

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



My Bed is a Crocodile

by Pauline Hosking

EXTRACT

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Characters

JANE, early 20s
ANDY, aged 17
DAD
MRS. KOSKY
KID 1
KID 2
G.P. [General Practitioner]
KRISTEN, a psychiatric nurse
EDITH , a patient
BRUCE, a patient
SPECIALIST

The play can be performed by 4 actors doubling:

Jane/Edith
Andy
Dad/Bruce/Specialist/Kid 1
Kristen/Mrs. Kosky/G.P./Kid 2

Style and scenery

The stage is bare except for a stylised wattle tree – which can be created solely with light. The style is of a dream or memory play, very fluid. Music/sound is used at many points to act as a time change or to underscore the action. The effect of the bed turning into a crocodile on p.11 is something only Andy and the audience can see.

N.B. Andy's violent actions on p. 21 and p.28 are attempts to protect himself, rather than attacks on Jane and Mrs. Kosky.

Duration of play: 55 minutes.

Special thanks to:

The Schizophrenia Fellowship of Victoria; The Department of Psychiatry, Dandenong Hospital; Angela Ballis; Christine and Cara Robinson; Marcia Ferguson; First year performing arts students, Ballarat TAFE [1998].

The poem "I have seen" reproduced with permission from "Poems from the Madhouse" by Sandy Jeffs published by Spinifex Press.

MY BED IS A CROCODILE

JANE IS SITTING UNDER THE WATTLE TREE. DAPPLED SUNLIGHT SHINES THROUGH THE LEAVES.

ENTER **MRS. KOSKY** ON THE TELEPHONE.

MRS. KOSKY: Jane. Jane dear. Jane.

JANE: Out of the blue I got this phone call from home, from Dad's next door neighbour.

MRS. KOSKY: Jane dear, it's Mrs. Kosky. I hope you don't mind me ringing but I'm a bit worried about young Andy.

JANE: My brother Andy. You immediately think – he's been hurt! He's had an accident! But it wasn't that.

MRS. KOSKY: He's been wandering around your backyard all day. I thought he might have locked himself out and I went over to help. He was very strange, Jane. Never answered me. Kept laughing and talking to himself. Hid under the big wattle tree. I don't know, dear. It's not for me to say. I think he might have taken something.

JANE: I was ticked off. I was having a good time living in the city.

MRS. KOSKY: Your Dad's in Ballarat this week so there's nobody home.

EXIT **MRS. KOSKY**. **JANE** STANDS UP.

JANE: The last thing I wanted to do was drive two hours up here. But someone had to. I arrived about midnight.

STAGE LIGHTS DOWN. ENTER **ANDY**.

Andy was still under the wattle tree.

JANE SWITCHES ON A TORCH, LOCATES **ANDY**.

Andy? Andy? What's the matter? What're you doing out here?

ANDY: [HE GIGGLES. HE DOESN'T LOOK DIRECTLY AT JANE AND IS PREOCCUPIED. HE NODS AND MUMBLES, LOOKING INTO SPACE WHILE **JANE** SPEAKS. HE IS SHIVERING WITH THE COLD BUT DOESN'T SEEM TO NOTICE.

JANE: What's so funny? Have you taken something – pills? Dope?

ANDY: [GIGGLES]

JANE: Andy? [SHE TOUCHES HIM] You're freezing.

ANDY: [AS IF SEEING HER FOR THE FIRST TIME] Jane?

JANE: [NOW WORRIED] What've you done to your arm?

ANDY: [PULLING AWAY. HE DOESN'T LIKE BEING TOUCHED] It's safe here. Under water's safe.

JANE: What are those scratches? Andy?

ANDY: [GIGGLES AGAIN, POINTS TO THE SKY] Star – fish. Star – fish!

JANE: It's very late. Why don't we—

ANDY: Watch tells me the wrong time.

JANE: Your watch doesn't work?

ANDY: Tells me the wrong time.

ANDY BEGINS ROCKING BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS.

JANE: Let's go inside, Andy. I'll make you a hot drink. We can talk.

ANDY: No – no! No, Jane. The lice.

JANE: Lice?

ANDY: In the walls of the house. They come out at night.

ANDY SCRATCHES HIS ARMS, SLOWLY AT FIRST AND THEN MORE FRANTICALLY.

JANE: Stop it. Andy stop it! You're bleeding!

ANDY: [SUDDENLY AWARE] Something's happening to me.

JANE: Andy! Andy!

ANDY FREEZES IN A SPOTLIGHT.

My brother, my little brother...who used to sleep with me at night when he was frightened. Whose hair smelt of vanilla. Who used to fart all Easter when he'd eaten too much chocolate. I should have known. But what were the signs? When did it start?

ANDY AND **JANE** ARE WAITING FOR THE SCHOOL BUS. **ANDY** IS ABOUT SIX, **JANE** ELEVEN.

Sit further away.

ANDY: Why?

JANE: Stop kicking the seat.

ANDY: No.

JANE: If I see anyone, I'll say I don't know you.

ANDY: Why?

JANE: Because! You are so dumb!

ANDY: Mrs. Chapman taught us a song today. A special Grade Two song because we're special Grade Twos. Wanna hear it?

JANE: No.

ANDY: [WHINING FOR ATTENTION] Jay-ayyyy-nnn!

JANE: [COPYING HIM] Ann-deeeee!

THE NEXT SPEECHES OCCUR SIMILTANEOUSLY.

ANDY:
[SINGING] 'Was a man who had a dog
and Bingo was his name-o..
B I N G O...B I N G O...
B I N G O... Bingo was his name-o!
[ANDY LAUNCHES INTO THE SONG
AGAIN, THIS TIME CLAPPING HIS
HANDS ON THE "B's"] Was
a man who had a dog and Bingo was
his name-o...
B I N G O...B I N G O...B I N G O ...Bingo
Was his name-o!

JANE:
Shut up, shut up, SHUT UP!

Oh my Gawd...

JANE: Stop it or I'll hit you.

ANDY: I'll tell Mum!

JANE: I'll tell Dad!

ANDY: Mrs. Chapman made us draw our hands. Look. [HE
STRETCHES OUT HIS HAND How big is your little finger?

JANE CHECKS TO MAKE SURE NO ONE IS WATCHING, THEN
SHE MEASURES HER LITTLE FINGER AGAINST ANDY'S.

That's a big little finger. [HE PUTS ON A FUNNY VOICE
PRETENDING TO BE THE FINGER] Hello big pinkie.

AGAIN **JANE** CHECKS THAT NO ONE IS WATCHING.

JANE: [AS THE VOICE OF HER FINGER] Hello little pinkie.