

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Argonauta

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by Emilie Collyer

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EXTRACT

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# *Argonauta*

by *Emilie Collyer*

## Synopsis:

Lily is sitting on a beach. She is looking for a shell. Once Lily finds the shell, she will be free. Free to go to a magical place. A place where she belongs.

*Argonauta* tells the story of Lily, a girl who has created a safe and isolated world in which she lives. A fantasy world where no-one else is allowed. So what happens when two people who were only supposed to exist in Lily's imagination walk into her world and change things forever?

*Argonauta* is a play about the walls we build up around us in the hope they will keep us safe. Safe from harm, change, fear and perhaps even from love. It is about the risk involved in letting the chink of light from outside penetrate, just a bit. And the wonder and terror of opening up to what might be let in.

## Audience:

*Argonauta* is an intimate play and would be suited to a small playing space and an audience of around 150 – 200 people. However it also has the capacity to fill a larger space, as by the end of the play Lily's world has exploded, opening up to something with great expanse and potential.

It is a great play for secondary school aged performers and audiences.

It has a running time of approximately 55 minutes.

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*3 large shells are sitting on the stage. The only other item is a plastic bucket, full of sand, shells - assorted ocean floor materials.*

*A low light comes up on stage. The sound of the sea, waves breaking on the shore fills the space.*

*A young woman, Lily, sits in front of the centre shell. She periodically dips her hand into the bucket and sorts through the handful. She picks out shells, examines them briefly and then discards the lot straight back into the bucket. She continues to do this.*

*Lily is humming to herself, then starts to softly sing:*

LILY:                    “Hush little baby, don’t say a word  
Daddy’s gonna buy you a mocking bird.  
And if that mocking bird don’t sing,  
Daddy’s gonna buy you a diamond ring.  
And if that diamond ring don’t shine....  
If that diamond ring don’t shine....”

Never could remember what he was going to buy after that ring. May-be nothing, may-be the song really does end there. May-be all those songs you can never remember more than two or three lines to actually only have those two or three lines.

Or gibberish. Like Alison does. You know.

“And if that diamond ring don’t shine,  
Daddy shwarna mama badee boo dspine.”

Alison! Alison, you promised you’d tell me the real words.  
Alison?

*Lily looks up.*

Hm. Good. She was annoying me. *(Mimics)* “Lily! That’s not how you sort through shells. I know the best way. Let me show you. I know.”  
Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know everything, Alison.

She even sings gibberish better than me.

*Lily repeats motion of putting shells back into the bucket, then pulls out another*

*handful to sort through.*

LILY: I'm behind today anyway. There was a bit of an incident. It wasn't my fault really. They're renovating the supermarket. You know how I like to get in and out really quickly. Well its just impossible at the moment. It's complete chaos. I couldn't find anything. I wanted some of those fresh nuts and they weren't in the normal spot. I ran around like a mad thing trying to locate them. Everyone was crazy - they all had this manic kind of look in their eyes because no-one could find anything. There were great piles of everything imaginable on the floor. Tomato sauce where the tampons used to be. Angry, angry shoppers. And no nuts. So I asked Sam. You know Sam. And he told me that it's been abolished. Taken away for good. Apparently the homeless people used to come in and feed from it and not pay. So now they are punishing all of us. I felt like I was at school. Not that I blame him. Sam, I mean. He's just doing his job.

Anyway, it became an incident because I wanted these particular smoked almonds. They're my favourite - a little expensive but worth it in my opinion. But in all the frenzy I picked up... something. I think it was an apple. It seemed kind of solid and... and steady in that mad place. Round, whole. But I forgot I had it and I just sort of... left.

Its all sorted out now. Security chased me down the street and I had to go back and explain. I can't remember what I said but they let me off with some kind of warning. I imagine my picture is now up on some kind of international supermarket black list. I'll have to ask...

*She breaks off as an imaginary figure enters.*

Sam. Hi.

I'm... I'm g-good. Thank-you. How are you?

Oh.

*Long awkward pause.*

Okay then. Bye.

*She sighs and watches him exit.*

He's so... so gorgeous isn't he. He doesn't speak much. Men don't, you know.

It doesn't matter though. We have a special bond.

*She starts back with her shell sorting.*

When I first met Sam, I thought he was... well a bit rough I suppose. He's quite a bloke. And he's got this... dark, mystery about him. But once you get to know him, under all that, he really has a heart of-

*At this point a woman, Alison, walks briskly into the space. She is speaking on a mobile phone and carrying an instamatic camera. As soon as Lily hears her she shrinks back against her shell. It must be clear that the woman does not see Lily or the 3 big shells, ie. they are invisible to her.*

ALISON: It's absolutely gorgeous. Fantastic. Gorgeous. Perfect, darl. Absolutely perfect... Yes, I'm here right now as we speak, I just wanted one more look... Oh I can see why Jock was so excited by it. So remote, so untouched... Yes... Yes, it's perfect. Okay, set up the meeting then. Our people, Jock's people. You know the spiel... Oh yes it's Friday isn't it. Better cater it... Yes.... Yes.... Snacks, grog, the works. Okay darl, ciao.

*She puts the phone into a hand bag.*

Just a few shots for Dad. He can't possibly say no to this.

*Alison takes photos of the space from various angles and then exits.*

LILY: I'm glad no-one else can see the shells. I'm lucky. I can keep people out.

*She sighs and goes back to her task of shell sorting.*

Except Alison. Unfortunately. And Sam of course. But I wouldn't want to keep him out. He's coming with me when I go. Over there. Just me and him, happy together. With people like us, in a place where we belong.

I can't wait.

*She puts her head right into the bucket. As she does so Sam tentatively enters. He is wearing plain black pants and windbreaker. It is clear that he can see Lily and the shells as he watches her movements. He pauses, seeming unsure of what to do, before taking a small step forward and clearing his throat.*

SAM: Excuse me.

*Lily shuffles back, her head still in the bucket, so she is tucked in front of the centre shell.*

Um... hello?