

# THE URBAN JUNGLE

A Ten Minute Play

*A park bench and a bush nearby. LARA and JIM enter and survey the area.*

LARA: There's no-one here.

JIM: Thank Christ for that. Let's go back.

*JIM turns to leave.*

LARA: We can't leave.

JIM: But there's no-one here. Let's just go back and write up the report.

LARA: You can't be serious?. Do you know how bad that will look?

JIM: Well, it's not our fault. We can't create clients out of thin air.

LARA: No, but we can wait a while. Some may turn up.

JIM: But the memo said this is their peak time. If they're not here now, they aren't going to be. Now let's go back and get a latte. My shout.

LARA: How can you be so gutless? This is our big chance. The Minister herself hand-picked us to do this. If we pull it off, we'll be heading to the top.

JIM: I'll be happy just to make it back to the office alive.

LARA: We're staying. I'm not having my career ruined by your gutlessness.

JIM: Well, I'm going. This place gives me the creeps.

*He turns to go.*

LARA: So you're going to leave a young woman all alone in the urban jungle? What if I don't make it back? How will you explain that in the report?

*Pause.*

JIM: All right. I'll give it five minutes. Then it's latte time. *Your* shout.

LARA: Fine. Just stop whinging.

JIM: Shit! Someone's coming. Hide!

*JIM ducks behind the bush.*

LARA: Why would we hide? We're here to provide him with a service.

JIM: We don't know if he's one of our clients yet. So get behind here and watch for a bit.

*He drags her behind the bush. They watch. A scruffy looking male teenager – TEEN - enters and sits on the bench, unaware of the two of them.*

LARA: He's not doing anything.

JIM: I don't think he's one of ours. He's probably just having a rest on his way to scouts.

*The TEEN takes out a huge bottle of scotch and has a sip.*

LARA: Look at that! He's one of ours for sure.

JIM: He only took a sip. He doesn't look like a binge drinker to me.

*The TEEN starts to really chug it down.*

LARA: What about that! He's definitely one of ours. Right. Get out the literature.

*JIM takes out a pamphlet reluctantly.*

LARA: Okay. Let's go over there in a non-threatening manner, give him the literature, answer his questions, then point out numbers he can call for further help. Okay?

*LARA stands and is about to go out when JIM pulls her back.*

JIM: Lara, he looks pretty dangerous to me.

LARA: Jim, he needs our help.

JIM: Look, the Minister just wants us to make sure the literature gets to the kids. It doesn't matter if we hand it to them personally or not.

LARA: Well, how else are we supposed to get it to him?

JIM: Watch.

*JIM turns the pamphlet into a paper aeroplane.*

LARA: You've got to be joking.

JIM: I was very good at flying these as a kid. It will get to him, I guarantee it.

*He throws the paper plane, and no matter where it lands the TEEN will notice.*

JIM: He's seen it!

*The TEEN looks at it shocked. He picks it up and looks at it.*

JIM: He's reading it! He's reading it!

*The TEEN then blows his nose on it and tosses it aside.*

LARA: Oh, yuk!

JIM: How could he do that? I spent months writing that. I had to collate information from a lot of agencies and that's how he treats it!

LARA: Can you stop thinking of yourself for one moment and think of our poor client. Are you ready?

JIM: No! Look what he's doing now.

*The TEEN is preparing a syringe to shoot up.*

LARA: Oh no!

JIM: I don't think I can get the literature to him in time!

*JIM starts to make a paper aeroplane frantically.*

*LARA leaps out from behind the bush.*

LARA: Stop!

*TEEN leaps up.*

TEEN: Jesus Christ!

LARA: Before you do that there are some things you need to know.

TEEN: Are you a cop? Cause this is medication. I'm, um...diabetic.

LARA: It's all right. I'm not a cop. My name's Lara Ellis, and I'm from DHA.

TEEN: DHA? Is that like the FBI?

LARA: No, it's the Department of Health and Aging.

TEEN: What, like the public service?

LARA: That's right. And the Minister's very concerned about the drinking and drug-taking habits of teenagers. She's very keen to make you aware of the risks that you're...

*A paper aeroplane comes flying across towards the TEEN.*

TEEN: What the fuck is going on?

LARA: It's all right, it's just some literature about the dangers of drug use. Why don't you have a read?

TEEN: What?

LARA: Jim, come on out.

*JIM slowly appears from behind the bush, trying to smile in a friendly manner.*

JIM: Hi. I'm Jim White, also from DHA. I wrote the pamphlet. Lara wrote the one on alcohol. Here, have a clean one.

*JIM moves towards him, offering him one.*

TEEN: Stay there!

*The TEEN grabs LARA around the neck and holds a syringe to her neck.*

JIM: Oh, shit!

TEEN: This is some sort of set-up!

JIM: Honestly, we've just come with some information, that's all.

TEEN: You're cops!

JIM: No, we're not. Look. Here's my ID badge.

*He pulls out an ID badge from inside his shirt. It is on a very long elastic string which he stretches out towards the TEEN.*

TEEN: I can't see it.

*JIM stretches it out to its full length.*

TEEN: Shit. You really are a public servant.

JIM: We're just here to help. So why don't you let her go.

TEEN: No! I hate pricks like you. Always preaching to us. Telling us what's good and bad for us. You're a bunch of hypocrites. You did the same things yourselves as kids.

JIM: That isn't true. And that's because I had the good fortune to have parents who took the time to educate me about drugs and alcohol.

TEEN: Oh, good for you, Hannah Montana.

JIM: I gather you haven't had that good fortune. Are you parents separated?

TEEN: No. They're very happy. And they love me very much. Who do you think gives me the money for this stuff?

JIM: I find that very hard to believe.

TEEN: My parents are probably more open-minded than yours were.

JIM: That's the drugs and alcohol talking, isn't it?

TEEN: No, it's me talking. And soon I'm going to share this needle with three friends, have unprotected group sex, take photos of it, then text them to everyone I know.

JIM: Oh my God! I forgot the safe sex literature. And there isn't even sexting literature available yet!

LARA: We'll get onto it first thing tomorrow.

TEEN: Don't bother. I won't read it anyway.

*JIM moves towards him.*

JIM: But it will only take a few minutes of your time and then, if you want, we can discuss it.

LARA: Good idea, Jim. We could have an informal workshop.

JIM: Exactly.

LARA: It's a pity we don't have a whiteboard with us.

TEEN: Shut-up! You two are freaking me out with all this talk.

JIM: See? – you're paranoid. That's one of the symptoms of drug and alcohol abuse. (*waves the pamphlet.*) It's all in here.

TEEN: Look, I wasn't hurting anyone. I was just getting primed for a mellow night with my mates when you two turned up and ruined it.

JIM: Ruined it? I don't think so. Listen to this (*reads from pamphlet*) "In Australia over seventy percent of prisoners convicted of violent assaults drank alcohol before committing the offence". You don't want to be part of that seventy percent do you? So why don't you put down the syringe?

TEEN: Why don't you stop telling me what to do?

JIM: Do you even know what's in there?

TEEN: My dealer only sells the best.

JIM: You can't know that. There could be gyprock in there.

TEEN: Are you telling me he's selling me substandard shit?

JIM: Listen: *(gets out another pamphlet)* "Heroin dealers usually mix the powder with other things that look the same to make the drug go further".

TEEN: So you're saying my dealer's ripping me off?

JIM: Do you know what gyprock does to your veins?

TEEN: No! So let's find out, shall we?

*He stabs the needle into Lara's neck. LARA cries out.*

JIM: No!

*JIM pulls out a small hammer and belts the KID over the head. Blood flies everywhere, he falls down dead. He pulls the needle out of her neck.*

JIM: Lara, my God, he's filled you with gyprock!

LARA: It's all right. I'm fine.

JIM: It hasn't taken effect yet. We have to get you to the hospital.

LARA: What did you hit him with?

JIM: A hammer. There was no way I was coming here unarmed.

LARA: I need to sit down.

JIM: No, we have to go.

LARA: It's okay. It's...oh my God!

JIM: Lara, what is it? What's wrong?

LARA: This is the best hit I've ever had.

*LARA lies down.*

JIM: What? You've done this before?

LARA: I use it socially. But haven't done it for ages. Oh God!

JIM: But you're supposed to be educating people about this. It's a conflict of interest!

LARA: Oh, shut-up, Jim. It's fine if you know what you're doing.

JIM: I can't believe I'm hearing this. Haven't you read my pamphlet?

LARA: No.

JIM: But I read yours. And I went from drinking two glasses of chardonnay a night to none. Now the strongest drink I have is a latte. And frankly I could really use one now.

LARA: We don't do any good, anyway.

JIM: What?

LARA: *(dreamily)* Those who want to drink and do drugs will do it no matter what we say. Kids take risks. Most of them will be fine, but some will end up in gaol, some will become schizophrenic, some will die. The media will film teenagers sobbing at funerals, and talk-back will go mad. Then the government will start the next round of education. In other words, we'll all have a really good time.

JIM: This is clearly the drugs talking.

*LARA points at the body.*

LARA: What happened to him?

JIM: I hit him. You know that.

LARA: But he didn't do anything to you.

JIM: He injected you with drugs!

LARA: Oh the poor boy. You shouldn't have murdered him

*She sits next to him, pats his head and gets blood on her hands*

JIM: Lara, don't do that.

LARA: You have to call the police. You have to turn yourself in.

*Pause. JIM is shocked. LARA passes out..*

JIM: Lara? *(pause)* Lara?

*No response. He picks up the hammer, wipes off the prints and puts it into her hands. She grips it unconsciously.*

JIM: You really should have read my pamphlet.

*JIM exits. Slow fade to black on LARA.*

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