

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Daphne Massacre

by Donna Abela

EXTRACT

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the daphne massacre

characters

Isabella	A bride-to-be
The Mums	Isabella's mother figures
The Boys	Orphans
Nurse	The Dentist's assistant
Cook	The Dentist's cook
Daphne	A bride-to-be who has had the pleasure
The Teacher	Miss Laurel, who taught at the orphanage
Dentist	A dentist (voice only)
Father Pat	Superintendent of the orphanage (voice only)

doubling

Isabella / Teacher
Cook / A Mum / A Boy
Nurse / A Mum / A Boy
Dentist / Father Pat
Daphne

setting

The play is set in a waiting room, near a river, in an orphanage, and in Isabella's imagination and memory.

production notes

The play is an ensemble piece for four women. Scenes merge and respond to each other. As such, blackouts, costume changes, and a fixed set are likely to impede the work.

The Mums and the Boys speak as choruses. However, the lines may be shared or staggered between the actors playing these roles.

synopsis

Isabella's just been sacked from the orphanage. Well, not sacked, not really, it wasn't a real job. Just minding the boys mostly, 'cause they were in shock when that teacher died. But never mind, just move on, think of the future. That's why she's at the Dentist's to have all of her perfectly good teeth extracted. It's her wedding present, but early.

In the waiting room, Isabella's Mother Figures, a Nurse, and a toothless bride-to-be called "Daphne", are all trying to persuade her to go through with this procedure. If she does, they promise, she'll have men's respect, women's envy, domestic bliss, God's blessing... and her pick of a high fashion set of choppers. Women's teeth are weaker, darl, so rip them out before the rots sets in, like we did...

However, when Isabella encounters the Cook and her world of abundance and appetite, she begins to re-consider the events surrounding her sacking and the teacher's death. Isabella comes to her senses, sees the origin of this custom, and decides to keep her bite.

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ISABELLA is on the floor devouring a diary. THE MUMS scoop her up.

THE MUMS

Ready Isabella?

For the best
for the future
for the best future?

Yes!

She wants to prepare properly
prepare for a whole life together with someone
a husband
properly

ISABELLA

To do right
right things
so I can't harm

The boys!
How are the boys?

THE MUMS

Better off without you!

Little darlings
locked themselves in when you left
starved themselves
refused to eat
thanks to you
and your uppity influence

And you can't do what you did to men!
Men like them
important men
some of them priests

Some jokes
you silly bitch
just aren't funny

So forget it
it wasn't a proper job
you helped out
that's all
did your dash

You're lucky Baxter didn't take back his ring!

ISABELLA

He's paying for this

THE MUMS This visit
 yes
 and others
 fittings and what not
 up to ten if need be

 Her wedding present but early

ISABELLA I'm getting him boots

THE MUMS and he's getting you dentures!

 So don't blow it!

 Chop chop!
 We've gotta get back
 cook tea
 bath kids
 and brick the house!

ISABELLA Miss Laurel
 that teacher who's place I took

THE MUMS Quick quick
 on the double

ISABELLA Did you know her?

THE MUMS Move it!

ISABELLA No

THE MUMS No?
 What?
 Excuse me?

ISABELLA This
 it's not compulsory

 Coughing up all my
 my teeth
 it's elective surgery
 a trend
 maybe not necessary at all

THE MUMS Ooooooh
 isn't she a bold article?

 Stop it!

ISABELLA What?

THE MUMS Upsetting the apple cart!
Like that teacher
don't be like the teacher

ISABELLA I know why she died

THE MUMS Look

 We've had it
 had the pleasure
 had the benefit of dentures almost all our lives
 See?
 Plastic
 doesn't rot stain or stink
 Changed our lives it did
 God yes
 'cause two dentures
 think about it
 instead of thirty-two teeth
 mathematically speaking
 is quite a convenience
 Drop 'em in the washing up
 the nappy bucket
 the twin tub
 bit of a swish
 then pop them on the sill
 while you
 free from the drudgery of dental hygiene
 mow the road
 make hay
 mince words
 and don't think!

 Once kids start popping out
 it's one less worry
 you'll see

ISABELLA So ditching my
teeth
before my Big Day

THE MUMS is normal
a very normal
very necessary
routine operation

ISABELLA for the best

THE MUMS for the future
for the best future
yes!

ISABELLA Thanks for coming with me then
for taking the trouble

THE MUMS Darling!
What's a bridesmaid-mother-best-friend for?
But to be there
completely
for you
with magazines and that
and brochures
swatches and cakes
hair dos and don'ts
kitchen teas
and now this

ISABELLA this this this

THE MUMS harmless
little
itty bitty
quite painless really

ISABELLA appointment

ISABELLA becomes the TEACHER at the orphanage. The MUMS become two BOYS who taunt her while she speaks.

THE BOYS You're lying Miss Laurel
about the lesson
making it up

Who'd believe you?
Father Pat doesn't

Your sums add up to vanity
to a liar's advantage

Don't bother
you stupid slut

I bet this lesson's bullshit

TEACHER The boys
Father Pat
they're only
not that bad but
one or two
a prank
a few pranks
and sometimes