

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# The Rood Screen

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by Donna Abela

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EXTRACT

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## **THE ROOD SCREEN**

1.

*THEODORA AND CELESTE AT HOME. CARL AND ROB APPROACHING.*

CELESTE            My Beloved? My full-hearted Love Queen?

THEODORA        That's me.

CELESTE            My Gorgeous One?

THEODORA        Yes?

CELESTE            You are a dish of caramelised peaches, lolling  
back on a bed of sweet baked ricotta.

THEODORA        Am I?

CELESTE            Oh yes. As intoxicating as crushed cardamom in  
hot apricot crumble.

THEODORA        And you...

CELESTE            Yes?

THEODORA        Sex Goddess Extraordinaire.

CELESTE            That's me.

THEODORA        Are a night delirious with jasmine. A suburb full  
of cicadas mad with summer.

CELESTE            Am I?

THEODORA        Oh yes. The pungent yield under a frangipani  
tree is nothing compared to the lushness of us.

CARL                They're in love.

ROB                 Can't you tell?

THEO & CELESTE    Out in the ocean of it.

CARL                Beyond the beached blue bottles, the rotting  
seaweed and lost thongs.

THEO & CELESTE ... we float... out here... akimbo.

ROB                    *Beyond bloody flies! There's sand in me chips. Who's nicked me frigging wallet?*

CARL                  But swimming out passed the breakers was no picnic.

ROB                    No. They've been concussed by boofheads on boogie boards coming in for the kill

CARL                  dumped onto rocks, covered head to foot in oyster cuts

ROB                    caught in rips, right out of their depth, and dragged back to shore

CARL                  gulping and coughing

ROB                    togs twisted

CARL                  tits everywhere

ROB                    the whole beach staring

CARL                  whispering

ROB                    sniggering at their fluffy bits.

THEO & CELESTE But now... we're Iron Women, Bronze Medallion Babes... in deep... in the swim of it... in this, forever and ever.

*THEODORA SEPARATES.*

THEODORA            Or are we?

CELESTE              Darling?

*THEODORA LEAVES.*

CELESTE              She wasn't in bed. Had been restless. Had left the back door open. I walked the streets we walk when it's too hot to be inside, looked on the oval where she sometimes runs, but I couldn't find her. I went to Callan Point, Ben Buckler, The

Gap. Nothing. I went to clubs, back streets, searching. Security guards found me crying *where is she?* They knew nothing. The street cleaners knew nothing... But I found her, eventually, asleep on the steps of St Marys. I wouldn't let go of her. Got a cab, took her home, took the day off work. Made parmigiana for lunch. My love had returned.

*THEODORA AND CELESTE AT HOME. CARL AND ROB APPROACHING.*

ROB                    We love their place. This great-hearted chaos. There's always music on, folk-punk usually, a cappella jazzy stuff.

THEO & CELESTE    Not The Indigo Girls. Can't stand them.

THEODORA            Have you heard of The Slits?

CELESTE              This obnoxious chick group from the seventies?

THEODORA            Brilliant.

CARL                  Once, we found them upset. Thought, bloody hell, can't believe it... The Icons of Bent Stability are splitting up!

CELESTE              But The Tiddas had split up.

THEODORA            Not us.

ROB                    Thank Christ.

CARL                  But thinking they *had* split up... I mean, if they ever did, I'd be... really... cauterised by it.

THEO                  Carl! Darling!

CELESTE              Rob! Come in!

THEODORA            Never mind the bikes

CARL                  or snorkels in the hallway

ROB                    wet suits, tents, yoga mats and

CARL & ROB           mmm

CARL                    the ambush of good cooking.

CELESTE                My lightly-fried zucchini flower

THEODORA             my almond-stuffed fig

CELESTE                my delectable bulb of slow roasted garlic.

*ROB TRIPS.*

ROB                    Nice kayak.

CELESTE                Fibreglass. Not plastic.

THEODORA             Garage sale. This morning. Give us a kiss, ugly.

CELESTE                Got a drum kit, too. In the sunroom.

THEODORA             Celeste swore she needed it.

CELESTE                It's exactly that sky blue colour. You need a riesling.

THEODORA             Must come for a paddle.

CELESTE                Tomorrow. You busy?

THEODORA             We're taking your car. Ours hasn't got roof racks.

CELESTE                Dolmade?

THEODORA             She's made enough to fill a Marrickville deli.

CELESTE                Well, *half* a deli.

ROB                    Celeste's the abundant one.

CELESTE                Char-grilled pork glazed with a cinnamon-based sauce, served with honey-smothered quince. Sound good?

ROB                    They bought a house near the Honeymoon Café, because Celeste, like the Portuguese, buys her cakes by the kilo.

CARL                   Theodora, the eldest daughter of flawed Catholics, scrubbed the cupboards.

ROB                    But Celeste burst into the backyard. Planted aquilegias next to eggplants, tomatoes near plum trees near flannel flowers. Flung seeds everywhere, labelled nothing

CARL                   stunned Theodora, who had to resist her compulsion to dig it all up, re-plant it in rows, straight, labelled and separate.

ROB                    But now... there's peace lilies in the bath tub... a kitchen full of African violets that forget to stop flowering... and the exchanged extravagance of rose gold and garnet rings.

CARL                   They're opposites who've brought out the best in each other. It's meant-to-be. Made in heaven...

*THEODORA SEPARATES.*

THEODORA            Or is it?

CELESTE             Theodora?

*THEODORA LEAVES.*

CELESTE             She'd been restless again. Got up, to wash up, I thought, but she wasn't in the house. I took to the streets. She wasn't at Abla's eating kataifi with pistachio nuts, her favourite. Wasn't watching the hoons from the footpath at Bar Italia. Wasn't in Bronte pool watching the moon rise, I checked. I wandered onto the sand, wasn't thinking. It was late, I was stupid, bashed up. They took my bag. I walked back to the city. Remembered, *St Mary's!* Went straight there. The steps were empty, but...

through a missing chink of stained glass, I hear her voice...

THEODORA            My conscience is clear...

CELESTE           The door's padlocked. But there's a vent open, so I crawl in, come up through the crypt, find her lying there, in the aisle...

THEODORA       ... but has God turned his back?

CELESTE        Theodora? My olive grove? My orchard?

THEODORA       Yes?

CELESTE        Come home.

THEODORA       Have you noticed?

CELESTE        What?

THEODORA       God's roof. It looks like a boat. See the ribs, the way they curve? But the boat's upside down. Capsized. See?

CELESTE        Come home.

THEODORA       If I said the word *lesbian* would the rood screen collapse?

CELESTE        What?

THEODORA       That screen between us and the altar.

CELESTE        Theo...

THEODORA       Were the spires built for me... or in spite of me?

*PAUSE.*

*THEODORA AND CELESTE TELLING A STORY TO CARL AND ROB.*

CELESTE        Fucken *lesbians!*

THEODORA       Rolled it round his tongue like phlegm then spat it at us.

ROB             Bastard.

CARL            Were you kissing?

THEODORA       Walking back from the video shop.