

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Clark in Sarajevo

by Catherine Zimdahl

EXTRACT

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Act One

Scene 1. PROLOGUE.

THE SOUND OF THE OCEAN.
OUT OF THE DARKNESS CLARK IS SLOWLY REVEALED. HE IS IN GLASSES AND
TRENCHCOAT.
HE GAZES OUT AT THE AUDIENCE, THE CHORUS BEHIND HIM.

Chorus: Clark Cant scratches his tummy and looks out at the
sea, wondering -

CLARK SCRATCHES HIS TUMMY.

Clark: Why do I have to be me?
I eat, drink, walk, talk
I ache, sigh, moan, yawn
I think, think, thought, thought.

Chorus: Clark Cant slumps at fate
Something is drowning he looks he waves.

CLARK WAVES.

Clark: I know who I am and what I believe.
I know where my place is in the map of history.

Chorus: Clark Cant reports

HE TAKES OUT HIS NOTEBOOK AND PEN.

Clark: The calm seas of democracy
The waves of monotony
oceans and oceans of everyday misery

Chorus: Clark Cant looks out at the sea
The sea of circling sharks.
He wants to be new.

Clark: Leave this stupid job, do something for myself.

Chorus: Clark Cant looks but he can't see
the gravity

the call to catastrophe
he just feels kind of

Clark: Hungry.

CLARK STANDS.

Clark: I need something more, the taste of a war.

HE STICKS OUT HIS THUMB FOLLOWS HIS DIRECTION IN A FIGURE EIGHT - THE CHORUS FOLLOWS HIM.

Chorus: He hitches a ride to the Balkans.

Clark: I'll find one good reason to have been born.

Chorus: He checks in to the Holiday Inn.

Clark: That's Cant with a C. No, no apostrophe.

HE IS SHOWN HIS ROOM.

Chorus: He wants to see Sarajevo under siege.
He wants to write it all down.

HE OPENS HIS NOTEBOOK.

His senses are heightened,

Chorus: He looks at his hand,

Clark: What a piece of work is man!

Chorus: A bomb explodes through the window of the hotel.
The guy from the New York Times screams.

Correspondent: Get down you idiot do you have any idea what is going on over by the fence?

Chorus: He peeks out the window braving the sniper fire.

HE SCRIBBLES IT DOWN.

Clark: A woman shot her handbag flung up stuck in mid-air stays

Chorus: Clark Cant thinks the strangest thing

Clark: This is the safest place to be.

Chorus: He sleeps.

CLARK TILTS HIS HEAD TO ONE SIDE AND STARTS SNORING.

Chorus: He cries out in his sleep.

Clark: I am here so therefore I am not.

Chorus: And over breakfast he is asked

Correspondents: What? What? What are you not?

LONG PAUSE. CLARK IS UNCOMFORTABLE. LOOKS AT HIS WATCH.

Clark: Well I better get a move on. You see, I missed Saigon, I somehow overlooked Lebanon and I really don't know, uh-uh, where I was when the Gulf War was on.

Chorus: Clark Cant rises up. He is offered a helmet and a bullet proof vest. He shakes his head.

HE TAKES OUT HIS PEN.

Clark: With my pen, my weapon, my wand
I am protected from all that is wrong.

HE CLICKS IT DOWN.

Scene 2 . THE CITY.

Chorus: Clark Cant steps out into sniper alley. One hundred and fifty metres from the front line.

He sees a sign.

HE GETS OUT PHRASEBOOK TO READ THE SIGN.

Clark: Beware sniper.

GUNSHOTS LIKE THUNDERCLAPS.

Chorus: But Clark Cant walks on.
 He follows the river.
 He sees Cathedrals, a Synagogue, a Mosque.
 He walks down Marshal Tito Street.
 He walks on and on and on
 until he turns, circles, wonders

THE CHORUS SCATTERS BACK AWAY FROM HIM.

Clark: Am I lost?

HE LOOKS AROUND.

Clark: It appears to be a kind of marketplace.
 And yet it's so strangely empty of anything that anyone
 could possibly want.
 I am vaguely troubled by the thought - if there is nothing then
 What can be sold? What can be bought?

LALA NOTICES CLARK, COMES FORWARD, CATCHES HIS EYE, SMILES.

Lala: Hey are you from the West?

Clark: Yes. How did you guess?

Lala: I don't know just popped into my head.
 We must have been meant to meet.

Clark: Yes.

Lala: My name is Lala.

SHE PUTS OUT HER HAND TO SHAKE.

Clark: My name is Clark C-

HE PUTS OUT HIS HAND TO SHAKE.

Lala: Can you get me out of here? Just me, my mother, my kid-

BUT BEFORE THEIR HANDS MEET CLARK PULLS HIS HAND BACK.

Clark: I can't. I can't because I have greater responsibilities.

Lala: Are you with the U. N.? Can you get me a job?

ANDJA NOTICES CLARK. COMES FORWARD TO HIM.

Andja: Are you lost? Do you need assistance...?

LALA STARTS TALKING TO ANDJA IN SERBO-CROATION BUT IT IS MOUTHED AND CAN'T BE HEARD. IT IS OBVIOUS WHAT IS BEING SAID - BACK OFF I SAW HIM FIRST. WHILE THIS IS HAPPENING CLARK PONDERES-

Clark: Am I lost?

Andja: I would love to show you my city and our ways of survival-

Lala: I could show you things you've never seen.

Andja: My husband, is a soldier he has so many stories to tell.

Clark: (takes out his notebook and pen) Oh. A soldier.

HE TURNS TO GO WITH ANDJA.

Lala: But Clark we were meant to meet.

Scene 3. ANDJA AND HARIS' APARTMENT.

CLARK STANDS FACING HARIS AND ANDJA. ANDJA IS IN HER LATE TWENTIES AND HARIS IN HIS MIDDLE THIRTIES, HARIS IS A SOLDIER.

Andja: I found him at the markets.

PAUSE.

Andja: He's a reporter.

CLARK PUTS HIS HAND OUT TO SHAKE - HE SPEAKS BUT WE CAN'T HEAR WHAT HE IS SAYING. ANDJA TRANSLATES.

Andja: He says he's pleased to meet you.

HARIS SHAKES HIS HAND.

Andja: Please smile.

Haris: Tell him to take his shoes off.

ANDJA SPEAKS TO CLARK. AGAIN WE CAN'T HEAR WHAT SHE IS SAYING
CLARK NODS TAKES HIS SHOES OFF.

Andja: (nodding and strained smiling at Clark) Make friends with him, just try -
I'm gone tomorrow-

Haris: And you bring a stranger home?

Andja: I need to know you'll have a chance, a connection, whatever I don't know....
you don't know maybe visas, where ever-

Haris: What are you trying to do? Turn me into a beggar?

CLARK BRINGS OUT FROM HIS TRENCH COAT - A BOTTLE OF
WHISKEY AND A PACKET OF MARLBORO GIVES THEM AS A GIFT. HARIS TAKES
THEM.

Haris: Have you told him what I use to do before all of this? Did you tell him?

HARIS OPENS THE CIGARETTES.

Haris: I am an architect. Tell him.

Andja: I told him. He said there would be a lot of work for you after the war.

HARIS SHAKES HIS HEAD. POINTS A CIGARETTE AT HIM.

Haris: I bet he hasn't even had an education. I-

CLARK STARTS TALKING, AGAIN WE CAN'T HEAR WHAT HE SAYS. HARIS STARES
AT HIM

Haris: What's he want?

Andja: (smiling and nodding at Clark) He wants to ask a question.

ANDJA SMILES AND GESTURES FOR CLARK TO SIT. GIVES HIM A GLASS. OPENS

THE WHISKEY POURS THE DRINKS.

CLARK OPENS HIS NOTEBOOK AND ASKS THE QUESTION. AGAIN HIS LIPS MOVE BUT WE CAN'T HEAR WHAT HE SAYS. HARIS AND ANDJA LOOK AT HIM - ANDJA TRANSLATES.

Andja: He says "Islam. Islam. (pause - translates)
Can this really be a holy war? (pause - translates) Is it really a race war?
Because (pause - translates) from what I read in the guide
book (pause - translates) you seem to speak fairly much the same language
(pause - translates) and to be honest from what I can see you all seem so, so...
European. (pause - translates) White. White, even."
He's only staying for tonight-

CLARK STARTS TALKING AGAIN. ANDJA CONTINUES TO TRANSLATE AS HE SPEAKS.

Andja: He says (pause) "I'm sorry if that came out a bit rude.
(pause - translates) since the thaw of the cold war it's hard
to know which side to be on.(pause-translates) Who's the
enemy, who are the allies, who are the ones worth dying for.
(pause-translates) It's maybe just me I'm having this mid-life
thing, I don't want any confusion, just...just...just (pause -
Clark searches for the word) clarity.

Haris: He's come here to tell us his problems?

ANDJA GETS THE GIGGLES. HARIS STARTS TO LAUGH TOO. THEY KEEP ON LAUGHING MORE THAN IS WARRANTED, HYSTERICAL.

CLARK TRIES TO JOIN IN BUT DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE JOKE.

THEY LAUGH UNTIL THEY ARE WORN OUT. THEN THEY BOTH GAZE INTO SPACE. HARIS ABSENTLY TAKES HER HAND. LONG PAUSE. CLARK RAISES HIS GLASS.

Clark: Here I am a stranger from the west,

HARIS LOOKS UP AT HIM, ANDJA KEEPS LOOKING DOWN BUT TRANSLATES SILENTLY FOR HARIS.

Clark: I was lost at the market and you, my good friends, my friends that I will have forever, you in all your suffering opened your doors to me. If I could be so bold, it leads me to believe that suffering is, in it's own way, truly ennobling.

HIS LIFTS HIS GLASS.
THEY BOTH STARE AT HIM.