

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Titania's Boy

by Alana Valentine

EXTRACT

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CHARACTERS

Victor Bellette
doubles as:

35, A regional high school teacher
Oberon, Lord of the Fairies
Mustardseed, a fairy
Onogoro, a Soothsayer

Meena Saraf
doubles as:

39, A healer
Titania, Queen of the Fairies
Fire Fighter (Lee)
Peasblossom, a fairy

Pradepan Saraf
doubles as:

15, her son, a high school student
Fire Fighter (Ian)

SET

The play is set in a regional town, and in the imagination.

ACT ONE
Scene One

MEENA SARAF is folding a pile of men's clothes into a charity plastic bag, when PRADEPAN SARAF enters. He sits for a moment watching her. MEENA holds up a jumper then rolls it into the bag. PRADEPAN leaps up and grabs it from her.

PRADEPAN Not that.

MEENA It's all going.

PRADEPAN Not this, please. I gave him this for Father's Day.

MEENA I don't care.

PRADEPAN I want to keep it.

MEENA And do what with it?

PRADEPAN Just keep it.

MEENA It's going. Now put it in the bag.

Pause.

PRADEPAN It will fit me in a few years.

MEENA And do you think I'll want to look at you in it?

Pause.

MEENA holds out the bag. PRADEPAN reluctantly relinquishes it.

MEENA I'll buy you a new one.

PRADEPAN It's not the jumper.

MEENA Then I'll buy you a jacket.

PRADEPAN How much are you going to throw out?

MEENA Everything.

Pause.

PRADEPAN You could at least have given him a chance to come and pick it up.

MEENA I don't want him anywhere near this house.

PRADEPAN What? Never?

MEENA That's right.

PRADEPAN I thought....eventually.....

MEENA Not now, not later, not ever.

PRADEPAN He's still my father.

MEENA Is he? Has he acted like a father? Or has he acted like a fifteen year old school boy?

PRADEPAN I'm a fifteen year old schoolboy.

MEENA Yes, and you act more responsibly than your so called father.

MEENA continues to stuff clothes into the bag, not folding them now, just stuffing them in.

PRADEPAN Stop it.

MEENA I want to be rid of him. I want to be rid of everything about him.

PRADEPAN Stop it.

They struggle. The bag is emptied of its contents. Pradepan grabs the jumper to him. MEENA grabs the other end so that the jumper is stretched between them.

PRADEPAN You hate him!

MEENA I'm certainly trying. It's hard for me, because I'm not used to trying to loathe someone. I'm finding it hard to go to that extreme. But that's where I'm aiming for. When I think about what he's put me through and you through. The shame of his sordid little affair with that student. All through the local papers. What do you think it's like for me? Walking out into that? I'm well

on the way to hating him.

PRADEPAN You can't keep me away from him forever.

MEENA Just watch me.

PRADEPAN relinquishes the jumper. MEENA falls back, the jumper on her.

PRADEPAN stands watching as MEENA flings the jumper from her and gets up, stuffing the clothes back into the plastic bag as she exits.

Scene Two

The local creek, a natural environment with gum trees and currawongs.

PRADEPAN prowls the stage, upset. He takes a book out of his bag and hurls it across to the other side of the stage.

OBERON, in full fairy attire, enters and picks up the book. He reads from it.

OBERON *(Reading)* Do you amend it then: it lies to you.
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy
To be my henchman.

TITANIA enters, in full fairy attire.

TITANIA Set your heart at rest:
The fairy-land buys not a child of me.
His mother was a vot'ress of my order
And in the spiced Indian air, by night,
full often hath she gossipt by my side;
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood;
When we have laught to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wonton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following, - her womb then rich with my young squire,-
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON walks over to Pradepan and gives him the book. Pradepan watches, enchanted. OBERON turns to Titania.

OBERON Too long you would have him be a boy,
Titania. It is now that he needs the instruction of a man.

TITANIA Not such instruction as comes from you, Fairy Lord.

OBERON And why not?

TITANIA Would you teach him to take mistresses then, and lie
to those he keeps as kin? Are these the measures of
such men as you?

OBERON Yes, I would teach him to admire beauty where he found
it and admit wrongdoings with courage.

TITANIA Admit wrongdoings when they have been found out and not
before.

OBERON You voice rings with the venom of revenge not a care
for this changeling's charge.

TITANIA There is nothing he needs to know that I cannot give him.
There is nothing of the so called lores of masculinity that
he cannot learn from those that attend me.

OBERON You have in your charge a boy child, and boy he will
ever be if you do not now allow him to learn from me.

TITANIA Would I have him tutored by such as you? Never.

OBERON But think again, Fairy Queen, he will not love you for
too tight a care.

TITANIA What know you of love, Oberon? What know you of this
child whom I have raised since birth?

OBERON I know that he is of the age where only a man can answer
his questions.

TITANIA You want his custody only because you see how much I
desire it.

OBERON No.

TITANIA You are provoked not by honour but by jealousy.

OBERON Untrue.

Pause, as Titania considers.

TITANIA What are these things that you would teach him then?

OBERON Such are the things that pass only between men.

TITANIA Aye. Name only the general areas of discussion. I would not have you speak of secret things.

OBERON Fairy Queen, I may not even speak of such things in generalities.

TITANIA What? Must he learn the operations of his manhood, methinks there is many a man raised by men who does not know the rudiments of its operation.

OBERON Would you tutor him in such contempt for his own sex?

TITANIA I would tutor him only in more respect for mine than you have ever displayed.

OBERON But you cannot know your own sex in the way that he must need to know it.

TITANIA I think he will know it too soon from some pretty fairy of my train.

OBERON If he does not know it already he is already spoiled.

TITANIA Then it is not the machinery of his flesh you would discuss?

OBERON I would not have him discuss anything. I would only allow him to be with me and learn the model of being a man.

TITANIA Such a model he can do without.

OBERON For his sake I will overrule you.

TITANIA Nay, you will not.

OBERON Here is not an end to our dispute.

TITANIA Here is all the end I will concede.

Oberon and Titania exit. Pradepan looks in the book. He reads.

PRADEPAN Give me that boy and I will go with thee.

Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies away:
We shall chide downright if I longer stay.

Well go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove

Till I torment thee for this injury -

Scene Three

PRADEPAN puts on the jumper and tie of his school uniform and sits down, curled up, reading.

Lights change to indicate the transition to a school playground.

VICTOR BELLETTE enters.

VICTOR Pradepan.

PRADEPAN Mr Bellette.

VICTOR How you going?

PRADEPAN Fine thanks, sir.

Pradepan returns to his reading. Pause. Victor sits down.

VICTOR What are you reading?

PRADEPAN Just a book.

VICTOR Indulge me. We teachers have a fascination for what young men might *choose* to read in their spare time.

PRADEPAN It's called 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

VICTOR Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound...

PRADEPAN You know it?

VICTOR I taught it.

PRADEPAN But you're a Science teacher.

VICTOR Not when you're in a one teacher school.

PRADEPAN Have you taught at a place like that?

VICTOR Just for a year. Then you lucky lot got me.

PRADEPAN (Grunts)

VICTOR (*Indicating the book*) I suggest you keep that to yourself.

PRADEPAN Why?

VICTOR Reading outside the syllabus. That's a dangerous thing to do in your peer group isn't it?

PRADEPAN Whatever.

VICTOR Dangerous bordering on totally unacceptable.

PRADEPAN I couldn't care less what they think.

VICTOR Who?

PRADEPAN Anyone.

Pause.

VICTOR So if I suggested ripping out the pages and pasting them inside the covers of a 'Rugby League Week' magazine you wouldn't be tempted to comply.

Pradepan smiles.

PRADEPAN No.

VICTOR Things alright at home?

PRADEPAN Fine.

Pause.

VICTOR Well, if you ever need anyone to talk to don't even think about talking to me.

PRADEPAN What?

VICTOR Reading outside the syllabus classifies you as a nerd. Getting friendly with a teacher...well...only a real head case would do that.

PRADEPAN Yeah.

VICTOR Of course, some of the most interesting people in the world started out as head cases.

PRADEPAN There's no problem. Really.

VICTOR Then I'll let you go back to your reading.

PRADEPAN returns to his book. But Mr Bellette doesn't go.

VICTOR Tell me, does your mother know what she's doing?

PRADEPAN What do you mean?

VICTOR In the health food store. I heard she was a bit of a whizz with the herbal remedies.

PRADEPAN I really wouldn't know, sir.

There is the sound of a school bell. PRADEPAN picks up his school bag and exits. VICTOR watches him go.

Scene Four

Meena in the Health Food Store. This is a theatrical representation with potions, herbs and tonics in larger than life representation.

Meena is behind the counter when Victor enters.

MEENA Good morning. Can I help you?

VICTOR Mrs Saraf?