

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Cloak of Feathers

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by Susan Rogers

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EXTRACT

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CLOAK OF FEATHERS

BY

SUSAN ROGERS

BELLONA  
THE RAVEN  
YOUNG WOMAN  
MIDDLE AGED WOMAN  
OLD WOMAN  
MOTHER  
DAUGHTER  
HEADMASTER  
PRESIDENT  
LAWYER  
BISHOP  
DEVELOPER  
SECRETARY  
BOY SOLDIER  
1ST SOLDIER  
2ND SOLDIER  
3RD SOLDIER  
JOURNALIST  
FLOCK OF BIRDS  
VOICES FROM THE CITY

MUSIC THROUGHOUT THE PIECE SHOULD BE COMPOSED FOR THE PIECE.

PROLOGUE

BELLONA

You know me. I am the singer. I am the one who entertains you. Once in every lifetime I touch the damp earth with dreams and songs. I sing of the intangible and flowers unknown. I come to you with my hands outstretched and filled with white petals. Each petal a word of hope. Listen to my songs. New stories, new beginnings. In my solitude I sang with three voices that rose from a single source within me. The notes many hued stitched themselves into a song of future. Listen to me, you my assassins and remember my voice even as you pull the trigger, even as you stain the white petals red with my blood. I am a light that cannot be drowned in blood. I am you the assassin and I am you the victim. There is no separation and change cannot be stopped. You my assassins I know you as I know myself. There is a lost place. Its name outside any memory, shimmering between the beginning and an end without end. In time the darkness will fold around us. Our shadows will draw us together through this darkness to the other side, into the light.

SCENE 1

MOTHER

There is no moon tonight.

DAUGHTER Do I look like my father?  
MOTHER And the silence could suffocate.  
DAUGHTER Tell me about my father.  
MOTHER Someone is watching the house.  
DAUGHTER Did you love him?  
MOTHER The birds are back.  
DAUGHTER Did you?  
MOTHER What?  
DAUGHTER Love him?  
MOTHER Can't you leave it alone?  
DAUGHTER Did you even know him?  
MOTHER Listen to the stillness  
DAUGHTER The skies are dark.  
MOTHER There is a curfew. Don't go out.  
DAUGHTER Where is my father?  
MOTHER Dead.  
DAUGHTER I don't believe you.  
MOTHER Stay indoors. Stay out of the wind.  
DAUGHTER You didn't.  
MOTHER I hear the Raven is back.  
DAUGHTER I want to hear it from you.  
MOTHER I don't know what you are going on about.  
DAUGHTER Me. About me.  
MOTHER All assembly is restricted.  
DAUGHTER I know the streets.  
MOTHER And the dangers? And my anxiety?  
DAUGHTER Who was he?  
MOTHER No one.  
DAUGHTER I need to know.

MOTHER Your Father is dead.  
DAUGHTER Did he love me?  
MOTHER He didn't know you.  
DAUGHTER Why?  
MOTHER There was a war on.  
DAUGHTER And?  
MOTHER Someone is watching the house.  
DAUGHTER So.  
MOTHER Stay in tonight.  
DAUGHTER No.  
MOTHER Where are you going?  
DAUGHTER Out.

DAUGHTER LEAVES SLAMS A DOOR.

MOTHER I dream. I dream screaming. I look down and see her. So small.  
Screaming . Mummy, mummy they are so heavy. I'm squashed Mummy.  
I wake. I am wet, my bed is wet. It is me, me screaming. Dry. Rasping. My  
throat grit sore. I choke on dream fragments.

SCENE 2  
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BIRDS Rain sweeps across the mountains.  
I heard the snows are melting filling the river with a rushing foam.  
The heat has started  
All the birds scream and swoop across the rapids.  
Soon they will arrive filling all the nesting places with lice.  
Lice live out their lives, in blackness, between feathers.  
They hear nothing, see nothing. We crack them in our beaks.  
I saw the Raven.  
He is travelling with Bellona  
His feathers have curdled with sadness.

SCENE 3  
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JOURNALIST

Good evening. Miriam West for Channel 8 News. Two thousand and two birds were netted from the invading flocks. Two thousand and two injured birds have been humanely destroyed. Two thousand and two pest inspectors have been allocated to the four sections of the city to eliminate lice. Street Leaders have been licenced to burn dead birds and the keeping of feathers is now a criminal act. The Chamber has appealed to the public for their co-operation. Local councils have the details. Informers will be protected. For health reasons all assembly has been strictly prohibited. Stay tuned for the latest on the sport scene. Thank you and good night.

SCENE 4  
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DAUGHTER

A refugee with no legs made his way across the city to the Cathedral so many times he developed huge calluses on his hands. He would break the crossing each day at the same small cafe, and flip himself over and onto a high chair. Sitting legless at the bar holding a steaming cup of given coffee, he would sing sad, sad songs. And every day in the Cathedral he lit a candle and begged for a miracle. One morning in the Cathedral when all the candles had melted into prayers he sang a song that cut into the stones and cracked the walls. Then with his little jewelled knife he opened his vein

VOICE

Too many refugees.

VOICE

In the Cathedral! I ask you?

VOICE

Can you believe it?

VOICE

Blood everywhere.

DAUGHTER

His song cracked the walls.

VOICE

And no legs?

VOICE

Disgusting.

DAUGHTER

They say when he died a Raven wept.

VOICE

The Raven is back?

VOICE

Too many refugees.

VOICE

And the property values...

VOICE

You can't trust governments.

VOICE

You said it.

DAUGHTER           Such sadness.

SCENE 5  
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RAVEN               I am Raven. Black. I shine. I am comforter and storyteller,  
the first degrees of enlightenment. Your Companion at this time of  
turmoil. I am wing beat. Wing shadow. I am Raven the wordsmith with  
a gift of the impossible. The one who entertains you. I stand here the  
symbol of the human soul. Mediator and messenger. My feathers are  
encrusted with secrets. Now the call comes again for a new story, a tale  
to end the violence. A story for all living creatures.

SCENE 6  
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THE BIRDS CALL BACK AND FORTH TO ONE ANOTHER SOMETIMES REPEATING AND  
OVERLAPPING.

All is Sacred  
The mark of silence.  
Feather fallings  
Cries of Stones.  
Waterfall daggers.  
Sand velvets.  
Bone etchings.  
The thunder of tread.  
Drum stories.  
The movement of crystals.  
The mark of silence  
All is Sacred.  
All is sacred.

SCENE 7  
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RAVEN               On the edge of a blue white winter I placed myself by an eternal flame.  
Then wrapped in a cloak of grey feathers I enriched the inner light and  
held the warmth within myself. The severity of the season had caused  
great hardship. The seven wars had striped away dreams. The people