

The Wonderful World of Dissocia

For Mum

The Wonderful World of Dissocia was first performed at the Tron Theatre, Glasgow, and opened at the Royal Lyceum Theatre as part of the 2004 Edinburgh International Festival. It was revived by the National Theatre of Scotland in 2007 for a tour throughout the UK. The cast for this production was as follows:

Passenger 3, Oath-Taker Attendant, Goat, Biffer, Nurse 2 Lisa	James Cunningham Christine Entwisle
Passenger 4, Oath-Taker, Ticket, Dr Clark	Alan Francis
Passenger 1, Oath-Taker Attendant, Jane, Violinist, Dot	Amanda Hadingue
Guard 1, Inhibitions, Vince	Jack James
Passenger 2, Oath-Taker Attendant, Britney, Nurse 1	Claire Little
Guard 2, Laughter, Dr Faraday Victor Hesse, Oath-Taker Attendant, Argument, Nurse 3	Matthew Pidgeon Barnaby Power

Director Anthony Neilson

Designer Miriam Buether

Lighting Designer Chahine Yavroyan

Sound Designer/Composer Nick Powell

Characters

Lisa
Victor
Passenger 1
Passenger 2
Passenger 3
Passenger 4
Guard 1
Guard 2
Oathtaker
Oathtaker Attendants
Goat
Jane
Bear
Britney
Laughter
Ticket
Argument
Inhibitions
Biffer
Violinist
Nurse 1
Nurse 2
Nurse 3
Dr Clark
Dot
Dr Faraday
Vince

Act One

Lisa Jones – a woman in her thirties – sits cross-legged onstage, absent-mindedly tuning the high E-string on an acoustic guitar.

She tunes the string up and up until it reaches the correct note – and then continues on past it.

*The pitch of the string rises and rises, but **Lisa**'s face remains blank, her eyes distant.*

Higher and higher the note, the string growing ever more taut, the fretboard beginning to tremble under the strain, the tension rising – but still she winds the tuning peg, up and up and up and up until . . .

. . . the string snaps!

. . . and lolls away from the fretboard.

Lisa stares at it impassively, a child who has senselessly broken her toy.

She gets up to put the guitar away. As she does so, someone rattles her letter box.

She stops in her tracks and listens.

*Note: until his entrance, all **Victor**'s lines are either recorded or delivered, via mike, from offstage – a 'voice in her head'. The rattling letter box, however, is live.*

Victor Miss Jones?

*The letter box rattles again. **Lisa** remains still, fearful.*

Victor I know you're there, Miss Jones. I know you can hear me. It is vital that I speak to you.

The letter box rattles.

Please, Miss Jones. I have come a very long way to see you.

Lisa doesn't know what to do.

Lisa If it's money you want, I don't have any! You can take me to court, see how far it gets you!

Victor I am not here for money, Miss Jones. I'm here to discuss your wristwatch.

Lisa *touches her wrist.*

Lisa My . . . wristwatch?

Victor You recently handed in a 1972 Sekonda wristwatch for repair . . .

She nods.

Lisa It was going slow. They said it had to be sent to a specialist.

Victor A specialist in Switzerland, yes; that is who I represent.

Pause.

I assure you, Miss Jones, it is very much in your interests to hear what I have to say.

Pause.

Lisa You'd best come in then.

Lisa *lets Victor in. He bears more than a passing resemblance to how we imagine Sigmund Freud: goatee beard, long coat, gloves, walking stick, hat, pocket watch.*

Victor Thank you, Miss Jones. Crouching at a letter box does little for the lower back.

Lisa Have you come all the way from Switzerland?

Victor There would be little point in coming only part of the way, don't you think?

Lisa There's no need to be arsey. It's you that wanted to see me.

Victor No. Forgive me; I am tired and I have . . . precision issues.

He presents Lisa with his card.

Victor Victor Hesse. Of Hesse and Sons.

Lisa Has something happened to my watch? You haven't lost it, have you? It's just that my aunt passed it down to me and –

Victor Your watch is quite safe, I assure you. I wonder, though – before I explain – could I possibly trouble you for a small glass . . . ?

Lisa Oh, yes, of course –

She is about to get him some water . . .

Victor – of piss.

She stops.

Lisa Of piss?

Victor Yes – I drink a glass of urine every day. It's good for the system .

Lisa Really . . . ?

Victor I haven't managed it yet, today. Contrary to popular belief, they don't serve it on SwissAir.

Lisa *(reluctant to provide)* I don't know . . .

Victor You don't need?

Lisa It's not so much that . . .

Victor It's quite common. A lot of people do it.

Lisa Well, yes, I've heard of it. It's just it's usually . . . their own. That they drink.

Victor Their own? I don't think so . . .

Lisa *(nods)* Whenever I've heard of it.

Pause. For Victor, many things rattle into place.

Lisa I'm sorry, I just –

Victor No: that does . . . make sense, now that you say it. My brothers *have* been . . . unusually *supportive* of the habit.

Pause.

Well – on to business: my father's name is Sylvester Hesse. Have you heard of him?

Lisa I don't think so . . .

Victor I'd be surprised if you had. We operate from a rather remote Alpine location and our clientele is . . . exclusive, to say the least. However, my father's work in the field of temporal mechanics has been instrumental in the development of many technologies – from the alarm clock to the internet.

Lisa Do I have to pay extra for this? Because the man said it'd be three, four pounds at the most or I'd just've –

Victor This is not about money, Miss Jones. Your case is of special interest to my father.

Lisa But why, though? It's just a watch, isn't it?

Victor To Sylvester Hesse there is no such thing as 'just a watch'. Every clock face, every timepiece, reveals to him the story of its owner; its hour hand mourns their losses, its minute hand describes their lives, its second hand sings to him of every moment spent in bliss.

Pause.

You don't believe me?

Lisa I think you're exaggerating a bit . . .

Victor No, Miss Jones, I am not! Quite the opposite. I know how it sounds. But I have seen him *do* things; beautiful, frightening, *maddening* things.

He sits down, cross-legged, on the floor and Lisa joins him.

Victor When I was a child, my mother told me that he had once made a watch so small, so ephemeral . . . that only a butterfly could wear it. The notion delighted me but I did not truly believe it. Until the day we found ourselves lost in the woods and I saw him, Lisa – with these eyes that see you now – I saw my father . . . take apart a spider . . . unspool its silk . . . and reassemble the creature as a timepiece . . . powered by its own tiny heart.

Lisa (*enchanted*) That's impossible . . .

Victor I cannot disagree. I only say that . . . I saw it.

He seems maudlin. Lisa attempts to lighten the mood.

Lisa So he's fixed my watch, then?

Victor Actually, no.

Lisa No?

Victor There was nothing to fix.

Lisa It was going slow!

Victor Was it?

Lisa Yes – it was always an hour slow!

Victor And you would reset it and wind it up but the next time you looked . . . ?

Lisa It'd gone slow again.

Victor And always by Exactly One Hour.

She nods.

Answer me honestly, Miss Jones: would you say that your life has recently been . . . out of balance?

Lisa Well . . . it hasn't been great . . .

Victor You've been finding it difficult to manage the . . . commitments of your life?

Lisa I suppose.

Victor You've become sluggish, unfocused, apathetic. You've neglected your friends, your family, your . . . relationship?

Lisa But what's this got to do with my watch?

Victor At the start of British Summer Time, the clocks go forward. You surrender an hour, correct?

She nods.

You surrender it in the belief that – when the clocks go back – this hour will be returned to you. However – in October last year – you returned from a trip to New York. British Airways Flight 771. Scheduled to depart at 12.05 but delayed by two hours. Of course, the time *here* is five hours ahead of the time *there*. But to complicate matters further, at the precise second you crossed the Greenwich meridian, the clocks here went back . . . by *exactly one hour*.

Lisa So?

Victor Think about it, Miss Jones! A seven-hour flight on BA from JFK with a two-hour delay on your UK ETA and a five-hour lag from EST to GMT just as BST is ending?!

She thinks about it.

Victor You didn't get it back! Somehow, in all the temporal confusion of that instant, the hour that you surrendered – the hour that was rightfully yours – went astray! Do you see?

Pause.

Your watch is not an hour slow, Lisa. *You are.*

Over the next speech, a stage mike is used to add a hint of reverb to Lisa's voice. Strange, discordant sounds can be heard on the soundtrack.

Lisa Yes . . . yes, you know, that's right – I was really ill after that flight. And ever since, I've had this sort of . . . head cold, that I can't seem to shake off . . . And God, yes,

you know it *has* been since then! Everything was fine until that trip to New York. But so . . . it's not just me, then? This isn't just . . . how I am. Oh God and, you know, I *knew* that! I told them! Everyone's been giving me such a hard time about it – saying I don't care about anyone but myself, that I was just being lazy and miserable, but I wasn't! It wasn't my fault! I just lost an hour along the way!

Return to normal.

But, so – is there a way to get it back?

Victor I am sure of it.

Lisa And everything would be back . . . back to how it was?

Victor Yes. If you reassimilate the hour, balance will be restored to your life.

Lisa Balance will be restored to my life . . . God, you know, that's just like me to go losing an hour! I'd lose my head if it wasn't screwed on! So what do I have to do?

Victor Your hour has been traced to a country called Dissocia. Arrangements have been made for you to travel there immediately. On the back of my card you will see a number. Once I have gone, you must dial it and follow the instructions you are given. When you arrive in Dissocia, you must make your quest known. Our agents will find you and assist you in your task.

Lisa Wow . . . it's like being a spy or something!

Victor This is no game, Miss Jones. A stray hour is a source of tremendous energy. In the wrong hands, its properties could be exploited to the most devastating ends. There are those who will not take kindly to your efforts to retrieve it; they will do what they can to obstruct and mislead you.

He adopts the air of a hypnotist.

Just remember – the hour is yours. Never doubt it, never deny it. This will be your protection.

Lisa I understand.

Victor Good. The best of luck then, Lisa. My father is depending on you.

He exits.

Lisa looks at the card. *She takes out her mobile phone.*

Lisa Balance will be restored to my life.

She dials the number. It rings, and then we hear an automated voice:

Automated Voice Thank you for calling the Dissocian Embassy. If you wish to report a conspiracy, please press 1. If you think everyone would be better off without you, please press 2. If you wish to correct a temporal disturbance, please press 3. If you wish to press 4, please press 5.

Lisa presses 3.

Automated Voice Thank you. You wish to correct a temporal disturbance. Your flat is now an elevator. To descend to Dissocia, please press 9.

Lisa Balance will be restored to my life.

Decisively, she presses nine.

Immediately, there is a pinging sound.

From offstage, a voice:

Passenger 1 Hold the lift!

Lisa, bewildered, has no idea how to do this.

Suddenly (at least) four people have all cramped around her, as if in a small elevator. They look like fairly regular commuters.

Automated Voice Doors closing. Going down.

The elevator begins its descent (although, curiously, it sounds more like an underground train).

Passenger 3 makes a strange noise, like a groaning moose, but no one (save **Lisa**) seems to notice. He does this a couple of times.

Automated Voice Going sideways.

Passenger 2 takes out a mobile phone. She/he talks loudly and cheerfully:

Passenger 2 Hi, it's me. Listen – I've been thinking about it, and I really think the easiest thing is to just push her down the stairs . . .

Lisa can't believe what she's hearing.

Passenger 2 Yeah. And I think you're right, she's almost bound to break her neck when she hits that landing. Yeah. And even if she doesn't, I think if you just prop her up and stamp on her chest . . . Exactly. I don't think anyone'll suspect us at all.

One of the Passengers turns round to face a different direction. Slowly, the others do likewise. Lisa – thinking they must be turning to face the exit – does so too.

Passenger 2 Exactly. Listen, I can't really talk about it now, I'm in a lift. What was that? I can't hear you, you're breaking up. I said you're breaking up. I'll see you tonight. Love you!

Passenger 2 puts the phone away.

Passenger 3 groans.

Automated Voice Going down again.

Another Passenger now turns back to the direction they were facing to begin with. Lisa, getting a bit tired of all this, grudgingly follows.

Passenger 3 groans again, even more loudly than before.

Lisa Excuse me – are you all right?

This enquiry causes a ripple of disgust and embarrassment among the Passengers.

Passenger 4 How rude!

Lisa What? I was just asking if he was all right – he was making that noise . . .

They try to ignore her. Lisa sulks.

Passenger 3 groans again.

Passenger 4 – *who has been reading a paper – turns to face sideways. Once again, the other Passengers follow. Lisa, her arms folded, does not.*

A pinging sound.

Automated Voice Dissocia. Arrivals.

Only now, as the doors open, does Lisa turn. Just as abruptly, however, the Passengers about-face and leave the elevator in the opposite direction, leaving Lisa feeling stupid. Realising she should ask for directions, Lisa follows them –

Lisa Wait – excuse me! Excuse me – !

She follows the Passengers offstage.

By the ambient sound, the blinking lights and the airship that floats in the distance, it would seem that we are in some kind of airport arrivals lounge.

Two uniformed Guards enter, mid-argument. They are both a mass of tics and twitches, bug-eyed and sweating with general paranoia.

Guard 1 is concerned about the length of his jacket.

Guard 1 But does it cover my arse? Look –

Guard 2 Well, reasonably, I mean – most of it, yeah –

Guard 1 It only comes halfway down! You can see – there's such a steep drop from my arse to my legs – I've got such a fucking fat arse!

Guard 2 You haven't –

Guard 1 I have. It's womanly.

Guard 2 Womanly?!

Guard 1 Yeah, not so much fat as womanly –

Guard 2 There's nothing wrong with womanly!

Guard 1 Not on a woman, no, but on a man? It's grotesque! Men are meant to have small arses!

Guard 2 It looks fine, I'm telling you! I'd kill for an arse like yours: look at mine!

Lisa is wandering around aimlessly when Guard 1 sees her.

Guard 1 Shit, look!

He grabs Guard 2, stricken with fear.

Guard 2 Bugger! And it's a woman too!

Guard 1 Should we go up to her?

Guard 2 We have to, don't we?! How do I look? Do I look terrible?!

Guard 1 No, you look fine – what about me? Does my breath smell?!

Guard 2 She's going to totally hate us!

Guard 1 I know – we're so fucking dull!

Lisa Excuse me

Guard 2 Um – hello – Um – can we help you?

He turns to Guard 1.

Guard 2 'Can we help you'? That's so fucking lame!

Guard 1 Yes, um – What we mean is – halt! Um – who goes there?!

Guard 2 *covers his face.*

Guard 2 Oh no . . . !

Guard 1 She thinks we're a right pair of twats!

Lisa I just arrived, and I was wondering –

Guard 2 She's just arrived!

Guard 1 Oh – you mean you’ve just got here? (*To Guard 2.*) Of course she means that! What else would she mean?! I’m such a dick!

Lisa I mean this is my first time here . . .

Guard 1 Ah, you mean you’ve never been here before!

He makes a ‘duh’ face at his own stupidity and immediately regrets it.

Shit, I shouldn’t have made that face! I must’ve looked a right fucking prick! You do it!

He collapses to the ground. Guard 2 steps over him.

Guard 2 Yes, sorry – you’re saying you’ve never been here before?

Lisa Not that I can remember.

Guard 2 Right. Because . . .

Guard 1 Because there are things . . .

Guard 2 There are things you have to do . . .

Guard 1 Things that *we* have to do . . .

Guard 2 Yes, to you –

Guard 1 Not *to* you, so much as –

Guard 2 – *with* you!

Guard 1 Exactly – *with* you –

Guard 2 There are things we have to do *with* you –

Guard 1 – if you haven’t been here before.

Guard 2 Yes.

Pause.

Lisa What sort of things?

Guard 1 Oh, it’s nothing that bad, is it? I mean, it’s not us, you understand –

Guard 2 No, I mean, we don’t care –

Guard 1 We’re quite easy-going, aren’t we?

Guard 2 Yeah, I mean, we don’t mind what anyone brings in, really –

Guard 1 No, I mean, as far as we’re concerned you can bring in what you like, can’t she?

Guard 2 Pretty much, yeah.

Guard 1 But, you know – the ‘rules’ say we’ve got to check, you know –

Guard 2 – that you’re not, you know –

Guard 1 – bringing anything into the country that *we* wouldn’t mind you bringing in –

Guard 2 – but that the *country* –

Guard 1 – that is, the *government* – um –

Both Guards – would.

Lisa It’s all right, you know; I don’t take it personally.

Guard 2 Are we boring you?

Guard 1 We are! We’re boring her fucking rigid!

Lisa No, really, you’re not. I should think it’s more boring for you.

Guard 2 Oh, it’s not boring, is it?

Guard 1 Boring? No –

Guard 2 Not boring so much as –

Guard 1 – nerve-racking!

Guard 2 It’s the war, you see.

Lisa There’s a war on?

Guard 1 There’s always a war on.

Guard 2 We can't trust anyone. Not even a stranger like you.

Lisa Oh dear. That must be awful for you.

Guard 1 Well, yes; but that is what we do.

Guard 2 Such is the lot . . . of an insecurity guard.

Pause.

Lisa An insecurity guard?

Guard 2 Yes?

Lisa Don't you mean a security guard?

The Guards look at each other.

Guard 2 What would be the point in that?

Guard 1 No, I mean, if it's *secure* –

Guard 2 – why would you have to guard it?!

Lisa I suppose. *(Pause.)* Anyway, I don't want to be rude, but –

Guard 2 You want us to hurry up!

Lisa I've just got something I have to find . . .

Guard 1 And you want us to get a bloody move on, of course you do! Of course she does!

Guard 2 You want us to stop dicking around like a couple of . . .

He looks to Guard 1 for support.

Guard 1 Boring?

Guard 2 Ugly!

Guard 1 Fat-arsed –

Guards *(simultaneously)* Pricks!

Guard 2 Of course you do!

Lisa What sort of things can I not bring in? You mean drugs, that sort of thing?

Guard 2 Drugs?!

Lisa Yes, you know – heroin, cocaine, cannabis –

Guard 1 Oh goodness, no!

Guard 2 We take a stack of them every day!

Guard 1 Couldn't function without them!

Guard 2 No, no, it's other things . . .

Lisa Like what?

The Guards take out their notebooks.

Guard 2 OK, well, do you have any . . . feathers?

Lisa Feathers?

Guard 1 From a pillow or a bird, say.

Lisa Why can't you bring in feathers?

Guard 1 Ah well, you see, a feather can be used to tickle a pilot's arse with –

Guard 2 Causing him to crash!

Lisa I'm not getting on a plane.

Guard 1 But that's exactly what a pilot-tickler would say, isn't it?

Guard 2 Can't take any chances.

Lisa Well, I don't have any feathers.

Guard 2 OK, well – have you got any . . . pants with –

Guard 1 Yes, with, like, clouds or – rabbits on them?

Lisa What's the problem with that?

Guard 2 They can very easily be used to strangle pilots!

Guard 1 So easily.

Lisa No, I don't have any pants with . . . clouds or rabbits on them.

Guard 1 Right. Good.

Guard 2 Well, we're whizzing through these, aren't we?! God, that sounded so *gay*!

Guard 1 What about – any heart-shaped pebbles?

Lisa No.

Guard 2 Dolls' heads?

Lisa No.

Guard 1 Tonto facsimiles?

Lisa No. Whatever they are . . .

Guard 2 Gum shields? Stick insects? Flump covers?

No' to each.

Guard 1 Buckaroo? Haunted House? Fuzzy Pumper?
(*All board games that would have been popular in Lisa's childhood.*)

Lisa Nope.

Guard 2 Ping-pong tie-exfoliators?

Guard 1 She won't have one of *them*!

Guard 2 She might.

Offended, Guard 2 drags Guard 1 aside.

Guard 2 Don't undermine me!

Guard 1 I'm not!

Guard 2 You are! You're always undermining me!

Guard 1 What?! If anyone's being undermined round here, it's me!

Lisa *clears her throat.*

Guard 2 Sorry –

Guard 1 *throws himself around, like a child, at the injustice of it all.*

Guard 2 And no, like, really tiny houses or Knievel-shaped occupants . . . ?

Lisa No.

Guard 2 And no donkey eggs?

Lisa Definitely not.

Guard 2 All right – a couple of questions . . .

Guard 1 Has anybody other than yourself worn that dress today?

Lisa Of course not.

Guard 1 OK – and have you left your hair unattended . . . for any period of time –

They become quite mesmerised by her hair.

– or allowed anyone else to . . . touch or stroke it recently?

Pause.

Lisa No. No one.

A pause as they touch her hair – an almost sexual moment.

Lisa Is that it?

Pause.

Guard 2 No!

Guard 1 No!

Guard 2 There's something else –

Guard 1 That's right! The oath!

Lisa The oath?

Guard 1 *uses his walkie-talkie.*

Guard 1 Asshole 1 to control – this is Asshole 1. We need an Oath Team to Concourse 6 please. An Oath Team to Concourse 6 . . .

Guard 2 All new arrivals to Dissocia have to pledge allegiance to the Queen.

Lisa You've got a Queen?!

Guard 2 Well, we did – sort of. I'm just telling her about the Queen.

Guard 1 Oh, right, yes.

Guard 2 You tell it better.

Guard 1 I so do not.

Guard 2 I always make an arse of it!

Guard 1 I'll start to cry if I tell it.

Lisa Why, what happened?

Guard 1 *(tearful)* Well, basically – we have a Queen . . . but she's missing.

Lisa Oh dear . . .

Guard 2 Our Divine Queen has forsaken us!

Guard 1 *angrily grabs Guard 2 by the lapels.*

Guard 1 She has not forsaken us! She is in hiding from the enemy! She'll return when it's safe to do so!

Guard 2 *puts up a fight.*

Guard 2 And when will that be, eh? When will it be safe?!

They wrestle each other to the ground.

Guard 1 Never!

Guard 2 It'll never be safe, ever!

Lisa *tries to intervene.*

Lisa Safe from who?

Then there is the sound of a drum, and the two Guards stop struggling, their mood suddenly changed.

Guard 1 Oh, never mind that! It's the Oathtaker!

An imposing figure – the Oathtaker – appears, comically grim, in robes and a ridiculous ceremonial wig. He has a round biscuit in one hand, and is attended by four ceremonial Attendants.

Of the two Attendants directly behind him, one carries an empty tray; the other carries a tray with a glass of water on it. Of the two behind them, one wears a drum; the other wears finger-cymbals.

As the procession takes a step, the Oathtaker intones these words in solemn fashion:

Oathtaker Oath-taker.

This is followed by a single beat of the drum.

On the next step, as one, his Attendants reply:

Attendants Oatcake-eater.

As they do, the Oathtaker takes a bite from the biscuit that he carries.

This is followed by a single clash of the finger-cymbals.

And so it goes on, as they approach.

Oathtaker Oath-taker.

Drum.

Attendants Oatcake-eater.

Cymbal.

Oathtaker Oath-taker.

Drum.

Attendants Oatcake-eater.

Cymbal.

The Oathtaker stops the procession for a moment and beckons his tray-carrying Attendants. The one with the glass of water steps up and kneels beside him. The Oathtaker lifts the glass from the tray and takes a drink of water. He clears his throat and returns the glass.

The tray-carrying Attendants return to their original positions, and then it begins again:

Oathtaker Oath-taker.

Drum.

Attendants Oatcake-eater.

Cymbal.

And so on, until they arrive at Lisa and the Guards.

The Oathtaker beckons his tray-carrying Attendants. The one with the empty tray steps up and kneels beside him.

The Oathtaker throws the biscuit down, and the Attendant returns to position.

The Guards position Lisa in front of the Oathtaker.

Guard 2 Right – you stand there.

Lisa Is this really necessary? I don't think I'll be here that long.

Guard 1 Look at her! She looks beautiful, doesn't she? You look beautiful!

Guard 2 I always cry at oath-takings!

Oathtaker Will them that wants the oath taken step forward.

The Guards prod Lisa forwards.

Lisa Um – yes, sir – that's me.

Oathtaker Raise your wrong hand.

Lisa My wrong hand?

Oathtaker Sorry, your right hand.

She does so.

Now – repeat after me: I –

Lisa I.

Oathtaker And state your full name.

Lisa Lisa Montgomery Jones.

Oathtaker Lisa Montgomery Jones.

Pause.

Yes?

Lisa It's you.

Oathtaker Eh?

Lisa It's you that's telling me.

Oathtaker Is it?

Pause.

Where were we?

Lisa I, Lisa Montgomery Jones –

Oathtaker (nods) I, Lisa Montgomery Jones –

Pause.

Yes?

Lisa It's you again. You're the Oathtaker.

Attendants Oatcake-eater!

The tray-carrying Attendants step up and kneel beside him.

Annoyed, the Oathtaker hurriedly takes a bite of the biscuit and follows it with a drink of water.

It catches in his throat, and he coughs and splutters for a while. His Attendants pat his back until he recovers.

Oathtaker Now – where were we?

Lisa I, Lisa Montgomery Jones –

Oathtaker Do hereby swear –

Lisa Do hereby swear –

Oathtaker My undying –

Lisa My undying –

Oathtaker Allegiance –

Lisa Allegiance –

Oathtaker To –

Lisa To –

Oathtaker Our –

Lisa Our –

Oathtaker Divine Queen Sarah –

Lisa Divine Queen Sarah –

Oathtaker Of the House of Tonin –

Lisa Of the House of Tonin –

Oathtaker Of the House of Tonin –

Lisa Of the House of Tonin –

Oathtaker Of the House of –

Lisa Have you got lost again?

Oathtaker No, they've got three houses.

Lisa Of the House of Tonin –

Oathtaker Sovereign of the East Wing of the Divided States of Dissocia –

Lisa Sovereign of the . . . East Wing . . . of the Divided States of Dissocia –

Oathtaker And pledge, in her absence –

Lisa And pledge, in her absence –

Oathtaker To defend her dominion –

Lisa To defend her dominion –

Oathtaker From the armies . . . of the Black Dog.

Lisa From the –

*But everyone (except the **Oathtaker**) puts one hand on the top of their head, bows and murmurs this phrase:*

Guards/Attendants Queen Sarah, protect us from the Black Dog King!

Pause.

Lisa From the armies of the Black Dog –

They all repeat the action:

Guards/Attendants Queen Sarah, protect us from the Black Dog King!

Oathtaker And –

Lisa And –

Oathtaker In –

Lisa In –

Oathtaker So –

Lisa's beginning to get annoyed.

Lisa So –

Oathtaker Doing –

Lisa (*sighs*) Doing –

Oathtaker Hereby make enemies of any other enemies, however many, if any, amen.

Pause.

Lisa Hereby make enemies . . . of any . . . other enemies?

*She turns to the **Guards**, who mouth the words.*

Lisa However many – if any – amen!

*The **Guards** applaud.*

Oathtaker And now for the Ceremonial Song!

They all launch into the song 'Dissocia'.

All

Welcome to Dissocia
We're so pleased to meet both of ya
We already feel close to ya
Dissocia, Dissocia!

And though we'd never boast to ya
We'll be such damn good hosts to ya
We'll even make a roast for ya
Dissocia, Dissocia!

And now you are our friend we will
Defend you to the end remember
No one in the world above will
Love you like the people of
This wonderful new world.

And so we raise a toast to ya
We'll even give the vote to ya
We'll forward all your post to ya
Dissocia!

Lisa ends up on one of the **Guard**'s shoulders, as cannons blast streamers all over her, the Dissocians arrayed around her Broadway-style. The jollity ends quite abruptly.

Oathtaker Right. I'm off for a shit.

But suddenly a siren starts up, and a mechanised voice:

Mechanised Voice Incoming attack – assume safety posture! Incoming attack – assume safety posture!

Everyone starts running around in a panic, stuffing pieces of material into their mouths.

Lisa What's going on?!

Guard 1 tears a strip of material in two and hands her a piece.

Guard 1 Put this between your teeth and bite down on it!

Lisa What?!

Guard 1 Do it!

She does it. Everyone is lying down, the gags in their mouths, clutching the tops of their heads. The siren is deafening. Lisa lies down.

Guard 2 Press down on the top of your head!

But his voice is muffled by the gag, and Lisa can't hear him. He pulls the gag out of his mouth.

Guard 2 Press down hard on the top of your head! Don't let go until –

And then it hits: a wave of low-frequency sound that can be felt rather than heard.

The Dissocians seem to be in a state of seizure, their mouths crooked, their ears and noses bleeding. Some of them lose control of their bladders.

Guard 2 – caught without his gag in – is bleeding from the mouth.

Lisa crawls over to him. Keeping one hand on her head, she manages to put the gag back in his mouth.

And then, a huge and frightening voice seems to form out of the rumbling:

Voice

Citizens of Dissocia!
Surrender your Queen
Or live forever in the fist
Of the Black Dog King!"

And then, abruptly, the attack ends.

Mechanised Voice The attack is over – resume your business. The attack is over – resume your business.

Groaning, the Dissocians begin to pick themselves up.

Lisa What on earth was that?!

Guard 1 It's happening every day now!

Lisa I thought my head was going to explode . . .

Guard 2 It would've, if you hadn't been holding it down.

Lisa But who was that voice?

Guard 1 That was him –

Guard 2 The Black Dog King!

Those within earshot cover their heads and repeat the mantra:

All Queen Sarah, protect us from the Black Dog King!

Guard 2 Oh, I don't know why we bother with that! Queen Sarah's not going to save us! She's as scared as we are!

Guard 1 Keep your voice down!

Guard 2 Well, where is she then?! If she loves us so much, why hasn't she come back?! Why doesn't she do something?!

Guard 1 You know why! As long as she's alive, there's hope!

Guard 2 And how would we know?! Nobody even remembers what she looks like! For all we know, she could have been dead for years!

Suddenly, the Oathtaker is there, in a fury.

Oathtaker Shut your blasphemous hole, boy! How dare you speak that way of your Queen?!

Guard 1 He's sorry, Oathtaker. He's just a bit tired, aren't you?

Oathtaker We're all tired! But the very fact that he is able to speak such blasphemy is proof that our Queen still lives! And when the time is right, she will return to save us all!

Guard 2 Forgive me, Oathtaker.

Oathtaker Take heed then. For if I hear such slander from you again, you'll be up before the Collective!

Guard 2 Yes, Oathtaker.

The Oathtaker and his Attendants exit.

Lisa approaches the Guards, still nursing their injuries.

Lisa He's a bit scary . . .

Guard 2 He hates my guts!

Guard 1 No he doesn't. If he hates anyone, it's me.

Guard 2 You're joking, aren't you? He loves you! You even get invited to his Twister evenings!

Guard 1 Only because I've got a new mat!

Lisa Listen – I need to ask you something . . .

Guard 2 We probably won't know the answer. But you can try.

Lisa OK, well, you see – I actually came here – to find something. Something I've lost.

Guard 1 Oh yes?

Guard 2 And what would that be?

Lisa Well, it's . . . an hour. My hour, actually. I lost it.

The Guards freeze in terror, staring at each other.

Guard 2 An hour!

Guard 1 She's lost an hour!

Lisa I know it sounds a bit odd but I was told it was here. I just don't know where . . .

Guard 1 Ah, right, yes, well –

Guard 2 An hour, yes –

Guard 1 Well, that's probably, that's probably – um –

Guard 2 I know!

Guard 1 Do you?

Guard 2 Yes – Lost Property!

Guard 1 Lost Property, of course!

Guard 2 It's the very place!

Lisa So where's that? In here?

Pause. The Guards seem confused.

Guard 1 In here?

Only then does Lisa realise that they are now outside. There are birds singing.

Lisa Oh. That's funny.

Pause.

Guard 1 OK, then. Bye!

Guard 2 Bye!

They almost fall over each other trying to get away, but Lisa stops them.

Lisa You haven't told me how to get there!

Guard 1 Where?

Lisa Lost Property.

Guard 1 Oh, right, yes. How does she get there?

Guard 2 How – ? Oh, yes, well – follow the sun?

Guard 1 That's right. Just – follow the sun and you'll get there.

Lisa *looks in the direction of the sun.*

Lisa But it's setting . . . ?

Guard 1 No, it's set.

Guard 2 That's how it set –

Guard 1 Setting.

Lisa Oh. All right, well – thank you. It was nice to meet you.

She shakes their hands (strangely, as during the song 'Dissocia', they also shake the hand of someone we can't see).

And I don't think you should be so insecure. You both seem like lovely people.

Sheepishly, they nod their thanks.

Guard 2 Be careful, won't you?

Lisa I will.

Guard 1 Don't talk to strangers.

Lisa I'll try not to. Bye.

They watch her walk off towards the setting sun. Lisa exits.

Guard 2 Did we do the right thing?

Guard 1 We did what we were told.

Guard 2 We're such fucking lackeys.

Guard 1 *(nods)* We're pricks.

They exit.

Lisa *re-enters, the sun in her eyes. She sings to herself:*

Lisa

Dissocia, Dissocia

We're dum dum dum dum da ya

We'll even roast a goat for ya

Dissocia, Dissocia

She comes to a stop.

Follow the sun. But it's just fields. Why would they have Lost Property in the middle of a field? That's the problem with insecure people; they just tell you what you want to hear.

Pause.

It does make for a beautiful sky, though, when the sun sets setting.

Pause. She has an idea: she takes out her mobile phone and dials a number. To her surprise, it works. (Here we might hear an effect similar to that outlined on page 10.)

Vince, it's me. Listen – I know I was supposed to be seeing you tonight and you probably think I'm messing you around, but something really important's come up. You know how I've been acting a bit funny recently? Well, it's because I lost an hour on the way back from New York. So you see, it isn't just me; I *do* know what love is and I *do* care about people. Anyway, my flat turned into an elevator and I've gone to this place called Dissocia. It's quite an odd place but the people are nice and the sky is really colourful and hopefully I'll be back soon with balance fully restored so don't worry about me. Give me a ring when you get this. Bye.

She puts the phone away. Pause.

I suppose that sounds a bit weird. I mean, it doesn't sound very much, an hour. Losing a year of your life, that's impressive – but an hour? I mean . . . what's an hour?

She makes a gesture as she says this:

An hour is just a sixty-second cycle –

She stops. A musical phrase has played under this.

Pause. She repeats the action:

An hour is –

The musical phrase occurs again. It seems to be connected to the gesture.

She makes the gesture on its own and, again, the musical phrase.

Obviously, this is a musical field. She giggles.

She makes a gesture like an orchestra conductor and the musical phrase plays again, in a classical style. This is not what she wants.

She thinks.

She makes a sexier gesture and the musical phrase plays again, in a swing style.

She shakes her head. She thinks. She decides.

Sweeping her arms up in a gentler motion, it's as if she lifts the music up from the ground, like flowers.

She sings 'What's an Hour'.

An hour is a sixty-second cycle
Dictated by our journey round the Sun
It's frequently divided into quarters
Like the hash we used to buy from Davy Dunn.
An hour is a twenty-fourth of daytime
If life's a bitch, an hour is a flea
An hour doesn't mean
So very much in itself
But it's my hour
And it means a lot
To me.

Of course I know an hour is just a construct
Concocted by an order-hungry race
I'm familiar with the work of Stephen Hawking
(Though I'm not sure I would recognise his face).
We could sit here and debate the implications
Until our faces turned a funny shade of blue
An hour is simply three thousand
Six hundred seconds
That I
Could have spent
With you.

An hour is simply three thousand
Six hundred seconds
That I
Should have spent
With you.

Lisa *laughs, looking skywards, and a flurry of petals falls around her.*

She crouches down to play with them, but the petals become flies, which buzz around her. She runs away from them.

Go away! I hate flies! Go away!

But they persist, clustering around her bottom.

What are you doing around my arse?! You know that's very insulting! These pants were clean on this morning!

Goat They're timeflies.

A Goat is tethered nearby.

Lisa What?

Goat Timeflies. Haven't you heard of them?

Lisa Timeflies? Not really.

Goat Never?

Lisa Well, apart from as part of a phrase – 'Time flies when you're having fun.' I've heard that.

Goat There you are, then.

Lisa 'Time flies when you're having fun'?

Goat 'Tend to cluster round your bum.'

Lisa I've never heard that bit before.

Goat And that's my fault, is it?

Lisa No . . .

Goat That's what you're implying.

Lisa No, it's not.

The Goat shrugs. Pause.

Goat They've gone now anyway.

Lisa *nods. The timeflies have, indeed, gone.*

Goat That's because you're not having fun.

Lisa If you say so.

Goat I suppose that's my fault as well.

Lisa Why would it be your fault?

Goat It stands to reason: you were having fun – hence the timeflies – and then you met me, and now you're not. So it's obviously my fault.

Lisa No, really, it isn't. I wasn't even having that much fun to begin with.

Goat But you're having less now.

Lisa Well . . .

Goat And you're blaming me for it. You can, you know; it's all right.

Lisa I don't want to blame you.

Goat But I'm to blame.

Lisa You're really not –

Goat I am! I am to blame, I am!

The Goat is very upset. Lisa sits beside him.

Lisa Oh no, what's wrong? Why are you crying?

Goat I'm a miserable failure!

Lisa Why are you saying that? How are you a failure?

Goat Nobody ever blames me for anything! What's the point in being a scapegoat if you never get blamed for anything?!

Lisa Oh . . . you're a scapegoat.

Goat Isn't it obvious?

Lisa Not really. I mean, you're obviously a goat . . .

Goat (*nods*) But not obviously a scapegoat. I know. That's half the problem; people can't see the difference. And they're not likely to go around blaming ordinary goats for things. That'd be ridiculous; not to mention unfair.

Lisa So you *want* me to blame you?

He nods.

But you really weren't to blame . . .

Goat But that's good! There's no point in blaming me for things I'm to blame for. Anyone can be blamed for things they're to blame for. A scapegoat is blamed for things they had little, or nothing, to do with.

Lisa Oh. Well, I suppose I could blame you for something . . .

Goat Could you?

Lisa If it'd make you feel better . . .

Goat Oh, it would!

Lisa All right, well . . .

Goat Make it something big. Something that really upset you.

Lisa OK –

She clears her throat and adopts a mock-angry tone.

Why did you put that mortice lock on? You know I lost my key! I had to sit outside for three hours until Mrs Cameron came back and it was really cold and raining!

Pause.

How was that?

Goat I said something that really upset you.

Lisa It did upset me! I was furious!

Goat But something big though!

Lisa Big like what?

Goat How about your childhood? You could blame me for that.

Pause.

Lisa There's nothing to blame you for.

Goat Nothing?

Lisa I had a very happy childhood, thank you. I was a very happy little girl.

[In the original production, the second sentence was also pre-recorded and played simultaneously to the actor speaking the line.]

Goat (*shrugs*) If you say so.

Pause.

Lisa This is stupid. I can't blame you for something I know you didn't do.

Goat What about something I *might* have done?

Lisa How d'you mean?

Goat Well – something *somebody* did . . . but you don't know who. Something I could *possibly* have done – for all you know.

Lisa Oh, yes, all right – Give me back my purse!

Goat Eh?

Lisa You stole my purse! You took it out of my bag in the cinema!

Goat Did I fuck!

Lisa Yes, you did! There wasn't even anything worth having in it – just a picture of my auntie and that was the only one I had, you sod!

Goat I never stole your fucking purse! I've never even *been* to a fucking cinema!

Lisa So you're going to deny it?

Goat Of course I am! I didn't do it!

Pause. Lisa doesn't understand.

Lisa Well, I know / you didn't, but –

Goat But you don't know that for a fact! I *might* have done it –!

Lisa Oh, I'm sure I'd have noticed a goat in the cinema!
He starts to cry again.

Goat I thought you were trying to make me feel better!

Lisa I know, I'm sorry.

Goat It's not your fault. It's this war we're having. Everybody just blames the enemy for everything. There's nothing for a scapegoat to do!

Lisa *is at a loss. Then she has an idea.*

Lisa Oh, wait a minute, of course, it's perfect! You stole my hour!

Slowly, the Goat raises his head.

Goat What did you say?

Lisa Well, I lost an hour, you see; that's why I'm here. But I reckon you stole it, you . . . thieving . . . goat, you! Give me back my hour!

The Goat stands.

Goat Wait, wait – I wasn't ready. But that was good –

Lisa Was it?

The Goat positions Lisa so she's facing front. She doesn't understand why, but goes along with it.

Goat Yes, blame me for that. Blame me for the hour.

The Goat pulls free the rope he was tethered with, and gathers it up.

Lisa All right – ready?

He stands poised behind Lisa.

Goat Ready.

Lisa Give me back my –!

Suddenly, the Goat ensnares her with the rope.

Goat I've found her, Master! She's here! The girl that seeks the hour!

Lisa What are you doing?! Let me go! You're hurting me!

She tries to pull away, but the Goat has the rope firmly and starts to reel her in.

Goat I've got no choice, don't you see? He'll have to let me join him now.

Lisa Who will? Join who?

Goat The Master! He who will bring calamity to Dissocia! The Destroyer! The Black Dog King!

The sound of distant thunder.

Having reeled Lisa in, the Goat winds the rope around her and ties it tight.

Lisa Listen, please – I really think you're making a mistake. I've never even been here before!

Goat There's no mistake! A girl will come seeking an hour – she must be found! Oh, and I'll be rewarded with a lifetime of blame! I'll be the greatest scapegoat that ever lived!

He forces Lisa to the ground and dances around her, in glee.

Goat

Rivers of bile will vein the land!
 Bones will twist inside the hand!
 Children will boil in mothers' wombs!
 Turning on lights will darken rooms!
 And heavy skies will teem with flocks
 Of tiny birds with human cocks!

Lisa This is really horrible of you! And after all the things I tried to blame you for!

The sound of passing cars, as if we're on a motorway lay-by.

The Goat has become distracted by the sight of Lisa's bottom, as she struggles.

He looks around, furtively. Decisively, he turns her over.

Lisa What are you doing?

With one final glance behind him, the Goat hitches up her dress.

Goat Just be quiet and you might enjoy yourself!

He starts to undo his trousers.

Lisa Oh my God, what are you doing?!

The traffic is deafening now. The Goat grunts as he tries to enter her.

Lisa lets out a shrill and chilling scream . . .

And then, suddenly –

– the 'toot-toot' of a horn!

The Goat stops what he's doing.

A woman drives on in a child's pedal car. She comes to a stop right beside them.

Jane Hello there!

Jane is dressed like a secretary, but she also wears an eyepatch, has one of her arms in a sling, and has a support bandage on her leg: she's in bad shape, but she covers it well with make-up and a thoroughly

cheerful demeanour. She is one of those people whose sentences rise at the end, like questions.

My name's Jane and I'm from the CCS – the VCI – the CV – ? I'm from the Council.

Goat I know where you're from.

Jane consults her clipboard.

Jane Now – which one of you is Miss Lisa Montgomery Jones?

Lisa Me! That's me, here.

Jane Right – do you think you could maybe just untie Miss Jones for me?

The Goat unties Lisa.

Jane All right, Miss Jones – Could you just confirm for me your date of birth?

Lisa Um – 17th June 1969. *(Or as appropriate.)*

Jane Right; and you've been a citizen of Dissocia for how long?

Lisa Just a few hours really.

Now free, Lisa tries for a kick at the Goat, who dodges it.

Jane A few hours. OK.

She notes this down.

So I take it you're Gavin Loxley?

The Goat nods.

Jane And you're how old?

Goat Six.

Lisa Six?!

The Goat nods.

Lisa You're a very, very, very bad goat!

Jane Well, that all seems to be in order. D'you think you could just – help me out of this car?

Lisa *takes her arm. Jane shouts in pain.*

Jane Not the arm, not the arm!

Lisa Oh, I'm sorry –

She takes Jane's hand and helps her out.

Jane Anyway, as I said, my name is Jane? I'm from the Community Crime Initiative.

Lisa *nods.*

Jane And I'm here to be beaten and anally raped for you.

Pause.

Lisa You're what?

Jane Right, well, what it is? Is what we call the Victim Concentration Scheme. Which is basically that Mr Loxley here was going to beat and anally rape you –

Lisa He was what?!

Goat I was going to piss on her as well.

Jane Were you?

She looks at her clipboard.

Lisa You dirty little sod!

Jane Oh, I *am* sorry. It's been one of those days today.

She scrubs it out.

Right, so anyway; he was going to beat, anally rape and urinate on you –

Lisa *(shakes head)* I can't believe that! I thought you just took the blame for things?

Goat *(shrugs)* There's no smoke without fire.

Jane But I'm here to be BAU'd on your behalf.

Lisa Why would you want to do that?

Jane Right, well, what it is? Is that under the previous Council? This borough had actually the highest crime rate in Dissocia. For example, over the last year, there were an average of *twenty-two* serious crimes per week.

Lisa How many are there now?

Jane Under the new scheme?

Lisa *nods.*

Jane *Forty-two.*

Pause.

Lisa So it's doubled?

Jane Right, well, whilst it's true to say that, since the scheme began, statistics do show that serious crimes have increased – ?

Lisa Doubled.

Jane Doubled, yes, that's true, but actually what they don't tell you? Is that the number of *individual victims* of crime has, in fact, *fallen*.

Lisa Fallen?

Jane Yes, well, under the last administration? There was an average of *twelve hundred* individual victims of crime per year.

Lisa And how many are there now?

Jane Under the new scheme?

Lisa Yes.

Jane One.

Lisa One?

Jane *suddenly gets a stabbing pain in her side.*

Jane One!

She grabs hold of Lisa as the pain passes.

Lisa And that's you.

Jane And that's me.

Goat I certainly feel safer than I used to.

Jane So – shall we crack on with it, then?

Jane *hobbles to her pedal car. The Goat follows.*

Lisa Wait a minute – I don't want you to get beaten and raped in my place!

Jane Right, well; the only alternative would be for it to happen to you. And I don't think you'd want that. OK?

She takes a medical kit out of the car, and starts to pull on a pair of surgical gloves.

Lisa But how's that the only alternative? I mean, you've stopped a crime. Why does it have to happen at all?

Pause. Jane can't think of an answer to that.

Jane Right, well, I'm not actually in the position of deciding Council Policy? I'm just the victim. Mr Loxley?

She beckons to the Goat, who follows her offstage.

Lisa No, listen, this is ridiculous, please –

She grabs the end of the Goat's rope.

Lisa This is really stupid! Please don't do this! You're only six and it's a really wicked thing to do!

With a grunt, the Goat pulls it free and exits.

Helplessly, Lisa watches the offstage action: there is the sound of animal grunting, Jane screaming, the sound of blows.

Lisa *can't watch any more.*

The awful sounds build and build.

(Note: in the original production, the live offstage sounds were eventually swamped by a treated recording of a violent domestic argument.)

Lisa *covers her ears and sings to herself:*

Lisa

Dissocia, Dissocia! We'll even make a boat for ya!

We'll dum dum dum dum dum for ya! Dissocia Dissocia!

She runs back and screams at them:

Leave her alone, d'you hear me? What's she ever done to you?! Leave her alone, you rotten horrible goat!

But the noise just gets louder. She starts to cry.

I hate this place, I hate it! I hate it and I want to go home!
I want to go home! I want to go home!

She lies down and curls up, in a foetal position, her ears covered.

I want to go home I want to go home I want to go home.

Dissocia darkens around her, and the violent noises recede until finally she is just a small, lonely figure in the landscape. She makes little bleating pre-linguistic sounds.

Pause.

A trapdoor opens near her head, hissing out icy smoke. A Polar Bear clambers out.

When Lisa sees him, she smiles.

Bear Hello, Lisa.

Lisa Hello, bear. How are you?

Bear Mmm. Not so bad.

Lisa What've you got for me?

Bear I've written a song.

Lisa Have you?

Bear Would you like to hear it?

Lisa I would. I'd very much like to hear it. Is it nice?

Bear It's quite nice, yes. Shall I begin?

Lisa Please do.

The Bear clears his throat. He sings 'Who'll Hold Your Paw When You Die?'

Who'll hold your paw when you die?
Who'll hear you whisper goodbye?
Who'll be beside you when brain death is declared?
Who'll think about you and all we have shared?
Some people call themselves friend
But will they be there when you end?
Life's full of clatter
But none of it matters
Only who'll hold your paw when you die.

Delighted, Lisa applauds.

Lisa That was excellent!

Bear It's not really finished yet.

Lisa It was very good though.

Bear Hmm. Thank you. D'you feel better now?

Lisa I do. I really do. You've restored my faith in animals.

Bear All right then. See you then.

Lisa Bye.

The Bear disappears back into the ground.

The light returns and, with it, the terrible sounds of the Goat assaulting Jane.

But now Lisa is smiling, still enchanted by the Bear's song.

After a time, the noises end.

Jane reappears, badly beaten up, her clothes torn, but still clutching her clipboard; and still thoroughly cheerful.

Jane All right?

Lisa Fine thanks. How are you?

Jane Oh, I'm fine. I mean, a goat's penis; it's quite rough? But apart from that, I'm fine. So could you just sign here?

Lisa signs.

Jane And could you just date it for me? Lovely. Thank you very much.

Lisa No, thank you.

Jane All right. Now Mr Loxley . . .

And then Jane suddenly becomes hysterical, screaming at the top of her voice.

Mr Loxley! Mr Loxley! Mr - !

Lisa slaps her face. Pause.

Jane Thank you. Mr Loxley is actually napping at the moment.

The sound of the Goat snoring, offstage.

Jane But I believe he does still intend to hand you over to the enemy -

Lisa I'm sure he's got that wrong. What would the Black Dog Thingummybob want with me?

Jane puts her hand on her head.

Jane Queen Sarah protect us from the Black Dog Thingummybob.

Lisa Unless it's my hour he wants. Victor did say it was a source of great power. Maybe he thinks I know where it is.

Jane Right, well, I wouldn't know about that. But what I'd suggest? is that I give you a lift to Lost Property. Would that suit you?

Lisa That would be fantastic!

Jane Righty-ho.

Lisa *helps Jane to the car. But then something strikes her.*

Lisa How did you know I was going there?

Jane Beg your pardon?

Lisa How did you know I was going to Lost Property?

Pause.

Jane Because you told me?

Lisa I don't think I did . . .

Jane Mmm. Well, what it is – is it was probably Mr Loxley that told me? He was saying quite a lot of things as you can imagine.

Lisa *nods, not quite convinced.*

Jane Anyway, we should probably go now? It's just that I'm due to be carjacked at six.

Lisa *climbs into the small car behind Jane.*

With a 'toot-toot', they drive off.

A sudden and thunderous blast of punky guitar music.

Jane and Lisa *are travelling at high speed around Dissocia's mountain roads.*

Lisa *(shouts)* It's very fast this car, isn't it?!

Jane *(shouts)* What?!

She turns down the music.

Lisa I said it's very fast, this car!

Jane What do you mean, car? It's not a car –

She seems to have become someone entirely different.

Lisa Isn't it?

Jane God, no!

She pulls on a pair of goggles.

Lisa What is it, then, if it's not a – ?

Suddenly the car accelerates even faster, pressing them back into their seats.

– CAAAAAARRRRRR!

And then takes off into the sky, up and through the canopy of clouds.

She covers her eyes, terrified.

Oh no, listen, please – I'm not very good with flying and that's when I'm in a plane! Can we go back down, please?! Please can we go back down?!

Jane Oh, nonsense: here, have a swig of this – that'll see you right.

Jane *swigs from a hip flask and passes it back.*

Lisa Oh my God, you're drinking!

She looks over the side and screams.

Oh my God!

She takes the flask and drinks from it.

How is this thing flying? It doesn't even have any wings!

She looks down again – takes another swig.

Oh, we're so high up! – this is really . . .

But she continues to look (and continues to drink).

. . . quite beautiful. It's really quite beautiful!

Jane What?!

Lisa Dissocia – it's beautiful!

She whoops with joy.

It's beautiful!

She drinks from the hip flask again.

Jane Yes, it is rather pretty, isn't it? The West was even prettier, once upon a time. But look up ahead!

Lisa I think there's a storm brewing!

Jane No – that's the West! The Black Dog reduced it to a wasteland in a matter of weeks! He'd do the same to us if he could!

Lisa Why can't he?!

Jane Because he wants Queen Sarah!

Lisa But hasn't she gone missing?

Jane Not exactly! The Collective sent her into hiding! Every single image of her was destroyed, even the money! Then they erased the memory of her face from every last citizen of Dissocia!

Lisa So no one knows what she looks like?

Jane Not a soul! So the Black Dog can't risk an all-out assault in case he kills her by accident!

Lisa Here – you're not doing that thing! You know – Queen Sarah protect us – that thing.

Jane Oh, that's just superstitious twaddle!

Lisa You did it before!

Jane I've never done it!

Lisa You did, I saw you! After you were raped by the goat!

Jane Have you gone fucking *mad*?!

Lisa Don't shout at me – you were raped by a goat, I heard it!

Jane It's hardly something I'd forget! Honestly, I don't know how you come up with these things, Lisa, I really don't.

[In the original production, the second sentence was also pre-recorded and played simultaneously with the actor speaking the line.]

An explosion goes off beside them, rocking the flying car.

Lisa Oh my God, what's that?!

Another explosion.

Someone's shooting at us!

She looks over the side.

We're flying over the West!

Jane Yes, sorry about that! Just a little detour – have to drop something off!

Lisa What are you dropping off?

Jane A bomb.

Lisa A bomb?!

The air is filled with anti-aircraft fire and explosions.

Oh my God! We're going to die!

Jane Well – got to do our bit, haven't we?

Another explosion.

Lisa No, wait a minute – this isn't my bit, this is your bit! And anyway – I don't want to drop bombs on people, whatever they've done!

Jane No, no, no: this is a novelty bomb!

Lisa A novelty bomb?!

Explosion.

What the hell is a novelty bomb?! You mean, it doesn't kill anyone?

Jane Oh no – it incinerates everything in a five-mile radius!

Lisa So what's the novelty?

Jane It leaves a scorch mark in the shape of a cat! Here we go –

She pulls a lever.

Bombs away!

The bombs whistle to the ground. Beneath them, explosions mushroom.

Lisa Oh my God! There's people burning!

Jane Good! Take that, you big bullies!

Lisa No, it's horrible – all the houses are burning, look – those are children down there!

Jane Yes, but look at that!

Lisa Oooh, you're right – it's a cat!

Jane Quite good, isn't it?!

Lisa Have you got any other ones?!

Jane I've got one shaped like a rhino?

Lisa Oh, drop that one!

Jane *lets another bomb drop.*

Lisa Wheeeeeeeeeeeeee!

Another explosion beneath them. Lisa looks back at it.

That looks more like a walrus!

Jane They're just prototypes. There's a good one that looks just like a little koala bear.

Lisa Aww.

Simultaneously:

Jane Die, you Black Dog scum!

Lisa Die, you Black Dog . . . buggers!

More anti-aircraft fire on their tail.

Lisa *sits up and taunts them.*

Lisa Come on, you want some?! You fucking want some?!

An explosion just behind them. Lisa laughs.

Jane We're clear now!

Lisa Well done! That was excellent!

Jane You mustn't feel any sympathy for them, Lisa. They're all slaves to the Black Dog King!

Lisa I hate the Black Dog King!

Jane So you should! I dread to think what he'd have done if he'd caught you! I mean, you've heard that poem, haven't you?

They start their descent.

Lisa

Rivers of bile will vein the land?

Jane

Bones will twist inside the hand!

Lisa

Children will boil in mothers' wombs!

Jane

Turning on lights will darken rooms!

Lisa

And heavy skies will teem with flocks . . .

Both

Of tiny birds with human – cocks!

The car rattles as they contact the ground and taxi towards a halt.

Jane That's the one! Have you ever seen a penis bird? Frightful things. Had one in the barn once. Came on my hand while I was saddling up.

Lisa Eeeuh!

The car comes to a stop.

Jane Anyway, here we are: Lost Property. Over that hill.

Lisa *climbs out.*

Lisa Well, thanks so much for the . . . flight.

Jane Not at all.

Lisa I've never been on a bombing mission before. It was very exciting.

Jane Yes, it is rather jolly, isn't it? Anyway – toodle-oo!

With a last 'toot-toot', Jane drives off.

Lisa *waves goodbye. She walks up the hill towards Lost Property.*

As she climbs to the top of the rake, the other actors will set up for the next section. Lisa watches them do so, making gestures with her hands that recall the gestures she made in her solo song, as if she is in some way conjuring the events. Over this, the following pre-recorded conversation plays.

The sound of traffic. A conversation on the move:

Vince *(voice-over)* Lisa! Lisa – where have you been?!

Lisa *(voice-over)* What do you mean, 'where've I been'?

Vince *(voice-over)* I thought I was meant to be seeing you tonight.

Lisa *(voice-over)* Were you?

Vince *(voice-over)* So what were you doing at the fucking airport?!

Lisa *(voice-over)* Just leave me alone, Vince.

Vince *(voice-over)* Is that what you want? Do you really want me to leave you alone? I can do that, if that's what you want. Because I'm telling you, I'm getting really fucking sick of this. Lisa, are you listening to me?

Lisa *(voice-over)* Do what you like.

A hot-dog stand, with a sign that reads 'Lost Property'. Behind the stand is a mound of shoes and handbags.

At the stand, a trashy-looking Australian girl called Britney is frying onions and splitting buns for the hot dogs.

A muzak version of 'Who'll Hold Your Paw When You Die' is playing (or something similarly bland).

There are two outdoor café tables, with two people sitting at each. There are menus on the tables, showing nothing but hot dogs.

At table one sit two men we shall refer to as Laughter and Ticket. They are respectably dressed. Ticket wears a panama hat. Every now and then Laughter will laugh loudly, and be hushed by Ticket.

At table two sit another two men we shall refer to as Argument and Inhibitions. Inhibitions wears a tweed suit and sports a bushy beard. Argument wears trousers and shoes – and no shirt, but a collar and bow tie, in the style favoured by male strippers.

All of them are intently eating hot dogs from paper plates. There are no signs of water, or beverages of any kind.

Lisa *approaches Britney, who is now putting hot dogs into rolls.*

Lisa Um – hello. I wonder if you could help me? I've lost something.

Britney *sets off around the tables, giving out hot dogs. Lisa follows her as she weaves inbetween them.*

Britney What do you want me to do about it?

Lisa Well – it's Lost Property, isn't it?

Britney If it's lost then, yes, obviously.

Lisa No, I mean – *this* is Lost Property. Isn't it?

Britney Does it look like Lost Property?

Lisa No, not really. But the sign says it is.

Britney The sign?

Lisa indicates the sign. **Britney** stops to look at it. She sighs heavily.

Britney I'm surrounded by bloody idiots! Biffer!

Biffer hurries in. He is a chef and wears a grimy apron. He is dripping with sweat and carrying a tray full of hot dogs.

Britney Biffer, get that bloody sign fixed! Give me those.

Biffer gives her the hot dogs. He replaces the sign with one that reads 'Lost Lost Property'. And then hurries back to the kitchen.

Lisa 'Lost Lost Property'?

Britney has put more hot dogs, in buns, on more plates. She sets off round the tables again. Although they have more hot dogs than they can possibly eat, the men are never less than grateful.

Britney Yes, well, that's why I was confused. You're looking for the Lost Property Office.

Lisa Where's that?

Britney We lost it.

Lisa You lost the Lost Property Office?

Britney There's no need to rub it in! We're obviously embarrassed about it.

Lisa So what do you do here?

Britney Well, if anyone finds the Lost Property Office, they'll hopefully bring it to us.

Lisa So what's all that stuff behind the stall?

Lisa indicates the pile of shoes and handbags.

Britney picks up the ketchup and mustard bottles and goes round the tables squirting it all over the men's hot dogs.

Britney Oh, that's lost property.

Lisa So you've got lost property?

Britney Well, yes and no.

Lisa Yes and no.

Britney Well, yes, people are constantly bringing us lost property. But ironically enough, the only lost property they never bring us is the actual Lost Property Office.

Lisa Yes, but I don't understand. If you've got lots of lost property, surely you're the Lost Property Office anyway?

Britney No, no, no. That doesn't follow at all.

Lisa Of course it does – Why not?

As she answers this, a distracted **Britney** squeezes a constant stream of mustard over **Ticket**'s hot dog.

Britney Well, you might have a lot of books in your house. But that doesn't make you a library, does it? You might have lots of hot dogs. But that doesn't make you a hot-dog stall, does it?

The flow of mustard ceases.

Everything all right for you?

Ticket Delicious, thank you.

Britney returns to the stall. **Lisa** follows.

Britney Actually, though, between you and me – the funny thing is . . . a couple of weeks back, someone actually *did* hand in a Lost Property Office; just not the one we lost. What are the odds on that? Anyway –

She tips a tray of hot dogs on to the floor.

BIFFER!

Biffer appears with another load of hot dogs.

Britney Get those bloody hot dogs up!

Biffer starts to gather up the hot dogs.

Britney Get the bloody fluff off them!

Lisa Well, maybe I could visit that one?

As Biffer hands Britney each hot dog, she throws it down again.

Britney What one?

Lisa The Lost Property Office that someone found but that isn't the Lost Property Office you lost. Can I visit that one?

Everybody stops what they're doing, frozen in fear. Britney doesn't know what to say.

Britney I don't know about that. I can't think of any reason why not . . . But I'm sure there must be one.

Pause. Laughter suddenly stands.

Laughter I've got a question.

Britney Yes?

Laughter brandishes a menu.

Laughter It says here – 'Today's Special'.

Britney Yes?

Laughter What's so special about it?

A group murmur of appreciation for this question.

Britney Well . . . it's Biffer's birthday!

Apart from Biffer – who looks confused – they are all delighted by this and offer their congratulations. They sing him a well-known birthday song.

They applaud. The applause dies down.

Lisa That's very nice. So do you – ?

Britney Hot dogs are on the house!

Everyone is appreciative. Britney's tone changes abruptly.

Britney BIFFER! HOT DOGS FOR EVERYONE!
GET A BLOODY MOVE ON!

Biffer scurries away for more hot dogs and the men go back to eating and chatting about how wonderful the hot dogs are.

Lisa So can I visit the Lost Property now?

Britney (*frustrated*) It's highly irregular, you know!

Lisa It'll just be for a minute. I'll give it straight back, I promise.

Britney You promise?

Lisa I do, I promise.

Britney disappears under the counter.

Lisa smiles at the diners.

Britney resurfaces, now wearing a false beard.

Laughter points at **Britney** and guffaws loudly. He is silenced by Ticket

Britney Lost Property, can I help you?

Pause. Lisa's patience is fraying.

Lisa Yes, like I said – I've lost something.

Britney's off round the tables again, this time throwing handfuls of fried onions over the ketchup-drenched hot dogs.

Britney And what would that be?

Lisa An hour.

Britney Can you describe it?

Lisa Oh – I don't know. How do you describe an hour?

Britney Well, do you feel heavier since you lost it?

Lisa Actually, yes, I do.

Britney So it must be light. If it's light it's daytime. And if it's daytime, it must be big.

Lisa Why?

Britney Because the small hours are at night. So it's a big hour, in the day – was it thick or thin?

Lisa I can't answer that. Hours aren't thick or thin . . .

Britney All right, then – was it dense or was it fine?

Lisa That's just as stupid, if not more so.

Britney Not at all. Have you never heard of someone's finest hour?

Lisa Look – I can't believe there's been that many hours handed in. Can't you just see if my one's there?

Britney Well, that's very selfish of you! I mean, there's a queue, you know.

The customers murmur their agreement.

Take a ticket and wait your turn. Biffer – where's those bloody hot dogs?!

Lisa takes a ticket from the ticket roll on the stand.

Britney Number seventeen?

Ticket Oh, that's me!

Argument Good luck, old boy!

Biffer rushes out with more hot dogs and collides with **Ticket**, spilling them all.

Lisa Oh dear!

Britney Biffer, you idiot! Get them picked up!

Britney and **Ticket** kick and beat **Biffer**, who crawls away.

Britney gets a cloth and wipes down **Ticket's** jacket.

Lisa (to **Laughter**) I feel quite sorry for him.

Pause. **Laughter** guffaws.

Lisa What's so funny?

Laughter stops laughing.

Laughter I don't know – what you said?

Lisa I just said I felt sorry for him.

Laughter brays with laughter again. **Lisa** shakes her head.

Britney Now – how can I help you?

Ticket Yes, you see – I was number three earlier.

Britney Oh yes, I remember.

Ticket But I lost my ticket.

Britney I'm sorry, no one's handed in a number-three ticket.

Ticket So what should I do?

Britney I'm sure it'll turn up soon.

Ticket I do hope so.

Ticket takes another ticket and, munching on a hot dog, returns to his seat.

Lisa That's ridiculous.

Argument stands.

Argument I disagree. I think it's eminently reasonable. I'd go so far as to say it was about the most reasonable thing I've either heard or seen ever. Do you concur?

Lisa No, of course I don't.

Argument Oh. Right.

Argument sits down. **Laughter** brays out another laugh.

Lisa Why do you keep doing that?!

Ticket He's lost his sense of humour.

Lisa Oh, I'm sorry. That must be awful for you.

Laughter Are you being sarcastic?

Lisa No, not at all.

Laughter I can't tell, you see. I tend to just laugh and hope it fits. It fits more things than not, I find.

Lisa How did you lose it?

Ticket He was the victim of a buse.

Lisa (*not smiling*) Oh – that's . . . terrible.

Ticket Isn't it? Especially as the buse has long been considered extinct.

Laughter In the wild at least.

This irritates Lisa. She watches them munch their hot dogs.

Lisa There's not much choice of food here, is there?

At the other table, Argument stands, one foot on his chair.

Argument I disagree. I've never been anywhere with so much choice. I'm actually dizzy with the amount of choices on offer. I'd go so far as to say there is more choice here than in any other choice-based establishment I've ever visited ever. Would you concur?

Lisa All they've got is hot dogs!

Argument Yes. That's true.

He sits down again.

Inhibitions There's no point arguing with him.

Laughter That's what he's lost.

Lisa What?

Inhibitions The argument.

Lisa Which one?

Argument Which what?

Lisa Which argument have you lost?

Argument Any one you care to mention.

Lisa But surely that could be fixed?

Argument How so?

Lisa Well – you say something and I'll agree with it.

Pause. This hasn't occurred to him.

Ticket It's worth a try.

Argument All right – let's give it a try!

There is much murmuring and excitement as Argument approaches one side of the hot-dog stand. Britney, in turn, takes his seat at the table. Lisa stands at the opposite end of the stand, and the whole scene begins to resemble a session in Parliament.

The hubbub dies down for Argument's opening statement.

Argument The wild-geese chase – is a cruel and barbaric sport – which should be banned outright!

Noise from all parties, some agreeing, some not.

Lisa That's not a sport! It's a turn of phrase.

Noise.

Argument Don't go telling me about wild-geese chases! I'll have you know I used to be a wild-geese-chase saboteur!

Noise.

Lisa Don't be ridiculous. A wild-geese chase means you're hunting for nothing. How can you sabotage that?

Noise.

Argument Easily!

Lisa How?

The noise dies down. Everyone is curious.

Argument You let loose – some geese!

Silence.

Inhibitions *suddenly becomes red-faced and angry, and shouts at the top of his voice:*

Inhibitions You! – Are talking! – Absolute! – *Fucking!* – SHIT!

Pause. Everyone's a little taken aback by this.

Argument Yes. Yes, I am.

He sits down.

Britney Is everybody all right?!

Everyone nods.

A Violinist, dressed as a giant hot dog (with 'Eat at Britney's' written on her front), appears and begins to play along with the muzak.

[Note: it happened to be that in the original production the actress played the violin – it could be another instrument.]

Ticket I must say – these hot dogs are absolutely delicious!

Argument They are – they're excellent!

Britney blushes with embarrassment.

Ticket And so you just put them in a roll . . . ?

Britney We put them in a roll . . . with onions!

Argument Ah, with onions!

Laughter Onions, that's what it is!

Ticket Well, they're absolutely top-notch.

Britney Thank you!

Argument You must give me the recipe.

Britney Another round?

Argument Well – I could have another round . . .

Laughter Yes, why not?

Britney Biffer – !

Lisa No, wait a minute, hold on – I'm not all right actually. Could you stop playing that? Could she stop playing that?

The Violinist carries on regardless.

Lisa Look – it's nice that you give people food while they're waiting. But maybe if you didn't spend so much time on the food, they wouldn't have to wait so long? I mean, it's just a suggestion.

Britney Biffer! Where's those bloody hot dogs?!

Lisa This is so frustrating!

Britney Ticket number eighteen.

Inhibitions That's me!

Lisa I don't even believe she's got –

As Inhibitions stands, we realise that he's naked from the waist down.

Lisa is shocked.

Lisa Oh my God – he's got no pants on!

Inhibitions I've lost my inhibitions.

Argument points at **Inhibition's** genitals.

Argument Now that is funny!

Ticket nudges **Laughter**.

Ticket He's right, it is!

Laughter guffaws manically.

Inhibitions suddenly realises he's naked and drops to the floor in shame, pulling a tablecloth down over him and tipping all the food on to the floor.

Biffer comes out with more hot dogs and trips over **Inhibitions**, spilling them all.

Britney Biffer, you clot!

She sets about Biffer with a kitchen implement. Absolute chaos.

Lisa gets up in disgust.

Lisa Right, I've had enough of this! I don't even know what I'm doing here! You're all completely mad, the lot of you – and not in a good way!

She storms off.

*There is laughter and screaming until she has gone and then –
– everybody starts retching and spitting out the hot dogs.*

Ticket I think I'm going to vomit!

Laughter That was awful!

Britney's accent seems to have changed.

Britney Listen everybody, I know it wasn't easy. But on behalf of the Dissocian Government, I'd just like to thank you for your contribution to the War Effort. It may seem like a small thing but believe me – anything that helps us stop Lisa finding her hour is extremely valuable. So give yourselves a round of applause . . .

A half-hearted round.

What they don't see is that Lisa has heard it all.

Britney As a token of our gratitude, each of you is to be inducted into the Order of the Pulled-Up Socks, for your bravery in the line of –

Lisa What's going on?

They fall silent.

Argument Oh dear . . .

Lisa Anything you can do to stop me finding my hour . . . ?

They all look ashamed.

This was all a fake?

Britney Lisa –

Lisa You haven't lost your sense of humour – And you haven't lost the argument – You haven't even lost your inhibitions!

Pause.

Why would you do this? Why don't you want me to find my hour?

Pause. Britney gropes for an answer.

Britney Biffer!

Ticket Biffer will explain.

Argument Yes, Biffer.

Biffer takes a central position. He speaks only in sounds and strange words. **Lisa** looks to the others for help in understanding him.

Biffer speaks.

Britney An hour is a source of tremendous energy. It generates life and it generates death.

Lisa Yes, I know all that . . .

Biffer continues.

Britney Dissocia is the life your hour generated.

Biffer continues.

Inhibitions Your hour is like the sun to us.

Biffer continues.

Laughter And if you reabsorb your hour –

Biffer continues.

Argument – Dissocia will sweat?

Britney Die.

Argument Dissocia will die.

Lisa absorbs this.

Lisa Oh look – you can't put that on me. I mean, I'm sorry I lost my hour, but you can't hold me responsible for what it got up to on its holidays.

Inhibitions We're only trying to protect you, Lisa.

Lisa No – you're trying to protect yourselves! And I understand that. I don't want you all to be destroyed. But I've got a life too and it's out of balance. I've got people that I care about – that I love and that love me – and I'm letting them down.

Britney Nobody loves you more than us, Lisa. Don't you remember?

They gather around her, hemming her in, softly singing:

All

And now you are our friend we will
Protect you to the end remember
No one in the world above will
Love you like the people of
This wonderful new world –

Britney No! Because if you loved me, you'd help me! I mean, Victor said there'd be people trying to mislead me. But I didn't think it'd be you!

Biffer starts again.

Britney Your hour contained much good, Lisa . . .

Biffer continues.

Argument But it also contained clogs.

Britney Evil.

Argument Evil.

Biffer continues.

Violinist The Destroyer is the embodiment of that evil.

Laughter We fight him here so that you don't have to.

Biffer continues.

Ticket In return you let us live.

Laughter That is the agreement.

Lisa I didn't agree to anything.

Pause. Biffer walks away.

Lisa Where's he going?

Britney Biffer is disappointed. He's said all he has to say.

Pause.

Lisa I have to find my hour. I'm sorry but I do.

All We beg you to reconsider, Lisa.

Britney The Judas Goat has already made you known to the Destroyer. He has your scent now.

Lisa But why would he want me? What use am I to him?

Suddenly, there is a rumbling in the distance. They all freeze in fear.

Violinist INCOMING!

In a panic, they all stuff their gags in their mouths, cover the tops of their heads and assume the safety position.

The wave hits.

But Lisa is still standing, left exposed.

The others are all in convulsions around her.

Lisa crouches at first, but slowly stands.

Eventually, the wave passes. Groaning with discomfort, the others rise.

They see that Lisa has stood there unaffected. A murmur of wonderment ripples through them.

Inhibitions She didn't cover her head! Did you see that?

Argument But she's still alive!

Violinist How is that possible? How did you withstand the attack?

Lisa I don't know. It wasn't so bad really.

Britney It had no effect on you at all?

Lisa I've got a bit of a headache.

More murmurs of wonderment.

Biffer *has reappeared, bleeding from his ears and eyes.*

Argument Biffer – Biffer will know!

Violinist Yes, Biffer –

Inhibitions Biffer knows!

They all agree that Biffer will know.

Biffer *points at Lisa and speaks.*

Britney There is only one who could withstand an attack unprotected – ?

Biffer *proclaims something else. And then he, Britney, Argument and the Violinist rush to worship at Lisa's feet.*

Britney All hail, Queen Sarah. You have returned to save us all!

All ALL HAIL, QUEEN –

Suddenly, Laughter kicks over one of the tables.

Laughter Be silent, you fools!

Argument How dare you, sir! Don't you know –

A collective gasp of shock.

Laughter and **Ticket** *have torn off their clothes to reveal that they are wearing dungarees over billowing silk shirts.*

They both have swords and the hats we associate with the musketeers of old France.

Violinist It's the Three Mungarees!

Laughter That's right, you cowardly curs! Mungarees! Defenders of the Realm and the Queen's own protectors!

They both sing this rousing ditty:

You take the M from Musketeers
The Ungarees from Dungarees
Put them both together –
The Three Mungarees – Ho!

Britney I thought you'd been disbanded.

Ticket We had! And we would happily have stayed that way had you not brought ruin on us all!

Lisa Listen, there must be some mistake. I'm not the Queen of anywhere. I've never even been here before today!

Ticket There's no mistake, M'Lady. We'll explain later – if we live out the day.

Ticket *takes Laughter aside.*

Ticket My friend – we must send for reinforcements!

Laughter It's too late, my friend. The Queen has been made aware. The Destroyer will be upon us in minutes!

The Dissocians bow down before Lisa.

All Queen Sarah, protect us from the Black Dog King!

Lisa I can't protect you – tell them!

Ticket It's true. It is we that must protect our Queen!

Laughter Quickly, all of you – seize whatever weapons you can!

Inhibitions We don't stand a chance!

Argument We'll be slaughtered like buses! (*As previously, in 'the victim of a buse'.*)

Laughter Nonsense! We shall prevail!

Ticket No, no, don't lie to them. It's true: we will all die in agony and live out the afterlife in excruciating torment!

No one is terribly enthusiastic about this.

But let us not forget why it is that we live!

As the Dissocians listen to this, they hum the tune of 'Dissocia'.

We are strong!

Laughter And yet we cower in fear!

Ticket We have one purpose!

Laughter And yet we fight amongst ourselves!

Ticket We must remember what we are – citizens of Dissocia, every one! We were born from the very stuff of courage! If we do not fight – we are less than nothing!

Laughter Now is the time – here and now – that we fulfil our destiny! Now is the time that we fight!

Ticket For the honour of our Divine Queen Sarah –!

Laughter And the greater good – of Dissocia!

Ticket Are you with us?!

Pause. The Dissocians reply as one – ‘Yes!’

And then, in the distance, the sound of the Black Dog’s approaching army, and their familiar chant:

Army

Rivers of blood will vein the land!
Bones will twist inside the hand!
Children will boil in mothers’ wombs!
Turning on lights will darken rooms!
And heavy skies will teem with flocks
Of tiny birds with human cocks!

The Dissocians swallow their fear.

Ticket Arm yourselves as best you can and prepare for the charge.

The Dissocians gather up implements from the hot-dog stand – a pathetic array of weaponry.

Lisa No, wait – I don’t want you to die for me! Let me face the Black Dog King alone!

Laughter It may yet come to that, M’Lady. But not until we have spilled Black Dog blood by the pint!

*The Mungarees move to the front. The Dissocians form a defence around **Lisa**, their Queen.*

Together they face the approaching army, the chant growing ever louder.

Laughter Still – it’s good to be back in action, my friend.

Ticket Indeed. And with our Queen at our side!

Laughter A Mungaree once more!

Ticket A Mungaree once more!

They perform the sword salute of the Mungarees.

CHARGE!

And set off towards the enemy, swords aloft.

The Dissocians follow, all of them shouting.

Lisa watches them disappear into battle.

The sound is deafening now – the sound of battle – which soon becomes the sound of death, as the Dissocians are slain by the Black Dog army.

Lisa watches helplessly, in fear and sorrow.

The sound of the battle finally ceases, and a shadowy figure emerges from the carnage.

Lisa backs away from him as he walks towards her – backs away until there is nowhere left to go.

*Finally, the Black Dog King steps into the light and **Lisa** sees his face for the first time.*

It is a face she knows only too well. She shakes her head in horror and disbelief.

Lisa Oh my God – it’s you!

For a moment, the lighting suggests we are back in her flat.

Vince reaches out – his hands touch her shoulders.

Blackness.

Act Two

Notes

The whole point of Act Two is that it is the polar opposite of Act One. There should be no overt colour used in set design, costume or lighting. The only sound effects should be the sound of footsteps, which occur only before and after scenes in which Lisa is given medication, and at no other point. The only exception to these two stipulations is in the final scene. Whereas the acting in Act One is stylised, in Act Two the style should be as naturalistic as possible. Accordingly, much of the dialogue in this act – especially in the first scenes – is little more than a sound effect, and the actors should be encouraged to improvise these scenes, using the dialogue as a guideline only, in order to achieve the maximum realism. In the original production, the hospital room was enclosed in a box, the front of which was clear perspex. This necessitated the use of radio mikes for the actors' dialogue. This allowed them to act on a much more intimate scale and was very effective. The set was lit with fluorescent lighting which flickered on and off (in stark contrast to the more fluid style of the first act). This is all very expensive, however, and I know that it will be beyond the reach of most companies. I don't expect fidelity to this design concept; I only mention it in the hope you might honour its spirit as best you can. The stipulations of no colour/no sound will mean that the hospital room will not be an accurate representation of modern psychiatric centres, which tend to be quite colourful places. It is important to me, however, that this play does not seem biased against the notion of psychiatric treatment; on some level, such treatment is always about the suppression of individuality which already loads the dramatic dice somewhat. In light of this, I would ask directors/designers to be careful not to tip the dice even further. For example, it's important that the room has a window: to omit a window would hint at an unacceptably inhumane environment. Similarly, the actors

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should endow the nurses, staff and relatives with a basic warmth, despite actions that may read as cold and impersonal. The play will be more interesting for it.

One

Lights up.

A room in a psychiatric hospital.

Lisa lies, asleep, in a hospital bed.

The sound of footsteps approaching.

The door opens.

Nurse 1 enters. Gently, she nudges **Lisa** awake. She helps **Lisa**, who is very drowsy, into a sitting position.

*She puts two pills in the palm of **Lisa**'s hand and helps them to her mouth.*

*She pours a glass of water and holds it to **Lisa**'s mouth.*

Lisa manages to swallow the pills. **Nurse 1** makes sure of this.

Lisa lies down again, goes back to sleep.

Nurse 1 covers her shoulder with the sheet, then leaves.

The sound of her footsteps as she walks away, down the corridor.

Lights down.

Two

Lights up.

Lisa is asleep.

The sound of footsteps approaching.

Nurse 2 enters.

Gently, he nudges Lisa awake.

Nurse 2 *helps her into a sitting position, gives her some pills and some water to wash them down with.*

Lisa *lies down again, goes back to sleep.*

Nurse 2 *covers her shoulder with the sheet, then leaves.*

The sound of his footsteps as he walks away.

Lights down.

Three

Lisa *is slumped in bed, awake.*

Decisively, she gets up, gathers her belongings and leaves the room.

Pause.

The sound of muffled voices.

She re-enters, ushered in by Nurse 3.

Lisa I just want to use the phone –

Nurse 3 That's fine, you can use the phone.

Lisa I've got a right to use the phone.

Nurse 3 Right, well, you leave your stuff here and I'll take you to the phone, fair enough?

Pause. Reluctantly, Lisa hands over her armful of belongings.

Lisa And I want to have a cigarette.

Nurse 3 Do you smoke?

Pause.

Lisa Sometimes.

Pause.

Look, I don't need this, I'm fine now. I'd be better off at home –

Nurse 3 You'll be home soon enough.

Lisa But it's not doing me any good here, I'd feel much better at home, you know – with all my things around me . . .

Nurse 3 Why don't you get back into bed?

Lisa I don't want to go back to bed! I'm fine now, I'm ready, I'll take my medication, I swear – !

Nurse 3 Come on, back to bed.

Reluctantly, Lisa gets back in. Nurse 3 puts her belongings back where they came from.

Nurse 3 That's a girl. Listen – as soon as you're better, you'll be turfed out, believe me. We need the beds.

Lisa *sulks.*

Nurse 3 Now don't be creeping around cos I'll be watching.

She exits.

Lisa *fumes for a while, then tears get the better of her.*

She puts the pillow over her head.

Lights down.

Four

Lights up.

Lisa *is asleep. The pillow is on the floor.*

The sound of footsteps.

Nurse 1 *enters and jostles her awake.*

She helps Lisa into a sitting position and administers medication.

Lisa goes back to sleep.

Lights down.

Five

Lights up.

The sound of footsteps.

Lisa lies in bed, slumped but awake. She looks hostile.

Nurse 2 enters.

Nurse 2 Hi there.

He empties some pills into Lisa's hand and pours her a glass of water.

Here we go.

Resentfully, she takes the pills.

Nurse 2 exits.

Lisa puts her Walkman on.

She listens.

The tinny sound of music, which we might just be able to recognise as the punky music from the flying car sequence in Act One.

She nods her head.

Lights down.

Six

The sound of Lisa singing raucously.

Lights up.

Lisa is dancing manically around the room, on the bed, everywhere, Walkman in her hand.

Nurse 1 enters accompanied by **Nurse 3**, and attempts to take the Walkman away from **Lisa**, who resists.

Lisa No!

Nurse 3 restrains her, with as little contact as possible, and manages to get the Walkman. She wraps the headphone cable around it.

Lisa What are you doing?

Nurse 1 You're supposed to be resting, Lisa.

Lisa You can't take that, it's mine!

Nurse 1 You can have it back when you've calmed down.

Lisa Right, I'm calm, I'm totally calm, see? I was just dancing, but now I'm totally calm, so you can give it back to me.

Nurse 1 Later.

Lisa No, listen, you don't understand – I need it, I really need it –

Nurse 1 You'll get it back when you've calmed down.

Lisa Give it back to me, you fucking cow!

Nurse 1 exits, followed by **Nurse 3**.

Lisa Give it fucking back!

Pause.

Like a petulant child, Lisa continues to dance and sing, but soon she is tired out, and she crumples to the floor, in tears.

Lights down.

Seven

Lights up.

Lisa is asleep on the floor, where she fell.

The sound of footsteps.

Nurse 3 enters, helps her up.

Nurse 3 Oh dear, come on – up we get.

Nurse 3 helps a compliant **Lisa** up into the bed.

Lisa adopts a sleeping position immediately, but **Nurse 3** interrupts her, sitting her up and giving **Lisa** her medication, which she takes obediently.

Lisa lies down again.

Nurse 3 exits.

The sound of footsteps as he walks away.

Lights down.

Eight

Lights up.

Lisa sits in bed, waiting.

The door opens and a doctor enters.

Dr Clark Lisa? I'm Dr Clark.

She shakes Dr Clark's hand.

Lisa I've actually got a doctor.

Dr Clark Dr Spence, I know. But you'll be seeing me for a while if that's all right?

Pause.

He sits down and opens her notes.

So – you've been having a bit of a time, haven't you?

Pause.

Lights down.

Nine

Lights up.

Lisa is in bed, reading – but the movement of her feet beneath the sheets betrays her lack of concentration. She has to keep turning the page back and starting again.

Nurse 2 enters.

Nurse 2 Hello again.

He empties the pills into Lisa's hand and pours her a glass of water.

Lisa stares at them.

Lisa Are these the same ones as before?

Nurse 2 Before when?

Lisa It's just I asked Dr Clark about some other pills. He said he'd see if there was anything less heavy.

Pause.

Nurse 2 These are what it says on your sheet.

Lisa Yes, but he said he'd try find something lighter because these ones make me feel really dopey?

Nurse 2 (nods) Right . . .

Pause.

But these are what it says on the sheet.

Pause.

Lisa takes them.

Nurse 2 points at **Lisa**'s book.

Nurse 2 What's that like?

Lisa I don't know. I can't focus on it, on the words.

Nurse 2 Oh, right . . .

Lisa That's another thing about them.

Nurse 2 Yeah – oh well; heard it's not that good anyway. Just wait for the film, maybe. Bye then.

Nurse 2 exits.

It's an insensitive comment but, for the first time in this act, Lisa smiles.

Lights down.

Ten

Lisa is asleep.

The door of Lisa's room has a window in it, so nurses can look in.

The curtain pulls back and Nurse 1 does exactly this.

All is well. Nurse 1 continues with her rounds, leaving the curtain drawn.

Eleven

Lisa's sister, **Dot**, sits in the chair by her bed.

Dot The thing is, in the end of the day, it's just selfishness, Lisa, it really is.

Lisa is slumped in bed, feeling a bit nauseous.

Dot You know what happened to Auntie Liz. You want to end up like that? How d'you think that'd make Mum feel?

Pause.

I mean, do you want everyone to think you're some sort of nutcase? I know you're not but that's what people think and you can't blame them.

Pause.

I mean, I can help you out now and then but I've got a mortgage to pay.

Pause.

And meanwhile, you're out there merrily buying shoes and handbags and things you'll never use –

Pause.

I've tried being nice. I've tried everything.

Pause.

A few pills, twice a day, that's all you've got to manage. I take four myself and they're only vitamins; I don't end up scribbling on the walls if I miss a day, but I still manage to take them.

Pause.

And if you don't care enough about yourself, then at least do it for Mum or for Mark or for me.

Lisa Dot, I'm sorry but I'm really feeling sick . . .

Dot You haven't heard a thing I've said, have you?

Lisa No, I have, I just – need to rest now.

Angrily, Dot gets up.

Dot Yeah well – I know how you feel .

She exits.

Lights down.

Twelve

Lights up.

Lisa looks down at the Walkman in her hand.

She puts the headphones on, presses play.

The same tinny music.

But this time, there is no movement.

She just listens.

Lights down.

Thirteen

Lights up.

Lisa *sits up in bed, reading.*

She seems more concentrated now.

The door opens and a doctor comes in, holding Lisa's notes.

Dr Faraday Sorry about the wait – Lisa, is it?

She sits up. He offers his hand, which she shakes.

Dr Faraday Dr Faraday. But call me Peter.

Pause.

Lisa What happened to Dr Clark?

Lights snap out.

Fourteen

Lights up.

Lisa *is reading. She's almost finished her book.*

The sound of footsteps approaching.

She marks her place in the book, puts it down on the bedside cabinet.

She pours herself some water.

Nurse 1 *enters.*

Nurse 1 Hi there.

Lisa Hello.

Nurse 1 *hands the pill container to Lisa, then goes to draw the curtains.*

Lisa *takes her pills.*

Nurse 1 Lovely weather out there.

Lisa Yes, I was out for a while.

Nurse 1 Indian summer.

Lisa Yeah. Probably be pissing down by the weekend.

Nurse 1 Well – as long as it doesn't rain on Thursday.

Lisa What's happening Thursday?

Nurse 1 Friend of mine's getting married.

Lisa Oh, that's nice.

Nurse 1 Yes, well – good excuse for a party, isn't it?

Lisa Yeah. Well – don't get *too* drunk.

Nurse 1 I'll try. All right then –

Lisa See you then.

Nurse 1 *exits.*

Lisa *looks at the sunlight pouring through the window.*

She sighs.

Lights down.

Fifteen

Lights up.

Lisa *is sitting, fully upright, in bed.*

She looks at herself in a compact mirror, adjusts her hair, puts the mirror away.

She takes a deep breath.

Vince *enters. He's carrying a plastic bag full of things.*

He hugs her, but there's a lack of affection in it.

He sits in the chair.

Vince How are you?

Lisa Fine. Good, actually.

Vince Good.

Pause.

Lisa How's work?

Vince Oh, you know – hectic. Same as ever.

Pause.

I'm sorry I couldn't get away –

Lisa It's fine.

Pause.

Vince I mean, I probably could've but –

Lisa Honestly, it's fine. I don't want you to mess up your work because of me. I feel bad enough as it is.

Pause.

Vince You don't have to feel bad.

Pause.

But you're feeling better now?

Lisa Much.

Vince Good.

Pause.

Lisa Roll on Sunday is all.

He nods, smiling humourlessly. Pause.

Simultaneously:

Vince Lisa, I –

Lisa Vince, I –

Pause.

Lisa You first.

Vince No – you.

Pause.

Lisa I just want to say that I'm sorry for all the trouble I've caused. I don't mean to. I just . . .

He nods. Pause.

Vince But it's difficult, you know – ?

Lisa (*nods*) I know.

Vince I mean, you say you don't mean to. But you know what happens when you come off the medication. This happens. Sooner or later you end up here.

Lisa (*nods*) I know.

Vince Yeah, but it's not *enough* to say that you know! I mean, why – ?

Pause.

I thought you wanted to get better.

Lisa I *do* want to get better.

Vince Well, yes, you say that but then you don't take your *medication* –

Lisa *sighs heavily.*

Vince Yeah, well, you can fucking sigh, but what can I do? All I can do is nag you to take the fucking pills and then you resent me for nagging you, I just –

Pause.

I don't know if I can do this any more, I really don't –

Lisa Vince – I'm really going to try –

Vince You say that / *every* time!

Lisa I know! I know I do, but you don't understand –

Vince That's not my fault! It's not my fault that I don't understand!

Lisa I'm not saying / it is –

Vince I mean, I've got a message from you on my phone. Do you want to hear it?

He takes out his mobile phone and pushes it at her.

She doesn't want to hear.

Because it's just nonsense. You're just, you're saying – nonsense!

Pause.

Lisa So what are you saying? You want to leave me?

Vince Leave you . . .

Lisa Split up with me.

Long pause.

What it is: it's like the Sirens.

Pause.

Vince The Sirens?

Lisa You know. They sit on the rocks and they sing to the sailors. And what they sing is so lovely it's like . . . they're hypnotised. They know if they sail to them their ship's going to get all smashed up. But they think it's worth it, you know – for the song.

Long pause.

Vince I should go.

Pause. She nods.

Got to finish this proposal. Here's your stuff.

He hands her the plastic bag. She nods her thanks.

Pause.

Lisa Will you come for me on Sunday?

Pause.

Or should I make other plans?

Pause.

Vince That thing you said. About the Sirens.

Pause.

I understand that.

Pause.

I'll see you Sunday.

He exits.

Pause.

Lisa lifts things out of the plastic bag: a jumper, another book, some bills from home.

Then she sees something at the bottom of the bag.

She smiles affectionately.

Lights down.

Sixteen

Night. Lisa is asleep. She looks at peace. In her arms she holds a small polar bear.

We hear music at last.

Coloured lights play on her face, swirling around her head.

Dissocia still exists, caged within her head.

There is little doubt that she will return to her kingdom.

The music ends.

Lights down.

Realism

For Amy

