

CHARACTERS

- SUMMER An actress. Aged about 37.
Outwardly confident, inwardly fragile.
- SKYE Her sister. Aged about 25.
Edgy. Wears her heart on her sleeve.
- RHETT Summer's assistant and lover. Aged about 35.
Urbane, efficient, elusive.

TOPE

The harsh nature of some of the lines in the exchanges between the sisters, is mitigated by the tone which should have a lightness of touch.

SETTING

A bare stage. Props and items of furniture moved on and off as needed.

TIME

The present.

PLACE

The action takes place on a bare stage, in a theatre dressing room, in a hospital room, on a park bench and in an unnamed, spot-lit space surrounded by darkness.
The characters move between England and Australia.

Dramaturgy supported by the Australian Writers' Guild of Western Australia and 'Stages' the WA Playwrights Consortium.

Dramaturge Timothy Daly

1

DARK STAGE

A spot light slowly glows on. It lights an empty space.

SKYE walks into it.

SKYE

She steps into a circle of light. It is 1660 and the house is full. The babble dies on a sigh. The laugh swoops to a whisper. She is the only one breathing. They've been expecting her but now, as with all expected guests, they are a bit fearful of her. So strange up there with white painted cheeks and red painted lips. A candle flares. She hesitates. It's the moment they've waited for. The Gallants and the Vizard Masks lean forward. That moment.

What shall Cordelia speak? Love and be silent.

Then they whistle and shout and blow raspberries and jeer and pelt her with whatever they have, including oranges. They laugh at her.

She is the favourite daughter of a mad king.

She is made of the self same metal as her sister is.

She is the one who leaves.

TRANSITION.

2

THE BARE STAGE.

RHETT

How now, Double Tripe!

THE LIGHTS snap on to reveal a bare stage. Working lights and a few spots with gels.

RHETT is standing in the auditorium to one side of the stage. He is reading from a script with SKYE who is auditioning for the role of the Orange Woman in 'The Man Of Mode' by George Etheredge.

SKYE is dressed in a T-shirt and a long rehearsal skirt. She is acting very hard and takes this section in character and at full flight

RHETT(cont'd)

What news do you bring?

SKYE

(As Orange Woman)

News! Here's the best fruit has come to town t'year; gad I was up before four and bought all the choice in the market.

RHETT

The nasty refuse of your shop.

SKYE

Well, on my conscience, there never was the like of you. God's my life, I had almost forgot to tell you there is a young gentlewoman lately come to town with her mother, that is so taken with you.

RHETT

Is she handsome?

SKYE

Nay, gad, there are few finer women, I tell you but so and a hugeous fortune, they say. Here, eat this peach, it comes from the stone...

RHETT

This fine woman, I'll lay my life, is some awkward, ill-fashioned, country toad.

SKYE

Gad, you'd change your note quickly if you did but see her.

RHETT

How came she to know me?

SKYE

She saw you yesterday at the Change; she told me you came and fooled with the woman at the next shop.

RHETT

I remember there was a mask observed me indeed. Fooled, did she say?

SKYE

Ay, I vow she told me twenty things you said too; and acted with her head and with her body so you...

SUMMER

(From the back)

Yes...Thank you.

(RHETT looks towards the voice in the dark while SKYE stands awkwardly recovering from her performance.)

SKYE

(To the voice)

I could do some more. I could do a speech of Mrs. Loveit.

SUMMER

No.

(Pause)

We'll let you know.

SKYE

Please I can do a lot better – just give me a chance to show you.

SUMMER

We'll be in touch with your agent.

SKYE

I haven't got one yet.

SUMMER

Ahh.

SKYE

(Making a lame joke)

I washed me face 'n hands before I come...

(Silence)

RHETT

(To SKYE)

You did well.

SKYE

(To RHETT)

If I could just...

RHETT

That's it. Sorry. Sorry.

SKYE

Okay. Thanks...

(Calling to SUMMER)

Thank you. Bye.

(To RHETT)

Bye.

RHETT

Bye.

(RHETT watches as SKYE takes off her rehearsal skirt, folds it up with a look to the auditorium, puts it onto a chair and leaves. Then he turns to the back of the auditorium.)

RHETT (cont'd)

Sometimes you can be such a bitch.

(SUMMER comes down to the front from the back of the auditorium)

SUMMER

She was never going to get it anyway.

RHETT

She's your sister.

SUMMER

She's an actor.

(They climb the steps to the stage and RHETT begins to pack up.)

((SUMMER feels her mobile phone buzzing in her pocket. She answers it.)

Summer (cont'd)

Hello. Yes, speaking, yes I'll hold... Sam! Hello darling what a surprise - ...No, no, we're just packing up - we arrived a week ago and I'm in the throes of casting... We have a great tour lined up.. Two plays. One old one new....

What? Yes – Australian. I think the American Regional Circuit is ready for us don't you? ...

The Guthrie in Minneapolis, Jeff Daniel's Purple Rose, New York's Atlantic Theatre We're taking over the Heartland... Of course, I'd love to read it! With you directing it'll be another American Beauty... Okay that sounds as though it might tie in nicely. I get back to London at the end of the year for the Shakespeare.... Yes, yes, I'm thrilled...Judy too? I've always wanted to work with her – despite the reputation, maybe because of it! ...Yes... We'll speak again soon – lots of love.

(She rings off)

Where were we?

RHETT

Your sister. I think she has talent. How long since you've seen her?

SUMMER

Not sure. Six, seven years maybe..

RHETT

You might have given her a chance.

SUMMER

Why would I want to do that?

RHETT

God, I don't know Summer. Maybe because she's your sister and you can.

SUMMER

That's exactly why I can't.

(Pause)

(RHETT continues to pack up.)

SUMMER (cont'd)

Are we done?

RHETT

She was the last.

SUMMER

Good - I need a drink. Coming?

*(SUMMER walks off stage through the wings.
RHETT calls to the lighting box)*

RHETT

Kill the spots.

BLACK OUT

3

SKYE'S SPACE

We hear the amplified tapping of a finger on a live hand held microphone.

A spot snaps on and illuminates SKYE holding the mic. The rest of the stage remains dark.

SKYE is rehearsing a stand up gig

SKYE

Hi – great to be here. Nearly didn't make it.

You're gonna laugh...

Went for an audition yesterday. An audition is where you go to be humiliated. Doesn't matter how kind they are – its humiliating to stand in front of someone who has basically lost the will to live. Who can blame them – they've endured thirty-five Stanley Kowalski's shouting 'Stella' and an equal number of "Romeo, Romeos". You lose perspective after a day like that. I mean I can't even chose a sandwich if there's more than cheese and salad. So I identify – I do. This one was a little different though. My sister was the producer. Just arrived back in London from a New York triumph, to cast a new Australian play and a Restoration piece. And take them to America. Who wouldn't want a part of that? Her first actor/manager gig.

I don't think she knew I was over here.

I haven't seen her for years.

She sat at the back of the theatre so I didn't actually get to see her.

She must have known who I was.

But we pretended we were strangers.

My sister Summer.

Like I said - you gotta laugh.

TRANSITION

4

SUMMER'S DRESSING ROOM AT THE THEATRE

(RHETT is wearing a rehearsal skirt. He is unlacing SUMMER'S boned costume corset as she stands in a petticoat.)

RHETT

...so the devil says 'I will give you everything your heart desires, fame, talent, money, adoration but in exchange' – 'yes, yes?' says the actress, 'in exchange I want your mother, your father, your children and your soul'. 'Agreed!' Says the actress. 'Sign here' says the devil and the actress is about to sign when she hesitates 'just a minute' she says, 'what's the catch?'

(Beat)

I saw Ishmael in the bar last night.

SUMMER

How was he? What was he wearing?

RHETT

Two beautiful boys. One like Byron and the other like Will Smith.

SUMMER

Was his wife there?

RHETT

What does she look like?

SUMMER

Opaque.

RHETT

He asked after you.

SUMMER

What did you say?