

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Panayiota

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by Angela Costi

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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](mailto:admin@ozscript.org)  
[www.ozscript.org](http://www.ozscript.org)  
ph +61 3 6223 4675  
fax +61 3 6223 4678

## Characters

LISA	woman 26 years old, Australian born of Cypriot-Greek family background, wearing a red top/shirt.
PATRICK	man about 32 years old, fourth generation Australian.
STELLA	woman at differing ages; 16 and 26 years old, Australian born of Greek family.
SILVANA	woman at differing ages; 16 and 26 years old, Australian born of Italian/Macedonian family.
THE CHORUS	Mainly Stella and Silvana, also Patrick where appropriate.

## Setting

Although the play begins at the sea, it is centred in Lisa and Patrick's living room which is close to the beach. The parallel setting is Lisa's swirl of memories which are evoked from Lisa's creative space.

## Notes

*Panayiota* is a female Greek name which isn't easily translatable into the English language. It's a name which symbolises Greekness within an Australian context. If it is changed in order to make it more accessible to the English language, it loses its qualities. Now for saying it, try the following:

**Pana** rhymes with 'runner'; with **yio** say it without the 'i'; **ta** as in thanks.

The constant image is the ominous aspect of the sea and three rocks on the threshold of that sea.

The play has had two moved reading productions in 1996. One at Theatreworks, as part of the St Kilda Writers' Festival, where it was given three performances. The other was at the CUB Malthouse - Playbox as part of *making performances '96*. Both stage versions (ie. Playbox and Theatreworks) re-created the Greek dance music by having the actors sing and carry-on with an up-tempo Greek-Arabic tune.

The play was also produced by Knockknock Theatre in June 1997 at the Brunswick Mechanics Institute. The sea and the three rocks were depicted by various slide projections bleeding from the screen onto fabric. The Greek and the Disco/Club Music were produced by tape.



PATRICK: Tell me later. My fish are waiting.

LISA: Don't worry about it.

PATRICK: *(LISA says the last two words simultaneously with PATRICK)* Look I want to hear it, I just haven't got time at the moment. I've gotta earn a living, somebody has to.

LISA: Somebody has to. Ok.

PATRICK: You should go home, get some rest. You've been at it long enough.

*PATRICK endeavours to look at what might be on the drawing pad but LISA is too quick, she holds the pad against her chest. Then LISA holds the pad out and shows her work to PATRICK.*

LISA: *(referring to the rocks)* I'm not sure what I'm drawing out from them, yet.

PATRICK: They look like hippos, maybe grey seals.

LISA: Really?

PATRICK: A family of them. There's the mum, spreading herself all over the place. There's Dad, squashed. And that's baby. Very symbolic.

LISA: It's what you want to see.

PATRICK: You've drawn it.

LISA: Yeh, three rocks.

PATRICK: You've drawn it. *(walking to the sea with his equipment)*

## SCENE TWO

*Sound of tide going in, going out. Fade up of living room impression. As LISA continues to tell the dream, STELLA is sitting nearby listening while SILVANA is having one of many cigarettes on the balcony. All the women have been drinking scotch whiskey. There's a bottle of Johnnie Walker and glasses for each of them.*

LISA: ... my eyes are dazzled by the white walls. There's a nurse blocking me from entering the room. That's when I realise I'm a patient. She asks me "What's your name?", it's like a password to enter the room. I tell her "Lisa Haris". She says, "No it's not", and puts one of those plastic hospital bracelets around my wrist, pins a name tag on my hospital gown ... on the bracelet and tag is my previous name.

STELLA: Athena Harismiadis.

SILVANA: *(to LISA)* Go on.

LISA: I got really scared for some reason and looked up, couldn't see her. She disappeared leaving me in the bright room. It had two hospital beds. On one of them was Stella ... *(looking at STELLA)* you, breastfeeding a little baby ...

STELLA: My Panayiota?

SILVANA: Will you let her get on with it.

LISA: You're smiling at me. I know it's your baby ...

STELLA: Panayiota.

- LISA: That's when I remember I've had a baby too. I think, "Where is it?" On the other bed there's another nurse, breastfeeding a baby. Her breast is bursting with milk. I know she is feeding my baby, its face is creased with some sort of tension, it starts to cry. I want to ask the nurse if my baby is healthy but I don't because she's busy trying to soothe it. She hands it to me still crying. I don't know what to do. The nurse takes off my gown while I'm holding the baby, covers us with a white blanket and leaves. I show the baby my small breast, it's not a breast, it's a little girl's nipple. My baby cries. I'm scared it's going to die. You come to my bedside, naked ...
- SILVANA: Stella? *(she enters the room with the smoke but gets a look from STELLA and retreats)*
- LISA: You're still breastfeeding your baby. I ask you, "Can you give some of your milk to my baby?" You smile, lift my baby to your spare breast. Both babies feed. You're looking at me, you're going to say something - then the bloody alarm decides to go off.
- SILVANA: Shit. *(to STELLA, not seriously)* So what were you going to say?
- STELLA: Is that why you invited me? To finish off your dream for you?
- LISA: We used to tell each other our dreams. We used to go to the Creek and talk about the dreams we had the night before. Remember?
- STELLA: Ten years ago. You can't bring those times back.
- SILVANA: You're here, I'm here, Lisa and Athena are here. We've got another fifty plus years of living, plenty of time.