE:** Can I get in through the back here?

**CARJI:** I guess. If you want?

**ALICE:** Esther wants.

**CARJI:** Sure then.

**TOMMY:** I can show you the way, speak to the staff and let them know not to stop you. For a couple of clams...

**CARJI:** Watch that one Alice. He's a real snake.

*Carji walks off toward the front/where Esther is.*

**ALICE:** He doesn't look too venomous.

*Alice puts out her hand and helps Tommy up from the ground.*

Well come on then. Who do I need to pay to get a drink around here?

*Tommy and Alice go inside.*

**SCENE 2.A**

*Characters: Esther and Carji*

*Location: The foyer*

*Carji approaches Esther who is waiting in the foyer, near the staircase.*

**CARJI:** What a silhouette.

**ESTHER:** I've been waiting.

**CARJI:** I'm sorry.

**ESTHER:** I hate waiting.

**CARJI:** The world doesn't run on Esther time.

**ESTHER:** Well it should. I'm sick of having to live my life at the strike of man. You're all a bunch of buffoons.

**CARJI:** Even this one?

*Carji does a slight impersonation of a baboon.*

**ESTHER:** Not baboon! You... you I can handle in small doses.

*She takes out a flower from her hair or corsage and puts it in Carji's lapel.*

**ESTHER:** There. 'Vestis virum facit.'

**CARJI:** -

**ESTHER:** Or perhaps if your Latin isn't up to scratch, some Shakespeare? Clothes maketh a man... What a specimen you are. Why, the cut of your jacket almost hides your primitive hunch.

**CARJI:** You are mean.

**ESTHER:** I'm sorry. I'm tired.

-

**CARJI:** My dear...

*Carji puts out his arm and Esther takes it.*

**ESTHER:** My dearest -

**CARJI:** Shall we?

**ESTHER:**           We shall.

*Esther and Carji head inside.*

**SCENE 2.B**

*Characters: Alice and Tommy*

*Location: Walking through the back end/kitchen of the venue*

**TOMMY:** Alice hey? Alice what?

**ALICE:** -

**TOMMY:** I've seen you at a few of these things now. Or at least, out the front of them, waiting in your car.

**ALICE:** -

**TOMMY:** You drive Miss Kelly around, yeah?

**ALICE:** -

**TOMMY:** With her da carking it and all I imagine she's got a lot of cash to throw around. New car, new driver. Sharp suit you got there. She got ya on the payroll?

**ALICE:** You're asking a lot of questions and I don't see a drink in my hand yet.

**TOMMY:** Ya based at her house? Ya part of the staff?

**ALICE:** Something like that.

**TOMMY:** Good. Good in these times to have a steady job, regular income comin' in. You just the driver then, or are you pickin' up other duties? Deliveries maybe? Ya interested in that sort of thing cos I can -

**ALICE:** I work for myself. I choose my work. The people I work with.

**TOMMY:** With? From the door you're coming in I'm thinking for. *For* Miss Kelly hey? With. Ha! That's a laugh. You're funny you are.

**ALICE:** -

And who do you work for then? Did your invitation get lost in the mail?

**TOMMY:** Well, there, now ya see, it's better that I don't make an entrance. It's actually on account of me social anxiety and all. Don't like to attract attention, steal a spotlight and all. Get's me all nervous and I can't function. I don't enjoy big crowds, lots of people. I tend to stick to the wall, the shadows. I'm guessin' you like hiding there too. I don't like fuss. Don't need a fanfare.

**ALICE:** Look, Thomas, is it?

**TOMMY:** Tommy -

**ALICE:** Thomas O'Connor? Yes?

**TOMMY:** -

**ALICE:** I saw the shabby darning on the heel and toe of your sock. And when you took your shoe off you got black ink marks on your fingertips. I've done that trick before, to cover up the scuffs when I ran out of shoe polish. I know you Thomas O'Connor. I see your frayed edges. How about you stick to your walls and I'll stick to mine.

**TOMMY:** Big words from a lass. All I'm saying, getting at, is that you and me we're both here, comin' through this same god-damn back door. We both know we're more than this skin and bone. But keepin' up appearances hey. That's the ticket. Now I won't be offended by your little observation, outburst. I don't like to make me mind up quickly about someone, so I'm given you a chance to redeem yourself, in me eyes. The night has barely begun.

*Tommy either pulls a flask out and gives it to Alice, or he grabs a bottle/drink from somewhere nearby and hands it to her.*

**TOMMY:** Feel free to pop over to my side of the wall, anytime tonight, and say hello.

*Both Alice and Tommy go through a door and into the main ballroom. Once in they split up and head to different sides of the room. Maybe Tommy heads to the bar area?*

**SCENE 3.A**

*Characters: J.C King, Margaret, Howard, Dr Mary, May, Carji, Esther, Joe, Tommy and Alice*

*Location: Inside, the main ballroom*

*Music is playing, guests are gathering. In the centre of the room are JC, Margaret and May. Dr Mary is at the bar being served by Joe. Tommy heads towards the bar area. Alice sticks to the walls. Esther and Carji enter.*

**JC:** *(Spotting Carji)* And there he is!

**CARJI:** Mr King, Mrs King.

**JC:** Now now, I keep telling you, JC. How's the leg?

**CARJI:** Ah, getting better, I think.

**MARGARET:** I hope it won't prevent you from dancing.

**CARJI:** I'll see how I go.

**MARGARET:** Oh don't let Miss Kelly be a wallflower.

**CARJI:** I'm sure I can manage something.

**ESTHER:** You can always lean on me, if you need.

**MARGARET:** What a delightful pair you are.

**CARJI:** Thank you both for the invitation.

**ESTHER:** It's a pleasure being here, thank you.

**CARJI:** JC, Mrs King, you know Miss Esther Kelly.

**MARGARET:** Oh yes -

**JC:** What a whirlwind few weeks it has been for you my dear. Editor-in-chief now? Quite an inheritance. I'm not sure if I'm to offer my condolences or congratulations.

**MARGARET:** I'm sorry to hear about your father's passing.

**ESTHER:** Thank you Mrs King. Mr King.

**JC:** And all, please meet Miss May Firth, our special guest performer for this evening.

**MAY:** It's also a pleasure to be here. Thank you for your hospitality Mr and Mrs King.

**JC:** I know the pleasure will be all ours. What do you have in store for us tonight Miss Firth?

**MAY:** I can't give away my secrets, you'll just have to wait Mr King.

**ESTHER:** You're a singer?

**MAY:** Yes, and dancer -

**JC:** And Miss Firth is about to head up to, where are you off to again?

**MAY:** Sydney, to work with the McDonagh sisters on a new silent film.

**ESTHER:** How wonderful.

**JC:** Yes, we have managed to pluck a star from the heavens to perform for us all tonight.

**MAY:** Oh, Mr King.

**JC:** We want this fundraiser to be a huge success. To do our bit, isn't that right Margie?

**MARGARET:** Yes my dear. It's so lovely having you all here to celebrate with us. It's a cause that's so dear and so close to my heart and I'm so grateful that I have the privilege and honour of ensuring we can raise / some much-needed funds for -

**JC:** Oh Margie, no one wants a speech yet - they want drinks.

**ESTHER:** Actually, Mr King, I'd love a chance to talk to you about your involvement with the hospital committee, and your plans to run for mayor in the next election.

**JC:** Always on the clock I see, just like your father. Maybe later Miss Kelly. We need to have some fun first.

*Howard enters, a little flustered. JC breaks from the group and heads toward Howard to greet him.*

**JC:** Finally, our esteemed Mayor Hitchcock!

**HOWARD:** JC.

*JC taps his glass and moves to the centre of the room, primed to give a welcome speech. (Carji and Esther move away from the group slightly?)*

**JC:** Dear friends and foes, gather 'round -



- MARGARET:** I thought it wasn't time for a speech.
- JC:** Welcome! Welcome! Now that our Mayor, the honourable Howard Hitchcock has arrived, we can officially begin our evening. Mayor Hitchcock, thank you for your attendance and support of this evening. And to everyone, my wife Margaret and I graciously welcome you all! We have a wonderful night ahead of us, full of fun and games to delight and seduce you into, well to put it bluntly, relieving yourselves of a lot of money. Your poor pockets must feel heavy. Your chequebooks aching to alleviate some of your economic burdens. Don't worry dear friends, you will be taken care of. Under the advice of some of our highest hospital staff and board, I have on offer an evening that will cure any illness or condition you may be suffering of the fiscal kind. As I'm sure most of you know, we are here for a very, very good cause. Tonight we raise funds for our Hospital - and in particular, for a new women's midwifery wing to be built. I just want to take a moment to introduce a wonderful woman, a pioneer, to you all... Dr Mary De Garis... Dr De Garis?
- MARGARET:** Come on Mary...
- MARY:** No, no thank you - I'm happy to waive from here.
- JC:** Mary? Where are you? Ahhhhhh, by the bar I see. *(Gestures to Mary.)* My dear guests, Dr Mary De Garis!
- MARGARET:** As a committee member of the Bethany Babie's Home I've had the pleasure of working closely with Dr De Garis to / advocate for a new women's wing...
- JC:** Yes, Dr De Garis we are honoured to have you here tonight and we hope that we can do you, and your plans for a new women's wing, proud.
- MARGARET:** I'm so proud / to be -
- JC:** Now, dear guests, you don't want to spend the night listening to me babble on. I urge you to grab yourself a refreshing tonic from the bar, take a relaxing seat at a table, dance, mingle, lighten those pockets, and amputate a page or two from your chequebooks. It's all in the name of a very, very good, very worthy cause. Thank you all! Enjoy!
- JC has finished his formal speech and heads back toward Howard who is standing near May. Margaret follows.*
- JC:** *(To May)* How are those vocal cords feeling my dear?
- MAY:** I might go and warm them up a little in the dressing room.

- JC:** *(To Hitchcock)* May is going to sing a few numbers for us soon. Howard, just you wait. Heaven on earth.
- HOWARD:** Hummmm?
- JC:** May Firth, Mayor Hitchcock. He's quite the bass. What's that hymn you're always humming dear friend? Something about the Lord be.... Oh, the Lord...?
- HOWARD:** "BLA BLA SOMETHING"
- JC:** That's it.
- MAY:** Oh, my daddy would always sing me "BLA BLA SOMETHING" *(She sings a line or two, but a little jazzy in style.)*
- HOWARD:** Humm, yes, that's a lovely one.
- MAY:** But I won't be singing any hymns tonight Mayor Hitchcock.
- HOWARD:** No, I imagine it's not the place really.
- JC:** No, it's not.
- HOWARD:** Hummmm.
- JC:** *(To May)* My dear, the sooner you warm up, the sooner you can offer our Mayor a small slice of heaven amongst this hellish hoard.
- MAY:** My pleasure. I'll be back soon.
- May heads to a dressing room.*
- JC:** Howard, it's unusual for you to be late to an event like this.
- HOWARD:** Someone left their vehicle right out the front. My driver couldn't pull up to the door.
- JC:** Where's Mrs Hitchcock?
- HOWARD:** She was feeling under the weather, so I told her I'd just make a brief appearance.
- MARGARET:** Oh poor dear. I will call on her tomorrow.
- JC:** Ha, if you rise before midday my love.
- MARGARET:** I..
- JC:** We do hope she's feeling better soon.

**HOWARD:** Yes, well. I'll only stay for half an hour at the most -

**JC:** Carji is here -

**HOWARD:** I'm not sure about all this JC.

**JC:** We're just changing things up a bit this year my friend. I thought we could have a few games. Raise money for the hospital while we flirt with Lady Luck. All innocent, I assure you.

**HOWARD:** But gambling at a fundraiser?

**JC:** It's for a good cause, my friend. What's the harm in it? Come, I'll get you a seat next to Carji.

*By now Carji and Esther have joined at a card/roulette table. JC brings Howard over to the card table and seats him next to Carji.*

**SCENE 3.B (FILLER DIALOGUE BETWEEN DR MARY & JOE AT THE BAR?)**

*Characters: Dr Mary and Joe*

*Location: Inside, the main ballroom, at the bar*

*Music is playing, guests are gathering. Dr Mary is at the bar being served by Joe. (In the centre of the room are JC, Margaret and May etc)*

**MARY:** Joe?

**JOE:** Yes.

**MARY:** Joe Gullet?

**JOE:** Dr Mary Degaris.

**MARY:** Gosh, it's been -

**JOE:** I hate to think. What can I get you?

**MARY:** To tell you the truth I'd love a brandy.

**JOE:** That's no problem at all.

*Joe makes Dr Mary a drink, and while he does his hands are shaking and he drops something. Perhaps a glass? Mary notices his shaking hands.*

**MARY:** You right there Joe?

**JOE:** Yeah, just... Ha, not the best line of work perhaps.

**MARY:** That happen a lot? Are you taking something for it?

**JOE:** I've seen a doc.

**MARY:** You sleeping?

**JOE:** Thank you Dr Degaris but I'm not seeking a second opinion.

**MARY:** Joe...

*A pause.*

**JOE:** I hate dreaming.

*Joe tries to focus on steadying his shaking hands. Perhaps he grips the edge of the bar or puts them in his pocket.*

**MARY:** There are ways to treat a condition that doesn't require medicine. Or at least, medicine shouldn't be the only treatment.

**JOE:** I know, I know.

**MARY:** Well, I won't go on about it.

**JOE:** Much appreciated.

**MARY:** It's lovely to see you Joe. Where have you been all these years?

**JOE:** Here.

**MARY:** Here? In Geelong?

**JOE:** Yes.

**MARY:** It baffles me that we haven't crossed paths.

**JOE:** I'm very good at keeping to myself.

**MARY:** I remember that about you - very quiet but always attentive. You do much of this kind of work, now?

**JOE:** On and off.

**MARY:** What happened to your family's stud farm?

**JOE:** All lost. While I was in the trenches. I came back to nothing.

**MARY:** Oh, I am so sorry to hear that.

**JOE:** What can you do, but soldier on hey?

**MARY:** Do you enjoy this kind of work?

**JOE:** Maybe I'm getting older, but the music and chatting is always too loud. After a night working an event like this I need several in bed to recover. I push through. The money gets me from week to week, just. If we have a generous host I can often get a tip.

**MARY:** What's your thumb like?

**JOE:** Excuse me?

**MARY:** I'm looking for someone who can assist with the garden and some odd maintenance jobs around my home. I don't suppose you'd be interested.

**JOE:** Well I.... Yes, thank you Dr Degaris.

**MARY:** But what's your thumb like? Is it green? I can't have you killing my show-winning orchids.

**JOE:** I'm willing to give it a decent shot if you're willing to give me chance.

**MARY:** Lovely. Come by my house tomorrow afternoon. We can chat some more then.

**JOE:** Thank you, thank you.

**MARY:** You are very welcome Joe.

*JC moves to the centre of the room and gives a welcome speech.*

**SCENE 4.A**

*Characters: JC and Margaret*

*Location: Inside, the main ballroom*

*(By now Carji and Esther have joined at a card/roulette table. JC brings Howard over to the card table and seats him next to Carji.)*

**MARGARET:** Oh no, my drink is empty. Will you excuse me...

**JC:** My dear, maybe you'd like to join at this table too?

**MARGARET:** Oh my dear, no, no thank you. I think I'll get myself another glass of champagne.

**JC:** My dear Margie...

*Margaret starts to head towards the bar. JC follows closely behind. Margaret trips a little and JC manages to scoop her up and twirl her toward the dance floor.*

**MARGARET:** Let me go. I want another drink.

**JC:** Dear, dear Margie. Dance with me. For a moment.

**MARGARET:** Let me get another drink.

**JC:** Woman, will you stop. Be quiet a moment. The evening has barely started and already...

**MARGARET:** Already what?

**JC:** -

**MARGARET:** Go on.

**JC:** -

If you make a scene...

**MARGARET:** A scene?

**JC:** You look so lovely tonight. Your hair. That dress. Your mother's pearls draped around your neck. You're becoming the picture of a perfect lady. A lady who could be standing next to the soon-to-be new mayor. Absolutely radiant you could be my dear. But don't spoil yourself tonight, like the other night and the other night and the other night. I can't have you fraying at the edges.

**MARGARET:** Are you saying this because you care about me?

**JC:** My dear -

**MARGARET:** Oh my dear, my dear, dearest, darling, my dear - Stop it. It's suffocating. I'm beginning to see that I'm nothing more than an accessory to you.

*Margaret starts to pull at the pearl necklace around her neck, as if it's choking her a little.*

I need a drink.

**JC:** Margie.

**MARGARET:** You don't care for me. Maybe you did before, but now, now you seem so consumed with, with all this pomp and power and, and I have no idea who you are anymore.

**JC:** It's been easy for you my dear. How lucky you are to be born into such wealth and privilege. You know I've worked hard - have had to work. Do you enjoy this lifestyle? The house? The parties? Not having to think, to worry?

**MARGARET:** No. I don't, I don't know -

**JC:** Would you prefer that the man you married stayed within his social tier, worked in a squalid factory for men like Hitchcock. Breaking himself, like my father did, to fill the pockets of others while his wife and 7 children pored hungrily over a single loaf of bread.

**MARGARET:** I loved you. None of that mattered -

**JC:** Of course it wouldn't matter to you. The air is thin up on your pedestal. It wouldn't matter because you're too high to even be aware of anything beyond your shallow life.

**MARGARET:** When did you become so mean?

**JC:** You say you loved me.

**MARGARET:** I don't know you, anymore. I don't know this man.

*Margaret tries to pull away. JC plays with the necklace around Margaret's neck. He gets a tight grip on it.*

**JC:** I'm so close Margie. But I need you. That must be a pleasant feeling - to be needed - not the same as love perhaps. Need. If that's where we now find ourselves. But because Margie, without me where would you go? What would you do?

**MARGARET:** I...



**JC:** Smile my dear. They're all watching. Every slight move. Don't trip. I may not catch you next time.

*JC twirls or dips Margaret and as he does this it snaps the pearl necklace. Pearls fall to the floor. Margaret gasps and kneels down to pick them up.*

My dear, oh no! Your mother's pearls! *(Referring to Joe)* You there, help pick these up.

*Joe comes over and starts to help Margaret collect the pearls. Dr Mary also comes over to assist.*

**MARY:** Are you alright Margaret?

**MARGARET:** Yes, I'm fine.

**JC:** My apologies my dear, my dip was a little too reckless. Perhaps I'm a little rusty on the old dance floor. I do try.

**JOE:** I think that's all of them Sir.

*Joe goes to pass them to JC.*

**JC:** They don't belong to me.

*Joe gives them to Margaret.*

**JOE:** Do you need anything ma'am?

**MARY:** I'll help you with these.

**MARGARET:** Thank you.

**JC:** *(To Joe)* Bring me a scotch.

**JOE:** Yes Sir. *(He leaves to get JC a drink.)*

**JC:** Take a moment my dear. Perhaps I'll practice my technique on Miss Firth later. I'm sure she'll have some pointers for me.

*Mary and Margaret head off towards the bathroom/dressing room?*

**SCENE 4.B**

*Characters: Dr Mary, Joe and Tommy*

*Location: Inside, the main ballroom, at the bar*

*Dr Mary is seated at the bar. Joe is working behind the bar/doing something nearby? JC's speech has just finished. Tommy approaches the bar.*

**JOE:** You didn't want to go up there and take a bow?

**MARY:** Ha, no thank you. I'm perfectly fine here.

**TOMMY:** Can I get a whisky?

**JOE:** What are you doing inside?

**TOMMY:** A man gets thirsty.

**JOE:** Give me your flask, I'll fill it and then you have to go.

**TOMMY:** I may have misplaced it. A glass will do just fine, thanks.

*Joe serves Tommy a drink.*

**JOE:** And you Doc? Another?

**MARY:** I'll sit on this for a while. Thank you.

**TOMMY:** Dr Mary De Garis!? You throw a great party. Cheers!

**MARY:** Oh, I had nothing to do with it.

**JOE:** I think Dr De Garis has better things to do with her time. Am I right?

**TOMMY:** But the cause, the cause hey?

**MARY:** I don't really know why I'm here. I'm exhausted. I'd much rather be home, reading a book.

**TOMMY:** Well, you've got to get in amongst it. All for the cause. Got to show face.

**MARY:** And what happened to yours?

**TOMMY:** Me what?

**MARY:** Your eye. Look's painful.

**TOMMY:** Nah, Irish skin. Always looks worse than it is. Me Ma was often black and blue just from me Da's kisses.

**MARY:** You should get it checked out.

**TOMMY:** You offering me a free consult?

**MARY:** Not at all. It would be extra at this hour.

*Tommy has finished his drink already.*

**TOMMY:** Another, please.

**JOE:** Last one, then you're out.

**TOMMY:** Yeah yeah. Maybe I'll find me a little lass whose door I can knock on. If I have no luck here I can always talk a walk down "SOMETHING" street.

**JOE:** None of that talk here.

**TOMMY:** Knock knock, ha ha. Don't need a key.

**JOE:** I'm cutting you off. You need to leave.

**MARY:** *(To Tommy)* And the cause?

**TOMMY:** Sorry?

**MARY:** Well, you've got to get amongst it, for the cause? You're here, getting amongst it. You care deeply for the cause?

**TOMMY:** Sure.

**MARY:** Do you even know what we're raising funds for?

**TOMMY:** Yeah, for the hospital.

**MARY:** Hummm? What about it?

**TOMMY:** The... the people who are ill. The... children. The precious little children. Probably.

**MARY:** Do you know what I did today? Today I was on "SOMETHING" street, helping a young woman, though you could almost say girl, deliver a baby. The place was a squalid mess. It smelt like death and decay already. She was alone. She'd been in labour for 3 days. Alone. A neighbour finally decided to see what the wailing and screaming was and found her. Came and got me. But, it was too late. She's gone. The baby's gone. That shouldn't happen, not in this day and age.

**MARY (cont'd):** No woman should ever have to be in a position where she... where she can't get... We're better than that. We're not animals.

**JOE:** I'm sorry to hear it Dr De Garis. Such tragedy.

**MARY:** Yes, well... I, we must do what we can. We must soldier on, right Joe. Despite what we see.

**JOE:** Tommy wouldn't understand that though, would you Tommy? It's hard to forgive his ignorance. He lacks the experience of some of us at this bar.

**TOMMY:** Excuse me?

**JOE:** There are just some parasites that are good at staying dormant in the cracks. Waiting to take advantage...

**TOMMY:** Hold on now, you having a go? **Six pounds you won off me earlier.** All fun and games then.

**JOE:** All fun and games Tommy. Finish up. You better head off now.

*Just then a small commotion is heard in the centre of the ballroom. It's JC and Margaret, her pearls have snapped and she is kneeling on the floor picking them up. JC calls Joe over to assist her. Dr Mary follows. (Refer to the final bit in scene 4.a) Tommy swigs the last of his drink and heads off.*

**SCENE 4.C**

*Characters: Esther, Carji and Hitchcock*

*Location: Inside, the main ballroom at a card or roulette table.*

*Esther and Carji are at the table. JC has just brought Howard over and has sat him next to Carji.*

**HOWARD:** Dear boy!

**CARJI:** Mayor Hitchcock.

**HOWARD:** How's the leg?

**CARJI:** Well, healing well, I think.

**HOWARD:** You've had a marvellous year. A few off weeks shouldn't leave too much of a stain. You've got a long, prosperous career ahead of you boy. What a joy it is to see you succeed. Ha, listen to me - I must sound like your father. He must be proud.

**CARJI:** He is. Very.

**HOWARD:** A tad envious I am. If my wife and I had of been blessed by the lord with children, I would have wished they were like you.

**CARJI:** Thank you Sir, that's very kind.

**HOWARD:** I'm looking forward to next season. Perhaps I will attend some of your training sessions in the meantime.

**CARJI:** You would always be welcome.

**ESTHER:** It's lovely to see you here Mayor Hitchcock.

**HOWARD:** Yes, hummm. Lovely to see you too Miss Kelly.

**ESTHER:** Always a supporter, a pillar of the community - even if this may not be familiar territory.

**HOWARD:** I am seduced only by charity and goodwill, not by this... this...

**CARJI:** I think it shows what a dedicated man you are. Just don't judge the rest of us too harshly. Just a spot of fun, hey?

**HOWARD:** Oh dear boy, judgement will come for us all. But yes, I'll not begrudge some fun in the name of a good cause, for tonight anyway. I know how important this is - you must pick your battles sometimes.

- ESTHER:** With the upcoming election I imagine that you must be feeling a bit of pressure? Particularly with JC King's announcement that he'll be running against you - and with him hosting the fundraiser tonight. If it does well, well... maybe a battle won?
- HOWARD:** Oh Miss Kelly, I feel no pressure and I'm confident that the people of Geelong will make the right choice. They always do -
- ESTHER:** There's been a lot of heat coming from the Unemployed Workers Movement. So many have been marching - for jobs - their dignity and survival.
- HOWARD:** Now, is tonight really the / time and place?
- ESTHER:** There's been confirmed reports of some members of your church, the well-meaning wives of local butchers, grocers and merchants, who are part of the "SOMETHING SOMETHING Benevolent Society" - visiting impoverished families applying for assistance - bread for their children, warm blankets.
- HOWARD:** Yes, wonderful work they -
- ESTHER:** And these women are going into homes, telling them "Oh yes, you need assistance but you're not up against it yet. You've got a piano there you don't need, more chairs than family members. Sell them and we'll come back in a fortnight." Then, once the family is down to the bare minimum they finally receive assistance, but it comes in the form of a docket written out to go to such and such butcher, or grocer. These societies are working to divert relief through their husband's businesses.
- HOWARD:** Now, now our, these societies are there to help the people.
- ESTHER:** Skimming the cream off the milk.
- HOWARD:** No, now -
- ESTHER:** I would love to interview you formally about this Mayor Hitchcock.
- HOWARD:** Not now, now I, / we're here to...
- ESTHER:** My paper will be running a column first thing tomorrow morning, exposing the inner workings of these societies. We have names, of businesses - good families - involved in the scheme. Maybe we can find somewhere quiet and you can enlighten me. Ensure that I can represent both sides, clearly. Dispel any confusion as to the motivation of these businesses.
- HOWARD:** Miss Kelly...

**ESTHER:** Carji loves a flutter, we can leave him to his vices.

**HOWARD:** Miss Kelly... Carji, I...

**CARJI:** Ha, Esther is a fierce player.

**ESTHER:** This is only my pre-game warm-up. Mayor Hitchcock, it's important that you can shed some light on this. You want the people of Geelong to make the right choice, and not be swayed by potential rumours, or simple misunderstandings that have been circulated by acquaintances of JC King's party.

**HOWARD:** Miss Kelly...

**ESTHER:** Shall we?

*Howard stands. Esther stands too. Carji stays seated at the table.*

**ESTHER:** It won't take long, then I'll deliver you straight back to Carji.

*Then, JC takes to the stage and gets everyone's attention again. (To introduce May's performance)*

**HOWARD:** Actually, will you excuse me, just a moment, first, Miss Kelly.

**ESTHER:** Ah? -

*Howard hastily leaves the table.*

**CARJI:** I think you played a little too hard, too soon. You didn't pull a muscle did you?

**ESTHER:** I told you, this is just the warm-up. Perhaps I'll excuse myself for a moment too, dearest.

**CARJI:** Should I stick with black, or try red now?

*Esther starts to walk off, calling back...*

**ESTHER:** You are your own man.

**SCENE 4.D**

*Characters: May*

*Location: Inside, a dressing room*

*May has just left the ballroom and is heading towards the dressing room. When she arrives she starts to warm up her voice, singing scales, and sections of the songs she will sing. She goes to the dresser to touch up her makeup and hair. She notices a bunch of flowers on the dresser, and hidden amongst them is a small note. It's a little love letter from a secret admirer (it's from JC). Perhaps May changes into a new dress/costume, for her performance.*

*(Note: re the note, it should include some mention of breaking heels (and hearts) on the dance floor. May is known for her dancing. Later, after May has performed a solo dance number on the dance floor, she mentions to JC that she thinks she broke a heel and needs to fix it in her dressing room ;-)*

*May is interrupted when Dr Mary and Margaret enter the room. Margaret looks upset.*



**SCENE 5.A (MOLLY)****SCENE 5.A**

*Characters: May, Dr Mary, and Margaret*

*Location: Inside, a dressing room*

*May is readying for her performance in a makeshift dressing room, warming up her voice/ touching up her makeup. Dr Mary and Margaret burst through the door. May is startled. Margaret looks upset and Dr Mary is trying to comfort her.*

**MAY** A knock never killed anyone. Oh- Mrs. King, excuse me.

**MARGARET** I didn't realise this was your dressing room, Miss. Firth. I'm so sorry.

**MAY** Is the performance starting early?

**MARGARET** No, not yet. I'm sorry. I just-

**MARY** Needed some space. You don't mind if we intrude for a moment?

*Before May can answer, Mary seats Margaret on a chaise.*

**MAY** Please, make yourself at home.

**MARY** Do you have any smelling salts?

**MAY** No, I don't ever need them.

**MARY** Right. Well, in that case this will do.

*Mary pulls out a flask and unscrews the top.*

**MARY** Bottom's up. Doctors' orders.

*Margaret takes a gulp. She settles. Looks around the dressing room.*

**MARGRET** Why, you don't travel with much Miss Firth.

**MAY** No need. I take what I need. If I'm lucky I get given what I want.

**MARY** I beg your pardon?

**MAY** See these pearls? James from Shepparton. And this? Charlie from Parramatta. And these flowers were here when I arrived. I'm a lucky gal.

**MARGARET** That you are. Thank you for that Mary. I can't believe my necklace snapped, just like that. And making such a scene before the night even starts.

**MARY** Would you happen to have something to put these pearls in, Miss...?

**MAY** It's Firth. May Firth.

**MARGARET** Oh my dear, my apologies. Yes, Dr Mary, Miss May Firth. Tonight's songbird.

**MARY** A pleasure. I know why you look familiar- that film you dragged me to at the Palais.

**MARGARET** I did adore *The Gentleman Bushranger*, Miss Firth.

**MAY** Cyril was a darling to work with. Though in the end he thought he really *was* a gentleman bushranger. Wanted to get married and run away into the country.

**MARGARET** How romantic!

**MAY** Why would I want only one man to give me flowers when I could have a dozen instead?

*May winks. She's missed the mark with these two. Mary gives her a look.*

**MARY** Do you have anything for the pearls?

**MAY** I travel light. Sorry.

**MARY** Not even an envelope?

**MARGARET** Mary-

**MAY** Sorry, Mrs. De Garis. Don't think I do.

**MARY** Doctor De Garis.

**MAY** Of course. This party is for you?

**MARY** No, this party is for the hospital for the vulnerable women of Geelong who need proper labor and maternity care.

**MAY** Right. Sounds sad.

**MARY** It's actually quite/

**MARGARET** Those flowers really are delightful! Who are they from?

**MAY** A secret admirer. All they left was this note.

*May hands Margaret the handwritten note.*

**MARGARET** 'My lovely little songbird. Your angelic voice matches nothing other than your beauty. I look forward to a dance tonight'.

**MARY** He's no Burns, that's for sure. Margaret, are you all right?

**MARGARET** Perfectly fine. Thank you. Just admiring the penmanship. Almost familiar. May, my dear. Would you mind if I spoke to Dr. De Garis alone for just a moment? I know how uncouth it is, but you will excuse me in my moment of distress.

**MAY** You seem alright now, Mrs. King.

**MARY** Next person who asks you to go will be me, girl.

*May puts her hands in the air as surrender.*

**MAY** I'm going, I'm going. Take all the time you need, Mrs. King. I'll go down to get some water from the kitchens.

*May exits.*

**MARY** The gall on her. She would've been good on the battlefield.

**MARGARET** Mmm.

**MARY** Are you sure you are all right? Look like you've found a fly in your soup.

**MARGARET** Fine, fine. Just needed a moment to breathe. And have another sip of this.

*Margaret drinks the rest of the flask.*

**MARGARET** Good stuff.

**MARY** It was.

*Mary stands and takes the envelope the love note was in.*

**MARY** Pop the pearls in that. Your lady's maid can take it to the jeweller tomorrow.

*They put the pearls in the envelope.*

**MARY** I'm glad I caught you though. I wanted to ask you a question.

**MARGARET** Ask away.

**MARY** Is your husband truly going to match what the people donate tonight? It's a big promise, and politicians are known to exaggerate just a little when so close to the election.

**MARGARET** He is, Mary. He's a good man. Sticks to his word.

**MARY** When he's not snapping the pearls from your neck.

**MARGARET** That was an accident, Mary.

*Pause. Both know it wasn't.*

**MARY** I don't mean to intrude. That was a bit sharp, I'm sorry.

**MARGARET**                    You've never been one for adherence to social rules.  
   One of my favourite things about you. I  
   can always trust you.

**MARY**                            That you can. And I need it from you now too. J.C.  
   will double the donation. The hospital will  
   get the funds it needs.

**MARGARET**                    It will. He will.

**MARY**                            Good. I'd better go butter up the check book writing  
   hands on Howard. If we both corner him,  
   he can't say no.

**MARGARET**                    I'll be down in a minute.

**MARY**                            All right. Keep the flask.

*Mary exits. Margaret stares at the note in her hand, now crumpled.*

**MARGARET**                    That man.

*She crushes it in her hand. Exits.*

**SCENE 5.B**

*Characters: JC and Joe*

*Location: Inside, the main ballroom*

*(Margaret's pearls have just snapped on the dance floor and she's exited the scene.) Joe returns to JC with a scotch.*

- JOE:** Sir.
- JC:** Make sure you keep everyone's whistle wet tonight. I don't want to see my guests without a full drink in their hands.
- JOE:** Of course.
- JC:** It's important that everyone is feeling festive... generous.
- JOE:** I understand.
- JC:** Don't let me down... ah....?
- JOE:** Joe Sir.
- JC:** Joe. Yes. I've had you on staff at a few of my events now, haven't I?
- JOE:** Yes Sir, thank you for the work.
- JC:** Oh I have nothing to do with it. Margaret is behind all of this - but I'm happy to take the thanks on her behalf. She's got contacts and lists, connections with all of the top-notch suppliers, and the ability to pull it all together. She's been bred for this really. Being born into a wealthy family you know no other world.
- JOE:** Unless you're like yourself, Sir.
- JC:** -
- JOE:** A man from humble beginnings who strives for a more equitable world, perhaps? You have stood on both sides Sir.
- JC:** It's a badge I wear proudly.
- JOE:** It's to your advantage -
- JC:** Yes, and with the upcoming election I want to ensure that families - men like yourself - are represented. That their voices can rise, loud and, and *(JC starts to speak louder, so that those nearby might hear his 'unofficial speech. Perhaps Carji is nearby still to hear?)*

- JC (cont'd):** and strong - proud of the blood and sweat they have given to make this country what it is today. And whose backs will carry the weight of its glorious future! That should be celebrated. That should be rewarded. *(JC returns to a 'normal' volume of speech.)* Men like you Joe, you're a fighter. I see that in you boy. You served?
- JOE:** I did Sir. A Sergeant in the 8<sup>th</sup> Light Horse. **(Check this???)**
- JC:** Well I sincerely thank you for your service, Sergeant Joe...?
- JOE:** Joseph Gullett. But ah, just Joe suits me well Sir.
- JC:** Gullett?
- JOE:** Yes Sir.
- JC:** Of the family Gullett, that ah... quite prosperous they were, known for their thoroughbred racehorses?
- JOE:** Yes Sir, had. It was an honour to put my skills to use though. The adrenaline of the racetrack can almost hit you as hard as the adrenaline in the trenches. Almost.
- JC:** The winners look different too. I imagine it's hard to distinguish between the face of a winner on the battlefield and the face of the loser. Both are dirty, bloody, pushed to the extremes of their being. Both have seen horror. There are no winners in war.
- JOE:** But one can still breathe.
- A pause. JC studies Joe's face.*
- JC:** That's why you look so familiar to me then. You bear an uncanny resemblance to your father.
- JOE:** Hauntingly so Sir. I often catch a scare out the corner of my eye, when I pass a mirror. I think he's come back.
- JC:** It's a tragedy, the loss of a great man and a great family from our area.
- JOE:** My father couldn't resist the adrenaline of the track. What he wouldn't bet. I fear how much I see of himself in me. That rush though, that burst - that addiction - I think served me well on the battlefield, but I'm afraid it did not serve me earlier when playing a game of 2-up out the back.
- JC:** To flirt and flutter with Lady Luck - Men can be made or ruined in the blink of an eye -
- JOE:** By a nose - in his case.

**JC:** You played with Tommy? Earlier? Out the back?

**JOE:** Played and lost Sir.

**JC:** Interesting. I asked him to stay away tonight.

**JOE:** He snuck in. I gave him a few drinks to appease, but then asked him to leave.

**JC:** Good... Good. No, I would appreciate it if he stayed well away tonight.

**JOE:** I can make sure he does, Sir.

**JC:** Good. Good fellow. Thank you.

*JC shakes Joe's hand. They take each other in for a brief moment.*

**JC:** So you know both sides too. Look at us, our beginning and our end, the opposites of one another. And here we stand.

**JOE:** Here we stand Sir.

**JC:** I'm sure we can work together. Do I have your vote Joe?

**JOE:** Sir.

*JC gives Joe a note or a coin.*

**JC:** Perhaps your luck might change? And I can guarantee, no matter how the chips fall tonight, you'll leave still breathing.

*JC gives Joe a pat on the back as he moves off and through the crowd. Joe heads back past the bar and then out towards the courtyard/out the back to double-check if Tommy had actually moved on.*



**SCENE 5.C (ALYSHA)**

*Characters: Esther and Alice –*

*Location: a hallway?*

*ESTHER has taken a moment of reprieve to catch her breath, (is she hiding, perhaps?) after her encounter with Howard. ALICE enters and startles her.*

**ALICE:** Excuse me Ma'am, would you care for a drink?

*She offers ESTHER Champagne, who politely refuses.*

Right, you're here on business. Did you talk with Howard? I'm sure he gave you lots to write about. I was thinking, now that you're buddies with the 'Big Cheese' you can put in a good word in for me for the garage! It'd be a great investment opportunity for him-

**ESTHER:** Alice...

**ALICE:** No trust me I've worked it all out! I'll offer his wife driving lessons first, so he'll see what a great business opportunity -

**ESTHER:** Alice I haven't spoken with him privately yet, but I will. He knows he needs to make a statement about the financial transparency of his charities and their motivations. With the article going out in tomorrow's paper, the pressure is on.

**ALICE:** I'm counting on you to introduce me though. Don't ruffle his feathers too much.

**ESTHER:** I'll have to see. God knows I have a knack for putting my foot in it, so the conversation might not leave room for polite introductions. There will be other opportunities though.

**ALICE:** You said you -

**ESTHER:** I know what I said, but I've got to be adaptable. And once I've sniffed out a lead -

**ALICE:** You're a bloodhound.

**ESTHER:** I've got to follow it, all the way to the end. The way Howard left the card table before tells me that he's worried. He avoided my questions. Was stammering and tripping over words. That's not like him. I think he knows that his reputation is in trouble when this article comes out.

**ALICE:** Front page stuff.

**ESTHER:** You know it.

**ALICE:** Unless...

**ESTHER:** What?

**ALICE:** Unless there's something even more scandalous that transpires tonight. What could that be I wonder?

*Alice moves slightly closer to Esther.*

**ESTHER:** No -

**ALICE:** Just a (peck) -

**ESTHER:** We're at a party. No.

**ALICE:** Or maybe the headline will be something like: Golden Boy Carji finally wins Esther's heart.

**ESTHER:** Stop -

**ALICE:** The guests at the hospital fundraiser were witness to the surprise engagement of two of Geelong's darlings - Carji Greeves and Esther Kelly -

**ESTHER:** Stop it! He'd be an idiot to.

**ALICE:** Carji, though injured from a recent match, managed to lower himself to one knee, holding out a -

**ESTHER:** I can't be around you when you're like this.

**ALICE:** Like what? I'm just teasing.

**ESTHER:** No, no - you, more than anyone, knows the seriousness of the, the, situation. And just how lucky I am to have, that we have someone like Carji. It's not a joke Alice.

**ALICE:** You're no fun sometimes.

**ESTHER:** It's complicated - this, all - but it's not... please don't joke. He's a dear friend and I don't want to break his heart.

**ALICE:** What about your heart?

**ESTHER:** I don't have time for my heart tonight. I'm working.

**ALICE:** You're always working. I could be working too, if you had of put in a good word with Howard before you turned him into a stammering mess.

**ESTHER:** There will be other opportunities and we'll find investors. The garage is a wonderful idea and I believe in you. *(Beat)* You're also an excellent cook. Breakfasts are the best...

*ALICE takes out a cigarette box.*

**ALICE:** You got that right.

*She offers ESTHER one, who accepts.*

**ESTHER:** I'm sorry Al...

**ALICE:** I know.

*ESTHER has been struggling to light the cigarette. ALICE finds this amusing.*

**ALICE:** Here, let me help.

*ALICE lights it, bringing her closer to ESTHER. ESTHER takes her hand before she pulls away.*

**ESTHER:** I'll make this up to you, I promise.

*ALICE moves closer again. The air is tense, abruptly broken by MARGARET walking through on her way back to find JC.*

**MARGARET:** Oh, excuse me Miss Kelly, Miss...

**ALICE:** Anderson. Alice Anderson.

**MARGARET:** I don't suppose either of you have seen my husband... or tonight's songbird?

**SCENE 5.D**

*Characters: May and Tommy*

*Location: In the kitchen (or backstage area?)*

*May enters the kitchen. Tommy is there sampling a tray of Hors D'oeuvres. (Note that Tommy might be monologuing/improvising with 'audience' in this room while he waits for May to enter.)*

**MAY:** A teakettle?

**TOMMY:** What?

**MAY:** For hot water. Is there a teakettle?

**TOMMY:** I don't know...? *(He looks around.)*

**MAY:** *(Referring to what Tommy is eating)* Oh, they are quite the berries - but I never like to eat before a performance. My nerves make my tummy flip-flop all over the place.

**TOMMY:** They don't have berries in them -

**MAY:** No - you never heard... "That's the berries?"

**TOMMY:** -

**MAY:** Bee's knees? Cat's meow? Ant's pants?

**TOMMY:** Oh, yeah.

**MAY:** Catch up tiger.

**TOMMY:** What's the water for?

**MAY:** A vocal tonic. Cold water can freeze the cords. I always take hot water on stage with me. And I don't mind a hint of lemon, if you've got any of that lying around?

**TOMMY:** I don't work here, / I wouldn't know where to

**MAY:** You're in the kitchen?

**TOMMY:** Yes -

**MARY:** You're not out there, with the rest of the flock.

**TOMMY:** I had something to, to do.

**MAY:** Oh?

**TOMMY:** Just a little delivery, a drop to make, of sorts.

**MAY:** A drop?

**TOMMY:** It's all done now / so I'll be on my

**MAY:** What's your name?

**TOMMY:** Tommy - Thomas.

**MAY:** Tommy Thomas? What kind of clown blessed you with that?

**TOMMY:** Thomas O'Connor, but people call me Tommy.

**MAY:** People. I'm May.

**TOMMY:** I know who you are.

**MAY:** Oh you do, do you?

**TOMMY:** Heard you're quite the *canary*. Isn't that what the Americans say?

**MAY:** Oh, well done. Don't suppose that drop of yours was delivered to my dressing room?

**TOMMY:** Ahhhhh...?

**MAY:** The most beautiful bouquet...

**TOMMY:** Oh?

**MAY:** And a devilish little note? *(Insert a line or two from the note.)*  
Unfortunately, they didn't sign their name.

*Tommy, always one to take advantage of a situation...*

**TOMMY:** Well... you know, I wouldn't want to admit to sneaking around out the back, poking' around where I'm not supposed to. Could get myself in trouble you see.

**MAY:** Caught you. Maybe I should hand you over to Mr King -

**TOMMY:** Ah, no, no don't... I also, well I actually thought I'd keep my presence on the down low on account of, well, Mr King's ego.

**MAY:** His ego?

**TOMMY:** Well it is his night you see, and well, dear Mr King owes me a few clams you see -

**MAY:** Oh, clams hey?

**TOMMY:** I'm kind of a bit of a... well, around town I'm... but I'm not one to steal another man's thunder and he needs to do well tonight. Keep up appearances and such. How would it look, the host of the most prestigious party in town getting intimidated by me, knowing his pockets aren't as deep as everyone thinks? It's a respect thing. I'm very respectful, want to make sure the night's a success - for the good of the community, the fundraiser, you know?

**MAY:** Bit of a big deal in this town are you?

**TOMMY:** I don't want to be big notein' myself.

**MAY:** A modest Irishman. I've never met one of those before. Good storytellers, you are. You never stop talking.

**TOMMY:** -

**MAY:** So what kind of donation will you be making tonight then?

**TOMMY:** Me? No. I'm collecting. Mr King needs to do very well tonight.

**MAY:** For the hospital?

**TOMMY:** For his future.

**MAY:** His campaign?

**TOMMY:** He's got a few personal expenses he needs to square first.

**MAY:** How surprising, a politician using community funds to settle a debt.

**TOMMY:** I didn't say debt -

**MAY:** Ha! Why don't you get in there then, if your pockets are so deep? One of the auction prizes is a dance with me.

**TOMMY:** I'll let Mr King have his night.

**MAY:** Not one for sweeping gestures?

**TOMMY:** I don't even sign my name on a note.

*A pause.*

**MAY:** Tommy Thomas, /

**TOMMY:** / O'Connor.

**MAY:** I've seen the sun set and the moon rise in almost every timezone on this glorious earth. I've met a lot of people from all kinds of countries and all walks of life.

**MAY (cont'd):** Many a time I've had no idea what they were saying - I don't speak any other languages, or bothered to learn. I haven't needed to. Now, I may seem like a naive little showgirl, a dumb Dora, but I'm not. And I can tell you're no boob. What show business and touring the world has taught me is how to read people and understand them, on a base level. We're simple creatures made up of simple wants and needs. I'm only here for the night and I want to have some fun. I suggest if you want to have some fun with me later, that you try and win that dance. Who knows, amongst this crowd I might go cheap. I could be a real steal.

*Just then JC walks by/or enters.*

**SCENE 5.E**

*Characters: Howard*

*Location: The courtyard*

*Howard is in the courtyard, getting a little air. Perhaps it's a monologue/impro with the audience moment, to provide some backstory and also express his thoughts (disgust?) about the evening?*



**SCENE 5.F**

*Characters: Carji*

*Location: The ballroom, still at the card table (or perhaps mingling in that room, heads to the bar?)*

*Carji is in the ballroom still playing at the card table. Perhaps it's a monologue/impro with the audience moment? Maybe he goes to the bar at some stage? The heads to the courtyard?*

**SCENE 6.A**

*Characters: Margaret, Esther & Alice*

*Location: In the hallway somewhere? Or they move to another room together.*

*(First few lines from the end of Scene 5.C... ALICE moves closer again. The air is tense, abruptly broken by MARGARET walking through on her way back to find JC.*

**MARGARET:** Oh, excuse me Miss Kelly, Miss...

**ALICE:** Anderson. Alice Anderson.

**MARGARET:** I don't suppose either of you have seen my husband... or tonight's songbird?

**ESTHER:** I'm sorry, no.

**ALICE:** Have you tried the dressing room?

**MARGARET:** I've just come from there. May left to get some tea or water or... something from the kitchen - before her big performance.

**ESTHER:** Congratulations on such a splendid event Mrs King. I'm sure it will be a huge success.

**MARGARET:** Please, Margaret, call me Margaret. You know, I'm not so sure it will.

**ESTHER:** Oh?

**ALICE:** Careful, Margaret, you know who you're talking to?

**MARGARET:** Yes... Yes I do.

*A pause.*

**ESTHER:** Is there something you're wanting to get off your chest Margaret?

**MARGARET:** I... well - I don't know. I feel like I have a million things spinning around in my head and I'm not sure what to do with them.

**ESTHER:** Many of us feel that way. You can trust me.

**MARGARET:** I feel that all you know of my character Esther - may I call you Esther?  
-

**ESTHER:** Of course -

**MARGARET:** Is what you've seen at soirees and balls - all feathers and frills. Floating on the bubbles of champagne, a well-trained smile across my face. A front seat passenger of privilege. But I want to drive something Esther.

**ALICE:** Well I can certainly help you there. I've been giving Esther driving lessons -

**MARGARET:** You are a dear, and I would love that - but no, that's not quite what I mean. For too long I have sat at the side of a man who is becoming reckless. Who's hunger for wealth and power has contaminated his once humble soul. I must admit that I have heard and witnessed things recently that I thought I could turn a blind eye to. Because I thought there was still love and commitment there - but I now know that is also a lie. I believe I am at my wit's end...

*Margaret starts to get a little bit emotional again.*

Maybe I shouldn't be saying...

**ESTHER:** As much as I'm tempted by a juicy story that will sell papers, know that I'm dedicated to using my position to make change. You are in good, safe company Margaret. In this world, we need to find loyal allies.

**MARGARET:** He can't get away with it.

**ALICE:** With what?

**ESTHER:** J.C?

**MARGARET:** Tonight is... the funds raised...

**ESTHER:** They're for the hospital?

**MARGARET:** Well yes, in a sense. But they won't entirely be spent on that. JC has some, personal expenses - debts - that are causing him some grief and needs to settle them before the official launch of his mayoral campaign. We - he - needs tonight to go well. Tommy is here to collect or it will all be coming out in the wash. If JC goes down, I go with him. And I will no longer sacrifice myself and the good name of my family.

**ESTHER:** Does he know how you feel? That you have this information?

**MARGARET:** He can sense that I've been... distant. I came across letters from Tommy to JC, outlining debts and eluding to what will happen if they're not paid. When I couldn't deny my suspicions any longer I went searching for his account ledgers. He's almost sucked my family fortune dry.

**ESTHER:** What can we do?

**MARGARET:** I don't know. I... All my life I've strived to serve my community, but as a woman there's only so much I can do. Oh to be a man...

**ALICE:** You should be running for mayor - hell, any of us would be better than that lot!

**MARGARET:** Ha, imagine.

**ESTHER:** Why just imagine? What if you did?

**MARGARET:** I didn't know you had such a sense of humour -

**ESTHER:** We don't have to just imagine these things.

**MARGARET:** What? What do you mean?

**ESTHER:** What if you ran?

**MARGARET:** I'm afraid the champagne has gone to your head dear.

**ESTHER:** What about Selena Siggins (Anderson?), running for the House of Representatives in 1903 - just one year after we won the right to vote.

**MARGARET:** She didn't win.

**ESTHER:** No, but she was part of the race. Making space for other women to also step up to the plate. Be seen.

**MARGARET:** How do we compete against -

**ESTHER:** It truly is a marathon - a relay even - each of us holding and passing the baton. Surely one day we will make it across the line. Shall I continue with the metaphors?

**ALICE:** Gosh no -

**ESTHER:** How will anything change if we're forever just sitting on the bench?

**ALICE:** You're spending too much time with Carji -

**ESTHER:** But really, Margaret - you have so much stacked in your favour. What have you got to lose?

**MARGARET:** Everything.

**ESTHER:** That's just it. If you don't do something then you risk losing it all. JC falls, so you do. You said it yourself. I can and would help you.

**MARGARET:** This is madness. These things take time. There's too much to consider. I don't know if I'm equipped for such a thing.

**ESTHER:** You've surprised me Margaret. I admit that I had painted you with the same brush as most socialites - with about as much depth as a saucer of milk. All cakes and tea. But that's not you, is it? Really?

*Margaret thinks.*

**ALICE:** This party is a bit ho-hum. It would be good to give Esther something truly newsworthy to splash on tomorrow's front page.

**MARGARET:** I wouldn't win.

**ESTHER:** That's not what I care about.

*A pause.*

**MARGARET:** Give me a... I'm sorry, I just need to think...

*Margaret exits. (She heads to the ballroom.)*

**ALICE:** Look at you.

**ESTHER:** What?

**ALICE:** I admire your tenacity, but...

**ESTHER:** But what?

**ALICE:** You're setting up an interesting game but I worry that you don't know enough about your players.

**ESTHER:** Sporting metaphors are my thing. I need to talk to JC and Howard. Find some dirt on Tommy for me.

**ALICE:** No doubt he'll be at the bar.

*Alice and Esther exit the hallway.*

*(Note; May has been eavesdropping on the last of the conversation, but dashes off to the backstage area just as Margaret exits.)*

**SCENE 6.B**

*Characters: May, Tommy and JC*

*Location: In the kitchen (or backstage area?)*

*JC has just walked into the kitchen, accidentally interrupting May and Tommy's conversation.*

**MAY:** Mr King! Is it time?

**JC:** Ah, my dear - yes. Yes, almost.

**MAY:** Mr O'Connor was helping me locate some hot water and lemon. I always have some side of stage.

**JC:** Well we have staff to assist you with these things my dear. Just let me know what you desire and I can make it appear.

**TOMMY:** Quite the magician - like pulling a rabbit out of a hat.

**JC:** Mr O'connor I don't even know why you're here... in the kitchen?

**TOMMY:** I was peckish. There's never enough food at these things.

**JC:** It's almost time for this songbird to perform. Miss Firth if I could ask you to start making your way to the backstage area. The stage manager is awaiting your arrival.

**MAY:** But my hot water and lemon?

**JC:** I'll get one of the staff to bring it, prompt side.

**TOMMY:** I look forward to hearing you sing Miss Firth. *(Insert a line/reference from the note that May spoke to Tommy in the previous scene 5.d.)*

**MAY:** And don't forget to bid on me Mr O'connor. The Irish are also virile dancers. I think we'd be quite a pair on the dance floor. *(To JC as she leaves the room)* Doing my bit for charity Mr King, stirring up some healthy competition amongst potential bidders.

**JC:** Bless you. What sport!

*May exits and heads to the backstage area. (If she can stumble across Margaret, Esther and Alice talking, to overhear them, then that would be good ;-)*

**TOMMY:** She's a firecracker that one.

**JC:** I told you not to / show your face tonight

**TOMMY:** I won a few pounds of old mate Joe earlier, maybe I'll place a bid / on the darling bud Miss May.

**JC:** Don't make me do anything that will -

**TOMMY:** What can you do? Mr King?

**JC:** This night needs to happen, perfectly, if... if... You, here, this was not part of -

**TOMMY:** I'm not here to cause a scene. I came in the back, respectful like. Just needed to let you know that I'm here. I won't cause you any trouble if you don't cause me none. No one needs to know I'm here, or that you owe me -

**JC:** You cannot utter any more words about it. Who knows who might pass down these halls. Just leave. Just... I'm.... Just please...

**TOMMY:** I don't think that's an option. I'm sorry.

*A pause as JC thinks. Tommy helps himself to more food. Maybe he pops a bottle of champagne.*

**JC:** If people see you, think I associate with you in any way - get a whiff of -

**TOMMY:** You don't need to worry about that. You just need to worry about making sure you get enough clams to make a good chowder, so you can share with your friend Tommy here.

**JC:** Howard, Howard can - If I can encourage him to donate a large amount then, then, you can lick the bowl clean.

**TOMMY:** You've been letting me starve for a while now -

**JC:** I know, I know...

**TOMMY:** Tonight. It's your last chance. I don't think you want to see me when I'm ravenous.

**JC:** Let me do my work, and yes, tonight I'll be able to get it all to you.

**TOMMY:** I have a memory of me and my Da. I was about 4, maybe? He wanted to take me to the Dublin Zoo to see the big cats. I had never been anywhere with my da before, except church some Sundays. Usually he was working, or drinking, or beating me ma. But this day, this blue-skied Dublin day, he and I went and waited in line at the entrance. His coarse hand held my tiny one. He bought us a bag of sweets that we shared. We headed straight to the lions. A new cub had been born and was going to join the family in the enclosure.

**TOMMY (cont'd):** He pushed and jostled through the crowd, with me, sitting on his shoulders. We made it right to the front - he placed me on the ground in front of him, my nose pressed against the glass in anticipation. I couldn't wait. It was the greatest day of my life - me and me da. The keepers opened a hatch and out came the tiny cub with its mother - timid at first, but with its mother's encouragement it ran and leapt towards its father, the king. The king of the lions. The father just sat, motionless and somewhat nonchalant, as this cub jumped and rolled and played all over and around its father. I looked up at me da, and he looked down at me and... he smiled. Then I heard the crack and squeak of a final quick breath escaping, as the small body of the cub was crushed between its father's jaws. On the way home, I broke my silence when I asked my da, "why? Why did the lion kill and eat its young?" "I think the king was hungry boy."

*Tommy grabs a few more Hors D'oeuvres, and pops one in his mouth as he exits. (Perhaps he heads towards the card tables?)*

*JC takes a moment then exits towards the backstage area - in preparation for announcing May's performance.*



**SCENE 6.C**

*Characters: Carji and Joe*

*Location: In the courtyard?*

*Carji is in the courtyard. Joe enters.*

**JOE:** Things getting too hot for you in there?

**CARJI:** Perhaps.

**JOE:** Winning or losing?

**CARJI:** Aren't we meant to lose tonight?

**JOE:** I'm not sure what the rules are.

**CARJI:** It's a clever guise - we play, we lose and that money goes towards the fundraiser. We play, we win and it's expected that we'll donate it back. JC wins either way.

**JOE:** All just a bit of fun.

**CARJI:** Of course. But the edge is taken off when there aren't any real stakes.

**JOE:** Prefer the back alley games of two-up?

**CARJI:** Sorry about earlier.

**JOE:** It's fine. Maybe you might be able to give me some advice on which way to go on your next game.

**CARJI:** 'Cats' all the way!

**JOE:** There's a bit of worry that the team's in a slump, much like the beginning of the '23 season. You don't have another black cat hiding up your sleeve?

**CARJI:** We'll be alright.

**JOE:** Will you? With one of their great players injured?

**CARJI:** Why are you digging into me Joe? Is it before? I can, here, you can have your money back.

*Carji goes to get money out of his pocket. As he does he also pulls out a small ring box.*

**JOE:** I don't want your money. Don't insult me with - Eh, what's that though?

**CARJI:** That's not for betting with.

*Carji puts it back in his pocket.*

**JOE:** A ring box? Carji, that's a big gamble. Is it that serious with you and Miss Kelly?

**CARJI:** No. Yes. I don't know.

**JOE:** But you've got a ring in a box there.

**CARJI:** -

**JOE:** Sounds like it's serious.

**CARJI:** No - It's... I've been carrying this around for three weeks now.

**JOE:** What are you waiting for?

**CARJI:** I don't know.

**JOE:** She's quite the catch. What a couple you'd make.

**CARJI:** There are so many things around me that tell me that this is the direction - it's the natural course of a relationship that has some time behind it. Her father, before he died, wasn't too subtle about it all. But Esther and I have been friends for years. Since we were children. It's expected, really.

**JOE:** The last few events I've worked I noticed you've been arriving together. Amongst these circles the assumption would be that you would be making it official soon. If Miss Kelly hadn't of inherited the paper, then the gossip columns would be burning. She's done well to keep your names out of it - but it doesn't stop people from talking.

**CARJI:** Oh, I know.

**JOE:** I've heard people spinning all kinds of tales. The walls have ears. There's been quite a bit of talk about Miss Anderson giving Miss Kelly driving lessons. And about her magically appearing at some of the recent soirees and parties.

**CARJI:** She's Esther's driver, that's what she's been engaged to -

**JOE:** It's not just the elite that talk. Those of us in service are privy to a lot of personal information.

**CARJI:** What are you getting at?

**JOE:** I'm just -

**CARJI:** Is this some kind of blackmail?

**JOE:** No, quite the opposite. I respect Miss Kelly and all her father did for me when I was left with nothing. I too have known her for many years, though she probably wouldn't recall. She's a good, honest woman and I'd hate to see all that she strives and fights for lost, in the blink of an eye, because of some information that may tarnish her good name.

**CARJI:** What are you saying, man?

**JOE:** A friend of mine, well an acquaintance really, is one of the groundskeepers for Miss Kelly at the manor. He's said that he's seen some... interesting... interactions between Miss Kelly and Miss Anderson. Staff are talking and I fear that it's only a matter of time before these rumours reach the ears of those that would use that information in insidious ways.

**CARJI:** Do people have nothing better to do with their time than gossip and spread -

**JOE:** Knowledge is power, is it not? Particularly amongst this lot.

*Carji thinks a moment.*

**CARJI:** Joe, you are an odd friend.

**JOE:** But I am a friend. You can count on that.

**CARJI:** I... I am aware of the rumours being spoken about Esther, and Alice. I do love her - as a dear, dear friend and I don't want her to get hurt. I know that she would be betraying her heart if she said yes to me. But what choices are there?

**JOE:** I should get back. I think Miss Firth is due to perform any minute. Mr King will be wanting everyone's glasses to be filled.

**CARJI:** Yes, yes. I should probably go and lose some more money to the cause. I think my luck ended with you in the ally earlier tonight. A cigarette will do me good first.

**JOE:** See you in there.

**CARJI:** Indeed.

*Joe exits (heads back to the bar/ballroom) . Carji stays a moment to smoke a cigarette and ponder. He leaves when he hears JC announce that May will be performing and heads to the ballroom.)*

**SCENE 6.D (MOLLY)**

**Trigger warning:** *This scene mentions miscarriage and infertility.*

*Characters- Dr Mary and Howard*

*Somewhere secluded, maybe a courtyard, maybe a hallway.*

*Howard sits alone, catching his breath after JC's speech, Esther's attack, and the overwhelming energy of the night.*

*Mary enters. Howard jumps to his feet. They've scared each other.*

**HOWARD:** Arhh!

**MARY:** Ah! Oh. Mayor Hitchcock. Please forgive me for, well... that.

**HOWARD:** Dr. De Garis! I thought you'd be soaking up the party atmosphere.

**MARY:** Me? No. I mean, I just needed a breath of fresh air, Mr. Mayor.

*Beat.*

**MARY:** Sorry for frightening you.

**HOWARD:** Me? Oh no, I wasn't... I did jump out of my skin, didn't I?

**MARY:** I won't tell.

**HOWARD:** I'd appreciate that. If Miss Kelly catches wind it'll be headlining tomorrow's news.

**MARY:** Unless the success of tonight outshines it.

**HOWARD:** Why yes, I suppose that is true. Let's hope it all goes well, hey? Would you care to sit with me?

**MARY:** Thank you, sir.

*Mary and Howard sit.*

**MARY:** Are you enjoying your night, Mr. Mayor?

**HOWARD:** Of course.

*Beat.*

**HOWARD:** Actually, I would very much like to be at home with my wife. I've been checking the time more than I should admit.

**MARY:** Wouldn't that be lovely?

**HOWARD:** The older I get, the less my social engine seems to run. I'm about ready for a cuppa and bed. Who waits at home for you?

**MARY:** My dear Miles Franklin, Mayor Hitchcock.

**HOWARD:** I haven't met him, I don't think. You didn't take your husband's name?

**MARY:** I would have, had he not died in France before we were married. *Stella* Miles Franklin waits on my side table at home.

*Hitchcock gives Mary a blank stare.*

**MARY:** She's an author. Sir.

**HOWARD:** Oh! My apologies.

*Beat.*

**HOWARD:** Brave man, your husband?

**MARY:** An unfortunate pawn in the games of silly men. Present company excluded, of course.

*Beat.*

**MARY:** I think I've managed to correct you *and* offended you in the last two minutes. I am doing a splendid job.

**HOWARD:** Ah, please! Usually, I am having to decipher whether the political wool is being pulled over my eyes or not. Your candor is welcome.

*Beat.*

I am sorry if I caused any pain bringing up your husband.

**MARY:** God has filled that part of my life with the hospital and my studies. Though I have caught my nurses joking once or twice that I might as well be married to my work. That is why I am here, and not in bed with my book.

**HOWARD:** My work has captured me here too. Can't turn down a political invite, especially from an opponent. "It simply isn't done", my wife would say. Any chance to support Geelong's civic improvement/ and beautification-

**MARY:** Beautification. It is a catchy slogan, Mayor Hitchcock.

**HOWARD:** Louie's work too, that one. Anyway, can't turn down a good cause. Old stomping grounds and such.

**MARY:** You were on the hospital board, weren't you, sir?

**HOWARD:** Many moons ago, when my hair didn't look like, well- this. Back before the Great Ocean Road build began. But, the worker's scheme demands too much of my time, and it is a cause I care deeply for. I deemed the hospital competent enough to run their course without me.

**MARY:** Mmm.

*Beat.*

**MARY:** Mr. Mayor, can I ask you a question?

**HOWARD:** Please do. And do call me Howard. No need for proper introductions anymore.

**MARY:** Then I'm Mary.

**HOWARD:** Fire away, Mary.

**MARY:** I need to know whether you are intending to donate tonight. A- well, large donation from you will encourage the others to do the same. And we can't open the ward without that money, which means we can't open the ward without you.

**HOWARD:** Ah. No pressure, hey? You know Mary, I was very ready to make a hasty exit until you surprised me just before.

**MARY:** Then accept my sincerest apologies for hijacking your getaway plan.

**HOWARD:** I think it may have been the Lord's intention after all. Louie and I had agreed on an amount from our own pockets for donation tonight. She suggested one number, I suggested something substantially lower. But... I think she'd want that money to go to you.

**MARY:** She is a good woman.

**HOWARD:** The very best.

**MARY:** She's a supporter of the hospital? She must sit on the committee with Mrs. King. I am surprised not to see her here tonight.

*Beat.*

**MARY:** And I've done it again. My foot, right in it. She's not on the board, is she?

*Mary winces.*

**MARY:** Have I opened a social can of worms?

**HOWARD:** Er, no. She is not.

*Howard takes a deep breath.*

**HOWARD:** My Louie and I were never blessed with children, as you may know. Many years ago, I was in Melbourne for a meeting at Parliament House, and she- er, she...

*Pause.*

**HOWARD:** I didn't know she was pregnant. She didn't tell me because she was scared that what the doctors had told her would be true. I thought she had just been ill, but by the time the doctor made it...

**MARY:** It was too late.

**HOWARD:** Yes.

**MARY:** And that is why she is not here tonight.

**HOWARD:** Amongst other things, yes. But it is a cause close to her heart, as you can imagine. For her, you can be assured the donation you need for your ward, you will receive.

**MARY:** Donating that funding means other women will be able to access the physical and emotional support Mrs. Hitchcock- Louie, didn't receive. Predictability in care. That is my goal. Predictability in the unpredictable. When things happen, these women will always have somewhere to go. Be sure to tell her that.

**HOWARD:** I will. She'll treasure that.

**MARY:** Plus, she'll also treasure the fact that a big donation like this is a strong political move in favour of both traditionalists and modernists. Very clever move indeed.

**HOWARD:** Hmm. Good political slogan that. '*Predictability in the unpredictable*'. That'd challenge J.C's '*Moving with the Times*'. You wouldn't mind...?

**MARY:** Happy to help.

**HOWARD:** Challenging a rival is a lovely outcome. I'll have your vote come election time then, Dr. De Garis?

**MARY:** A lady never speaks of politics in polite company, Mayor Hitchcock. But for your support in my endeavours, I can give you this reassurance.

*Mary stands, and winks at him.*

**MARY:** Enjoy the peace and quiet. I'm sure Miss Kelly is on the prowl somewhere.

**HOWARD:** Was that a yes?

*Mary exits.*



**SCENE 6.E**

*Characters: May*

*Location: Backstage/side of stage? Or dressing room if there's no backstage area?*

*(Note; perhaps May had eavesdropped on some of the conversation towards the end of scene 6.A? Perhaps this is made possible because of the way she needs to go to get from the kitchen in 6.B to the backstage area?)*

*May is backstage getting ready to perform. She's awaiting an announcement.*

**SCENE 7.A**

*Characters: All*

*Location: The main ballroom.*

*Note: May is backstage.*

*Margaret has just arrived, she's back in the ballroom. Maybe heading to the bar?*

*Tommy is hanging near the card tables.*

*Joe has returned to the bar.*

*Esther is in the ballroom, trying to find Howard / and or JC.*

*Alice is also in the ballroom trying to find Tommy.*

*Dr Mary and Howard are nearby and re-enter the ballroom space once JC starts calling guests in.*

*Carji re-enters the ballroom once JC starts calling guests back.*

*JC is side of stage or on the dance floor?*

*JC steps onto the stage and gets the crowd's attention. (Perhaps impro some banter with the 'audience/crowd' as they gather, and to give all the characters time to return to the ballroom.)*

**JC:** Ah my dear sinners - I mean winners! May I have your attention, please. I trust that you've all been enjoying yourselves and that if you have lightened your pockets that you take comfort in knowing that all your shiny pennies will be going to the Hospital. But, if you've found yourself to be blessed by Lady Luck tonight, do do DO remember that there are those out there who are less fortunate, who face challenges that many of us only read of - so please, if you can find it in your hearts to donate any winnings from tonight's fun, then I - we - the hospital would be most grateful. Now, we have reached a point in the evening that we've all been waiting for. I am thrilled that this lovely lady has so graciously offered to perform for us tonight, finding time amongst her busy schedule. Miss May Firth is on her way to Sydney where her beauty and talent will shine in the McDonagh sister's latest silent film. But we have been granted a true gift tonight - the patrons of the cinema will only get to look upon this songbird - we on the other hand will get to hear her! Performing "BLA BLA SONG", I welcome Miss May Firth!

*The crowd claps as JC steps down from the stage and stands in the front, watching slightly adoringly.*

*(During JC's speech, Carji has joined Esther to watch the performance, Alice is hanging near the bar. Margaret slowly joins JC. Howard and Dr Mary mingle together. Tommy watches from the back somewhere. Joe watches from the bar.)*

*May sings a song. At the conclusion the crowd clap and JC returns to the stage.*

- JC:** Ah, what a delight! Thank you Miss Firth. Now, I have an extra little surprise for everyone. What sport it is to hold a good old auction? Am I right? I urge you all to be generous - the money is, after all, going to such a worthy cause. Now, Miss Firth has offered a dance to the winning bidder. Some lucky gent will have the pleasure of skipping, hopefully not tripping, across the dance floor with this lovely lady. Get your money and your cheque books ready... shall we start the bidding at???
- TOMMY:** Two pounds!
- JC:** The, ah, gentleman in the shadows there - kicking things off at an insulting two pounds. Come on, we can do better than that!
- HOWARD:** 30 pounds!
- JC:** That's more like it. Our dear mayor, 30 pounds -
- CARJI:** 35!
- JC:** Surely we can have increases of at least 10! 35 pounds to Carji Greeves - although with your injury I fear the experience will be wasted on you.
- CARJI:** 45 pounds! You bid against yourself!
- TOMMY:** 46 pounds.
- JC:** Now really?
- HOWARD:** Oh, alright - an. Even 50 pounds!
- JC:** Thank you Mayor Hitchcock. At 50 pounds, going once -
- CARJI:** 60 pounds!
- JC:** Mr Greeves at 60 pounds!
- HOWARD:** 75 pounds!
- JC:** Our mayor is keen for the honour. What can we raise for the hospital? 75 pounds going once. 75 pounds going twice -
- MARGARET:** 80 pounds!
- JC:** Excuse me?
- MARGARET:** 80 pounds!

- JC:** My dear I heard the amount, you don't need to bid for me.
- MARGARET:** Oh it's not for you. 80 pounds!
- JC:** Ah, 80 pounds. Surely we can get to 100 - wouldn't that be newsworthy, Mayor Hitchcock? Mr Greeves?
- HOWARD:** Ah, 90 pounds!
- MARGARET:** 100 pounds!
- JC:** My dear... I... I'm not sure how appropriate it is for the auctioneer's wife to be bidding.
- HOWARD:** 101 pounds!
- MARGARET:** 120 pounds!
- JC:** Mayor Hitchcock, what an opportunity to prove to your, your community that you, to give back and...
- HOWARD:** I will bid 130 pounds!
- JC:** *(says quickly)* Final call - 130 pounds going once, twice -
- MARGARET:** 200 pounds!
- JC:** Margaret?!
- MARGARET:** 201!
- JC:** My dear - Mayor Hitchcock?
- HOWARD:** As a gentleman, I wouldn't want to deprive your wife. Seems she's a hunger for winning, no matter the price. I will contribute in another way, that is less competitive.
- JC:** 201 pounds going once. 201 pounds going twice. The final call, anyone?

*The room hangs in anticipation.*

201 going... Sold to Mrs Margaret King.

*The guests clap/cheer. Margaret looks quite pleased with herself.*

Congratulations my dear.

- MARGARET:** Why thank you. Perhaps after my stumble earlier, I might pick up a few pointers from Miss Firth.

*Margaret moves to the centre of the dance floor and gestures to May to join her.*

May I have the pleasure Miss Firth?

**MAY:** Of course.

*May joins Margaret on the dance floor. May encourages others to join too. (Perhaps this is an opportunity for some of our characters - Esther, Carji, Howard, Dr Mary, JC - to ask members of the audience to partner them? And a way to divulge some one-on-one info? And position the audience members closer to Margaret and May to overhear some of their conversation?). Music plays and May and Margaret start dancing.*

**SCENE 8.A**

*Characters: Margaret & May*

*Location: The main ballroom, the centre of the dance floor*

*Margaret and May dance together.*

**MAY:** I must confess, this is quite a surprise.

**MARGARET:** Are you uncomfortable dancing with me?

**MAY:** Oh no, not at all. You're a winner, fair and square. But I am a little confused as to who's leading.

**MARGARET:** Forgive me. I'm not used to it -

**MAY:** You're doing a swell job.

**MARGARET:** Actually, Miss Firth, there's an ulterior motive to wanting to dance with you. I must speak quickly and frankly, before the song ends.

**MAY:** Yes?

**MARGARET:** I need your help. The flowers you received earlier, and the note. Do you know who they're from?

**MAY:** I believe some Irish gentleman, Thomas O'Connor?

**MARGARET:** They are not my dear. The stationary, the handwriting - they are from my husband.

*May stiffens a little, unsure of how Margaret will continue.*

Please, know that I have nothing against you. My fury lies entirely with Mr King.

**MAY:** I'm so sorry -

**MARGARET:** I'm over sympathy. I will no longer be the victim of my husband's tarnished soul.

**MAY:** I'm always up for fun, but know that I do have boundaries Mrs King. If there's a ring they're out of bounds. I learned that the hard way a long time ago. But how can I help you?

**MARGARET:** I need you to make an exception to your rule. He needs to know that I'm aware of his betrayals - both of the heat and of the good people of Geelong.

**MARGARET (cont'd):** You see, he is taking advantage of this night to raise funds which he will use to settle his debts with Tommy O'Connor. If the night goes particularly well you can guarantee that some of the money will also magically appear in his campaign fund. I've hidden his account books and ledgers, but will use them against him later. What I need from you is some power - leverage.

**MAY:** In what way?

**MARGARET:** Esther Kelly, editor in chief from the newspaper is here tonight. I need my husband to be discovered in a compromising situation. I need the threat of a front-page scandal.

**MAY:** I can't risk my career with -

**MARGARET:** Know that it will only go as far as Esther and I... and maybe Mary can keep watch at the door if I can arrange it. It won't go to print, ever. In fact, I think I'll be able to provide Esther with a much more positive headline.

**MAY:** I'm not sure -

**MARGARET:** Please. I know what I'm asking is, well, I feel that I am stooping to a level that he slithers along.

**MAY:** If you can make it worth my while then...

**MARGARET:** What's your price?

**MAY:** I do admire your diamond earrings and brooch. They would go beautifully with a costume I have.

**MARGARET:** Consider them yours.

**MAY:** I can lure him to the dressing room.

**MARGARET:** Give me a few minutes. I need to make sure Mary is near the door to ensure that no one else will stumble across the scene. Esther and I will be nearby and can make an appearance - How long do you anticipate...?

**MAY:** A few minutes should do it. If she's by the door tell her to keep an ear out for "you devil, Mr King!"

**MARGARET:** Fitting.

**MAY:** I have an entertaining little solo Charleston number I'll perform during the next song. That will provide you some time to rally your supporters, and me with a reason to return to my dressing room Mrs King.

**MARGARET:** Margaret.

**MAY:** Margaret. What a spot of fun. Here I was thinking that Geelong was a stuffy little place, bereft of drama.

**MARGARET:** I can count on you?

**MAY:** You can. And you're a wonderful dancer.

*The song starts to end and Margaret and May make a wonderful spectacle - twirling, dipping, laughing and having a jolly good time. The crowd notices. So does JC. As the song ends Margaret and May bow to one another, thank each other for the dance and then move on; Margaret heads towards Esther. JC goes to head to Margaret but Howard stops him? May continues dancing for a little while then heads to the bar.*



**SCENE 8.B**

*Characters: Alice and Joe*

*Location: At the bar*

*While May and Margaret are dancing (as well as a few other characters) Alice and Joe chat at the bar.*

**JOE:** Not one for dancing?

**ALICE:** I have two left feet. And who would I dance with anyway?

**JOE:** Well Miss Firth and Mrs King look like they're enjoying themselves. Two skirts twirling around the dance floor.

**ALICE:** Ha! So I should just ask Mr King perhaps?

**JOE:** We wouldn't know where one pinstripe ended and the other started.

**ALICE:** No thank you. I couldn't think of anything worse.

**JOE:** If I had the cash I'd get the name of your tailor.

**ALICE:** Thank you - the work of one of my girls, at the garage. I find second-hand suits and she alters them for me. Does a fine job.

**JOE:** Skilled in the art of needlework and mechanics?

**ALICE:** We can do and be more than one thing.

**JOE:** Of course. Perhaps another arm of your business? Get your suit altered and pressed while your automobile is serviced? Maybe you could set up a shoe-shine area too?

**ALICE:** I'm happy to focus on one industry for now.

*Joe gives Alice a drink. While she sips she watches Esther who is on the dance floor (dancing with an audience member?). Joe observes Alice.*

**JOE:** I hear you're hoping to set up a garage here, in Geelong?

**ALICE:** Kew is going very well. Esther found a warehouse on XXX street that has a lot of potential. I just need to secure some investors. I was hoping to talk to Mayor Hitchcock, but I think that will have to wait. Esther is hot on the trail of some scoop that might grace the front page of tomorrow's paper. Playing host to formal introductions isn't on the agenda for tonight.

- JOE:** She's always got her nose buried deep in a story. Even as kids she knew everyone's secrets.
- ALICE:** You know Esther?
- JOE:** Knew. I doubt she'd recognise me after all these years.
- ALICE:** How?
- JOE:** Our fathers were friends, well, until my father squandered our family fortune away. Gullett Thoroughbreds - it was a prosperous family business until my father's luck ran out. When we were around 7 or 8, Esther and I would often ride together. We looked after her pony, Long John I think he was named. She was very close with my younger sister, Sarah. Practically inseparable - a bit like the two of you now.
- ALICE:** Hum. I don't suppose / you've seen Tommy O'Connor?
- JOE:** People change when they get married, don't you think?
- ALICE:** What?
- JOE:** Carji and Esther. They're quite the picture of a modern couple, but marriage often brings children, a more domestic lifestyle, quieter. I wonder if she'd still be involved in the newspaper?
- ALICE:** Esther won't marry Carji.
- JOE:** They seem quite serious. They've attended every soiree, gala, debutante ball and garden party together for the last, well, at least 6 months. Don't spoil the surprise, but he's been carrying around a ring for three weeks, just waiting for the right time to ask. Gosh, imagine if he did it tonight. I wonder if that would trump whatever scoop / Esther is hot on the trail of?
- ALICE:** So have you seen Tommy, or not?
- JOE:** Card table perhaps? Or if he's not there he might be out the back playing two-up with some sucker.

*Alice quickly downs the rest of her drink.*

**ALICE:** Thanks for the info. That's really helpful.

*Alice heads off towards the card table area in search of Tommy.*

**SCENE 8.C (MOLLY)**

*Characters: Howard and Esther*

*Location: Dance floor.*

*As the music begins and Margaret and May take to the dance floor, Howard and Esther begin dancing with an audience member. But, Esther spots Howard and sees this as an opportunity to chat with him again about the 'charity scandal' story that will be going to press tomorrow.*

**ESTHER:** Mind if I cut in?

**HOWARD:** Miss Kelly! I-ah, I am sorry. You wouldn't believe that my old friend and I haven't seen each other in years. We are just reminiscing on old stories, so if you'll excuse me/

**ESTHER:** A gentleman never refuses a dance, Mr. Hitchcock! Plus, if I don't cut in now, you might have a chance to sneak off again.

*Howard laughs uncomfortably. Caught out.*

**HOWARD:** I'm old enough to be your father, surely you don't want to dance with an old dodder like me/

**ESTHER:** You don't mind, do you Ma'am? Besides (*whispers*) people are starting to look.

**HOWARD:** Like a dog with a bone.

**ESTHER:** Woof.

*Howard holds out his hand. Esther takes it.*

**ESTHER:** What a turn of events, hey?

**HOWARD:** Anything goes. these days. J.C is making some very clear political statements. All in the name of charity, I suppose. That much he can hide under.

**ESTHER:** Speaking of charity- so glad you brought it up- we have some air to clear, don't we Mr. Mayor?

**HOWARD:** Now look, Miss Kelly-

**ESTHER:** Would you be so kind as to remind me what the bible say about the armour of God, Mr Hitchcock?

**HOWARD:** I beg your pardon?

**ESTHER:** You shall put on the armour of God to protect you from the devil's schemes. One of Pauls letters.

**HOWARD:** Why yes, I do believe you are correct. The Helmet of Salvation and such-

**ESTHER:** The belt of truth, too. Always my favourite piece.

*Beat*

I'm not sure your spiritual armour will be enough to protect your political career come tomorrow morning, when your name is headlining the front page.

**HOWARD:** The fine people of Geelong have always trusted the traditions of these societies, Miss Kelly. I don't think you'll be hard pressed to find a family who hasn't been affected by their goodwill.

**ESTHER:** You are completely correct, Mr. Mayor. I haven't been hard pressed to find witnesses and addresses from the families exploited by these 'charitable' establishments.

**HOWARD:** Is this some attempt at a threat?

**ESTHER:** Simply a heads-up on tomorrow's press release.

**HOWARD:** What if I were to give you something else for tomorrow's headline? Good news-

**ESTHER:** Good news for you or good news for the people?

**HOWARD:** Good news for the hospital. A big donation. From me.

**ESTHER:** How big?

**HOWARD:** Just as much as J.C intends to donate for tonight's cause.

**ESTHER:** Very generous of you. A tie in the donations and a tie in the political race. I guess you leave the fate of the election in the hands of the people now.

**HOWARD:** Ah, I wasn't finished- Just has much as J.C met by me and the town council, but another generous donation on top from the Geelong Benevolent Society.

**ESTHER:** Is that so?

**HOWARD:** It is now.

**ESTHER:** Very well.

**HOWARD:** So?

**ESTHER:** Yes, Mr. Mayor?

**HOWARD:** You'll stop the release of Monday's story?

**ESTHER:** For now.

**HOWARD:** What do you mean, for now? I've given you what you want.

**ESTHER:** You've given me what you *think* I want. I don't want temporary fixes, Mr. Mayor. What good is a bandage on a broken leg?

**HOWARD:** The donations not enough?

**ESTHER:** There needs to be people, objective eyes on the Geelong Benevolent Society's 'goodwill missions'. Someone like Dr. Mary, who can send the resources to the families who need them.

**HOWARD:** Under her watchful eye nothing will be slipped into anyone's pocket.

**ESTHER:** Exactly. She will be able to send the society to the families she works with, and she will know whether they've been cheated.

**HOWARD:** Very well. I will try to speak-

*Esther gives Howard a look.*

**HOWARD:** I *will* speak to Dr. Mary. Tonight.

*The dance has ended. Esther and Howard applaud with the others. Margaret moves toward Esther.*

**MARGARET:** Miss Kelly, might I have a word?

**HOWARD:** Please do. I'm going to speak with my running mate. Excuse me.

**SCENE 8.D**

*Characters: Tommy, JC, Carji, Dr Mary*

*Location: Various within the ballroom - eg dance floor, card tables*

*While May and Margaret are dancing some of the others dance with audience members. JC, Dr Mary and Carji dance?*

*Tommy hangs near the card tables.*

*At the conclusion of the song they all clap Margaret and May then: Carji goes to try and dance/talk with Esther but Margaret gets to her first and whisks her off to the courtyard along with Dr Mary. JC wants to talk to Margaret about what just happened, but Howard interrupts him before he can get to Margaret.*

*(Work out what everyone is doing)*

**SCENE 9.A**

*Characters: Margaret, Esther and Dr Mary*

*Location: The courtyard?, somewhere private*

*As the song ends Margaret and May bow to one another, thank each other for the dance and then move on. Margaret heads towards Esther who has been dancing with Howard.*

**MARGARET:** Miss Kelly, may I have a moment of your time, in private?

**ESTHER:** Of course.

*They start to walk off, towards the courtyard?*

**MARGARET:** May I bring Mary in on the conversation?

**ESTHER:** Oh, I'm curious...

**MARGARET:** *(Calling to Mary as they pass)* Dr De Garis! Care to join?

**MARY:** After that splendid spectacle, yes.

*The three women arrive in the courtyard.*

**MARGARET:** This will do -

**MARY:** I didn't know you had that in you Margaret.

**MARGARET:** I surprised myself, a little.

**ESTHER:** What is this light I see burning behind your eyes?

**MARGARET:** My heart is beating at a million miles. I don't know if it's from the dancing, or from the sheer rush of what I have discovered and have set in motion - both. I feel as though I have sprouted wings and am flying. The air feels crisp out here -

**MARY:** Are you alright my dear?

**MARGARET:** Yes, perfectly fine. I, earlier, I had a conversation with Esther and, well it made me think and, well... You are right. I have nothing to lose.

**MARY:** What are you talking about?

**ESTHER:** Well done Margaret -

- MARGARET:** *(To Mary)* Earlier, in the dressing room with you, the flowers and note for Miss Firth are from my husband. I recognised the stationary and handwriting immediately.
- MARY:** Oh Margaret I am sorry -
- MARGARET:** No. No Mary. I will not give any energy to wallowing over that man.
- MARY:** Well good for you. But I suspect there is more to your fervent state than just the realisation that your husband is an unfaithful bastard, excuse me.
- MARGARET:** Esther, the seed you have planted was quick to sprout. I shall run for mayor.
- MARY:** Dear God, what have I missed? Are you sure you're alright?
- ESTHER:** Wonderful. I am here for you.
- MARGARET:** I will catch you both up on the main points, but I need your faith in what I have planned. If I'm going to run then I need to do it without another King in the race. There was motivation behind winning that dance with Miss Firth. I have arranged for her to help lure my husband into a, let's say, a compromising position.
- ESTHER:** And Miss Firth has agreed?
- MARGARET:** For the price of my jewels she's happy to play along.
- MARY:** And you trust her?
- MARGARET:** Yes. I do. I have to. There's no going back now really.
- ESTHER:** But what will that do?
- MARGARET:** You and I will stumble across their moment of indiscretion. I can confront my husband about his betrayal, that I have proof of his debts to Tommy and that he's been embezzling public funds to support his own political gain. You will be there as a witness, and as someone who can bring everything out in the open if he won't cooperate. You are on the hunt for a good headline for tomorrow's paper, are you not?
- ESTHER:** This evening has provided a few good options already, but...
- MARGARET:** I hope that it may be something about my decision to run, and not about my husband's misdemeanours.
- ESTHER:** We can roll the dice.
- MARY:** What can I do to assist?



**MARGARET:** I have promised Miss Firth that no one, outside of Esther and myself, will know about the situation, in order to protect her and her career. Can you keep watch Mary?

**MARY:** Of course.

**MARGARET:** If you can station yourself nearby the dressing room door and alert Ester and I as to when Miss Firth has lured him in. You will hear her call the words, “you devil, Mr King.”

**MARY & ESTHER:** Fitting.

**MARGARET:** I said the same thing. *(A beat)* Well. Shall we?

**MARY:** My goodness, this is quite a night.

*The women start to leave the courtyard.*

**MARGARET:** It shall be memorable, I just hope it’s for all the right reasons.

*When they leave the courtyard Mary heads straight to the dressing room doorway area and hangs there, discreetly.*

*Margaret and Esther make their way through the ballroom so they can give a ‘wink’ to May, who has been over by the bar. Margaret and Esther hang in an area where JC cant notice them. Carji spots Esther though and approaches...Does Alice spots Esther too (after her fight).*

**SCENE 9.B**

*Characters: Howard and JC*

*Location: The dance floor/ ballroom*

*As the song ends Margaret and May bow to one another, thank each other for the dance and then move on; Margaret heads towards Esther. JC goes to head to Margaret but Howard stops him. May continues dancing for a little while (then heads to the bar.)*

**JC:** Margaret!

**HOWARD:** Ah, JC -

**JC:** Excuse me -

**HOWARD:** Just the man I'm wanting to see.

**JC:** Perhaps we can talk in a moment, I just need -

**HOWARD:** I have a large donation I wish to give to you tonight.

**JC:** Oh? Ah... *(Gives up on pursuing Margaret)* How very generous of you Mayor Hitchcock. But you had a wonderful opportunity to make a donation known by bidding on a dance with Miss Firth.

**HOWARD:** Oh no, what would it have looked like if I had of bid one thousand pounds on a dance with a starlett? I was happy to be part of the fun, but I didn't want to deprive Mrs King of her little moment. Or was it your moment really? Pledging your own money to the cause. Two hundred and one pounds - I'm sure it will be a worthy footnote in Miss Kelly's article reporting the takings for the evening.

**JC:** One thousand pounds. That is quite an amount.

**HOWARD:** I had an encouraging talk with Dr De Garis, and Miss Kelly is keen to headline some positive news -

**JC:** Buying front page real estate are you?

*(May is on the dance floor, but she's managed to catch JC's eye. She gives him an "encouraging" look. JC continues to keep an eye on her as she goes to the bar.)*

**HOWARD:** You know how these things work.

**JC:** I do indeed.

**HOWARD:** Tonight, when you officially announce that you'll be running in the next election for mayor, don't forget to mention the funds you have raised. You don't want the people of Geelong to think that tonight is all about you. That would be bad taste.

**JC:** I wasn't going to announce anything official tonight -

**HOWARD:** Come now -

**JC:** I have plenty of time to -

**HOWARD:** You'd be an imbecile not to. I'm no fool.

*May approaches.*

**JC:** Well... I thank you for your generous donation to tonight's fundraiser. Miss Firth, what a spectacle that was!

**MAY:** I think I may have snapped the heel of my shoe. Mayor Hitchcock, I'm sorry I couldn't provide you with the pleasure of a dance.

**HOWARD:** To the winner goes the spoils. I couldn't deprive Mrs King, and I don't think I would have managed it as well.

**MAY:** I must dash off to the dressing room. I should try and fix this heel.

**JC:** I'll get one of the staff to find some glue.

**MAY:** Why thank you Mr King. Maybe we can sneak in a little dance later Mayor Hitchcock?

**HOWARD:** Don't add me to your card my dear. I'm afraid I'll disappoint.

*May heads off to the dressing room with JC close behind. Howard heads to the bar area?*

**SCENE 9.C**

*Characters: Alice & Tommy*

*Location: Near the card table, or perhaps it's a travelling scene? They end up out the back/kitchen? Somewhere?*

*Alice leaves the bar and heads towards the card tables. She can see Tommy, playing. She calls out...*

**ALICE:** Tommy!

**TOMMY:** What do you want?

**ALICE:** To say hello.

**TOMMY:** Hello.

**ALICE:** Enjoying yourself?

**TOMMY:** As much as one can among this lot.

**ALICE:** *(Slightly whispered)* I was wondering if you might like to play something else? I noticed, when I arrived, that you were... having some fun with Carji and Joe out the back. Cards aren't my thing but I've got an itch. You keen?

**TOMMY:** Always.

*Tommy and Alice stand and leave the table. They head out towards the back, or kitchen even? (The following dialogue is while they're travelling?)*

You me friend now hey?

**ALICE:** I wouldn't say that. Might depend on whether I can win anything off you.

**TOMMY:** Be prepared to be me enemy then.

**ALICE:** I imagine you don't have many friends in your line of work.

**TOMMY:** Can't - what kind of man would I be with friends anyway, hey? Soft and such. No thank you. Don't need em. Respect's what's important.

**ALICE:** I heard Mr King has a lot of respect for you.

**TOMMY:** Who knows?

**ALICE:** You don't like to give much away.

**TOMMY:** If you knew what I knew you'd be keeping things close to your chest too.

**ALICE:** See, the thing is, I was hoping to invite Mr King to be an investor in my new garage that I'm planning on setting up here in Geelong. But there are rumours around that the man isn't worth much. That he's got some debts owing. Your name came up.

*(They should be at their location by now. Tommy starts to set up to play.)*

**TOMMY:** Ahhhhhh, now it clicks. Alice Anderson, with them lady garages in Kew? You want to set one up here hey?

**ALICE:** Yeah, but it smells like Mr King isn't good for it.

**TOMMY:** Ya know, I knew a lass that was training at yer garage. Young, and pretty - the most beautiful golden hair that came all the way down too... like the birth of Venus. Had a habit she couldn't shake. Pity what happened to her. Found strangled in an alley they said. Hair splayed out and tangled. Stuffed in her mouth too.

**ALICE:** You know an awful lot -

**TOMMY:** She was a wild one. Looked like a goddess but was absolutely possessed by somethin' when we were in the sack. They think if there's a relationship there, they can get away with being late on their payments, and think they can settle things in other ways. But as I said before, respect's the key - plain and simple - and I'm shown that by being paid on time. Otherwise, I gotta set an example.

**ALICE:** You dirty dog -

*Alice goes to punch Tommy. A fight ensues. At one point Alice looks like she has the upper hand (maybe she has him pinned somehow?), but Tommy manages to break free and runs off. Alice pursues him.*

**SCENE 9.D**

*Characters: May & Joe*

*Location: The bar.*

*(May performs a little solo dance spectacle for the crowd. At the conclusion, she feigns being pooped/thirsty and heads to the bar? Timing?)*

*May approaches the bar.*

**MAY:** Ohhh, that worked up a thirst.

**JOE:** What can I help you with?

**MAY:** Bubbles! Please.

*Joe hands her a flute of champagne.*

**MAY:** Oh, can I also get a bottle and two flutes? And be a dear and pop them in my dressing room for me? I think I need a moment to cool down, alone.

**JOE:** Two flutes?

**MAY:** Well, who knows who I might stumble across on my way there? I'm very good at making friends.

**JOE:** Of course, happy to help Miss Firth.

*Joe gets a bottle of champagne and two glasses, and heads to the dressing room where he sets them on the dresser near May's bunches of flowers.*

*When May see's Esther and Margaret re-enter the ballroom area (maybe there's a wink from Margaret?) May heads to JC, who is chatting with Howard.*

**SCENE 9.E**

*Characters: Carji*

*Location: ??? Ballroom still? Card tables? Bar?*

*(What's Carji up to? Work it out.)*

*When Esther and Margaret re-enter the ballroom, Carji approaches them. He wants to chat with Esther.*

**SCENE 10.A**

*Characters: Esther, Margaret (and Carji at the end)*

*Location: The ballroom*

*Esther and Margaret re-enter the ballroom.*

**ESTHER:** Everyone seems to be enjoying themselves.

**MARGARET:** Yes...

*Margaret takes a breath.*

**ESTHER:** Are you alright?

**MARGARET:** Yes. Yes. Just, are there moments when you feel outside yourself Esther? Like the world is either too slow, or too fast and either way you're not able to be completely present?

**ESTHER:** I...? I'm not sure.

**MARGARET:** For the first time, in a long time I feel as if I am finally within my own skin. It feels strange, but wonderful. I'm frightened, but...

**ESTHER:** It is a bold thing you are doing. But that feeling that it's right, well, hold onto that with all your might. It's a precious thing.

**MARGARET:** I admire you Esther. You seem to have yourself so put together, even in the wake of your father passing, taking on such a prestigious role at the newspaper. I imagine that you have ruffled a few feathers.

**ESTHER:** What's a couple of cranky old cocks in the henhouse? They'll be up for slaughter soon anyway.

**MARGARET:** How do you do it?

**ESTHER:** Oh, I don't dare start questioning and analysing myself. One tug at a loose thread and I would completely come undone.

*Esther and Margaret move through the ballroom to head to a position where they can see Dr Mary clearly. Carji notices Esther and heads towards her, calling...*

**CARJI:** Esther! Esther!

**ESTHER:** Oh, Carji. I'm just off to assist Margaret with something.

**CARJI:** Mrs King, Esther I just need a moment -

**ESTHER:** Carji, your timing sometimes - It will have to wait.



**MARGARET:** I need Esther's assistance urgently.

**CARJI:** Oh...?

**MARGARET:** I don't want to have to divulge...

**CARJI:** Oh, of course. How long will you be Esther?

*Esther and Margaret look at each other.*

**MARGARET:** Not long.

**ESTHER:** A while.

**CARJI:** What is it?

**ESTHER:** I'll come and find you after I've helped Margaret, alright.

**CARJI:** I'll be at the bar then.

*Carji heads to the bar area.*

**ESTHER:** Here we go then. Ready?

**MARGARET:** I think so.

*Margaret and Esther get into position near Dr Mary and the dressing room door. When they hear May say the words "you devil, Mr King," they enter. Dr Mary stands guard near the door.*

**SCENE 10.B**

*Characters: May & JC*

*Location: The dressing room*

[TW: Sexual assault, intimacy and consent]

*May and JC make their way from [previous location] to May's dressing room. Actors may have to add/subtract dialogue as this first part is 'travelling' dialogue. May's objective is to seduce - but is nervous when JC isn't looking.*

**May:** You know Mister King, I've never danced with a politician before

*(JC attempts to be smooth)*

**JC:** Please, just call me John. Ha, well I'm not as stuffy as some of these [20's slang for old fart] might have you believe

**May:** *(buttering up)* 'And How'! This party is just the berries. Truly, I've not had a night out like this since Ol' Harry thought his speakeasy would get busted out in Chicago. Waste not want not - we had a gallon each surely!

**JC:** A gallon! Oh my, well, you must hold your liquor well then fo-

**May:** What?

**JC:** ... Never mind

**May:** *(giggles)* It's alright Mister King. Us Dolls can have fun too you know!

**JC:** Of course, of course... Please, just call me John.

**May:** I know I look petite, but they don't call me Pocket Rocket for nothin'. In fact, how about you fix us an old-fashioned while I powder my nose? Then we can *really* have fun...

*JC pulls himself together, May giggles and takes his hand. At this point they arrive at May's dressing room. JC opens the door for her in a chivalrous fashion*

**JC:** After you

**May:** Why thank you Mister-

*She makes eye contact, purposefully.*

**May:** Thank you, *John*.

*They enter*

**May:** Make yourself at home, bootleg's in the bureau

*May scurries off into her bathroom/wardrobe/behind a partition? She primps and mentally prepares for what she's about to do.*

*Meanwhile, JC wanders around nervously, checking his breath and teeth in the mirror, combing his hair, taking off his jacket, loosens tie/belt. He pours two glasses of whiskey (or champagne from the kitchen?), then takes a large swig from the decanter. He busies himself until May returns.*

**JC:** *(looking at May's chachkis & keeping distracted)* You truly have travelled the world  
Ms Firth

**May:** Yeah, its overrated. Most of it's just the same. I don't actually see much outside o' the big top or a train carriage, or my dressing tent. Sure, there's glamorous occasions like this but it ain't all parties and sight seeing y'know? How bout you *John*, have you travelled much?

**JC:** No, I've been to Sydney once for a family holiday as a child but I'm a creature of habit. Home is where the heart is, after all. But I have always wanted to see the pyramids of Giza

**May:** Phooey, Sydney's overrated, bunch a rich boys with nothing to do but holler. Besides, I bet they'll never finish building that eyesore of a bridge. Egypt though, now that's a beautiful place. Almost as hot as Cairns in the summer Y'know in Egypt they had a Lady King?

**JC:** Pardon?

**May:** Well the Pharaoh died so they put his wife in charge and she became the king. They invented make up y'know?

**JC:** Ah, you must mean Pharaoh Cleopatra. Yes, I'm familiar. Well, I suppose technically she would be a Queen ...

*At this stage May re-enters the room, now dressed in an elaborate silk robe and not much else.*

**May:** I don't know, *Lady King* has a certain... ring to it.

*She crosses the room to him*

**May:** What do you think, *John*? I suppose I could be Lady King for a night?

*She brushes past him and takes a cigarette in a long holder, sitting at the table with the whiskey and an aesthetic ashtray*

**May:** Got a light?

*JC attempts to look macho as he fumbles over a match, trying to light the cigarette. When he can't get it, May takes his hand and strikes, helping him light it. She takes a deep inhale and [if possible] blows smoke rings into JC's face. He doesn't appreciate it.*

*JC has reached his limit – drunk, stressed, overwhelmed. He somewhat forcefully takes the back of the chair in his hand. May is startled but covers it well.*

**May:** Goodness, Mr King – breaking chairs as well as heels and hearts?

*The final straw. JC is shaking, either with lust or frustration it's hard to tell, and swipes the ashtray and glass from the table. (note: plastic glasses for this scene.)*

*He scoops up May and sits her on the edge of the table. May is panicking now as she knows she hasn't stalled enough for Alice, Esther, and Margret to make their way upstairs.*

**May:** Well John, now let's maybe finish our drink before -

*JC attempts to remove her robe, which she clings onto*

**May:** Woah! Now hold on just a minute -

**JC:** Pipe down.

**May:** Excuse me?!

*She tries to leave and he takes her arm firmly*

**JC:** No. I won you fair and square. Now shut it.

*May knows she is no longer in control. In a panic, loudly attempts to say [THE LINE THAT IS THE SIGNAL]*

**JC:** I said shut it.

*May yelps as JC knocks over the chair and pulls her by the waist to the edge of the table. Luckily, the commotion from the glass banging and the muffled scream was loud enough to have alerted Dr Mary, who bursts into the room to see May looking terrified on the table, JC holding her down, but just in time. Margret and Esther follow suit...*

**SCENE 10.C**

*Characters: Dr Mary*

*Location: The hallway/area near the dressing room door.*

*Dr Mary is waiting/guarding the doorway to the dressing room. She keeps an eye out for Esther and Margaret. Once she spots them she ushers for them to come and join her. They wait in anticipation...*

**SCENE 10.D (ALYSHA)**

*Characters: Howard and Joe*

*Location: The bar or ballroom?*

*[CW death, religion, sexual assault]*

*Joe is washing glasses, Howard wanders over to the bar, and hands him an empty glass.*

**Howard:** Top shelf, please.

*He slides an exorbitant amount of money across the bar*

**Howard:** Keep it to yourself chap.

*Joe gives an understanding glance and pours a glass of high-end gin into a coffee mug.*

**Joe:** Good to keep up appearances, Sir.

**Howard:** Hmm.. Indeed. You know I don't usu-

**Joe:** You don't need to explain yourself sir. We all have secrets, it's how we survive.

**Howard:** Hmm, but the Good Word says - "Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops."

**Joe:** "Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered."

**Howard:** Proverbs! You are a man of God my son?

**Joe:** My mother, sir. She took me to church every weekend.

**Howard:** Hmm I remember Miriam, made the best CWA Victoria Sponge 6 years in a row. I know, because I enjoyed eating it 6 years in a row. (chuckles)  
How is she nowadays?

**Joe:** Dead, sir.

**Howard:** I – My condolences boy, I truly am sorry. She is in the arms of the Lord now, as we all will be.

*Joe makes a noise or a face, distaste*

**Howard:** Apologies, I didn't mean to offend son, I only -

**Joe:** I'm not your son.

**Howard:** No of course not I -

**Joe:** You want to know how my Mother died? One night the local pastor decided he was lonely and bored, broke into her house, slipped something in her tea. Bedded her, left her pregnant. Dad was long gone, I was on the front. She was so ashamed, she went for a swim and never came back. A man of God, did that sir. The same God that put hundreds of men at war and pushed a woman to her own death from the guilt of eternal sin.

**Howard:** Well now tha-

**Joe:** I'm needed in the kitchen. Enjoy your evening, sir. *God Bless.*

*Howard sits, stunned.*

**SCENE 10.E (MOLLY)***Characters: Carji and Alice**Location: Ballroom**Carji is hovering on the edge of the crowd, searching the faces for Esther. Alice marches through the crowd past him, bloodied and bruised from the fight.***CARJI** Alice, hey! I need your opinion on something-**ALICE** Carji unless you're going to tell me you've bought me a Rolls' Phantom, I am otherwise occupied.**CARJI** It's about Esther.**ALICE** I'm looking for her. You know where she is?**CARJI** I was hoping you would. Hold on- what happened to your face?**ALICE** My face is fine. Where is she?**CARJI** If you walk through that crowd people are going to think you've killed someone. *(Whisper)* Have you killed someone?**ALICE** With all these witnesses?*Beat.***ALICE** Joking. I just, fell.**CARJI** Fell? Into a fight? You forget I know what you're like.**ALICE** Last time I checked you weren't my husband, so quit it on the interrogation front, got it?**CARJI** Would you just-**ALICE** This is important, all right?**CARJI** What makes you think mine isn't?**ALICE** You really want me to answer that?**CARJI** Look, I heard something that could jeopardise Esther's work at the paper and her social position. Listening now?**ALICE** Go on.



**CARJI:** A friend of mine- well, not really a friend, sort of an acquaintance-

**ALICE:** Carji, I swear-

**CARJI:** Hold your horses! A trusted source of mine mentioned some gossip about you and Esther. Sightings of you two in compromising situations on those ‘outings’ of yours. And you know that once that kind of information reaches the downstairs staff...

**ALICE:** This kind of stuff floats around all the time. Like smelly feet. You gets wafts of it for a while and then you take a bath, and the smell disappears.

**CARJI:** This is not of the smelly foot variety and you know it.

*Carji is serious. Alice realises he’s not being overdramatic.*

**ALICE:** You’re worried?

**CARJI:** Very. If this gets out- and I mean, it sounds like people have been trying to suppress it for a while... it’ll ruin her. But I think I might have a solution.

*Beat. Alice realises the Carji means to propose to Esther.*

**ALICE:** Already. You can’t give us just a little more time?

**CARJI:** It’s our last choice. If you care for Esther-

**ALICE:** Of course I care for Esther! Doesn’t make sharing her easier, Carji. Just... bear with me.

**CARJI:** I know. I’m sorry to do this tonight, and here of all places. But it might be a silver lining. All of Geelong’s social elite in the same place...

**ALICE:** They won’t be able to contest what they think they saw. They’ll all be seeing the same proposal.

**CARJI:** They’ll all be seeing the same proposal.

**ALICE:** It’s a good plan. Smart.

**CARJI:** Thank you.

*Alice gives him a look.*

**CARJI:** I know how much you care for her. Nothing would have to change.

**ALICE:** Everything will change. You can't be that stupid.

**CARJI:** Then we'll make a new normal. I love her too, you know. This has been expected of us since we were sixteen. You must've known it was bound to happen.

**ALICE:** I'd hoped things would have been different by now. That the times would have changed. That there would be places for us.

**CARJI:** We'll make a place for you. But only if you give me your blessing. I have to do it tonight.

**ALICE:** Just... wait until after the big announcement tonight, all right? It's really important that it's the highlight of the night.

**CARJI:** Is that you giving me your blessing?

**ALICE:** Yes. For Esther.

**CARJI:** For Esther.

*Beat.*

**CARJI:** How will I know the right big announcement?

**ALICE:** You'll know.

*Alice exits.*

**SCENE 10.F**

*Characters: Tommy*

*Location: Hiding somewhere? Perhaps the courtyard, or near the front entrance?*

*Tommy has just been in a fight with Alice. He has a blood nose perhaps? (Work out what Tommy is up to.) Maybe he's on the hunt for JC to get an update on when he can get his cash? Maybe there's a moment where he can pass by Dr Mary and she comments on his bleeding face - how it's evolved from just being a black eye at the start of the night?*

**SCENE 11.A**

*Characters: May, JC, Esther and Margaret*

*Location: The dressing room*

*(Margaret and Esther get into position near Dr Mary and the dressing room door. When they hear May say the words "you devil, Mr King," they enter. Dr Mary stays outside and stands guard near the door.)*

*Margaret and Esther enter the dressing room. They catch JC and May in a suspicious/compromising position. (Check where Alysha left Scene 10.b with JC and May). JC is startled, May feigns surprise.*

**JC:** *(Spotting Margaret) My dear... (then spotting Esther) Miss Kelly?!*

*JC quickly hops up and starts re-arranging himself. Does up his shirt button etc...*

**MARGARET:** Oh, my dear - dear dear me. Have I caught you at a bad time?

**JC:** Miss Firth was just... I was just...checking - she broke the heel of her shoe and being a gentleman I / was assisting her with fixing...

**MARGARET:** Her shoes look perfectly fine from where I'm standing. What do you think Miss Kelly?

**ESTHER:** I'd say that it looks like the issue is more with one's clothing, not footwear.

**JC:** I do believe you've had issues with this costume as well, have you not Miss Firth? The straps, hooks and whatnot?

*JC looks to May as if to say 'get on my side.' A beat, then -*

**MAY:** Oh, no! You caught us Mrs King!

**JC:** Excuse me?!

**MAY:** It's all out now. We can't hide it can we daddy?

*May goes to dramatically embrace JC and fall into his arms. He awkwardly resists.*

**JC:** Margaret, it's not what you think - Miss Firth seems to be confused...

**MAY:** I have never been so sure of anything in my life. I love you -

**JC:** Please, stop!

**MARGARET:** No, please, go on.

*JC and May both speak their following lines at the same time:*

- MAY:** I'm sorry Mrs King, but I can't deny the animal attraction - it was lust and now love at first sight. I've never felt so strongly, so instantly, passionately, so so deeply for anyone in my life. His words struck me to the core of my soul. I've found my soul mate. What a whirlwind of a night. I don't know what will happen from here on in, but what I do know is that I need this man by my side. Mrs King, oh what shall we do? I'm at the mercy of love. *(She falls to the floor, kneeling.)*
- JC:** My dear, this is all a rather silly misunderstanding. Miss Firth has me confused with someone else, perhaps. I do believe she is also rather intoxicated and doesn't know herself. I can assure you that I came in here to assist her with an issue with her shoe and arrange for some glue - I was just about to go and ask Joe if he could fetch some - when she fell upon me and, the timing of it, well it, I think she tripped - the heel, you see, of course - and I do think she is rather drunk and needs a rest. *(Noticing May kneeling on the floor)* My goodness, see she is quite a mess. Miss Firth, you're embarrassing yourself.
- MARGARET:** No my dear, you are embarrassing *yourself*. You need to stop the lies and deceit. This is the man you are now - embrace him. I have. And I have decided I want no more of him.
- JC:** Margaret, my dear, what are you saying?
- MARGARET:** Don't you dare call me my dear again.
- JC:** What has got into you? Margaret, my - we should talk, alone. I can clear everything up. You look tired. Let's go and talk.
- MARGARET:** I have never been more awake. My eyes are wide. I see the life I have led, with you, and what started out as sweet has turned sour. I know about the money you have put in your own pocket. Good people's money. And your debts with Tommy. I have your ledgers and I am willing to use them as evidence if I have to.
- JC:** Evidence? Are you mad woman? What are you talking about?
- MARGARET:** Miss Kelly knows about them too.
- ESTHER:** Monday morning's headline is looking rather juicy. Embezzlement. A secret affair thrown in too. Mr King, you're giving me more than I'd bargained for.
- MAY:** Oh no! I'll be ruined. Please, please, no. You can't mention this in the papers.
- JC:** *(To May)* Shut up you harlot.
- MAY:** My heart is breaking...

**MARGARET:** Miss Firth, there is a chance to save your name and reputation, and that of my husband too.

**JC:** I care not for Miss Firth, I told you -

**MARGARET:** You should hear me out. I have a proposition.

**JC:** Oh, this is ridiculous -

**MARGARET:** You will not be running for mayor.

**JC:** Margaret -

**MARGARET:** If you wish to save yourself - your name and reputation from complete ruin then you will not run for mayor.

**JC:** Complete ruin?! My name? Do you forget what *your* name is? You married me. Me!

**MARGARET:** And I will divorce you.

**JC:** Are you hearing yourself? This is madness.

**MARGARET:** There is a glimmer of luck, in a strange way, that as a woman not much has been expected of me. Because of that I haven't much to lose, really. So far, I have just been a small footnote against the name and life of my father, and then of you. I had no great career. But, I have the wealth and privilege of my family behind me so if I do fall in any way, the worst that will happen is that the children and I would live out a quiet, peaceful life. Probably at our country estate. But you - you, my dear - as a man who has strived to leave a mark on the world, if you fall everything you have worked for and built of yourself goes down with you. And where would you be?

*A pause.*

**JC:** Margaret...

**MARGARET:** Where would you be?

*JC studies Margaret a moment. There's a shift as he realises he's in a sticky situation.*

You have no money of your own. No family to support you. A scandal like this will kill a man.

**ESTHER:** How many years would one get for embezzlement? Hummm, I shall mark my notebook to seek out that information. I don't want to misreport the facts.

*Esther gets out her notebook and starts taking notes.*

**MARGARET:** You are known for your thorough research.

**ESTHER:** I do pride myself.

**JC:** What do you want Margaret?

**MARGARET:** This - tonight, in your closing speech I want you to be brief. You will thank our patrons for coming and will advise them that you have some exciting news to share. Then, you will introduce me and I will make a statement that tonight I am officially announcing the launch of my campaign to run for mayor.

**JC:** You are mad. They will laugh. You have lost your mind.

**MARGARET:** I will file for divorce, because of your adultery.

**JC:** Margaret...

**MARGARET:** Miss Kelly is a witness. Miss Firth, may I have the letter you received with your flowers?

**MAY:** Of course.

*May hands Margaret the letter and envelope.*

**MARGARET:** You always had such lovely penmanship. A very distinct way that you liked to cross your t's. I used to swoon over your words - Dearest Margaret... There would be no denying that this note is from your hand.

**JC:** You don't really want this. Think of the children. Divorce? What will everyone think?

**MARGARET:** I don't care. Times are changing and I want to be part of it. I will no longer be a footnote. Do you agree to all that I have put forth?

**JC:** I... let's not rush into -

**MARGARET:** You either agree or Miss Kelly and I will head straight to the police station and tell them everything.

*A pause as JC ponders.*

**JC:** Where has this woman been hiding? We could have been quite the pair.

**MARGARET:** I believe it's almost time to bring the night to a close. After you my dear, and don't trip - I won't be there to catch you.

*JC exits the room with Margaret and Esther close behind him. May takes her time to fix her hair and make-up and then heads to the ballroom.*

**SCENE 11.B**

*Characters: Alice & Dr Mary*

*Location: The hallway/area near the dressing room door.*

*Dr Mary is standing guard by the dressing room door. Alice approaches.*

**ALICE:** Excuse me, have you seen Miss Esther Kelly? Has she passed by here recently?

**MARY:** She's currently indisposed - what happened to your face?

**ALICE:** I'm fine.

**MARY:** You're bleeding.

**ALICE:** I know. It's fine. What do you mean she's indisposed?

**MARY:** She's assisting Mrs King with something. I'm sure she'll be out in a moment.

**ALICE:** It's alright, I was there when they were talking earlier. You can let me in.

**MARY:** I'm afraid I can't.

**ALICE:** What? I need to talk to her. It's alright - Mrs King knows who I am. I'm sure that it won't be any trouble if I pop my head in. I just really need to see Esther.

**MARY:** Why don't you go and wash that blood off your face. I'm sure she won't be much longer.

**ALICE:** Why are you acting so strange?

**MARY:** I'm not. Why are you?

**ALICE:** I'm not.

*A pause.*

Alright. Alright, I'll go wash my face. But when I come back you better let me in.

*Alice heads to the bathroom or kitchen to wash her face.*



**SCENE 11.C**

*Characters: Joe & Tommy*

*Location: Perhaps back outside? Out the back?*

**JOE:** You're like some bad smell I just can't get rid of. Get out of here.

**TOMMY:** I'm not going nowhere.

**JOE:** *(Noticing the blood on Tommy's face.)* What kind of trouble have you been stirring?

**TOMMY:** Nothin.

**JOE:** That doesn't look like nothing. That looks like someone had a right go of you.

**TOMMY:** I've suffered much worse.

**JOE:** You really need to moving along now. Mr King doesn't want you around and I don't want to have to do anything to make you suffer some more.

**TOMMY:** Are you threatening me now?

**JOE:** Tommy, please -

**TOMMY:** Here I was thinking we were friends.

**JOE:** We're not friends. People like you don't have friends -

**TOMMY:** Thinking we at least had some mutual understanding. Respect. I let yer play. I let yer win sometimes. Not my fault if yer lose. Now, Mr King - he owes me and he's meant to be delivering, tonight. So I won't be going nowhere until I get paid me dues.

*Tommy tries to get past Joe and head back inside.*

**JOE:** I can't let you in.

**TOMMY:** Come on now. I don't want any trouble.

**JOE:** You need to leave.

**TOMMY:** That's not going to happen.

*Tommy goes to push past Joe but Joe pushes back. A scuffle occurs. Another fight. They're pretty equally matched until Joe manages to punch Tommy in the head (?). Tommy falls to the floor, unconscious. Joe is a little worried. He kneels down to check that Tommy is just unconscious.*

**JOE:** Tommy? ....Tommy? You breathing? Tommy? ....

*Joe looks around then drags Tommy over to an area where he tries to hide him (or so he's at least out of the way a little). His hands are shaking quite intently. He takes a small vile out of his pocket and drips a few drops onto his tongue. He watches his hands as they start to calm a little. He straightens his clothing, smooths his hair and heads back into the venue.*

**SCENE 11.D**

*Characters: Carji & Howard*

*Location: Bar area, or back near card tables?*

*Carji approaches Howard and notices a drink in his hand.*

**CARJI:** The cold air this time of year, this time of the evening -

**HOWARD:** It does provide radiating warmth at the back of one's throat.

**CARJI:** It's standard after our winter games. Once the final horn has sounded and you've shaken the hand of each muddy opponent, it's back to the locker rooms for hot showers and a shot of... what's your poison Sir?

**HOWARD:** This? Just a dash of whisky. A dash a day -

**CARJI:** Keeps the Dr away.

**HOWARD:** And have you won anything this evening?

**CARJI:** I'm afraid I've donated quite a few pounds to the fundraiser.

**HOWARD:** Ha ah, good lad.

**CARJI:** I'm hoping I'll win in other ways.

**HOWARD:** That's a rather cryptic statement.

**CARJI:** It is isn't it? I'm not very good at being direct - unless it's in relation to my aim on the field.

**HOWARD:** Even that has been off lately.

**CARJI:** Yes...

**HOWARD:** Don't let it get you down. I have no doubt you will pull through this rough patch and come out the other side. Like you always do, riding high - holding that cup above your head. Carried on the shoulders of your teammates. Sometimes, I wish I'd had the opportunity to play, at your level. I would have loved it I think. The roar of the crowd... that really is something.

**CARJI:** I don't really hear them.

**HOWARD:** You what?

**CARJI:** It's strange, but I don't think I've ever taken any notice of the crowd - the noise.

**HOWARD:** How can you not?

**CARJI:** I don't know. I just... I don't know.

***FILL OUT \_ FINISH SCENE***

**SCENE 12.A**

*Characters: ALL characters eventually end up back here.*

*Location: The ballroom / stage.*

*JC and Margaret enter the ballroom. Esther follows closely behind.*

*Joe comes in from out the back and resumes work at the bar.*

*Carji and Howard are at the card tables or bar? Carji spots Esther and heads towards her.*

*May arrives in the ballroom at some stage?*

*Dr Mary enters the ballroom and spots Esther. She heads towards her.*

*Alice arrives in the ballroom at some stage?*

**MARGARET:**       *(To JC)* Shall I get some champagne? You'll need something to toast the success of the evening.

**JC:**                 Ah, yes. Yes...

**MARGARET:**       Hop up on the stage. Make sure everyone has a full glass.

**JC:**                 Margaret, if, once I do this then...

**MARGARET:**       Then what?

**JC:**                 There is no turning back.

**MARGARET:**       I know. Isn't it exhilarating?

**JC:**                 You really want this? To destroy me? Destroy us?

**MARGARET:**       We were dead long ago. Now, what is the lesser evil? Turing you into the police? Or retreating into the shadows?

**JC:**                 And by retreating no one will find out about the money? It is a clean slate?

**MARGARET:**       Your ledgers won't see the light of day. Unless I need them to.

**JC:**                 How can your moral compass still allow you to continue on, knowing what you know? Can you turn a blind eye?

**MARGARET:**       I will. There are sacrifices that will be made for the greater good. I think my soul can soldier on. Anyway, this is after all, politics, is it not? I'm a quick learner.

*Margaret ushers JC to take his place on stage. He is hesitant.*

**MARGARET:** Well if you won't get things started, I will.

*Margaret goes to step onto the stage. JC stops her.*

**JC:** Friends, ah... it's coming to the end of our evening. May I implore you to make sure you have your glasses filled before I make my final announcement for the night. Fill your cups... gather around... please, gather around.

**MARGARET:** Don't play any games.

**JC:** Isn't that what tonight is all about?

**MARGARET:** Do as we agreed.

*JC takes the stage. His previous air of confidence now noticeably forced.*

**JC:** I trust that you have enjoyed your evening. From the depths of my heart I thank you for your attendance, and for reaching into the depths of your own pockets in support of our hospital. With the contribution you've all made tonight's funds raised have exceeded expectations. I believe we've surpassed last year's record which was (*amount???*)

*Margaret clears her throat, loudly, so that JC (and others) can hear.*

Ah, I... I... now I ... There is some more exciting news to announce. I must welcome onto the stage, my wife, Mrs Margaret King. Margaret...

*Margaret takes the stage.*

**MARGARET:** Thank you, Mr King -

*Howard calls from nearby.*

**HOWARD:** Oh come now JC. We all know that you're using this fundraiser to officially launch your mayoral campaign. It could be viewed in bad taste. Let the financial success of the night speak for you and not be tarnished by such a desperate stunt. But, if you would like to mention the generous donation of XXX? pounds, which I made in the name of my wife and I, then please... let that speak too.

**JC:** I... Mayor Hitchcock I... thank, thank you, yes, I, but...

**HOWARD:** Oh, you're very welcome JC. It's a pleasure to support such an important cause. I understand my donation is a bit hard to top. You are lost for words.

*Margaret, cool and collected, takes centre stage.*

**MARGARET:** Mayor Hitchcock, yes, thank you so much for such a generous contribution. The people, and in particular the women of Geelong will benefit greatly from tonight's fundraiser. I would like to see that they can continue to benefit - in all facets of life. I have been an active and devoted member of organisations such as The Country Women's Association and The Bethany Babies Home. I stand here now because... well, because...

*Margaret takes a moment, gathers herself and her thoughts. There is a noticeable shift in her demeanour, a fire in her eyes perhaps...*

Power is a public good that does not, should not, belong only to men, or only to institutions and groups that enjoy its privilege and comfort. Having power is about setting your own agenda - and not being at the mercy of others. *(Looking at JC)* Power, though it should not be bought, may have to be fought for, and there comes a time when it certainly needs to be claimed. I stand here tonight to announce that I will be running for Mayor in this next election. I put forward my claim in the pursuit of greater agency, for equality, for the power not only of women but for the good of my whole community and country.

**HOWARD:** JC, what is this absurd stunt?!

**MARGARET:** Mayor Hitchcock, I assure you this is no stunt. My intentions are true and I will do my best to be a fierce competitor.

**HOWARD:** This makes no sense. JC, you support this? Are you still running?

**JC:** I will not be running. I, I support Margaret.

**HOWARD:** Well....hummmmm. I wish you luck Mrs King. Ha ha, I wish you luck.

*Esther moves forward, calls out -*

**ESTHER:** Mrs King, this is fantastic news! Congratulations! I'm sure my readers will have lots of questions and would love to know more about your campaign, what you stand for - your hopes for Geelong. Can I secure an interview with you first thing tomorrow morning, so that I can ensure there's a full article on you in Monday morning's edition?

**MARGARET:** It would be my pleasure. I know that this announcement will ruffle some feathers but if the beginning of this century has taught us anything, it's that change is happening. We are living it now, it's not on the horizon - it's now, in the moment - and we must embrace every opportunity we have to be part of it. *(Flesh out a bit more)*. Now, let's all finish the night on an absolute high. Miss Firth, if I could invite you back onto the stage for a final number.

*May steps onto the stage.*

**MAY:** Oh, that would be just the queen bee's knees! *(To JC)* Move over buster, I need room.

*May sings a bouncing, joyful song and encourages everyone to dance.*

*Maybe Esther and Alice are somewhere off to the side, hiding in the shadows a little. Esther is looking at Alice's face (her injury). There is great care and love between them in this moment.*

*Margaret and Dr Mary dance together on the dance floor.*

*JC and Howard stand on either side of the dance floor, silently taking in the sight around them. They're both deflated, slowly realising that the world around them is no longer one they recognise.*

*Joe watches on, joyfully as he watches Dr Mary and Margaret dance.*

*Carji wanders through the dancing hoard, on the lookout for Esther. He doesn't find her.*

*Tommy, badly beaten/injured, stumbles back into the ballroom but keeps to the edges for most of the song. His eyes focused on JC. Near the end of the song Tommy slowly makes his way to JC where he taps him on the shoulder. JC turns around. There's an 'oh fuck' moment.*

*Maybe the song is a way to also have bows? Help signify that the "show" is over? Or a reprise of the song is the bows?*

**THE END.**