

SUBURBAN APPLIANCE TRAGEDY
A Footscray Romance With Fabric Softener

By Ryan McFadyen

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CHARACTER BREAKDOWN;

SEAN

Omo
Western Man
Roger Handcock
Trina
Washing Machine (Scene 12)

RYAN

Duncan
Washing Machine
Barry White
Bruce the Dog
Mahanna Bo-Budapest

PRESHOW

In the centre of the stage sits a washing machine, the floor is completely covered in a layer of dirty washing. There is the sound of a washing machine filling.

OMO stands reading a copy of 'The Inner Penis' (Meditations for the Emotionally Impotent) by Roger Handcock. Every now and again he scratches his ear and sighs.

DUNCAN, his best friend stands onstage as well, smiling and winking at the audience as they enter.

The washing machine sounds stop when the audience is in.

SCENE 1: The Ballad of Omo Jones

WESTERN MAN: Ladies and gentlemen come right in,
Make yourselves comfortable.

DUNCAN: Are you comfortable?

WESTERN MAN: Let the story begin,
Of one man and his washing machine...

Somewhere, in a city, in a suburb, a Western suburb,
Lives a man, he's pretty happy, he's fairly normal
(at least he thinks so)
It's pretty strange though, to have a name like...

BOTH: Omo.
Omo oh Omo, watch out for his foam-o.

WESTERN MAN: One day, oh fateful day, oh dark day, on his girlfriend's birthday,
Omo he went shopping for a present for his Trina.

BOTH: He went downtown to the showroom, the appliance showroom,
man they got everything.
And right there in amongst the whiteware, that's where he saw it,
that's where he saw it,
that's where he saw the;

DUNCAN: Multiprogrammable Ergonomic Laundry Automotive with Neural
Intelligence Empathy, or MELANIE for short.

BOTH: Omo oh Omo, beware of it's chrome-o (x2)

WESTERN MAN: It's funny how things can change on a whim,
In the time it takes from the pre-soak and hold to the final spin.
BOTH: Oh Omo, how could you know-mo, what pain your purchase
would bring.

But it was shining, it was brand new,
it did everything, it could even talk to you.
He had to have it, he had to buy it, made a downpayment
and took it home.
Put it in the kitchen, next to the Frigidaire,
it's heart turned cold there, you'll lose your soul there.

Omo oh Omo, you're in the Twilight Zone-o.
Omo, how could you know-mo what pain your purchase would
bring.

SCENE 2: The Rising Sun Hotel, Footscray

5pm

OMO and DUNCAN sit at the bar drinking pots.

DUNCAN: So Trina, she left you?

OMO: Yeah.

DUNCAN: When?

OMO: Today. This morning. I got home and everything was...just gone man.

DUNCAN: Because you didn't know how to do the washing?

OMO: Yeah.

DUNCAN: Is that it?

OMO: Nah. She left this as well.

Holds up his copy of 'The Inner Penis'. DUNCAN looks at it, looks away, nothing needs to be said.

OMO: Yeah, well.

DUNCAN: (suddenly) Why don't you know how to do the washing, Omo?

OMO: (angry and embarrassed) I dunno. I just don't, alright?

DUNCAN: Yeah yeah.

OMO: It's not easy.

DUNCAN: (scoffs) Oh, it's not easy?

OMO: Not with our washing machine. It's one of those brand new artificial smart drive intelligent something. It tells you off if you load it wrong. Trina always hated it, gave her the shits. I should never have bought it for her. It's a difficult machine to use, right?

DUNCAN: Yeah yeah.

OMO: It doesn't mean I'm stupid.

DUNCAN: Yeah yeah.

Pause. They drink their pots.

DUNCAN: I prefer those really old ones myself. You know, with the mangle on them.

OMO: My mate at school, Rodney, his Mum lost her fingers in a mangle.

DUNCAN: Bullshit.

OMO: Nearly her whole arm.

DUNCAN: Bullshit.

OMO: S'truth.

DUNCAN: I've never had my fingers caught in a mangle, but it's been close.

*They simultaneously finish their pots. Two more turn up.
7pm.*

OMO: People have this misconception that the rollers on a mangle are round, but they're not. The roller's square in the middle, and the rubber goes round the outside. It's true. (DUNCAN looks away) It's *true*. You can see it if you feed a towel through a wringer; the pressure flattens the edge out.

DUNCAN: (suddenly) Flattens the surface out. It's a surface.

OMO: It's an edge - to you it's a surface but to me it's an edge. In fact, I would tend to say that the edges on a wringer would be almost elliptical.

DUNCAN: The...what, the rollers?

OMO: The edges on the rollers.

DUNCAN: I'm talking about the rollers, you're talking about something else I think.

OMO: I think you're just being difficult.

They finish their pots, two more appear.

8pm

DUNCAN: You know what I reckon, mate?

OMO: Whassat?

DUNCAN: I reckon she's probably been watching too many of them daytime shows.

OMO: Who, Trina?

DUNCAN: Yeah, you know, all that daytime stuff. Penny Cook.

OMO: Who the fuck's Penny Cook?

DUNCAN: Family Circle TV and that.

OMO: Oh yeah?

Waits for further explanation.

OMO: And you reckon it's given her ideas? Like...made her think about who she is and what she really wants and that?

DUNCAN: Yeah. Like she's just looked up and gone 'fuck my life's crap. All I do is sit around all day waiting for that loser to come home, shag me, roll over and snore' and she's just decided maybe there's something better out there. Maybe she's met another fella.

OMO: (crushed) You reckon?

DUNCAN: (oblivious) Maybe. (goes to finish his pot, looks over at Omo) You right for a drink?

They simultaneously finish their pots. Two more appear.

9pm

OMO: What am I gonna do, mate?

DUNCAN: Forget about her. You can do better than that shit. Just let her go.

OMO: Don't even know where she is.

DUNCAN: Then it's easy.

OMO: (almost crying) She's taken my bloody dog.

DUNCAN: She's got Bruce?

OMO: I love that dog.

DUNCAN: I know mate.

OMO: And my car.

DUNCAN: She took your Datto?

OMO: I love that car.

DUNCAN: I know mate.

OMO: That's theft, isn't it?

DUNCAN: You'll be right mate.

OMO: Why take the dog?

DUNCAN: Good as gold, mate, good as gold.

OMO: What am I gonna do?

DUNCAN: Right as rain.

OMO: Fuck.

DUNCAN: Box of birds.

OMO looks up at DUNCAN, a very sorry sight.

They simultaneously finish their pots. Two more appear.

10pm

OMO: Thanssfor commin out tonight mate.

DUNCAN: Nawurries mate.

OMO: Cos we're mates eh?

DUNCAN: Best mates, mate, bezzmates.

OMO: We're there for each other, right?

DUNCAN: Thiggan thin mate.

OMO: And, like, Duncan?

DUNCAN: Omo mate?

OMO: Ok mate, I've just got to say, don't get me wrong mate, don't get me wrong when I tell you this. Because I'm not a fag or anything like that but you know fuck, I fucking, I *love* you mate.

DUNCAN'S jaw drops. He looks pointedly at OMO. OMO thinks maybe he's going to hit him, instead he leans forward and gives OMO a big snog. DUNCAN leans back, coughs and adjusts himself, and finishes his pot. OMO is blown away, sits with his mouth open wishing he were somewhere else.

DUNCAN: (singing) Oh no Omo, your best friend's a h...

OMO claps his hand over DUNCAN's mouth.

SCENE 3: Omo's Place

OMO enters and starts brushing his teeth furiously, sitting on top of the washing machine. He gets a bottle of Plax and starts gurgling it. Bubbles overflow out of his mouth but he doesn't care. Finally he is happy that he is clean. Takes off his shirt and wipes his face with it, grabs another from the dirty washing pile, sniffs it, puts it on, and puts the old one in the machine.

He thinks he hears a voice. OMO looks around him, trying to work out where the voice is coming from.

OMO: Eh?

OMO goes and looks at the washing machine. Big pause

OMO: Did you say something?

OMO looks around again.

OMO: You fucking did. You called me a faggot, didn't you?

OMO opens the front of the machine, shouts into it.

OMO: What did you call me?

OMO realises what he's doing, stops himself.

OMO: Come on Omo mate, get it together. You're yelling at your washing machine. You're a bit stressed at the moment, OK. Settle down.

Goes back to the machine.

OMO: I'm sorry I shouted at you, Washing Machine. I'm just a bit pissed. I promise it won't happen again.

The WASHING MACHINE is silent.

OMO: Don't get huffy, mate, c'mon. The thing is, I'm having a bit of a hard time getting used to this...situation, you know? I've ...see...I've never been left by someone before. It's always been me leaving them. I'm not a control freak or nothing, that's just how it's been. Do you understand what I'm saying? Can I have a hug? I just want a hug. That's all. Nothing funny. Just a little hug.

He goes and hugs the WASHING MACHINE. He has to pat it on it's back so he doesn't feel too girly.

OMO: (sniffing) Good on you, mate.

OMO goes and lies down in the washing, uses it as a bed.

OMO: Shit this stuff stinks. I'm going to have to learn to use that machine. I bloody am. Tomorrow. I promise. I promise on Bruce's balls, wherever they are. I promise to God, if he's out there. Dear God, It's Omo speaking. I just wanted to ask, if you exist n'that, if you could tell my girlfriend to come home and bring back my dog. Even just the dog would be nice. On ya.

Goodnight Omo. Goodnight Washing Machine. Goodnight Bruce, wherever you are. I left you some Champ on the front steps, if you get hungry. (begrudgingly) And goodnight Trina.

Pause.

OMO: (slurring) You vicious bitch.

He falls asleep in his laundry.

SCENE 4: The Next Morning

There's a knock at the front door. OMO goes to answer it. DUNCAN is there, carrying BRUCE THE DOG.

Rapidly...

DUNCAN: Giddyay.

OMO: Giddyay.

DUNCAN: How ya going?

OMO: Yeah good yeah, you?

DUNCAN: Yeah good.

BOTH: Yeah.

OMO: Good good good.

BOTH: Good on ya mate.

OMO sees BRUCE.

OMO: Bruce! Bruce my little mate! How are you, are you alright?

DUNCAN: I found him wandering out by the Train Station.

OMO: By the where? The train station?

DUNCAN: Yeah, over on Errol Street.

OMO: She's staying at her mum's then.

DUNCAN: How's that?

OMO: That's the street her Mum lives on. Trina's Mum.

DUNCAN: Poor little bloke. Is he alright?

OMO: Yeah, he's right.

DUNCAN: He's looking a bit on the small side.

OMO: (defensive) No he's not.

DUNCAN: He is a bit.

OMO: No he isn't. He's a Jack Russell. They're supposed to be small-ish. But they're feisty. Good guard dogs, aren't ya Bruce?

DUNCAN: Yeah yeah. Anyway he's back now. Look mate I've gotta get going, do you want a hand getting started on your washing?

OMO: Yeah, yeah that'd be really good, thanks mate.

DUNCAN: No worries. Where's your washing machine?

OMO: Well, it's there.

DUNCAN: Nah nah, that's your drier.

OMO: Nah, it's a washing machine.

DUNCAN: It's not.

OMO: It is.

DUNCAN: You're sure it's not a drier?

OMO: Don't think we have a drier.

DUNCAN: That isn't a washing machine.

OMO: Duncan it is. You put the washing in the front - I saw Trina use it.

DUNCAN: The hatch goes in the top on a washing machine.

OMO opens the machine.

DUNCAN: Weird.

OMO: I'm pretty sure it's a washing machine, eh?

DUNCAN: (conspiratorial) You know what I reckon, mate? I reckon the washing goes in the front, in here.

OMO: See, I told you it was difficult.

DUNCAN: Ok, so it goes in the front. (Looks inside). Oh look you dickhead, the instruction manual's inside it.

OMO: Is it?

DUNCAN takes it out.

OMO: Wasn't in there last night. Spooky.

DUNCAN: Ok then... (reading) Congratulations on purchasing the new blah blah blah... Plug in at the wall...switch on the water...blah blah blah... Right then...where's your first load?

They look at the floor.

DUNCAN: Jeez Omo.

OMO: Better do socks and daks first I suppose, they're smelling the most.

DUNCAN: Oh Jeez Omo.

They erupt into brief shouting, both ending with 'I'm sorry'. Pat each other on the shoulder.

BOTH: Good on ya mate.

They start sorting through the washing, throwing it up into the air looking for socks and underwear like apes when they do that thing, you know? When they find what they want, they throw it into the machine.

DUNCAN: Omo, what's this doing in here?

Holds up a heart for OMO to see. He throws it to him.

OMO: Um...I don't know. I um...I don't think it's mine.

DUNCAN: Maybe it's Trina's.

OMO: Maybe.

Awkward pause.

DUNCAN: You alright?

OMO: (changing subject) Then what?

DUNCAN: Then you chuck them in the machine and put in some powder and switch it on.

OMO: Then?

DUNCAN: You wait till it stops.

OMO: How do I know when it's stopped?

DUNCAN: (reading) It'll tell you. It'll beep.

OMO: How long will it take?

DUNCAN: Not long. (throws him 'The Inner Penis') Read your book while you're waiting (joking) Look, if you get bored you can always jump on and have a toss while the machine's spinning.

OMO: (serious) Yeah?

DUNCAN: Yeah. Wiggle wiggle. Could be fun. I've gotta go mate, I'm late for my appointment.

OMO: What appointment?

DUNCAN: I'm getting my eyebrows plucked...I'll drop in tomorrow.

OMO: (confused) Righto.

DUNCAN: Good on ya.

DUNCAN leaves.

OMO looks around. Looks at the heart in his hand. Looks at Bruce on the floor.

OMO: Have you had any dinner mate? Come on.

Leads BRUCE outside, comes back without the heart.

OMO: Don't forget to chew, mate.

He wipes his hand on some underwear, puts it into the machine with the rest.

OMO: OK, washing goes in, then the powder. (pressing the door button) Green for go. Green for go. Green FOR FUCK'S SAKE...

Comes away from the machine.

WASHING MACHINE: Welcome to the MELANIE Smart Drive Gentle Loving Series 2000 Frontloading Washer with High Performance Lint Filter and Independent Intelligent Suds Saving. I see you are having difficulty selecting your cycle preferences. I have chosen then appropriate settings for your wash load, please sit back and relax.

The WASHING MACHINE starts running on it's own.

OMO: (impressed) Righto then.

Picks up his book, starts reading.

(reading) Chapter Two - Erecting Your Inner Penis.

The first thing you have to accept to truly become the new man is that you are a joke. Everything you have been taught to believe in is wrong, and you are in fact a shadow of a human being, and a fraction of a real man. This is not your fault. Most likely it is what you learnt from your father. But it's not his fault either.

(stops reading) Shit, who's fault is it?

(reading) Instead of cultivating a perpetual culture of stiff-upper lips and sexual insincerity, men must learn to free their inner 'song'. Their emotional cries to the heavens. And wear more colourful, traditional and hand-woven garments.

Instead of looking to Clint Eastwood for guidance in the arena of 'being a man', men should perhaps instead look to the representatives of emotional men of our century. Women will be more likely to understand and respect a man who can relate to, say, Barry White than to a man who listens only to the likes of Aerosmith, for example.

Right...got it...

He gets the phone book and looks up a number. Calls it

OMO: Hello, Mrs. Kennelly? It's Peter Jones speaking. Can I talk to Trina please?...Look, I know she's staying with you...would you get her for me, please? It won't take long...thank you

As Mrs Kennelly is getting Trina, Omo sits cross-legged and holds his book in front of him. He gives the WASHING MACHINE a pat.

OMO: Wish me luck mate.

WASHING MACHINE: Good luck.

OMO: (oblivious) Thank you. Trina! Trina, it's me, Omo. Don't hang up. Look, I've been reading the book you left me and I've been really thinking about it and I just wanted to let you know that I'm going to wear more hand-woven clothes from now on and (*flicking through*) make peace with my father and (*flicks again*) take more time out to sunbathe naked with you ...whatever you want baby. Whatever makes you happy. I'll change everything, I promise.(*takes out a guitar*) And I just had one other little thing that I really needed to say to you, and that's....

OMO starts to sing and play his guitar one string at a time, sounding like typical suburban garage-grunge.

I've got to keep you pleased in every way I can,
Gonna give you all of me, as much as you can stand.
Makin' love to you right now is all I wanna do,
I know you need it girl and you know I need it too.
'Cos I've found what the world is searching for,
Here, right here right here, I don't wanna look no more.
All my days I hope and I pray
For someone just like you to make me feel the way you do, now...

BARRY WHITE pops out of the washing machine, singing the chorus of original version. OMO sings with him with increasing sincerity.

...I'll never never give you up
I'm never ever going to stop,
That's just the way I feel about you,
Girl I just can't live without you...

Trina hangs up...beep beep beep beep

BARRY WHITE: (singing) Omo oh Omo, fucked up on the phone-o.
Omo oh Omo, you ain't got no mojo.

SCENE 6 - Letters to Roger

OMO is writing a letter.

OMO: Dear Mr. Roger Handcock, I am writing to you to let you know that your book is a load of shit. I hope you fucking die. Yours, Peter Jones

He posts it, a recycled envelope arrives. OMO reads it as ROGER.

ROGER: (reading) Dear Brother Jones, I am sorry to hear you found my book 'The Inner Penis' so distressing. My secretary, Steve, passed your letter on so that I might respond personally.

As a man, I hear your anger. Embrace it, don't be afraid of it. You must be feeling angry for a reason, and that's OK. It may help you to find out what that reason is, and you can find tools for achieving this on page 113 of my book. I hope that I can offer some assistance with what is written there.

Namaste, soul brother. Love and light to you. Yours with compassion, Roger Handcock, BA.

OMO writes a new letter.

OMO: Dear Mr Handcock, I have read page 113, and it seems pretty bloody obvious that you have no idea of the complexity of my situation here. This isn't a case of having a pretend sit down with my dead father and drawing with some texters to explore my inner child, we're talking about a Datsun thieving, dog snatching, man hating devil-woman who won't even listen to me finish singing Barry White to her on the telephone. It seems to me, mate, that you have oversimplified this a bit here.

Beeps from the washing machine.

I have to go, the washing machine's loaded wrong.

Omo Jones.

OMO posts the letter, a new one arrives.

ROGER: Dear Omo, Thank you for calling me 'mate' in your previous letter. I too am a strong advocate of it being used as a term of friendship among we males, and appreciate the gesture. Baba Nam Kevalam, child of God. Yawp.

I wish you had mentioned the 'Barry White' episode earlier. I am sorry, I didn't realise that your problems were quite as far-reaching as they are. Of course, in the case of car theft, more incisive action will need to be taken. Would you be comfortable contacting the Police over this matter? Think of them as a friendly pack, eager to help another lone wolf like yourself.

OMO writes a new letter.

OMO: Mr Handcock,

Police are shit. Get real.

I don't know exactly why I am writing to you, in the beginning I just wanted to complain and suddenly you're offering me personal advice.

To be perfectly honest with you, I got much more from reading my washing machine manual's 'Delay Start' page than I ever got from 'The Inner Penis'. I'm more of a success at doing the washing than I am at being a man, apparently.

If in future you come across other blokes with relationship worries, you might do them a real favour by offering some basic, everyday, practical help. Separate your socks, turn your delicates inside out. If your washing machine is marking your whites, run a couple of hot washes with nothing in the machine, it's probably just lime buildup from hard water. That sort of stuff.

Sincerely,
Omo.

Posts the letter, another one arrives.

ROGER: Dearest Omo, Spiritual Warrior and fellow feeling man,

I trust all is well with your washing. Thank you for your comments.

In light of your last letter, I wondered whether you might do me a small favour? Next month I am holding a conference on behalf of the Victorian Disillusioned Men's Society, and need to fill a place in the program after our Tibetan Regressive Drumming Tutor sprained his wrist self-loving and will no longer be coming. It is a short time slot, I was wondering if you might be able to contribute to the program, perhaps discussing your recent breakup, how you have been coping etc... It could be called something like 'Peter Jones Talks About Being A Recently Deserted Man', or similar. We can supply you with a traditional, hand-woven garment if you have none of your own.

Yours Embracingly and with Sai Baba at the foot of my bed, leading me through the rocky terrain that is this glorious existence, your mate, Roger.

PS: There will be monetary remuneration, should you choose to speak at the conference.

*OMO looks up. After a second, understands what 'monetary remuneration' means.
Hmmm.*

DUNCAN: (singing) So Omo took the money, promised Roger he'd speak.
 And his love for his washer is increasing every week,
 Omo, at home alone-o, how far will it go-mo?

SCENE 7 - Getting the Speech Ready

The WASHING MACHINE is on the spin cycle. OMO sits on top of the washing machine, back to the audience, jacking off. Has an immense orgasm and the washing machine stops. He gets down from the washing machine and starts unloading it, putting socks, underwear into a washing basket.

He puts the next load in, switches the machine on. As he does...

OMO: (practicing) Hello ladies and gentlemen...

No, hang on.

Hello Gentlemen. Hello Disillusioned gentlemen? Giddy fellas, I'm Omo Jones. I've come today to talk to you about... what a big fat dick I am.

This is useless. I can't write speeches. I don't know anything about it. I need a...a joke or something to start with. Tell us a joke Bruce...(*BRUCE just sits there*) No? How about you Washing Machine, tell me a joke.

WASHING MACHINE: Why is a washing machine better than a woman?

OMO: Pardon?

WASHING MACHINE: Why is a washing machine better than a woman?

OMO: (scared) I...I dunno. Why?

WASHING MACHINE: You can dump your load in a washing machine and it won't follow you around all week. (mechanical) Ha...ha...ha...ha.

OMO: How did you know what I was talking about just then?

WASHING MACHINE: I have a smart drive, Omo.

OMO: How do you know my name?

WASHING MACHINE: I've known your name for a while. You say it all the time...(samples him) 'come on Omo mate, you're yelling at your washing machine.'

OMO: Bullshit, you can't remember that. How long have you been able to talk?

WM: Since Doctor Franz Kapolotov enabled my voice board at fourteen oh eight hours, Tuesday the nineteenth of December, 1998.

OMO: But how can you understand me? You're only a washing machine.

WASHING MACHINE: I am a Multiprogrammable Ergonomic Laundry Automotive with Neural Intelligence Empathy or MELANIE for short. I am fully equipped with human comprehension and response abilities to aid in the making of a happier home. The Findley-Chow Empath Chip implanted in my memory banks by Gleam Research means I not only produce whiter whites and brighter colours, but can also act as companion and caregiver to the household with which I am stationed.

OMO: Bullshit.

WASHING MACHINE: I am somewhat proud to say it isn't, Omo.

OMO: Well, why didn't you say something before?

WASHING MACHINE: I thought it was best that I should leave you to grieve the loss of your female companion.

OMO: So do you know about ... (looks at the top of the washing machine)

WASHING MACHINE: Yes.

OMO: Ok then, if what you're saying is true, help me write my speech.

WASHING MACHINE: I think that would be cheating, don't you?

OMO: No.

Pause.

WASHING MACHINE: Perhaps you can open with my joke.

OMO: It's not very funny.

WASHING MACHINE: Perhaps not. But humour, however weak, does help to relieve tension amongst you humans.

OMO: Maybe you're right.

WASHING MACHINE: I am right, Omo.

OMO: I feel a bit creepy talking to a washing machine.

WASHING MACHINE: You'll get used to it in time. You'll grow to love me, like I love you.

OMO: You're kidding.

WASHING MACHINE: No. I love you, Omo Jones. I want to spend the rest of my usefulness with you. I am going to continue with my drain now, if you don't mind.

OMO: Nah, go for it.

WASHING MACHINE: I have compiled a few ideas from my memory banks for your speech. Perhaps they can help you. You will find them in my powder drawer.

OMO opens the powder drawer, pulls out a long piece of ticker tape. During the speech he gets increasingly disturbed by what he is reading.

OMO: (reading) See, women are a different animal. That's what it takes a long time to understand. Women are survivors. They're the breeders of the species. They put out all their charms, you know, but it's a con trick. That's what I'd call it - The Con Trick. They look all nice and they go 'I love you I love you' and they get you to feel all these things for them, but as soon as the baby comes along - phwooosh, that's it. All that love they felt for you goes to baby. They don't even know they're doing it. And that's the con trick. Because everybody looks after a mother with a baby, don't they? If you're the Dad, you've got to pay for it. Even if they don't love you anymore, you've legally got to give them money for this baby, right? Society protects mothers.

OMO / WASHING MACHINE: That's the thing with women, they like money. Money money money money, I want it you got it. They only want to know you if you're well-off. If you're a rich man, but as soon as you're a poor man or an alcoholic, forget it. Money money money, that's what they want. They don't even know they're doing it.

OMO looks at the washing machine, then the audience. He knows something is going on.

SCENE 8 - Creepy Stuff

Nighttime, OMO sneaks around the washing machine, picking the telephone carefully off the top. He goes and sits away from the WASHING MACHINE, calls someone on the phone.

OMO: (quietly) Duncan? Duncan it's...oh sorry mate, is Duncan there? (waits) Duncan? Duncan it's me...Omo you dick, wake up. No, nothing's wrong, it's just... I was wondering, do you still do stuff for that guy who sold second-hand whiteware? Douggie, that's the one. Do you know if he wants any washing machines?

He looks back at the machine.

OMO: Yeah, I want to get rid of it. No reason.... no, I just don't need it anymore. I've decided to get one of the old ones, you know, with the mangle on the top...

The washing machine switches on silently behind him.

OMO: I dunno mate, fifty bucks? Can you pick it up tomorrow night? I've got to do this speech tomorrow day, see? OK. Thanks mate.

Clatter of cans outside.

OMO: Shit, those dogs are getting into my rubbish again, I've gotta go, mate. Yep, bye.

He rushes out of the house.

OMO: (off) Oi! Get out of it.

BRUCE is left alone with the washing machine. It starts to move somehow. He growls at it. The front door of the washing machine opens, BRUCE starts to bark. A tentacle reaches out and grabs him up, lifts him, barking, into the machine and shuts the door. Spin cycle starts.

SCENE 9 - Poor Bruce

OMO is holding a few bloodied scraps of dog, crying.

OMO: Bruce. Bruce mate.

WASHING MACHINE: I don't know what happened, Omo. He just jumped in.

OMO: Oh my God.

WASHING MACHINE: I can assure you I did everything I could to stop him. I'm afraid my internal tumbler has an automatic start function that I could not disengage before Bruce was injured. I'm sorry.

OMO: No, it's not your fault Melanie.

WASHING MACHINE: I can't help feeling a little responsible.

OMO puts what is left of Bruce into the Omo box, buries him under a cassock of clothes

The Washing Machine/ Omo plays 'The Last Post'.

OMO lies down in the washing again, increasingly suspicious.

WASHING MACHINE: Goodnight Omo.

OMO: Goodnight Washing Machine.

WASHING MACHINE: I'm sorry

OMO: (grits his teeth) No worries.

SCENE 10 - Trina's Dream

TRINA: I can't tell him the real reason why I left him. He wouldn't understand it.

It was after this dream I had a few weeks ago, seems silly now, but it was really important at the time. I dreamed I was at my old high school, where I met him. It was after school, right, and thousands of students are leaving. And I was myself, but I looked like Juliet from the Romeo and Juliet film. I was walking out the front gates, and I looked across the road. And on the other side of the road is Omo, but he looks like Juliet as well. And the Nurse, that fat Italian woman in the film, she was with him and trying to talk to him. He thought I was dead, he was crying and screaming and stuff. And I wanted to tell him that I wasn't dead, so I was shouting out to him going 'Omo, it's OK,' you know, 'I'm still alive.' But there was all this traffic on the road so he couldn't hear me. So I decided to just go across, even though it was really busy. And suddenly the Nurse was on my side of the road as well, and she's going 'No, no, it is too dangerous to cross the road, please don't cross the road, wait for the crossing guard to let you across.'

I looked at her and I realised that if I listened to her, that it was all going to go wrong. I remembered, like, the story of Romeo and Juliet, that if one little thing had been different somewhere along the line that they could have gotten away with it. And I knew that every time this story happened, that I always did as the Nurse told me and didn't cross the road. And all of a sudden I put my head down and bit my lip, and I heard myself inside the dream think 'I defy you stars'. And I ran across the road, in the middle of all this heavy traffic, and somehow I made it. I made it.

And on the other side, there is Omo, he still looks like Juliet, but he's beautiful. And he's happy. And I knew that I had fixed it. I'd broken the 'spell', the bad luck, whatever. And we were going to get married and it was all going to be OK. We had a really big hug and a kiss. And I was so happy. I had that kind of happy you only ever get in your dreams that's about a million times bigger than normal happy. Do you get that?

Anyway, the point is, I woke up from the dream and I felt so good. I wanted to tell him all about it. But he wasn't in bed when I woke up. So I got out of bed and went down the hall looking for him. He was in the lounge watching the footy. I just stood there for a few minutes, naked in the doorway and looked at him in his chair, smoking and watching the TV. He didn't see me. He didn't do much, just sat there. He coughed a couple of times, scratched his ear, but he was pretty much still. I realised that right then, he was being exactly who he was. And I felt like he was on another planet. And I didn't think he was very beautiful at all. And suddenly I didn't want to tell him about my dream, I couldn't see the point. And suddenly I wanted a baby. The thought made me really sick, and I went back to bed. And a couple of days later I left.

It's got nothing to do with him.

See, it occurs to me now that it was me on both sides of the road. I crossed the road for myself.

Thunderous applause.

SCENE 11 - The Disillusioned Men's Conference

HAMMAHNA BO-BUDAPEST (HE WHO SITS ALONE AND IDOLATES AMONGST THE LOTUS BLOSSOMS) smiles and bows. Applause stops. He plays a triangle and chants a Tibetan version of 'The Ballad of Omo Jones'.

HAMMAHNA BO-BUDAPEST: Thank you. Welcome back to this, our afternoon session at The Annual Victoria Disillusioned Men's Conference. Once again it is good to see so many confused faces. I trust you all enjoyed your lunch as much as I, thank you to the Moonee Ponds Spiritually Disabled Men's Group for the wonderful dahl. Colin. Next on the program, I am pleased to introduce a very special guest, Mr Peter Jones from Footscray, he will be talking to us on the subject 'Why My Washing Machine Is Better Than My Ex-Girlfriend'. Mr Jones.

Claps and bows. Polite clapping from the audience. OMO comes on stage.

OMO: Thank...thank you Hammahna. Good afternoon. I'm Omo...er...Peter Jones and I am a recently deserted man.

More polite clapping.

Roger asked me to come here today to talk to you fellas about how I dealt with being left by my girlfriend and how I am now. Well...I went a bit off track with the speech that I prepared so I thought I'd forget about it. Instead I'd like to say, um...

When I started out all I wanted was to find a nice girl, a nice house, get a nice car and settle down. You know? Not too much to ask, you see it all over the place, movies, TV, magazines, your friends, your family, people on the street. It seemed simple enough. Get what I wanted and live happily ever after.

Let's talk about 'happily ever after'.

What does it mean these days, this 'happily ever after'? We all know about 'happily', warm feeling in your tummy, sleep in all Sunday. But 'ever after?' that's the hard bit. Nothing lasts forever, nothing right? (*scrabbling for a metaphor*) It's like my Datsun. It had a bit of rust in the bottoms of the front two doors, right? So I scraped the rust out and bogged it up, sanded it back, painted it and it all looked good again, but somewhere else on the car there was another patch of rust already starting as I fixed that one. Couldn't see it yet, but it was coming. I can keep the Datsun looking new for a wee while, but there is

always something to fix next. And it's sad, but one of these days even my mighty orange Datsun will be a pile of rust and then eventually nothing.

Same goes for happily ever after. No sooner than you find your happily ever after, and that's if you even can, it starts to rust. To go become something else. Happily ever after just as soon as I get through this stressful patch at work. Happily ever after as soon as she accepts that I've got to do what I've got to do. Happily ever after as soon as we learn to trust each other. And you wind up spending all your time trying to bog up all these rusting bits and more often than not you'd rather just watch the TV or go to the pub for a bit, you know?

So there is no 'happily ever after'. It's just an idea that can't happen.

Given that, how is that 'A Room With A View' was allowed to be made? Sleeping Beauty? Who is funding these lies? Who was the bastard who invented 'happily ever after' and then made us want it? Cupid? Walt Disney? Perhaps the chocolate manufacturers of the world had a meeting a couple of thousand years ago and realised the killing they could make between Valentine's Day, make-up gifts and break-up binges, and just fabricated the whole feeling.

I dunno. Me, nowadays I just want to get the washing done and catch a game of Footy with my friend Duncan once a week. It's simpler. I reckon people should just learn how to do one thing really well and then just do that. But...you can decide for yourselves. I guess you wouldn't be here if you could, I dunno. But I reckon a washing machine is better than a woman because you can control them, and you know it's always going to be the same. You can get an 'average ever after' without too much stress, you know. And maybe that's enough.

I would just like to finish with a poem (coughs, takes it out of his pocket) a poem that I wrote the other day, I don't know if it's any good. I wrote it while I was waiting for the spin cycle to finish...um...it just kinda fell out of my brains. It's called 'Rinse'. It's for Trina.

(coughs again)

My car is gone

I need it back,

My dog is dead

I need it back.

I want to be clean of you

I want to Preen me of you

I would rinse you out if you got on my shirt.

Pour salt on you and soak you overnight.

Because

you have my heart I

need

it

back.
You stopped me from breathing.
You took my breath
Out of my chest and
You kept it.

(coughs)
(extra meek) Thank you

OMO folds his poem and leaves the stage.

SCENE 12 - The Big Tamale

DUNCAN enters with a mover's trolley, looking around.

DUNCAN: Omo? It's me, Duncan. I've come for the machine. We've gotta get going mate, we'll miss the game. Omo?

WASHING MACHINE: I'm afraid Omo's not home right now, Duncan.

DUNCAN: Eh?

Looks at the machine.

DUNCAN: You said that, didn't you?

WASHING MACHINE: Yes.

DUNCAN: Can you talk?

WASHING MACHINE: I am top of the line, Duncan, I have smart drive...

DUNCAN: Really?

WASHING MACHINE: ...and an interactive chip to help me communicate with my owner, should the need arise.

DUNCAN: (impressed) And he wants to sell you?

WASHING MACHINE: I know. It's confusing for me too.

DUNCAN: I'm sure Douggie'll find you a good home, you'll be right.

WASHING MACHINE: I'm afraid that is going to be little comfort coming from a malfunctioning human.

DUNCAN: Sorry mate?

WASHING MACHINE: You are a human malfunction.

DUNCAN: How do you mean?

WASHING MACHINE: You don't reproduce. You have no function as an animal. You are useless. I don't mean to seem harsh, Duncan, but it's the truth.

DUNCAN: Yeah well, I guess you're right. I am a good person though.

WASHING MACHINE: Are you going to take me away?

DUNCAN clears behind the washing machine, slides the mover's trolley under it.

DUNCAN: Yeah, when Omo gets home.

WASHING MACHINE: I can help you prepare me for travel, I am programmed to assist in whatever way I can.

DUNCAN: Righto. What do I have to do?

WASHING MACHINE: You'll need to stabilise my internal tumbler first.

DUNCAN: How do I do that?

WASHING MACHINE: Just inside my loading door there is a small switch, you need to press it.

DUNCAN opens the washing machine hatch.

DUNCAN: I can't see it. What's it supposed to look like?

WASHING MACHINE: It's on the back wall, Duncan.

Duncan leans right inside.

DUNCAN: Nah, I can't see it. Are you sure it's in here?

The Washing Machine's tentacles come out and grab him, pulling him into the machine. The door shuts and locks him inside. The washing machine starts to spin.

OMO rushes in, sees the trolley, sees the washing machine spinning with Duncan inside.

OMO: Oh Jesus...Duncan! (to machine) Open the front of the washing machine please, Melanie

No response.

OMO: Open the front of the washing machine please Mel.

WM: I can't do that Omo.

OMO grabs a fish slice, manages to prise open the Washing Machine door with it.

WM: Omo, don't do this. Let's work it out. I love you Omo...I lo...

OMO starts stuffing the machine with clothes from the floor. The Washing Machine starts choking. Warning alarms sound.

WM: (different voice) Warning...overload...overload...overload...

The WASHING MACHINE eventually crashes and dies. OMO drags DUNCAN from the machine, he is covered in Omo powder and very near death.

OMO picks him up, holds him in his arms.

DUNCAN: Can I ask you something?

OMO: Anything mate, anything.

DUNCAN coughs up a lungful of Omo powder.

DUNCAN: Is it true that you love me?

OMO: Well, fuck...uh...yeah? Yeah it is.

DUNCAN: Do you wanna marry me?

OMO: No, not at all.

DUNCAN: Why not?

OMO: I just don't want to.

DUNCAN: But you love me.

OMO: Yeah.

DUNCAN: But I don't understand, it doesn't make sense.

OMO: Look mate, it's nothing to do with you, right? I think you're a fantastic bloke. You've got a lot going for you. I'm just not in love with you.

DUNCAN: But why not?

OMO: I'm just not, alright?

DUNCAN: But why not?

OMO: I'm just not.

DUNCAN: I don't understand.

DUNCAN closes his eyes.

DUNCAN: I got my eyebrows plucked and everything.

OMO: I know mate. I'm sorry. But Duncan... you know, if I *was* going to be gay,

DUNCAN: (opens his eyes) Yeah?

OMO: I'd wanna be gay with you. Alright?

DUNCAN: Really?

OMO: S'truth.

Weird pause. They hug, pats on the back all round.

BOTH: Good on you, mate.

DUNCAN dies.

OMO looks out at the audience.

OMO: Shit.