

**Philip Witts**

## HIGH MOON

*The lights come up on a corner of ROSSI'S, a plush and obviously pricey, Italian Restaurant. The downstage front table over looks the corner of Sydney Road and Anzac Drive. There is an entrance from the street upstage left, a swinging door to the kitchen downstage right, and another exit to the toilets upstage right. The blackboard menu, on the wall downstage left, is full of unusual Italian dishes at exorbitant prices. The lush Italian love song fails to entirely drown out either the traffic noise, or the heavy rain.*

*We hear a car brake heavily, skid and then stop. This is followed by loud hooting. As the car drives off.*

*The traffic noise increases as MANDY LYNCH and DENNIS WRIGHT burst in from the street. MANDY is an attractive, confident woman in her late twenties. While DENNIS is a shy, balding older man. MANDY was obviously anticipating a more casual evening. While DENNIS looks stiff, in an old, shiny, suit, a plain white shirt and an unfortunate beige tie. He also carries the buckled remains of a cheap umbrella. Both MANDY and DENNIS are damp and slightly out of breath.*

*DENNIS closes the door, easing the traffic noise slightly.*

DENNIS: That's better!

*MANDY looks at her surroundings.*

MANDY: Are you sure this is the right place?

*DENNIS is upset.*

DENNIS: You don't like it?

MANDY: Oh, no. It's not that. It just seems ... a little out of our usual price range.

DENNIS: My treat.

MANDY: Oh, no!

DENNIS: I insist. ... It's a special occasion.

Philip Witts, "High Moon"

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MANDY: (Frowns) It is?

DENNIS: Very special.

*DENNIS smiles enigmatically. And MANDY isn't game to ask.*

*MANDY looks round again.*

MANDY: It's not very busy.

DENNIS: It's empty. ... Not even a waiter.

*SILVIO ROSSI, the owner's son, bursts from the kitchen brandishing a pair of oversized glossy menus. SILVIO is a glamorous youth in his mid-twenties. He smiles warmly at his guests.*

SILVIO: Buena sera.

MANDY: (Smiles) You obviously haven't been outside just lately.

*SILVIO returns her smile.*

SILVIO: You must be the Wrights?

*MANDY is amused. DENNIS is alarmed. Surely they're not ROSSI'S only customers?*

MANDY: Dennis is.

*SILVIO smiles at DENNIS.*

SILVIO: So, where would you like to sit, Mr Wright?

*DENNIS looks at MANDY.*

MANDY: What about over by the window?

*SILVIO smiles.*

SILVIO: Of course. Good choice.

*He escorts them to the front table.*

SILVIO: Best table in the house. Panoramic views of Sydney Road.

MANDY: On a clear day you can see ... Capri?

*SILVIO smiles.*

SILVIO: Very nearly.

*SILVIO holds Mandy's chair for her. MANDY smiles and sits.*

MANDY: Grazie.

SILVIO: Prego.

*SILVIO deftly flicks a starched napkin into her lap. As DENNIS makes his own arrangements. SILVIO hands them each a menu.*

DENNIS: Thank you.

SILVIO: You'll find our Specials on the blackboard over there. The Quail in Chillied Apricot is truly wicked.

DENNIS: We'll bear that in mind.

*SILVIO lights the candle on their table with a gold cigarette lighter. And whispers to DENNIS.*

SILVIO: You did know that we're not licensed?

*DENNIS obviously didn't.*

DENNIS: Oh, dear. ... How disappointing.

SILVIO: You'll find that THE ELEPHANT AND ACCORDION across the road has a reasonable selection.

DENNIS: Oh, good. Thank you.

SILVIO: I'll leave you to make up your minds.

*SILVIO returns to the kitchen.*

MANDY: This is great.

DENNIS: I'm glad you approve.

*We hear another car brake heavily.*

DENNIS: Pity about the traffic noise? ... I should have checked. About the wine.  
... Although you'd think. A place like this ... ?

MANDY: Dennis? ... Relax.

DENNIS: Sorry.

MANDY: And stop apologising.

DENNIS: But we do have to have wine. This is a special occasion.

MANDY: So you keep saying. But why don't we order first? I'm starving.

DENNIS: Good idea.

*They both study their menus closely. As a truck roars past. Disturbing the cutlery.  
MANDY watches its progress.*

MANDY: Busy road?

DENNIS: Yeah. ... Nasty junction too.

*They return to their menus. As an argument develops, in Italian, between SILVIO and  
the CHEF. MANDY smiles.*

MANDY: Well the staff sound authentic enough.

*DENNIS nods. As the argument escalates and a cooking pot clatters to the ground.  
DENNIS frowns.*

DENNIS: Well really! That's a bit rich.

MANDY: Dennis!

DENNIS: Relax?

MANDY: Thank you. ... I think I might go for the Goat's Cheese. ... Followed by  
the Tagliatelle.

*DENNIS returns to his own menu.*

DENNIS: I love a woman who knows her own mind.

MANDY: Not to mention her own stomach?

*DENNIS laughs, generously.*

DENNIS: I might try the Calamari. Followed by the ...

*Only the rest of his speech is drowned out by a passing truck. And tinkling cutlery.*

MANDY: Sorry?

DENNIS: The "truly wicked" Quail.

MANDY: Good idea. Then I can find out what "truly wicked" means?

DENNIS: Why don't you order while I get the wine?

*DENNIS gets to his feet.*

MANDY: At least let me pay for the wine?

*DENNIS smiles and shakes his head.*

DENNIS: No chance. It's my treat. I told you. What do you feel like drinking?

MANDY: I'll rely on your judgment, Dennis. Whatever you feel is suitable for such a special occasion.

DENNIS: Okay. ... Shan't be long.

MANDY: Just mind the traffic?

DENNIS: *(Smiles)* Relax!

*DENNIS grabs his umbrella and exits. ... A few moments later we hear a loud screech of brakes followed by furious hooting. MANDY looks up with concern.*

DENNIS: *(Off)* Sorry!

*MANDY shakes her head. He's hopeless. ... She stares thoughtfully out of the window, until SILVIO re-appears from the kitchen with a note pad. He comes over.*

*Philip Witts, "High Moon"*

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SILVIO: Ready to order?

MANDY: Yes, please. One Calamari entree, one Goat's Cheese, one Pesto Tagliatelle and one "truly wicked" Quail.

SILVIO: *(Smiles)* You won't be sorry.

MANDY: I know. ... It's for Dennis.

SILVIO: Your father?

*MANDY laughs.*

MANDY: He's not quite that old. ... It's probably his lack of hair. He lost it when he was very young. ... He's a bit of a worrier.

*SILVIO nods.*

SILVIO: I thought so? ... So? What are you doing here? Some kind of special occasion?

*MANDY nods, sadly.*

MANDY: Apparently.

SILVIO: You don't look too thrilled? ... Want to tell me about it?

*MANDY considers SILVIO'S offer for a moment. Then checks the road. No sign of DENNIS.*

MANDY: I'm afraid that he might propose.

*SILVIO slips into Dennis's chair.*

SILVIO: Marriage?

MANDY: Of course.

SILVIO: Oh, no. You can't marry Dennis. He's way past his "use by" date. ... You need someone younger, sexier, more carefree ...

MANDY: Not according to my Mother. She thinks I need warmth, stability, security. ... An armchair by the fire.

SILVIO: Only the armchair has lost most of its stuffing. And the fire went out. Years ago. ... No. You can't throw yourself away. You're still young, vibrant, attractive ...

*MANDY is delighted.*

MANDY: You think so?

SILVIO: Of course. You need romance, music, dappled moonlight on warm tropical sand.

MANDY: Don't stop.

SILVIO: You need poetry, diamonds, French champagne. ... And maybe just the hint of bougainvillea on the breeze?

MANDY: I do, don't I?

SILVIO: Of course you do. An armchair by the fire is the last thing you need.

MANDY: You're right.

SILVIO: Let your Mother marry Dennis, if she's so desperate for security.

MANDY: She thinks Dennis is my last chance.

*SILVIO laughs.*

SILVIO: Oh, come on! If you believe that, you'll believe anything.

MANDY: You'd go out with me?

*SILVIO frowns.*

SILVIO: Well, no. Not exactly. ... Well, maybe for one night?

*MANDY nods, sadly.*

MANDY: Yeah. I've had a few of those. ... You think I'm a one night kind of girl?

SILVIO: No. Not at all. ... If I weren't married, I'd go out with you like a shot.

*MANDY brightens.*

*Philip Witts, "High Moon"*

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MANDY: Oh? ... Well that's different. ... Grazie.

SILVIO: Prego. ... Tell me about Dennis?

MANDY: He's a businessman. Runs a chain of laundrettes. SPARKLE AND CO.

SILVIO: Ah, but does he make you sparkle?

*MANDY frowns.*

MANDY: He makes me laugh. ... Now and again.

SILVIO: And you have a lot in common?

*MANDY frowns again.*

MANDY: No. Not exactly.

SILVIO: But you do love him?

MANDY: I'm very fond of him. He's a good man. A decent man. A nice man.

SILVIO: In what way?

MANDY: He's good company. Reliable. Down to earth. ... He's generous. Kind to animals ...

SILVIO: Predictable?

MANDY: There's nothing wrong with a bit of predictability. Every now and then. At least you know where you stand. ... We never fight.

SILVIO: He's obviously not Italian?

MANDY: *(Smiles)* No.

SILVIO: What about sex?

*MANDY frowns.*

SILVIO: Let me guess. Comfortable? Undemanding? ... Your turn on top?

MANDY: I don't know that I should be discussing my sex life with you. ... I don't even know your name.

*SILVIO smiles and holds out his hand.*

SILVIO: That's easily fixed. I'm Silvio Rossi.

MANDY: As in ... ?

*She indicates the restaurant.*

SILVIO: My father.

*MANDY nods and takes his hand.*

MANDY: Mandy Lynch.

*They shake hands.*

SILVIO: Pleased to meet you, Mandy.

MANDY: And you, Silvio. ... What soft hands?

*MANDY, somewhat reluctantly, lets go of SILVIO'S hand.*

SILVIO: The spoilt son and heir.

MANDY: Don't you find sex over-rated?

SILVIO: No. Of course not. Not with the right person. ... It just doesn't sound as if old Dennis ...

*MANDY shakes her head.*

MANDY: So, how do you meet the right person? I've been looking for years. ... The only men I ever meet are either married. Or workaholic. Or they're hooked on the Internet. Or they're gay. Or they're unhappily divorced, un-financial, and up to their ears in emotional baggage and seriously disturbed kids.

*SILVIO nods sympathetically.*

SILVIO: Don't stop.

MANDY: After years of trawling pubs and clubs, sipping cocktails, and waking up to strange men in your fridge in their underpants. You say, "That's it. Let them find me." So you hang up your little black dress, and you stay home with your Milo and your quilting and your Burt Reynolds movies. Or you attempt to plough your way through impossibly long novels like *AN UNSUITABLE BOY*. Which keep you tied up for years. ... Why am I telling you all this?

SILVIO: Because I asked.

MANDY: So, how did you meet your wife, Silvio?

SILVIO: She was the daughter of a friend of my father.

MANDY: Ah? So the choice was made for you?

SILVIO: Not entirely. ... It was just always assumed.

*We hear hooting from the road. They both look out of the window. MANDY begins to panic.*

MANDY: What am I going to do?

SILVIO: Maybe he won't make it across the road?

*They both sigh as DENNIS completes his crossing.*

SILVIO: Ah? In that case, you're just going to have to let him down. Gently, but firmly. "You're a nice man, Dennis, but ... " ... Sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind.

MANDY: No, I can't, Silvio. Really.

*SILVIO gets to his feet.*

SILVIO: You have to, Mandy.

MANDY: Mum will never speak to me again.

*SILVIO moves off towards the kitchen.*

SILVIO: One less card to send at Christmas.

*SILVIO exits to the kitchen as DENNIS enters from the rain carrying a bottle of champagne and shaking the umbrella. MANDY smiles as he comes over.*

MANDY: You made it?

DENNIS: Only just. That is a very busy road. And, of course the drivers never make any allowance for the conditions.

MANDY: No?

DENNIS: I settled for champagne. ... As it's such a special occasion.

MANDY: Terrific.

DENNIS: Have you ordered yet?

MANDY: Oh, yes.

*DENNIS sits down.*

DENNIS: Well, that's a start. It really is such a filthy night.

*MANDY looks out of the window.*

MANDY: Yes it is, isn't it? Although the headlights through the rain are pretty. And the full moon which every so often peeps through the clouds.

*A motorcycle screams past.*

DENNIS: I'm sorry about the noise.

MANDY: Dennis!

DENNIS: I mean, would you prefer another table?

MANDY: No. This one's fine. ... Stop worrying.

*DENNIS looks round, but there's no sign of SILVIO. He takes the champagne from its paper bag.*

DENNIS: Maybe I should open this?

MANDY smiles.

MANDY: Good idea. Why don't you?

*She watches thoughtfully as DENNIS removes the silver foil.*

MANDY: Dennis?

*DENNIS looks up.*

MANDY: Do you think we have much in common?

*DENNIS is surprised by the question.*

DENNIS: Yes. Of course. We have a lot in common. ... Why?

MANDY: I just wondered.

*DENNIS returns to the champagne. Only to have trouble with the cork. DENNIS mutters darkly to himself.*

MANDY: (Smiles) Want me to have a go?

DENNIS: No! ... No. It's fine.

*DENNIS attacks the cork with renewed vigour.*

MANDY: What do we have in common?

*DENNIS exhales angrily. Annoyed with both MANDY and the cork. He takes a break from opening the bottle.*

DENNIS: Mandy, we've been going out together for two years.

MANDY: You mean we have each other in common?

DENNIS: No. That's not all. We both like going to the movies.

MANDY: If not always the same movies?

DENNIS: That's alright. ... We both like reading. Weekends away. Long walks in the country. ...

MANDY: Go on.

DENNIS: We both like eating out.

MANDY: Yes. But you're not interested in gardening or gardens. Only as toilets for Omo. Or bargain hunting. Or dancing.

DENNIS: So? You're not interested in sport. Or surfing the Net.

MANDY: You don't like my Mother.

DENNIS: You don't like her that much yourself most of the time. ... And besides it's not true. I don't mind your Mother. ... In small doses. ... I really like your father.

*DENNIS returns to the cork.*

DENNIS: How much do you think they have in common?

MANDY: Mum and Dad? Next to nothing.

DENNIS: And yet they're still together.

MANDY: Awesome inertia.

*DENNIS splutters to a halt. As MANDY loses patience.*

MANDY: Here. Let me. ... Before we all die of thirst.

*DENNIS offers the bottle to MANDY. Who opens it with a flourish.*

MANDY: Tara!

*She returns the open bottle triumphantly to DENNIS.*

DENNIS: See? We make a great team. I loosen it. And you take all the credit.

*MANDY pulls a face as DENNIS pours them both a glass of champagne.*

MANDY: So? What are we drinking to?

DENNIS: Our differences?

MANDY: Better than "awesome inertia" certainly.

MANDY toasts.

MANDY: Vive la difference!

DENNIS: Vive la difference!

*They clink glasses and drink. As another fight erupts from the kitchen.*

DENNIS: Do you think that's the reason this place is so deserted?

MANDY: All part of the charm.

*There is a sudden loud screech of brakes followed by a sickening crunch as two cars collide. DENNIS and MANDY are both shocked. They look out of the window.*

MANDY: Shit!

DENNIS: What did I tell you!

MANDY turns away. As DENNIS jumps to his feet.

DENNIS: I'd better go and see if there's anything I can do.

MANDY: Do you have to?

DENNIS: No. But I feel I should.

MANDY: *(Nods)* I'll ask them to keep your Calamari warm.

DENNIS: Thanks. And get them to call an ambulance?

MANDY: Sure.

DENNIS hurries towards the exit.

DENNIS: Thanks. Sorry. ... Sorry. Don't apologise. ... I'll be as quick as I can.

MANDY shakes her head as DENNIS exits. She takes a sip of champagne. ... And then another.

MANDY: Take your time.

*SILVIO re-appears from the kitchen looking decidedly tense. Only MANDY doesn't notice. She's busy punching triple "0" into her mobile phone. SILVIO comes over.*

SILVIO: At least they didn't come through the window this time.

*MANDY frowns.*

MANDY: (To phone) Come on!

*As SILVIO looks at the accident, and winces.*

SILVIO: Sante Madonna!

*He looks away. Then looks back. And frowns.*

SILVIO: Isn't that Dennis?

MANDY: Of course it's bloody Dennis! Who else would it be? ... (To phone)  
Come on! Come on!

*SILVIO helps himself to Dennis's champagne and takes a much needed swig.*

SILVIO: He's very public spirited, isn't he?

*MANDY nods.*

MANDY: Yeah. Unfortunately. Always has been. Giving blood. Watering the median strip. Rescuing cats from trees. On phone) And about time! Ambulance please. ... There's been a two car accident on the corner of Sydney Road and ... ?

SILVIO: Anzac Drive.

MANDY: Anzac Drive. Thank you.

*MANDY disconnects the call and returns the phone to her bag.*

MANDY: They're on their way.

SILVIO: Great! ... So? How's it going? Have you told him yet?

MANDY: No. But then he hasn't brought it up yet.

SILVIO: He will. Most guys save it for dessert and the second bottle of wine.

MANDY: Thanks for the warning.

*SILVIO tops up both their glasses. As MANDY becomes serious.*

MANDY: You just never know what fate has in store for you, do you?

SILVIO: That's right. But you can usually bank on it being a melanoma rather than a lottery win.

MANDY: *(Nods)* Or an airline strike?

SILVIO: Or a Military coup?

MANDY: Or food poisoning? Or high cholesterol?

SILVIO: Steady on.

MANDY: Sorry. ... So the trick is to enjoy life while you can?

SILVIO: Definitely. "Eat the peach" as the Irish would say.

MANDY: Sounds particularly Irish. ... Live every day as if it were your last?

SILVIO: Because one day ... you never know.

MANDY: Sex isn't everything?

SILVIO: No. Of course it isn't. Passion burns itself out. ... Eventually.

MANDY: That's right. It's friendship that's important. ... Friendship. Trust. And respect. ... I haven't even liked a lot of the men I've been out with. They've mostly been macho, aggressive, self obsessed. About as deep as a warm Pavlova.

*She looks out of the window.*

MANDY: But Dennis isn't like that. ... Just look at him. ... Sympathy. Concern. Text book tourniquets. ... How many men do you know who'd do that?

*SILVIO shakes his head.*

SILVIO: None that I can think of. ... Or women either for that matter.

MANDY: Exactly. The man's a Saint. I'd be crazy not to marry him. ... Lucky to get him. He's one in a million.

*SILVIO nods.*

SILVIO: Yeah. ... If not more?

*Silence. Until MANDY frowns.*

MANDY: Do you think I'm good enough for him?

SILVIO: Of course you're good enough for him. He'd be lucky to get you too.

MANDY: *(Smiles)* Thanks, Silvio.

SILVIO: Prego.

*We hear an ambulance race up with siren blaring.*

MANDY: That was quicker than it took them to answer the emergency call.

SILVIO: There's a hospital just round the corner.

*The ambulance pulls up outside. The siren is switched off but the lights continue to flash. SILVIO gets to his feet.*

SILVIO: I'd better go and check on what's happening with your dinner.

MANDY: Good idea. We would prefer it some time this evening.

*SILVIO exits to the kitchen. As DENNIS enters damply from the street, his beige tie now splattered with blood. He comes over to the table.*

MANDY: How are they?

DENNIS: As well as can be expected. At least they're both conscious. ... Suffering from shock of course. She has a broken leg and he has abrasions. ... At least I managed to stem the bleeding.

MANDY: Well done.

Philip Witts, "High Moon"

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DENNIS: No sign of our entrees yet?

MANDY: Afraid not.

DENNIS: That's disappointing. It's not as if they're exactly rushed off their feet.  
... I'll just go and wash my hands.

MANDY: Good idea.

*MANDY watches as DENNIS moves off towards the toilet. ... She makes a momentous decision and calls after him.*

MANDY: Dennis?

*DENNIS stops and turns.*

MANDY: The answer is "yes".

*DENNIS smiles.*

DENNIS: Oh, good. (He frowns) What was the question?

*MANDY is stunned. Speechless with embarrassment.*

DENNIS: Never mind. You can tell me when I get back.

*DENNIS exits to wash his hands.*

MANDY: Shit!

*MANDY throws back her champagne. She tries the bottle only to discover that it's empty.*

MANDY: Shit!

*MANDY pours the remainder of Dennis's champagne into her own glass and polishes that off too.*

MANDY: Shit!

*She is obviously considering doing a "runner" when DENNIS reappears from the toilet. MANDY smiles broadly as DENNIS returns to the table. DENNIS is about to sit down when he notices the shortage of champagne.*

DENNIS: What happened to all the champagne?

MANDY: I was thirsty.

DENNIS: Why don't I get some more?

MANDY: No, Dennis! Not now? ... Maybe later? Sit down.

*DENNIS sits. He smiles. MANDY smiles back.*

DENNIS: So? ... What did you just agree to?

*MANDY takes a deep breath.*

MANDY: I agreed to marry you.

*Now it's DENNIS'S turn to be stunned.*

DENNIS: What? ... I thought you just decided we had nothing in common?

MANDY: I reconsidered. I think we've got a lot in common. ... We both enjoy each other's company. ... We never fight. ... We like each other's friends. ...

*MANDY runs out of inspiration.*

MANDY: Of course if you don't want to marry me, that's okay too.

*DENNIS fails to respond.*

MANDY: You have blood on your tie. ... It's an improvement. ... You should soak it overnight.

DENNIS: You don't have to tell me about laundry.

MANDY: No. Of course not. ... Sorry.

DENNIS: And stop apologising.

*DENNIS removes his tie and puts it in his jacket pocket.*

DENNIS: There. Is that better?

MANDY: Much better.

*DENNIS takes MANDY'S hand.*

DENNIS: Mandy, I don't know quite how to put this. This has come as such a shock. ... Of course I'm flattered. Who wouldn't be? You're a wonderful woman. Warm. Funny. Enthusiastic.

MANDY: Attractive?

DENNIS: Of course attractive. That goes without saying.

*A pregnant pause.*

MANDY: But?

DENNIS: But I'm afraid I can't marry you.

MANDY: Okay. ... So just what the hell was so special about tonight?

*DENNIS takes a deep breath.*

DENNIS: I wanted to tell you about Laura.

MANDY: Laura?

DENNIS: Laura Marshall. This new woman I've just met.

MANDY: Oh? ... Ah? ... Really?

DENNIS: Yes. Only I haven't actually met her yet. We've just spent hours, days almost, chatting over the Internet.

*MANDY is obviously on the verge of hysteria.*

MANDY: A cyber romance?

DENNIS: That's right. It feels like I've known her for ever. Although it's only been a couple of weeks. I know you'll like her, Mandy. She sounds incredible. ... Although, come to think of it, I've never even heard her voice.

MANDY: Let's hope she's really a woman?

DENNIS: Of course she's a woman. I've got a photo.

MANDY: Show me.

*DENNIS takes computer generated photo from his wallet.*

DENNIS: Here.

*MANDY studies the photo carefully.*

MANDY: How old is this?

DENNIS: It was taken at Aspen. Earlier this year. ... She's thirty two. Never married. And she lives in Boulder, Colorado.

MANDY: *(Smiles)* That's handy.

DENNIS: She's a Librarian. Likes all the same books and movies. Loves the Great Outdoors. Camping. Skiing. Horse riding. ...

MANDY: And large dogs?

DENNIS: *(Frowns)* Well, I have sent her a picture of Omo. I just haven't had a response yet. ... But I'm sure it won't be a problem.

MANDY: Of course it won't.

*DENNIS takes a deep breath.*

DENNIS: The problem is ... she's invited me over to meet her family.

MANDY: Already? ... That is a problem.

DENNIS: No. That's not the problem. I've already agreed. I'm going over next month. For two or three weeks.

MANDY: You are keen!

DENNIS: And the problem is ...

MANDY: What to do with the mutt?

*DENNIS nods.*

DENNIS: I could put him in kennels. ... ?

MANDY looks out of the window.

MANDY: Just look at that. The moon's come out. Isn't that great?

DENNIS: Lovely. ... But getting back to Omo ... ?

MANDY turns back to DENNIS.

MANDY: You'd prefer to leave him with me?

DENNIS: Would that be too much of an imposition? ... He'd be no trouble. And he does know you. Just needs to be fed a couple of times a day. And taken for the odd walk every now and then.

MANDY sighs.

MANDY: Alright, Dennis. Stop groveling. I'll do it.

DENNIS: Are you sure?

MANDY: Positive.

DENNIS grabs MANDY'S hand. And squeezes.

DENNIS: You are fantastic!

MANDY: I know. Tell your friends.

DENNIS: Now I won't have to worry.

MANDY: Well that's certainly a relief.

DENNIS looks out of the window.

DENNIS: Just look at that moon now! Hovering over the ambulance.

MANDY: Very romantic.

DENNIS: I still can't believe it, Mandy.

MANDY: No. Neither can I.

DENNIS: It's all happened so fast. I'm so excited. So scared. I really think she could be the one.

MANDY: Yes. It is scary. ... I imagine.

DENNIS: (*Frowns*) You weren't serious, were you? About getting married?

*MANDY laughs uproariously.*

MANDY: No. Of course not. You and me? Forget it!

*The fight in the kitchen suddenly rekindles with a vengeance.*

MANDY: We'd end up like those two in there. ... Just imagine. You'd be dusting all my op shop trophies. I'd be changing channels while you were trying to watch the footie. You'd be wanting to use your computer while I was gasbagging to my mother.

DENNIS: (*Frowns*) It wouldn't have been that bad. ... Would it?

MANDY: It would have been an absolute disaster. Worse than the Titanic.

*Silence. Apart from the fight.*

MANDY: Maybe I should get on the Net? Meet someone in Ruislip or Reykjavik?

DENNIS: Why not? ... If I can meet someone ... ?

*MANDY grabs DENNIS'S hand.*

MANDY: It's great news, Den. Really. I couldn't be happier for you ... both.

*SILVIO suddenly screams loudly from the kitchen. The argument stops. MANDY and DENNIS both look apprehensively towards the kitchen. As we hear the back door slam. And SILVIO appears from the kitchen holding his bloody arm.*

MANDY: Silvio! Are you okay?

*SILVIO is obviously in deep shock.*

SILVIO: Dinner is off. The chef just quit.

*DENNIS hurries over to SILVIO.*

DENNIS: Here. Let me see. ... Take off your jacket. ... Carefully.

*DENNIS, with his back to the audience, checks SILVIO'S wound.*

DENNIS: Now roll up your sleeve.

*SILVIO groans, in obvious pain.*

SILVIO: I'm sorry about this. But THE ELEPHANT AND ACCORDION does a great Chilli Con Carne.

DENNIS: Never mind about that. We have to get you to a hospital. This needs stitches.

*DENNIS grabs his tie from his pocket and applies it to SILVIO'S arm as a tourniquet. As MANDY gets to her feet.*

MANDY: Why don't I get the car?

SILVIO: Oh, no. What about your special evening?

MANDY: It's okay, Silvio. Dennis has just explained the reason for this little celebration.

*SILVIO is shocked.*

SILVIO: But you haven't even had your entree yet!

MANDY: No, Silvio. It wasn't that at all. Dennis has met this wonderful woman over the Internet.

SILVIO: Oh? Really? ... That's great!

MANDY: Yes, it is, isn't it? Her name is Laura and she's thirty two, never been married and she lives in Boulder, Colorado.

SILVIO: Rocky Mountain High?

DENNIS: That's right. Maybe they could fit Silvio into the ambulance too? ... Why don't I go and check?

MANDY: Good idea.

*DENNIS races out into the street leaving the door open behind him.*

SILVIO: So? ... False alarm?

MANDY: I have never been so embarrassed.

SILVIO: All's well that ends well?

MANDY: What happened with you?

SILVIO: Oh? Just the usual. Marina brought up "bambini" and I said "no way".

MANDY: That was your wife?

SILVIO: Yeah.

MANDY: She has a very deep voice?

SILVIO: I know. I used to think it was sexy. ... Now she wants a divorce.

MANDY: Oh, Silvio, I'm sorry.

SILVIO: No. It's okay. ... We married far too young.

MANDY: She wasn't trying to kill you?

*SILVIO laughs.*

SILVIO: Oh, no. Of course not. She's Italian. It was just bad luck that she happened to have a meat cleaver in her hand at the time.

*Silence.*

MANDY: So? ... We're both in the same boat?

SILVIO: Looks like it. ... How do you feel about Westerns?

MANDY: (*Frowns*) I love them. So long as they're not too bloody. ...

*She notices SILVIO'S arm.*

MANDY: Sorry. ... No. You always know where you are with a Western. The white guys with the big hats are always the goodies. While the tanned guys with the great teeth and the head-dresses are always the baddies.

SILVIO: Life was so much simpler then.

MANDY: Except for Tonto, of course?

SILVIO: Yeah. There's always one rotten apple, isn't there?

MANDY: Why did you ask?

SILVIO: I just thought that, once I've been stitched up and released from hospital, we might go to the movies?

Mandy: I'd like that, Silvio. ... There is just one problem.

SILVIO: What's that?

Mandy: For the next few weeks I'll be looking after Omo, Dennis's Samoyed, who needs a lot of exercise.

SILVIO: (*Grins*) No worries. We'll just hook him up to the Alpha Romeo.

*MANDY looks nervously towards the door.*

Mandy: Don't let Dennis hear you say that.

*SILVIO moves towards her.*

SILVIO: Stop worrying.

*He kisses her. MANDY responds. As DENNIS returns from the street.*

DENNIS: They can just squeeze you in.

*DENNIS notices the kiss.*

DENNIS: Oh? ... Er, sorry. ... No hurry.

*The kiss continues, more passionately. As DENNIS hovers.*

DENNIS: I'll just go and check that you've turned off everything in the kitchen.

*The kiss continues, as DENNIS exits to the kitchen.*

*As the lights slowly fade to black. And the ambulance races off with lights flashing and siren blaring.*

\*\*\* END OF PLAY \*\*\*