

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Covert

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by Robert Jeffreys

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EXTRACT

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**CHARACTERS**

MAJOR PEACOCK-	male, forties.
CAPTAIN SMITH-	male. thirties.
CAPTAIN LEWIS-	female. thirties.
PRIVATE COPELY-	male. twenties.
PRIVATE BROWN-	male. twenties.
SHADDOCK-	female, twenties.
GENERAL SHEPHERD-	male, fifties

COVERT

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

USC IS A BACK LIT CAMP BED WITH MOSQUITO NETTING SURROUNDING IT, SILHOUETTED WITHIN THE MOSQUITO NETTING ARE THE SHAPES AND SOUNDS OF A COUPLE MAKING LOVE. THERE IS A CLOTHES RACK UPON WHICH ARE TWO CAPTAINS' UNIFORMS AND A BULKY MILITARY PHONE.

THE AMBIENT SOUNDS ARE THOSE OF THE JUNGLE, IT COULD ALSO BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE THE STEAMY HEAT OF A MIST SURROUNDING THE COUPLE.

GRADUALLY THE SOUNDS OF THE TAPE COME TO VOLUME: THE COUPLE ON THE CAMPBED DO NOT HEAR THIS.

DSL OUT OF THE POOL OF LIGHT THAT SMITH WILL USE WHEN ANSWERING THE PHONE, COPELY IS ON THE FLOOR, ON HIS KNEES DOUBLED OVER, HIS GROANS VERY GRADUALLY INTRUDE ON TO THE FOLLOWING SCENE.

BROWN IS STANDING MOTIONLESS ALL BUT INVISIBLE.

*SHADDOCK*

*Mobile Two, Mobile Two, this is Romeo Romeo. We have intruders. Sector 97, repeat, intruders sector 97. Intruders heading North to lake. Switch to Emergency channel. Over.*

*BROWN*

*Romeo, Romeo. This is Mobile Two. Who? What? Heading North to lake? Over..*

*SHADDOCK*

*Mobile Two. Repeat Code Orange. Two intruder violations, following tree line North in sector ninea sevena. Over.*

*BROWN*

*Ours?*

*SHADDOCK*

*Mobile. Sector should be clear. Access violation Code Orange. Where are you? Over..*

*BROWN*

*Romeo. Give us a better landmark? Over..*

SHADDOCK

*Mobile Two. One hundred meters from the rise, heading north. Where are you? Over.*

BROWN

*On our way. Go Copely.*

COPELY

*Where? Where?*

BROWN

*No to the right. To the right...Over.*

SHADDOCK OFF RADIO

*Shit.*

SHADDOCK

*Mobile This is Romeo, Romeo. They could be armed. Over.*

BROWN

*Romeo, Romeo. How armed? Over.*

COPELY

*Shit.*

SHADDOCK

*Mobile Two. Mobile two. They've seen you. They are running east. Turn to the left; you'll get them at the fence. Go. Go. Go. I can see you. You'll get them. Go. Over.*

BROWN

*What are they fucking armed with? No, No, oh fuck.*

SHADDOCK

*Not sure. I thought I saw a rifle. Over.*

BROWN

*Get back up. We spotted em. Copely to the left, cut them off, go, go ,go,*

COPELY

*I am. I am.*

BROWN

*...that one, that one, yes look at the bastard run...*

SHADDOCK

*Go off air. Go off air. You idiot.*

BROWN

*Yes, yes we got him, he's fucked, straight at him, straight at him...*

COPELY

*All right.*

BROWN

*...now, now, you fucking missed him, that way, that way, there he is, there he is.. where did he go...*

[A CRY CAN BE HEARD]

COPELY

*Fuck! I think I hit him.*

BROWN

*Reverse, reverse, reverse.*

COPELY

*I am. It's going down.*

THE PHONE RINGS.

SMITH

Captain Smith.

SHADDOCK

*Captain Smith. Code Red. Repeat Code Red.*

SMITH

SMITH COMMENCES DRESSING. Details.

SHADDOCK

*Mobile Two are exchanging fire with two intruders in sector 97.*

SMITH

Are they taking heavy or light arms fire?

SILHOUETTE OF LEWIS ON OTHER SIDE OF THE BED, STANDING, STRETCHING LUXURIOUSLY, JUXTAPOSES THE ACTIONS OF SMITH.

*Light.* SHADDOCK

Number. SMITH

*Two, visible.* SHADDOCK

And? SMITH

*Only two.* SHADDOCK

Emergency channel? SMITH

SHADDOCK  
*I can't communicate with them Sir. It's a hands free set in the vehicle and they have failed to switch off.*

Who is it? SMITH

*Brown and Copely.* SHADDOCK

SMITH  
SWEARS AWAY FROM THE PHONE. Get the other mobiles to them and send a vehicle for me. HANGS UP PHONE.

LEWIS COMES INTO THE LIGHT SR WITH A SHEET AROUND HER, SMITH PAUSES. [THE SOUND OF COPELY'S GROANS BEGIN TO IMPOSE THEMSELVES] SMITH TURNS, IS CAUGHT BETWEEN A QUICK EXIT AND EMBRACING HER, THEN THEY KISS PASSIONATELY.

THE TAPE RESUMES AS SMITH AND LEWIS KISS

BROWN  
*Watch out.*  
*Aghhhhhhhhhhhh*

TWO GUN SHOTS THROUGH GLASS ARE HEARD. SPLINTERING, SLICING, SPLASHING, DEATH CRY IS HEARD.

*SHADDOCK*

*Fuck.*

AS THE LIGHT FADES ON SMITH AND LEWIS A NIGHT JUNGLE DAPPLED GREEN PUTS COPELY IN HALF LIGHT. HIS GROANS ARE CONSISTENT, AND PAINFUL TO HEAR.

BROWN

Shut it Copely. PACING BY BROWN Shut the fuck up.

BROWN PACES PAST COPELY TURNS PUSHES COPELY WITH HIS BOOT.

Shut up. PAUSE Fuck. Shut up.

BROWN MOVES OFF SL

COPELY'S GROANS REMAIN CONSISTENT.

SCENE 2 AM 14<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2000

SUDDENLY HARSH LIGHT FILLS STAGE RIGHT, ALONG WITH THE DEAFENING SOUNDS OF JUNGLE LIFE, BY THE TIME THE LIGHT HITS SL COPELY AND BROWN ARE STANDING, AT EASE, WITHOUT THEIR WEAPONS, IN SMART DRESS UNIFORM. BOTH HAVE CUTS ON THEIR FACES.

CENTER STAGE RIGHT IS A TABLE. THREE CHAIRS. THE CHAIRS ARE USC. ON THE TABLE IS A JUG OF WATER, A TAPE RECORDER WITH MICROPHONE ON A STAND, AN ORDINANCE MAP, PEN AND PAPER. SMITH HAS A VERY PRECISE MILITARY MANNER, WHICH HE EXHIBITS WITH THE MEN BUT EXPERIENCES DIFFICULTY DETERMINING HIS MANNER WHEN LEWIS AND THE MEN ARE IN THE SAME SCENE.

PEACOCK ENTERS USR A LITTLE UNEASY. HE IS A CAREER SOLDIER WHO STARTED IN THE LOWER RANKS AND HAS BEEN PROMOTED UP TO MAJOR. MAJOR IS THE HIGHEST RANK HE CAN ACHIEVE FOR HE NEVER, AND CAN NOT, ATTEND OFFICER TRAINING AT DUNTROON. HE IS FROM A WORKING CLASS BACKGROUND AND SEES SMITH [WHO DID ATTEND OFFICER TRAINING, COMPLETED SEVERAL DEGREES AND CAN, AND POSSIBLLY WILL, RISE TO A GENERAL'S RANK] AS SLIGHTLY INTIMIDATING INTELLECTUALLY AND ADOPTS A BLUFF, BELLIGERENT MANNER TO COUNTER THIS FEELING.

PEACOCK

Who was the idiot who came up with hands free sets anyway?

SMITH

It was a health and safety issue, Sir.

PEACOCK

Who's running this war?

SMITH

PR says it's a peacekeeping mission.

PEACOCK

Fuck them. No more hands free sets.

SMITH

Yes sir.

PEACOCK

You can't have a shit around here without half a dozen boffins sitting somewhere deciding how you can wipe your arse. They think a peacekeeping mission is like a fucking picnic. They have no idea that ninety percent of the population resent the hell out of us being here and the other ten percent know their days are limited the moment we leave.

SMITH

Yes Sir. I'll be doing a full audio taping of the debrief?

PEACOCK

You can bet your balls on that. The General has made it very clear that there are to be no fuck-ups, he is under pressure, the minister's under pressure. No fuck-ups Smith.

SMITH

I'm fine with that.

PEACOCK

So, tell me, how do you see this panning out?

SMITH

Sorry Sir?

PEACOCK

Don't be coy Smith. We've got the eyes of the world on us. Let me impress upon you, if heads role, yours will roll before mine. You clear?

SMITH

Yes Sir.

PEACOCK

It better be. Now, you are the genius, tell me.

SMITH

The men engaged an enemy, that were a known and armed threat to the lives of our personnel on the base. And a possible de-stabilising effect on the efforts of the international peace keeping force.

PEACOCK

Sounds like you have written it already. So when do the military police get all this?

SMITH

Just before the media.

PEACOCK

You will get the men's answers to support this?

SMITH

It's the facts.

PEACOCK

LAUGHTER If you can make that happen, without any flack, I will personally ensure your next promotion ASAP

SMITH

I appreciate that Sir.

PEACOCK

You mean you expect it. Don't fuck with me. PAUSE Which brings me to this, *Captain Lewis*.

SMITH

Yes Sir. She won't be up to this.

PEACOCK

And you'd be the one to know, what she is up to, from what I've heard.

SMITH

There are complications in this one.

PEACOCK

I don't want her sitting in on this. It's the General's idea. 'to look after the morale of the men.' What do they want with morale? If this joint doesn't give you a hard on everyday nothing will. So are you porking her Smith?

SMITH

She is not army.

PEACOCK

She completed her KFS training.

SMITH

Five weeks. She has learnt how to march, wear her uniform and salute.

PEACOCK

Tell me something new.

SMITH

She is very idealistic.

PEACOCK

You're well suited.

SMITH

She is politically left, Sir.

PEACOCK

REACTION She's in uniform Captain. She is serving her country.

SMITH

Her Captain's rank is more for the amenities of the place.

PEACOCK

You don't have to build your case for fraternising. What can she do? It will open her eyes a bit.

SMITH

Sir her background is as a psychology lecturer at a West Australian Uni. She has no experience and I know she will not understand how we operate.

PEACOCK

How long have you known her?

SMITH

We were at school together.

PEACOCK

Just how long have you been with her Smith?

SMITH

We'd see each other when we can.

PEACOCK  
You're not married to her?

SMITH  
No Sir.

PEACOCK  
Bit of stray stuff is she?

SMITH  
She is not stray stuff. Sir.

PEACOCK  
What is she then?

SMITH  
We have our differences.

PEACOCK  
I've been married thirty years and I don't think my wife and I have ever seen eye to eye.

SMITH  
Yes Sir.

PEACOCK  
So. Why haven't you made an honest woman of her?

SMITH  
Our careers haven't allowed it.

PEACOCK  
Bullshit. Think you can do better eh?

SMITH  
PAUSE No.

PEACOCK  
How did she get here? PAUSE [SMITH'S REACTION IS NON COMMITAL SUGGESTING THERE WAS SOME PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN LEWIS' POSTING] A civilian? Here? When we are still engaging hostiles?

SMITH  
She did her doctorate on the long-term trauma of soldiers who successfully engaged the enemy during the Vietnam War.

Who killed the enemy?  
PEACOCK

Yes.  
SMITH

And?  
PEACOCK

The General was required to engage a non-military professional who could 'assist the men who have engaged the enemy'.  
SMITH

You're joking?  
PEACOCK

Afraid not Sir.  
SMITH

We've had Civilian Consultants before. What usually happens?  
PEACOCK

Some one is attached to them and basically every thing they see is screened before hand. If they see anything else they are subject to a secrecy act.  
SMITH

So what are we worrying about?  
PEACOCK

I don't know how she will react.  
SMITH

The General has more faith in her than you Smith, and you are sleeping with her.  
PEACOCK

What shall I do with the tape of this incident? Incident forty-six. Sir.  
SMITH

There isn't a tape Smith.  
PEACOCK

Major P...  
SMITH

No. That tape gets out it will sound like we have put Daffy Duck in charge.  
PEACOCK

SMITH  
And Captain Lewis?

PEACOCK  
She only has a couple more days here?

SMITH  
Yes Sir.

PEACOCK  
Fine. Find a reason to stall the debrief today.

SMITH  
Yes Sir.

PEACOCK  
Who was monitoring the radio in the Central Surveillance Booth?

SMITH  
Corporal Shaddock.

PEACOCK  
Where is she?

SMITH  
She requested patrol duties and consequently is not available for this investigation Sir.

PEACOCK  
Wise move. Did you encourage her?

SMITH  
No Sir.

PEACOCK  
Yes Sir. Who was in the vehicle, Mobile Two?

SMITH  
Private Brown and Private Copely.

PEACOCK  
How's Brown?

SMITH  
Pig in shit.