

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Camarilla

by Van Badham

EXTRACT

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Camarilla

A play by Van Badham

Characters:

- *Prof. Margaret-Ann Tanner, an Australian-born senior lecturer in Political Science at a London university, and a well-known public intellectual. 50s.*
- *John Allthorpe, Maggy's husband. A northern teacher/trade unionist, now a labour historian. 50s.*
- *Rebekah Tanner-Burton, Maggy's daughter from her first marriage. A 23-year-old recent university graduate, now working as an admin assistant for a small PR company.*
- *David Crystal. John's estranged son from his first marriage. American-raised. A lawyer working in the legal department of a media company. 28.*
- *Charles Ashe. A member of the G8 London Summit Secretariat.*

David and Charles are to be played by the same actor.

Scene:

London, the Tanner/Allthorpe home in Fulham. Present day.

For Damien Cahill, my hero.

Prologue

London. A shopping street. A massive explosion - a bomb - ripping glass. Panic, sirens. An aftermath.

Maggy cradles Rebekah in her arms. They are in a circle of shattered glass, covered in it. They are bleeding, both riddled with cuts - Rebekah the worse. Maggy is hysterical, Rebekah almost unconscious, with blood running down her face.

MAGGY: *(screaming)* Somebody! Somebody help my daughter!

REBEKAH: Mum... It's all right, Mum; it's all right...

MAGGY: Help me! *They've hurt my daughter!*

Scene 1

The Tanner/Allthorpe house, the next day. John Allthorpe enters the livingroom with a mobile phone, searching for a television remote control.

JOHN: *(on the phone)* – I just wish people would leave her alone – Which channel? I can't hear – All day! Place is like a madhouse – !

He switches on the television.

JOHN: No –

TELEVISION:... *the Australian-born academic who has been a vocal critic of the government's response to the global terrorist threat. In an interview with Newsnight last year, the Professor –*

JOHN: Played this on the radio as well –

He turns off the television.

JOHN: Everywhere – I don't – Yes, I will. When she's –

MAGGY: *(o/s)* John!

JOHN: The kraken wakes – nevermind; I'll have to call you later -

Enter Maggy, in a dressing-gown, brandishing a newspaper.

MAGGY: Have you seen this?!

JOHN: *(to phone)* Of course – bye –

MAGGY: John – ?!

JOHN: Brad Somers just called to see how you were faring. Marie sends her regards as –

A landline telephone begins to ring.

MAGGY: That sound! That's the fiftieth bloody time!

JOHN: Quite a fanclub of well-wishers –

MAGGY: *(with the newspaper)* Sending poisoned roses and – are you answering that?!

JOHN: No, I'm not.

John goes over to the telephone and rips it out of its socket.

JOHN: Peace in our time.

MAGGY: Tell me you're going to plug that back in.

JOHN: They can live without us, *(turning off his mobile)* if we can live without them. I don't want you disturbed. Come now, back to bed. The doctor said –

MAGGY: Bugger the doctor – *(with the paper)* what's this doing in our house?

JOHN: You should be resting, love.

MAGGY: I just got up to go to the bathroom and *this* greets me. "Red professor", "Terrorist friend Tanner", "Marxist aca—" - here! - "maybe her daughter needs more than a few more cuts and scratches for Prof. Tanner to grasp what the British public have known all along – " They've got a picture - of her! - What was this doing in the bathroom?

JOHN: I did intend to wipe my arse on it.

John comforts her.

JOHN: You know its drivel. When you're rested you'll remember – and they'll already be driveling at somebody else.

- MAGGY:** Where's Rebekah?
- JOHN:** She's sleeping.
- MAGGY:** She should be – !
- JOHN:** The doctor wants you both to rest. The concussion's lifted – there's no reason for Rebekah to –
- MAGGY:** Page 5, right-hand side, covered in blood – In this bloody – I'm going to call Harold West and I'm going to have them in court – they've got a –
- JOHN:** Why don't you rest and think about it?
- MAGGY:** I don't want to rest!
- JOHN:** At least sit down. For me.
- MAGGY:** Rebekah and her bloody shoes. Shoes, she wanted! Couldn't be from anywhere - All the corporate bloody business at that office –
- JOHN:** I'll get you a pillow.
- MAGGY:** – when I saw her with the blood pouring out of her face – *this is where the label chase brings us*, Rebekah. This is a high bloody price to pay for what you wear to work.
- JOHN:** Let her get some sleep before you broach the subject, eh?
- MAGGY:** Who's called?
- JOHN:** University media unit. BBC. Guardian. Everyone's looking for you.
- MAGGY:** *(with the paper)* Not everyone.

JOHN: Everyone you write for has called – everyone you've ever met. The messages are by the phone. I thought it was better that you let yourself recover –

MAGGY: I thought I heard you on the phone to David earlier.

JOHN: David did call this morning. I thought you were sleeping.

MAGGY: Drugged, not sleeping. What on earth have they given me?

JOHN: Mogadon.

MAGGY: I hardly think –

JOHN: You were hysterical. A bullet in the eye wouldn't've been enough.

MAGGY: How many dead?

JOHN: Maggy –

MAGGY: How many?

JOHN: Seventeen. Most from the Capita office. Planted under a desk, they think - managed to limit the damage it did.

MAGGY: So David must've seen us on CNN. Him calling us is very nice. After such a long -

JOHN: He's coming to stay.

MAGGY: He's what?

JOHN: For four weeks.

MAGGY: Here?!

JOHN: He's my son.

MAGGY: When? John?

JOHN: On the 20th.

MAGGY: Is that practical?

JOHN: He's my son.

MAGGY: Two weeks! Where do we put him?

JOHN: Rebekah's room.

MAGGY: And Rebekah stays where?

JOHN: In her own flat.

MAGGY: After what she's been through, and you want to send her back to that hovel in Stepney – ?!

JOHN: She's paying enough for that hovel to stay there once in a while.

MAGGY: And you and David cooked this up this morning?

JOHN: If she wants to stay here she can camp in the study.

MAGGY: You can tell she's not your daughter if you're content to shove a traumatised girl in a –

JOHN: Maggy!

MAGGY: I'm sorry..

JOHN: Rebekah won't mind.

MAGGY: How're you going to work on your book with a bed in there, Rebekah in there, and David –

- JOHN:** History won't change if I leave my book for a week - or a year. Certainly not the history of the National Union of Teachers..
- MAGGY:** Rebekah won't mind!
- JOHN:** She and I discussed it weeks ago.
- MAGGY:** Weeks?!
- JOHN:** I wish you'd get back to bed.
- MAGGY:** I bet you do - making some arrangement with David, discussing it with Rebekah – my house, I'm the last person to know.
- JOHN:** I wanted to prepare you, I haven't had time. Please, love –
- MAGGY:** David's just going to turn up – !
- JOHN:** He hasn't been in this country for twelve years. He's grown from a boy to a man and all I've got to see of it are some digital pictures he's emailed in the last eight months. Now he's ready to come over and I'm more than ready to see him – to have him in my house and be whatever kind of father I can to a twenty-eight year-old man.
- MAGGY:** You wait until the day after I'm at the scene of a bomb going off –
- JOHN:** You want to press the issue or go back and lie down?
- MAGGY:** Why wouldn't you discuss this with me?
- JOHN:** You haven't heard him on the phone. Not a scrap of the Yorkshireman left. All American now. I don't know why he's calling. I don't know why he wants to come but I want him to.
- MAGGY:** You thought I'd get between you and your son.