

australian.
script
centre

Motion Sickness

by Michael Hill

EXTRACT

This script is distributed by the
Australian Script Centre, trading
as australianplays.org

77 Salamanca Place Hobart
7004 Tasmania Australia

admin@australianplays.org
<http://australianplays.org>
Tel +61 3 6223 4675
Fax +61 3 6223 4678

© 2004 Michael Hill

MOTION SICKNESS

© Michael Hill 2004

CHARACTERS

WENDY	19, works in a call centre
VANESSA	16, Wendy's sister
TAYLOR	13, Wendy's sister
SEAN	21, a radio journalist
SAM	20, Sean's sister
ANTHONY	18, Sean's brother
MATTHEW	Mid- to late 20s, a priest
BETH	Mid- to late 20s, a doctor, Matthew's wife
AL	15 or thereabouts, lives on the street

PROLOGUE

A mobile phone beeps momentarily (someone has received a text message). Pause. A mobile rings a couple of times then stops. Another mobile rings, this time with a familiar tune. It continues and is joined by another, then another, until a cacophony of phones fills the theatre. The ringing reaches fever pitch then abruptly cuts out, simultaneously with a blackout.

TAYLOR enters. A piano begins an introduction to a song. TAYLOR misses her cue. The piano falters and plays the intro again. TAYLOR begins to shake a little and then collapses on the floor.

VANESSA sits at a single school desk with her head in her hand, staring at the test in front of her. She taps her pen on the paper.

A voice is heard ‘Shhh!’

VANESSA makes a face. She writes an answer but isn't very happy with it. She holds her hand to her chest. A damp spot appears on her uniform. She puts up one hand, holding the other over the damp spot.

SEAN and WENDY are seated at a small table on which there is a microphone and sound recording equipment. WENDY has her arm in a sling.

SEAN How is your shoulder?

WENDY It's OK.

SEAN Does it still hurt?

WENDY Not really.

SEAN I just ... want to say how sorry I am —

WENDY Don't. Really.

Pause.

SEAN Are you sure you're OK with this?

WENDY Yes.

SEAN 'Cause we can do it some other time if you'd prefer.

WENDY Can we just get on with it?

Blackout.

SFX: Jumping between radio stations as if pressing pre-set buttons on a digital radio: ... change of government/grab of advertisement jingle/call or register on-line now/extraordinary situation which calls for emergency powers/grab of cheesy pop song/another price hike/want a great smile for summer?/sadistic, cruel and inhuman/unbelievable prices this Easter/inability to pay could lead to closure/grab of classical music/smile-enhancing system for/people are becoming more sceptical about what the media tells/grab of a thrashy song/fine and mild today/lives lost/stations of the cross service/risk losing public sup-/-proaching eight o'clock.

SCENE ONE: MARSHALL HOUSE

Lights up. MATTHEW is on the phone. His wife, BETH, is getting ready to go to work.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V/O) News up next.

An old popular song begins to play on the radio.

MATTHEW ... ah ... attendances are improving, we've ... I appreciate that, but it's an improvement nonetheless and given a little more time and pers-

BETH kisses him on the neck. He puts his arm around her.

MATTHEW ... Yes, but to a lot of these people this is the only place they know to come and ... I know ... yes, I know, I ... that's exactly why I need more time.

BETH's mobile phone rings. She answers it.

BETH Doctor Marshall. *(she breaks away from MATTHEW)* Hello, Phillip, good to hear from you.

MATTHEW With all due respect, John, I can't just turn things around in a year.

BETH Listen, can I call you back from the surgery? Great, thanks. Speak to you later then ... OK, bye.

MATTHEW Things have been going downhill for over a decade, I need –

BETH motions for MATTHEW to hurry up as she finishes getting ready. He waves her off.

MATTHEW ... these people need to develop trust in me. They're afraid of change, it's in their ...

BETH Matthew.

MATTHEW No, John, I'm not – *(to BETH)* Just hang on. *(pause. Into phone)* ... I don't think that at all, I truly believe that it's something we can achieve with –

BETH *(beat)* Matthew, come on.

MATTHEW *(to BETH)* I won't be long, darling. *(to phone)* Yes. Of course. *(to BETH)* John says hello.

BETH Hello, John.

MATTHEW 'Hello, John.'

BETH *(under her breath)* Now get a move on.

MATTHEW She is, yes, I'm very lucky.

BETH Oh, for God's sake.

MATTHEW frowns at BETH. She motions for him to hurry up and get off the phone.

MATTHEW Do you think you could just speak to the committee and ... I know, but in all fairness, John, it just isn't enough ... you may as well have sold it last year and not bothered to put me in

there ... Another twelve months.

Pause.

BETH Do you want me to get a taxi?

MATTHEW *(to phone)* Well, that *is* realistic ... *(to BETH)* Shh. *(to phone)*
No, six months isn't enough. I'm sorry, I –

BETH Don't you bloody well shoosh me...

MATTHEW *(over BETH's line)* I'm not being cocky, I'm asking the
committee to think long term, to, to have a little faith in me
and look at the –

BETH I'm out of here. You can find your own way around today.

MATTHEW *(over 'find your own ...')* I don't know, John, I'm in a very
difficult position ... can you just hold the line for a second, I
just, I won't be a sec. *(to BETH as she grabs her keys and bag)*
Can you just wait a minute?

BETH I've waited long enough, I have to go.

MATTHEW I need the car today.

BETH You should have thought of that before.

MATTHEW Beth, this is important –

BETH Yeah, I know it is, so why do you make important calls just
when I have to go to work?

MATTHEW Can you just –

BETH *(over him)* Bye. Have a nice day. *(exits)*

MATTHEW *(to phone)* Sorry about that, John ... Mm hm. OK ... *(defeated)*
Well, it's better than nothing, I suppose ... all right ... OK,
thanks John ... thanks, bye now.

He hangs up.

SCENE TWO: ANTHONY'S HOUSE

ANTHONY is curled up on the couch.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V/O) Do you believe there is a way forward from this point?

INTERVIEWEE (V/O) It's hard to say. If I were to be perfectly honest, I would
have to say I can't see a peaceful solution being found in the
near future.

The phone rings. ANTHONY lets it ring a while.

INTERVIEWEE (V/O) I think both sides are stuck in a deadlock and neither is
prepared to make the first move towards peace. The
bloodshed on both sides has reached –

ANTHONY points a remote at the radio and switches it off. He picks up the phone.
*NB: MOTHER is heard only (through the phone), read live backstage by one of the
actors.*

ANTHONY What?

MOTHER *(voice)* What sort of a way is that to answer the phone?

ANTHONY I don't know.

MOTHER *(voice)* That is no way to answer the phone. Do you always answer the phone with 'what'?

ANTHONY No.

MOTHER *(voice)* So why start now?

ANTHONY I knew it would be you.

MOTHER *(voice)* Oh, so you answer the phone to your mother with 'what'?

ANTHONY Well, I did this time.

MOTHER *(voice)* How did you know it was me?

ANTHONY You always ring about this time on a Wednesday.

MOTHER *(voice)* Doesn't necessarily mean it was me. Could be anyone. Could be your boss.

ANTHONY We communicate via email.

MOTHER *(voice)* You've always got an answer, haven't you?

ANTHONY That's the way a conversation works.

MOTHER *(voice)* My God, you are infuriating.

ANTHONY What did you want?

MOTHER *(voice)* Hey?

ANTHONY What is the purpose of your call?

MOTHER *(voice)* What do I want? I want to talk to my son. Do I have to have a purpose?

ANTHONY Most people do.

MOTHER *(voice)* Mother Mary pray for us. What did I do to deserve a son like this? *(pause)* Hey?

ANTHONY I'm sorry. I thought you were talking to Mary.

MOTHER *(voice)* Your father is sick, Anthony.

ANTHONY Yes, I know.

MOTHER *(voice)* No, you don't know. He's taken a turn for the worse.

ANTHONY Right. So this is why you called.

MOTHER *(voice)* You must go and see him.

ANTHONY Must I?

MOTHER *(voice)* You could go with Sam. She's going on Saturday.

ANTHONY No thanks.

MOTHER *(voice)* Anthony! He's your father. He may not be with us for much longer.

ANTHONY I'll go when I'm ready.

MOTHER *(voice)* My God, you're worse than your brother.

ANTHONY I'll go when I'm ready.

MOTHER *(voice)* And when will that be?

ANTHONY When I am ready!

MOTHER *(voice)* When you can be bothered to leave the house?

ANTHONY Mum.

MOTHER *(voice)* My God, you test me sometimes.

ANTHONY I'm going to go now. Bye.

He hangs up.

SCENE THREE: BEHIND SAM'S BUILDING

Back of an inner-city building. A skip and other bins. AL is sheltering in an alcove with a blanket, listening to a small portable radio. He has a trendy but well-worn sports bag. SAM enters. She pulls out her cigarettes.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V/O) ... other insurance companies are now following suit, though none seem to have any clear explanation for the recent

jump in premiums. Many small business operators are wondering how they will be able to meet the rise and rise of insurance costs, some accusing insurance companies of cynicism for using the constant threat of global terrorism as an excuse for far too long.

SAM Hi, Al.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V/O) I spoke to the head of the natio-

AL turns off his radio.

AL Morning. *(pause. He looks at her cigarettes)* May I?

SAM How can I be sure you're as old as you say you are?

AL Scouts' honour.

SAM Dib dib dib.

AL Dob dob dob. *(pause)* Who's going to care, anyway? My parents are hardly going to dob you in, are they?

SAM Where are your parents?

AL I lost them.

SAM *(beat)* I'm sorry.

AL They're not dead. As far as I know. I just lost them.

SAM Oh.