

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# The Last Word

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by Andrea Gillies

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EXTRACT

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CHARACTERS

MAN, mid 40's

WOMAN, mid 40's the first time she appears. Her second incarnation is as the lawyer/cop/general inquisitor figure.

HER, early 20's. Casually dressed. Her appearance deteriorates throughout the play. Also known as Meredith.

HIM, early to mid 20's. Recently graduated law student trying to look the part. Also known as Russell.

MUM, Mother to HER.

The play begins with a couple (MAN and WOMAN) waiting for a tram (shown by a timetable/map post, a bench seat and the metal safety zone cut diagonally). They stand slightly apart. A younger woman(HER) joins them. She checks her watch and glances to the side of the stage, looks at the couple, looks away and wraps her coat more tightly around her. She begins to read the newspaper she is holding. Sound of approaching tram. All step forward and look down the tracks. Return to previous positions obviously disappointed. Sound of tram flying by - wind and dust/sand and the rattle of the tram as it recedes into the distance.

**MAN:** They got the bastard hey?

**HER:** *(Looks up)* Pardon?

**MAN:** *(Nods at her paper)* They got him.

**HER:** Oh, oh yes. *(Goes back to reading her paper).*

*(The noise of a tram arriving. The girl glances up as if looking at the number and then looks down at her paper. The woman steps towards where a tram would be and turns around.)*

**WOMAN:** *(To Man)* Are you coming?

**MAN:** Nah, I'll wait for another one. Wouldn't want to leave the kid alone.

*(Woman leaves. Sounds of the tram recede. The man stomps his feet. The girl checks the timetable on the post.)*

What are you after?

**HER:** Uh, a No. 8.

**MAN:** You just missed it. Must've been seconds before you got here.

**HER:** Oh. *(She folds the paper carefully, tucks it under one arm and looks up and down the street. She looks again at the timetable and glances at her watch.)*

**HER:** I think that was the last 72.

*(Man shrugs.)*

**MAN:** Yeah I know. The next one's not till 5.07 - A.M. Might be a bit of a wait. *(He looks up and down a bit and pulls out a packet of cigarettes. He offers her one.)*

**HER:** No thanks, I don't smoke.

**MAN:** No harm in offering, 34% of young women do.

*(He lights up. She has turned to watch him - side on to the audience.)*

\*

*(HIM walks on stage from behind HER. Taps HER on the shoulder. She turns and as she does so MAN leaves slowly. HIM and HER hold hands. She looks down.)*

**HIM:** You said no in front of all those people.

**HER:** *(looks up)* No I didn't. We were talking about that stupid movie and you asked me my views on marriage.

**HIM:** And you said you thought our generation *(Imitates her voice and as he does so she drops his hands)* "was past needing such a bourgeois ritual to prove commitment".

**HER:** The price of an average wedding would support a dozen families in Africa for at least a year.

**HIM:** Well invite them, the more the merrier.

**HER:** *(steps back)* You don't get it do you? I could never get married.

**HIM:** Not to me anyway.

**HER:** *(quietly)* No, I suppose not.

\*

*(Pause. HIM turns and walks away. MAN walks back, smoking. HER has her back to him.)*

**MAN:** Funny how it makes you feel warmer.

**HER:** *(turns)* What?

**MAN:** Smoking. Funny how smoking makes you feel warmer.

**HER:** I wouldn't know.

**MAN:** *(Moves closer and offers her his cigarette)* Do you want to try?

**HER:** No.

*(MAN turns stagefront continuing to smoke. HER looks at the timetable again and up and down the stage.)*

**MAN:** Want to share a cab?

**HER:** No thanks. I'll wait a bit longer.

**MAN:** It costs approximately \$7.10 to my place from here. Your stop would add a bit - say six bucks each.

**HER:** I'll wait.

**MAN:** Sure you don't want a smoke?

**HER:** No, I mean yes I'm sure.