

SHANE: *[excited]* I felt it too.

PHILLIPA: If only Con could give me that.

SHANE: I'd be happy if he just stopped flailing his arms in the air every time he spoke. Nearly took my eye out in the dress.

PHILLIPA: He wears a dress?

SHANE: Dress rehearsal.

PHILLIPA looks quizzical.

Dress-up rehearsal.

PHILLIPA: Aah yes.

SHANE: But it's nice to have some new blood in the company.

KAREN enters.

KAREN: Shane. Sorry to interrupt. Umm, bit of bad news. Pam and Percy Begg just called. They weren't feeling well, so they thought they'd do a test before they came in and, they're both positive.

PHILLIPA / SHANE: Fuck it!! / You're kidding me!

KAREN: Pam was so apologetic. They're both just gutted, said they shouldn't have gone to that Fondue Festival but obviously they won't be coming in tonight.

PHILLIPA starts to get panicky and potty-mouthed.

PHILLIPA: Fondue fuckers!! Sorry.

SHANE paces and figures it out.

SHANE: Let me think ...

KAREN: I'm really sorry guys.

SHANE: For what?

KAREN: Well, shouldn't we cancel, or postpone tonight?

PHILLIPA: I knew it was all going too well. Something had to go wrong ...

SHANE: Phillipa, breathe, it's okay ...

PHILLIPA: First Damian flashing everyone at the pool, then my mum making fun of my acting, now the fucking Beggs...sorry.

SHANE: *[working it out]* Phillipa ... it's fine, of course we're not cancelling. Heindrich can play the Doctor and Helen can play Gloria. It'll be fine. It'll work, trust me. The show must go on.

Pause.

KAREN: Why?

SHANE: It just ... must. That's showbiz. It's what we do.

BARNEY enters in his bathrobe.

BARNEY: What's all this? Showbiz talk, without me? Of course the show must go on, what's happened?

KAREN: Percy and Pam have the lurgy. They're not coming.

SHANE: It's fine. Heindrich can play the Doctor and Helen can do Gloria.

BARNEY: Heindrich-play the Doctor! You can't be serious, Shane?

Let me play the Doc, I can do it on my ear.

SHANE: I know you can, Barney ... and can you close the bathrobe a little ...

BARNEY: Come, come. We're all artists here!!

KAREN: Don't you work at Harvey Norman?

BARNEY: I manage small appliances ... it can be artistic! ... What happened to freedom of expression??

KAREN: Pretty sure that didn't mean having to look at middle-aged balls.

BARNEY: Heindrich hardly speaks English. He doesn't know what he's saying half the time. He said 'shall we tire of the drawing room' in the dress ... up. Luckily, I stepped in with some impro and saved the day.

SHANE: Barney, listen, there are too many scenes with the Colonel and the Doctor. It would be impossible.

BARNEY: You saw my one-man show—if anyone in our troupe can play two characters in one scene it's me. (Six is my record.)

SHANE: Trust me, this will work best.

BARNEY: You're the boss.

SHANE: Just over two hours to showtime. We'll do a quick walk-through when Heindrich and Helen get here. Karen, if you could make the necessary adjustments to costume thank you.

KAREN: Sure. By the way, the sound desk is still on the blink.

SHANE: Have you tried—

KAREN: Kicking it? Yes, several times.

BARNEY: It always comes good. It has an actor's temperament. Doctor Theatre always does the trick.

KAREN: My niece is staying with me—she's up there with the manual seeing what she can do.

They all wave up to the bio box.

SHANE: You've got yourself an assistant, great. Her generation have a way with gadgets.

Sound comes on way too loud—

KAREN: Please don't touch anything.

—then lowers. KAREN leaves, talking to her niece on her headset.

But that's really helpful thanks.

PHILLIPA: *[flustered]* Alright, I'm going to steam my make-up for a few minutes and start my voice. I mean...you know what I mean.

PHILLIPA leaves.

BARNEY: Glad we've got a moment before the cyclone hits. Before I put on my slap, Shane, can I have a word?

SHANE: If it's to pitch 'Blarney with Barney' to me again, can we just get tonight over with mate?

BARNEY: Of course, of course, let's put that on the back burner for now. No—what I wanted to say was two years you've been at the top job here at the Middling Cove Players, and since you've taken over from Doreen, which couldn't have been easy, you have done a sterling job young man. And yes, I was overlooked for succession ... but, well, if it was going to be anyone else, I'm glad it's you ... And tonight writing, directing and acting!

SHANE: Producing, designing, dramaturgy, publicity-

BARNEY: YES ... it's a tour de forza ... as they say in the classics.

SHANE: Thanks, Barney ...

BARNEY: And just let me plant a little seed for next year's *Wizard of Oz* ...

SHANE: Well, the Wizard's already cast.

BARNEY: No Dorothy.

SHANE: Er—

BARNEY: 'I guess we're not in Kansas anymore' ...

SHANE is speechless.

Think about it. Anyway, from the old guard, what I wanted to say was chookas for tonight lovey. Big hug!

SHANE: Thanks, Barney. Coming from you, a founding member, that's—