

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Journey

by Suzie Boisjoux

EXTRACT

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ACT ONE. SCENE 1.

"THE INTERIOR OF A TRAIN CARRIAGE TABLES ARE SET IN A DINING CAR.

A WOMAN STANDS AT THE WINDOW LOOKING OUT WITH HER BACK TO THE AUDIENCE.

VOICES OFF. OVERLAPPING. MALE AND FEMALE. SPOKEN AT RANDOM.

I wish you'd listen. Can we?. You really should have. What time did?.
Do we have enough. It was late back. Is this enough? What time did they
say? Ring the desk. The bus stops outside. Bring a jacket. What time
did they? I didn't ask. It's in the room.

We'll have to buy one. They close for lunch. Where is the
umberella? Bring the map. What's the time here? Have you looked out?.
It's raining. What day is it? I'll get some change. Its on the
brochure. He's late. What time will we?

A MAN ENTERS. HE CARRIES A BRIEF CASE A WOMAN FOLLOWS. THEY SIT AT ONE
OF THE TABLES.

MAN: What time do you want to be back then?

WOMAN: I don't mind. I never loved him you know.

MAN: What time?

WOMAN: I don't mind.

MAN: Well... say.

WOMAN: What do you...Do you think we... I was lonely.

MAN: Oh for God's sake. Say a time.

WOMAN: Would six be alright?

MAN: Six then. Back here at six. Right?

WOMAN: Six is fine. You were never there.

MAN: And he was...there.

WOMAN: I just needed...

MAN: So six o'clock. Back here. Fine.

WOMAN: Shall I order something?

MAN: Order?

WOMAN: Yes order.

MAN: If you like. I've had mine.

WOMAN: Oh. When did you... when?

MAN: I got up early. Earlier.

WOMAN: And you ordered then.

MAN: Earlier.

WOMAN: Yes you said.

PAUSE

WOMAN: I thought we'd have it together.

MAN: What? Oh.

MAN OPENS HIS BRIEF CASE GETS OUT A MAP AND STUDIES IT.

WOMAN: I said. I thought we would have it together.

MAN: Mmm **NOT LOOKING UP.** Look. Is there?...

WOMAN: But you --

MAN: Is there someone you could find to talk to.

PAUSE

WOMAN TO WOMAN AT WINDOW:

I wonder if you would like... **WOMAN AT WINDOW SHOWS NO SIGN OF HEARING.**

WOMAN: We were having... I was just about to order. Perhaps you would like to join in...

WOMAN AT WINDOW DOES NOT MOVE, WOMAN RETURNS TO TABLE SITS REARRANGES TABLE CLOTH, FLOWERS ON TABLE, MAN CONTINUES READING.

WOMAN TO MAN:

Do you want something? Coffee?

MAN NOT LOOKING UP:

I told you I had it earlier.

WOMAN: So you did. Yes. You did say that.

**SHE HELPS HERSELF TO COFFEE. STANDS DRINKING WATCHING THE MAN.
TWO OLDER WOMEN ENTER CARRYING TRAVEL BAGS.**

FIRST OLDER WOMAN (OW1):

The guide told us quite clearly, it was twelfth century.

SECOND OLDER WOMAN (OW2):

How could it be twelfth century?

The French were not here in the twelfth century.

OW1: The bayeux tapestry depicted the Normans invading Britain.

OW2: We're not in Britain.

OW1: This important historical tapestry was known by experts to have been made in the eleventh century, therefore as it is crystal clear --

OW2: But they went to England.

OW1: If they went to England, they were perfectly capable of coming here, and I distinctly remember her saying twelfth. I recall the moment well. I listened to every word she uttered. I always do. I always do.

THEY SIT AT A TABLE.

OW2: But she spoke in French.

OW1: I know that.

OW2: You don't speak French.

OW1: No but I understand the written word, I have a good ear.

OW2 OPENS HER HANDBAG TAKES OUT A HANKY, WAVES IT UP AND DOWN.

OW1: What on earth are you doing?

OW2: I'm trying to get the waiter's attention.

OW1: Don't be ridiculous, put it away, this is a buffet.

OW2: I know it's a buffet. I've been in a buffet before.

OW1: You help yourself.

OW2: Oh **PUTS HER HANKY DOWN.** Where does it say that? **PICKS UP HANKY SHAKES IT, BLOWS HER NOSE, PUTS IT BACK IN HER BAG. WOMAN WALKS BACK TO TABLE WHERE MAN IS READING MAP.**

OW1: What is a word for waiter?

OW2: Yes I should know. I'll look it up. **SHE GETS OUT A BOOK FROM HER BAG AND READS.**

W a i t e r... If I don't know the word, how can I look it up?

OW1: Turn the book backwards. No, no, backwards. Now upside down, the other way! Now. Look. There see? It's in English.

OW2: W a i --

OW1: Oh don't bother I'm going to help myself.

OW2: They have far too many words. What was the other word we wanted to know?

OW1: It wasn't a word it was a sentence.
We wanted to say "Hello. How old is your baby"?

THEY BOTH GO TO HELP THEMSELVES TO COFFEE.

OW2: He was cute. Funny, fat, dimpled little thing, with huge brown eyes.

OW1: And tight frizzy hair.

OW2: I could have hugged him. I could have bundled him up and smuggled him home.

OW1: He had a runny nose.

OW2: Just bundled him up.

OW1: A festering sore on his leg.

OW2: Smuggled him home.

OW1: You can take a child from the gutter, not a gutter from the child, never the gutter from the child.

SHE WALKS AWAY AND SITS AT THE TABLE. OW2 STARES AT HER AND SITS ALSO.

OW1: Shall we have lunch today?

OW2: We could try.

OW1: But I do not want that dreadful dish. I couldn't look at that again. What was it called? Can you recall?

OW2: No I just pointed at it.

OW1: What a pity, it might appear again.

OW2: I think it was chicken.

OW1: I haven't seen any chickens around here, have you?

OW2: No. No chickens. Only... Oh dear!

OW1: If we do have lunch, you must remember this time to speak slowly, very slowly, like this.

SHE SPEAKS VERY SLOWLY

We shall have tea. Tea. One weak, black with a slice of lemon, the other not weak, but not too strong, with milk. Milk in a separate jug. Hot milk--

OW2: I don't mind the milk cold.

OW1 BEGINS AGAIN:

We shall have tea. Tea. One weak, black with--

OW2: I've always preferred cold milk with my tea.

OW1: I knew it we're late.

OW2 **LOOKING AROUND:**

There are others still here.

OW1: And they got the best table. We were late because you didn't get up when I called. Didn't you hear the alarm.

OW2: I heard it, you put it next to my bed.

OW1: Remember that time where you were late for breakfast three times?

OW2: That wasn't breakfast, it was anti-pasto in oil.

OW1: That's because you were late.

WOMAN TO MAN:

I never loved him, never.

MAN: He was just... there. For you.

WOMAN: Yes.

MAN: And I wasn't.

WOMAN: No.

WOMAN AT WINDOW MOVES. OW2 LOOKING AT WOMAN AT WINDOW.

OW2: What is she doing?

OW1: Looking out the window I suppose.

OW2: She was doing that when we came in.

SHE TAKES OUT A HANKY AND FANS HERSELF.
It's very close in here.

OW1 **FANS HERSELF:**
Very close.

OW2: Almost hot. Did you ask them what the temperature would be today?

OW2: I'm a little worried that the floral skirt would have been better.

OW1: I did ask while I was waiting for you. I made a special trip. Asked at the lobby for the minimum and maximum temperature expected today.

OW2: Yes?

OW1: Yes.

OW2: And? What did they say?

OW1: They said, it leaves Tuesdays and Fridays.

OW2: In the brochure, I read the temperature this time of year gets up to 38 degrees.

OW1: Where in the brochure?

OW2: Printed in red.

OW1: No, I would doubt that.

OW2: In red ink at the top of the page.
Did you put in the swimming costumes?

OW1: I certainly don't remember any information about the possibility of swimming here.

OW2: There is a sea.

OW1: Still.

PAUSE

NOTES FOR THE DIRECTOR.

THE JOURNEY

A PLAY BY SUSIE BOISJOUX.

CHARACTERS:

- MAN:** Aged around the late thirties/early forties. Rigid. Obsessive. His movements are nervous. He has a need for order, without that clear definition his world would become a place of uncertainty and one to fear. He is driven. He travels to further the acquisition of knowledge. To propel him forward.
- WOMAN:** She is a similar age to the man. Her movements are slow, deliberate, quiet. She is very internal, reflective. Yet she watches the other characters, hears them. There is a sense of sadness about her, sometimes bitterness, yet a feeling of hope.
- GIRL:** In her early to mid twenties. She is sensual, dresses provocatively, constantly touching her clothes, her hair, her body for effect and for reassurance. She is no innocent. She keeps moving, afraid to be alone. There is a vulnerability around her and a restless energy.
- OW1:** The dominant one of the two older women. Constantly disappointed. Not loved and not likely to be. Bitter and bigoted and afraid of all things foreign.
- OW2:** Dominated by OW1 and resents this. This is her cross and her sorrow. Narrow in her outlook and also afraid of all things foreign. But with her this is a hint of softness of being once touched by love, that perhaps the world is not so harsh there might be out there, something quite lovely.
- WOMAN AT THE WINDOW (NON SPEAKING):**
The WAW is at all times merely a presence. At no time must she intrude into reality. She must remain a shadow, a suggestion of someone, a glimpse. She is to each of the characters, themselves, their other voice. She listens to all they say, watches, hears, judges them. She absorbs their pain, their anger, their fears, hopes, dreams and their cruelty, turning away from them when it is too much to bear. Until at last she is forced to go, she can stand no more. Her absence, the empty space, is at first a relief, she was a constant threat, then comes realisation of what they have done to her and to each other. So although she appears as a shadow, there are times when she must be there.