

SERIES TWO

THE GAMES

EPISODE

06

POMMY VISITOR

BROADCAST DATE
24/07/00



Nicholas is on the phone.

NICHOLAS Yes, well, it's just in terms of this GST. It's point 17R, part 2, section 4. Well, I'm on page 81. Yes, how will that affect... no, 81. How will that affect... eight one, yes, how will that affect a government department?

Well, all right, what about a semi-autonomous special-purpose quango connected to a government department? Yes, I'm asking for a ruling. Right. Treasury. Yes. Well, what do you mean it's never cropped up before? What does the legislation say? Because to me it looks like anything purchased before 30 June can be liquidated and the money put into consolidated revenue. Does that apply to motor vehicles? What about furniture?

John is in an empty underground carpark on his mobile phone.

JOHN Bryan, are you back from Canberra yet? Where are you now? Well, I'll see you when I get back. Listen, where's the courtesy car? No, it's not here, Bryan. I'm standing right where it ought to be and it isn't here. I've got to go and pick Gina up from her place. She and I are then going to the airport to pick up this English guy from the London bid. No, we can't do that. My car's in dock.

Meanwhile, Nicholas is at Niki Furniture Dealer, a furniture warehouse.

FURNITURE DEALER No, mate, you can't sell furniture at the moment. How much have you got?

NICHOLAS About \$150,000 worth.

FURNITURE DEALER Gordon Bennett! Are you a dealer?

NICHOLAS No, it's ex-government.

FURNITURE DEALER Look, you couldn't give it away at the moment. Why don't you send it to Brisbane or Adelaide or Melbourne? You won't shift it in Sydney.

NICHOLAS But the furniture's in Sydney.

FURNITURE DEALER Well, stick it on a train. You're not going to sell it here. No-one's buying furniture at the moment.

NICHOLAS Why not?

FURNITURE DEALER No money, mate. The bloody Olympics are on in a minute.

John is on his mobile phone again.

JOHN I've been out on the street for twenty minutes trying to get a cab, Bryan, that's why I'm ringing you. There are no cabs. I have used binoculars. You cannot see a cab. Van, what van? No, I'm not going to go out and pick up an international visitor in a van, Bryan. No. All right, where is it?

The camera follows Nicholas into the Games office.

NICHOLAS (To Tim) Afternoon.

TIM Afternoon.

NICHOLAS Is John here?

Nicholas walks into John's office, sees that he's not there and goes back to the reception area.

TIM No, not at the moment.

NICHOLAS Do you know where he is?

TIM Yes, he's taken the courtesy car. He's on his way to the airport to pick someone up from the London bid committee.

NICHOLAS We've never actually been formally introduced. I'm Nicholas.

TIM Hello, Tim Schwerdt.

NICHOLAS Nice to meet you, Tim. You been here long?

TIM Yes, got here about seven.

NICHOLAS This morning?

TIM Yes.

NICHOLAS I mean, have you been doing the job long?

TIM Yes, since the beginning of the series.

NICHOLAS Good. Enjoying it?

TIM Very much so, yes. It's great.

NICHOLAS Did you actually see John in the courtesy car?

TIM No.

NICHOLAS Good.

TIM Why do you say that?

NICHOLAS Because I sold it this morning. Where is he? I mean, he's supposed to be seeing me now. I don't know why he bothers having an appointment book.

TIM Yes, neither do I. You often see him looking at it.

NICHOLAS I think it relaxes him. Gina's not around, is she?

Nicholas walks into Gina's office. Tim follows.

TIM No, not just at the moment.

Nicholas points to something on Gina's desk.

NICHOLAS Is that a laptop?

TIM That one over there?

NICHOLAS Yes.

TIM Yes, it is.

NICHOLAS Is it any good?

TIM Yes, pretty good.

NICHOLAS Do you need a desk?

TIM Pardon?

NICHOLAS You know, it's a laptop, you put it on your lap, don't you?

TIM What, the computer?

NICHOLAS Yes. Do you need to put it on a desk?

TIM Yes, it's better with a desk, yes.

NICHOLAS Why?

TIM Well, the printer is a desktop and the computer doesn't have any drawers and you can't stand a phone on it.

Next, Nicholas checks out Gina's chair.

NICHOLAS Well, what about this? What would you say that's worth?

TIM Twenty dollars?

NICHOLAS More, surely.

TIM Thirty dollars?

NICHOLAS No!

TIM Of course, it could be early Regency. It's a bit difficult to tell.

Gina and John are sitting in a bus.

JOHN How late are we?

GINA The difference between the time his plane arrived and the time it is now could be measured by an archaeologist.

JOHN We're here on the right date though, aren't we?

GINA Just.

JOHN Have you ever seen traffic like that?

GINA The traffic's always like that.

DRIVER It's worse most of the time.

JOHN Is it?

DRIVER Yes, I nearly got her up to 50 there at one stage.

JOHN Yes, it's a good thing we're not trying to organise the Olympics in this town, isn't it? We could be in real strife.

GINA What are we going to do?

JOHN Stick in a new freeway system.

GINA In two months?

JOHN Bryan's brother-in-law's a carpenter. Apparently a very good one.

GINA We should have turned right at Liverpool Street.

JOHN Yes, that would have saved a minute.

DRIVER Here we go.

GINA Nice start to a relationship, isn't it?

JOHN Yes, it's good isn't it? Thanks for coming the 10,000 miles to see us. Wish we'd been able to cover the fourteen yards necessary to see you a little more swiftly.

John and Gina walking outside the airport.

GINA I can't believe with all we've got to do we're taking this deadweight on and we're actually wasting the time picking him up from the airport.

JOHN Look, deadweight he might be, but at least I think we could have got here on time to meet him.

GINA It won't matter anyway.

JOHN 'It won't matter anyway', she said boldly.

GINA His plane will have been late.

JOHN Oh, we're predicting the past now. You don't often see that.

GINA Every flight into Sydney's late. We need a new airport. It's ridiculous.

John stops to talk to a group of people. Gina waits for him.

JOHN No, I don't know anything about hotel prices. I don't think anybody does. Gina and I can't even get tickets to the things we want to go to, I'm afraid. There are none. There's certainly nothing we can do about it, I'm afraid. I'm sorry.

He extricates himself eventually.

GINA What was that about?

JOHN Just trying to keep the dream alive, Gina.

The arrival hall is deserted but for a solitary figure standing next to a heap of luggage, among which is a long object in its own casing.

GINA Do you think that's him?

JOHN Yes, looks like a Neil. What's with the huge suitcase? Neil McPherson?

NEIL Yes.

JOHN John Clarke, how nice to see you.

GINA Gina Riley. Welcome to Australia.

NEIL Thank you very much.

JOHN I'm sorry we're so late.

NEIL That's all right. Don't mention it.

GINA Told you.

JOHN Please ignore the camera. This is a documentary that's being made.

GINA Yes, we're being stalked.

JOHN Have we kept you waiting terribly long, Neil?

NEIL No, I haven't been here long. The baggage conveyance system broke down so we were an hour getting through there.

JOHN Baggage system?

GINA Broke down?

JOHN Very unusual.

GINA Broke down completely?

NEIL Yes.

JOHN Very unusual.

GINA So, no other hold-ups then?

NEIL Well, actually, it took us an hour to get through Customs as well. Apparently several planes arrived all at the same time.

JOHN Really? At an airport? That's unusual too.

NEIL Is it?

JOHN Oh yes. Only very rarely would that happen.

NEIL I thought this was your busiest airport.

GINA Yes, yes it is.

JOHN Yes, but all the same. You know, two at the same time, Neil, chance in a million.

NEIL I'm sure it will all be working really, really well by September.

Neil, Gina and John are making their way to the van. John and Gina help Neil with the luggage.

GINA Oh yes, don't worry about that.

JOHN Humming like a top.

GINA Right.

JOHN Where are we?

Gina wonders at the contents of the long object in its casing.

GINA What have we got here, Neil?

NEIL Oh, it's a shotgun. I thought I'd get in some clay-pigeon shooting while I was here.

GINA Clay pigeons. You must be good. I'd need a clay barn.

John has been wrestling with the luggage and missed Neil's reply.

JOHN What have we got there, Neil?

GINA A gun.

JOHN Really? It must have taken you some fast talking to get that through Customs.

NEIL Excuse me?

JOHN That's good going. You've been a bit lucky. Normally if you've got a funny-looking parcel they give you the full medical.

NEIL Sorry?

JOHN It can be a bit character-building, getting through Customs, Neil. You've done very well.

NEIL Really?

JOHN What did you tell them – it's a very long biro or something?

NEIL I didn't tell them anything. Nobody asked me about it.

GINA (Incredulous) No-one asked you about it?

NEIL No, I just walked straight through.

GINA No-one asked you about the gun?

NEIL No.

JOHN Did you have it with you when no-one asked you about it? Did you just walk right through?

NEIL Yes, no problem.

GINA It doesn't really look like a gun.

JOHN I suppose it fires things that don't really look like bullets.

GINA It could be a metal detector or something.

JOHN If they had a metal detector they might have picked that Neil was a security risk.

GINA Neil's not a security risk.

JOHN Perhaps if he had a nuclear warhead the system might have spotted him.

GINA Look at it. It could be a set of blinds.

JOHN 44-calibre blinds.

GINA My point is, it doesn't look like a gun.

JOHN Is that the official position, is it? They only stop people with things that look like guns?

GINA It doesn't look like a gun. It could be anything.

They have arrived back at the taxi.

DRIVER Take your gun, mate?

NEIL Thank you very much.

JOHN (Hands the driver the shotgun in its case) And this small thermo-nuclear device if you've got room. Just anywhere in there. (To Gina) Are you coming with us, Gina, or are you bringing the tank?

Nicholas and Tim are in the Games office.

NICHOLAS What sort of mood is he in today?

TIM What do you mean?

NICHOLAS Well, when he gets here I'm going to ask him to do something for me. Is he going to argue every point, will he mock me at every turn or will there be occasional gaps in the conversation where I could slip an idea in?

TIM I don't think I can give you any reason for optimism.

Gina tries to make small talk on the scenic drive back to the Games office.

GINA Look, I guess we should clear the air about this republican stuff.

JOHN I do hope you're not going to apologise, Gina.

NEIL Sorry?

JOHN There was a bit of a move on recently, Neil, to get rid of the Queen and 'hold on to the dream'.

GINA No, that's two campaigns, John. You've got two campaigns mixed up there.

JOHN No, you see, I'm just pointing out the sign to Neil. Do you see that 'Hold on to the Dream' sign, Neil? That's one of ours.

NEIL So you're not going to become a republic, then?

GINA Not this week, no.

NEIL I suppose that means the Queen's coming over to open the Olympics.

Gina tries a diversionary tactic.

GINA Gee, you don't often see them this blue at this time of year.

John backs her up.

JOHN I think I left the gas on.

The driver has other ideas.

DRIVER No, she isn't. The Prime Minister's opening the Games.

GINA Not any more, he isn't.

JOHN He wanted to, didn't he?

NEIL I thought he was a monarchist.

DRIVER Yes, he is, up to a point.

NEIL What point?

DRIVER The point at which he thought he could elbow the Queen out of the picture and get himself on every television on the planet opening the Olympic Games.

JOHN I don't think that's his full view on the rich texture of constitutional reform, is it?

DRIVER It's the only thing he gives a stuff about, mate.

GINA Well. Glad that's sorted.

John's mobile phone rings.

JOHN Hello?

TIM John, Tim.

JOHN Hi, Tim.

TIM Are you supposed to have a meeting with Nicholas?

JOHN Nicholas?

TIM Yes.

JOHN No, I can't, we're still in... (He is breaking up)

TIM OK, I'll tell him. He was here looking for you.

JOHN Any idea why?

TIM He asked a lot of questions about furniture.

JOHN Furniture?

TIM Furniture.

JOHN Sorry, it's a bad line.

TIM (Spells out) F-U-R-N-I-T-U-R-E.

JOHN You're dropping out, Tim. I'll call you in a minute.

DRIVER There are two things you'll notice straight away about Australia.

JOHN Oh Christ.

GINA This'll be good.

DRIVER One. Everyone is equal.

GINA Any chance you could turn some air-conditioning on?

DRIVER Two. Australians are the friendliest people on earth.

GINA Air-conditioning runs on air that is currently free if that's what you're worried about.

John is on the phone again.

JOHN Can you keep it down to a dull roar please, Gina? I'm trying to find out whether Bryan's booked that hotel room. Mate. Bryan.

BRYAN John.

JOHN Have you booked that hotel room for our visitor?

BRYAN The hotel room?

JOHN Yes.

BRYAN This is for the guy from Rentapom?

JOHN For our English visitor, Bryan.

BRYAN At the Inter-Continental?

JOHN Yes.

BRYAN No, I haven't.

JOHN And why would that be, Bryan? Such an apparently simple task.

BRYAN Because they refused to take our booking, John.

JOHN Oh yes. Why would that be?

BRYAN We bounced a cheque on them the last time we booked a visitor in there, John.

JOHN Bryan, Gina and I are flat out like a bloody lizard drinking here.

BRYAN What are you talking about?

JOHN Stone the crows, shagger.

BRYAN John, why are you speaking like Paul Hogan?

JOHN So you'll jack up the room then?

BRYAN You've already picked him up, haven't you?

JOHN What's that, snakedunny?

BRYAN You've got him with you, haven't you?

JOHN I don't know. I just assumed he'd want to stay in a hotel. You know, he's just got off a long flight. Long flight, hotel room. You know, seems logical, doesn't it? Mate, cobber. Digger.

BRYAN Mate, digger? What do...

JOHN Well, that's an interesting thought, Bryan. Good thought, actually, yes. He could stay with one of us.

BRYAN Stay with one of us?

JOHN Yes. We are the friendliest nation on earth, aren't we? I mean, why not begin as we mean to continue.

BRYAN And save ourselves the cost of accommodation?

JOHN Absolutely.

GINA (From the back seat, sensing looming trouble) Mate.

BRYAN Well, he's not staying with me, John.

JOHN Absolutely.

BRYAN Gina's got a spare room.

JOHN No, no. Great idea. He can stay at Gina's. She's miles closer to the venues than we are. Excellent point. Well, we'll be back in a minute. I'll see you, mate.

Gina is greatly discomfited. John has the look of a self-satisfied problem-solver.

GINA Mate?

JOHN Sorted, mate.

GINA I'll give you sorted, mate.

Gina, John and Neil are in the Games office.

JOHN This is us in here. Bryan, come and meet our visitor from foreign shores.

Neil spies a bit of Games merchandise.

NEIL Oh, I like this fluffy duck thing.

GINA That's not a duck.

JOHN We've resolved the republican issue, incidentally. Neil McPherson, Bryan Dawe.

BRYAN Hello, Neville.

NEIL Very nice to meet you, Barry.

BRYAN (To John) Nicholas is after you.

JOHN Yes, I'll duck over in a minute

BRYAN Nicholas wants you now.

JOHN Yes, I'll duck over when I get a moment.

GINA Nicholas is the Secretary to the Olympics Minister.

NEIL You have an Olympics Minister?

BRYAN And a very good one too.

GINA Very lucky to have him.

JOHN Excellent.

Bryan gets a newspaper to show Neil whom they are talking about.

BRYAN He's in the newspaper today.

JOHN Oh, not again! What's he done today? Give us a look.

BRYAN Yesterday he christened a baby gorilla at the zoo.

JOHN Oh, yes. There's virtually no end to his capacity.

GINA He's the one on the left.

Nicholas enters.

NICHOLAS I would die before you'd come and see me.

JOHN Well, give us the full range of options, Nicholas. Nicholas, have you met our friend Neil McPherson from London?

NICHOLAS No.

JOHN This is Nicholas Bell. We're not quite sure where Nicholas is from.

GINA Friendliest nation on earth.

NICHOLAS John, I need to talk to you about something.

JOHN Well, we're all here to learn, aren't we, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS In private.

JOHN This is Australia. There is no private.

GINA (To Neil) Let's get your things.

JOHN How can I help, shagger?

NICHOLAS I want you to sell the furniture, mate.

JOHN What furniture is that again, shagger?

NICHOLAS All the furniture here, blue.

JOHN We've been plonking our dates on it, Nicholas, for a fair old while now and it's proven more than adequate to the purpose. Why sell it, cobber?

NICHOLAS Because I said so, china.

GINA Excuse me, digger, knackers. Cup of tea, Neil?

NEIL I'd prefer coffee. Is that all right?

Nicholas suddenly notices the long black case.

NICHOLAS Is that a gun?

JOHN No, it's blinds, we think.

*John and Nicholas go off to their meeting.
Gina is making Neil coffee.*

NEIL Do you have the whole organisation in here?

GINA No, just us. The ones who do all the work. We answer to the main committee for the Games as well as to the Olympics Minister.

NEIL And what does that actually mean in structural terms?

GINA It means that we get all the crap jobs and none of the free drinks. Milk?

NEIL Yes, please and no sugar.

GINA John's nominally in charge. Bryan's the money man and I'm supposed to handle the PR. But if we only did what was in our job description we'd never get anything done. In fact, we never get anything done. (Hands him the coffee) There you go.

NEIL Thank you very much.

GINA So, what is it you're here for exactly?

NEIL Well, I'm on the London bid committee. We're trying to get the Games in 2012. So, I'm over here to see what I can learn from you.

GINA And upstairs have let you do that?

NEIL Yes.

GINA In the spirit of international co-operation?

NEIL Yes.

GINA No, that won't be it. Are they paying you to do this?

NEIL No, no, no, my bid committee's paying me.

GINA Oh, that's it then. We get ourselves an extra helping hand without having to pay for it. Welcome aboard.

Bryan walks past.

BRYAN Gina, I should grab Neil at some stage and show him how the parking situation works.

GINA Great. Then he can let me know.

John and Nicholas are in John's office.

JOHN Why on earth, Nicholas, would we want to sell all the furniture? We can't even get tickets sent out.

NICHOLAS We've had a review of all aspects of the office set-up.

JOHN Could you perhaps be a tiny bit more specific?

NICHOLAS You do try to make this as difficult as possible, don't you?

JOHN No, I'm not trying to make it difficult, Nicholas. And personally I think you're going fairly well so far. But would you mind please defining 'we', 'review', 'aspects', 'office' and 'set-up'.

NICHOLAS The Look Committee feels...

JOHN The Look Committee? Oh, we're being run by a rock band now. That's good.

NICHOLAS The Look Committee feels that this is important. This is the interface with the rest of the world.

JOHN Nicholas, I love you like a brother, as you know, but frankly this is bullshit, isn't it? I mean, I'm currently trying to unlock parking problems at four separate Olympic venues and you're telling me that the Minister says, 'No, no, John. Don't do that. I want you to sell the furniture.'

NICHOLAS John, the world is coming here. We're being showcased.

JOHN They're not coming here to look at our breathtaking upholstery.

NICHOLAS It's corporate regeneration. New office set-up. They've done studies. They are experts at this sort of thing.

JOHN Ten years ago, Nicholas, this sort of thing didn't exist.

NICHOLAS Pep everyone up in the final straight.

JOHN Oh, it's bullshit, Nicholas. You know it's bullshit. Has the Minister's brother-in-law got a furniture factory or something?

NICHOLAS Lift everyone's spirits.

JOHN Gee, perhaps we should send out a chair with each ticket. Maybe the chair might fit in the bloody machine.

NICHOLAS It's all organised. I'm just making sure you're informed.

JOHN I don't think I want to be informed.

NICHOLAS That's right. You don't want to be informed.

Bryan walks in with Neil and hands John a document.

BRYAN Here are the figures you wanted.

JOHN Ah!

- BRYAN** Have you got the keys to the sauna?
- John commences looking for the keys to the sauna.*
- JOHN** The sauna? Oh, you're going to show Neil the sauna.
- Nicholas, you cannot expect me to believe that somewhere in the Minister's mind lurks the idea that if we change from a blue couch to a red couch sales of archery tickets are going to increase. Have a look at the archery tickets. Archers aren't buying them. No-one's going to go to the finals of the synchronised drowning because I've upgraded to a recliner rocker. It's not going to happen.
- BRYAN** Neil, you stay here until I get the sauna warm, OK?
- NEIL** Thanks, Bryan.
- JOHN** What is this, Bryan?
- BRYAN** These are the latest figures on the sponsorship shortfall.
- NICHOLAS** Situation.
- BRYAN** Sponsorship shortfall situation.
- NICHOLAS** Sponsorship situation.
- BRYAN** Sponsorship situation.
- JOHN** Good. Can you put a little yellow sticker on it for me, Bryan?
- BRYAN** What?
- JOHN** Just whack a little yellow sticker on it. I won't know what it is if you don't stick a little yellow sticker on. (Points to a pile of documents on his desk) Look, Mallory died trying to climb something half this height. I'm not going to know what that is unless you stick a little yellow sticker on it. It will never get dealt with anyway, Bryan, because I'm in the wholesale furniture business. (Gina enters) What now, Gina?!
- GINA** Friendliest nation on earth. Listen to this fax: 'We are to stress in any dealings with the international media that the Games are not just about Sydney alone, but are Olympics that belong to the nations of the whole South Pacific region.'
- JOHN** Oh good. Have we got a postal address for the whole South Pacific region? Because obviously we're going to need to send them a bill for this at some point.
- GINA** Don't know.
- NICHOLAS** John. Change the furniture.
- JOHN** What do you want me to do with the old furniture?
- NICHOLAS** I don't care. You can eat it, you can burn it. You can do what you like. I do not care. But just get with it, John. I mean, this is how things work in the modern powerhouse economy. Just ask our friend here. (Gestures to Neil)
- JOHN** A modern powerhouse economy?
- NICHOLAS** John, you're just going to have to learn that in order to get things done you need to stop asking questions and just follow orders.
- JOHN** (To Nicholas's back as he departs) Jawohl mein kommandant.
- GINA** Friendliest nation on earth.
- John follows Nicholas out and corners him at the lifts.*
- JOHN** Nicholas.

NICHOLAS What now?

JOHN Nicholas. I don't fully understand what you're talking about. But please try and explain to me A: why is it that you're not selling this furniture yourself?

NICHOLAS We've got an annual allocation for furniture and fittings. It came into effect on July the first for \$160,000. If we sell all the furniture I think we can put the money into consolidated revenue.

JOHN Good. Good, Nicholas. B: what are we supposed to use for furniture?

NICHOLAS We buy new stuff with the \$160,000. If we don't spend it on furniture, the money lapses.

JOHN Right. C: what if you're wrong?

NICHOLAS I'm not wrong. I've spoken to Treasury, I've spoken to Allan Fels' department and I've spoken to the Minister.

JOHN Have you spoken to any adults, Nicholas?

NICHOLAS It's got to be done from here. I can't do it, John.

JOHN Someone in here has to sell the furniture.

John walks back into the office and heads for Gina's office.

JOHN Gina, I've got a little bit of a job for you.

GINA Oh no, you don't. You don't have a job for me.

JOHN Yes, I want you to sell...

GINA You don't want me to do that, John.

JOHN Yes, I want you to sell the furniture.

GINA It's a ridiculous idea.

JOHN Yes, I think that's been well and truly established. But please, just do it. Just sell the furniture.

GINA No.

JOHN I'm not asking you to sell it, Gina. I'm instructing you to sell it.

GINA You can't order me to do that. This is Australia, mate. We're all equal here.

JOHN All right, I'm not instructing you to do it. I am asking you to do it.

GINA Well, thank you for asking, but I decline, mate.

JOHN I'm asking you in a much more forceful way than you seem to understand.

GINA Yes, I sense that, but continue to refuse to be swayed, mate.

Neil has overheard the exchange from John's office and offers his contribution.

NEIL Do you do that here?

GINA AND JOHN What?

John walks into his office.

NEIL Own furniture?

JOHN Oh dear. Yes, Neil. You'll find that a lot of things are quite different here. In Australia, for example, we have laws that allow the common folk to own property. Doesn't matter who you are or where you come from. It's not on loan from the Duke of Northumberland. It's not on a 99-year

lease. It doesn't revert to some chinless wonder on the death of the oldest male heir. You'll pick it up as you go along, I'm sure.

NEIL So it's not leased.

JOHN No, no, no. No permission required from the House of Lords, no writ of Estoppel. We just went out and bought this stuff. Nice man delivered it.

Gina joins them in the office.

NEIL It's just that I thought it was more usual to lease. Tax advantages and financial flexibility and all.

JOHN Really?

GINA Really? John, Neil seems keen on the subject of the sale of the furniture.

JOHN He does, doesn't he?

GINA Unusually keen.

JOHN You do seem unusually keen, Neil. We're very keen on rewarding keenness in this country.

GINA Oh, very keen.

JOHN Yes. We don't like to tamper with initiative. In fact, have a look at the tax system while you're here if you get a moment. Perhaps you would like to attend to the sale and replacement of the furniture.

NEIL That's very nice of you. Are you sure you want to entrust me with that so soon in my stay?

GINA Oh yes. Yes, we would.

JOHN Oh yes.

NEIL Oh, I'll deal with that right away. Perhaps I should ask the chap at the desk and make an inventory.

JOHN I would.

NEIL All right.

Neil leaves for a chat to Tim.

JOHN (To Gina) Well done.

GINA Might have found a use for this bloke yet.

JOHN Yes, the human rubbish bin.

At Tim's desk.

NEIL My name's Neil. I wonder if you have a pad and pencil.

John and Gina are having a meeting in one of the offices. In the background, Neil and a team of removalists are on the job.

GINA Yes, I'll deal with that one. Next.

JOHN Well, the Minister flies to Switzerland tomorrow.

GINA Ah, he's flat out then.

JOHN What's the next problem?

Neil interrupts.

NEIL I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, but would it be all right if we took these chairs now?

JOHN That's all right

GINA Gee. (Laughs)

JOHN Are you here already?

John gets up. The removalists take chairs.

NEIL Come on, chaps. We'll just take the chairs now and we'll come back for all of the office equipment tomorrow.

Gina gives up her chair and stands next to John.

NEIL Thanks very much and I'm sorry to interrupt.

JOHN That's all right, Neil.

NEIL Thank you.

GINA No, that's fine.

JOHN That's actually very interesting. We just asked Neil to do something and he did it.

GINA Yes. Well, I've actually made a little list of things that I thought he might be up for.

John looks at the list.

JOHN Oh yes. We've been putting that one off for about three months. I don't know about that one. And I think it might be a breach of the Geneva Convention to ask another human being to do that.

It is much later. John, Gina, Neil and Tim are eating fish and chips on the floor of the office. The television is on with the sound off.

JOHN So, when does the new furniture arrive?

NEIL Tomorrow.

TIM Pity, I was getting attached to this.

GINA I think I am attached to this.

JOHN I must say, Neil, you did work very quickly.

NEIL Thank you.

GINA So it wasn't leased then?

NEIL It was, actually.

JOHN No, I didn't think it would be. I beg your pardon? It was?

NEIL It was all leased, as is all the office equipment and furniture in this entire building.

JOHN Really, is it?

NEIL Yes, I have the original lease. It was in one of those filing cabinets that I sold this afternoon.

Pulls out piece of paper and passes it to Tim.

TIM But, you've sold it all, haven't you?

JOHN But you knew it was leased, didn't you, Neil?

Tim looks at the lease.

NEIL Yes. But you told me to sell it.

GINA You've just sold furniture we don't own.

- JOHN** We've now got to buy furniture for us and furniture for the other people we were leasing the furniture from.
- GINA** Two lots of furniture to replace. Great!
- JOHN** Yes, that's a brilliant result, Neil. As a matter of interest, why did you sell furniture that you knew was leased?
- NEIL** You asked me to.
- JOHN** Yes, but at that stage I thought we owned it.
- NEIL** If you want to get things done, you have to stop asking questions and start following orders. Remember, that's what Nicholas told you.
- GINA** The media are going to crucify us over this.
- NEIL** Oh, I don't think they will.
- GINA** Having just sold furniture we don't own we're now an expert in the feeding habits of the Australian media are we, Neil?
- NEIL** I think it's the Minister who's due for a crucifixion.
- JOHN** Yes, I think you should stick to the media you're familiar with, Winston.
- NEIL** The Minister must have known all the furniture was leased and yet he ordered you to sell it.
- GINA** How could you possibly justify that conclusion, that he knew it was leased?
- NEIL** His signature is actually on the lease.
- GINA** Excuse me?
- JOHN** The Minister's signature's on the lease?
- NEIL** Which is why the Minister would be crucified by the media if this were to leak.
- JOHN** Leak.
- GINA** Look...
- JOHN** No leak. We're talking about a lea...
- GINA** No, no, no, look. It's Nicholas!
- Gina points at the television set. Nicholas is on with Maxine McKew. The sound is turned up.*
- JOHN** Good lord!
- MAXINE MCKEW** Mr Bell, does the selling of leased furniture represent a new low point for the Minister?
- NICHOLAS** You seem to be asserting that the Minister was aware that the furniture was leased. Now, I'm not sure that has yet been established.
- MAXINE MCKEW** He was aware.
- NICHOLAS** You say that, but without proof.
- MAXINE MCKEW** Well, there is proof. Here, in fact, is a photocopy of the actual lease in question, which clearly shows that the Minister's office was a signatory. Mr Bell, you've sold furniture you don't own, furniture you can't get back, money you can't keep and now you've got to lease new furniture at huge expense to replace it all. Have you got a budget to do that?
- NICHOLAS** It's not good Maxine, obviously.

MAXINE MCKEW In a situation where you're already in serious budget shortfall.

NICHOLAS But if a mistake has been made it should be acknowledged...

MAXINE MCKEW Better not to have made a mistake in the first place.

NICHOLAS And taken responsibility for, of course. I think you would agree that it makes things worse in a situation such as this to elect to tough it out in the face of an obvious mistake...

MAXINE MCKEW An obvious mistake.

NICHOLAS An obvious mistake and refuse to kneel.

MAXINE MCKEW Refuse to kneel?

NICHOLAS To kneel, yes.

JOHN Refuse...

Gina raises her glass in salute. The others follow.

GINA Yes, to Neil.

JOHN To Neil.

TIM To Neil.

NEIL Thank you.