

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Triptych

by Kate Herbert

EXTRACT

© 1994 Kate Herbert



This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre
77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
email admin@ozscript.org
www.ozscript.org
ph +61 3 6223 4675
fax +61 3 6223 4678

TRIPTYCH Draft Four
by Kate Herbert

OUTLINE: Daniel Bonaventure has been married to Mandy for over two years and lives in a bush retreat. Mandy brings home a woman she has met at a book launch. Nina is Daniel's ex- great love. Mandy is unaware of this. The submerged antagonisms bring about a dramatic turn of events - and a death.

CHARACTERS:

DANIEL BONAVENTURE: 35. Travel and wine writer. Tried to write for screen. Works from his home office and travels a great deal. He has an acerbic wit, is smart, urbane, dependent on his women but a control freak, attractive, intelligent, flies off at his wife, wields power in the relationship and is dissatisfied with his lot. He does not really love Mandy whom he married to distract himself from Nina with whom he lived for five years and was the great love of his life. Still loves her but it is a relationship fraught with emotional pitfalls. He is losing touch, can't work effectively, avoiding contact, ignoring his young wife, drinking too much and pining for Nina but denying it.

MANDY BONAVENTURE: 26. Married to Daniel for two years. She loves him desperately and he pays her little attention. She is secretly violently jealous of Nina and will do anything to keep Daniel. She allows and encourages him to be dependent on her. Relentlessly cheerful. Dresses in pretty folksy clothes. Does not work. Was a receptionist in Daniel's newspaper office when they met. Her style is from the catalogue. Smart but not unique. She seems ordinary, under-educated but not stupid. She must seem sane and ignorant of the dynamic between Nina and Daniel.

NINA MANDORLE: 35. Lived with Daniel for five years until three years ago. She loves him but knows she cannot live with him. Everything she says is true but we must doubt her veracity constantly. She can be abrupt and pedantic and hence a bit dislikeable. Worked in publishing as a an editor for years. Highly educated in Literature at Melbourne University and quotes Shakespeasre almost without thinking. Owns a chain of book stores in various cities. Travels a great deal buying and jet-setting. Attractive, charming, smart, stylish, unique, witty but smug and cool. Strong femocrat politics. New Woman who didn't get it together. Therapy helped. Should appear to be unstable by the end of Act One.

INSPECTOR JOHN BARTON: 45. Police Inspector from local CID. Efficient. Responsible. Cool. Respectable. Intelligent and discreet cop.

LOCATION: Daniel and Mandy's home. Open plan, large french windows onto unfinished landscaped garden.

STRUCTURE:

Act 1: Scene 1 - Nina arrives

Act 1: Scene 2 - After dinner

Act 1: Scene 3 - Midnight seduction

Act 2: Scene 1 - Finding Nina

Act 2: Scene 2 - After the burial

Act 2 Scene 3 - Barton arrives

TRIPTYCH by Kate Herbert

ACT ONE: SCENE ONE

LIVING ROOM OF DANIEL & MANDY'S HOME IN CHRISTMAS HILLS.

(It is spring, November in Melbourne environs. There are huge french windows upstage which look out onto the partially finished garden outside. There is a small desk, an antique sideboard with drinks behind glass, two chairs and a couch of a solid, quite expensive old variety. There is a door SL to kitchen and another SR to hallway and bedrooms and front door. There is a bed SR which is the Blue Room.

Daniel Bonaventure is sitting at a desk staring at a lap-top computer. There is a radio phone, three expensive looking wine bottles all empty, an empty glass and a box of tissues on the desk at his right hand. He sneezes occasionally with hayfever and curses as he does as if he is sick of it. His hair is well cut but messy as if he has not combed it. He looks tired and scruffy in designer clothes which have seen better days. He is obviously having a bad afternoon. He pushes his hands through his hair and groans and moans about the work. He is in his living room because this is where he prefers to work for the natural light.

**There is background music which is rather grim and works against the lightness of the opening scenes.*

The phone rings. He answers it after a moment of consideration.)

DANIEL: *(charmingly acerbic.)* Yes....No, I haven't finished it yet.....I said Friday.....No. Next Friday....No I haven't drunk them all. It's Australian. Why would I drink it?....Oh, get off my back Jack, will you? Who do you think you are? Kerry Packer? I'm hanging up on you now. Any last words? Oh! Very nice for an editor.

(He puts the phone back onto the desk and makes faces at it. He sneezes suddenly.)

DANIEL: Shit!

(He grabs a tissue from the box and blows his nose. He hits the quit key and closes the program. The computer makes the appropriate accompanying beeps. He grabs each of the wine bottles one after the other and tips them over the glass. Nothing. He wrings out the last comically, laughs then sneezes.

He gets up from the desk, checks his watch and wanders around the room, picking up things and putting them down. He picks up a rolled architect's plan from the lounge chair where it has been

casually tossed and unravels it to study. He tosses it back with a sigh and picks up the empty glass from the desk, draining the last drop from it as he goes to the drinks shelf of the sideboard for a bottle of scotch. He pours a liberal amount into a tumbler and drinks. He lies on the couch and muses.

** Fade background music.*

*He sings something maudlin . Maybe the following song:
"And the music don't feel like it did / when I felt it with you.
Nothing that I do or see / feels like I felt it with you.
Footsteps on the dance floor / remind me baby of you.
Teardrops in your eyes / The next time I will be true. And I do."*

He checks his watch again. As he sings he hears a car on gravel and the same song music from a car stereo. He listens, laughs at the coincidence and sings

DANIEL: *(singing)* Footsteps on a driveway, Remind me baby of you"

(He throws himself onto the couch with his drink and waits. Two female voices are heard, two car doors open and shut, feet on gravel, laughter and chat. He realises there are two people and gets up to look out the window. He cannot see the two women so he stomps out the kitchen door SL.)

MANDY: *(Off)* Sorry about the dirt. The contractors are still working. Just hang your coat up on the hall stand there, Nina.

NINA: *(off)* Mandy, what do you do with your days out here? Or do you go into town every day?

(The two women come in dressed to kill in day wear. Nina's outfit is more stylish, almost Parisian and chic. Mandy's is more folksy and pretty. They are ever so slightly tipsy so that they are abnormally cheery and familiar even though they are almost strangers. As she speaks Mandy checks the bottles on the desk without Nina noticing. She looks around, obviously for Daniel. She looks relieved, drops her bag on the chair and sits.)

MANDY: I drive down most days.

NINA: Ooh! This is charming. I used to have a sideboard just like that one. Lost it in the settlement.

MANDY: I love the Hills but, shit, I do get a bit bored, 'scuse the French.

NINA: I should say "Unsettlement." *(Nina looks at Mackintosh.)* Nice little Mac.

MANDY: Mmmm. I usually use IBM. Sit down.

(Nina sits in one of the chairs with a sigh.)

NINA: Like the suite too.

(As Mandy talks Nina looks around the room surreptitiously, almost making an inventory of the furniture with her eyes. Her eyes rest momentarily on the sideboard. She feels the fabric of the chair. She does not seem to hear all of the following until muscles are mentioned.)

MANDY: I see my mother and my sister. I shop. I play tennis locally once a week. I was having lessons but Daniel got jealous of the tennis coach. He's right. He is pretty gorgeous. All those lovely tennis muscles. Mmmm.

NINA: I prefer cyclists: long and strong.

MANDY: Swimmers. Not so bulky.

NINA: Mmmm. Nice chests. Can't go past a nice strong pair of pecs. Smooth. Hairless. Makes me crazy every time.

MANDY: Arms. I love upper arms. Those soft, round bulges at the top of men's arms.

NINA: Nothing like a soft, round bulge to cheer you up.

(They laugh wickedly)

NINA: Oops! We're objectifying.

MANDY: Pardon?

NINA: Making the poor babes objects of desire. Not very P.C.

MANDY: P.C.? *(slowly after a pause)* Personal Computer?

NINA: *(laughs)* Politically Correct. But, I think I prefer personal computer. Do you think we drank too much champagne at the launch?

MANDY: You can never drink too much champagne.

NINA: A woman after my own heart.

MANDY: I have a theory. The bubbles have more alcohol than the rest of the stuff so you get drunk faster.

NINA: A fine theory Mandy.

MANDY: Think so?

NINA: I do. Impeccable.

MANDY: I didn't drink very much really. I had to drive.

NINA: And you wouldn't want to kill a prospective buyer.

MANDY: No.

NINA: If you drink then drive.....

NINA) you're a bloody idiot.

MANDY): you're a bloody idiot.

(They laugh)

MANDY: Drink?

NINA: *(laughs)* Yes please!

MANDY: *(Getting up to go to kitchen)* Oh, bugger. I think I'm out of champagne. I'll have to go to the pub later for supplies.

NINA: Oh, I don't mind. *(indicating bottles.)* Wine will do.

MANDY: Empty. Sorry. Scotch?

NINA: Perfect.

(Mandy goes to the shelf, takes out a bottle of scotch and one of brandy and two glasses. Mandy starts to pour the scotch.)

NINA: *(as Mandy pours)* Oh, gosh. *(rising)* I have to go to the loo. Where is it?

MANDY: It's the second on your right off the hall.

NINA: *(doing a mock "I'll wet my pants" walk, she goes off SR)* Oooh. Stop pouring the drinks. I won't make it.

(They laugh. Mandy stands giggling over the drinks. Daniel comes in through kitchen door and stands looking petulant and peevish at her back. Daniel sneezes. Mandy smiles then turns to look at him sympathetically and tousles his hair like a mum.)

MANDY: Oooh! Hello Sneezzy. Didn't hear you.

- DANIEL: *(With tissue over face)* Bloody hayfever.
- MANDY: Have a nice day all by your lonesome?
- DANIEL: Not very productive if you must know....
- MANDY: *(lightly but cynically)* And how was your day, dear?
- DANIEL: ...Didn't write a word.
- MANDY: Not Sneezy. Grumpy. *(over Daniel)* Hi ho. Hi ho. It's off to work we go.
- (continues to sing "Hi Ho. Hi Ho." quietly under Daniel.)*
- DANIEL: *(ignores)* That bloody Evelyn's with you, isn't she? Shit! You know I can't stand that woman. She makes my flesh crawl ever since that party at Anna and Derek's *(He does not stop speaking)*
- MANDY: *(Stops singing. Speaks over Daniel)* It's not Evelyn, Daniel.
- DANIEL: *(cont)*when she tried to get into my trousers by the hibachi.
- MANDY: I said it's not Evvie.
- DANIEL: She's - What? Well who the bloody hell is it then?
- MANDY: I met her at a book launch in town. I was in a book shop looking for a birthday present for you Mr. Saggitarius, and I was scouring the Gardening shelf when she came up and asked me to join them for the launch. It was just starting. It was very exciting. The writer was there to sign books and everything. See. I have one here.Signed. She was Chilean. Lived under the... the Pinochet regime for years and was tortured and everything. Awful. So now she travels the world promoting her books.
- DANIEL: So we have a Chilean refugee in our dunny, do we?
- MANDY: No. Don't be stupid! She's gone off to Myer to sign books. This one owns the shop. In fact she owns the whole chain. You know. Fountain book stores? Well she wanted to see our collection. They deal in rare books too.
- NINA: *(Off)* Oh, gosh. I put mud all over your lovely Italian tiles
- (Nina comes in SR trying to check her shoes for mud, awkwardly over her shoulder. She doesn't see Daniel. He sneezes just as Nina enters so he does not see her either. He recovers from his sneeze and she looks up from her shoe at the same moment as*

she apologises.)

NINA:) I'm so sorry.
DANIEL:) Shit!

(The both freeze staring at each other)

MANDY: Nina this is my husband, Daniel. Daniel Bonaventure, Nina Mandolin.

NINA: *(Automatically)* Mandorle. *(Pronounced "Mandalay".)*

(She walks to him and shakes his hand. He takes her hand after a pause staring at her face.)

NINA: I am very pleased to meet you Mr. Bonaventure. Mandy, you didn't tell me you were married.

(Daniel sneezes onto her hand. He pulls his hand away and wipes it with a tissue. Nina rather delicately pulls a tissue from her bag and dabs at her fingers.)

MANDY: *(over their action)* Didn't I? Of course I did. I must have. Well, we were so busy chatting about books and first editions and muscles *(giggle)* I probably forgot all about him. *(She hugs him)* You'd hate that, wouldn't you darling? That we didn't mention you.

(he doesn't respond but keeps staring at Nina, wiping his nose.)

All right, so who's for a drink, eh? We're out of champers. I'll go down later. Please sit down Nina. Darling move the plans, will you? *(holding up bottle)* How, Nina?

(Daniel gets up grudgingly and tosses the plans onto the sideboard. Nina sits on the couch. She seems very composed. Mandy becomes coy and girlish around Daniel in a most unnerving way.)

NINA: No ice.

MANDY: Same for Daniel *(pouring)* and brandy and coke for me.

(Daniel is scowling and ignoring Nina purposefully. Nina retains a sense of decorum. She gazes around the room, drinks, notes the sideboard again, then notices the plans.)

NINA: So, you're renovating at the moment?

(Daniel ignores her and sneezes)