

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Kitchen

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by Van Badham

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EXTRACT

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# Kitchen

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## **Characters:**

Helene: a human resources manager in her mid/late-twenties.

Owen: a human resources manager in his mid/late-twenties.

## **Scene:**

The stage is set in the kitchen of Helene and Owen's executive apartment in Northbeach, Wollongong. From the kitchen window a broad vista of beach and steelworks can be seen.

## ***Production history:***

- April 9, 2001, at the Bridge Theatre by the Theatre South Company, as a work-in-progress performance.
- June 9 - June 10, 2001, at the Crucible Studio, Sheffield and June 6 at the University of Sheffield (both UK), by the Nabokov Company.
- January 9-27, 2002, at the Cat and Fiddle Theatre by the Pardytime Company.
- July 31 – August 25, at C Venues, Edinburgh, by the Nabokov Company, as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

## Scene 1

Afternoon. Owen, in a shirt and tie, is trying to light the gas jets on the cook top of the kitchen stove. It appears as if he's about to cook something.

When the gas jets are lit, Owen fetches a pillow, not a pan. He opens the oven and puts the pillow inside it. He places his head inside the oven and tries to get comfortable. In the end, he settles on face down.

A key turns in an external lock.

Enter Helene, laden with David Jones bags. She sings as she walks into the kitchen. Owen has not heard her entrance.

Helene sees Owen.

**HELÉNE:** No!

Owen kongs his head on the roof of the oven.

**OWEN:** Arghhh!

**HELÉNE:** What are you doing?!

**OWEN:** Ohh... My head!

**HELÉNE:** Please tell me you're not about to cook.

**OWEN:** Helene – !

**HELÉNE:** The fridge is full of Lean Cuisine for a reason, Owen. Really.

**OWEN:** I didn't think –

**HELÉNE:** You never do!

**OWEN:** Can you get me some ice?

**HELÉNE:** What for?

**OWEN:** My head?

**HELÉNE:** (fetching it) Like a little baby, sometimes. They write about men like you in magazines. Self-prioritising. You may not like me taking responsibility for our calorie intake, Owen, but some of us think that maintaining a professional physical appearance is –

**OWEN:** (taking the ice, resting on the pillow). Thank-you.

**HELÉNE:** And you haven't even asked about a day. Not even a – What's that doing in here?

**OWEN:** The pillow?

**HELÉNE:** *My* pillow.

**OWEN:** I had it in the oven.

**HELÉNE:** I have to sleep on that!

**OWEN:** I'm sure it's the one that I –

**HELÉNE:** Come home, long day at work – don't say hello, you're putting pillows in the oven, you got the whole stovetop on –

**OWEN:** – If you're sure it's yours –

**HELÉNE:** Just what we're you planning to do? Kill yourself?

**OWEN:** Yeah – I was gunno<sup>1</sup> ...

**HELÉNE:** Oh, and that's all I need. Turn off the stove, Owen - it's like the Steelworks in here.

Owen gets up, turns off the jets and makes Helene a drink with the ice he's had on his head.

**HELÉNE:** You wouldn't believe the day I've had. Seven-to-seven! I think I'm getting a blister on my ear from my phone at work. Fifteen forced redundancies today. Fifteen sobbing losers, harassing me in my office - threats, Owen - losing their marbles and wanting me to pick them up. You give them the contact number for Employment National and they expect you to find them a job! Do I look like a job shop? Do I?

**OWEN:** I lost my job today.

**HELÉNE:** You did?

**OWEN:** The company's downsizing.

**HELÉNE:** You're in human resources!

**OWEN:** They reassessed their operation and discovered a superfluity.

**HELÉNE:** But, honey, you downsized fifty people for them last week!

**OWEN:** I've fulfilled my contract and I'm being let go.

**HELÉNE:** For being valuable to the company?

**OWEN:** I'm a cost-heavy overhead.

**HELÉNE:** What did they say?

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<sup>1</sup> Actually, how the hell would you spell this? It's "going to" contracted, but it's phonetically GUN-oo.