

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Weightless

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by Christine Evans

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EXTRACT

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## **CHARACTERS**

LILLIAN: Plastic surgeon. Late 40's. Looks 25.

HORACE: Married to LILLIAN. Early 50's.

SETH: HORACE and LILLIAN'S son. 17.  
Recently released from juvenile rehabilitation  
for violent offenders.

MARION: SETH'S nurse/ lover from Rehab. 23. Looks 30.

ARRENDE: Female Family Servant, played by a BLACK MALE  
ACTOR. Resembles Grace Jones, but scarier.

### **Setting:**

The penthouse of LILLIAN and HORACE, perched high above the Island.

This is a world that bears the relationship to the "real" of a hall of distorting mirrors. The penthouse has a sparse, steel modular feeling to it. New "rooms" should be suggested in the most economical fashion.

There are two levels: a balcony overlooks the central playing area. This balcony space, on which ARRENDE and MARION sometimes appear (part of the world within the apartment), is clearly distinct from the space of ARRENDE'S final apparitional appearance, suspended in mid-air.

### **Note on Style:**

This play was conceived in September '01, as an unlikely love-child of Noel Coward and Ionesco. As its title implies, it is best played *allegro con brio*; while the themes are certainly dark, recognition of this fact is best left to the audience. It's vital that the Family is there to convey a social and political architecture, and not the other way around. If the characters are played in a deep and earnest way and events given their full 'weight', the play will sink without trace, leaving in its wake a bad Family Drama.

### **Note on Horace:**

His transformation into a chicken is not to be made a cheap joke, or the source of winks between director and audience. Chicken suits, in particular, are out of the question.

### **Note on Overlapping Speech:**

A slash (/) indicates the interruption point in a line by the following speaker.

**PRELUDE**

*Each speaker appears as s/he speaks, isolated in a cold pool of light.*

SETH:

[*studying the crossword*] One Across: 'A ruptured moment'.

[*Beat*]

But they're all like that.

ARRENDE:

I wake up and it's the same as being asleep.

SETH:

Is that a clue?

HORACE:

It's a problem-

MARION:

I dream of nothing at all-

LILLIAN:

If we just keep the windows closed-

HORACE:

-Everything gets smaller and smaller-

MARION:

-Or only white things

LILLIAN:

-And everything very clean.

HORACE:

-Until that's all you want.

*Lights.*

**ACT ONE**

**SCENE I**

*We hear MARION humming 'Yellow Submarine' in the dark and see the warm glow of her cigarette. Lights come up like an unwanted morning.*

*MARION hands the cigarette to SETH. He smokes.*

MARION:

[*singing*] It's time- da da da dah.  
[*speaking*] Come on, drinky-drinky

SETH:

Drop it Marion.

*MARION straddles SETH, pushing her breasts in his face.*

MARION:

[*softly*] Take. The fucking. Pills.

SETH:

You want my balls whole, or on a plate?

*ARRENDE enters*

ARRENDE:

Breakfast is served.

*ARRENDE leaves.*

SETH:

Mmmm, breakfast.

*SETH bites her breast. She slaps him, hard.*

MARION:

Sweetie? Wake up, it's Sunday.

*SETH drinks the water, eats the pills.*

MARION:

[*stretches*] I love Sundays.

**ACT 1**

**SCENE II**

LILLIAN and ARRENDE. ARRENDE [*played by a Black male actor*] wears a body-stocking that makes her look naked, in the way a plastic doll is. LILLIAN walks around her with a piece of chalk. There's an easel with an anatomical sketch with little red-topped pins all over it.

LILLIAN:

I'll put on the heating. [*snaps fingers*]  
Are we thinking Grace Jones or something a little more identifiably female?

ARRENDE:

You're the artist.

*Lillian makes some chalk marks on ARRENDE'S thighs.*

LILLIAN:

I think thigh implants might be fun, don't you?

ARRENDE:

[*shrugs*]

LILLIAN:

I think we're past that very anorexic moment, the gazelle thing. Back to those ancient fertility sculptures but with a Sigourney Weaver twist-

ARRENDE:

[*coughs*]

LILLIAN:

Did I offend you?

ARRENDE:

I would like my female parts back.

*Beat.*

LILLIAN:

But you still have them.

ARRENDE:

I thought you knew.

*Enter MARION*

LILLIAN: [*to MARION*]

Later.

MARION:

Oops.

*MARION exits.*

ARRENDE:

I've worked hard for you, haven't I Ma'am.  
And we've tried a lot of new things haven't we. And I have  
never complained. Not when the stitches/ burst

LILLIAN:

We're at the "cutting edge" of live modeling- and I pay / you  
very well for that-

ARRENDE:

It's not/ the pay

LILLIAN:

We help your whole village. And we do all your paperwork so  
that / Immigration -

ARRENDE:

Yes Ma'am. You do all that.

[Beat]

LILLIAN:

Well, then-

ARRENDE:

I would just like-  
I know you are highly highly trained and even though it's  
mostly fat asses and eye bags and thighs for rich white kids I  
know you know about the body, and medicine and you have the  
touch, you have the touch, you have the touch of the Devil, so  
soft and like a cat so delicate, I know you got your skill off  
the Devil and I'm not criticizing you for that, no, I mean  
it's nice to stay young forever and have fingers like silk or  
catgut, and a soul is a messy thing specially for  
Christians, so I don't judge you Ma'am, I see your skill and I  
am ... requesting- I would like you to restore my female parts  
because, because I am afraid that I am no longer alive.

LILLIAN:

Arrende.

ARRENDE:

Yes, Ma'am.

[Beat]

LILLIAN:

A woman doesn't need to have children to feel feminine, in  
fact after / Seth I felt drained of all reason-

ARRENDE:

So you won't do it.

LILLIAN:

I can't. It can't be done.

*LILLIAN and ARRENDE change gears and begin The Game.*

ARRENDE:

In that case, Ma'am I'm afraid I must terminate my employment with you.

LILLIAN:

Oh no! Please do not terminate your employment with us.

ARRENDE:

I am afraid I must terminate my employment with you.

*Enter HORACE.*

HORACE:

Sorry.

*Exit HORACE.*

LILLIAN:

Arrende. Please. [*Beat*] Don't make me beg.

ARRENDE:

But I must make you beg.

LILLIAN:

Oh no! Please don't make me beg.

*Enter SETH.*

SETH:

Mom, where's Mar- [*takes in the scene*] Shit.

*Exit SETH.*

ARRENDE:

I'm afraid Madam must resort to her knees.

*LILLIAN kneels. ARRENDE takes the felt pen and pushes LILLIAN'S head forwards.*

ARRENDE:

[*her hand following her words*]

Now here. Here is the 'string of pearls'.

And here... is the center line of the body.

If you cut along here, why every organ is available to your outstretched hand. And one organ...one little organ... is right in harm's way. The Spanish Inquisition called it the devil's teat.

[*Beat*]

Do you want me to stop?

LILLIAN:

[*mumbles*]

ARRENDE:

What's that? Speak up Madam. I can't hear you.  
Do you want me to stop?

LILLIAN:

*[quietly, head bowed]*  
No, don't stop.

*ARRENDE continues tracing a line down LILLIAN'S body.  
We hear LILLIAN'S breathing, then the sound of the building,  
groaning.*

**ACT 1**

**SCENE III**

*SETH is looking at the crossword. MARION is looking at herself in the mirror. There is a thin crack in the floor.*

SETH:

"Hedge your bets, the enemy's loaded". - Marion?

MARION:

Is that a new song, sweet pea?

SETH:

Nah, it's a clue.

MARION:

I dunno. -Do you think I should get a boob job?

SETH:

*[musing]* Hedge. Loaded. Enemy.

*Enter ARRENDE. She glances at the crossword.*

ARRENDE:

"Hegemony".

*Exit ARRENDE. Beat.*

MARION:

I dunno. Cryptics are bullshit.

SETH:

Yeah.

*[Beat]*

SETH:

Do you think I should get a cock ring?

MARION:

It's your body, angel.

SETH:

Hah! "Hegemony"! *[writes it in]*

**ACT 1**

**SCENE IV**

*Split scene: HORACE/ARRENDE [in darkness]; MARION/ LILLIAN [visible].*

HORACE:

Oh oh oh.

LILLIAN:

I just wanted to thank you personally for taking the position at such short notice.

HORACE

*[sounding very fake]* Oh baby, that's it.

LILLIAN:

I realize that Seth is a 24 hour job-

MARION:

-Person.

LILLIAN:

Good distinction, yes. You seem like a very caring person.

HORACE:

Tell me you loove it...

MARION:

It's my profession.

LILLIAN:

I like that in a woman. Professionalism.

ARRENDE:

*[through inconveniently full mouth]*  
I loove it.

MARION:

So, what can I do for you?

HORACE:

Ohhh suck it baby... ooh harder... Ooh...

LILLIAN:

Well, as a way of showing my appreciation, I'm offering/ a complimentary procedure.

HORACE:

You're not trying. Talk dirty to me.

LILLIAN:

Seeing as this is a, a challenging job-

MARION:

Actually it's not so tough-