

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Train Dancing

by Michael Watts

EXTRACT

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TRAIN DANCING

THE CHARACTERS

Ulysses Black, late teens.

Violet Black, late teens.

Molly White, middle aged.

Ed White, middle aged. In a wheelchair.

Some of the text in train dancing is sung. The rest of the text has been designed to be underscored or complemented by musical composition.

ULYSSES

When I was five my grandfather told me about the first time he saw a train. He thought it was a devil-devil. He threw his spears at it and ran. He hid for two days. He swept his tracks away. He walked along the rocky outcrops, he used all his skill and was really careful because he knew that devil-devil would follow him back to camp and kill all his family. He laughed about it when he told me. But it was a serious story.

VIOLET

At five years of age I was a feral little babe.

A wild young thing,

Already filled with rage.

I'd wander from camp to camp,

Sometimes I'd get a feed,

But no one wanted me.

By eight I'd been raped

More times than you'd want to know,

By nine I was sniffing petrol,

I had nowhere to go.

Pregnant before I was twelve,

And I thought to myself, well –

Did I really want to bring

Another into this hell.
I mourn the day welfare took
My baby away from me.
Because I wanted to love her
And hold her for eternity,
Nobody listened to me.

I've been living in this riverbed for two years too long.
Still looking for a feed, a place to call my home.
Still drinking and fighting and scratching a feed.
It seems it's just the way it's going to be.
Since no one wanted me.

Ulysses. Take me away from the river.

ULYSSES

I will take you away, away from the river, and all this loveless drinking and fighting
with their heads bleeding and screaming and the cold grog bloated carcasses lying
there waiting for the river to come down and wash them all away.

VIOLET

Take me away Ulysses, take me away from the river to a place where our love will
grow a garden and to where the sun warms our perfect skins.

ULYSSES

A place of hope, where it's not so heavy duty.

A place for us, an altar to your beauty.

VIOLET

Our beauty. And we will take off our clothes and hold each other and you will sing your hot love words to me 'till my body swells and blooms and bursts into a thousand blazing galaxies. Take me away from the river. Yes. Yes. Yes,

.....

MOLLY

What miserable lives they live, those black kids down in the riverbed. All that drunkenness and fighting. No food. No love.

ED

And as this beer-smelling town sleeps, all is quiet except for the song of the freight-train coming through his lonely country. This country that God forgot. It's two o'clock in the morning and I'm bringing this train home and dreaming of a T-bone steak.

MOLLY

That's my Ed.

ED

A beer, and lying between Molly's great white breasts.

MOLLY

And I'll lay back wifely like.

ED

A quick root.

MOLLY

And let him stick his dripping willy into my tired old hole.

ED

Then catch some sleep.

MOLLY

While I dream.

ED

Before the footy starts on the telly.

MOLLY

About the dusting to be done and how if I were a God I'd beat the living crap out of the sun for shining like an arsehole every day.

ED

Two thousand tons of freight train. Coming down the line.

MOLLY

I used to dream of the train coming.

ED

Two thousand horses in each loco.

MOLLY

It brought laughter and little luxuries like fresh fruit and stockings.

ED

And the noise up here, it's deafening.

MOLLY

And newspapers.

ED

But outside it's quiet.

MOLLY

And handsome men in uniforms.

ED

You ride high above the country, high above the darkness and nothing can touch you.

You belong in this country, like the rivers and the mountains.

MOLLY

There wasn't a lot to do back then. We were either waiting for the train or watching

the weather. When we got married I used to wait for Ed.

ED

The train's always been here. It's our first dreaming. The snake, and I'm Captain

Starlight. The original hero.

MOLLY

Always waiting for the train. He was different then. Much shyer. Handsome even.

ED

Two thousand tons of freight train, coming down the line. And all you tiny little

people down there, living your tiny little lives in your tiny little houses, look out, this

train is coming and it's going to keep on coming, and coming and coming.

.....

ED