

\* WENDY I don't care how long they wait! I am not comfortable with any of this, as you and Phillip well know, and I will not be reading a statement whose wording leaves me open to stupid bloody attacks by every pedantic bloody journalist under the sun...

\* PENNY They've already been in there an hour! Edwards let them in and now he's in there playing the big hero as if this is his statement and not yours. They'll turn on us, no matter what we say, if we leave them to stew in the hen-house till we've crossed every T and dotted...

\* *Spoken simultaneously*

*Wendy has proceeded to her desk and chair and thrown down the folder containing her speaking notes. Penny moves in front of the desk as they try to over-talk each other across it. They peter out together and both look towards the source of the noise from the vacuum cleaner.*

PENNY Excuse me...! I said, excuse...!

*There is no reaction from the cleaner. Penny marches across like the power-freak she is and yanks the plug out of the wall. The sound cuts accordingly.*

PENNY Can't you see we're trying to conduct business here?

WENDY She probably couldn't hear over the sound of that...thing...

*The cleaner, Raisa, has turned and revealed the ear-plug wiring. An enraged Penny yanks them out of her ears and thus free of the hijab.*

PENNY Sound of sitars, more likely. God bless George Harrison. This is why she couldn't hear.

WENDY *(A gentle reminder)* Ahm...that was assault, Penny.

PENNY What? *(Looking at plugs dangling in her hand. Hands them back. Searching for something placatory...)* So...what was it you were listening to?

RAISA *(From the outset, Raisa is strong and unperturbed, in no way servile)* "Beds Are Burning"..... Midnight Oil....

PENNY No sitars there then. Didgeridoo perhaps...

WENDY Yeah, great. That's all we need. Even the Services Staff are listening to songs sung by a previous Minister in an Opposition government.

PENNY Oh, come off it. Who the hell's going to remember that?

RAISA *(Speaking out of turn but as if it was)* Anyone who is Oils fan.

PENNY What...?

WENDY        (*Leaping in to avoid confrontation*) How long have you been an Oils fan?

PENNY        How long have you even been in the country?

WENDY        Penny...

RAISA        (*Unfazed*) I was fan before I came. It is international world, you know.

PENNY        Thank you for that lovely neat little lesson in both geopolitical philosophy and pop culture. A very commendable stance, and so parallel to our own. But all you were actually doing was listening to a disco hit from the Eighties, you know... (*Tries to turn back dismissively to resume business with Wendy.*)

RAISA        It is song about social position of Australian native people.

PENNY        *And* a dance hit of its time. Some of us were there, you know.

RAISA        A song about situation of your native people, and all you think of is bounce, bounce... (*Doing it; bad disco moves*)...and pretty lights?

WENDY        At least she *dances* like Garrett...

PENNY        (*Needing to cut this off*) I think you're reaching slightly above your station here, don't you?

RAISA        Native people are not important?

WENDY        Look, I'm sorry, but if you'd care to read the Government Policy statements you'll find that Native Issues are huge on our agenda.

PENNY        The Opposition, on the other hand, can't even be bothered to...

WENDY        Penny...

PENNY        (*Hands up in surrender*) Look, we're very busy here, but we have to go very soon. You can get on with your cleaning *then*. Wendy, what *is* it that you object to in the wording? The team have gone through it with a comb so fine-toothed it would neuter nits!

WENDY        Their sexuality is their own business, but *my* business is that I have to *speak* the stuff.

*As they speak, the ignored Raisa moves around to pull the door firmly closed.*

PENNY        They've had a year. They must have your cadence down by now.

WENDY        The only cadence they know is *The Lord's Prayer* because they chant it every sitting day. They certainly don't believe it.

PENNY Is that important?

WENDY How can I convince the nation there's any truth in this if I don't believe it myself?

PENNY It's Party Policy.

WENDY Exactly...

*There is a distinct click as Raisa either locks the door or presses it into place.*

PENNY Okay, this is intolerable. What do you think you're doing? I told you, we need a few minutes' discussion and then you can...

RAISA *(To Wendy)* Sit down, please.

WENDY Sit down?

RAISA Yes, please.

WENDY You're inviting me to sit down in my own office?

RAISA I wish to talk with you. We should sit.

PENNY Oh, this is too much. Is this because we reacted to you too abruptly? I apologise for that. We know you're not a terrorist. We know you're not wired with explosives...

*She is trying to joke but suddenly the atmosphere goes leaden.*

RAISA Are you sure?

*Raisa waits a moment to create doubt then suddenly throws her arms in the air. Both women scream in spite of themselves, Wendy falling behind her desk, Penny running to the far end of the room.*

RAISA *(To Penny)* You think you will be safe there?

PENNY Why shouldn't I be?

RAISA What about the bomb in the vacuum?

*Penny leaps about with another shout before she realises she has been had.*

PENNY Jesus H. Christ!

RAISA *(Lowering arms)* I did not know he had a middle name.