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WILDCAT FALLING

by Alan Becher

EXTRACT

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77 Salamanca Place Hobart
7004 Tasmania Australia

admin@australianplays.org
<http://australianplays.org>
Tel +61 3 6223 4675
Fax +61 3 6223 4678

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PRODUCTION NOTES:

ALAN BECHER

The aim with WILDCAT FALLING was to explore a less logical and linear narrative structure that would accommodate forms akin to dream in dramatic shifts of style, context, scale and time that could be linked as often by poetic association as by literal course of action.

As the entire play is set in Wildcat's memory and is essentially his story, much of Wildcat's dialogue is in the form of direct address to the audience. As the action often moves instantaneously from place to place, memory to memory, very little was employed in the way of costumes, props or settings - a few buckets, a newspaper, a bottle, a rifle. Two-foot lengths of steel pipe served for the coshes. The set consisted of a cyclorama and six chairs with lighting being responsible for setting mood and place. Much of the action was mimed. The cast wore a simple basic costume of white T-shirt, dinner suit and black desert boots. Changes of character were sometimes indicated by the addition of a jacket or its removal. The two musicians were positioned upstage prompt side and provided music where indicated in the text and incidental effects and music where needed.

The stage directions set out here attempt to give an indication of how the text and action of the play were integrated in my own production.

Scene breakdowns are a rough guide only. The play is seamless in nature and does not follow traditional scene changes.

CHARACTERS

Mother / Magistrate

Priest / Dorian / Swanview Brother / Old Trapper

Wildcat

June / Bodgie Girl

Jeff / Policeman / Swanview Principal

Denise / Uni Student

Prisoners, Bodgies, Children, Wardens, Court Officials and others are played by the company.

SCENE ONE:

ACTORS IN A LINE FACE THE AUDIENCE. TOWELS AROUND THEIR NECK. LIGHTS FLASH.

ALL Another debt paid to society and I never owed it a thing.

A WHISTLE IS HEARD OFFSTAGE. ACTORS TURN TO FACE BACK, RAISE THEIR ARMS UP TO FORM BARS. THEY MAKE A NOISE OF A SIREN GOING OFF.

SCREWS (Whistle) Hey you!

WILDCAT TURNS AND FACES AUDIENCE.

WILD CAT Lifetime lousy months. Lifetime boredom of sameness. Same people, same talk, sick sameness of dirty jokes. Same sagas of old jobs pulled and new jobs planned. Heroic memories. Swell hopes... Nearly eleven o'clock and ready for the shower that will clean our prison-fouled bodies for the sweet fresh air of the free world.

ALL TURN TO FRONT HOLDING A TIN BUCKET EACH. THEY SIT AND COMMENCE SHOWER "HISS" ON THE WORD "SHOWER" IN THE ABOVE SPEECH. IN UNISON THEY BEGIN TO CHANT.

ALL No talking. No sex. No talking. No sex.

WHISTLE. WILD CAT BEGINS TO HUM "LOVE ME TENDER."

ALL Love me tender,
Love me true,
All my dreams fulfil
Oh my darling I love you,
And I always will...

WILDCAT (CUTTING OFF THE SINGING) Bullshit! All love is bullshit!

WHISTLE.

PRISONER 1 I want to get blue and run amok.

PRISONER 2 I want to get pissed with all my mates.

PRISONER 3 I want to see my wife, I want to see my kids.

PRISONER 4 I want to get a job.

WHISTLE . ALL PRISONERS FORM A LINE. FOLLOWING THE LEADER, THEY SNAKE UP AND DOWN BANGING THEIR TIN BUCKETS. THEY CHANT THEIR INDIVIDUAL HOPES, FEARS AND DESIRES ON GETTING OUT. THIS BUILDS...

WHISTLE. THEY REACH THE BACK AND FACE THE WALL. PRISONERS BECOME COPS. WILDCAT TURNS AND WALKS FORWARD. THE COPS BEAT A RHYTHM WITH THEIR FISTS DURING THE FOLLOWING SPEECH.

WILDCAT Today's the end. Getting outside into a fake heaven. Alone and so-called free...When I get out, what's to do but lie about in some cheap room until I can't stand it any longer, and then meet up with the milk-bar gang again?...Green light and the road home to jail.

ON THE LAST LINE TWO COPS WALK FORWARD AND CLAP HANDS ON WILDCAT'S SHOULDERS.

WILDCAT That first time in. Sixteen years old and standing sick and scared in the corridor, wishing I was dead. How the place seemed – four tiers of cells reaching to the ceiling and daylight greying in through the dirty skylight. The cell is ugly and desolate as hell...Life here is more clear-cut than outside, I summed that up pretty quickly and decided to make my mark.

SCREW You there! Pick up that bucket! Move it!

WILDCAT Do it your bloody self!

COPS REACT VIOLENTLY. THEY SECURE WILDCAT'S ARM BEHIND HIS BACK.

WHISTLE.

WILDCAT IS MARCHED TO COURT. THE COPS FORCE HIM TO HIS KNEES AND PLACE THEIR HANDS ON HIS SHOULDERS.

MAGISTRATE You are charged with assault, with disobeying orders and insolence to an officer. How do you plead?

WILDCAT I don't know.

MAGISTRATE Guilty or not guilty?

WILDCAT Nine years old...

SCREWS Breaking and entering -

MAGISTRATE Swanview Boys Home.

WILDCAT Sixteen -

SCREWS Car stealing -

MAGISTRATE Six months, juvenile section, Fremantle Jail.

WILDCAT Seventeen, seventeen...Juke-box baby...Seventeen...

SCREWS Burglary -

MAGISTRATE Eighteen months imprisonment with hard labour.

SCREWS Guilty or not guilty?

WILDCAT I don't know.

MAGISTRATE Take that insolent grin off your face and plead...

ALL Guilty!

MAGISTRATE You are sentenced to fourteen days solitary confinement. Seven days bread and water. Take him away.

THE COPS PLACE ONE ARM UNDER EACH OF WILDCAT'S ARMS AND DRAG HIM BACK.

ALL (QUIETLY CHANTING) Guilty, guilty...etc.

THEY FORM A CELL AROUND WILDCAT. SOUNDSCAPE TO GIVE SENSE OF WILDCAT IN A CELL, COLD, FEAR. ETC. WILDCAT CURLS ON THE FLOOR AND SLEEPS. DREAMSCAPE.

ALL (DREAMLIKE) Days and night drift and merge etc.

WALLS SINK DOWN. THE ACTORS WEAVE THEIR HANDS AND ARMS AROUND HIM LIKE BIRDS. THEY MOVE AWAY CAWING LOUDLY. WILDCAT WAKES SCREAMING.

WILDCAT Mum!

MUM What's wrong?

WILDCAT There's awful things in here, Mum. They've got wings and claws.

MUM Nonsense. They're only shadows, son.

WILDCAT They keep grabbing me. Can't I sleep with you?

MUM Keep still, then.

SHE ROCKS HIM, HUMMING SOFTLY

There's no nightmares here. Mummy's got you safe. You're safe now. We're safe. We've got each other. I won't let Welfare take you away like they took the others...now there's only you and me son.

SCENE TWO

LIGHT COMES UP ON MUM IN THE KITCHEN.
WILDCAT IS A YOUNG BOY.

MUM Get up out of that. Your breakfast's ready. Don't forget to wash.

WILDCAT What is it?

MUM Kangaroo tail.

WILDCAT Did you get it off that old blackfella trapper? Gee, he's a funny looking guy.

MUM You remember what I said and don't go talking to him. Looks like you've been wriggling through the drainpipe again. You haven't been with those dirty Noongar kids, I hope?

WILDCAT No.

WILDCAT GRINS AND SHAKES HIS HEAD.

MUM It's no joking matter. If we get seen with that mob we'll be chucked out of this place quick smart.

WILDCAT Some of the white kids play with them.

MUM That's different. They belong on the white side of the fence. You've got to prove you do and don't forget it.

WILDCAT Yes Mum. There's a cricket match on in the school grounds. Can I go and watch?

MUM What about your breakfast? All right. But look out you're home in good time for dinner.