

Lights up on THE EXAMINING ROOM. This is a walk-in clinic: you walk in and there it is. All of it. A door to the outside is upstage left (the sign is turned "OPEN" toward the street (so the house sees "CLOSED.")). There's just enough here to tell you this is a medical operation: an examining bed with a sterile white sheet draped along it. A table with a few usual instruments. A whiteboard along the wall. In the corner, canes and crutches stuffed into what looks like an umbrella stand. But these are all secondary to our attention, for at center this whole time has been DOCTOR MIRANDA ROBBIE, packing up her briefcase. It's getting long in the day and she's looking a little glum. Also, she's Australian.

ROBBIE. (*Sighs, shuts case.*) What a day. No "g'day," either. I knew it was a mistake coming here. Here I am: top of my class, the Perth School of Podiatry, hundreds of thousands of dollars down in debt, and where do I look to find my fortune? Out here in the States, in some old neighborhood of some old town, stuck with the bogans. American Bogans. (*Shudders.*) "Go to the States," they said. "Things are different there," they said. "More accepting." "There, 'Randa, you'll find yourself a Sheila." "Because you're a slit-licker, 'Randa! And we ain't want you here." Fine, I said. Go, I did. Dumb, I was. I can't even find myself a patient, let alone a lover. I'll be first to admit, I've got my flaws. I'm a bit manic, something of a root rat whose, uh, specific sexual inclinations tend to come up a bit on the job. And, when in downer moods, I tend to talk in rather expository fashion regarding my situation. (*Sighs again, takes the briefcase in hand and approaches the door.*) 'Course, for those seriously in need of the medicine of podiatry, perhaps a "walk-in" clinic was rather insensitive.

BLAIR. (*Enters from door with son JOHNNY, blonde-haired. Blair is a gussied-up Southern Belle type, looking quite distressed. A light ticking sound can be heard*) Is there a doctor in the house?!

ROBBIE. (*Turns to audience, wide-eyed.*) Crikey.

BLAIR. Are you the doctor?

ROBBIE. Oh, defo, miss. Defo.

BLAIR. Then, you can help?

ROBBIE. Call it mutual aid! (*Robbie whisks Blair away. Johnny, without his mother's support to sturdy himself, pratfalls.*)

BLAIR. Oh, Johnny!

ROBBIE. (*Props Blair up on the examining table.*) Set you right here.

BLAIR. But my son, doctor!

ROBBIE. Ah, little tyke'll be just fine. Resilient bunch, kids today.

BLAIR. But he is the one in trouble, doctor!

ROBBIE. (*Halts, confused. Looks back at Johnny. Laughs it off, condescendingly.*) I'm a PODIATRIST, miss. Not a pediatrician.

BLAIR. But--

ROBBIE. Now! Let's see what you've got under the hood! (*Throws off Blair's shoe. In awe:*) Steve Irwin's ghost. Nice set of wigglers!

BLAIR. Oh, doctor--

ROBBIE. Tell me where it hurts, love. Here? Here?

BLAIR. Doctor, please--

ROBBIE. Or... (*Robbie rubs Blair's foot in tiny circles around her own (Robbie's) heart.*) Here?

BLAIR. (*Kicks her away.*) Doctor, I am not the one in need! It is my son who requires your attention.

ROBBIE. Miss, I'm not an ankle-biter doctor, I'm an *ankle* biter-doctor.

BLAIR. But I am telling you it is his foot that ails him!

ROBBIE. (*Looks back over to Johnny. He is on the floor, deep in pain, gripping at his foot.*) Oh. Thought that was just iffy yoga.

BLAIR. Will you help him, doctor? Please?!

ROBBIE. (*Approaches Johnny on all-fours.*) Listen, how's about you be a real deadset cobbler for ol' 'Randa here? Mm? I do the doctorly deeds, you feel better, and for our efforts we put your mum in me pocket? Whaddya say? (*Johnny snaps his fingers. Robbie is confused.*) I said, whaddya say, mate? (*Johnny snaps his fingers again. Robbie to Blair:*) I don't know about feet, miss, but I think he's got a few wires crossed, this one.

BLAIR. Oh, no, doctor. That's just how my Johnny, true Nordic cherub that he is, prefers to talk. He's what some would call "non-verbal."

ROBBIE. Oh. Well, what did he say?

BLAIR. Two snaps mean yes.

ROBBIE. One snap means no?

BLAIR. Yes, precisely.

ROBBIE. Simple enough.

BLAIR. Just don't get a tune stuck in his head. Very confusing.

ROBBIE. (*Sets Johnny up on the examining table.*) Right then. Now, you being a good little Joey--

BLAIR. Johnny.

ROBBIE. Right--and take off your shoe for ol' Doc Robbie, eh? And, ah, be gentle now. (*Robbie winks. Johnny does as told, untying his laces nice and slow.*) In the meantime, miss, how's about you share when all this trouble began?

BLAIR. Oh, a most terrible happening, doctor! And after such a lovely day. You see, I was just taking Johnny for a walk here--here, in the OLD NEIGHBORHOOD--and we were running around so free and gay.

ROBBIE. Good way to be.

BLAIR. And then it all--(*stifling tears*) it all happened so quickly! (*Sobs.*) Oh, Johnny! Oh, my poor, sweet, Aryan child!

ROBBIE. (*To audience:*) Real clucky type, ain't she?

BLAIR. What was that?

ROBBIE. Mm?

BLAIR. That word you said. I've never heard it. And your voice. You're not from around here, are you, doctor?

ROBBIE. No, miss, I ain't.

BLAIR. My, the OLD NEIGHBORHOOD sure is changing.

ROBBIE. (*Gets close to her.*) I'd like to think for the better. (*Pause. Robbie stares deeply at Blair. Johnny tumbles over in pain again.*)

BLAIR. Oh, Johnny!

ROBBIE. (*Goes swiftly to his aid.*) Not to worry, miss. She'll be apples soon enough.

BLAIR. My Johnny's a boy!

ROBBIE. (*Lays Johnny down on the examining table and whispers:*) Oh, good on ya, Johnny, ya little ripper! Keep this up and me and your mum will be pashin' nuddy in no time. You just hang tight and 'Randa will fix ya right up and proper. Peachy? (*Johnny snaps yes.*) Peachy! (*Robbie reaches into her briefcase.*)

BLAIR. What are you doing now, doctor?

ROBBIE. (*Reveals a thermometer.*) Taking temperature! (*Stuffs it into Johnny's mouth.*)

BLAIR. Temperature? Doctor, I hardly see how--

ROBBIE. Oh, you'd be surprised, miss. What goes up must come down, and likewise. D'you know that the gums have a direct effect on the heart?

BLAIR. Well, yes, but that can be easily explained if one considers--

ROBBIE. (*Re temperature-taking:*) Now that could take a minute! So how's about you tell ol' Randa a little bit about yourself, eh?

BLAIR. My-myself?

ROBBIE. (*Revealing a notebook and pen.*) Your information! For insurance purposes.

BLAIR. Oh, yes. Yes, of course. Um. What would you need to know?

ROBBIE. Well how's about a name for starts?

BLAIR. Blair. Blair Jenkins.

ROBBIE. Oh, lovely. Lovely name.

BLAIR. Yes, and my son is--

ROBBIE. Phone number?

BLAIR. Hm?

ROBBIE. Phone number. I mean, I'd take any ol' set of digits, but really it's best you give me something more personal. So I can reach you quickly, in case of urgent matters.

BLAIR. (*Hesitates.*) 555-340-2424.

ROBBIE. Thank you. Relationship status?

BLAIR. Widowed.

ROBBIE. Aw, fuck me dead. (*Blair gasps. She SLAPS Robbie.*) Yow! What was that for?

BLAIR. For your CRASS comment, doctor!

ROBBIE. Crass what-it?

BLAIR. Those words, doctor! Those awful, horrible words that just came out of your mouth!

ROBBIE. Words...? (*Thinks about it. Realizes the mistake.*) Oh, ha! No, I'm sorry, miss. That was just an expression.

BLAIR. Oh, come now, doctor. You must think me a fool.

ROBBIE. Fair dinkum, ma'am! It's a... term of sympathy where I'm from.

BLAIR. A term of sympathy?

ROBBIE. Yes.

BLAIR. Where you're from?

ROBBIE. Yes.

BLAIR. And just where are you from, doctor?

ROBBIE. Straya.

BLAIR. What?

ROBBIE. Aus-tral-ia.

BLAIR. Oh. Well, that explains the peculiar manner.

ROBBIE. *(To audience:)* Well, that was a piece of piss.

BLAIR. But what is that, doctor?

ROBBIE. Oh, it just means something is easy--

BLAIR. No, that talking. Talking to... over there.

ROBBIE. Oh. Uh. That's just... the observership!

BLAIR. The observership?

ROBBIE. Right.

BLAIR. But, I don't remember signing any waivers!

ROBBIE. Uhh... *(Johnny turns over on the table, fainted. The thermometer drops out of his mouth.)*

BLAIR. Johnny!

ROBBIE. Johnny signed!

BLAIR. Oh, help him, doctor!

ROBBIE. *(Gets nice and close to Johnny.)* Alright, John-o. Home stretch. Just gotta take this time to really wow her, alright? Here! *(Grabs a white board, hands it to Johnny.)* Now, Johnny: I want you to show me where it hurts.

BLAIR. Show you--but doctor!

ROBBIE. Blair, please! It's the only way to be sure.

BLAIR. But as I've said, the pain is coming from—

ROBBIE. Hey, ever seen this? (*Robbie grabs a few items from around the room. She juggles them.*) Pretty gnarly, right?

BLAIR. Doctor, what on Earth--?

ROBBIE. Not your thing, eh? No wucka's. (*Stops juggling.*) No wucka's at all. How about... this? (*Robbie performs a whole freakin' cartwheel.*) Eh?

BLAIR. (*Pause.*) Are you ill, doctor?

ROBBIE. (*Sighs. To audience:*) Just lovesick.

BLAIR. Oh. And the students... are helping you with that?

ROBBIE. No, just... (*defeatedly*) show us where it hurts, Johnny. (*Johnny reveals a wonderfully drawn foot on the whiteboard. An arrow points to his toe.*)

BLAIR. You see! It's--

BLAIR & ROBBIE. His toe.

ROBBIE. Yes. (*On a slight pause, Robbie suddenly becomes aware of that ticking noise. Yes, that ticking noise that's been playing since they got here.*). Oi, what's that noise? (*Administers a stethoscopic reading on Johnny's heart.*) Got a bum ticker, Johnny?

BLAIR. That's just it, doctor. The ticking started on our walk, when Johnny got hurt.

ROBBIE. (*Moves the stethoscope around a bit. It gets louder the further south it goes on Johnny.*) Seems to be getting louder when I... (*Robbie runs the stethoscope all the way down to Johnny's toe. The noise is at its loudest.*) The Hell is... (*Robbie inspects the toe.*) Something in there. His feet been exposed to anything?

BLAIR. Well, we were running barefoot.

ROBBIE. Oh, barefoot. Well that explains it.

BLAIR. (*In a dreamy daze:*) We just love the OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, doctor. (*Robbie grabs a pair of tweezers. He digs deep into Johnny's toe and the boy YELPS in pain.*) Doctor, you're hurting him!

ROBBIE. (*Yanks out a small object. Johnny wilts with relief.*) There we are.

BLAIR. What is it, doctor?

ROBBIE. Why... I think it's gotta be the world's... tiniest cuckoo clock? (*The clock cuckoos.*)

BLAIR. Oh! Like from childhood. The OLD NEIGHBORHOOD is renowned for these wonders.

ROBBIE. Huh. (*To audience:*) for some reason, I kind of saw that coming the whole time.

BLAIR. Oh, how can I ever repay you, doctor?

ROBBIE. Eh--

JOHNNY. (*With a clear, proud voice:*) I know how.

BLAIR. Johnny? You can talk?

JOHNNY. Yes. But more than that, mother: I can see. I can see that THIS is a good woman of medicine. Though she delayed my relief so that she may better court you, this gross abuse of her responsibility in pursuit of your favor has shown me that a pain sustained is worth even the smallest moments of peace. And yours, doctor, is a pain of the heart. One you've suffered far too long.

BLAIR. Is that true, doctor? (*Robbie nods.*) And... you'd like to heal that pain... with me?

ROBBIE. Bloody oath.

BLAIR. Well... it has been some time since my husband passed. And we were married right out of high school. Just that school over there, right here in the-

BLAIR & ROBBIE. The OLD NEIGHBORHOOD.

BLAIR. (*Smiles.*) I don't know. At this age... I guess I'm willing to try something new.

ROBBIE. (*Excited.*) Really?

BLAIR. Yes. (*Robbie shouts with glee. They embrace.*) But, I'll need guidance.

ROBBIE. (*Gathers up her things.*) Yes, yes of course.

BLAIR. Someone professional. Someone with experience.

ROBBIE. Aw, no worries, love. I'm Australian. (*To audience:*) I've got plenty of experience with bush! (*They exit. Lights out.*)