

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Marmalade and Egg

by Melissa Cantwell

EXTRACT

© 2006 Melissa Cantwell



This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre
77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
email admin@ozscript.org
www.ozscript.org
ph +61 3 6223 4675
fax +61 3 6223 4678

Characters:

Marmalade: Egg's mum, faded beauty queen, clinging to her colours.
Henry: Egg's father, married to Marmalade. A chicken farmer of broiler birds. Isolated. A bad cough.
Egg: Their daughter. Engaged to be married.
Early: Egg's fiancée, American, An airforce pilot, just out of training.

A corrugated façade, the red and blue contrasts of Western Australia. A chicken shed, an accessible roof, a weather vane and an egg-shaped moon. Egg's bedroom with a wooden bed, like a boat, and the chicken wire endoskeleton of her wedding dress. Marmalade's kitchen, a table and chairs, an oven and bench. Henry's run, populated with live chickens, a sense of machinery and a carpet of sawdust.

These areas of the stage should often be used simultaneously. When not engaged in dialogue:

Egg is making her wedding dress using white chicken feathers from her father's sheds. The passage of time in act one is marked by the progress of the dress's completion. Henry is often alone, and still, in the sheds. He sips from a hip flask, reading 'The Standard of Perfection' - a nineteenth century guide to breeding prize winning poultry, rocked by unpredictable bouts of coughing. Marmalade is domestic. Her kitchen gradually fills with wedding decorations until she is enveloped in white wedding fantasy.

Act 1: The Calm.

Lights up on HENRY, alone with the chickens.

HENRY: See? A calm sea of white, as far as the eye and ear. If you stacked them all on top of each other, they'd hit their heads on the sky.
Bang!

Lights snap up on MARMALADE, serene, poised at the kitchen bench. Lights slowly up on EGG, working on her dress.

HENRY: A stretch of quiet bodies breathing, dormant, dreaming. Sleep to wake up to be fed up and fattened.

MARMALADE: Egg, if you would just follow a pattern. Choose a simple, yet effective design, and just cut along the dotted line.

Ping of the oven timer, MARMALADE sets about removing a cake from the oven. She begins to ice it white.

MARMALADE: I only want what's best for my daughter.

HENRY: Mostly they're docile right up to the slaughter. Still, you have to develop a certain manner of motion, like moving against the swell of an ocean. I call it wading, like walking through water.

EGG: More than just a farmer's daughter. I'll be a wife with a life lived at heights, where a girl can unfurl and a woman take flight, live on a postage stamp, love in the night, where your arms are so strong, it can only be right, only yes in my body, love on my bed, stars up above, clear skies ahead, no more question marks hang like a mobile of maybes.

MARMALADE: Finally saying goodbye to my baby. Before you know it, it'll be the big day, pretty soon she'll be flying away.

EGG: Away from this place where the people look down, where they laugh when I tell them the world might be round, can't get an original thought off the ground. I'm counting it down.

HENRY: Minute by minute. It's all predetermined.

MARMALADE: Father Brian's agreed to performing the sermon.

HENRY: Temperature to the exact degree is controlled.

MARMALADE: The sun will shine down on the day, so I'm told.

HENRY: Whatever the weather. It's perfect in here.

EGG: Just send me a sign, let me know that you're near.

MARMALADE finishes icing the cake, and resumes her pose.

MARMALADE: As soon as she's married, my heart is contented. Spinsters are always a trifle demented.

HENRY: The pullets enjoy having cockerels around. It's human nature. It stops them from pecking and flapping and pining.

EGG: Everyday we're apart stops the sun here from shining.

Ring of the telephone. MARMALADE picks up.

MARMALADE: Hello?

EARLY heard on in-flight radio.

EARLY: Whiskey, Alpha, Bravo, 9 4 1, come in Egg. Do you read me? Over.

EGG: Early?

EARLY: Honey? Where are you? Where are you at?

EGG: I'm on a boat sailing straight for your heart.

EARLY: Is it aluminum or fiberglass?

EGG: It's woodwind and whispers inflating my pillow, the main sail sewn from my skin begins billowing.

EARLY: I'm losing you Egg, I'm losing you baby.

EGG: Starboard I dream up the streams of your stomach, rocked by the rhythmic updown of your breath, chart a course for the orchestral pit of your chest.

EARLY: I'm losing you honey, I'm losing you Egg.

EGG: My ripples slip to the tips of your fingers and linger there leaving their prints on your shore, for forever to keep. If your love for me should sink into sleep, however much the waves will weep, the dream start to leak, my mind start to creak like a cubby house, brittle with time, its undersized oven cold, clogged up with lime. If the elements rusted, if its door can't trusted, to open with smells of a welcoming kind, I'll heat the pan with the warmth of my hands, and spice all my dishes with sorrow. Even if your heart should change its beat, you'll always be my midnight treat.

EARLY appears in flight suit, the cockpit.

EARLY: Roger, Egg. Confirming transmission. My palms have gone sweaty, my pulse rate is quickening. I'm noticing a sort of biological change, the sound of your voice within listening range. There's only one thing this could logically be.

Pink neon lights up the letters L,O,V,E above Egg's bed as EARLY spells:

EARLY: Lima, Oscar, Victor, Echo.

EGG: I miss you like lemonade, when can we kiss?

EARLY: I'm in the cockpit baby, doing mach two, breaking the sound barrier to get back to you.

EGG: How much longer?

EARLY: It's hard to say, but I'll be there baby, before the big day. And 5,4,3,2 bandages away!

The sound of a distant explosion.

EARLY: Oops, that's a- , uh, honey, I gotta go, gotta clean up some mess I just seen down below. At least now I got somewhere flat I can land.

EGG: Is it safe?

EARLY: No. But somebody's gotta give them a hand.

EGG: Early, why you?

EARLY: It's nothing a regular guy wouldn't do, though its lucky I'm here, or these guys would be toast. The hot here is scorching, their bodies will melt if I don't helter skelter and build them a shelter. Sure I'll swelter a little, that blast kicked some booty, but I'll finish the job, it's my God given duty. I'll signal you Egg, when I'm back on my route.

EGG: Be careful.

EARLY: Roger that honey. Over and out.

Lights to MARMALADE on the phone.