

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Bang on the Nerve

by Van Badham

EXTRACT

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# Bang on the Nerve

**Van Badham**

***Characters:***

Elle, a filmmaker. 20s

Louis, a musician. 20s

***Scene:***

*Louis' bedroom in a sparse share-house, and later, perhaps, the pub.*

For David Abeles.

*Louis sits on his bed, tuning his guitar. His touch upon it is so gentle it could almost be a caress. He enjoys the purity of a few perfect notes.*

*The door flies open. Elle, in a rage.*

**ELLE:** Right. This is how fucked it is – this pissant – cunt bastard little fucking AARGH! – right, I’m sitting there. I’m actually talking to the Canadian guy – yeah – Mr Pinstripe sex fetish swing party whatever – but he’s basically all right – and – AND – right, you’re Gabriel, so I’m like here and you’re there – talking to the Canadian guy – hoping he’s just looking down and not straight at my tits – Gabriel, right – little fucking – he goes “You! Hey you!” – he’s a thug! I just can’t – ARGH! You’re there going “You!” – *I know he means me* – I don’t know the game, see? No-one tells you the fucking game – Canadian guy’s too busy talking about zippers or nipple-clamps or whatever – “Hey! You!” and I turn around. And cunt bastard “Stop looking at me!” throws a jar of jam – glass jar *at my head*. Straight at. BOOM! CRASH! Missed me, but BANG! Straight at the wall, glass everywhere – SMASH – glass in my hair, jam *everywhere*, didn’t get a lunch break – spent all fucking lunchtime in the staffroom trying to get – look, it’s STILL everywhere and look at me *look look look* – Everything’s a fucking mess and I hate it there and I’ve got in – *it’s all in my hair* – all this jam and bits of glass... *(sooky voice) He threw jam at me...!* The fucking little PRICK!

*Pause.*

*Louis strums a single note.*

*Pause.*

**ELLE:** Anyway...

*Pause.*

*Louis strums another note.*

**ELLE:** POINT IS that I’m having an absolutely shit day and I can’t believe I’m still working there at that fucking fucking place and –

*Louis strums another note.*

**ELLE:** Be a friend and not a bastard.

**LOUIS:** Hmm...

*Louis considers his guitar. He improvises a song.*

**LOUIS:** “Angry girl, put away your hate.  
The kid who threw the jam jar is only - eight.”

**ELLE:** What’s happened to my LIFE?!

**LOUIS:** “He wants to lighten his load –  
(He needs to lighten his load!)  
There’s too much at stake  
More than a mere child can take.  
He wants to lighten his load,  
(lighten his...!)  
While he’s finding his road  
(findin’ his...!)  
It’s going too fast –  
He don’t want no – break - fast...”

**ELLE:** Roaring up the independent charts *as we speak*. Mainstream pop success is only a catchy intro away.

**LOUIS:** I can do catchy.

**ELLE:** Put it down before I rip it to pieces.

**LOUIS:** *You said* you were going to quit last week.

**ELLE:** I saw myself in the window of the bus and I was like “I look like a primary school teacher.” Louis, I *am* a primary school teacher.

**LOUIS:** You picked it.

- ELLE:** I didn't! I picked something entirely different! I've ended up ending up. Louis – I've *settled!*
- LOUIS:** Honey, most of the girls you know did that years ago.
- ELLE:** You think I'm old and past it. You think I'm a wrinkly old hag with a cobwebbed uterus.
- LOUIS:** I have never thought about your uterus.
- ELLE:** I'm deeply offended.
- LOUIS:** Sheets offend you. Socks offend you.
- ELLE:** Your socks offend anybody. Laundry is a concept holding no appeal for you...
- LOUIS:** My room, my mess, your choice to deal with it –
- ELLE:** I need a hug!
- LOUIS:** (*hugging her*) Was the big nasty eight-year-old mean to you today? You know what we say to the big nasty eight-year-old?
- ELLE:** "Fuck off, you little cunt"?
- LOUIS:** Parents, be inspired with confidence! "Don't be mean to me, Mr Eight Year Old! If you do, I shall have to cry on the bus and come over and get hugs from Louis...!"
- ELLE:** We thought about putting valium in school dinners today.
- LOUIS:** Why didn't you?
- ELLE:** We'd run out.
- LOUIS:** Today, I wrote a song about lard.

*He strums.*

**LOUIS:** (*singing*)

“I like lard, and lard likes me.  
I have it for dinner and I have it with tea.  
I have it on biscuits and with celery.  
Lard costs little, it’s almost free.  
It’s so tasty, don’t you agree?  
Lard surely does appeal to me.  
Lard, lard, lard.”

**ELLE:** They made you sing that?

**LOUIS:** They might as well. Composing the lard song was the only thing that got me through the song I was *supposed* to be learning which had the refrain “I can’t believe it’s not butter” and I think – but am not entirely sure – was about vaginal fluid. (*he strums*)

**ELLE:** You’re not singing it, are you?

*He strums.*

**LOUIS:** You are not the only one (*he strums again*) with an unpleasant (*he strums*) job. AND check out my - new - hose.

*He indicates a pair of mock mediaeval hose hanging somewhere in the room.*

**ELLE:** Two words that belong solely in the sentence “should we go to the theatre OR the restaurant?”.

**LOUIS:** The glamorous life of a medieval minstrel, who sings AND serves soup. (*guitar riff*) Mock and roll!

**ELLE:** Let’s run away.

**LOUIS:** I don’t want to leave my job. It’s the best one I’ve ever had.