

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Loss

by Maryanne Lynch

EXTRACT

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CHARACTERS

Alice: an 8-year-old girl

Dolores: her 40-year-old mother and a single parent

Toni: a 30-year-old married mother of one

Radio host: a 50-plus man

Radio callers: various

SYNOPSIS

Eight-year-old Alice McDonald has gone missing from her home in suburban Melbourne. Her disappearance arouses public outrage and private anguish. For the general public, the case becomes a cause celebre as it drags in its wake ancient fears, new dangers and enduring prejudices. For two women who, in different ways, both 'know' Alice, her vanishing raises more personal questions.

The first, Alice's mother Dolores, moves through a series of reckonings and relationships around the chance of her daughter coming home while the other woman, a neighbour called Toni, develops a growing suspicion that her own husband is somehow involved in the mystery.

These personal experiences are contrasted with the public scrutiny of the case in order to comment on the way in which crimes against children are deeply imbued, beyond their obvious condemnation, with the cultural values of contemporary Australia.

1. **DOLORES AND TONI:**

(IMPERSONAL VOICE #1)

Australia is a country in which ...

(IMPERSONAL VOICE #2, OVERLAPPING WHISPERING)

you never think it'll happen to you.

2. **FX: A GLASS SHATTERING ON A TILED FLOOR: WITH REVERBERATION**

3. **ALICE:**

When I grow up, I'm gunna see the world.

4. **FX: "PUSHBIKE" UNDER SPEECH**

5. **ALICE:**

(VOICE PROGRESSIVELY BECOMING MORE REMOTE, AS IF GOING DOWN A TUNNEL) I'm

gunna get on a plane and fly to every country beginning with A. A is the first letter of my name. A is the first letter of the alphabet. A is the beginning, like me. Australia, Austria, America, ...um ...

Argentina, ... ummm ... Arizona! In Arizona there are cowboys but I'll be a cowgirl. I'll wear a big red hat and big red boots. You call them cowboy boots but I'll just change the name. When I was little I wished I had a different name but now I like it so long as it's spelt right. A-L-I-C-E. Alice.

"Introducing ... Cowgirl Alice on her trusty horse Caramel. See this daring pair perform amazing tricks and death-defying feats!" I'm gunna go there one day, to Arizona and the rest, flying on a plane first class with seats that go down and my own TV. I will watch whatever I like and float above the clouds.

6. **FX: "PUSHBIKE" FADES OUT**

7. **ALICE:**

(LONG WAY OFF) I'm gunna be famous.

8. **FX: A CAR DOOR SLAMMING SHUT AND A CAR TAKING OFF QUICKLY IN THE DISTANCE**

1. **RADIO HOST:**

And then she vanished, without a trace.
2. **DOLORES:**

No!!!!
3. **RADIO HOST:**

A young girl went missing one week ago today. Disappeared, into thin air, and in her absence has caught the nation's attention. Over the past seven days we've asked ourselves the same questions. Where is she? How is she? Who is she? These are questions demanding answers and answer them we must. Yet, for me, there's a bigger question. Is this a sorry case of misadventure—being in the wrong place at the wrong time—or the sign of a sickness at the very heart of our society? I ask you this question now.
4. **FX: BEEP**
5. **RADIO CALLER 1:**

(ON AIR) Whoever did this is an animal! They should be locked up and the key thrown away.
6. **FX: BEEP**
7. **RADIO CALLER 2:**

(ON AIR) I put it down to a lack of discipline. And values. People have no values any more. Look at TV ads. Sex. Sex. Sex.
9. **FX: BEEP**
10. **RADIO CALLER 3:**

(ON AIR) You've gotta look at the facts. Fair and square.
11. **FX: BEEP**
12. **RADIO HOST:**

Meanwhile, somewhere sometime somehow, a little girl has vanished, just like that.