

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Better Than This

by Pauline Hosking

EXTRACT

© 2002 Pauline Hosking



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

BETTER THAN THIS
© Pauline Hosking, 2002

Characters

CLIFF
LUCY
TAM

The characters are Year 11 students at a country secondary college.

BETTER THAN THIS was first performed by Spanda Productions at St. Martins Youth Arts Centre in April 2002 with the following cast:

CLIFF	Brook Sykes
LUCY	Miranda Nation
TAM	Thanh Vu

Director:	Elena Vereker
Designer:	Adrienne Chisholm
Lighting Design:	Jen Hector
Sound design:	Rob John

Style and scenery

The play comprises 17 short scenes. The different areas:

The gym

Mr. Raffael's office

The store room

Lucy and Tam's homes

The boat

are located by lighting specific areas. Minimal props should be used. In the original version the set was based around platforms and ladders to resemble the equipment in a school gym.

Sound/music was used during the scene changes and played before the play began.

In Scene 7 Tam speaks Vietnamese, if possible. The Vietnamese words are not included because of the difficulty of writing Vietnamese phonetically.

BETTER THAN THIS

SCENE ONE THE SCHOOL GYM [JULY]

LUCY ENTERS, HUGGING HERSELF AS IF SHE IS COLD. SHE IS WEARING NONDESCRIPT BAGGY TRACK PANTS AND TOP.

LUCY: [NICELY] I think there's been a mistake. I'm fine.

ENTER TAM, VERY SHARPLY DRESSED, WEARING GLASSES. HE HAS RECENTLY BEEN IN A FIGHT AND HAS BRUISING ON HIS FACE. HE LOOKS RESENTFUL AND SULLEN. HE TURNS ON HIS WALKMAN AND SITS ON THE FLOOR.

ENTER CLIFF, DRESSED LIKE A HOMEBOY. HE IS VERY AGGRESSIVE AND HYPER. WHEN HE REMEMBERS, HE TALKS WITH A HOMEBOY ACCENT.

CLIFF: [SHOUTING OVER HIS SHOULDER] I can walk out that door, anytime. Anytime, right? I'm doing you a favour. Yeah, doing you a big one. [TO HIMSELF] What a load of shit.

LUCY: But I'm fine.

CLIFF: [OVER HIS SHOULDER] Full of it. You're all full of it.

LUCY: There's been a mistake.

CLIFF RANGES AROUND THE AREA, ALMOST TRIPS OVER TAM.

CLIFF: Is this it? You and me and.....that. Stinkin' up the neighbourhood.

LUCY: I want to go back to class.

CLIFF: Hey! You're Lucy Selwyn, right? Used to be a big star. Dancing.

LUCY: Callesthenics.

CLIFF: Yeah. What you doin' here?

LUCY: I don't know. They've made a mistake----

CLIFF: You still do that stuff? Dancing?

LUCY SHAKES HER HEAD

Why'd you stop? Eh, Lucy, eh? Eh? All that glitter and satin and makeup...

LUCY TURNS AWAY FROM HIM. **CLIFF** CIRCLES AROUND **TAM** LIKE A BOXER.

Hey, what's that? You givin' me a greasie, gook? Bring it on then, bring it on!

ANGRY BUT POWERLESS TAM GETS TO HIS FEET READY TO BE BASHED AGAIN.

You know your problem? You got a real short memory, boy. One word to my thug brothers and crack! Be your other eye.

LUCY: Don't...don't fight!

CLIFF: [SAVAGE] What you say?

LUCY: Nothing. [UNDER HER BREATH] Big fat bully. [SHE GLARES AT HIM BUT RETREATS INTO A CORNER]

CLIFF: Show some respect, slug-eye. Respect.

CLIFF PUNCHES TAM. TAM STANDS TAKING IT AS CLIFF GETS IN A FEW MORE PUNCHES. TAM DOES NOT RESPOND.

LUCY: [TRYING TO DISTRACT HIM AWAY FROM TAM] Cliff, why do you do that? Talk with that phoney accent. You're not black. You're not a homeboy.

CLIFF: Because it's better, better than this. In my heart I'm black. I'm a soljah!

CLIFF CHECKS OUT LUCY COWING RESENTFULLY ON ONE SIDE, TAM WAITING TO BE HIT ON THE OTHER.

You know why we're here in this crap gym, freezin' our balls off? 'Cause last holidays good old Jimmy Bear topped himself on the basketball court.

LUCY LOOKS AROUND THE SPACE NERVOUSLY

[LOSES ACCENT] Not in here. Dumb chick. Outside. [ACCENT AGAIN] And the school don't want no more agg-re-vation. [STARTS RAPPING] School don't want more agg-re-vation
No TV jocks across the nation
Asking where and why and who
Don't turn away girl - I'm talking to you!

SCENE TWO

CLIFF IN FRONT OF A MIRROR

CLIFF IS GROOMING HIMSELF, COMBING HAIR ETC. HE IS TRYING REALLY HARD TO BE COOL. HE STARTS MAKING RAP SOUNDS, ADDS SOME WORDS AND OCCASIONALLY BREAKS OUT INTO A BIT OF DANCING. IT GETS VERY COMPLICATED WITH NOISE, WORDS AND MOVEMENTS. SOMETIMES HE MISSES A BEAT OR A WORD. THE OVERALL EFFECT SHOULD BE AMUSING.

Suggested song: Hanging with the Homeboys

Check it out, check it out, check it out, check it out...
 Hanging with the homeboys
 We gonna have some fun tonight
 Hang with Dr. Feelgood
 He's gunna make us feel alright. [TWICE]

Down and dirty partners in crime
 You got the rockin, I got the rhyme
 I got your back if you've got mine
 So let's swap our girls one at a time.
 Hangin out with one another
 Doof doof doof... blue-eyed soul brother
 My new found friend.. homies to the end
 Let's find some freaks and commit sin
 Take my hand man and be my friend
 And together we can make it to the promised land
 And get badassed drunk
 And...

AS HE ATTEMPTS A SHOULDER ROLL HE HURTS HIS NECK.

[LOSING ACCENT] Owwww! Shit.

SCENE THREE MR. RAFFAEL'S OFFICE.

LUCY IS IN A COUNSELLING SESSION. THE EFFECT OF LUCY'S CONVERSATION WITH THE [INVISIBLE] MR. RAFFAEL IS LIKE HEARING A PHONE CONVERSATION. SHE FACES THE AUDIENCE.

LUCY: I don't understand, Mr. Raffael. I'm never in any trouble. I always get good marks. Do I have to do this? I hate being singled out. Can't I go back to normal classes please? [LIKE A LITTLE GIRL] Please, please, please, please, pwease Mr. Raffael. Pwease. [PAUSE, HE HAS ASKED HER HOW OLD SHE IS] Um...I'm sixteen. [PAUSE] It's stupid, that's why. I hate being stuck with those boys. Cliff's as thick as a brick. He struts around pretending to be tough. Pathetic really. And he smells. Hasn't anyone told him about personal hygiene? Tam - is that his name? - the Asian guy? - he doesn't speak. Hasn't said a word. [PAUSE] That's what my parents say "It's early days, Lucy. Give it a chance." [PAUSE. SHE IS UNDERWHELMED]. Wow. Games, excursions, creative activities. And plenty of this too, talking to you? [PAUSE. SHE SMILES AT