

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Marigold Hour

by Catherine Fargher

EXTRACT

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PROLOGUE- DON DUNSTAN- SPIRIT GARDENER.

AS THE AUDIENCE ENTERS AND SEATS THEMSELVES. THE MUSIC OVER THE SPEAKERS IS A LIGHT MIX OF GARDEN SOUNDS. FROM OUTSIDE THE SPACE WE HEAR DON'S VOICE CALLING.

Is there anybody there? Can anybody hear me? I can hear voices, see the lights, feel the lovely warmth, I can feel my earthly form returning ...I'm coming throooooooooough!

DON ENTERS IN A FLURRY THROUGH THE AUDIENCE, DRESSED IN A SLIGHTLY DISHEVELLED PAIR OF PINK HIPSTER SHORTS. HE ALSO HAS A PAIR OF GARDENING GLOVES, AN OLD HAT, AND A POT WITH A PLANT AND SECATEURS IN IT.

Well here I am, It's so good to be back in my garden here in Adelaide.

(INTRODUCES HIMSELF, STILL THE POLITICIAN AT HEART)

Don Dunstan, hello, so hope you are enjoying the flowers, aren't the spring blooms wonderful?

Don Dunstan, Unfortunately I can't smell a thing anymore, one of the more regrettable things about dying. No, don't mention it, I'm still enjoying myself tremendously. And now of course Dame Roma is with me. She is choosing to have a small break from state duties.

Do any of you recognise these old gardening shorts?

CLIMBS ONTO THE STAGE AND ASSUMES THE STANCE OF POLITICAL ORATOR.

They may remind you of the wonderful days of my Premiership. That Absolutely Fabulous time in the 60's and 70's, when the winds of change started blowing in Paris, London and San Fransisco. They didn't blow in Sydney, they didn't blowing in Melbourne, but we let them blow across the desert to Adelaide. We blew about like an enormous palm tree in fact. My government gave Adelaide permission to swing.

STARTS TO MOVE AND GYRATE HIS HIPS A LITTLE

We created a wonderful provincial garden, an oasis in fact, with the tall palms of legislation for landrights and youth justice, the calm pools of child care and accessible housing, and the swinging harem, our own homosexual Mecca and festival of arts. Controversial at times yes, but for every egg getting shoved up someone's ass, there were some lovely Vietnamese water puppets for the children.

I love to return to my garden, to keep an eye on it in fact, for I fear that without intervention it may perish. Like so many of our global gardens, being taken over by powerful conservative forces. These creeping forces , like the strangling bridal veil and Lantana creepers, are destroying the diversity of our native gardens.

Do not be hoodwinked by the smattering of pretty flowers on these stranglers, ladies and gentlemen. When you see a creeper taking hold, do not hesitate to rip it out, and stomp on it. If that fails, get out your secateurs and hack at it. For a final measure, get a good tin of kero and with all the political fire that remains in your belly, start a small bushfire.

Nothing like a small fire to clear the ground for the lovely new shoots and buds to return. The Indigenous Australians have known this for many years, and at this point I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Kuarna people.

The secret of a great garden, and a society in fact, is a good cultural compost, Room for everyone in a good compost, minority groups, workers, young and old people. We all become compost in the end, you mark my words. It pleases me a great deal to think that the worms are enjoying my toes as we speak.

Today I am going to plant a rose, a hardy little plant which can take a beating, and still produce a bloom of great beauty. You can hack at it and it will fight back to bloom again.

So it is with the Rosebud in our story ladies and gentlemen, a beautiful bloom raised on the arid soils of Adelaide, a flower maiden not unlike Persephone, from the Greek myths, who frolicked and played under the gaze of her mother Demeter, the goddess of the grain. She was plucked from her mother's sight by Hades, god of the underworld, leaving her mother in terrible grief. I will leave you to this wonderful tale and get on with a bit of work in the potting shed, if you hear me chatting to myself out the back, don't be alarmed....

DON EXITS, BUMPING INTO SOFA.

Oh look, there's a new sculpture in the garden, I'm sure there was a gnome there yesterday.

DON V/O

There's always so much to do in the potting shed. I can sharpen my secateurs, in preparation for clearing more creepers. Don't hesitate to call if you want any help clearing the Lantana....I will come wherever my spirit is needed, to help with the creeping forces..

A MUSICAL INTERLUDE STARTS, CAPTURING THE INNOCENT WORLD OF THE FLORAL MAIDEN WITH CONTEMPORARY AMBIENCE. THE STAGE IS NOW FLOODED WITH GOLDS, PINKS AND YELLOWS. THROUGH THE DOORS, ROSEBUD APPEARS IN A CHILD LIKE STATE, PLAYING HIDE AND SEEK.

SONG TEXT

ROSE

Push against the sun

You can't help yourself can you?

Being so beautiful.

ROSEBUD IS PLAYFUL, SHE EXPLORES THE SET, SHE INSPECTS BODY PARTS, SHOWS EARLY SENSUALITY, RUBS HERSELF AGAINST PART OF THE STAGE. SHE ACTS QUITE OBLIVIOUS TO THE AUDIENCE OR HER MOTHER AND THEN IN NAUGHTY DEFIANCE OF THEM.

VOICEOVER (MOTHER)

Rosebud/ Rosebud/ Rosebud!/ Mummy's looking for you/I want to take a picture! There you are!

SLIDE PROJECTION OF MOTHER IN RETRO 70'S CLOTHES AND A POLAROID CAMERA. ROSEBUD HIDES BEHIND UPRIGHT SOFA, AND MOVES FORWARD TO CENTRE WITH THE SOFA IN FRONT OF HER. SHE EMERGES FROM BEHIND SOFA AND SITS ON IT, LOOKS UNDER SKIRT.