

Romantic Comedy

A screenplay

By

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LARRY MacDOUGAL	mid 30s, reasonable looking, muscular but not to a Arnold Schwarzenegger degree, ordinary nice guy
MICHAEL MacDOUGAL	2 years younger than LARRY, but also mid 30ish, a highly qualified actuary working for a large insurance company, slightly hesitant, not as confident or socially adept as LARRY thinks he is.
DAD (SYD MacDOUGAL)	late 60s, still working.
MUM (VERA MacDOUGAL)	early 60s or late 50s, a neat society matron of the upper north shore, devoted to husband and sons.
JOANNA	the romantic lead, 32, good looking, handsome rather than beautiful, at all times very neatly dressed and groomed, moves and talks with great self-assurance, obviously successful career woman, brunette, human resources manager with insurance company MICHAEL works for.
VICKY	the comic lead, late 20s early 30s, blond, bright and vivacious, a mischievous twinkle in her eyes most of the time. Capable of mid-sentence mood swings – model Meg Ryan in “When Harry met Sally”.
VICKY’S PARENTS	50ish / 60ish, immigrants from Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia or somewhere in that general region, each still with accents.
LUCINDA	27, pleasant looking, girl next door.
Mr FITZSIMONS	senior executive in the insurance company that JOANNA and MICHAEL work for.
ELIZABETH	late 50’s early 60’s, Mr Fitzsimon’s long-term secretary.
NATALIE	a more junior employee in the insurance company.

CLERK at Registration Desk of Melbourne Hotel.

VICKY (as a young girl) about 12 or 14.

JOANNA'S SECRETARY female, age doesn't matter.

GROUPS

VICKY's aunt, uncle and cousin for the open window scene.

Minister for VICKY's fantasy wedding and real wedding.

Minister / Priest for MICHAEL and JOANNA's wedding.

Other workers in the insurance company.

People on buses and planes.

Miscellaneous neighbours and friends.

SCENE 1

JOANNA'S office, early Wednesday morning, JOANNA has a neat, well-organised desk with telephone, her secretary to a side desk. JOANNA is on the phone. There is a vase on the table with a single red rose beginning to droop.

JOANNA
(firmly)

But Mr Fitzsimons, the company decided some time ago that communication throughout the office was to be by e-mail. You really must learn to use your e-mail. I am going to send up one of my trainers to go through with you the whole procedure again. It really is very easy to use.

MICHAEL walks into the office. He is carrying a single rose and a purple envelope obviously containing a card. He advances towards JOANNA'S desk holding out the rose. We can hear Mr FITZSIMONS at the other end of the telephone.

Mr FITZSIMONS

I have been with this company for 35 years. I have never had to use a keyboard. I resent having to use a mouse. Why can't I keep on telling my secretary what I want other people to know? It is stupid. Just because we have a new technology, we don't have to use it. What's the matter with a short typed note, a telephone call or a hand written note by me.

He is obviously put out.

While he is speaking, JOANNA motions her secretary to take a small vase containing a single rose which is beginning to droop a bit and to put MICHAEL'S new rose into it. She covers the mouth piece and says to MICHAEL.

JOANNA
Thank you Michael, that's sweet.
(Small smile.)

She then returns to Mr Fitzsimons.

JOANNA
But Mr Fitzsimons, your secretary can't use the e-mail either. It is really not satisfactory when your office is the only in the building to which we cannot send e-mails or receive e-mails from.

We can hear Mr FITZSIMONS replying as JOANNA takes the card MICHAEL is holding out, props the telephone against her ear with her shoulder and opens the card and quickly looks at it. The card has a heart on it and it says something to the effect of, "I love you." She opens it, there is what looks a piece of verse written inside by hand. She gives MICHAEL another little smile.

Mr FITZSIMONS

But Elizabeth has been my secretary for nearly all the years I have been with the company. I totally depend on her. She knows what I want. She can write most of my correspondence for me. She is brilliant at doing what I want her to do. Why does it matter that she just can't handle anything to do with e-mails? It is just too silly.

JOANNA

(firmly, but encouragingly)

Well why don't we just try another course with the instructor to see if we can solve the problem? I'll get her to call up at some time that she can arrange with Elizabeth. I am sure it will all work out.

Mr FITZSIMONS is heard to be hanging up angrily.

JOANNA rises from her desk, leaving the card on her desk and picking up a file. She moves towards the door. MICHAEL is obviously disappointed that his card and flower is not being better received.

MICHAEL

Could we even have lunch, or a drink after work?
What about breakfast before work?

JOANNA

(as she gets to the door)

Now Michael, I have told you I really don't think my boyfriend would approve of us having a date.

JOANNA disappears out the door leaving MICHAEL still standing in the middle of the room. JOANNA'S secretary looks vaguely sympathetic but doesn't say anything.

SCENE 2

At the home of MICHAEL, LARRY, MUM and DAD. Early evening that same Wednesday. We are in the dining room end of a large dining room / lounge room / family room. The kitchen is off to one side of the dining room. There are lounge chairs, television, etc, in the other part. DAD is already sitting at the dining table. MUM is bringing food it. LARRY is watching something on the television. MICHAEL is sitting looking downcast.

MUM

Come on Larry. Come on Michael. Dinner's ready.

They get up and come to the table.

DAD

(looking at MICHAEL, as MICHAEL and LARRY sit down)
You look as if things did not go well with you today.

MICHAEL

No they didn't.

They start to eat. No further conversation for a moment.

DAD

(again looking at Michael)
What's the problem?

MICHAEL

Well, the girl I am crazy about still won't have anything to do with me.

DAD

I have tried to explain to you. The girl has to be interested in you. Asking for a date will never get to anywhere. All girls know what asking for a date means. It means I want to get into your pants, but I am prepared to buy you dinner first.

MICHAEL

But I take her flowers every couple of days.

LARRY

I want to get into your pants, and I am prepared to go to some trouble about it.

LARRY is amused.

MICHAEL

I wrote her a little poem this morning.

DAD

I want to get into your pants so badly I am even prepared to write a piece of poetry about. Give up, you are wasting your time. As they used to say in the arm, "Pull out dig, the dogs are pissing on your kit bag."

MICHAEL

(a bit crossly)

Well what can I do?

MUM

You just have to find a way to attract her attention.

LARRY

Or happen to be there at the right time, preferably when she is just breaking up with a previous boyfriend.

DAD

But this has been going on for months. It is stupid. You have got to clear the decks of it and get on with life. If you are really that crazy about her, go right to the bottom line, ask her to marry you, she knocks you back, you then know where you stand and you can get on with life.

MICHAEL

But I have never even been out with her. She will never give me an opportunity to talk to her.

DAD

Then put it in writing. You'll have made the attempt. You won't be able to criticise yourself later in that you didn't even try and then you can get on with life.

MUM

I keep saying to Larry that he ought to take Louisa out. She is a very pretty nice girl. You've both known her for years. Our families have always been friends. You both know that your father and I would really love it one of you took an interest in Louisa.

LARRY

Sorry mum. I just cannot get enthusiastic about her.

MICHAEL

I just can't get Joanna out of my mind. It is interfering with my work. It takes me twice to calculate premiums and risks as it used to take. The trouble is, I just don't have any excitement about me. The sort of work I do makes even the accountants think that I am boring and dull. I am probably the most boring man in the whole company. I may be the most boring man in the whole world.

He looks down cast.

MUM

(brightly)

No Michael, don't be silly. You are very good looking and very clever. Think of all the degrees you have and all the prizes you have won and all the awards you have. Any girl would be delighted to have you taking an interest in her. Why don't you think about Louisa?

Michael does not respond.

DAD

The trouble with the present generation, they think that getting married is a matter for them. Whether they get married or not is their business and nobody else's business. Who they marry is exclusively their concern. That's all crap. If either of you ever gets round to marrying anybody, that woman will become my (with emphasis) daughter-in-law. She will be a part of my (emphasis) life. If you and she have children, they will my (emphasis) grandchildren. Whoever you get involved with will be a part of my life.

MUM

(Softly)

Ours. Ours, dear.

DAD

Louisa's family have been our friends for years. We all know that we get on well with them. You both get on well with Louisa. I am sure that she would happily marry either of you. Her parents would be delighted about it. She would make a loving, loyal, devoted wife. She is even taken cooking lessons.

LARRY

Oh, come on dad.

MICHAEL

I just can't get Joanna out of my mind.

DAD

Then for heaven's sake, do something about it. And as for you Larry, I am fed up with hearing about this wonderful girl, Vicki, from Melbourne whom I have never met, and whom I have never seen. Why not bring her up to Sydney so we can have a look at her or your mother and I could go down to Melbourne and meet her and her parents.

LARRY

(Looks aghast.)

No dad. It is a beautiful romance between me and the most lovely, intelligent, clever woman in the world.

DAD gives a bit of a snort and shoves some food into his mouth.

.....
LARRY

Only Michael could fall for the office dragon.

MICHAEL

She is not the office dragon. She is the human resources manager.

LARRY

That's was the office dragon is.

MICHAEL

Why do they call the job the office dragon?

DAD

Because she flies around everywhere breathing fire and eating people.

SCENE 3

JOANNA'S office again. Friday morning, early. JOANNA is on the phone.

JOANNA

Well, Mr Fitzsimons, my instructor tells me that you just weren't interested in trying to master e-mails and that Elizabeth just got upset and cried when my instructor tried to go through the really very simple operation. I think the only solution is that we get you a new secretary who is happy with e-mails.

As she has been talking, MICHAEL has entered the room. This time, he has another rose and an A4 sized envelope with a big red heart drawn on it. As Mr FITZSIMONS is reply, again JOANNA motions to her secretary to take away the slightly dropping rose from Wednesday.

Mr FITZSIMONS

You can't take Elizabeth away. She has been with me all these years. I couldn't do without her. It would break her heart. Don't I count for anything in this company anymore? Why do I have to have my life ruined by your new fangle crap.
(He is upset and angry.)

JOANNA

We'll we really have to do something.

Mr FITZSIMONS can be heard hanging up angrily as JOANNA puts the phone down.

JOANNA'S SECRETARY

I have got Natalie on the phone.

As JOANNA picks up the phone to talk to NATALIE, MICHAEL puts the envelope down in front of her. JOANNA gives him a little smile as she turns to talk to NATALIE.

JOANNA

Natalie, could you come down to see me at half past three on Monday?

Natalie is heard giving a little gasp almost a sob.

NATALIE

Yes, Joanna.

JOANNA puts the phone down and again stands up picking up a file. She gives MICHAEL a little smile as she moves towards the door.

JOANNA

I did like your verse from the day before yesterday. Is this another one?

(As JOANNA is going out the door.)

MICHAEL

No, it's a proposal of marriage.

(JOANNA does not pause.)

SCENE 4

In another corridor of the office, MICHAEL is walking towards his room passing Mr FITZSIMON's office. As he passes, Mr FITZSIMONS comes out absolutely furious.

Mr FITZSIMONS

That rotten hell fire human resources bitch, I am going to have her balls.

MICHAEL

But she is a woman, doesn't have any balls.

Mr FITZSIMONS

Don't you believe it. This is a black Friday.

He moves along the corridor. NATALIE is seen being comforted. She is crying and sobbing on somebody's shoulder.

MICHAEL

Natalie, what's the matter?

NATALIE

(between sobs)

I have to see Joanna on Monday. I am going to be fired. My mum said this morning that Friday 13th was a bad omen.

MICHAEL looks at little dismayed but walks on to his office.

SCENE 5

JOANNA'S office. She at her desk. She quickly opens MICHAEL'S envelope. Has a brief look at it. Picks up a file and as she is leaving the office, says to her secretary:

JOANNA

Get out MICHAEL, the actuary's personnel file. Do me a copy of his CV and his assessment reports for the last three years.

JOANNA'S SECRETARY

Do you want his health report too?

JOANNA

(as she is almost at the door)

No. He's already given me that.

SCENE 6

JOANNA's flat that same Friday night. It is expensively furnished. It is obviously in a high rise. Through the window we have harbour glimpses and we can see other hi-rise unit blocks. It is probably at Kirribilli or Neutral Bay or Cremorne. JOANNA is sitting at a table with MICHAEL's envelope in front of her reading through pages (about 12) that she has taken out of the envelope. She has two neat heaps in front of her. One, the page that she is reading, and the other side where she is putting the page face down after she's read it. Even though she is at home she is still looking very neat and well groomed. Also in the room is her long-term boyfriend, JOE, who is watching a football match on television with great excitement and drinking a beer. As JOANNA is reading, JOE comes out with various excited exclamations.

JOE

Can you believe it? Oh my god. How could he miss that? How did that fuck wit get into the team? What's the matter with the ref? Is he blind?

JOANNA finishes reading. Neatly puts the papers together and puts them back in the envelope. She walks over to her handsome decorative desk and puts the envelope into a draw. She walks over to where JOE is standing, standing up and looking at him in a somewhat critical way.

JOANNE

Joe, do you want to marry me?

JOE

(Not taking his eyes off the game.)
Of course honey. Look at that.

JOANNA

When?

JOE

Any time. There is no hurry.

Then towards the television.

Oh, did you see that. We've got it. They've got no chance now.

JOANNA

We need to talk about this seriously.

JOE

Sure honey. This game will be over about 10 minutes if there isn't any injury time and then there will be half another before the other game I want to watch.

JOANNA leaves the sitting room / family room area while JOE continues to watch the television excitedly.

A few minutes later, JOANNA re-enters the living room area and puts a large green garbage bag obviously full near the door and leaves the room again. JOE's jacket is hanging over the back of a chair. JOE is still engrossed with the television. JOANNA walks over the jacket, gets keys out of the pocket, removes her flat key from the keys in JOE's key ring and put his key ring back. A few minutes later, we can hear a full-time whistle from the television and JOE sits back comfortably in his arm chair and takes a big swig of the beer as JOANNA comes back in with a second green garbage bag which she puts near the door.

JOANNA

Can we talk now?

JOE

Sure honey.

JOANNA

If we are ever going to get married, we have to do it soon. I am 32. My biological clock is ticking. If I am going to have children it has to be within the next year or so, or otherwise there is an increased statistical chance that I will run into problems. I think it is important part of every woman's life that she should have children.

JOE

There is always plenty of time to have children.

JOANNA

It's all right for you. You have two children from your marriage, even though you never see them. You just spend your time complaining about the child support you have to pay. You are now 43. If we have children now, straightaway, you'll be over 60 by the time the children are finished school. We don't have plenty of time.

JOE

But one of the things I have always loved about you the most is that you are your own woman with your own career and your own life. Do you really want to have your life messed up by children.

JOANNA

(slightly shocked)

You see you children as having messed up your life.

JOE

We have each other. If you want to have children, fine. But we don't have to do it tomorrow.

JOANNE

Why not tomorrow? We've been together off and on now for nearly four years? Is this relationship really going anywhere?

JOE

It's great. I am very happy the way we are.

JOANNA

(very firmly)

Joe, are you going to marry me or not?

JOE

We'll get around to it.

JOANNA

(firmly and decisively as she walks towards the door)

Joe, I want you to leave now, and please take these bags with you.

She points to the two green garbage bags.

JOE

Is this our third break up? You don't really mean it?

JOANNA

It is our final break up. I do mean it.

JOE

What's in the bags?

JOANNA

I am tidying up my life.

JOE looks in one of the bags.

JOE

It's my stuff.

JOANNA

(Opening the door.)

Yes it is, and I have taken my flat key back from your key ring.

JOE

(Accepting that momentary discretion is the better thing to do.)

OK, I'll be in touch.

As he goes out the door.

JOANNA

Don't bother.

She shuts the door behind him. She pauses. She looks momentarily only slightly crushed. She physically pulls herself together and stands up straighter with a bit of a shake. She walks firmly across to the desk. Takes out MICHAEL's envelope, pulls the pages out, looks at the front page, picks up the phone and dials a number that she is obviously reading from front the front page.

JOANNA

Could I speak to Michael please?

On half of the screen we see DAD on the phone talking to JOANNA on the other half of the phone.

DAD

Sure – who's calling?

JOANNA

Joanna.

DAD looking surprised and putting his hand over the mouth piece.

DAD

Michael, Joanna on the phone.

MICHAEL comes to the phone with a mixture of looking absolutely delighted and looking worried out of his mind.

MICHAEL

Hi.

JOANNA

Michael, could you come over to my place in the morning. I would like to talk to you.

She sounds very calm and self-possessed. It is unclear from the tone of her voice whether she wants to fire him, tell him he is an idiot, or what she wants to do.

MICHAEL

What time?

JOANNA

Somewhere around 9.00 am?

MICHAEL

Sure.

JOANNA

Do you know my address?

MICHAEL

Yes I do. I have looked it up. I have even driven past it on a couple of occasions.

JOANNA

Why? Do you know anybody in this area?

MICHAEL

No. I just thought I might get a glimpse of you.

JOANNA

(still quite calmly)

OK, 9 o'clock tomorrow. See you then.

JOANNA hangs up. The half screen of her disappears, and we are left just with MICHAEL standing by the phone looking quite stunned.

MUM and LARRY come nearby and DAD is still standing nearby.

DAD

What brought that on?

MICHAEL

Well, I took your suggestion. I gave her a written proposal of marriage. I also included a statement of my financial position so she could see that I was financially all right and I gave her a copy of my latest health report that the company does. She probably had that anyway.

LARRY

You would think you were applying for a job.

MUM

Well, there you have her attention.

DAD

Thanks heavens. We will stop hearing about your love for the office dragon.

MICHAEL

Why? What do you think she is going to say?

DAD

She is obviously going to tell you have no hope. You should forget about her and get on with your life, which is what I have been telling you.

LARRY

(laughing)

Or she might be going to tell you, you have to apply for a job in some other company cause you are going to be fired. Who could ever fall for the office dragon?

SCENE 7

9.00 am the following morning, Saturday. It is a bright sunny day. MICHAEL is walking up to the block of units where JOANNA's flat is. He is looking very nervous. He has tried to dress in elegant causal but has not quite got it right. He rings her bell outside.

MICHAEL

It's Michael.

The door clicks open.

SCENE 8

JOANNA's flat. She lets him in. She is, as always, well groomed in elegant casual clothing which she has got entirely right. She looks, as always, elegant and well organised.

JOANNA

Good morning, thank you for coming. Have a seat.

They cross to the table where she had been reading MICHAEL's proposal the night before and she has the envelope with the papers out in a neat heap alongside it. She sits down. He sits down.

(PAUSE)

JOANNA

You really want to marry me?

MICHAEL

Yes, I do. I keep telling you I love you. You are the most wonderful, clever, intelligent, beautiful, gorgeous I have ever seen in my whole life. I can't get you out of my mind. I think about you all the time. I think I am going to die if I even stopped seeing you. It is the only thing I look forward to about going to work that I may be able to see you some time during the day.

JOANNA

(interrupting)

Yes. I believe that you really do love me. (PAUSE)
What do you think about children?

MICHAEL

I want to have children, of course. I would like to start soon. I am 35.

JOANNA

How many children do you favour?

MICHAEL

Well, I think overall three is best, but two is OK and four would be all right.

JOANNA

Are you religious?

MICHAEL

(Looking a little uncertain.)

Well, not really. I went to an Anglican school, but since then I have only been to church to weddings and funerals, and occasionally mum drags me along to some special event.

JOANNA

We where would you want to live?

MICHAEL

I think that's really always a matter for the woman. She will always want to be somewhere near her family.

JOANNA

My family lives at Lane Cove, and your family lives at Gordon. Artarmon or Chatswood would be in between.

MICHAEL

(still bewildered, but being to sound hopeful)
That sounds great.

JOANNA

(obviously thinking)

When would you want to marry me?

MICHAEL

(beginning to sound absolutely delighted)
How about this afternoon?

JOANNA

(gives him a little smile)

No, we would have too many things to do first.

She pulls out a piece of paper from the bottom of the pile of MICHAEL's in front of her and begins to read through the list.

JOANNA

We have to get an engagement ring and order wedding rings. We have to see the minister. I know the church for the wedding. We have to organise a wedding reception. I have to meet your parents. You have to meet my parents. Probably our respective parents have to meet each other. We have to arrange wedding stationery. We work out a guest list. The church will hold 200, but we don't want that many. I've given thought to my list. It will come to about 30. How do you think you would need at the reception?

MICHAEL

I don't think I have 30 family and close friends, but somewhere about that should be fine.

JOANNA

And then we have to go house hunting. We also have to decide whether we are going on a honeymoon and put in our leave applications and make hotel and travel reservations. My father and brother went to the same school you went to, so schooling for the children shouldn't present any problem, at least as to the boys. Can you cook?

MICHAEL

(somewhat surprised)

Well, I have done some cooking, and any time mum's out, I do the cooking at home.

JOANNA

Good, I feel strongly that there should be a sharing of domestic activities.

MICHAEL

Fine. Sure. I can even use the washing machine, and I usually iron my own ties.

JOANNA

I think the first step, we should go and pick up the engagement ring. I selected one when I thought I was going to marry that dope, Joe, and I have checked this morning that they are open and that they still have the ring. Have you got your car here?

MICHAEL

No. I was so nervous, I caught a train and then walked.

JOANNA

Fine, I prefer to drive anyway.

She puts the list of items to be done into her handbag, puts MICHAEL's pages back into his envelope and puts them back into her desk drawer and walks towards the door.

JOANNA

On the way, I can ring the church office and see if we can see the minister today.

MICHAEL follows looking so happy he can't believe, but also slightly bewildered.

MICHAEL

This means we are engaged?

JOANNA
(firmly)

Yes.

SCENE 9

The car park area in JOANNA's block of units. A few minutes later, it is the small conservative well maintained car. As she gets in JOANNA takes her mobile phone out of her bag and puts it into the car phone cradle in the central console. She takes out her piece of paper with the list of jobs on it and enters a number into the telephone.

JOANNA

I will ring the church office as we go.

She starts the car, and as they are driving out, she pushes the 'send' button. MICHAEL is sitting in the passenger seat still looking as if he can't believe his good luck. The phone answers.

THE VOICE

St John's Church office.

JOANNA

Could I see the Reverend Thompson some time today? It is about getting married.

THE VOICE

Would you be coming with the bridegroom?

JOANNA

Yes, we can both be there at any time. (PAUSE)

THE VOICE

Would 12 o'clock be too soon?

JOANNA

No. There will be no problem at all. We will see you at 12 noon. Thank you.

She pushes the 'end' button on the mobile phone.

SCENE 10

JOANNA's car with JOANNA still driving, pulling up outside the church. As they get out of the car, we can see that JOANNA is wearing an engagement ring which she looks at from time to time, and MICHAEL is now looking positively stupidly happy. They walk towards the church office, which is alongside the church. As they walk ...

JOANNA

That was sweet of your mother and father to invite us to lunch today. We should have no trouble getting there by one o'clock. They sounded very pleased.

MICHAEL

They have been putting pressure on me to do something about my life for some time, and I've told them often how much I love you.

They walk into the office front door.

SCENE 11

An hour later. That is about one o'clock. They are pulling up in JOANNA's car. She is still driving. They pull up outside MICHAEL's house. A nice domestic street in Gordon. As they get out and head towards the front gate ...

JOANNA

Four weeks gives us plenty of time, but I want to do with your parents this afternoon if we can is to agree upon the list of the guests for the reception, and arrange the reception venue. Oh, and if we have got time, I want to get to Kinko's to get the wedding stationery ordered. On Saturdays I think they are open to 5.30.

MICHAEL follows along still looking dazed and tremendously happy and unable to believe his luck.

JOANNA

You did tell your parents not to go to any trouble because we have got to get a lot done this afternoon.

MICHAEL

Yes. I told them just our usual Saturday lunch – cold meat, salads and fresh bread.

He opens the front door with his key. As he opens the front door he calls out.

MICHAEL

Mum?

Mum bustles up to the front door.

MICHAEL

Mum, this is my fiancée, Joanna.

He takes Joanna by the left hand and holds it forward so that the engagement ring can be obviously seen.

Mum moves excitedly forward unsure of whether to look at the girl or the ring first. She does both in a confused sort of way. Mum obviously wants to take Joanna in her arms or kiss her, but is somewhat put off by Joanna's very self-possessed manner.

MUM

I am so happy to see you. Michael has told us so much about you.

JOANNA
(pleasantly)

I am very happy to be here, and thank you so much for inviting us to lunch at such short notice. You have a lovely house.

MUM

Thanks so much. I am sure Michael has told you a lot about us.

JOANNA

Absolutely nothing.

??????????????

Well I am sure we will rectify that.

Dad comes up to where they are, having now moved away from the front door into the living room area. In the background on the table we can see salad bowls, a plate with some ham or corned beef, a bread board with a loaf of bread and a knife set for a simple lunch. Dad is looking astonished.

DAD

I am happy to see you! Michael was right. You really are great looking. Vera and I always wanted to have a daughter to go with our sons, but it never happened. If we had had a daughter, we would have wanted her to look as marvellous as you.

JOANNA is slightly embarrassed but looks pleased at her immediate warm welcome.

MUM

Such a beautiful girl. I can't understand why they called you the office dragon.

MICHAEL
(shocked)

Mum!

JOANNA is momentarily taken aback, then laughs in a relaxed way.

JOANNA

I didn't know they called me that. Obviously Michael has told you a lot about me.

DAD

That's just about all he talks about.

MICHAEL

Well, it generally doesn't go down well at the dinner table to talk about my job. Who wants to hear about risk calculations?

DAD

Before you first saw this beautiful woman, you used to drive us all nuts talking about your job. I was glad when that disappeared from the topic list. Come and sit down and have some lunch.

As they move towards the table ...

JOANNA

We've arranged the date for our wedding at St John's. Four weeks today at 3.30 pm. I'll have my sister as my bridesmaid and Michael says he will ask his brother to be his best man.

DAD

Well, that will be the nearest we have got Larry to a marriage ceremony so far.

MICHAEL

Where is Larry?

MUM

Oh, you know dear. Its Saturday. He is out hitting some sort of ball. Golf, squash, tennis, cricket, I can only tell if see which bag he is carrying as he leaves, and I didn't see him this morning.

They are sitting down.

JOANNA

I hope you won't think we are rude, but we want to do a lot this afternoon. Particularly, I would like to get the guest list for the wedding and reception settled. I actually worked out a list of my family and long-term friends that I would like to invite to my wedding some time ago, and I don't think there is any need to revise it. It works out about 30. Michael thinks his list would probably be about the same.

Dad is slicing the bread as Joanna has been talking. Joanna helps herself to some salad.

MUM

Oh, it would be much more than that. Why, I have got 110 on my Christmas card list.

DAD

What the hell are you talking about? We are not going to invite everybody on the Christmas card list. You only invite immediate family and long-term friends of Michael's.

SCENE 12

Lunch is over. MUM is sitting at the dining room table with her address book and is making a list. DAD is also sitting at the table looking slightly concerned. MICHAEL is sitting in a lounge chair in the lounge part of the room with an open telephone book. JOANNA is standing some distance away at a window, still looking elegant and poised with her mobile phone. The scene cuts back and forth between the four people with close ups of one or two each time.

MICHAEL

(on the phone)

Yes, Saturday, 1 September. (pause) You don't have any Saturdays in the next year?

Cut to JOANNA at the window.

JOANNA

Saturday, 1 September. (pause) What do you mean which year?

Cut to MUM and DAD at the table.

MUM

We'll have to invite my cousin, Moira and her husband.

DAD

What are you talking about? We haven't seen her in years. She never remembers your birthday. She didn't even send us a Christmas card last year.

MUM

But family expect to be invited to things like this.

DAD

Well you can invite her to my funeral but not to this wedding.

Cut back to JOANNA and MICHAEL.

MICHAEL

I've had no luck. Every wedding reception place within five miles of the church hasn't got a vacancy for years. We could hold it here and put a marquee in the back yard.

JOANNA

(calmly)

No. I have the answer. We will use the conference room on the top floor of the office, and I will organise the office caterers who do all the staff lunches.

MUM

(calling across the room)

Joanna, Syd doesn't want to invite my cousin, Moira!

JOANNA

(back to MUM)

Put them all in a list. Give them points depending upon how close a relation they are, and how often you see them, or what close friends they are. Put them in order. Draw a line across the thirtieth – then you know who you are inviting and who you can invite later if others drop out.

JOANNA has been dialling on her mobile.

JOANNA

Oh Tony! I am so glad to catch you. I want you to do the wedding reception early in the evening on Saturday, 1 September. (PAUSE) I know you the restaurant and that you are always booked up on Saturday evenings, but this is special for me. (PAUSE) [Firmly] Tony, may I remind you what the company paid to you last year for catering services. May I remind you also that your contract comes up for renewal in October. (PAUSE) [Trying to sound charming] Tony, that is so kind. I am so glad that you can assist. I am sure I will be able to find some staff to help with the service and the wines. (PAUSE) We'll that's very kind of you to arrange the wines as well. We would like the champagne to be rather nicer than the one you provided for the last office Christmas Party. (PAUSE) Tony, that's absolutely great – we'll be in touch.

Cut back to MUM and DAD who are talking to each other while JOANNA is still on the phone.

DAD

(quietly to MUM)

That woman is going to be running this family. Are you sure you will be able to cope with it?

SCENE 13

JOANNA and MICHAEL are leaving about an hour later that same afternoon. They are at the front door. MUM and DAD are near the door. MUM gives MICHAEL a kiss.

MUM

Don't worry dear. I am Joanna's family will love you as much as we do.

JOANNA

(as they walk out the door)

They are not going to get a choice.

SCENE 14

JOANNA's apartment again. Early evening. It is dark as they come in and she switches on the lights. She has opened the door and MICHAEL has followed her.

JOANNA

Well that went very well. You said all the right things. My family never liked Joe so they are very happy about you. We've got everything done. It's been a very fruitful day. Engagement ring, church, wedding invitations, meeting your parents, meeting my parents, I've got my guest list, your parents are working on their's. I like to get things done.

MICHAEL

(looking happy but a little overwhelmed)
It has been the best day of my life so far. All this and we have never even kissed.

JOANNA

(turning efficiently)

Easily remedied.

She walks up to him, puts her arms around him in a mechanical way and kisses him. MICHAEL responds with gentle and affectionate movements embracing her.

JOANNA

(obviously trying to check her memory)
What else do we have to do?

MICHAEL

I don't know what we have to do, but I know what I would like to do. I would like to take you to bed.

JOANNA

(thoughtfully)

That is probably a good idea.

She takes him by the hand and walks towards the bedroom.

JOANNA

Now you are not to worry about performance. All men are so worried about their performance. You will probably go off far to quickly the first time, but you will improve. Just relax and don't worry. Now I went off the pill a couple of weeks ago. I have got some rubbers if you want to. Otherwise, I might get pregnant.

Just as they disappear into the bedroom.

MICHAEL

To conceive our first child with our first sex would be more than I could hope for.

SCENE 15

The MacDougal home. About 9 o'clock the next morning. MUM and DAD are in the kitchen area. LARRY enters with his golf clubs, obviously about to go out.

MUM

I am terribly worried. Michael didn't come home last night. His car is still in the garage. Do you think he has had an accident? Perhaps he has been mugged? I should ring the hospitals.

LARRY

Don't be crazy, mum. He's just got engaged. He'll be at her place for sure.

MUM

But I don't have her phone number. What could they be doing?

LARRY looks despairingly at the ceiling – forms a circle with the thumb and first finger of his left hand pokes his index finger of his right hand through it back and forth indicating intercourse.

MUM

Oh, do you think so?

DAD

Now look, Larry. Michael has followed my advice and got his life in order. I think Joanna is probably going to drive all us mad, but she is what he wants. You ought to do the same. You have been talking for years about this girl in Victoria you love called Vicky. She's been the reason why you don't look at anybody else. You've got the next week off. You should go to Melbourne and either come back with her or get her out of your system so that you can get on with your life.

LARRY

Oh, dad.

DAD

Enough is enough. I am fed up with hearing about Vicky as the reason for you not taking an interest in anybody else. It is too silly. We have got to clarify things. I'll pay for the air ticket. You can pay for the hotel. I'll ring and organise your ticket tomorrow.

LARRY

But I've got two games of golf lined up next week, and I am having some lessons from the tennis pro and I have cricket practice on Thursday night.

DAD

Practice? After all these years you are stilling practicing? You are a lunatic. You get down to Melbourne tomorrow.

MUM

It would be just so lovely if we could have a double wedding in the family at the one time. And if Vicky rejects you and your heart is broken, then I am sure Lucinda will be able to help you recover. She is such a sweet, lovely, beautiful girl.

LARRY rolls his eyes to the ceiling and escapes through the door with his golf clubs.

SCENE 16

The same house the next morning. DAD and MUM are there standing near the door and LARRY has his golf clubs with him.

DAD

Here is your electronic ticket. All you have got to do is turn up at the counter and identify yourself. A driver's licence will do. What the hell are you taking your golf clubs with you for?

LARRY

Well, I always like a round on some of the good Melbourne courses.

DAD

You are going down there to propose to this girl and talk her into marrying you, and if that doesn't work, giving her up.

LARRY

Well I can't be asking her to marry me every morning at dawn. I'll have time for several rounds of golf.

DAD

If you come back without Vicky or a decision, I'm going to take those damn golf clubs and give them to the poor.

LARRY

The poor don't play golf. They can't afford it.

MUM

Dear, I do hope you will succeed with the girl you have loved for so long. But if it doesn't go well, and you come back empty handed, think of Lucinda. You would make us and her family so happy.

There is a beep from the taxi. LARRY goes out with his golf clubs and bag.

SCENE 17

LARRY arriving at Sydney Airport. LARRY at registration desk of Melbourne hotel.

GIRL behind registration counter
Welcome back Mr MacDougal. I am so pleased to see you have brought your golf clubs again.

LARRY
Can you ring Royal Melbourne and see if I get a round this afternoon?

GIRL
Certainly Mr MacDougal. I'll ring you as soon as you're up in your room. And would you like a reservation at our restaurant tonight?

LARRY
Yes. Just one please.

SCENE 18

That afternoon LARRY playing golf. Obviously late afternoon, lengthy shadow, sun setting.

SCENE 19

The following morning, LARRY on a tennis court practicing his backhand with a tennis pro.

SCENE 20

JOANNA's change in the office on Monday morning.

SCENE 21

The following morning. LARRY on a tennis court practicing his backhand with a tennis pro.

SCENE 22

Night. LARRY at a box office of Melbourne theatre.

LARRY

One please.

Next morning. LARRY playing golf on a different course.

SCENE 23

LARRY in a Melbourne restaurant sitting a table for one, drinking a glass of wine with his food being served.

SCENE 24

LARRY getting on to the airport bus. He props his golf clubs and bag in a corner reserved for luggage and sits down alongside VICKY. As he sits down he looks at VICKY and is impressed.

LARRY

Hi. Mind if I sit here. Where are you off to?

VICKY

I am going to Sydney.

LARRY

Do you live there?

VICKY

No, I live in Melbourne.

LARRY

I live in Sydney. What is taking you to the vast metropolis?

VICKY

(looking very intense and serious)

I've just murdered my boyfriend and I'm hiding from the police.

LARRY

You don't look like a murderer. I find that a bit hard to follow.

VICKY

Well, actually, there is this man that has been stalking me, following me home from work, standing outside my window staring in night after night. I have just got to get away from him.

LARRY

I might've believed that if it had been the first story, but as a second story it doesn't ring very true.

VICKY

I just can't help it. I am always making up things. Why, I remember when I was a little girl ...

SCENE 25

This is one of the crazy stories of VICKY. Director's decision. Could be softened edges or could be black and white or other means of indicating that it is not a continuation of the story.

The front door of a country house. It is just on dusk. A man is standing at the door knocking. VICKY as a young opens the door ...

THE MAN

Good evening. I'm Charles Fortescue. Is Mrs Forsyth home?

VICKY (as a young girl)

My aunt is upstairs at the moment. But she is expecting you. Do come in.

They walk into a living room where there is a fire in the grate, but French windows are open revealing a lawn where it is growing dark.

THE MAN

I've come down here to have a complete rest. I have some very serious ill health. My sister used to know your aunt well, and has arranged for me to visit. I do not know anybody else in this area.

VICKY (as a young girl)

Let me explain the open window. A year ago tonight, my uncle, my aunt's husband, and their son, went out hunting rabbits with a dog. As they went, I remember they were singing "Hi ho, hi ho, its off to work we go." There was a terrible accident. They never came back. My aunt has never recovered. She still thinks that one evening like this they will just walk through the door. She is still in a state of denial.

THE MAN

(looking sympathetic)

Oh, how terrible. I can entirely understand.

The aunt enters the room.

THE AUNT

Oh, good evening. You must be Mr Fortescue. I am so happy to see you.

THE MAN

I don't know anybody else in this area, and although that's a good method of getting a total rest, it is nice to have somebody to talk to. My sister always speaks so highly of you.

THE AUNT

I am sorry to have the French windows open on such a cold evening, but I am expecting my son and my husband back any minute. They have been out shooting rabbits this afternoon.

THE MAN and VICKY (as a young girl) exchange meaningful glances.

Then two male voices are heard singing "Hi ho, hi ho, its off to work we go.", and a dog is heard yapping. Through the gloom on the lawn, an older man and a younger man with a dog and guns and few rabbits are seen advancing to the window.

VICKY (as a young girl) looks shocked and horrified. THE MAN looks at the approaching figures and looks at VICKY and runs from the room to the front door, runs out the front door slamming it behind him and is heard running down the path. As soon as he is out of the room, VICKY (as a young girl) relaxes. The uncle and cousin come through the door. The dog is pushed out. The windows are closed. The gun is rested in a corner.

THE UNCLE

(calmly)

Who was that?

THE AUNT

The brother of an old friend of mine. He's done here having a complete rest after some health problem. I don't know what sort of health problem it was. Perhaps psychiatric?

VICKY (as a young girl)

speaking to the Aunt

He told me while we were waiting for you to come downstairs that he was terrified of dogs. He was once in India where he was trapped overnight by a group of wild dogs and he's been unable to be near one without becoming terrified ever since.

SCENE 26

The bus to the airport.

LARRY

That didn't happen to you at all. That's a short story I've read by Saki called 'The Open Window'. I remember it ends, "romance at short notice was her specialty."

(Note to producer, **Saki, H H Monroe** died in 1916.)

Completely unperturbed that she had been found out.

VICKY

Oh, isn't that wonderful. You are the first person I have ever met who has read that story.

LARRY

Since you are great on fantasy. You could be the solution to all my problems.

VICKY

I have found few solutions to my own problems, but I am prepared to tackle yours.

LARRY

My family has pressing me to marry a girl who lives nearby who is the daughter of some great friends of theirs. She is a nice girl, but I find the idea of marrying her about as welcome as a cold shower in the middle of winter, so a few years ago, I invented an imaginary girlfriend called Vicky who lived in Melbourne. She has been excuse for not having anything to do with Lucinda. They insisted I come down to Melbourne to propose to her, and either bring her back as a wife of fiancée or to forget about her and as they put it "get on with my life", by which they mean, marry Lucinda. So, my idea is that you could come back with me and pretend to be Vicky and pretend that we had married in Melbourne then we could have a dramatic breakup and I could be broken hearted and I would have an excuse for not taking any interest in anybody else for years. You could have an entertaining, all expenses paid holiday in Sydney, doing what you like to do, my problems would be solved, and you could then go back to Melbourne, unless they are going to arrest you for murder or the stalker is chasing you, in which case you could go to Brisbane.

VICKY

What would our big row be about?

LARRY

I don't know. We'll work something out. You could find out that I had another woman. That wouldn't work, your family seem to know perfectly well that you don't. Well, you could find out I was impotent or something awful like that.

VICKY

That wouldn't work either. I would have to be miserable from the very beginning. I'd have to be talking about sending you to specialists for treatment. It would all be too embarrassing. Besides, who would believe we hadn't had sex before we were married? It just isn't done these days.

LARRY

We'll think of something.

VICKY

No. I'll think of something. I am very good at thinking up believable stories.

The bus arrives at the airport and they get off.

SCENE 27

VICKY and LARRY on the plane.

LARRY

In the cricket season, I play in my team every Saturday, and we have practices on Thursday night and I play golf on Sunday. I play tennis on Tuesday night and squash on Wednesday night. In summer I try to fit in an early round of golf on Friday. Monday is usually free, but I can always catch a game on television. We subscribe to Foxtel.

VICKY

Why were your parents so keen for you to marry?

LARRY

They think everybody should have a spouse. The idea that I could be perfectly happy without one has not occurred to them. They are all so frantically keen to have grandchildren. I think it is dynastic. The MacDougals must live forever.

.....
VICKY

We have got to be careful that we are both telling the same story. Where did we get married?

LARRY

We were so overwhelmed with passion and desire that we got married at the registry office as quickly as we could.

VICKY

Can't we have a church wedding with a beautiful white gown?

LARRY

How would we have had time to get married in a church, hire a wedding gown and all that? I have only been in Melbourne for a week.

VICKY

I could have had all the wedding arrangements in place already because I was going to marry somebody else and he dumped me and you turned up, so we put you into all the existing arrangements.

LARRY

No, we can't do that. My brother has just done that. He proposed to this girl who then threw her long-term boyfriend out and accepted him. They're getting married in about three weeks.

VICKY

Oh well. I suppose we'll have to go with the registry office. What sort of engagement ring did you buy me?

LARRY

Well I haven't bought one.

He looks at her right hand where she wearing an attractive ring.

LARRY

Why don't we use that as your engagement ring.

VICKY

(looking shocked and tearful)

But that ring was given to me by dear Charles who died in the service of his country in East Timor. It nearly broke my heart. I wear this ring in perpetual memory of him.

LARRY

Come off it, I don't believe it. Why can't we use that ring?

VICKY

All right, you are a cheap skate.

She transfers the ring from the right hand to the left hand.

VICKY

We still have to get wedding rings. If I've got to wear one, you'll have to wear one too.

LARRY

But it will interfere with my golf swing and my squash racquet.

VICKY

Well you can take it off but don't lose it. It is very bad karma to lose rings.

SCENE 28

This scene goes between dialogue on the plane and dialogue at the airport in Sydney.

VICKY's thought – VICKY is walking down the aisle in a beautiful white wedding gown with her father along side her. LARRY is standing at the altar dressed in a mourning suit looking nervous and an organ is playing Handl's Wedding March.

SCENE 29

At Sydney airport at a hotel booking hotline.

LARRY

(on the phone)

The honeymoon suite will be fine. We will be there in about three-quarters of an hour.

LARRY puts the phone down.

LARRY

(to VICKY)

I've got us a nice suite at a reasonable hotel in Manly.

VICKY

You said we'd be there in 45 minutes, but we have got to buy the rings on the way.

LARRY

(not very enthusiastically)

Oh, OK.

SCENE 30

Minutes later, LARRY and VICKY are at the carousel where the luggage from the flight is coming off. VICKY indicates her back to LARRY. LARRY moves forward to get it. As he has it, someone else grabs a bag nearby and bumps him. A broken wheel on VICKY's bag scratches the inside of LARRY' left arm. As LARRY pulls the bag off anyway ...

LARRY

Damn. That sharp bit of the broken axel scratched me. Never mind, its not serious.

They move off.

SCENE 31

In the honeymoon suite at the Manly Hotel later that same day, it is still daylight. The ocean can be seen through the window. VICKY has a roll of thick sticking plaster.

VICKY

Here, let me put some sticking plaster on that scratch.

LARRY

It really doesn't need anything, it is just a scratch.

VICKY

No, you cannot be too careful. It could get infected. Why, I remember on one occasion ...

LARRY

(interrupting)

Ok, Ok, I'll have sticking plaster.

He holds out his left arm and VICKY puts the sticking plaster the full length of the left forearm inside and cuts the sticking plaster at the wrist.

VICKY

Its broader than we need, but that's all the reception desk had.

LARRY

I'll ring MUM and DAD and tell them the good news.

LARRY dials on the hotel telephone.

LARRY

Mum, I have great news. I did what Michael did. I just asked Vicky to marry me and she did. We had a quiet little wedding in Melbourne with just her immediate family there. (PAUSE) Sure, well come tomorrow to the BBQ. (PAUSE) Yes, I know its wonderful. I am very happy. (PAUSE) You can meet Vicky then. (PAUSE) Ok, see you tomorrow.

LARRY puts the phone down.

VICKY

What is the lunch tomorrow and what is this about Michael? Who is Michael?

LARRY

Michael is my younger brother. He's been in love with Joanna for yonks. She wouldn't even go out with him. Out of the blue of he asked her marry him and she accepted. They're having a lunch tomorrow at mum and dad's place for Joanna to meet other members of the family and friends. We'll have to be there. I am sorry to throw you in at the deep end.

VICKY

Well, I'm going to have the bedroom. So you'll have to sleep out here.

LARRY

Fine. The hotel has a tennis court on the roof and a swimming pool, so I'll just go and have some exercise. I know a nice little place for dinner nearby, and we can have an early night.

VICKY

Yes, I'm exhausted. It's not every day that I get married to a man I've never met before. Meeting the family sounds like an ordeal.

SCENE 32

The honeymoon suite at the Manly Hotel the next morning. Sun is streaming into the room indicating that it is still fairly early morning. LARRY has been sleeping on the couch and is just getting up from the couch as the telephone rings. LARRY picks up the phone.

LARRY

Hi mum. (PAUSE) Well, we've just got up. Where are you? (DISMAYED) Here? What the hell are you doing here? (PAUSE) Well look, we've just got up. Don't come up for at least 10 minutes. Ok.

He puts the phone down. He races to the bedroom door and knocks on it.

LARRY

Vicky, wake up. My mother is here. She couldn't wait till lunch time. she just had to meet you. She'll be up here in about 10 minutes.

LARRY dashes back to the bed on which he is sleeping and removes the blanket that he had been using and quickly puts on the pants and t-shirt he had been wearing the day before which are lying nearby. He puts the bag out of sight. He runs into the bathroom which is entered off the sitting room.

Minutes later, the doorbell of the honeymoon suite rings and LARRY goes to the door. VICKY still has not come out. He opens the door to MUM.

LARRY

Mum. Wonderful to see you. But couldn't this have waited until lunch?

MUM entering the room and as LARRY shuts the door behind her.

MUM

I just couldn't wait. Both of my boys getting married to girls I had never met or seen. I just couldn't bear the thought of you arriving at the luncheon and me not recognising her or knowing her. How could I be introduced to my new daughter-in-law in front of everybody else? I don't even know what she looks like.

LARRY goes across to the bedroom door and knocks ...

LARRY

Vicky darling, mum's here. She'd love to meet you.

VICKY
(through the door)
Ok, I'll be out in a moment.

LARRY
Whose coming to the lunch?

MUM
Oh, everybody. Most of them haven't even heard your news yet. Why didn't you tell us so that we could come down to the wedding?

LARRY
Oh, we just wanted to do it quickly and also so that her parents could be at the wedding.

The door to the bedroom opens and VICKY enters. She is wearing one of LARRY's shirts and apparently nothing else. Her legs and thighs are bare. She is holding her thighs together carefully as she walks. MUM looks surprised and concerned about her attire. VICKY holds out her hand, using her left hand to keep the shirt wrapped around her.

VICKY
I am so pleased to meet you. I am afraid that everything has happened so quickly that I don't even know your name.

MUM
(assuming she means only first name)
Vera. You can call me Vera or mum, whichever you prefer.

VICKY
Oh that's so sweet. Please excuse my attire. I had such a pretty nightie to wear, but LARRY ripped it getting it off me.

LARRY is looking a mixture of consternation, disbelief and embarrassment and gasps slightly. MUM tries to look shocked but can't quite manage it, and she appears to be amused and/or delighted. She turns to LARRY and gives him a little slap on his right arm.

MUM
Oh you naughty boy.

VICKY sits down on one of the chairs.

VICKY

Pardon me having to hold my legs together and sit like this, but, ... there's just so much.

LARRY's mixture of embarrassment, disbelief and amazement increases, now associated with agitation.

VICKY

And Vera dear, we must have a talk. You might have had the same problem with Larry's father. Its just ... Its just that its so hard its like a lead pipe. I'm afraid I may be injured ... and it's so big. Women have breast reduction operations if their breasts are too large. Why can't men have reduction operation too? ... I really don't know whether I will be able to get used to it.

MUM looking embarrassed, but also apparently amused and delighted.

MUM

Well I can see I'd better leave you little love birds alone for the moment and we'll see you at lunch as soon as you can get there.

MUM goes towards the door and LARRY races to open it for her.

MUM

(to LARRY as she leaves)

Oh you naughty boy.

MUM leaves. LARRY then turns to VICKY.

LARRY

What the hell was all that about?

VICKY

I just wanted to be as convincing as possible that we were a newly married couple on our honeymoon.

LARRY

Well I wish to god you'd been just a little less convincing. Knowing mum, everyone will have heard every detail before we get to the lunch.

VICKY

I thought you would like a reputation for an ample penile development. Remember what Mae West said: "A hard man is good to find."

LARRY

But I have to continue living here. When we have our break up, you can go back to Melbourne.

VICKY

Well I don't think you should complain, I think I have given a very convincing performance.

VICKY rises and haughtily goes back into the bedroom and shuts the door.

SCENE 33

At the luncheon at MUM and DAD's house. It is about midday. We are in the backyard. There is a BBQ to one side and a table with salads, bread, etc. There are various people in the yard. At a table at one side there is MUM, LUCINDA, JOANNA and two other middle aged ladies. We come upon them in the middle of a conversation.

MUM

... and she said it was so big and so hard, like a lead pipe, that she thought she might be injured and she wondered whether he could have a reduction operation?

All of the ladies laugh heartily except LUCINDA. She looks shocked.

JOANNA

We'll have to call him Lead Pipe Larry.

More laughter.

One of the other ladies

Well, that's better than Garden Hose Jerry over there.

She indicates a male guest chatting to DAD at the other side the backyard drinking a beer with a large beer gut.

The other lady

He's only firm when it's actually squirting.

MUM

But here they are ... don't mention the lead pipe.

LARRY and VICKY have entered the backyard from the house. LARRY is wearing a t-shirt which still shows the sticking plaster on the inside of his left forearm. VICKY is very attractively casually dressed. She looks very pretty. MUM races up to them. She throws her arms around VICKY.

MUM

Welcome to your new family home. It's so wonderful to have a new daughter. I always wanted to have a daughter. Now I've got one and I about to get a second one. Just come over here and meet some of the others. Larry. Stop. Your father wants to speak to you.

LARRY moves over towards where his father and the plump neighbour is, and they are seen greeting each warmly. MUM takes

VICKY to the table of ladies. We come upon them as she has almost finished the introductions.

MUM

This is Lucinda. A near neighbour who has been a friend of the family since she was a little girl. And this is my daughter-in-law to be, Joanna.

All of the ladies are looking at VICKY with great interest. LUCINDA is looking restrained daggers. VICKY sits between MUM and JOANNA.

JOANNA

Your marriage has been on even shorter notice than mine. How did it come about?

VICKY

Well, he has been pursuing me for years. He rings me up from time to time, and every time he is in Melbourne he has been descending on me telling me how much he loved me and how he lived only for the times he saw me. I thought that if that was true, he ought to have come to Melbourne much more often and when he came, he shouldn't have been playing games all the time.

She turns to MUM.

VICKY

How do you control all the games he plays? It's exhausting.

MUM

I gave up years ago.

VICKY

(warming to her subject)

He told me that he was desperate to marry me because if he didn't his parents were going to force him to marry the girl of their choice.

LUCINDA looks mortified.

VICKY

I told him that parents were usually right and he should follow their advice and marry the girl they suggested and that he would probably live happily ever after.

LUCINDA looks vague mollified.

VICKY

But then he forced me into marriage.

All the ladies look intensely interested.

VICKY

He came to my apartment the afternoon he got to Melbourne.

SCENE 34

(Note to Director – again, fuzzy edges or whatever is decided upon for VICKY's fantasies.)

An elegant suburban apartment in Melbourne. Elegantly furnished. VICKY is wearing elegant casual gear and looking very pretty as she opens the door to LARRY.

VICKY

Why Larry. I haven't seen you in months. I thought you had given me up. For somebody who is supposed to be madly in love with me, you have not been very attentive.

LARRY enters looking very serious.

LARRY

I've come to ask you to marry me again, but this time I'm not going to take no for an answer.

VICKY

(brightly)

But 'No' is the only answer I have got. I've given it to you a number of times. If you don't like it I'm sorry. I just can't think of anything else to say. You and your family are very close and you live in Sydney. My family and I are very close and we live in Melbourne. A marriage over the telephone is not likely to work. Besides, I have other possibilities that I am at least investigating.

LARRY

I just cannot live without you, so if you are not going to marry me, I'm going to kill myself here and now.

VICKY

Can I watch?

LARRY throws off his coat and produces from his belt an ugly sharp looking knife. VICKY recoils and looks terrified.

VICKY

What are you going to do with that? Put it down.

LARRY

I'm going to commit suicide by the death of a thousand cuts. I'm going to cut myself until you agree to me marry me and if don't agree to marry me, I will just keep cutting myself until I die of blood loss.

VICKY

(voice over)

I had to do something so I thought the best bet was to delay him until his crazy threat passed.

LARRY removes his shirt and throws it one side with his jacket.

VICKY

I saw a Japanese movie once in which the main character kills himself by cutting his penis off. Are you going to do that?

LARRY

Only at the end. When I have abandoned all hope and know I'm dying, I'll cut my penis off and that will speed up the process.

LARRY poises the knife over his left forearm.

VICKY

Will the blood spurt out?

LARRY

(disconcerted)

I expect so.

VICKY

Well I wouldn't want it to get onto my pictures. Could you move away from the wall?

Camera focuses on a number of Australian landscapes on the wall, then they immediately change to a group of religious pictures on the wall, then they immediately change to a group of modern abstract art.

LARRY moves a distance from the wall and again poises the knife over his left forearm.

VICKY

Hold on. I don't want blood on the carpet. Come out to the sunroom where there are tiles on the floor that we will be able to wash more easily.

LARRY, looking irritated, moves out of the adjacent sunroom and stands in the middle and again poises the knife over his left forearm.

VICKY

Will you be cutting your legs as well?

LARRY

(getting really exasperated)

I expect so.

VICKY

Then perhaps you should take your trousers off first so that we can give them to the St Vincent de Paul Society afterwards without blood stains on them.

LARRY, still holding the knife, undoes his pants and takes them off. He is then standing just in underwear. He again poises the knife over his left arm.

VICKY

Should I get some biscuits and cheese so we can have some nibbles while this is going on. It might take quite a time you know. The body has a lot of blood in it.

LARRY

I'm killing myself here. Will you stop chattering and just watch? The only way to stop me is to agree to marry me. (PAUSE) LARRY cuts his left forearm with the knife. Blood flows.

VICKY

(screams)

All right, I'll marry you.

VICKY

(voice over)

I knew I was going to have to give in eventually, and I didn't see why he should have any more scars than was necessary. I didn't fancy the idea of living with a badly scarred body.

VICKY

We'll have to get you to the hospital to get that cut fixed. Its bleeding badly.

LARRY

No. We couldn't possibly. There would be too many questions.

VICKY wraps a towel around the bleeding arm, takes LARRY into the bathroom and washes away some of the blood then produces a thick roll of sticking plaster and puts it on LARRY's forearm to seal up the cut. As she does so ...

LARRY

See, its all worthwhile. I have suffered a little hurt and bled a bit but I have got the woman I love to marry me.

SCENE 35

Back at the table ...

VICKY

And he's still wearing that same plaster. I haven't been game to pull it off in case it starts bleeding again.

All of the ladies look at LARRY at the other side of the courtyard and see the sticking plaster on the inside of his left forearm. They all gape at him with absolute amazement. LARRY sees them all staring at him.

LARRY

(largely to himself)

My god, what has she told them this time.

Back at the table ...

JOANNA

And what about the wedding?

VICKY

Well, there was this beautiful church that I've always wanted to be married in, and I'd already picked out a wedding dress at a bridal hire shop in case I ever needed it.

JOANNA

I can relate to that.

VICKY

So that within a couple of days everything was organised. But we only had time to get my parents and immediate family there.

SCENE 36

The same church as seen before. VICKY coming down the aisle with her father as before, with the organ playing Handel's Wedding March.

VICKY

(voice over)

It was so beautiful, and there was a choir.

Immediately the organ stops and a choir is heard in the middle of singing. She advances to the altar and LARRY is standing alongside with his left arm bandaged in a sling sticking out from under his jacket.

THE MINISTER

Larry, do you take this woman, Vicky, to be your lawful wedded wife? To honour her, love her and be true to her so long as you both shall live.

LARRY

I do.

VICKY

And do you promise to limit your sporting activities to not more than one day of each weekend and one evening during the week?

LARRY

(looking shocked)

Do I have to?

VICKY

Yes you do.

LARRY

All right, I promise that too.

THE MINISTER

And Vicky, do you take this man ...

In the background, VICKY's parents can be seen. VICKY's mother is crying happily and sentimentally and VICKY's father is looking vaguely sad.

SCENE 37

Back at the table at the luncheon.

VICKY

And here we are today.

JOANNA

That's the most dramatic courtship I've ever heard of.

All of the ladies at the table again turn to look at LARRY with a mixture of amazement and admiration. VICKY looks very satisfied.

SCENE 38

Two or three hours later in the backyard of MUM and DAD's home. MUM is seen in the background with one of the other ladies clearing away plates and taking the salad bowls inside. VICKY and JOANNA are sitting in a corner of the yard some distance from anyone else.

JOANNA

I just wanted a decent reliable man with a reasonably secure job and a nice family so I could have some children. I had really got to the stage where I felt that children was the next thing I wanted to do. Michael came along. He answered all my specifications. He asked me to marry him. I accepted. But then came the surprise. We made love on the night that we got engaged. My experience of sex is that the partner doesn't matter all that much. There is the physical contact of the bodies. There is the thrill when he first goes in. The orgasm is much the same. They all feel the same in the dark.

VICKY

I have never tried it in the dark.

JOANNA

(choosing to ignore that remark)

For the first time, I was making a love man who really loved me. It was very different. I felt for the first time that unity or oneness that I've read about. It was not just him and me being us. It was if I had become part of him and he had become part of me. It was as if I could see our life together flashing before my eyes. I could feel that we were going to grow old together. I could mentally picture myself with him as an old couple surrounded by grandchildren. It was a feeling I have never had before. I know he loves me. I am quite clear now that I love him. But you have been through that terrible experience with Larry. How are you going to cope in a married life together?

VICKY

(sounding as if she is being seriously honest)

Well, I suppose I didn't think he was really going to keep on cutting himself and die, and that really at least I liked him a lot. I suppose I probably would have married him eventually anyway. I think looking back on it I was really wanting him to do something dramatic to prove his love.

JOANNA

Well, he certainly did that.

JOANNA glances again at LARRY in a corner of the yard with the sticking plaster still visible on his left arm.

VICKY

I have always seen myself as having children one day too.

Fuzzy edges: VICKY at some unidentified place wearing a matronly tight dress, holding a 6 year old by one hand, a 4 year old by the other, and with a 2 year old holding onto her legs, but all looking cheerful.

Immediately change – VICKY wearing a positively dowdy looking dress with the same three children, one on one side, one on the other and one holding her leg, but also with a baby in her arms and all four of them are complaining or crying.

Immediately change – VICKY looking some years older, elegantly dressed with a 14 year old, 12 year old and 10 year old all neatly dressed in school uniforms standing with her.

SCENE 39

Back at the conversation between JOANNA and VICKY.

JOANNA
(thoughtfully)

What does Larry think about children?

VICKY

Oh, he is wildly enthusiastic. He's talking of having
six.

JOANNA

That's funny. Michael told me he hated children, and would even leave a restaurant if there were children in it. Michael says that has always declined to do coaching of children in any of the games he plays: cricket, golf, tennis or squash.

VICKY

Oh, but Larry is very deep. He doesn't disclose his true feelings to anyone but me. He likes to put on a pretence of being Mr Macho Man.

JOANNA

He does it very well doesn't he.

SCENE 40

Late morning, a few days later, LARRY and VICKY are in LARRY's car and the car radio is on at a low volume.

VICKY

Who are Greg and Norma?

LARRY

Greg is one of my oldest friends. We still play golf together at least once a month. He used to be my partner for tennis doubles. He and Norma have been married for three or four years. He doesn't play as much now as he used to.

On the car radio is heard the old song, "Oh how I love my honey bunch."

LARRY

I used to sing another version of that.

LARRY breaks into song.

LARRY

Oh how I love my honey bunch.
I'd like to fuck her after lunch.
Her bum is quite fine.
Her tits are divine.
I'd like to fuck her after lunch.

They both laugh.

SCENE 41

Arriving at GREG and NORMA's at the front door. As GREG opens the front door ...

GREG

Well, if it isn't Lead Pipe Larry.

LARRY looks a little embarrassed and VICKY smiles.

VICKY

Don't worry darling. Good news travels fast.

LARRY

Greg, this is my wife, Vicky.

As they move inside, GREG introducing NORMA to VICKY.

GREG

And this is my wife, Norma.

NORMA looks interested and the two women greet each other in a way appropriately for the wives of close friends.

SCENE 42

An hour later they are just finishing lunch.

VICKY
Norma, that was delicious.

NORMA
Oh, just something simple.

VICKY
(looking very serious)
Now on the way over here, Larry was telling me that he wanted to fuck me after lunch.

LARRY
(outraged)
No I didn't.

VICKY
Yes you did, at least twice. I know my wifely duty.

VICKY stands up indicating a couch in a sunroom off the place where they had been eating, the back of which is towards the table.

VICKY
Can we use that couch?

NORMA looks shocked and amazed. GREG looks amused.
LARRY looks dumb-founded. VICKY, turning brightly to NORMA ...

VICKY
Do you have some personal lubricant?

NORMA
(almost too shocked to answer a very hesitant)
No.

VICKY
(confidently)
Oh well, I'll just have to used spit.

VICKY stands up and walks towards the couch, taking LARRY by the hand as she goes. After LARRY is moving, she drops his hand and putting each hand at the side of her dress, she steps out of some small sexy looking undies.

Note, the dress has to be sufficient long and loose that she can do this without revealing that she has another pair of undies on underneath.

VICKY goes to the couch and lies on it so that she cannot be seen from the table. A bare leg of VICKY's is seen over the back of the couch. LARRY is standing alongside her looking dumb-founded and VICKY pulls him down out of sight. GREG is watching with amused disbelief. NORMA is watching with shocked disbelief. Noises are heard as if sex is taking place on the couch.

Close up of the two heads from the other side of the couch. VICKY doing noises as if she was having intercourse. LARRY looking a little less amazed, now rather amused and interested.

LARRY

(softly)

What on earth is this about?

VICKY

You need to maintain your reputation as the world's most sexy man and this is a great test of their friendship.

After a moment.

LARRY

But you've got another pair of pants on.

VICKY

Of course darling, with you around.

VICKY is still making noises as if intercourse was occurring. After a (PAUSE) ...

LARRY

But I want to do it.

VICKY

Too late, I've started on my orgasm bit.

VICKY is heard from the other side by GREG and NORMA still sitting at the table as if an orgasm was taking place. Her bare leg and foot protruding above the back of the couch moves appropriately.

Back to a close up of the two heads from the other side of the couch.

LARRY

(groaning)

Oh, I've come in my pants.

VICKY

Poor darling.

Back to the other side of the couch where GREG and NORMA are still at the table looking amused and astonished at what has been going on. LARRY is seen beginning to get up and then VICKY gets up and says brightly ...

VICKY

Poor Larry needs to clean up a bit. Can he use your bathroom?

GREG indicates with a gesture the direction and LARRY departs holding his pants in front of him.

SCENE 43

A few minutes later, VICKY is sitting alone at the dining table peeling a banana as LARRY comes in. LARRY's pants have an obvious wet stain in front.

LARRY

Where are Greg and Norma?

VICKY indicating with a look and a nod of her head, the bedroom part of the house, from where sounds are heard of bed springs moving rhythmically and what might be intercourse going on between GREG and NORMA. VICKY illustrates with the peeled banana moving it in and out of her persed lips.

Close up of VICKY moving the banana in and out of her persed lips when she exposes her teeth and sharply bite the end of the banana off.

SCENE 44

JOANNA and MICHAEL's wedding. It is early afternoon in a relatively small church. There are about 60 guests present. MICHAEL is standing at the altar with the minister / priest. JOANNA is seen coming down the aisle with her father. She is looking particularly beautiful in a very attractive wedding gown. Mendelsohn's Wedding March is played on the organ. In the front row on the groom's side, MUM is shedding a happy tear, DAD is looking pleased or satisfied, LARRY is looking as if he would rather be out playing golf and VICKY is looking very thoughtful.

As JOANNA reaches the altar and stands alongside MICHAEL, they beam at each other with looks of great love and happiness. The camera goes back to VICKY as we hear the minister performing the ceremony as a voice over. We go into another of VICKY's fantasies while the voice over continues.

Fuzzy edges

Same scene, but is VICKY at the altar in front of the minister wearing the wedding dress that she has worn in the previous marriage fantasy scenes, but is still MICHAEL standing alongside her.

Immediate change – and it is LARRY standing alongside her wearing the same outfit that MICHAEL was wearing. He looks at VICKY lovingly.

Immediate change – it is MICHAEL standing alongside VICKY again looking at her lovingly.

Immediate change – it is MICHAEL and LARRY both standing alongside her, both looking lovingly.

Immediate change – it is just LARRY standing alongside her.

End of Fuzzy edges

Back to VICKY's thoughtful face, then back to the altar. The minister / priest is just finishing the service.

MINISTER / PRIEST

I now pronounce you man and wife.

JOANNA and MICHAEL turn to each other with looks of radiantly loving happiness.

SCENE 45

At the wedding reception.

SCENE 46

Back in the honeymoon suite later that night. VICKY and LARRY arriving back from the wedding reception.

LARRY

We still haven't worked out what we do about our break up. It is getting very difficult. Everyone seems to be able absolutely convinced that I am so madly in love with you that I threatened to kill myself if you wouldn't marry me. I really think you overdone the story line. But we've got to do something soon. I'm getting fed up with sleeping on that couch.

VICKY

(confidently)

I've got the complete solution to all our problems. We just stayed married, or rather we get married, and then you won't have to sleep on the couch any more. Of course, we will have to go back to Melbourne to get married, so that your family don't know that we weren't married already. Although, I suppose we can say that it is just a renewal of our vows since there were so few people present at our real wedding.

LARRY

(looking aghast)

What are you talking about? That wasn't part of the deal. You were just going to come here and help me through a problem, then we were going to break up and you go back to Melbourne and resume your own life, and all my problems would be solved at least for a few years.

VICKY

We just can't do that now. Everyone knows how much you love me. I've sworn to be a dutiful wife.

LARRY

You haven't sworn anything.

VICKY

Well, I've told everybody I have, and that's just as good. We just can't get out of this now. Besides, everybody knows how much you want to have a family – little grandchildren for your mum and dad.

LARRY

I hate children. A baby is the worst thing in the world. It cries, it dirties its nappy, it eats awful food except when its actually on its mother's breast, that doesn't look too bad. It doesn't play any games and it has no conversation whatever, and it gives everyone up in the middle of the night.

VICKY

But babies grow up. They become beautiful adorable loving school children.

LARRY

That's worse. There is school fees, lost bits of uniforms, library books mislaid, homework that you are supposed to help them with and Interminable telephone calls between them and their school friends. I've never understood how school kids can spend so many hours on the telephone talking to people they've just spent the whole day with. And worst of all, school concerts.

VICKY

Don't you think it would be wonderful to see our children up on stage performing beautifully.

LARRY

Our children may perform beautifully – though of course I have yet to see it. But let me tell you every other child up on that stage will be absolutely awful. School concerns are the most excruciating things in the whole world.

VICKY

They sound absolutely wonderful. I suggest you give up now. Accept the inevitable. You know you really love me dearly.

VICKY goes into the bedroom leaving the door open. A few minutes later LARRY is in pyjamas settling in on the couch.

VICKY

(through the door)

Larry, why not come in here?

LARRY exasperated but getting off the couch and walking to the bedroom. The scene changes in the bedroom as LARRY walks. VICKY is in the bed with a very attractive looking nightie.

LARRY

What is it now?

VICKY

Why don't you just give up and accept the inevitable. Promise that you'll marry me and get into bed. You never know, it may be wonderful.

LARRY

And if I get into bed and I don't marry you.

VICKY

You would not believe what I would tell your parents.

LARRY

(with a groan)

Oh yes I would.

VICKY

Larry, give up. Just get into bed and be a good boy.

LARRY, with despair and resignation, throws off his pyjama top and gets into the bed. The sheets and blankets are pulled up over them. After a couple of moments of movement under the blankets ...

VICKY

Careful, or you will tear my nightie.

A ripping sound is heard.

VICKY

Oh, ... I'll tell your mother.

LARRY

(with a laugh)

You already have.

VICKY also laughs. (PAUSE)

VICKY

Oooh. Lead pipe.

LARRY

Yes, and that's after my reduction operation.

They both burst into laughter.

SCENE 47

VICKY's apartment in Melbourne. Late afternoon or early evening. VICKY and LARRY have put down their bags and are standing in the living room, dining room, family room area alongside a small kitchen. Is a small flat. It is not at all elegant as the flat in VICKY's earlier fantasy. There is one rather ordinary Australian landscape on the wall.

LARRY

I've just realised. We are getting married the day after tomorrow and I don't even know your name.

VICKY

Then you must listen carefully and try not to forget.

VICKY speaks slowly and carefully ...

VICKY

Maria, but nobody calls me that, Victoria, and everybody calls me Vicky, Rosati.

LARRY

That's an Italian name. I thought all Italian women had dark hair. How come you are blond?

VICKY

(looking very grave and serious)

I am going to tell you something that I ask you to believe, though you will probably think it's another crazy story of mine. This is really and truly true. My blond hair comes out of a tube once every four weeks.

They both laugh.

LARRY

(astonished)

Your name really is Vicky?

VICKY

Would I lie about something like that?

LARRY

You didn't. I made up the name Vicky. I made it up years ago. She has been my secret protectress for years.

VICKY

It was me really all along. We were fated for each other.

LARRY

Nonsense. It was just accidental that I sat down alongside you on the bus.

VICKY

No a divine hand was guiding us together. You just remember that for the future. When the minister says, 'Whom god hath joined, let no man put asunder.', you remember that god really has joined us. He put you on that bus. He put me on that bus. He sat us both down together.

LARRY

Well that's the craziest fantasy you've had so far.

They both laugh.

LARRY

To think that unintentionally I have been telling the truth all along.

They both laugh. There is a buzz at the door.

VICKY

That'll be my mum and dad. They couldn't wait to meet you.

LARRY

Oh, god. Why not?

VICKY

Well your mother couldn't wait.

LARRY

Does mean I should go and take my clothes off.

VICKY

That will not be necessary.

She opens the door. Middle aged couple of Italian origin come in. VICKY greets them warmly ...

VICKY

Mum and dad, this is Larry, my fiancée.

LARRY, obviously uncomfortable, holds out his hand ...

LARRY

Mrs Rosati, Mr Rosati, I am very pleased to meet you.

Mr Rosati shakes his hand very firmly looking at him very gravely.
Mrs Rosati is a bit more responsive.

Mrs ROSATI

(looking at LARRY)

Well, the first thing I need to know is how you met and who introduced you.

LARRY

Well it was all rather funny really. We met accidentally on a bus going to the airport and I asked Vicky if she would come to Sydney with me and pretend that we were married for a couple of weeks so as to get me out of a bit of a problem. She came and well, here we are.

Mrs Rosati bursts into tears and throws her arms around her husband.

Mrs ROSATI

Mary, mother of god, we've got another one of them.

Mr ROSATI holding on to his wife and looking angrily at LARRY ...

Mr ROSATI

Why can't you two just tell the simple truth? Why have you always got to be making up these ridiculous stories? It will be the death of us.

LARRY looks bewildered.

Mr ROSATI

(looking at LARRY)

Where are you staying until the ceremony?

LARRY

I was planning on staying here.

Mr ROSATI

What are you talking about? You're not married yet. You can't stay here.

LARRY

It is usual these days that a couple have become physically intimate before they get married.

Mr ROSATI
(shocked)

What are you telling me? Are you saying that our daughter, Maria, has turned her back on everything her mother and I have taught her since she was a child? Are you saying that she had sex before marriage? I just don't believe it.

LARRY

Well, we love each other, we are going to be married, and I am sure Vicky wasn't really turning her back on all the benefits you have given her.

Mrs ROSATI

Maria tells us that she is going off to Sydney to visit her sick school friend, Ms Bunbury, and then we hear about this marriage.

LARRY

(turning to VICKY with amused amazement)
Bunbury?

VICKY

(softly to LARRY)

Oh, you have read Oscar Wilde too.

LARRY

Well actually, Ms Bunbury was an old family friend of ours too. Vicky and I met at Ms Bunbury's bedside. We were both there visiting her in her terrible illness. Ms Bunbury really introduced us. It was our mutual love of Ms Bunbury that brought us together.

Mrs ROSATI

Well I am glad you have now told us what really happened instead of that stupid story about meeting on the bus.

Mr ROSATI

Well you are not staying together. Maria, get your things, you are coming home with us until the wedding.

VICKY

I can't possibly do that, dad. All my things are here.

Mr ROSATI

(to LARRY)

Then you are coming home with us.

LARRY

There is no need. I could go to the hotel I usually stay at in Melbourne. I could get a round of golf tomorrow.

Mr ROSATI

No you're not. I know your type. As soon as we are out of sight, you'll be here and Maria will not be safe. You are coming to our place and we are going to keep an eye on you until the wedding ceremony. Get your bags.

LARRY picks up his bag and his golf clubs.

Mr ROSATI

Forget those golf clubs. I don't play golf. My son, Giovanni, doesn't play golf. One of us is going to keep an eye on you all the time.

He takes hold of LARRY's arm and marches him to the door. LARRY is holding onto his bag. Near the door, LARRY turns to VICKY ...

LARRY

Well that has all gone rather well don't you think?

VICKY is trying to suppress to laughter.