

THE FIFTH COLUMN

by Rowan Crawford

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BLACK

The SOUNDS OF PEOPLE.

FADE IN:

EXT. BUSY CANBERRA STREET -- MORNING

A bookstore window features a display of recent newspaper cover stories, all of a single event:

A POLITICAL SCANDAL, FOLLOWED BY THE RESIGNATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER, ALEX HAMPTON.

JANE JEFFREYS (34, wearing a beany) runs past.

INT. AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL REVIEW OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

The APR office bustles with journalistic activity.

Jane rushes to her desk in a dark corner of the bullpen. Located next to a coffee machine, Jane's desk is covered in coffee mugs.

Jane moves the mugs and wipes away a coffee stain from her desk.

JANE

Great...

A COLLEAGUE goes to place his mug on her desk. Jane quickly grabs it.

COLLEAGUE

Oh thanks, Jane.

The colleague leaves the mug with Jane and wanders off.

As Jane cleans her desk, she notices some journalists watching a press conference on a monitor. She moves closer.

On the monitor, ACTING PRIME MINISTER, WILLIAM REED (35, fit and stately), takes questions from a keen press gallery. The news station subtitle reads: ACTING PRIME MINISTER WILLIAM REED.

REED

(on monitor)

We, of course, support his decision to step down, and wish him the best in his future endeavors.

MCKENZIE'S SECRETARY

Jane.

JANE

Hmm?

MCKENZIE'S SECRETARY

You were late again?

JANE

My car broke down.

MCKENZIE'S SECRETARY

He wants to see you.

INT. MCKENZIE'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

BRUCE MCKENZIE (60, unkempt), the EDITOR OF THE AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL REVIEW (regularly referred to as APR), chairs an editorial meeting of JOURNALISTS.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Jane, come in.

(to journalists)

They're saying he's already moved out of the Lodge, so find where he's holed up and get a camera there. That's you, Phil.

JOURNALIST PHIL

Right.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

The rest of you on the opposition's response, the family of what's-her-name, voter reaction. And let's see a page on the next Prime Minister of Australia.

JOURNALIST

It'll be Reed.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Then that's who we write about. That's it, back to work.

Jane is still standing.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Jane, come in. Take a seat, girl.

JANE

Sorry I'm late again. I mean, I don't know if you noticed I'm late, but I wanted to point it out so it doesn't look like I'm hiding it.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Have a seat.

JANE

Car broke down. It's up near the station. I don't know the name of the street.

McKenzie waves his hand telling Jane to stop.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Now, Jane. You think you might be ready for a real assignment?

JANE

Absolutely. Yes. Wow, I thought I was going to be fired. I've got some ideas. Do you want me to--

EDITOR MCKENZIE

A one-pager on Friday's bipartisan chow-down, or whatever they're calling it.

JANE

The Commencement Party?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Whatdoyasay?

JANE

Are you joking?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

No.

JANE

You're serious?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

I was.

JANE

Are you SERIOUS?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Half a page. Outline by Thursday, final copy for Sunday's edition.

JANE

Thank you, Mr McKenzie.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

And buy a new car, girl.

JANE

I'm getting a raise too?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Leave my office now.

JANE

Thank you, Mr McKenzie.

EXT. PARLIAMENT HOUSE OF VICTORIA -- DAY

The press conference finished, Reed sits on a bench with his head in his hands.

SUPER: VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT BUILDING, MELBOURNE

Reed's CHIEF OF STAFF, HEATHER BOONE (50, serious) arrives.

HEATHER BOONE

Are you alright?

REED
 (standing)
 What have I got next?

HEATHER BOONE
 The flight's at two. We should
 get into Canberra by four thirty.

REED
 I thought we might drive up through
 Orange.

HEATHER BOONE
 Look--

REED
 What?

Heather takes Reed aside, talks in quieter tones.

HEATHER BOONE
 Just so you know, Lennard Kain put
 his hand up. He'll be running
 against you.

REED
 Yeah, I know.

HEATHER BOONE
 You knew?

REED
 Harson might have mentioned it.

HEATHER BOONE
 Did Harson mention *he* asked Kain
 to put his hand up?

REED
 Harson told him to run?

Reed needs to consider this.

REED
 He won't have more than eight votes.

HEATHER BOONE
 He's not running to win.

REED
 Right.

HEATHER BOONE
 But you'll want to talk with
 McNamara, Collins, Brunning.
 They're going to use this.

EXT. PARLIAMENT BUILDING -- MORNING

A plane flies overhead.

SUPER: AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT BUILDING, CANBERRA

INT. PARLIAMENT BUILDING -- MORNING

Reed and Heather wheel their airport bags.

REED'S ASSISTANT, KATE (27, colorful), meets them.

REED

Hello Kate.

ASSISTANT

Good flight? Hey, let me take those.

Kate takes their luggage.

ASSISTANT KATE

You're with the, ah, Senate committee for Finance and Public Administration in forty minutes.

REED

Room two?

ASSISTANT KATE

No, um, let me see. Yeah. Well, no. You're in that ugly room with the velvet seats.

REED

That's straight out of the tourist brochure is it, Kate?

ASSISTANT KATE

And you're going to need that black folder aren't you?

REED

You don't have it?

ASSISTANT KATE

Okay, yeah. See, I probably should have picked that up when I was there, but I didn't for some reason. Couldn't say why though. I'll call someone to get it.

REED

Sure.

Kate leaves.

REED

I once had a dream in which everyone in the world talked like Kate, and I didn't understand any of it.

HEATHER BOONE

So you'll sit down with McNamara, Collins, and Brunning?

REED

My point is that usually nothing makes sense in a dream, yet you *think* it makes sense. But in this dream even my subconscious couldn't make meaning out of it.

HEATHER BOONE

William?

REED

I'm not worried about Collins and Brunning.

HEATHER BOONE

You should sit down with everyone from caucus before Wednesday. Including the left.

REED

Is it possible-- Can we just set politics to one side now? We got through the loss of our Prime Minister... Is it possible? I tell you what, let's leave parliament dissolved and get some mileage out of *Acting Prime Minister* before we have to deal with an opposition again.

(beat)

I'm joking. Let's do this, Heather. Seriously, bring it on.

CUT TO:

EXT. LABOR CAUCUS CENTER -- DAY

An explosion of camera flashes as reporters surge forward.

A large number of Labor Party Ministers and Senators gather around LABOR PARTY SECRETARIAT, HARSON COSIMO (45, sturdy). Reed is wearing a big smile.

HARSON

Ladies and gentlemen. Thank you.

(ignoring questions)

Please. Thank you. It is my great honor and privilege to introduce the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Honorable Lennard Kain.

More camera flashes as PRIME MINISTER LENNARD KAIN (50, overwhelmed) steps forward, shaking hands. There's a murmur of surprise in the crowd.

PM LENNARD KAIN

(hesitant, awkward)

Well, I hardly know what to say.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Except to say what a great honor
and privilege this is, and I pledge
to you on this day I accept to be
your Prime Minister...

Behind Kain, Harson's face twitches at Kain's odd speech.

LATER

Reed and Heather walk towards a rear exit.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Reed! Will you challenge Lennard
Kain again before the election?

Reed turns around.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Do you support Lennard Kain?

INT. KAIN'S OLD OFFICE -- DAY

The packing of Kain's ministerial office is in full swing.

PM LENNARD KAIN

"If I don't hold him up, who will?"

HARSON

I'm afraid so.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Who heard him say it?

HARSON

It was Channel 7.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Harson. Come on. William said
this to *camera*?

HARSON

The reporter missed that it was a
joke.

PM LENNARD KAIN

We don't have enough opposition?
The Liberals, the press, probably
the Queen, not to mention whomever
leaked Alex Hampton's story to the
press.

HARSON

Aquinas said *every man fights two
wars*. I always felt that was an
underestimate. It was a play on
words, sir. *Support*, meaning to
hold up.

PM LENNARD KAIN

I understand it, I'm saying it's not funny.

HARSON

Don't worry about it.

Harson hands Kain a piece of paper.

HARSON

A few words.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Words?

HARSON

A few words to inspire the troops.

Kain looks it over then puts it in his pocket.

PM LENNARD KAIN

If I don't hold him up, who will?
It's not exactly bloody Shakespeare.

HARSON

Don't worry about it.

KAIN'S SECRETARY, SUE, meets them.

SECRETARY SUE

Everyone's ready. I can't believe it.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Well, let's go run a country.

INT. AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL REVIEW OFFICE -- DAY

Jane hands McKenzie's secretary some paper.

JANE

The outline for my special. Can you make sure Mr McKenzie gets it?

McKenzie exits his office reading a draft of something, his print manager close behind.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Goal, Donny, goal! Make a mental association with football or basketball, or whatever helps. Goal! You know... 'gaol' works too, but honestly, my readership won't see the funny side.

PRINT MANAGER DONNY

I'll fix it, Mr McKenzie.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Third time's a charm. Jane. Follow me, girl.

JANE

Good morning, Mr McKenzie.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Got a joke for you. Something about refugee detention, playing on how 'gaol' and 'goal' are spelled similarly.

JANE

Okay...

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Well, it seemed *John Clarkian* a moment ago, but now I don't know. Use it if you want. Me to you.

JANE

Thanks.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Now where's that outline?

JANE

Leigh has it.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Good, good.

An APR JOURNALIST calls to McKenzie--

APR JOURNALIST

Bruce, you coming, mate? The breakfast menu ends in ten minutes.

JANE

Mr McKenzie, I was wondering. Or maybe I should ask Leigh...

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Ask it, girl.

JANE

I don't know if I should already know, but is Friday's party formal dress or, you know, not-formal?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Hmm?

JANE

I wasn't sure...

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Jane. You understand you're not going to the ball? It'll be yours truly representing the hallowed pages of APR. I don't know where you got the impression...

JANE

I was making a joke..

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Yeah?

JANE

I was joking. Why would I go to the Commencement Party? Wouldn't make any sense. I was going to write about it, about the clothing, and I just wanted to know...

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Yeah?

JANE

Absolutely.

McKenzie and the journalist enter the lift.

APR JOURNALIST

You watching the bookies? Reed's still unbackable, but Lennard Kain's odds are shortening. You got money on Kain?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Kain, no.

JANE

I know Reed.

The lift doors close -- and open again.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Say it again, Jane?

JANE

I.. Just so you know. I know William Reed. I'm putting that out there. I guess, just for future reference.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Jane, are you telling me you know William Reed... *socially*?

JANE

Nooo. No, no. Not like that. We're friends. Just friends. But good friends. But just friends.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Define 'good' for me? Give it some context.

JANE

Well, what exactly...

EDITOR MCKENZIE

When'd you last talk to William
Reed?

JANE

Well, what I meant was, we went to
uni together. University. Monash.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Back to work, Jane.

The lift doors close. Jane returns to McKenzie's secretary.

JANE

Leigh. Can I have that back.

MCKENZIE'S SECRETARY

Sure. Remember, he wants it today.

INT. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE CORRIDOR -- MORNING

Reed walks with Heather. As they enter the Prime Minister's
Office corridor, a HUGE CHEER raises from Kain's office.
They see Kain giving a speech, champagne glasses charged.

Harson approaches, so Heather falls a few paces back.

HARSON

Reed.

REED

Harson.

HARSON

Got a moment?

REED

I'm here for a bit of a chinwag
with your Prime Minister.

HARSON

Tomorrow.

Reed sees Kain raise his glass, and their eyes meet for a
moment.

HARSON

The deputy's office is still yours.
There was never any question. The
rest of cabinet is being built
around that foundation. That's if
you still want it.

REED

What does he say?

HARSON

I'm telling you what he says.

Reed begins to return to Heather.

HARSON

If I don't hold him up? That was out of line.

REED

Oh, come on. Don't tell me you didn't get it either? It was a joke.

HARSON

I think you and I both know that isn't true.

REED

You disappoint me, mate. You really disappoint me.

Reed leaves.

INT. AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL REVIEW OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Jane walks towards a meeting room where she can see McKenzie talking with some journalists.

MEETING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jane enters.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Here she is. Little Miss Cinderella herself. Yeah, outline looks good.

JANE

Thanks.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

It's funny. Amusing. And you managed to lever the 'gaol/goal' thing in.

JANE

Yes.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

You can edit it out. I can see it doesn't work.

JANE

Okay. Thank you, Mr McKenzie.

Jane starts to leave.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Jane, nothing about dress codes in here. You did think you were off to the shindig tonight.

JANE

No. Well...

EDITOR MCKENZIE

That I asked for an outline a day before the event didn't strike you a little *George The Third*?

JANE

Well, I thought about it and I thought...

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Jane, what if I *do* send you tonight?

JANE

Are you serious?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

We're not doing that again.

APR JOURNALIST

If you go tonight, representing APR, can you get an interview with William Reed?

JANE

What? I'm sorry, did we get more tickets?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Jane, if I give you my invite, can you get an interview with William Reed? Before you say anything--

JANE

Yes.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Before you say anything, carefully consider the following. If you return sans interview, won't be no point fixing that car. You understand, Janey? You won't have anywhere to drive. You will have to ask him if he intends to challenge Lennard Kain before the election. Rumour is he's acting odd post Wednesday, and we want that story.

(APR JOURNALIST
nods)

A new world for you Jane. This is Chopper writing children's books. Yeah? This thing's supposed to be an off-the-record gathering, Reed hates my fucking guts - I'm not talkin' rhetoric - and it's never, ever easy asking hard questions of a friend. You get what I'm saying? So I ask again; I give you my invite, can you interview Reed?

JANE

(pause)

Yes.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Wear your best dress.

INT. THE GREAT HALL -- EVENING

The Commencement Party is well underway. Two hundred politicians and journalists mingle, immersed in music, wine, and conversation.

On stage, an IMPERSONATOR OF PRIME MINISTER LENNARD KAIN entertains.

KAIN IMPERSONATOR

So Harson queried me the other day, he asked how many journalists can fit into the Member's Hall. I figure, it depends how thinly I'm allowed to slice them.

Reed wanders around the gathering, but most of the politicians excuse themselves or simply float away to other conversations.

KAIN IMPERSONATOR

We were late to a meeting with the Crown Prince of Serbia. This is the country that buys all those Jago balls we manufacture but don't use, so I said I didn't mind *running* to the meeting. But Harson said I wasn't allowed to do that. Why not, I asked? Well apparently it's un-constitutional.

Huge laughs from the knowing crowd (hint: a 'constitutional' is a 'brisk walk'). Reed's assistant, Kate, drags her BOYFRIEND (26, rugby player) to Reed.

ASSISTANT KATE

Reed. Have you met my boyfriend, Brad? He plays for Souths.

KATE'S BOYFRIEND

Reed, yeah, I know you.

REED

Hey Brad. Good to meet you.

ASSISTANT KATE

Reed, who's that guy over there?

Reed looks at a DISTINCTIVE MAN standing in the corner.

REED

I've seen him around, but we haven't met.

ASSISTANT KATE

He's been on his own the whole night, so no way he's a poli' or a journo'. I think he's ASIO!

REED

He could be.

ASSISTANT KATE

I wonder if he has a gun.

Kate makes her way over to the mystery partygoer (hereon known as ASIO MAN).

KAIN IMPERSONATOR

Hey, is that Minister Edwards?
Eddy, I want to add a barbecue porch to The Lodge but the permit's taking bloody forever!

KATE'S BOYFRIEND

A politician, hey?

REED

Yes. And not the most popular one right at this moment I should say. You're losing street cred if it even looks like you're talking to me.

KATE'S BOYFRIEND

Know any popular politicians?

REED

I take your point. You play league? Or that other one?

KATE'S BOYFRIEND

Twelves. But I'm studying politics in my spare time.

REED

Really?

KATE'S BOYFRIEND

No way, buddy. Life's too short, you know?

REED

I think I do.

INT. PARLIAMENT ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

Jane stumbles on high heels. She has made a genuine attempt to dress up, but there's something not quite right about her attire...

PARLIAMENT GUIDE

Are you alright, ma'am?

JANE

High heels.

PARLIAMENT GUIDE

Yes. I mean, you're here for the--
(Jane offers her
invitation)

I'm sorry, ma'am, they're in the
Great Hall, which is right at the
very end of the building.

JANE

Oh. Which way?

PARLIAMENT GUIDE

You might prefer to drive around.

JANE

Can I get there through here?

PARLIAMENT GUIDE

If you follow the orange signs.

INT. THE GREAT HALL

Reed muscles his way into a group that includes the GOVERNOR-
GENERAL (60, kindly).

REED

(shaking hands)

Governor-General, sir. I haven't
had chance to thank you for coming.
I trust you approve of the
refreshments.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Reed, Reed. We've just been
discussing that particularly fine
Pinto that chappy over there is
serving.

REED

Excellent.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL

I've had it before, of course, but
it still strikes me as a bloody
good drop.

Another POLITICIAN greets the Governor-General
enthusiastically, peeling him away from Reed's group. Two
others make their excuses, leaving only:

POLITICIAN #3

Bad luck about Wednesday.

Reed nods. That politician also leaves. After a moment,
the Governor-General touches Reed on the arm.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Would you mind taking a word of advice from an old bleeding-heart? Just suck it in, son. No one ever won a game of poker with that face. Just suck it in.

REED

I will. I have. I appreciate it though, Sir.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL

They were never going to hand the top job to a thirty-something. You understand that, right?

REED

Yes, Sir.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Your time will come, Reed, and when it does you'll be the best Prime Minister we ever had. I know that as a fact.

REED

Thank you Sir.

INT. CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Jane has her heels off as she explores the building in search of the Great Hall, only half interested in orange signs.

She narrowly avoids being seen by a guard by stepping into--

INT. COMMITTEE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Jane looks around the room, then checks out the door, only to see--

EX-PRIME MINISTER ALEX HAMPTON (55, solemn) strolling through the corridor, followed by a sizable entourage.

INT. CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Kain and Harson are waiting outside the party. Sue arrives with a jacket for Kain.

Kain catches a glimpse of TIM FINLEY (25, parliamentary newbie) standing a distance away.

PM LENNARD KAIN

He's been standing there for half an hour. Just standing there.

HARSON

I'm showing him around.

PM LENNARD KAIN

It's a bit creepy.

HARSON

Just helping him get a feel for
the work we do here.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Another personal project?

HARSON

I do see potential in this one.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Let's hope he works out better
than William Reed.

HARSON

This would be an ideal opportunity
to talk to Reed.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Not now, mate.

(re: party)

I don't even know how we're
approaching this. Madsen knows we
want my entrance to be as low key
as is *humanely* possible?

HARSON

You think you can walk in there
unnoticed?

PM LENNARD KAIN

(to Sue)

Find Madsen.

HARSON

Look, I hate to push it.

PM LENNARD KAIN

It won't kill Reed to warm the
backbench for a couple of years.
Damn it, now you've got me calling
him Reed. He's not a politician;
he's a flamin' pop star.

HARSON

That's why we need him, Mr Prime
Minister.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Mmm.

HARSON

I'm going to put you together in a
room sometime tonight. You give
Reed a nice office and you get to
be Prime Minister. That's not
such a bad trade off.

Kain's family arrives and he gives them all a kiss, then
picks up his 3YO DAUGHTER.

PM LENNARD KAIN
This is exciting isn't it?

His daughter nods enthusiastically.

PM LENNARD KAIN
Has anyone seen Madsen?

Booming from the sound system in the Great Hall:

PRESS SECRETARY MADSEN (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen. Everyone,
please. Please charge your glasses.

PM LENNARD KAIN
I said low-key...

THE GREAT HALL -- CONTINUOUS

Kain's PRESS SECRETARY, MADSEN, is on stage.

PRESS SECRETARY
...your Prime Minister.

Kain and his family enter the hall. The vigorous applause surprises Kain, and there's a sense that this is the first moment Kain has really felt like the Prime Minister of Australia.

In the background, Reed makes his exit.

INT. REED'S OFFICE -- LATER

Reed works at his desk. He goes to his bookshelf and picks out a large financial tome.

But another book catches his eye, and he pulls down a small LEATHER-BOUND BOOK.

He opens the first page and is reading it when he hears a LOUD FLUTTERY NOISE emanate from the next office. And then he HEARS IT AGAIN.

Reed steps over to the door -- his assistant is RIGHT THERE.

REED
Whoa...

ASSISTANT KATE
What?

REED
Were you jumping around?

ASSISTANT KATE
What? I don't understand you.

REED
Okay.

ASSISTANT KATE

I've been looking for you, like, all over the place. And I'm not even kidding. I looked in the boy's loo. Is there some work--

REED

No. It's okay, Kate. Go back to the party. Enjoy yourself. A new session starts next week, this will be our last chance to breathe for a while.

ASSISTANT KATE

What are you doing here?

REED

Just breathing.

ASSISTANT KATE

Well, there's a journalist asking for you. She says she's a friend.

REED

A journalist friend?

ASSISTANT KATE

She said to say 'applesauce'. You'd know what it meant.

REED

Applesauce?

ASSISTANT KATE

I thought it was a code word or something?

REED

A journalist *friend*, you say?

Reed DROPS THE BOOK INTO A BIN and follows Kate.

ASSISTANT KATE

Can you do me a favor? Compliment her on her blouse.

REED

Okay...

INT. THE GREAT HALL -- LATER

The CAPITAL HILL SINGERS are singing 'WALTZING MATILDA'.

Harson prowls the periphery of the party, taking in every little interaction and filing it away.

Reed follows Kate into the crowded hall. Various people greet him, but Reed is more interested in the journalist. And then he sees Jane -- he heads straight for her.

REED
Applesauce?

Jane turns around, sipping at a cocktail.

JANE
Hey, you.

REED
Applesauce? I don't... I really don't know what that means.

JANE
It got you out here didn't it, Reed? I'm sorry, am I supposed to call you Sir, or The Honorable something?

REED
Jane Jeffreys. I am stunned. And she's dressed up!

JANE
I'm quite the catch tonight.

Reed leads in with a handshake, but Jane is having none of it; she gives him a big hug and a kiss on the cheek.

REED
Who on God's green Earth let you in here?

JANE
I got an invite.

She shows Reed her ticket. Reed's fun mood falters momentary when he sees the ticket, but he quickly returns to high spirits.

REED
And that blouse. I really must compliment you on your blouse.

JANE
Thank you! How sweet are you?

REED
Though it doesn't look entirely comfortable.

JANE
You want me to take it off?

Reed reaches over Jane's shoulder, leading Jane to believe that he's flirting with her so she plays along -- until it becomes clear that he's actually placing the invite in her blouse pocket -- which is ON HER BACK.

JANE
What? How the fff...

She slides one arm up into the blouse and is about to spin it around before thinking better of it.

REED

Can I get you another drink?

INT. OUTSIDE THE GREAT HALL -- MOMENTS LATER

Jane spins her shirt around.

JANE

Don't look!

REED

You were just about to do it right in front of just about every peer you have in this world.

JANE

Don't look! What is it with politicians and...

REED

And?

JANE

Yeah, that one's not going anywhere.

REED

I tell you what though; if you had actually done it I guarantee you'd have made the cover of every weekend paper. I'm not all that sure you won't anyway.

JANE

What is it with politicians and *publicity*?

REED

There it is. So what would you say to the VIP tour?

INT. MEDITATION ROOM -- NIGHT

Kain paces the small room. At first it appears that he's tired of waiting for Reed, but then he talks to himself--

PM LENNARD KAIN

...education is the main issue for anyone interested... education is the priority issue for... education is the priority? ...education...

Harson arrives.

PM LENNARD KAIN

I've been going over my address. Does "education is the priority issue" sound correct? Perhaps "primary issue"?

HARSON

I wrote some remarks for you.

PM LENNARD KAIN

I should probably write this one myself.

HARSON

This will be the first time the nation hears you speak as the Prime Minister. The words you utter here tonight will be front page on every paper tomorrow.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Let's have a look at what you have.

Harson hands Kain a note.

PM LENNARD KAIN

(glancing over notes)

You don't think having you write every word I say gives the wrong impression?

HARSON

Look, don't worry about it.

PM LENNARD KAIN

I think we need to get something straight, mate. That's the tenth time you've said *don't worry about it* in the three days I've been Prime Minister, and if you think you helped me here just so you can run the goddamn country you're in for a big 'ol disappointment. Because you can pack your bags, mate. You can pack your bags and beg the Executive for your old job back.

HARSON

If I say *don't worry about it*, sir, it's because, whatever it is, it is so absolutely beneath you. You don't waste your time on it. I'm not joking, Lennard, you've got to get your head into the real things. This isn't the dress rehearsal, you get one shot and the starter fired his gun three days ago.

PM LENNARD KAIN

(pause)

So you're saying I shouldn't worry it?

HARSON

If you think that's for the best.

They laugh, but it's not an easy laugh.

HARSON

What did you say to Reed?

PM LENNARD KAIN

Someone's still looking for him.

INT. REED'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Reed and Jane arrive at the Deputy Prime Minister's office.

JANE

Your office is bigger than my house.

Jane finds the BOOK IN THE BIN, picks it up.

JANE

Whatever goes on two legs is an enemy.

REED

Excuse me?

Jane shows him the book: it's George Orwell's ANIMAL FARM.

JANE

Can I have it?

Reed takes the book and places it back on his bookshelf.

JANE

Who'd have thought, back when we were skipping classes and copying each other's assignments, that one of us would end up in this office. I mean, this office!

REED

And one of us would end up working for APR.

JANE

Oh, you saw?

REED

The jokes on the back page of the Friday edition. I recognized the style. I think you reused a couple of the old Monash paper.

JANE

My website went bust. We seemed to be getting enough hits, but no click-throughs, advert clicks I mean, so the backing pulled out and, whatever. So here I am, back to square one, working my way up from the ground floor once more. Bruce McKenzie basically has me licking stamps.

REED

Are you sure?

JANE

Yeah, why?

REED

Why are you here, Jane? Why did Bruce McKenzie give you his invite?

JANE

(pause)

Okay, so I wondered, you know, we know each other, and I thought maybe you'd like to do an interview. It doesn't have to be epic or anything, just a few questions. Nothing really. But you know, with everything that's happening, there's an interest. I know, I should have asked first.

REED

Of course I'll do an interview.

JANE

Oh wow, that is fantastic.

REED

So long as you can promise that it won't be published by APR, or any affiliated enterprise.

Jane laughs, but then realizes Reed isn't joking.

JANE

I work for APR, Reed.

REED

Whom recently beat up the dumbest story, I mean the absolute stupidest story, and to such a degree that the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia was forced to step down. My Prime Minister. That's who you work for, Jane Jeffreys.

JANE

It was a *story*. It had to be told, Reed.

REED

Well this was fun, let's do it again some time. I best get back before no one notices I'm missing.

Reed leaves.

INT. CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

After a distance, Reed looks back at Jane following him.

JANE
Well I don't know the way back.

Reed continues.

JANE
Reed. I need a favour. Seriously.
(pause)
Introduce me to Lennard Kain.

REED
(pause)
Sure.

JANE
Or Alex Hampton! Make it Alex
Hampton!

REED
Hampton? Good luck finding Hampton.

JANE
He's here.

REED
He's here, here?

JANE
I saw him a bit earlier. Him and
a whole heap of--

REED
Where?

INT. PMO FOYER -- LATER

Reed finds the Parliament building SECURITY CHIEF, BOB.

REED
Robert. You heard anything about...

Reed sees a black limo pulling out of the driveway.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Sir?

REED
Is that him? Is that Hampton?

INT. JANE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Jane is driving.

REED
(spots the motorcade)
Is that them? Go, go!

JANE

I'm doing the speed limit!

REED

Toot! Toot!

JANE

I'm not tooting the Prime
Minister...

Reed reaches across and toots the horn.

EXT. SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY -- LATER

Ex-Prime Minister Alex Hampton is with his assistant, who leaves as Reed approaches. Everyone else is well back.

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

Making a bit of a scene aren't
you, Reed?

REED

Well it seems to take a genuine
freaking effort to talk to you
these days. You're not answering
the phone, you're not returning my
calls.

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

Talk is a thing of the past. I'm
retired from talk. I don't care
if I never say another word.

REED

And you think I made a scene?
What the FUCK, Alex. I mean, what
the fuck?

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

And there's that William Reed
eloquence we love so.

REED

I don't know where to start.

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

This is where you shake my hand
and wish me all the best.

REED

You just gave the Liberals their
biggest win since '72, and handed
Lennard Kain the keys to your
office.

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

I thought I was handing the office
to you, Will. Man, that Kain's a
wily one.

REED

You didn't need to hand the office to anyone. So you knew about the campaign against Jean-Louis -- so the fuck what? None of us wanted her to get a seat. You couldn't know she was going to flip out like that.

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

I knew something about the state of her mental health, Will.

REED

But how much did you know?

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

Just that she was taking pills for something.

REED

There you are.

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

It wasn't a huge secret, but it was why I gave a go-ahead to leak details of her past.

Reed gets it now. He paces.

REED

Alex. What were you thinking?

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

Like you said, no one wanted her to win pre-selection. Of course, no one anticipated she'd lose her mind. She was hanging over the precipice, and I pushed.

(pause)

But it doesn't matter. My indiscretions needed to come out. For my sins to be repaid in kind. Apparently Lennard Kain thought so, anyway.

REED

Lennard Kain?

EX-PM ALEX HAMPTON

Come on William, who do you think repaid my dark deeds against Simone Jean-Louis?

INT. JANE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Reed is now driving Jane's car, and *fast*.

JANE

What is it? What did he say?
Reed? Change gear! Up!

JANE
Change up! Maybe I should drive.
Reed, can we stop?

REED
You wanted a story? How about
Lennard Kain...

JANE
Lennard Kain what?

Reed DRIVES THROUGH A RED TRAFFIC LIGHT.

JANE
STOP THE CAR! Billy! You're going
to kill someone.

EXT. ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

Reed skids to a stop, gets out and whacks the car bonnet.

REED
Fuck!

JANE
Reed?

REED
He gave the story to McKenzie.

JANE
Kain? Are you sure?

REED
Fuck!

JANE
What are you going to do?

Reed walks silently for a while, then returns to the car.

REED
You know, it really is just like
riding a bike.

JANE
I can out him. Reed, I can out
him! What should I write?

REED
You can't write a word. Until I
say.

JANE
Okay.

REED
Okay, Jane?

JANE
Okay, okay!

INT. THE GREAT HALL -- LATER

The OPPOSITION LEADER is in animated, slightly tipsy conversation.

OPPOSITION LEADER

Wouldn't that be great if it were true? The countries greats minds united to debate the important issues, to find some great truth.

SOMEONE

I'm from Scotland, actually.

OPPOSITION LEADER

Countries is plural, Jeff. Let me make this clear, gentlemen. Harson Cosimo is a fool if he believes opposition serves no beneficial purpose. Opposition is where the hard yards are fought. Cosimo thinks he walks on water.

(notices that Harson
is standing with
them)

Speak of the devil. Damn, did someone draw a pentagram somewhere. Kidding, mate, kidding. I suppose I should congratulate you, Harson.

HARSON

Colin.

OPPOSITION LEADER

Although... moving from Labor Party Secretariat to Lennard Kain's Chief of Staff... I'm not sure how many would consider that a step *up*.

HARSON

Both positions look down on Opposition Leader, Colin.

Harson moves on.

ELSEWHERE

A large group has gathered around Kain, everyone enjoying the evening. ASIO Man is on the fringe of the group.

ASIO MAN

Mr Prime Minister, I wonder if you might care to share with us the government's funding intentions for sustainable energy?

PM LENNARD KAIN

Someone get this fellow a drink.

ASIO MAN

Can we expect a change in policy
now that Hampton is gone?

PM LENNARD KAIN

Perhaps. Perhaps. Though that
might be something for the next
term.

Harson steps in at this moment--

HARSON

Excuse me, sir.

Harson takes Kain aside.

PM LENNARD KAIN

What is it?

HARSON

It might be best if you avoid policy
talk. Until we've had a good chance
to go over the complete folio.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Oh come on Harson, lighten up.

Kain notices Reed approaching.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Ahh, here he is. The elusive Mr
Reed. You know, while we've been
enjoying ourselves the honorable
member for Higgins here has been
searching diligently for tax breaks
in this year's budget.

Friendly applause and cheers, including Kain.

Reed acknowledges the cheer, then approaches Harson. Reed
gives Harson the Animal Farm book from his office.

REED

Thought maybe you'd want this back.
For your new guy there.

HARSON

You knew he was running.

REED

Try not to take this the wrong
way, but go fuck yourself.

HARSON

How many of your fellow caucus
members did you speak to before
Wednesday?

REED

Heather talked to--

HARSON

Heather's a top-flight political advisor, Reed, but she's not your mother. They wanted to hear from you. They were going to make you Prime Minister and they wanted to be inspired.

REED

And you pushed Kain to get yourself into the Prime Minister's Office.

HARSON

All animals are created equal, Reed. And thanks for the book. Let me know when you want it back.

INT. AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL REVIEW OFFICE -- MORNING

Jane sits at her desk. She notices McKenzie watching her. McKenzie motions for Jane to come over.

INT. MCKENZIE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Do you know I have a brother, Jane?

JANE

No, I didn't know that.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

20th of July, 1982. I'm in the waiting room of the Royal Prince Alfred with my two sisters, one of them is also named Jane, although that's not the point of this story. I'm fondling an unopened box of Cubans I've had since I was 24, we're debating names like we think we have some say in the matter. All the while waiting for Bradley to come dancing down the corridor to announce the birth of his son.

(beat)

He never did come dancing down the corridor. Don't remember the details and don't care to, but I'll never forget the look on my brother's face.

(beat)

Your face doesn't look like my brother's face, Jane, but you didn't come dancing into work today.

JANE

Is your brother a kind and generous human being, just like his brother?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Jane.

JANE

Reed said no.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

And?

JANE

He said no to the interview.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

He said no and you said okay?
Jane, everyone says no. You never
say okay.

JANE

It was a pretty enthusiastic no.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

He says no, you say you're going
to write the story anyway. He
says be careful what you write,
you say perhaps you can answer
just this one question. He says
make my day, you say rumour has it
that... You write the story. And
under no circumstances do you say
"okay". This is journalism, kid.
You're not writing Reed's press
releases.

JANE

I'll do better next time.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Next time? No, Jane

JANE

Mr McKenzie. Please.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

This isn't for you. You know that,
right?

JANE

Reed promised me another story.
Something big. Huge even.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Jane? Are you fucking me?

JANE

No.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

(pause)

...so what is it?

JANE

Oh, he said he'd tell me in a few
days. Two days. Three days tops.

INT. REED'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Reed is in meeting with SEVERAL MINISTERS from his Labor faction. It's a casual conversation. Reed only half listens.

MINISTER #1

Did you guys hear there's a magpie loose in the executive wing?

MINISTER #2

I always said the 'NO PIGEONS' signs need to be bigger.

MINISTER #3

Someone said it got into the press room and shit everywhere.

MINISTER #1

How could they tell?

MINISTER #3

Exactly.

MINISTER #4

Should we get on topic?

MINISTER #3

Yeah. I think we should aim for June or July.

MINISTER #4

That's what I'm thinking.

MINISTER #3

Gives everyone an opportunity to see Lennard can't cut it, and still affords us, I mean Reed, time to recover lost percentages.

MINISTER #2

I wouldn't want it any later than that.

MINISTER #1

I agree.
(to Reed)
What do you think?

Reed stands.

REED

Keep talking.

INT. REED'S OUTER OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Reed approaches Heather.

REED

Can you set up a meeting with Lennard? Off the books.

REED

Maybe at the Lodge.

HEATHER BOONE

Oh?

REED

Actually, make it Harson. Not Lennard. An off the schedule meeting with Harson.

HEATHER BOONE

What about?

REED

Actually, nevermind. Nothing.

(beat)

Perhaps you can look up another quote for me? I think it was something like: *All animals are created equal.*

HEATHER

All animals are created equal, but some animals are more equal than others. You know what that's from.

REED

I do?

HEATHER

Animal Farm. You haven't read it?

REED

(getting it)

No.

HEATHER

I saw it on your bookshelf. This from Harson? I couldn't guess what he meant. We should get moving, everyone will be there by now.

REED

Everyone?

HEATHER

You're sure that meeting was nothing?

REED

I'll run into him today. Go get a good seat, I'll catch up.

HEATHER

Sure.

REED

And save a seat for me.

Heather leaves.

INT. REED'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Reed returns to his office.

REED

Time to open parliament for a new
year, gentlemen. We'll continue
this later.

The ministers leave.

Reed picks up the phone.

REED

(to phone)

Robert Tilly at security, thanks.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- MORNING

149 MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES mingle in
preparation for the opening of a new year of Parliament.
The observation decks and gallery are filled to capacity.
The media is ready. Lots of energy.

INT. HOUSE OBSERVATION DECK

Jane is talking with her friend, VANESSA (35).

Nearby, Heather has a front row seat with Sue. Heather
scans the House floor for Reed, but he's not there.

INT. REED'S OFFICE

The phone rings, but no one is there.

INT. PARLIAMENT BUILDING CORRIDOR

Reed jogs down the corridor.

Suddenly, a MAGPIE (the source of the fluttery noises Reed
heard earlier) flies past Reed.

ASIO MAN runs down the corridor after the magpie.

Reed points in the direction the bird was last seen heading.
Neither man says a word.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER

The HOUSE CLERK enters and rings a bell. There is still
no Reed as everyone else takes their place.

HOUSE CLERK

Honorable Members, please stand.

The Ministers and observers stand. The SERGEANT-AT ARMS
leads the SPEAKER in.

SERGEANT-AT ARMS
Honorable Members, the Speaker.

INT. HOUSE GALLERY

Harson watches proceedings from the gallery. Someone steps up and stands beside him -- it's Bruce McKenzie.

EDITOR MCKENZIE
Once more into the breach.

HARSON
Unto.

EDITOR MCKENZIE
What's the bloody difference?

HARSON
An education. Nice talkin' to ya,
Bruce. Love your work.

Harson moves away.

INT. HARSON'S OFFICE

Reed enters Harson's office, trying to be as casual as possible. As he searches each bookcase, he begins beat-boxing the Mission Impossible theme.

After the bookcases he moves onto the desks and cabinets.

But he can't find his Animal Farm book.

Just as Reed hits the last two notes of the MI theme--

OFFICE WORKER
What are you doing? Mr Reed?

REED
I've... got a meeting.

OFFICE WORKER
Session has started!

REED
What? What's the time? Oh damn.
Say, you haven't seen a book about
yay big?

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER

The opening ceremony continues.

USHER OF THE BLACK ROD
His Excellency, the Governor-
General, desires the attendance of
Honorable Members in the Senate
chamber forthwith.

Everyone stands and shuffles out of the chamber.

INT. CORRIDOR -- LATER

As everyone crosses the hall to the Senate, Jane wanders down the corridor a distance where she finds Reed coming the other way.

JANE
What happened?

REED
Toilet.

JANE
For forty-five minutes?

REED
It wasn't pretty.

JANE
They're just going into the Senate.
I wanted to to ask, what progress
you've made?

REED
Progress?

JANE
You've done nothing?

REED
Oh, that thing. I've started
inquiries. I've initiated
investigations. Really out of my
hands now, I couldn't say when
I'll get an answer.

JANE
You must be able to do something.
You should tell Harson Cosimo.

REED
I need to know that Kain really is
guilty of what he's accused of
before I go to the next level.

JANE
Hampton lied?

REED
Look, I need to go.

JANE
Oh, can I use your name? Um, I
told my friend - my friend Vanessa -
I could get her permission to shoot
here next week.

REED
Shoot? What?

JANE

They want to shoot some scenes for
Under The Cover in the building.

REED

Let me know if you need strings
tautened.

JANE

Forget the strings, I can do that.
Just tell me I can give the story
to my editor.

REED

You know, now I really do need to
go to the toilet.

Reed heads towards the Senate.

JANE

Reed.

REED

It'll take longer than a day, Jane.

INT. SENATE GALLERY -- LATER

The Governor-General presents his opening speech. Jane
enters the back of the gallery, approaches her editor.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

You spoke to Reed?

JANE

Only briefly.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Did he give you the story?

JANE

No, he won't say what it is yet.
(off his look)
I'm going to see him again tonight.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Yeah, he's playing games, Janey.
Unless he hands you story of the
flamin' year, you press him for
that interview. Press hard.
Remember what I said about 'no'?
Either way, I expect to read words
by Wednesday. Alright Jane?

JANE

I'll do my best.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Good girl.

Jane leaves.

APR JOURNALIST

What's she onto?

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Reed's trying to get into her pants
and she's got no clue.

APR JOURNALIST CASEY

She asked me earlier if I had any
idea who gave you the Hampton story.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Did she?

APR JOURNALIST CASEY

What do you make of that?

Down on the Senate floor, McKenzie watches as Reed slips
quietly into the chamber.

EXT. CALLAN PARK -- DAY

Jane drives into the Callan Park Mental Hospital.

INT. CALLAN PARK -- DAY

The hospital is filled with patients, workers, and visitors.

Jane approaches a nurse's booth.

JANE

Hello. I'd like to speak to a
Simone Jean-Louis. I was told
she's on this floor.

NURSE

Are you a relation?

JANE

Not exactly.

NURSE

How much less than exactly, dear?

JANE

I'm from APR.

NURSE

From what?

JANE

Australian Political Review.

NURSE

Maybe you can start again. Who
are you?

JANE

A journalist. I'd like to speak
to Simone Jean-Louis. I think I'm
saying that right.

NURSE

No.

JANE

Jon-Loueese?

NURSE

No, I mean you'll need to gain permission from the family to see patients on this ward. The front desk will be able to help you.

JANE

Oh. Okay. Thanks.

NURSE

No worries.

Jane walks back towards the lift, but then turns around and ghosts past the nurse by walking behind a family.

INT. SECURITY -- LATER

Jane comes to a security door that leads into the ward.

JANE

I'm here to see Simone Jean-Louis.

ORDERLY

Sign in here. I'll take your purse.

A MAN (40) leans across and looks at Jane's signature.

MAN

Jane Jeffreys?

JANE

Yes.

SIMONE'S BROTHER

Why are you asking to see my sister?

JANE

You're Simone Jean-Louis's brother?

SIMONE'S BROTHER

That'd make her my sister.

JANE

I'm sorry. I just wanted to ask her a few questions. Won't take a couple of minutes. Honest.

SIMONE'S BROTHER

(to guard)

Give the lady her purse, she's not staying.

JANE

Well hang on.

SIMONE'S BROTHER

No, your kind's done enough damage.

JANE

My kind?

SIMONE'S BROTHER

Fucking journalists.

JANE

No no, I'm not a journalist.

SIMONE'S BROTHER

What are you about then?

JANE

I'm... an assistant for the Senate Ethics Committee.

SIMONE'S BROTHER

And?

Jane takes Simone's brother aside.

JANE

We're trying to determine how Bruce McKenzie discovered that the Prime Minister knew about your sister's condition. There are gaps in his story, and we just want to be sure there was nothing unethical in his doings.

SIMONE'S BROTHER

Unethical? Jesus Christ, lady. Fucking politicians.

JANE

Oh, I'm not a politician. I'm just an assistant. Really more an aide at that.

SIMONE'S BROTHER

Well you don't want to talk to Simone. I'm the one Bruce McKenzie talked to. What do you want to know?

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: a low-budget action-drama television show.

FOUR ROUGH BLOKES walk along a footpath, each carrying flowers. They enter a jewelry store.

STORE OWNER

Can I help you gentlemen?

Three of the blokes toss the flowers to reveal guns.

BLOKE #1

Yeah, mate, you can. What can you recommend for a tenth anniversary?

Bloke #2 smashes a cabinet, throws the jewelry into a bag.

BLOKE #3

You move'an'I'll blow your head off!

The forth bloke - a BURLY GUY (30) - now drops his flowers to reveal two police pistols. He aims them at his "mates".

BURLY GUY

You fellas have the right to remain silent. Or else I'll bloody shoot ya.

The store owner slowly crouches behind his counter.

BLOKE #1

Gavin? What the hell, man?

BLOKE #2

Gav?

BURLY GUY

Undercover Detective Guy Watson to you. Now put down the guns real careful like.

BLOKE #3

Hey guys, he's only got two guns and there's three of--

Guy Watson lifts his boot straight into the jaw of Bloke #3, drops him to the floor.

BURLY GUY

As I was saying; real careful like.

Suddenly the store owner appears from behind the counter, this time holding a shotgun.

STORE OWNER

Bastards!

He OPENS FIRE--

And it cuts straight to the equally tacky opening sequence for the television show: UNDER THE COVER

INT. REED'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Reed watches this with an expression of disbelief. Jane is laying out some RESEARCH on a table.

REED

That's bloody brilliant.

JANE

You really are still in there
somewhere.

REED

What does that mean?

Jane takes a SCRIPT from her bag, throws it to Reed.

JANE

They're shooting this at your place
of business this week. Be nice to
them, please.

Reed flicks through the script as Jane begins laying out
some RESEARCH on a table.

REED

You said you know the producer? I
don't understand why you're not
writing for them.

JANE

It's not really my sort of thing.

REED

This says 'Prime Minister'?

JANE

One of the characters. That's the
character and the dialogue he says.

REED

Is there a Deputy Prime Minister?

JANE

No.

REED

And Lennard Kain is doing this?

JANE

Reed! An actor plays the Prime
Minister.

REED

Ah. Yes, that makes more sense.

JANE

I think they've got John Howard to
play the PM.

REED

What?

JANE

The actor, Reed. Are you screwing
with me?

(beat)

Okay, here's what I found today.

REED
I'm hungry, let's eat.

Reed puts on a jacket.

JANE
I want to show you what I found.

REED
Do you know who leaked the story?

JANE
No, but--

REED
Let's eat. Can I drive?

EXT. REED'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

They approach Jane's car. Jane sees the TELSTRA TOWER (a large communications tower/restaurant) on the hill.

JANE
Can we try the Tower?

REED
Let's not.

JANE
Reed.

REED
What did you mean when you said
I'm *still in there*?

JANE
You know. I've seen you on TV...

REED
And?

JANE
You're... so prepared, you know?
So boring and so bloody stiff. I
didn't know what you were going to
be like now. But I can see you're
still in there somewhere. You're
still you.

REED
I'm me?

JANE
You are very you.

REED
Okay. You haven't been talking to
Kate have you?

INT. THE BOATHOUSE RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Reed and Jane eat dinner.

JANE

I don't know how you fly all over the country when you can't even dine at the Tower, just because it's on a hill.

REED

I only ever sit in the middle aisle, and I pretend I'm on a train.

JANE

And that works?

REED

It must.

A waiter tops up their drinks.

WAITER

Are you ready for deserts, sir?

REED

Yes, thank you Ashley.

JANE

(quick-fire, almost nonsensical)

So, what I found. I talked to Simone Jean-Louie's brother. He's the one Bruce talked to! I thought it was Simone, but it wasn't. He, ah, the brother I mean, told Bruce that Alex Hampton had apologized to the Jean-Louie family, after what happened, and apparently Bruce was all like, WHOA! Hellooo.

(beat)

But the brother didn't call Bruce, so how'd Bruce know to contact the brother? Well the brother said Bruce mentioned a date, which happened to be the day the Prime Minister visited. You know, this would have been whole lot easier at your place. I made charts. But I think it's pretty obvious Bruce was given a date and a name, and bingo.

The waiter brings deserts.

REED

It doesn't matter, it wasn't Kain.

JANE

What?

REED

It wasn't Kain. Can't have been Kain. You should try that with more of the sauce.

JANE

Reed, how do you know the leak wasn't Lennard Kain?

REED

It's really quite obvious, I'm not even sure why we didn't see. Kain wasn't next in line for the top job. He wasn't even in the top three. Lennard Kain was a project of Harson Comiso, and Harson didn't know about the Prime Minister's indiscretions.

JANE

You have to ask Lennard Kain if he gave APR the story.

REED

Why?

JANE

To be sure.

REED

Jane, he's a politician. Even if he did it with a room of witnesses, he's not going to admit to it.

JANE

See, I read on the Internet that if you confront someone with a similar story, I mean similar to something you think they did, but don't know if they did or not, I read that you can tell from their unconscious reaction to your story if they really did what you're wondering if they did.

REED

And that's on the Internet?

JANE

It made more sense on the site. I need to write something, Reed.

REED

You have a pen?

JANE

I mean I have to write the story.

REED

I'm saying let's do that damned interview.

JANE

What? No, that doesn't work. My editor knows there's another story.

REED

Excuse me?

JANE

He doesn't know *what*. Even that Hampton thinks it was Kain is a story.

REED

What if I slip you something from the budget? A juicy tidbit. Will that do?

JANE

I don't know.

CHEF

(interrupting)

Enjoying your meals?

REED

As always, chef.

CHEF

Give it to me: out of ten?

REED

I think a 9.85 this week.

CHEF

Ohh. Ooh. A turncoat in our midsts!

REED

It's just I'd hate to see you rest on your laurels, chef.

JANE

Mine's a 10. All of it.

CHEF

You've found yourself a sweet plum here, Reed.

REED

She's a journalist.

CHEF

Is she just? Hey, you know what he said to me once? *I hate journalists. The shallowest people on the face of the earth.*

REED

I was misquoting Yeats, but I'm sure that won't matter.

EXT. THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL -- MORNING

Kain presents medals to some MEDAL RECIPIENTS. A large gallery watches on, the press are all around.

LATER

As the crowd disperses--

PRESS SECRETARY

If everyone could make their way back to the forecourt. There will be a photo-op in thirty minutes.

JOURNALIST

(catching Kain off-guard)

Sir? Can you confirm that Labor will be introducing civil union legislation this term?

PM LENNARD KAIN

I'm sorry?

JOURNALIST

There's some budget information on the APR website that seems to suggest--

PM LENNARD KAIN

Yes. Actually, we are...

JOURNALIST

And this will include same-sex couples?

Harson, realizing what has happened, prompts Madsen--

PRESS SECRETARY

Questions will be taken after photos.

JOURNALIST

If I may--

PRESS SECRETARY

After the photos.

The journalist leaves.

HARSON

I wish you hadn't said that.
(to Madsen)

Can you get her back?

PM LENNARD KAIN

So who is it?

HARSON

Who leaked it?

PM LENNARD KAIN

I told you we're taking water.

HARSON

Any one of ninety people from Family and Community Services, Human Services, and Treasury.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Treasury. William's office.

HARSON

It wasn't Reed.

PM LENNARD KAIN

No, I think it was. He's got something up his arse. You can't tell me you haven't noticed.

HARSON

I may actually know what's had Reed on edge lately. A girl.

PM LENNARD KAIN

William?

HARSON

Apparently he took a date to the party. I didn't see her myself, but there are stories going around.

PM LENNARD KAIN

A girl?

HARSON

We need to talk about taking civil unions off the table. For now. We don't have the numbers in the Senate.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Who switched?

HARSON

The Liberals have been doing the rounds, making the most of Hampton's exit. We're not supposed to know anything about this, so don't mention it.

PM LENNARD KAIN

How do we know about it?

HARSON

We have a *fifth column*.

PM LENNARD KAIN

We have a what?

HARSON

An insider working on their staff.

PM LENNARD KAIN
You're joking?

Madsen and the journalist return.

HARSON
Nadia. Could you repeat the question? We're wondering if we misheard...

INT. AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL REVIEW OFFICE -- DAY

Jane types at her desk. The coffee mugs are back, but Jane is too busy to care.

EDITOR MCKENZIE
Jane.

JANE
Good morning, Mr McKenzie. I was early today. I don't know if you noticed. Practically danced into work.

Bruce McKenzie pulls a chair close to Jane and reads from a printout:

EDITOR MCKENZIE
...that APR would attempt to construct news out of an old, incomplete white paper on civil unions only serves to show, once again, the anti-government position of the paper's editor since Labor took office...

JANE
No, that's not right!

EDITOR MCKENZIE
Your boyfriend used me to get a rise out of the Liberals.

JANE
He's not my boyfriend.

McKenzie moves closer, face-to-face.

EDITOR MCKENZIE
Hear me, Jane. I know you've got something. I wish you trusted me enough ask for advice, direction, but I s'pose we're still like two second cousins meeting at a family reunion. I trust your judgment, Janey. You're as good as anyone I've seen, no smoke blowin'. You've got an eye for details no one else even knows are there, and I wanted you to know I noticed *that*. You can do this.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

You have my confidence. Bring it to me when you're ready.

JANE

I will.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

Now, I want a face-to-face with William Reed by the end of day. No excuses this time.

INT. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Kain meets with the security chief, Bob.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB

I've seen three Prime Minister's come and go, sir, and in my experience the only way to put a halt to leaks is to cease creating information that needs to be kept from someone.

PM LENNARD KAIN

You can't test some paper or ink? Match it to an office. My wife said they do that now.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB

It may be possible to match to an individual printer, but as I told Reed, you would need to subpoena APR for the material--

PM LENNARD KAIN

You've spoken to William about this?

SECURITY CHIEF BOB

He has asked me to look into recent events.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Well, let me know what you find.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB

I'll see what I can do, sir.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Thanks, Bob. Appreciate your time.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB

Of course, sir.

PM LENNARD KAIN

And just between you and I, I'd suggest you keep one good eye on William Reed.

Bob leaves and Sue enters. Kain picks up a small WEBSTER'S BOOK ON ENGLISH.

PM LENNARD KAIN

When an active sentence with an indirect object is recast in the passive, the indirect object can take on the role of subject in the passive sentence.

SECRETARY SUE

Sir?

PM LENNARD KAIN

Does that make any sense to you?

SECRETARY SUE

Not really.

PM LENNARD KAIN

I didn't think so.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Kain hides the book.

HARSON

Apparently there's a bird in the building. It's bathing in the Reflective Pool.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Bob says that we can stop leaks by not writing anything worth leaking.

HARSON

I can't fault that thinking.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Who is that *third leg* you mentioned? Is it worth asking if he's heard anything?

HARSON

Third leg? Oh. A *fifth column*, sir. In the 1930s when Nationalist General Emilio Mola Vidal marched--

PM LENNARD KAIN

Vidal marched his four army columns on Madrid, and referred to the militant supporters behind the walls of Madrid as his *fifth column*.

HARSON

Of course he was Spanish so he'd have called them his *quinta columna*. Did you look that up, sir?

PM LENNARD KAIN

You couldn't let me have it, could you?

HARSON

He was an aide in the Shadow Treasurer's office. And I use past tense because he was fired, after a manner, last night.

PM LENNARD KAIN

A shame.

HARSON

Yes. He was useful while he lasted.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- DAY

Parliament is in session. Reed watches as the new members make their first speeches.

SPEAKER

Before I call the honorable member for Blair, I remind the House that this is the honorable member's first speech and I ask the House to extend to him the usual courtesies.

TIM FINLEY

(standing)

Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is with great honor that I stand before you today in representation of Blair, my home electorate for all twenty-five years of my life...

Reed watches Kain, not really listening. But then he listens to the words--

TIM FINLEY

...It is also with unashamed pride that I am able to inform the House that I am the third generation of Finley to represent the Labor Party and the fine people of Blair in the great and noble establishment that is the Australian House of Representatives. Like my father, and his father before him, I pledge my every effort to support the Australian ideals of fairness, honesty, virtue, and to uphold the honour of our representative democracy.

These last lines burn into Reed. He stands and leaves the chamber.

INT. HARSON'S OFFICE -- DAY

Harson flips through a large pile of WOMAN'S MAGAZINES. Secretary Sue throws Harson a curious glance, but says nothing. Sue's phone rings.

SECRETARY SUE

(into phone)

Hello? Yes. I can find out for you. One moment please.

(to Harson)

Who's on the back of the five-dollar note?

HARSON

There are some fifteen countries that use a five-dollar note.

SECRETARY SUE

The Australian one?

HARSON

There are currently three issues of the Australian five-dollar note in circulation.

SECRETARY SUE

Pick one. Please.

HARSON

Catherine Helen Spence.

SECRETARY SUE

(into phone)

Catherine Helen Spence.

HARSON

Did you know the word *dollar* comes from the Scottish town of Dollar?

Harson finds what he is looking for: a photograph from the party of Reed with a young woman--

The woman is Jane, just as she was about to spin her blouse around at the party, but her face is obscured in the image. Harson tears out the page.

A YOUNG ASSISTANT arrives.

YOUNG ASSISTANT

Mr Cosimo? Got a journalist here asking to speak to the PM, and I can't find Mr Madsen.

HARSON

Who's asking?

YOUNG ASSISTANT

A Miss Jane Jeffreys.

HARSON

Jane Jeffreys? Did she say where she's from?

YOUNG ASSISTANT

I think she said APR. Should I ask her to wait?

HARSON

No, I'll talk to her.

INT. HARSON'S OFFICE -- LATER

Reed arrives.

REED

Where is Harson?

SECRETARY SUE

He's just popped down to the main committee room. He won't be long I shouldn't think.

INT. OUTSIDE COMMITTEE ROOM

Harson approaches Jane. Jane is admiring the Tom Roberts painting ("The Big Picture").

HARSON

It's a remarkable piece of art.

JANE

Mr Cosimo?

HARSON

My favorite piece in the building as a matter of fact. It's interesting that Tom Roberts painted himself into the image, as though wanting to make himself part of the story, yet just one hundred years later most people recognize his painting but don't know of the event it depicts.

JANE

The opening of Australia's first parliament.

HARSON

That's right, Miss Jeffreys.

JANE

I know they said to wait down there, somewhere down there it was. But I thought, you know, while I'm here I'd be stupid not to have a look.

HARSON

No, that's fine.

Reed enters the corridor with a COFFEE in hand. Reed sees Jane talking to Harson and stops suddenly, SPILLING COFFEE DOWN HIS SHIRT. He stands there, frozen. Jane notices Reed, but keeps talking to Harson.

JANE

I'm just waiting for an interview with the Prime Minister.

HARSON

Now, you can't just walk in off the street and have a sit-down with the Prime Minister. Just what sort of journalism does Bruce McKenzie teach over there?

JANE

Well, more truthfully, I really just wanted to invite Mr Kain to the filming. They're filming *Under The Cover* here. Tomorrow. In this building I mean.

HARSON

But that's not what you said.

JANE

Bruce McKenzie teaches us to aim high.

HARSON

I'm sure the Prime Minister will appreciate the invitation. Thank you.

JANE

It's at six anyway. Tomorrow.

HARSON

If he has some free minutes I'll suggest he drop in.

JANE

That's great. Well, nice talking to you. I better get back to it.

Reed starts walking again as Jane leaves Harson. As they pass--

JANE

You spilled your drink.

Harson happens to see this exchange out the corner of his eye, and it intrigues him.

INT. PARLIAMENT CAR PARK -- LATER

Jane approaches her car. Reed steps out of the shadows.

REED

Why were you talking to Harson?

JANE

Reed? Harson is actually quite a nice man. A bit controlled, yet surprisingly pleasant.

REED

What were you doing?

JANE

Trying to get an interview with the Prime Minister.

REED

You were not!

JANE

I was going to hit him with it.

(interview voice)

Rumour has it, Mr Prime Minister, that someone from within the Labor Party leaked Hampton to the press. Do you know who it was?

The words echo around the car park.

REED

Shhh. Jane.

JANE

Don't worry, I never got past Cosimo.

REED

You're serious?

JANE

Someone has to wear the pants.

REED

Jane, Cosimo can see a light on in a building two kilometers away and figure out who turned it on by pure deduction. You do not play politics with Harson Cosimo.

JANE

I used my backup story, played it smooth as. He had no clue.

REED

You're insane. I've just realized, you're insane.

Jane opens her car door.

JANE

Come on, let's go get you out of that shirt.

INT. REED'S HOUSE -- EVENING

Reed and Jane are finishing dinner.

JANE

You know that's why they were never going to make you Prime Minister?

REED

Why?

JANE

You're not married.

REED

Okay. You know, of the several dozen theories I've heard in this past week, that is by far the dumbest.

JANE

You're still in that shirt.

Reed is still wearing the coffee-stained shirt.

JANE

Come here.

Jane starts taking Reed's shirt off.

REED

I know how to change a shirt.

Reed goes into his bedroom. Jane stands outside but can see him through the open door.

JANE

Why didn't we ever get together?

REED

Wasn't one of us too involved in their career? And the other was exactly the same. And I happen to know you had a thing for Steve.

JANE

Steve?

REED

Courtney told me.

JANE

Courtney told you I had a thing for Steven?

Reed takes off his shirt.

REED

She didn't need to say who. Steve was the only guy you knew.

REED

(beat)

Other than me I mean...

Jane looks away.

REED

Jane, did you have a thing for me?

JANE

(beat)

Don't be silly.

REED

Do you *have* a thing for me?

Jane turns, finds Reed standing right there, bare-chested.

JANE

You're not the boy I knew then.

REED

But you said I'm in here somewhere.
How do I find my way out?

Jane kisses Reed. Reed returns the kiss.

They move into the bedroom. This is awkward, neither player entirely sure what they're doing or what the other is thinking. Jane starts unbuttoning her shirt.

REED

Do you want the light on or off?

JANE

What's the benefit of having it on?

REED

So you want it off?

JANE

What do you want?

REED

I'm good either way.

Reed goes to take down his pants, but hesitates. So Jane hesitates. Then Jane continues tentatively, so Reed pulls down his pants. And then Jane stops.

REED

I'm confused. Are we doing this?

JANE

Yes.

REED

You're sure?

JANE
Can you look the other way?

REED
What?

JANE
I'm not wearing a bra under this.

REED
Okay...

Jane suddenly notices the time.

JANE
Oh God!

Jane rushes back to the living room.

REED
I know it's been a while, but I
remember it being more fun.
(Jane is collecting
her stuff)
You're leaving?

JANE
You are too. We've got a meeting.

REED
Okay...

EXT. THE LODGE -- NIGHT

Harson parks his car and walks to the Prime Minister's
residence. Kain is at the door in his pajamas.

INT. THE LODGE -- NIGHT

Kain and Harson are in the dining room. Kain's wife is at
the doorway.

KAIN'S WIFE
Would you like something to drink?

HARSON
No. Thank you. I'm sorry for the
intrusion. I won't stay for long.

Kain's wife leaves.

PM LENNARD KAIN
She's none too comfortable with
all this yet. Can't say I'm all
that comfortable sitting here in
my pajamas now that we're on that.

Harson places two images on the table. The first is the
magazine photograph of Reed with Jane.

HARSON

Reed with Jane Jeffreys at last week's event.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Jane Jeffreys?

The second is an old photograph: a young Jane Jeffreys working at a computer, and a correspondingly young Reed can be seen in the background.

HARSON

Jane Jeffreys as editor of the Monash student newspaper. That's Reed in the background.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Was she his date?

HARSON

She works for Bruce McKenzie.

PM LENNARD KAIN

(getting it)

I swear, I'm going to hang him from the flagpole, Harson. I'm bringing-- Here's what's going to happen. I'm going to reinstate capital punishment and hang his goddamn neck from the goddamn flag pole.

HARSON

She's at his residence again tonight.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Didn't I tell you! Did I not tell you?

HARSON

Will you let me handle this, sir?

PM LENNARD KAIN

Promise you'll hang him from the flagpole.

HARSON

I'm afraid not. This needs some delicate handling.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Do your delicate whatever. Then bring me his head.

EXT. BOTANICAL GARDENS CAR PARK -- NIGHT

Jane's car drives into the car park. Jane and Reed get out and try to keep warm in the dark, damp gardens. There's an awkward space between them.

JANE

It's cold.

REED

It's brisk, I wouldn't call it cold.

(pause)

What are we doing here?

JANE

Someone wants to have a word.

REED

Is it Bruce McKenzie?

(pause)

You know, if you ever want a change of career, you can be my driver.

(off Jane's look)

I'm not joking, you drive almost as well as anyone I know.

JANE

I know you're not joking.

REED

Jane. I am joking. You know I'm kidding, right?

JANE

Reed, what happened with that stuff you gave me? Did you give it to me just to get a rise out of the Liberals?

REED

Hmm?

JANE

My name was on that article!

REED

What do you mean?

JANE

What do I mean... Harson's office rejected the whole story outright.

REED

So... Okay, I'm guessing your boss isn't coming to simply say thanks. Give me the keys.

JANE

No.

REED

Give me the keys!

JANE

Let's hear him out.

REED

McKenzie's going to yell at me,
Jane. And I'm big enough to admit
that I don't like being yelled at.
So it's just going to be awkward.

JANE

Maybe you need someone to yell at
you.

A car approaches. Reed walks into the gardens.

JANE

(holding Reed's arm)
Reed! Please, Reed!

Reed shrugs Jane off and disappears. Jane picks up a stone
and throws it at Reed with a scream as McKenzie's car turns
into the car park.

INT. REED'S OUTER OFFICE -- MORNING

Heather sorts through paperwork. Harson enters.

HARSON

Where is he?

HEATHER

Good morning, Harson. William?
I'm not sure.

HARSON

You've misplaced our Deputy Prime
Minister?

HEATHER

I'm not his mother.

HARSON

(beat)
I want to see him in my office. I
don't mean after lunch, I don't
mean when he feels like it. Now.

INT. PARLIAMENT BUILDING CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

As Harson strides back to his office he hears a FLUTTERY
SOUND behind him -- he looks around, but sees nothing.

A moment later he hears the sound again -- he turns just
as the MAGPIE FLIES STRAIGHT INTO HIS FACE. Harson and
the bird go down.

INT. PMO CORRIDOR -- DAY

Reed walks the corridor to Harson's office. He sees ASIO
MAN TALKING WITH ONE OF KAIN'S ADVISORS in a side office.

Harson steps out of his own office to meet Reed. Harson
has a LARGE SPLINT across his nose.

INT. HARSON'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Reed follows Harson in, greets Sue.

REED
(re: splint)
What's with the...

SECRETARY SUE
Would you boys like a drink?

HARSON
No.

REED
I'd love one, thanks Sue. A plain
tea. Do you have any bickies?

SECRETARY SUE
We've got some Monte Carlos and
Granita.

REED
Are either of those Australian
made?

SECRETARY SUE
It doesn't say.

REED
Then I'll try a Granita, thanks
Sue. It doesn't necessarily sound
Australian, but at least it doesn't
sound un-Australian.
(to Harson)
But seriously, what happened? Did
Lennard try to cut himself loose?

Sue gives Reed his tea and biscuit.

HARSON
Could you give us a few minutes.

Sue leaves. Harson watches Reed sip his tea.

HARSON
Have you got something you'd like
to say?

REED
A topic of my choosing?

HARSON
I'm giving you a chance to get
something off your chest.

Reed sips his tea.

REED
Well. Now that you mention it...
Why do Americans call petrol, gas?

REED

They know it's a liquid, right?

Harson tips Reed's tea into a potted plant.

Reed stands, starts to leave.

REED

All right.

HARSON

Sit down.

(beat)

Are you leaking classified--

REED

Fuck you.

HARSON

Are you leaking classified documents
to APR?

Harson places a PHOTOGRAPH on the desk, image side down.

REED

Now why would I participate in
this infested cesspool of back-
stabbing and bullshit you and Kain
and everyone else here wades in
day after day?

HARSON

Because that's what this is, Reed.
You think you got to where you are
with no one hurt? Is that what
you think? I buried a continent
of bodies to put you were you are.
The killing fields. Some of them
good people, good politicians,
friends. You do it because that's
what this is. The inveterate nature
of politics. This is Darwinian
evolution in real-time - thousands
of hands grasping for the top, and
only the strongest survive. And
that's how must be, because only
the strongest are good enough.
Everyone else is compost for
society, a couple of words in an
historian's notebook a hundred
years from now.

REED

And Lennard Kain is your top branch?

HARSON

No, he's not. Absolutely not.

REED

Well, you sure fooled me. And the
rest of caucus.

HARSON

You honestly believe my hopes and dreams for the party rest on having Lennard Kain in the office? I've got this guy who went from Education Minister to Prime Minister while the rest of us were blinking, who hates to be handled, but I have to handle him because he's just drowning. He's just drowning. I wanted you in that office, William Reed. Putting up Kain as an opposition was just to make your win look like a win.

Harson flips the photo over -- it's the OLD PHOTOGRAPH OF JANE AND REED.

HARSON

Time's up.

REED

Jane Jeffreys.

HARSON

I know who she is. I know everything about her.

REED

I don't know if I like what I'm being accused of.

HARSON

What am I accusing you of? Tell me. I'm curious.

REED

I know her. In fact I think she took some documents from my house.

HARSON

Are you saying she stole the budget draft?

REED

I think so. I don't know. I can't prove anything, but that might be how APR got them. I should have said something, but I'm not one to throw baseless accusations around.

Harson tries to take this in.

Suddenly there is a LOUD CRASH and the SOUND OF PEOPLE WRESTLING in the corridor.

INT. PMO CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Harson and Reed step out to see ASIO Man being wrestled by TWO SECURITY GUARDS. Security Chief Bob is also there.

They CRASH against the plaster wall, leaving a large dent.

ASIO Man starts yelling obscenities, and then things like "I am not resisting arrest!".

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Take it easy, fella.

They drag ASIO Man away.

ASIO MAN
YOU'RE POLLUTING YOUR CHILDREN!
REPEAT AFTER ME: MOTHER EARTH IS
NOT A COMMODITY! MOTHER EARTH...

Everyone from the PMO is in the corridor. Security Bob approaches Harson.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Sir.

HARSON
What's going on?

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Do you know that man?

HARSON
He's a secretary from Aboriginal
Affairs. I don't recall his name.

ADVISOR #1
That's actually Keith from the
Department of Environment and
Heritage.

ADVISOR #2
I've been meeting with him all
week about the earthquake in
Bangladesh.

REED
I've never seen him before.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Okay.

HARSON
Who is he?

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
We're not sure yet.

REED
(thinking quick)
Is he a journalist? Is he the
leak?

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Couldn't say yet, sir, but I'd be
prepared for something in the paper.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
He didn't do this for the work
experience.

Bob leaves. Everyone returns to their offices.

REED
(to Harson)
So you'll get back to me about
that gas thing?

INT. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- LATER

Kain and Harson meet with Security Bob.

PM LENNARD KAIN
You say he's done this before?

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Yes sir. He has been jailed twice
before for similar actions. He
"worked" at Jabaluka for six months,
and the other incident was in the
office of the Environment Minister
in Western Australia. He will be
serving time for this, and it will
be an extended term.

PM LENNARD KAIN
Incredible.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
His name is Weatherson. James
Weatherson. He has ties with
various environmental pressure
groups, but it looks like this was
just a stunt.

PM LENNARD KAIN
How did you find him out?

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
You asked me to look into the recent
leaks.

PM LENNARD KAIN
I did? Oh yes, I did.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
We cross-referenced security logs
with passes. It was immediately
clear there were discrepancies.

HARSON
More to the point, how did you *not*
find him for so long?

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Security procedures are being
reviewed as we speak, sir.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
And I will of course offer my
resignation if requested.

PM LENNARD KAIN
I hope it doesn't come to that,
Robert.

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Thank you, sir.

Bob starts to leave.

HARSON
Robert. Do you know if Bruce
McKenzie from APR has tried to
make contact with this Weatherson?

SECURITY CHIEF BOB
Yes sir. They met this morning.

Bob leaves.

PM LENNARD KAIN
I think it might be best if our
head of security resigns later
this week.

HARSON
Yes.

INT. PARLIAMENT LOBBY -- AFTERNOON

The large lobby is filled with groups of school children,
tourists, tour guides, and families large and small.

Reed sits alone on a bench, reveling in the expressions of
awe as people come through the entrance for the first time.

People recognize him -- some point or politely look away
while others call out his name and wave. Some even approach
to shake his hand or have their photo taken with him.

Reed sits there, enjoying it all, taking it all in.

Reed stands and walks to the entrance, looks out into the
light of day. As he begins to walk outside--

A COUPLE OF GUYS carrying heavy camera equipment enter and
put their gear down. They're followed by Jane's friend,
Vanessa.

VANESSA
Hi.

REED
Hello.

VANESSA
Reed isn't it?

REED

Yes.

VANESSA

See, that was supposed to be funny.
You're like famous and stuff.

REED

I guess I am.

VANESSA

You know Jane, right?

REED

I'm sorry, who are you?

VANESSA

Vanessa. Jane's friend. She was
supposed to meet us but I can't
find her.

REED

Yeah I'm sorry, interviews are
arranged through my office.

VANESSA

Ah, we're from Under The Cover.

REED

Jane's friend Vanessa from the TV
show!

VANESSA

That's me! We're shooting here
today. I really hate to ask, but
is there any chance you could point
us in the right direction?

REED

Absolutely.

INT. OFFICE SET -- AFTERNOON

The Under The Cover shoot is set up. The ACTORS rehearse
with the DIRECTOR. Reed observes from the back--

REED

No no no...

DIRECTOR

Hmm?

REED

This is all wrong.

The director looks at Vanessa.

REED

I don't mean to emasculate you,
Sean wasn't it?

REED

But the Prime Minister doesn't know his aide is a terrorist, right?

DIRECTOR

No.

REED

So what if there were a much more Machiavellian means by which the aide could go about this evil deed?

DIRECTOR

I appreciate the interest, sir, but a dozen writers have been polishing this script for almost a week and, you know, you change just one thing and the whole intricate story-line collapses right in front of you.

REED

I understand that, Sean, I do. But let's change it anyway.

DIRECTOR

Oh, I don't know, Mr Reed. There are whole levels of complexity in this script that even I don't understand. Vanessa?

The Director looks to Vanessa for a rescue.

VANESSA

I can promise you a story-advisor credit if the idea's any good.

INT. CORRIDOR -- AFTERNOON

Kain, Sue, and a portion of Kain's staff walk towards the Under The Cover shoot. Kain notices something odd a short distance down a side corridor.

PM LENNARD KAIN

What's that?

They approach the strange arrangement of colors on the floor of the corridor--

There is a miniature flower wreath against the wall, some candles, and dozens of small white paper crosses sprawling out into the corridor.

Sue kneels to read an inscription on the wreath.

SECRETARY SUE

In loving memory. We'll miss you.

PM LENNARD KAIN

In loving memory? He broke his nose, he's not dead.

SECRETARY SUE

I think it's for the bird, sir.

INT. OFFICE SET

Everyone sits around waiting for the Prime Minister. The Kain Impersonator (out of costume and makeup) has arrived and is chatting with the actors.

REED

You should ask Jane to write some stories.

VANESSA

Jane's written a lot of scripts, but they're not really up to that quality level we're looking for.

Reed moves away.

Jane arrives, approaches Vanessa.

JANE

I'm so sorry I'm late. I was busy being fired.

VANESSA

You were fired?

JANE

(spots Reed)

I have to go. Do you need me?

VANESSA

No, we're fine, Jane. Do what you have to do. You'll call me?

REED

Jane. Jane, Jane Jeffreys!

Jane leaves. Reed follows to the door, but Jane is running away.

REED

Jane! I did what you said! Jane?

Jane is gone.

VANESSA

Okay everyone. Everyone, please! The Prime Minister will be here shortly, can everyone quickly get into your positions for a take.

DIRECTOR

Thanks, everyone. We'll do two runs with this setup and then go straight to coverage.

Kain and his entourage arrives.

VANESSA

Welcome, Mr Prime Minister.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Please, as you were everyone. I'm just here to watch, I don't want to get in the way.

VANESSA

You're not in the way at all, sir. We appreciate your interest in what we do.

PM LENNARD KAIN

I'm looking forward to it.

The producer introduces the director and then each of the actors, describing their roles of: PRIME MINISTER, PERSONAL AIDE, and the show's protagonist: UNDERCOVER DETECTIVE GUY WATSON.

PM LENNARD KAIN

(to ACTOR JOHN HOWARD)

And you're me?

ACTOR JOHN HOWARD

Yes sir.

KAIN IMPERSONATOR

Four acting Prime Minister's in the same room at the same time. This is better than planetary bloody alignment.

DIRECTOR

Okay, everyone, lets do this. Take your places please. Sir, if you wouldn't mind standing over there.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Lights please. Mobile phones OFF. If your phone goes off you will be exiled from the studio, regardless of who you are. I am not joking.

Everyone in the studio checks their phone, including Kain.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Please be absolutely quiet while the cameras are rolling. No talking, coughing, laughing, whispering, movement, or loud breathing. Roll cameras.

A GAFFER steps in and snaps the marker.

DIRECTOR

Action.

THE ACTORS PLAY THE SCENE:

PERSONAL AIDE

If the press finds out about the fifth bomb they'll know that you knew about the fourth bomb, sir.

PRIME MINISTER

That's a risk I'm prepared to take, Rodney. A risk I must take.

PERSONAL AIDE

But that would destroy our government. We'd be stuffed.

PRIME MINISTER

Rodney, I love you like a son, but I am the Prime Minister of Australia and you must address me with the respect deserving of my office.

PERSONAL AIDE

It won't happen again sir.

PRIME MINISTER

Okay. I've got a meeting with the Prime Minister of Israel now. A chance to make a deal that could bring about world peace. Don't concern yourself, son. Everything's going to work itself out.

PERSONAL AIDE

I trust you sir.

The Prime Minister walks out of shot. The actor has a big grin. He feels he really nailed the scene.

The Aide picks up a phone and enters a number--

PERSONAL AIDE

(into phone in an unlikely middle-eastern accent)

Let me speak to your editor.

(beat)

I have a tip for you. It doesn't matter who I am, just listen carefully. Speak to a man named Masterson and mention this date; 20th of July 2001.

KAIN SUDDENLY STANDS UP and makes a LOUD GRUNT. Everyone turns to look at him. Kain storms out, followed a moment later by his entourage.

VANESSA

What happened?

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Stop the cameras.

At the back of scene, Guy Watson appears from behind a sofa where he was hiding.

GUY WATSON
I didn't get to say my lines.

REED
(applauding)
Brilliant! Bravo, bravo! That's a wrap!

INT. CORRIDOR -- MOMENTS LATER

Kain with Sue.

PM LENNARD KAIN
Stop them filming.

SECRETARY SUE
Sir?

PM LENNARD KAIN
Stop them filming. My Parliament Building is not to be used to promote that sort of scandalous filth.

INT. PMO CORRIDOR -- LATER

Reed exchanges a glance with Sue and walks into--

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Kain is pouring a drink, sees Reed.

PM LENNARD KAIN
Can you wait in Uncle Cosimo's office, sweetie?

REED
You're explaining yourself right here and now you sonofabitch.

Reed now realizes that Kain's daughter is in the office.

PM LENNARD KAIN
Just for a few minutes, and then we'll get some ice creams. Okay?

Kain's daughter goes into Harson's office.

PM LENNARD KAIN
Can I pour you a glass of something, Will?
(beat)
I don't suppose you'll say who told you?

REED
You did. Just then.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Yeah. You know, Will, I've been reading your speeches. Harson says you pen them yourself? They're very good. The use of words, the rhythms, the way you bounce themes back and forth and arrive at an inevitable conclusion. I can very clearly recognize the use of literary devices in your writing, but they're... gone... nowhere to be seen... when I want to say something. The best I can do is blurt out a cliché or repeat a phrase I heard five minutes ago. I've taken to looking up words and quotes. I'm actually starting to get a real feel for using quotes.

REED

Hink stamus in stercore et dividimus.

PM LENNARD KAIN

I don't know that one.

REED

Here we are standing in shit talking about diving.

PM LENNARD KAIN

I did the right thing, I really hope you understand that. Alex Hampton had to go. I've called the Executive, they'll be here shortly. And if you ask me to, I will offer my resignation to them.

REED

You'll step down?

PM LENNARD KAIN

Of course, I'll drag you kicking and screaming with me. Kicking and screaming. Whatever it takes.

REED

Just fucking try it.

PM LENNARD KAIN

You'll hurt your party over petty factional--

REED

This is not about caucus!

PM LENNARD KAIN

Oh, I know it isn't. Harson thinks it's about some whore you're fucking, but I know better.

Reed walks right up to Kain's face.

REED

Say that again.

PM LENNARD KAIN

You ran the numbers. You saw we wouldn't win the next election so you feigned an injury. Sit on the bench for the next match and come back as some sort of savior for the finals. Do you like how I used allegory there?

REED

Say it again, Lenny. Find it in yourself.

PM LENNARD KAIN

You've been taking swipes at me from the moment you realized I might actually take the election. And you punch like a girl.

Reed grabs Kain by the shirt.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Alex never liked you, Will.

REED

Alex sold you to me.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Well then, I'll wager even Alex knows it's just politics. Come on, Reed. I get to lose the election and you get to be Deputy Prime Minister. Seems a fair trade.

Reed leaves.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Kicking and screaming, Will!

PMO CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Reed strides past Harson's office. But then returns--

HARSON'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Harson is now there with Sue and Kain's daughter.

REED

Did you know?

HARSON

Did I know what?

REED

Did everyone know? Was it everyone but me?

REED

Am I the big fucking office joke?

HARSON

William. What's going on?

REED

You pretending you don't know your Prime Minister gave Hampton to the press?

HARSON

Nonsense.

Kain enters from the side door.

REED

Of course he did it. Look at him.

HARSON

(to Kain)

Is there anything in this?

SECRETARY SUE

Sir? How could you?

REED

How could he? Easy.

Reed exits, walks down the corridor yelling--

REED

(top of lungs)

THE PRIME MINISTER IS THE HAMPTON LEAK. THE PRIME MINISTER IS THE HAMPTON LEAK. THE PRIME MINISTER IS THE HAMPTON LEAK.

Everyone in the PMO looks out to see what is going on.

HARSON

REED!

REED

(yelling back at Harson)

You absolute simpletons.

INT. PARLIAMENT BUILDING CORRIDOR -- LATER

Reed is escorted by TWO SECURITY OFFICERS.

INT. SMALL BLAND ROOM -- LATER

Reed is alone. He sits for a while, stands, paces back and forth. It looks like he's in a cage.

The door opens and Heather enters.

HEATHER BOONE

How are you feeling, William?

REED

Sort of restful, I think.

HEATHER BOONE

The story will be something about looking for a new challenge, or deciding it's time for new direction in your life.

REED

I suppose we can't use 'family life'.

HEATHER BOONE

Don't worry about the details, we'll work out the wording. We're arranging a flight back to Melbourne later tonight and a press conference for tomorrow afternoon. We felt you would prefer to hold it in Melbourne.

Reed nods.

HEATHER BOONE

So you know: we'll leak this early, just to soften the ground.

REED

Yes.

HEATHER BOONE

And we'd like to have Cummings sit down with you later in the week.

REED

That's fine. I'll make myself available whenever he needs.

HEATHER BOONE

Good, thank you Will. Kate and the others are still in the office if you'd like to go and say something.

(pause)

I'll tell them. I think that's it then. Good luck, and thank you, William.

Heather coldly shakes Reed's hand.

INT. REED'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Reed calls a number on his mobile phone, but no one answers.

EXT. REED'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

A TAXI DRIVER shoves Reed's bags into the boot.

TAXI DRIVER

Where to, Mr Reed?

REED
 Airport, thanks.

TAXI DRIVER
 Righto. Nice night for a view of
 the city I reckon.

EXT. CANBERRA -- NIGHT

Reed watches Canberra pass by him from the back seat of
 the taxi. On the hill in the distance he sees THE LIGHTS
 OF TELSTRA TOWER.

INT. TELSTRA TOWER RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

The Opposition Leader and TWO OPPOSITION MEMBERS eat dinner.

MEMBER #1
 So he's in the meeting room with
 his new staff and apparently said,
*quite plainly, these curtains are
 grey and boring, just like most of
 the people in this room.*

MEMBER #2
 This is Moore-Wilton?

OPPOSITION LEADER
 I remember that. It's a spook
 story Members tell their public
 servants at night. Do a good job
 or Max the Axe'll get ya.

MEMBER #2
 Can you imagine if someone tried
 that now?

OPPOSITION LEADER
 My daughter says we should run
 elections like Australian Idol.

MEMBER #1
 Sure, why not?

OPPOSITION LEADER
 You'd start with twelve Prime
 Ministerial hopefuls, and each
 week they debate on live television
 on the given topic. Terrorism,
 nationalism, tariffs...

MEMBER #2
 Comb-overs.

OPPOSITION LEADER
 The public votes for who they reckon
 did the best job. One hopeful
 drops out, and next week it's a
 new topic.

OPPOSITION LEADER

The final episode's on the lawns of Karrabilli; the winner gets the keys and a three-year lease.

MEMBER #1

It has the same problems the current system has.

MEMBER #2

Namely, it's still the public that's voting.

OPPOSITION LEADER

I think her point was that politics these days feels more like a game show than a serious search for the best leaders.

MEMBER #1

Isn't your daughter five?

The Opposition Leader answers his phone.

OPPOSITION LEADER

(into phone)

Colin.

MEMBER #2

Wise beyond her years.

MEMBER #1

Is she looking for a job?

OPPOSITION LEADER

(into phone)

What's that? Yes? Is he sure about that? Alright.

He hangs up.

MEMBER #1

What was that?

OPPOSITION LEADER

Let's get out of here.

EXT. TELSTRA TOWER -- LATER

The three opposition members exit the tower, each with a phone to their ear. The opposition leader hangs back when he sees Reed.

OPPOSITION LEADER

Mr Treasurer?

REED

Colin. Did I miss the jam convention?

OPPOSITION LEADER
I get that. Funny. I wouldn't expect you up this way.

REED
Some of us like a challenge.

OPPOSITION LEADER
If you're eating I can recommend the chicken.

Reed sees the other ministers at their cars, talking animatedly on their phones.

REED
What are you fellows working on?

OPPOSITION LEADER
Just plotting the downfall of Government. Same old, same old.

REED
It's in my nature, said the scorpion to the frog.

OPPOSITION LEADER
You didn't think we were going to go easy on you this year did you, Will? Where'd the fun be in that? Hah! And the story going 'round is we made some inroads tonight.

REED
They leaked that already? Man...

OPPOSITION LEADER
Yeah. It's just politics.

REED
You're the second person to say that to me tonight.

OPPOSITION LEADER
Yeah? Who knows, there might even be some truth in it.

The opposition leader leaves. The LIFT OPERATOR has been holding the door patiently.

LIFT OPERATOR
Are you going up, sir?

INT. THE GREAT VERANDAH -- MORNING

Secretary Sue greets a foreign delegation. In the distance she sees Reed enter the Parliament Building.

INT. PARLIAMENT CORRIDORS -- MORNING

Reed walks the corridors.

A WORKER (45, disheveled) approaches with a cart of STORAGE BOXES. He is whistling a fun tune.

REED

A good day, sir?

WORKER

Each day better than the one before.
Best day I ever had in fact. Could
you get that?

Reed is standing by a lift -- he presses the button and the doors open. The worker pushes his cart in and continues whistling, nodding thanks to Reed as he passes.

Reed decides to step into the lift.

INT. PARLIAMENT BASEMENT

Reed carries a box, follows the worker through the bowels of the building. DEEP SOUNDS echo all around.

The worker nods and Reed opens a door.

INT. STORAGE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

A large storage area FILLED WITH BOXES.

Reed sets his box down and looks around while the worker labels the new boxes.

REED

What are these, if you don't mind
me asking?

WORKER

Sometimes people upstairs up and
leave in a huff. They leave things
behind; personal items and whatnot.
It's my job to collect said items:
to know each box, and remember who
of the upstairs people is in each
box. It's very complex, but I'm
not one to shirk a challenge.

REED

(reading a label)
Brandon Locke.

WORKER

Answered phones in the Shadow
Department of Foreign Affairs until
July 2001.

REED

(indicating the NEW
boxes, believing
they're his)
And whose boxes are these?

WORKER

They're my boxes.

REED

Who's items are in the boxes?

WORKER

The contents are mine now too,
sir.

REED

Okay. To what politician did the
items once belong?

WORKER

No politician.

REED

A public servant?

WORKER

No.

REED

Not a person then? I feel that
we're running out of possibilities.

WORKER

He may once have been a politician,
but my understanding he is one no
longer.

REED

(enjoying this)

I do need to be careful with my
words, don't I?

WORKER

In this building, more-so than
anywhere else I'd reckon.

(indicating an
ashtray)

See that? Belonged to Gough
Whitlam.

REED

May I have it?

WORKER

What? Well, it has sentimental
value you see. Smoked my first
real Cuban with that lump of crafted
glass nearby. Now that you mention
it, the Cuban was Whitlam's too.

(reaching for another
box)

I tell you what. I've got a pair
of John Howard's glasses here
somewhere.

He pulls out a pair of think-rimmed glasses with EYES DRAWN ON THE LENSES.

REED

He's a Liberal.

WORKER

You're a lefty, hey? We shot your sort in '72. Just shot 'em. Best thing we could do for ya. No offence.

REED

About the ashtray.

WORKER

Look, I can see you have your heart set on it. Hmm, maybe I can interest you in something from the new floor stock...

REED

No, you can have what's in those. I like the idea of starting from beginning.

WORKER

Hmm?

The worker opens one of the new boxes, and REED SEES HIS ANIMAL FARM BOOK ON TOP.

REED

What? Who's stuff is this?

INT. MCKENZIE'S OFFICE -- MORNING

McKenzie watches the morning news on a monitor.

NEWS PRESENTER

(on television)

Mr Cosimo would not comment on his departure, but in a brief press release issued this morning by the Prime Minister's Office he expresses regret for his actions and hopes that the Labor Party will now be able to focus on the term ahead.

MCKENZIE'S SECRETARY

(at the door)

The Prime Minister's Office is on line one.

EDITOR MCKENZIE

No calls. Just find me Jane Jeffreys.

The news report shows footage of Harson Cosimo. McKenzie pours himself a drink.

NEWS PRESENTER

Harson Cosimo was the high-profile Secretary of the Federal Labor Party for seven years, before accepting the position of Lennard Kain's Chief of Staff. His departure is believed to be in connection with a spate of leaks, including those that forced Alex Hampton's shock resignation in December. Reactions from the Liberal Party...

McKenzie raises a toast to a defeated adversary.

EXT. AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL REVIEW BUILDING -- MORNING

Jane stands outside, taking a moment to gather her thoughts, when:

MAN (O.S.)

Jane Jeffreys!

Jane looks. It's Simone Jean-Louis's brother.

SIMONE'S BROTHER

Look at you, you whore. You talked to me about ethics and sell yourself for a few dollars? You're as bad as the rest of them. Look at her! Look at her! Whore! Whore!

Jane runs away.

INT. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE CORRIDOR -- MORNING

Boxes of paperwork are being removed from Harson's office.

INT. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Lennard Kain, Heather Boone, and THREE MEMBERS OF THE LABOR EXECUTIVE are in meeting.

TIM FINLEY (O.S.)

Watch it! Hey!

Tim Finley pushes his way into the office.

LABOR PARTY PRESIDENT

Is there a problem, Mr Finley?

TIM FINLEY

I don't believe you people.

PM LENNARD KAIN

It's fine, let him have his say.

TIM FINLEY

Harson was set up. Are you all blind? Someone set him up.

PM LENNARD KAIN

He wasn't set up, Tim. Harson sacrificed himself to save the party.

TIM FINLEY

What?

LABOR PARTY PRESIDENT

Harson was not the only Member to resign last night.

TIM FINLEY

Who?

PM LENNARD KAIN

The announcement of William Reed's exit from politics will be made later today.

TIM FINLEY

Reed?

SECRETARY SUE

You know, I think I saw Reed this morning.

HEATHER

Here? You saw William Reed here?

They all turn to look down the corridor, where Reed is standing. They step out to meet him--

INT. PMO CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

REED

And how's everyone doing?

PM LENNARD KAIN

William. Let's talk.

REED

You let Harson take your bullet? Your call, I suppose, but what do you think that says about you, Lennard?

Tim Finley attempts to muscle Reed, but he is restrained.

TIM FINLEY

You shouldn't have come back.

REED

I didn't know...

PM LENNARD KAIN

Listen. They're going to rip us apart in there today, and we need to be on the same side of the chamber. Even if just a few hours. What do you say?

REED

I've said everyone I had to say,
and wronged a friend in the process.
You'll never hear me speak of these
days again.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Tim?

(Tim doesn't object)

Good then.

REED

From now on, just good, clean, fun
politics.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Come inside. Let's nut out the
details. We can save Harson yet.
That Weatherson character was in
an out of these offices for months,
who's to say what he gave the press?

REED

Whatever you want, Lennard.

Reed approaches Heather.

REED

Did anyone come in today?

HEATHER

Reed.

REED

I'm serious, all that's behind me.

HEATHER

William. It appears I'm being
offered Harson's job.

REED

(beat)

This is what you want?

HEATHER

I think so.

REED

She thinks so. Whatever.

(to Kain)

I'll see you in chambers, Mr Prime
Minister.

Reed leaves.

INT. HOUSE CHAMBER -- AFTERNOON

The Members gather for another day of Parliament. Reed,
Kain, and Tim Finley keep distance from each other. The
Clerk rings the BELL.

CLERK

Honorable Members, please stand.

The Sergeant-At Arms leads the Speaker to his chair.

SERGEANT-AT ARMS

Honorable Members, the Speaker.

SPEAKER

Honorable Members, please be seated. Parliament is now in session. May I remind the Honorable Members of the standing orders.

(beat)

Questions without notice will now be taken. I will take one question from each side of the house starting with the Opposition. Members with questions please stand.

The Opposition Leader is the only one to stand.

SPEAKER

The Member for Kingsford Smith.

OPPOSITION LEADER

Mr Speaker, I direct my question to the Prime Minister. It has been a most extraordinary week. The most bewildering, most disheartening three weeks that I can remember in my twelve years representing the good people of Leichhardt.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Here here!

OPPOSITION LEADER

Mr Speaker, these past two weeks have seen two of the most senior members of the Labor Government resign in disgrace--

SPEAKER

If the Member for Kingsford Smith does not have a question I ask him to take his seat.

OPPOSITION LEADER

I do have a question, Mr Speaker, and it is an important one. I ask that the Prime Minister show the Australian public that the rot and corruption ends here. I ask that the Prime Minister calls for an election one month from this day, and in doing so he demonstrates to the people of Australia--

SPEAKER

The Member for Kingsford Smith may take his seat.

Now the Opposition Members are yelling.

OPPOSITION LEADER

I'm sorry, Mr Speaker, but I have not had a chance to ask my question.

SPEAKER

The Member for Kingsford Smith has not asked an appropriate question in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Various Labor Members stand, including Tim Finley.

SPEAKER

The member for Blair.

TIM FINLEY

Mr Speaker, I direct my question to the Treasurer.

(Reed flinches)

In the past several days it has been reported in the media that a number of important documents have been leaked from, among other places, the Department of the Treasury. This morning we heard it reported that the source of these leaks had been discovered. I ask whether the member for Higgins can shed any further light on these reports?

The Opposition go quiet. Reed goes to the Dispatch Box.

REED

Mr Speaker, I thank my colleague for an opportunity to clarify some misreports in the media. Harson Cosimo has been unfairly and incorrectly burdened with blame for these leaks, when in fact investigations are as yet far from concluded. I can report that investigations are ongoing into the actions of a James Weatherson, an activist who attended meetings throughout the executive wing for more than two months. I will of course endeavor to keep the House informed on any progress made on these investigations.

As Reed returns to his seat he nods a "thanks" to Finley. Finley stands again.

SPEAKER
The Member for Blair.

TIM FINLEY
Mr Speaker, I have just one follow-up for the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer deny, for the record, the rumour that it was you yourself who leaked this information to the media, via a writer at the Australian Political Review: a Jane Jeffreys.

Dead silence.

REED
(to Finley)
What the hell is that?

SPEAKER
I ask that the Member for Higgins address his answer through the chair.

Reed walks up towards Finley. Finley steps down to Reed.

SPEAKER
The Member for Higgins! The Member for Blair!

REED
You moron.

TIM FINLEY
Can you deny it for the record? That's not hard is it? Can you deny it or not, Mr Treasurer? The House is waiting.

Reed grabs Finley's shirt and shoves him.

SPEAKER
Sergeant! Escort the Members from Chambers!

The Sergeant-At Arms and some Labor Members pull Reed and Finley apart.

PM LENNARD KAIN
You're out of line, Mr Finley!

REED
You'd ruin us both for him?

TIM FINLEY
(beat)
Kain told me. Kain told me to say it.

Reed pulls away from the Sergeant and leans into a nearby microphone.

PM LENNARD KAIN

Reed!

REED

Mr Speaker, I call a vote of no confidence against the Prime Minister, on the grounds of behavior unbecoming...

The entire chamber is in uproar.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. PARLIAMENT BUILDING -- DAY

The Governor-General reads an address outside the Parliament Building amid a flurry of media activity.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Nowtherefore, I, Sir Layton Marlo Hughes, the Governor-General of Australia, do by this my proclamation dissolve the Senate and the House of Representatives and put forth an election date of not more than six weeks from this day...

VOICE (O.S.)

God save the Queen!

INT. AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL REVIEW OFFICE -- DAY

Journalists are gathered around a monitor, watching Kain being interviewed on Lateline.

EX-PM LENNARD KAIN

(on monitor)

Oh, let me tell you about William Reed...

Reed walks behind them. One surprised journalist notices Reed, and then everyone turns to look at him.

Reed walks to McKenzie's office.

EXT. BLOCK OF RUN-DOWN APARTMENTS -- DAY

A taxi pulls up and Reed gets out. Reed re-checks the address.

EXT. STAIRWELL

The flats are old and decrepit. Reed finds unit 7 and knocks on the door. The door opens and Jane peers out.

REED

I brought an olive branch.

Reed hands Jane his Animal Farm book. Jane takes it, but a moment later the book flies out the open door and hits Reed on the forehead.

Jane closes the door. Reed knocks again.

REED

Jane?

LATER

Reed sits in the stairwell.

A NEIGHBOUR of Jane pushes a bike past.

REED

Hey.

The neighbour nods.

Jane's door opens enough for Jane to look out.

JANE

Did you tell them I stole something from you? Yes or no?

REED

Can I come in?

Jane slams the door closed again--

But Reed puts his hand into the room, blocking the door from closing. Ouch.

Jane backs away, so Reed enters.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

It's a small, unappealing two-room flat. Jane is in the process of packing her last suitcase.

REED

I like what you've done with the place. It's cozy. Very *nouveau-guttural-chic*. A lick of paint'll brighten it right up. If you like I can arrange someone to paint it. My treat.

JANE

You're trying too hard.

REED

Yes.

JANE

Give me that...

Jane takes the novel from Reed.

JANE

What is it?

REED

Harson Cosimo gave it to me on my first day in the House of Representatives. It's probably worth a bit of money.

Jane places it in her bag.

REED

Bruce McKenzie said you wouldn't tell him what happened. I don't understand. I don't have to say you're in a great position to wring out of him everything you could ever want. It's a seller's market, Jane.

JANE

I'm not involved any more, Billy.

REED

Jane. You are involved. You're the only person involved in all this the public sees as unbiased.

JANE

My sister's giving me a job at her pet store. And you know what? I'm looking forward to it. I really can't wait to start.

REED

Yeah well that sounds like it'll be a great help to mankind.

Reed wonders if Jane is about to cry.

REED

Hey. No, it's not that bad. Well, this whole stinking event's a mess. But you're above it. You're above it all.

JANE

Bring those.

Jane picks up a small suitcase and Reed grabs the rest.

EXT. STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

REED

Kain's bullshitting all over the media and we need someone out there to set the records straight.

JANE

That's nice.

REED

We need you to tell what happened.

JANE

You keep saying we, but you mean
you?

EXT. BLOCK OF RUN-DOWN APARTMENTS -- CONTINUOUS

They set the bags down beside the taxi. The driver packs them into the boot.

REED

This is actually my taxi.

(beat)

Not that it's relevant I suppose.

JANE

Get out of politics, Billy. The cage is open, fly for the hills with everything you've got. Find someone you can love, get married, have a life.

REED

I can't leave politics. I tried, but I can't.

JANE

But why?

REED

Because I love it. It's impossible and it's disheartening, and it'll chew you up so much as look at you, but this is where I make a difference. This is who I am.

JANE

Billy, do you actually know why you lost caucus to Kain by forty-one votes? And I don't mean jokes and punch lines, I mean for real?

REED

...no.

JANE

For the same reason you can't dine in the Tower.

(Jane gestures to
Telstra Tower,
seen on the hill
in the distance)

You're afraid of heights, Billy.
You're afraid of heights.

REED

I went to the Tower last night!

