

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# We Met at the Demo

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by Van Badham

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EXTRACT

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**Characters:**

- FLEUR, a data-entry clerk [19, later 26]
- PETER, a university student majoring in Politics [23, later 30]
- HELEN, a senior public servant [35]
- JUDE, a writer for a socialist paper [28]
- TONY, a student [20s]
- MYRTLE, a student [20s])
- PAULA, a truckstop worker.
- NEVILLE a truckstop worker.

*The character doublings possible are:*

- *Peter/Neville*
- *Tony/Paula/Jude*
- *Myrtle/Helen*

**Scene:**

The play is set in homes in Sydney and Melbourne, with a brief interlude in Goulburn. The first half of the play (scenes 1, 2 and 3) is during a period of conservative government. The second half of the play (scenes 4, 5 and 6) take place seven years later, when a transition to a federal Labor government has been made.

**Scene 1:** Darkness. A riot in progress, volume building slowly but to roaring point, on the brink of toleration.

The sound of a police siren.

**POLICEMAN:** Move back, or we will disperse you by force! Move back!

**FLEUR:** What are you doing?!

**POLICEMAN:** We will disperse you by force! Move back!

A scuffle is heard. Fleur screams. A window shatters.

Silence.

**Scene 2:** A key turning in a lock. A door comes open: Peter and Fleur enter Peter's inner-city bedsit.

**PETER:** It's okay, you're safe now...

**FLEUR:** What happened to the other guy? Where'd he go?

**PETER:** Can you walk?

**FLEUR:** Yes. No. My head... Yes.

She takes a step forward and falls over.

**FLEUR:** No.

**PETER:** Okay... Let's try and make it to the couch.

Peter flicks on the light and closes the door.

The bedsit belongs to a university student activist: central focus is given to a poster depicting a man's head which says "Free Reg Now!".

Fleur has a t-shirt wrapped around her head, Peter is wearing a flannelette shirt with no t-shirt underneath. He runs for the sink as she totters towards the couch.

**FLEUR:** [unwrapping the shirt from her head] Oh, wow...

The removed shirt reveals a bloodstain covering half of Fleur's face. She shows herself the bloodstained t-shirt.

**FLEUR:** Is this mine?

Peter nods.

**FLEUR:** Oh *fuck*...

Fleur begins to faint, but Peter manages to catch her.

**PETER:** You all right?

**FLEUR:** You could have told me I was bleeding to death.

**PETER:** Yeah, but I'm not sure if it's all your blood. [He carries her to the couch]. There.

Peter goes back to the sink.

**FLEUR:** I'm still bleeding.

**PETER:** [procuring] It's okay. I've got Dettol.

**FLEUR:** Well, then, why worry? [pause] Who's the other guy, anyway?

**PETER:** Tony.

**FLEUR:** Who's Toby?

**PETER:** Tony - To-ny.

**FLEUR:** Nice to meet you, Toby.

**PETER:** I'm Peter. I told you before.

**FLEUR:** Hi, Peter, I'm Fleur.

Fleur extends her hand to shake his. Instead of shaking it, he wipes blood from it with a flannel.

**PETER:** Hello, again, Fleur.

He then wipes the blood from her face, and begins to search her scalp for the wound.

**PETER:** Let's have a look...

**FLEUR:** Ow! Ow!

**PETER:** It hurts?

**FLEUR:** Yes, it hurts. That's why I'm saying... ow!

**PETER:** You're a real mess.

**FLEUR:** A policeman hit me.

**PETER:** I know, I was watching. I'm trying to work out why you're bleeding so much...

**FLEUR:** Because he hit me *really hard*.

**PETER:** Only with a rubber truncheon...

**FLEUR:** Only?

**PETER:** Where does it hurt the most?

**FLEUR:** [indicating] There. Ow!

**PETER:** You've got a metal clip wedged right into your scalp. I'll have to take it out.

**FLEUR:** That's going to hurt, isn't it?

**PETER:** Probably. Stupid thing to wear to a demo - no wonder...

**FLEUR:** I wasn't at the demo. Ow! Ow! Ow! Jesus... that hurts!

**PETER:** Shh... out it comes...

**FLEUR:** Why are my eyes watering?

**PETER:** You might have copped a little capsicum spray.

**FLEUR:** What?!

**PETER:** They use it for riot control.

**FLEUR:** In case you're attacked by a salad?

**PETER:** It's out. See? A little disinfectant, and the holes aren't that big.

**FLEUR:** It still hurts.

**PETER:** It should. Wearing a hairclip.

**FLEUR:** I don't usually get beaten up by the police on my lunchhour. I only came out for a cigarette.