

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Dirty Caff

by Stephen Vagg

EXTRACT

© 2000 Stephen Vagg



This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre
77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
email admin@ozscript.org
www.ozscript.org
ph +61 3 6223 4675
fax +61 3 6223 4678

CAST

JENNIFER, 17

JED, 24

BRIDGET, 24

ROB, 18

LARINA, 17

KARA, 18

MR SULLIVAN, 51

GREG, 32

MEGAN STANLEY, 18

DIRTY HARRY, 40s

MISTY, 18

DOM, 19

AINSLEY, 18

BOUNCER

SLEEZE

3 STUDENT HECKLERS

(many of these parts can be doubled up – possible double ups include DOM/GREG, SULLIVAN/DIRTY HARRY, MEGAN/MISTY)

ACT I INTRODUCTION

STREET NIGHT

TV screen plays scenes from the early 1990s.

JENNIFER V/O: The early 1990s... What a time to be alive... OK, I know it wasn't as cool as the '60s, or as decadent as the 70s. Maybe times weren't a changin' and something wasn't blowing in the wind. Maybe the world was in a crippling recession. But you can't pick the Era you live in when you're young. All you can do is make the most of it.

Dance song from the early 90s starts. Laid over them are sounds of grabs from various newsreaders (these should be done as realistic as possible).

VOICES: Australia's unemployment figure hit a new high today...

Paul Keating has not ruled out another leadership challenge to Bob Hawke...

Iraqi troops have marched into Kuwait...

Melissa Tkautz is clearly a star of tomorrow with the release of her sensational new album...

Projected figure on a wall: "January, 1991".

ACT I SCENE 1

SULLIVANS THORNE FOYER DAY (JANUARY 1991)

SULLIVAN O/S: I don't want to hear it! I don't want to hear it! Do I look like I care? Do I look like I could give a rat's arse about your excuses?

Lights come up on the Brisbane CBD accountancy firm of Sullivans Thorne. The only furniture on this set apart is a bare desk with a phone and a large sign indicating the firm's name. The phone starts to ring.

SULLIVAN O/S: They're not reasons, they're excuses and did I say you could talk? Did I? Answer me?

A secretary, MISTY, 18, rushes in to pick up the phone.

MISTY: Good morning, Sullivans Thorne.

SULLIVAN O/S: Fuck that! Fuck that!

MISTY: I'm sorry, Mr Sullivan's busy right now. Can I take a message?

SULLIVAN O/S: You little shit! You moron!

MISTY: Thank you.

Misty hangs up. BRIDGET, 24, seemingly confident, enters. She's carrying a bunch of letters. She starts collating them at the desk, poorly.

BRIDGET: Where's Jennifer?

MISTY: I don't know.

BRIDGET: *(looking at letters, muttering to herself)* Which is which? Shit. This isn't my job. *(calling out)* Jennifer! *(to Misty)* Can you have a go?

Misty starts collating the documents, not very well.

BRIDGET: No, not like that. *(calling out)* Jennifer!

JENNIFER O/S: Coming!

SULLIVAN O/S: I don't want to hear it! I don't want to hear it!

MISTY: *(still collating)* Um, Bridget?

BRIDGET: Yes, Misty?

MISTY: He's been in there all day.

BRIDGET: I haven't got all day. *(she sees Misty making a mess of the letters)* Here, I'll do it. *(looking around)* Where is my bloody secretary? *(calling out)* Jennifer!

JENNIFER O/S: Almost!

BRIDGET: Now!

Bridget starts to exit (to look for Jennifer). Another secretary, the myopic JENNIFER, 17, rushes in, her arms full of photocopies. Not seeing her, Bridget turns and crashes into her - the papers go flying.

BRIDGET: Jennifer!

JENNIFER: I'm sorry...

BRIDGET: Watch it!

JENNIFER: (*picking up papers*) I'm sorry! I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry.

SULLIVAN O/S: I don't care!

Misty, Bridget and Jennifer all start picking up papers.

JENNIFER: I'm sorry, I'm really sorry, it was my fault, I won't do it again.

They've picked up all the papers; Jennifer takes them and quickly shuffles them into order.

BRIDGET: Is everything here?

JENNIFER: (*passing letters as she speaks*) These are the accounts for the past 6 months. Here's the letter to the lawyers, and this is for the bank.

BRIDGET: What about the Form 301?

JENNIFER: The solicitor can sign that for us.

BRIDGET: Are you sure?

JENNIFER: It's in the guidelines. Fiona's ready to take it right away.

BRIDGET: (*relieved*) OK. (*trying to remember if anything else*) OK, OK, OK...

Bridget picks up a report, different looking to the others.

BRIDGET: (*slight panic*) Shit! What's this?

JENNIFER: That's... Uh... That's my report. You know, that I've been doing.

BRIDGET: What's it doing here?

JENNIFER: I thought maybe...

BRIDGET: I'll ask him if I have time. Alright?

Bridget hands the report back to Jennifer and starts re-checking her letters. JED, a 22 year old accountant (obviously a rich man's son), saunters over.

JED: Hey, guys. The big boss in?

BRIDGET: I get him first, Jed.

SULLIVAN O/S: Fuck that! Fuck that!

JED: Struth. What's going on in there?

MISTY: Partner's meeting.

BRIDGET: (*to herself*) OK, I'm set. (*to Jennifer*) Am I set?

JENNIFER: You're set.

BRIDGET: Here we go....

She walks over the door.

SULLIVAN O/S: No! NO! Fuck that!

Bridget takes a deep breath and enters the room. Silence.

MISTY: Can you hear anything?

JENNIFER: No.

MISTY: Maybe he's killed her.

Jed appraises Jennifer.

JED: Oh. Hey there, Jen.

JENNIFER: Hi, Jed.

JED: Jen?

JENNIFER: Yes?

JED: You know, that dress isn't too bad. Isn't too bad at all.

JENNIFER: Uh... thanks, Jed.

Sounds of laughter. Jennifer and Misty sigh in relief. Bridget comes out with the managing partner - SULLIVAN, 50, tough.

SULLIVAN: G'day, ladies. (to JED) G'day, dickhead.

JENNIFER & MISTY: Mr Sullivan.

BRIDGET: (holding up letters to Misty) Get these to Fiona right away, please.

MISTY: Yes, Bridget.

Misty takes the letters and exits.

SULLIVAN: What are you all doing out here? Having an orgy or something? Heh-heh.

Jennifer stares at Sullivan, unable to speak.

BRIDGET: Mr Sullivan, Jennifer wanted to speak with you about something.

SULLIVAN: Oh, yes?

JENNIFER: I... I... Mr Sullivan I know you are very busy –

SULLIVAN: I'm never too busy for my girls. Heh-heh.

JENNIFER: I understand you're interested in making the firm more efficient and... and...

SULLIVAN: Yes?

JENNIFER: I've done this report you might be interested in... possibly... maybe...

Jennifer tails off and shyly offers up her folder; Sullivan stares at her.

SULLIVAN: And?

JENNIFER: I'd possibly maybe like you to keep me in mind for the trainee accountancy job, maybe?

SULLIVAN: Oh. *(takes the folder and flicks through it)* A lot of work. You haven't been doing this in office hours?

JENNIFER: No, no, Mr Sullivan – at home.

SULLIVAN: *(passing folder back)* That's really great, er...

JENNIFER: Jennifer.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, look, I've got to go to lunch, I mean to a meeting with a client now, but that's really great – I really mean that. You fill out the forms or whatever and we'll... yeah, that's really good you're positive, I want you to never lose that positive attitude, no matter what happens, I really mean that. *(to Jed)* And what do you want? Apart from a better bloody tie than that one? Heh-heh.

JED: What does "ASC" stand for again?

SULLIVAN: Fuck me! How many fucking [times do I have to tell you]... *(remembers other people are there)* You need the answer right now, do you? It's a matter of life or death, is it?

JED: No, but –

SULLIVAN: Then ask Bridget.

JED: But –

SULLIVAN: I haven't got time to wipe your arse for you.

JED: But Dad...

SULLIVAN: I don't want to hear it!

Sullivan exits. Misty enters.

BRIDGET: *(to Misty)* Letters gone?

MISTY: Just then.

Bridget sighs and relaxes for the first time.

JED: You know, he said. He said on my first day here – if I had any questions, I should come straight to him.

BRIDGET: Don't take it personally, Jed. He says the same thing to all graduates.

JED: This work thing is really stressful. I'm sick of feeling as though I don't know anything.

BRIDGET: You just finished your university degree. No-one expects you to know anything.

JED: When will I know what I'm doing?

BRIDGET: In about 6 months.

JENNIFER: Then they'll move you to another section.

BRIDGET: *(laughs)* Good call, Jen. Thanks for your help before, by the way.

JED: What's this report?

JENNIFER: Nothing.

JED: Tell me. I'm interested.

MISTY: She thinks she's going to be an accountant.

BRIDGET: What's so strange about that, Misty? Jennifer should be able to do whatever she wants to do.

JED: I think it's great you want to improve yourself, Jennifer.

BRIDGET: *(to Jennifer)* I remember when I was your age and I... Shit, did I just say "when I was your age"? *(They nod)* I'll be watching "Home Improvements" next. *(to JED)* Let's head out tonight. I need to do something infantile.

JED: I was going to get drunk.

BRIDGET: And?

JED: We need an "and"?

BRIDGET: Good point. Dirty Caff?

JED: Two dollar cocktail shots. We can work our way down the list. You want to come along, Jennifer?

JENNIFER: I wouldn't want to be a tag.

BRIDGET: No, not at all.

MISTY: I thought we were going to Rowers.

JENNIFER: *(disappointed)* Oh, yeah. I have kind of already made plans.

BRIDGET: Suit yourself.

JED: Uh, Bridget. About that ASC stuff...

BRIDGET: Alright. Come on...

Bridget and Jed exit.

MISTY: They were only asking us to be polite.

JENNIFER: It might be nice to try something different.

MISTY: We'd have nothing to talk about.

JENNIFER: Please, Misty...

MISTY: *(reluctant)* OK. But you're telling Dom.

Lights go down.

NEWSREADER V/O: UN forces today commenced bombardment of Iraqi positions in Kuwait...

ACT I SCENE 2

OUTSIDE DIRTY CAFF NIGHT (JANUARY 1991)

Pink neon sign of the nightclub Café Neon. The beat of dances songs inside can be heard. Lights come up on a queue into the nightclub. A BOUNCER lets people in at intervals; the regulars are young beautiful people. Looking out of place are Jennifer, Misty and Jennifer's boofhead boyfriend, DOM, 19.

DOM: They're doing it, Jen! They're really doing it!

JENNIFER: Yes, Dom.

DOM: The bombs are flying! They're really flying!

JENNIFER: Yes, Dom.

DOM: We should be there, you know. Aussies always fight well in the desert. It's because we've got so much of it.

JENNIFER: Yes, Dom.

DOM: It's amazing. We're living through an actual era. It's like Vietnam, only more justified.

JENNIFER: I thought you said no Australians are fighting.

DOM: Fuck, Jen. Haven't you been listening? Are you deaf?

JENNIFER: But I thought you said –

DOM: We're patrolling the Gulf, aren't we? The whole area is a Powderkeg. A Powderkeg! Anything could flare up at any moment.

JENNIFER: I suppose.

DOM: You're so stupid sometimes.

JENNIFER: I... Sorry.

They reach the bouncer.

BOUNCER: Evening ladies and gentlemen, could I see some identification, please?

MISTY: I.D.? I haven't been asked for bloody I.D. since I was fort... For ages.

BOUNCER: Could I see some identification please?

Dom and Misty pull out I.D. and show it to the bouncer, but Jennifer doesn't have any.

JENNIFER: I forgot mine.

BOUNCER: I'm sorry, ma'am, but I can't allow you to enter the premises. Could you clear the way please?

Misty, Dom and Jennifer move away from the front door.

MISTY: That's bullshit. They let everyone else in without I.D.

DOM: They always let us in Rowers. *(to Jennifer)* Why don't you have any I.D.?

JENNIFER: I'm 17, Dom.

DOM: Oh, yeah.

MISTY: Let's go to Rowers.

JENNIFER: I could try to sneak in later...

MISTY: I really don't want to go in, Jen.

DOM: Me, too.

JENNIFER: But...

DOM: It's a big pink poofta building with a big pink nightclub full of big pink yuppie faggots. Fuck that off.
What's so great about it?

MISTY: Jennifer wants to be a yuppie.

DOM: You still reckon you're going to get that promotion? It's never going to happen, Jen.

Jennifer goes silent. She looks upset.

MISTY: Now you've upset her, Dom.

DOM: I have not... (*Sees that he has in fact upset Jennifer.*) Oh, baby. Oh, come on...

JENNIFER: It was just an idea.

DOM: I'm just worried how you'll take the rejection.

MISTY: He kind of has got a point.

JENNIFER: Thanks for the vote of confidence, guys.

MISTY: You're a 17 year old secretary from Esk. They give professional jobs to uni graduates.

JENNIFER: But if I do the work –

MISTY: No-one will know it. You're not good at presenting yourself. You know that.

JENNIFER: But Bridget said [today that] –

DOM: (*angry again*) Bridget, Bridget, Bridget. (*to Misty*) That's all I hear about, you know – how Bridget's the best boss, Bridget's so great, Bridget's shit doesn't stink.

JENNIFER: She's been really nice to me.

DOM: She's only pretending to be nice to get you to work harder. That's the way rich people are, Jen. The only genuine people in this world are people with no money. The early aborigines had rich people, too, you know, who had harbour views and big canoes. Guess what? They were the first ones to go. It's only the ones who live in the desert who survived. Think about it.

MISTY: You're better off where you are, Jen. We get to walk out the door at five. No stress, no hassles.

DOM: Come on, we're going to Rowers.

JENNIFER: I'm not coming.

DOM: What, you want to go home and sulk like a girl?

JENNIFER: Yes.

DOM: Fine!

Dom exits. Misty waits for Jennifer to start walking - but she doesn't.

MISTY: You really want to go home?

JENNIFER: I won't be very good company tonight, Misty.