

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Fourplay

by Jane Bodie

EXTRACT

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FOURPLAY

Four characters: Tom, Alice, Natasha and Jack

Fourplay can be played non-naturalistically.

In the scenes between Alice & Tom, and Tom & Natasha, a split focus or perspective can be used, meaning they have no physical or eye contact when communicating with each other.

Jack & Alice should be played naturalistically throughout the play.

Scene One

Each character recites a list of names, their past lovers, relationships, ending with the word "You".

Scene Two

Alice & Tom

Alice & Tom's bedroom

Alice: *We must have walked for hours*

Tom: *Hours. It hasn't stopped.*

Alice: *I don't even feel wet*

Tom: *There's still rain in your hair*

Alice: *How can there be?*

Tom: *There is. It suits you, I think you should always wear rain in your hair*

Alice: *For you*

Tom: *No, because it suits you*

Pause

Tom: *You know that I.../*

Alice: *Don't say it, don't say anything/*

Pause

Alice: *You interrupt me there*

Tom: *What?*

Alice: *It says here, that you're supposed to interrupt me, at that point*

Tom: *Yes,*

Pause

Tom: *I actually knew that*

Alice: *But you didn't, you didn't interrupt me*

Tom: *No, I know*

Pause

Alice: Are you supposed to interrupt when there's a dot dot dot, or just a slash?
Tom: When there's a slash
Alice: So what about a dot dot dot
Tom: No
Alice: You just leave those ones
Tom: Yeah
Alice: You don't cut me off mid sentence
Tom: That's right
Alice: Unless there's a slash
Tom: Well, I think the idea.../
Alice: Then you cut me off mid sentence
Tom: Yes, that's right
Alice: Right, so then with the dot dot dots, you just....
Tom: I just leave you hanging
Alice: You leave me hanging and then come in with the line
Tom: Yes, that's right
Alice: Sorry, I just wanted to check on that, to be sure. Shall we start again
Tom: If you don't mind
Alice: Not at all

Alice: *We must have walked for hours*
Tom: *Hours. It hasn't stopped*
Alice: *I don't even feel wet*
Tom: *There's still rain in your hair*
Alice: *How can there be?*
Tom: *There is. It suits you, I think you should always wear rain in your hair*
Alice: *For you*
Tom: *No. Because it suits you.*
Pause
Tom: *You know that I.../*
Alice: *Don't say it, don't say anything/*
Long pause
Alice: *It's your line*
Tom: *I know. I know this line, I got it before, just give me a second*
Long pause
Alice: *But I want to tell you, you say "I want to tell.../*
Tom: *I knew that. I did know that, I just needed a moment to remember*
Alice: *Sorry*
Tom: *I did say that I needed a second*
Alice: *I just thought that if you hadn't got it by then, you weren't going to get it*
Tom: *Well I would of, if you'd just/*

Alice: Sorry, let's start again
Pause

Alice: I don't mind, really. Come on, I'm enjoying it
Tom: Really?
Alice: Really

Alice: *We must have walked for hours*
Tom: *Hours. It hasn't stopped*
Alice: *I don't even feel wet*
Tom: Actually I'm not in the mood
Pause

Tom: I'm just at that point, you know, between knowing it and not knowing it. I think if I leave it and come back to it, the lines will be there, do you know what I mean?
Alice: I think so, I think I can remember what that's like
Tom: I'm just pushing it, it doesn't actually help
Pause

Tom: It's a good play
Alice: You don't have to convince me. I just think that...
Tom: What?
Alice: That...that's not a slash, it's a dot dot dot, I'm trying to choose my words carefully

Tom: No, go on, what do you think, really?
Alice: That plays like this have been done before
Tom: Plays like what exactly?
Alice: Plays about two people, in a forbidden love, they've been done to death

Tom: People will always fall in love
Alice: Yes, but what's so different about this scenario that makes us care?

Tom: The way that it's played
Alice: I don't agree. It's still the same old story
Tom: You've become a cynic
Alice: I always was one
Tom: You used to be a romantic
Alice: A romantic with a healthy edge of cynicism. Look if I want to see a play about unrequited love /

Tom: It's not unrequited, not ultimately
Alice: Repressed then, repressed love. If I want to see a play about that, I'll go and see an old classic. I'm not knocking it, I just don't think it's breaking any new ground, I'm sure it will be brilliant, you'll be brilliant, I like it, it's funny

Tom: It's not supposed to be funny
Alice: Well it is, you're funny, the way you're choosing to deliver your lines is funny

Tom: I'm not choosing to deliver them in any particular way. It's just a line run, I'm not acting, I'm not trying to act
Pause

Tom: I wasn't trying to act just then
Pause

Tom: Perhaps I shouldn't be doing this with you
Alice: Why not?
Tom: Because you hate acting
Alice: I thought this was just a line run
Tom: It is
Alice: And I like helping you with your work
Tom: Thanks
Alice: And I love what I do now
Tom: I know
Alice: And it's great, that you're still doing it, that you still love it
Tom: Yeah
Alice: I want to go to sleep, I'm tired
Silence

Alice: Don't
Tom: What?
Alice: Don't do that
Tom: What?
Alice: That, I don't like it
Tom: What, that, or that?
Alice: Tom, you know what I mean, that, that, I don't like it
Tom: I thought you did like it, you usually like it
Pause

Alice: Can we just.../
Tom: Sure
Alice: Your hands are cold
Tom: Right
Alice lights up a cigarette
Alice: I hope I sleep
Tom: I don't think that cigarettes going to help
Silence

Alice: Goodnight
Pause
Tom: Goodnight.
Lights fade

Scene Three

Tom & Natasha

Natasha's Place

Tom: *There's still rain in your hair*

Natasha: *How can there be*

Tom: *There is. It suits you, I think you should always wear rain in your hair*

Natasha: *For you*

Tom: *No. Because it suits you*

Pause

Tom: *You know that I.../*

Natasha: *Don't say it, don't say anything/*

Long Pause

Natasha: Is there a problem?

Tom: No

Natasha: Then why did you stop?

Tom: I don't know

Natasha: Maybe we should just do a line run

Tom: I know them

Natasha: I'm sure you do

Tom: No, really, I know them, I knew them yesterday, I knew them last week, I don't need to run them

Natasha: Let's not then

Tom: I was fine until yesterday, until I did the fucking things with Alice

Natasha: Alice?

Tom: With Alice at home, we were running them and I just got stuck, on one bit and then I couldn't go any further

Natasha: And you feel you're at that point in between knowing them and not knowing them

Tom: Yes that's exactly where I am

Natasha: Line overload

Tom: Sorry?

Natasha: It's very common, especially at this point, the halfway mark. It happens to a lot of actors

Tom: I'm not sure what you're.../

Natasha: Well, It's like being told a hundred times not to forget the car keys.

Pause

Natasha: You've told yourself a hundred times it's the one thing you mustn't do, so you go right ahead and do it, it's obvious. You forget that one line. Then the fact that it's so natural, so like real speech, that makes it harder

Tom: Does it?

Natasha: I read somewhere once, that with writers like Pinter and... Williamson, it's particularly difficult for actors to learn their lines. Because it has all the qualities, all the punctuation, the exact timing of real speech, you find yourself missing out bits or.../

Ben: Adding bits in

Natasha: Thinking you're saying exactly the same thing, but actually adding a whole new meaning, a whole paragraph that wasn't there before

Tom: And this is quite common?

Natasha: It's a well known fact, happens to the best of us

Tom: That's a relief

Natasha: And because of its naturalistic style, because of the text beneath what's unsaid, sometimes a whole speech, a whole scene even, really says nothing at all
Pause

Tom: Isn't it great though?
Pause

Tom: It's a great play

Natasha: And I'm sure that you know it, every line, every pause, you just need to stop focussing on it

Tom: You're right

Natasha: And stop running the lines at home
Pause

Natasha: So, I think we should stop for tonight

Tom: I suppose so, yeah. I should go

Natasha: It's raining

Tom: It hasn't stopped

Natasha: No

Tom: Shit, I really should go, I'm on my bike

Natasha: You'll get rain in your hair

Tom: On my helmet, I have a helmet

Natasha: Good

Tom: I'll go, before it gets worse

Natasha: Worse?

Tom: The rain, it always gets worse

Natasha: Does it?

Tom: Oh definitely

Natasha: You don't want to stay and see if it stops, gets worse and then stops

Tom: I can't

Natasha: We could have a drink, I've got a bottle of wine somewhere, for occasions like this
Pause

Natasha: You know, waiting for the rain to stop