

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Hearts of Fire

by Kate Herbert

EXTRACT

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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

CARL WAVES ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND "I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MOMENT." HE IS OBVIOUSLY FLIRTING WITH HER.

WOMAN 1 A long macchiato and a caffe latte thanks.

CARL SCRIBBLES ON NOTE PAD.

CARL Yup. Anything to munch?

WOMAN 2 I'm depressed. I need a cake. Go halves?

WOMAN 1 No. I need a whole one.

WOMAN All right. I'll have the Chocolate Death, thanks.

MAEVE Excuse me. Could I have...

WOMAN 1 Yeah. That'll make you feel much better. Um. I'll have the Carrot Cake.

WOMAN 2 'Cos you think it's good for you.

WOMAN 1 Do not.

WOMAN 2 Do so.

CARL Long macch., caffe latte, Choc Death and Carrot "Choose Life" Cake.

HE RIPS PAGE RIPPED OFF PAD WITH A FLOURISH, GRABS THEIR MENU AND WHIRLS AWAY PAST MAEVE.

WOMAN 2 *(about Carl)* He's a terrible spunk.

MAEVE *(to Carl)* Excuse me.

WOMAN 1 But of course you're too depressed to notice.

CARL *(To Maeve)* With you in a tic.

MAEVE Could I have a menu, ta?

WOMAN 2 I am depressed but he's still a spunk.

THE WOMEN PUT HEADS TOGETHER AND GOSSIP. CARL FLAPS A MENU ONTO MAEVE'S TABLE ROUGHLY BUT NOT RUDELY.

MAEVE *(mockingly)* Gee. Thanks.

CARL Sorry. Thought you were waiting for someone.
(Calls behind bar SR as he walks) Long macch, caffe latte.

GOES DOWNSTAGE TO MARCO. MAEVE WATCHES HIM, PARTLY TO GET HER ORDER AND PARTLY FROM INTEREST.

Where's that Fettucini Funghi, Marco? They've been waiting a week.

MARCO Coming.

CARL So's my salary rise.

MARCO *(more insistently)* It's coming.

CARL They're getting cobwebs waiting.

MARCO I couldn't bloody read the order, could I? Looked like "Fettucine Golf-Ball."

CARL Need glasses in your middle-age.

MARCO Yeah, well get your act together.

CARL You pay me to act and I'll act.

MARCO I pay you to serve people without a hangover.

CARL My people do not have hangovers.

MAEVE LAUGHS.

MAEVE Bravo!

MARCO Very funny. Customers, Carl.

CARL Ja, vol, Mein Herr.

CARL MOVES GRACEFULLY BACK THROUGH CAFE TOWARDS MAEVE THEN TURNS AWAY. IT A FEAT FOR HER TO CATCH HIS EYE.

MAEVE Heh, clown! Back here or I'll grab you by the ankles and drop you.

HE STOPS IN MOCK AMAZEMENT

- CARL Best offer I've had in weeks.
- MAEVE I need to eat.
- PULLS OUT PAD AND PENCIL SYMPATHETICALLY
- CARL I know. You're depressed and you need chocolate torte.
- MAEVE *(Mock offence. Flirtatious)* How rude! Do I look depressed?
- CARL No, but everybody's depressed in Fitzroy.
- MAEVE Rubbish!
- CARL Well I am.
- MAEVE And you're everybody?
- CARL I am. What can I get you?
- MAEVE I'd like a...
- MARCO Carl! The Fettucini sono pronti.
- CARL Sorry. Just a tic.
- MAEVE That's what you said 20 minutes ago.
- CARL And I meant it then too.
- MARCO Carl!
- CARL RUSHES BACK TO MARCO AND GRABS TWO PLATES. HE TURNS AND GOES TO A TABLE, LOOKS AROUND CONFUSED.
- CARL Now, here's your two Fettucine Funghi... *(looking around)* Jesus! Where the hell are they? *(to Maeve)* They didn't go to the toilet together did they? Marco doesn't like that sort of thing.
- MAEVE They left.
- CARL They..?
- MAEVE Left. Very dark looks in your direction first.

CARL Like yours, I presume.

MAEVE You're having a really shitty day, aren't you?

CARL Ha! I'm in cafe hell.

HE RUSHES BACK TO MARCO'S BAR WITH PLATES

WOMAN 1 Well, you should go back to Art School.

WOMAN 2 I was no good. And I hate Expressionism.

CARL COMES BACK TO MAEVE. SHE MOCKS FAINTING FROM STARVATION

MAEVE Feed me!

CARL OK. Anything in particular.

MAEVE I'm very taken with the Fettucini Golf-Ball.

CARL A personal favourite of mine. I hear it's very big in Japan.

MAEVE Quick! Before you click your heels and disappear. Caffe latte, glass of water, risotto. Get that?

CARL Got it! There's no place like home. There's no place like home.

MARCO *(calls)* Carl.

CARL Oh, oh. The Wicked Witch of the West,

CARL ABOUT FACES LIKE A SOLDIER, RIPS PAGE OFF PAD AND MARCHES OFF TO MARCO LIKE DOROTHY IN THE WIZARD OF OZ.

MAEVE Follow the Yellow Brick Road.

CARL OK. Toto.

MARCO Why are these fettucini back here?

CARL They left.

MARCO You bloody incompetent dickhead.

CARL You employed me.

MARCO Yeah, and I just unemployed you.

CARL Oh, don't be stupid Marco. It's lunch. You need me.

MARCO Like a hole in the head.

CARL You've already got one of those.

MARCO Very funny. Get out.

CARL Marco!

MARCO I don't need a pig-headed alcoholic ruining my business and driving customers away.

CARL I entertain them. They love me. I'm the laughing waiter of Fitzroy. I won the Waiters' Race for you this year.

MARCO And you drank all the wine on the trays at the finish line.

CARL My prize.

MARCO You're a drunk.

CARL Personal abuse now.

MARCO It's the truth.

CARL MAKES A DECISION IN THIS MOMENT TO GET SERIOUSLY "IN MARCO'S FACE" AND THROW HIS JOB PROSPECTS AWAY. THE TWO WOMEN AND MAEVE WATCH IN FASCINATION.

CARL Yeah, well the truth is you run a second-rate cafe in the middle of Arty-Wanker city 'cos you think it makes you an arty wanker. Well, I've got news for you. You're just a plain old ordinary no-talent wanker who cooks designer pasta for a living. They've been doing that in Sicilian villages since the Roman Empire. So that makes you a peasant housewife with a very big family of wankers to feed.

MARCO Collect your pay in the morning.

CARL You can keep your blood money. You never paid union rates anyway, fascist. I'd report you to the Department of Labour if they hadn't been Jeffed.

MARCO Out! I have a business to run.

CARL Your wife runs the business. Everybody knows it except you.

MARCO Leave. You've insulted me enough.

CARL I don't think so. I have a few more juicy bits to add.

MARCO Dina, call the police.

CARL That'd be right. More fascists from the Fitzroy Police Station.

MARCO Dina.

CARL This town ain't big enough for the two of us. Chink. Chink. Chink.

DOES AN IMPRESSION OF SPAGHETTI WESTERN SPURS. THEN WHISTLES GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

CARL Remember "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly"? Well you know which one you are, man.

MARCO Get out before I throw you out.

CARL Jesus, Marco. You couldn't throw me out. I'm the one who runs 6 k and lifts 180.

MARCO Out!

CARL Ciao for now you big cow.

THE TWO WOMEN APPLAUD HIM. HE BOWS AND SALUTES THEM AS HE RUSHES TOWARD MAEVE, GLOWING WITH VICTORY AND UNDERLYING ANGER, RIPPING HIS APRON OFF AND THROWING HIS PAD AT MARCO.

MAEVE What about my food?

CARL Forget the risotto. It's crap. I had it for lunch.

MAEVE I'm starving!

CARL So, we'll eat out. Let's blow this pop stand.

HE GRABS HER HAND. SHE JOLTS OUT OF THE CHAIR

MAEVE Is this a date?

HEARTS OF FIREA COMEDY-DRAMA BY KATE HERBERTSCENE ONE. MELBOURNE AUGUST 1993

AUGUST IN MELBOURNE. A BUSY AND GROOVY INNER-CITY CAFE. COOL JAZZ MUSIC AND POSSIBLY SOME AMBIENT CAFE CLATTER AND VOICES IN BACKGROUND. NEON SIGN AT REAR SAYS "MARCO'S" BACKWARDS.

MAEVE SITS AT A FUNKY-LOOKING TABLE TRYING TO GET THE ATTENTION OF CARL. HER JACKET IS OVER THE BACK OF THE CHAIR. CARL WHISKS BY HER, NOT PAYING HER ANY ATTENTION, HIS EYES ON A TABLE ON THE HORIZON.

HE MOVES ABOUT LIKE A DANCE, POSING AND BEING ENTERTAINING. HE MOVES THROUGH THE STAGE LIKE IT IS A BUSY CAFE. THEY KNOW EACH OTHER BECAUSE MAEVE EATS THERE EVERY DAY. THEY FLIRT POLITELY.

TWO VERY GROOVY WOMEN PERCH ON STOOLS AT A BAR LOOKING AT A MENU. ONE LOOKS VERY DEPRESSED.

AT REAR BEHIND SECOND BAR, MARCO PREPARES FOOD. ONLY UPPER TORSO IS VISIBLE.

MAEVE Excuse me... Excuse....!

WOMAN 1 You can't just walk out on him you idiot.

WOMAN 2 Why not? He's done it to me often enough.

WOMAN 1 He stays at our place because you're acting like a lunatic.

MAEVE *(to Carl)* Excuse me!

WOMAN 2 I do not.

WOMAN 1 Do so.

WOMAN 2 Only when I'm pre-menstrual.

WOMAN 1 Yeah like today. "I want everybody dead!"

WOMAN 2 Well? I did. I do.

CARL MOVES SWIFTLY BY MAEVE TO BAR TO TAKE WOMEN'S ORDER. MAEVE LEANS OUT TO TRY TO GET HIS ATTENTION.

MAEVE Excuse me. Could I have a menu, please?