

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Mothergun

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by Christine Evans

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EXTRACT

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**Characters:**

- A: An injured soldier.
- B: A woman who has lost her children.
- C: A soldier child.
- D: Member of Peacekeeping troops. Translator and dealer.

A, B & C don't have a common language. D translates- after a fashion.

**Setting:**

A refugee camp, somewhere between Europe and Hell. A single scraggly Tree grows on a hill, where much of the play takes place. There is no other vegetation. A single road runs through the camp and on to the rest of the world, but it is guarded at the perimeter to keep the refugees in. **The Set** should be bare and minimal. The indispensable element is the Tree, which B progressively adorns with gold. The tree also has its own luminosity. The Tree could be created from an old broken restaurant umbrella, its spokes the branches, its shelter rags.

**Time:**

Our time. Spring has not come this year. Possibly close to Easter.

**Sound and Music**

The WIND OF VOICES is a semi-constant presence through the play, sometimes at the edge of audibility. The sound is abstracted from the Macedonian and Bulgarian-style village singing, where a drone part underlies a harmonized melody. The sung intervals in this style are often very close, dissonant to Western ears. The drone part forms the constant part of the 'wind', and moments of melody at times rise from it; B may also at times semi-sing her text, using the drone as basis.

**Note on C's gun sounds** : These are written in comic-book style ('kaboom kabang' etc); to indicate the kind of sounds kids make when they play soldiers; but I encourage the actor to find his own 'gun' sounds. C's language is based on the music of war. He is like someone with a Walkman turned up very loud. His jerky movements are a kind of dance and the war/rap track in his head is the beat. His sounds often form a percussive accompaniment to the WIND OF VOICES.

**Note on casting:**

There are no ethnic prerequisites for casting: the only important point is that the camp exists in the fallout from a fratricidal war.

**Note on punctuation**

A slash (/) indicates the point where the next speaker interrupts a line, creating an overlapping effect.

## **PRELUDE**

*Darkness. The WIND OF VOICES rises. It continues through the following.*

*Lights up: C runs onto stage and performs his maneuvers, “shooting” at the audience, at trees, the sky, imaginary enemies. He is dirty and barefoot and his gun is a stick. He vocalizes the sounds of war in the manner of kids playing war games; however this is not a game but his daily drill. His aggressive sounds form an unlikely counterpoint to the WIND OF VOICES.*

*He runs off stage. The WIND OF VOICES fades out.*

**SCENE ONE**

*D and B on the hill by the tree. B listens to the WIND OF VOICES; D can't hear it.*

**D:**

You have to concentrate on what's around you.

*Long pause. B doesn't respond.*

**D:**

If this thing's going to come off I need you/ to concentrate.

**B:**

I fell from the sky, that's the last real thing I remember. Before that was a beach, a long slice of gray moon fallen by water. It was always freezing so the kids would shriek and run around. Kazim had a red sweater-

**D:**

No point thinking about that.

**B:**

You said concentrate.

**D:**

On the here and now. On the thin, the very thin thread to the future. Look around you. A future isn't the most likely outcome.

**B:**

It doesn't matter. Not now.

*D slaps her. The WIND OF VOICES dies down. B doesn't react- then suddenly goes to slap him back. He catches her wrist.*

**B:**

You bastard.

**D:**

That's better. Now. Look. Food, a blanket. These things are gold.

**B:**

I know gold. They are not gold.

**D:**

They're gold. I mined them. I mined you out of the mud and blood. Out of the pit on the road. You were moaning and holding /a red sweater.

**B:**

I don't remember.

**D:**

That's good. You don't need to remember that stuff. You need to remember where the papers are stored. To be waiting for when I can get on food patrol, it'll take a few days. Then you have to be ready. Is that too much?

**B:**

No.

**D:**

Don't worry. I'll do the remembering for you.

*He puts his hand up her skirt.*

**D:**

How does that feel?

*The WIND OF VOICES rises.*

**B:**

Nothing. It feels like nothing

**D:**

That's good.

*They fuck.*

**D:**

That's good.

## SCENE TWO

*At C's "training ground". C is jerking round like a crazy insect, playing shoot-'em-dead with his stick.*

**C:**

Bang bang bang. Kapow. [*makes more gun noises*] Drop your fucking piece. Die dirty dog-

*B walks wearily past, ignoring C.*

**C:**

[*to B*] Drop down bitch. Hit the floor. On your face, right now.

*B pushes his stick out of the way as if swatting a fly, keeps walking*

**C:**

Hey lady, got an apple? Got any cabbage?

*She looks at him blankly. He mimes eating.*

**C:**

Eat, eat. Food, eat.

*B reaches in her sack and gives him half an old carrot. He eats it.*

**C:**

More? More more more more more? More more more?

*C dances around her, begging*

**B:**

Shut up.

*She keeps walking. C aims his stick at her.*

**C:**

Die enemy dog. On your face now. Kachow bang kapow. This is an AK47 big fucking mother gun. Mothergun mother gun. Bang bang kapow

**B:**

You should find some shoes.