

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Caught in the Act

by Nick Hughes

EXTRACT

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"Caught In The Act" was commissioned by the Murray River Performing Group in Albury, N.S.W. It was first performed on Thursday 2nd September 1993 in (and around) the Old Albury Court House.

The cast was as follows:

Judge Hunter	Leo Taylor
Helena	Josephine Lee
Charles Diamond	Allan Dukes
The Associate	Fiona Barber
Constable Clough	Allan Dukes
Sonia White	Josephine Lee
Mick White	Leo Taylor
Tina	Fiona Barber

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

[The Judge is reading Snow White to his 8 year old Daughter.]

JUDGE: The Dwarves were very hungry after working hard all day so they-

HELENA: Daddy?

JUDGE: Yes, Helena?

HELENA: The Huntsman who left Snow White in the forest?

JUDGE: What about him?

HELENA: Why was he so mean to her?

JUDGE: He was forced to do that by the Queen. The dwarves were very hungry after working hard all day so they-

HELENA: Daddy?

JUDGE: Yes?

HELENA: Why was the Queen so mean to her?

JUDGE: Because she was jealous of Snow White's beauty.

HELENA: So it was really the King's fault.

JUDGE: The King?

HELENA: Because the Queen wanted to be beautiful for him.

JUDGE: No, no, no. It was the Queen's fault because she was a wicked Queen. While the Dwarves were eating their stew-

HELENA: Why was she wicked?

JUDGE: She just was. She was a wicked women.

HELENA: I think the Huntsman was more wicked than the Queen.

JUDGE: No Helena, he was a good man. Now please be quiet and listen to the story. While the Dwarves were eating their stew, Snow White told them all about the wicked Queen and how the Huntsman had left her in the woods.

HELENA: To be torn apart by wild bears.

JUDGE: It's just a story Helena.

HELENA: Yes Daddy.

JUDGE: When she'd finished her story, the Dwarves insisted that she should stay with them and they would look after her. Snow White was very happy and she promised to cook their meals for them and to clean the house in return. The next day-

HELENA: Daddy?

JUDGE: Yes?

HELENA: Who cooked their meals before Snow White came?

JUDGE: They did their own I suppose.

HELENA: And did their own cleaning?

JUDGE: Yes, but they wouldn't have been very good at it, would they?

HELENA: Why?

JUDGE: Because they were men. They were good at doing the hard work; going off in the morning and digging in the diamond mines all day. They didn't have anyone to do the housework, so it was a good arrangement: Snow White would look after the house and they'd go and do the work.

HELENA: Like you and Mummy?

JUDGE: Yes. Just like me and Mummy. I go out and do the work and she looks after the house.

HELENA: Did you do the cooking and cleaning before you met Mummy?

JUDGE: No, of course not. I was too busy studying the law.

[Exit Helena and Judge. Enter Reporter speaking as though doing a piece straight to camera.]

REPORTER: Gold fever! The yellow madness. A hundred and forty years ago, Black Dog Creek was just a

sleepy little hollow inhabited by birds and snakes and the odd sheep. But then gold fever drew men here and a small town sprang up overnight. After a few years the gold was worked out and Black Dog Creek became a sleepy little hollow once again, struggling to survive and, in recent years, promoting the relics of its Gold Rush days as a tourist attraction.

But now, gold fever has returned to Black Dog Creek and passions are running high once more. But this time around, it's not miners who are rushing to the area; it's Conservationists.

VOICES OFF:

C.R.A. Out! C.R.A. Out! C.R.A. Out!

REPORTER:

In what is shaping up to be the hottest Green issue since the Franklin Dam, Conservationists are flocking to defend the Iron Box forest around Black Dog Creek. Mining giant C.R.A. is assuring everyone that there won't be any environmental damage, just a few holes in the ground. But Conservationists fear that they will establish an open cut mine and that this will have devastating consequences for some of the area's long term residents. Residents like the Powerful Owl and the Bandy Bandy Snake.

[The Bandy Bandy Snake Band sings (Don't step on my) BANDY SCALES to the tune of Blue Suede Shoes.]

Well it's holes in the forest
Holes in the sky.
Try steppin' on me
I'll make you cry.
So don't you
Step on my Bandy scales.
Well you can do anything
But lay offa my Bandy scales.

You can cut down the trees
Dig up the gold
Show the whole world
You got no soul.
Well go to hell or go to jail
But ah ha honey, lay offa them scales.
And don't you step on my Bandy scales.
Well you can do anything
But lay offa my Bandy scales.

Well you can rip the guts
Outta the creek
Show everyone
You're greedy and weak.
Go to hell or go to jail
But ah ha honey, lay offa them scales.
Don't you step on my Bandy scales.
Well you can do anything
But lay offa my Bandy scales.

Well it's holes in the forest
Holes in the sky.
Try steppin' on me
I'll make you cry.
So don't you
Step on my Bandy scales.
Well you can do anything
But lay offa my Bandy scales.

REPORTER: Conservationists are threatening to mount a blockade of the forest unless the company agrees to conduct a more thorough environmental impact study before proceeding any further. It remains to be seen whether the yellow madness will return to Black Dog Creek.

[Enter the Judge and Helena (now a grown woman)]

This is Charles Diamond reporting for the Sunday Programme.

[The Judge turns the TV off. Exit Reporter.]

JUDGE: Another biased report from your friend Charles.

HELENA: He's not "my friend". I met him at a party once. Anyway I thought it was a very balanced report.

JUDGE: Because he took the conservationist's side.

HELENA: He did not.

JUDGE: They have no right to do that.

HELENA: I'd like to think you were referring to the Mining Company - but I know you're not.

JUDGE: The point is Helena, the Company does have a right to mine there.

HELENA: The Judge has spoken.

JUDGE: The government has given them that right.

HELENA: Tremble all ye who disagree with his Honour.

JUDGE: And people who disagree have to make the Government change its mind.

HELENA: Sure.

JUDGE: Not these illegal blockades. That's not the way to do it.

HELENA: The Government wants them to mine there. Development. Jobs. They're not going to change their minds.

JUDGE: Nonetheless, that is the only way.

HELENA: Oh fine. The mine has to go ahead because it's legal? And what's the Bandy Bandy snake supposed to do? Huh? It's lived in that forest for God knows how many million years. Doesn't it have any rights?

JUDGE: It's another reason for the Government to change its mind.

HELENA: Daddy, snakes don't vote. They just stand for Parliament. The people at those barricades are heros!

JUDGE: They are breaking the law.

HELENA: Sometimes the law needs to be broken.

JUDGE: Helena!

HELENA: It's true Daddy.

JUDGE: The law is there for everyone's protection.

HELENA: Bullshit.

JUDGE: If it can be disregarded at will, it loses its force.

HELENA: The law protects rich, white, men.

JUDGE: Nonsense.