

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Invertebrate Trilogy

by Susan Rogers

EXTRACT

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B E E T L E G R A D U A T I O N

THIS PIECE MOVES BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT.

CHARACTERS:

MISS BEETLE.	SEVEN YEARS OLD	FORTY YEARS OLD.
MOTHER.	THIRTY TWO YEARS OLD	SIXTY FIVE YEARS OLD

SCENE 1

THE LINK SPEECH. THIS SPEECH NEEDS A SCORE. IT IS TO BE SPOKEN NOT SUNG AND THE WORDS AND MUSIC MUST BE EQUAL.

MOTHER I believe. I believe in. I believe in Nothing and Something. The dark rings on the tail of my cat. Progeny an ashes. I have been intrigued, danced in every room and embraced the bright days. Now this, a journey into Mist. Before in another time I knew my own reality. Now it sits in a polished frame. I am a photograph.

MISS BEETLE Take a large scarab beetle,
cut off its head and wings,
put them in oil and apply it.

It is written in a book.

If one throws a dung beetle onto a gazelle,
the latter will surely die.
If the beetle is placed in the centre of a rose,
It remains lying there so quietly
that it seems to be dead.

These are my secrets,
The little ecstasies.
You can touch them if you wish.

Those are my secrets,
They are not yet for you.
The darkness would make you afraid.

These are my places,
Inside is a discovered violence.
It sits patiently inside a rose.

SCENE 2

MOTHER 32 YEARS OLD

MISS BEETLE 7 YEARS OLD. THEY ARE IN THE SAME SPACE.

MOTHER Beeeeetlllle, Where are youuuuuuu?

MISS BEETLE In the gound, in the ground, in the ground.
Put the Beetle in the ground, then you turn it round and round.
Put the Beetle in the ground, then you turn it round and round
Put the Beetle in the ground, then.... No it's not Beetle my name
is Miranda. Yes it is Miranda so there... Not Beetle.

MOTHER Beetle, my little Beetle, Beetie. Are you hiding from mummy? Come on,
out, when I call you. Damn, where is she?

MISS BEETLE Crush a Beetle mush a Beetle make a Beetle dead. Smack, smack crack
a Beetle on the head. I'm not a Beetle I'm Miranda, I'm Miranda. I'm....

MOTHER Stop it.

MISS BEETLE Put a Beetle in the gr....

MOTHER Shut up for Christ's sake.

MISS BEETLE Shut up for Christ's sake. Amen.

MOTHER Bloody kid.

MISS BEETLE Put a Beetle in the ground, in the ground and I'll be dead, dead dead a
dead Beetle.

MOTHER Beetie stop it.

MISS BEETLE I'll be dead, I'll be dead, dead, a dead Beetle.

MOTHER I want a lovely little live Beetle.

MISS BEETLE I'm Miranda.

MOTHER You are my precious Beetle.

MISS BEETLE NO. No, no, no.

MOTHER I need a holiday.

SCENE 3

MISS BEETLE. AGED 40 YEARS. SHE IS ALONE.

MISS BEETLE Did I tell you when she died I was in the kitchen? When she died I was
stringing snow peas. Haven't eaten them since. I'd been into the room,
the small bedroom, ten minutes before. Her face was, she was in pain.
It upset me. I went back to the kitchen and worried over the vegetables.
The night nurse came and told me. That she had died. I washed my
hands, her hands. Dried them on the tea towel. They came later that
night. Two men in leather aprons with a stretcher. I put my head in the
hollow of the pillow where her head had lain heavy with morphine. I am
waiting for the hysteria. I am watching myself. I need a holiday.

SCENE 4

MOTHER 65 YEARS OLD

MISS BEETLE 40 YEARS OLD. EACH IN A SEPARATE PLACE.

MOTHER I am full of little fears.

MISS BEETLE I need a holiday.

MOTHER What a sunset. The sky is on fire and filled with the screams of insects.

MISS BEETLE The sky is bug filled and I'm afraid in the sunset. Dark-rising. Moon-bleached. Day -ending.

MOTHER My mother loved me. My mother didn't like me. She said I was simple. My mother loved me.

MISS BEETLE My mother drank. She said I was plain. A plain little Beetle.

MOTHER My mother was a saint.

MISS BEETLE My Mother had a lover. My lover In-Law.

MOTHER My mother had many lovers. I had lots of Uncles

MISS BEETLE My mother hated her body. Loved my father.

MOTHER My Mother Flirted. She was promiscuous and loving.

MISS BEETLE My Mother was not lovable.

MOTHER My Mother had secrets.

MISS BEETLE My mother told me everything, burdened me, protected me.

MOTHER My mother was a woman who died not understanding how she arrived at that point. I have my mother's hands.

MISS BEETLE I am my mother. Look at my hands.

MOTHER Look at my hands. Her hands.

MISS BEETLE When I look at my hands I am afraid.

MOTHER I am full of little fears.

MISS BEETLE If I could cry I would feel normal.

MOTHER It is a relief to cry.

SCENE 5

MISS BEETLE 40 YEARS OLD SHE IS ALONE.

MISS BEETLE Her cat rubbed up against my leg. I bent down to pick the thing up. It leapt high landing on the sideboard flicking a tail marked in ever darkening stripes to a black tip. Hissing and furious it swayed before me. I knocked it off. It screamed and darted like a possessed familiar down the hallway.

SCENE 6

MOTHER 65 YEARS OLD.

MISS BEETLE 40 YEARS INTHE SAME SPACE.

MOTHER Don't torment the cat.

MISS BEETLE I didn't touch the bloody thing. Jesus Christ.

MOTHER You hate cats.

MISS BEETLE Yes

MOTHER You always hated cats.

MISS BEETLE Yes

MOTHER It's unnatural.

MISS BEETLE So?

MOTHER He said there is nothing more that can be done.

MISS BEETLE What?

MOTHER That young Doctor.

MISS BEETLE Why didn't you ring?

MOTHER I didn't think.

BEETLE I would have come and got you.

MOTHER I didn't think.

MISS BEETLE I would have gone with you.

MOTHER Yes.

MISS BEETLE What did you do?

MOTHER I went to the pictures and cried.

MISS BEETLE I would have gone with you.

MOTHER Yes.