

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Pulpit Rock

by Gina Schien

EXTRACT

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A woman in her 40s sits in a chair centre stage. Lights come up.

It was the crash that woke me. We'd stopped for dinner about an hour before and a lot of people were nodding off. Obviously the driver was too, because the bus had gone onto the other side of the highway and crashed head on into a car. There was a long silence and when I looked around I saw bodies everywhere. The two nice women from Sweden were... it's too awful to even say what they looked like. People aren't as tightly joined as they think. And the man from Perth and his wife weren't anywhere near where they'd been sitting. They were lying in the aisle.

But Frank was still next to me, sitting there on his seat next to the window. Perfectly all right. He looked at me in the middle of all the blood and twisted seats and said, "that was lucky".

We climbed out through the windscreen and onto the road. Ambulance men were lifting bodies out of the bus and putting them on the ground. The car that ran into us was totally crushed and I could see our driver lying a little way ahead on the road. He must have gone through the glass. There were two other bodies laid out near him.

I walked over to get a closer look. It was a woman and a man about our age. His head was just gruesome and there was dirt on his face. He was wearing Frank's jacket. I thought that was a bit odd. Then I looked at his face. Really looked at it. It was Frank.

And then I looked at the woman again and I saw that it was me. I had huge cuts on my arms and all over my chest. We were lying there and a policeman was coming up with two blankets. I touched him on the arm and said "excuse me, I think there's been some sort of mistake". But he bent over the two people, over Frank and me, and covered us up. I stood there and I tried to weep but nothing came out.

beat

Everything went black, and when I could see again, there we all were. The two Swedish girls, the couple from Perth, the driver, me and Frank, and a woman who kept asking if we could hear her and if we were comfortable. No-one was injured.

Frank said 'forget comfortable. Just tell us if we're alive.'

She ignored him and started talking about new rules. We can't eat now. We can't drink. We can't wash. Eventually, after Frank asked three times, she said "No. I'm sorry Frank. You're not alive any more".

That didn't shut him up, though. He wanted to know how she knew his name, where we were, who she was. She said 'if I tell you, you won't believe me".

He said "try me".

She said "God".