

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Eleanor and Eve

by Mark O'Flynn

EXTRACT

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ELEANOR & EVE

By Mark O'Flynn

(with Weatherboard Theatre Co.)

CHARACTERS:

Dr. Eric Dark

Eleanor Dark

Eve Langley

*[The minor roles of Dr. Savige and Nurse Hilda are played
by Eric and Eleanor.]*

The play is set in the bedroom, loungeroom, and outside patio of the
Dark's house.

ELEANOR & EVE

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[Dr. ERIC DARK, an old man now, is discovered in his bed.]

OLD ERIC:

Ah, you're here, good, good. I've been expecting you. Thank you for coming. Come in, come in, there's plenty of room. This won't take long. I'm so glad you could come. My there's a lot of you. Squeeze up, there's room over here.....Isn't this cosy. We have such a lot of visitors these days. My name is Doctor Dark and I can tell by the look of you just what you're thinking. It's been said I can see into the minds of young people. I can tell you're thinking 'What are we doing squashed into this room with this old man in his pyjamas. What's he planning with us?' Don't worry. I know you've not come to see me, you've come to worship at the shrine of my wife. Dear sweet Eleanor. Yes, she lived here. Slept on this side of the bed. Unless I'm mixing things up. I'm no good at remembering things. She worked in this house. Here is her stick which she used to thump on the floor with when she wanted things.

[He takes a stick from under the bed clothes and demonstrates. From down stairs we hear Eleanor's voice call out:]

ELEANOR: *[off]*

What is it? I'm busy.

OLD ERIC:

There she is, hard at work.....I had to chase an intruder down stairs with it once. Unless it was a phantom. Too quick for me. And here's her piece of lead pipe.

[He takes a piece of lead pipe from under a pillow.]

You'll find out later what she kept that for. Look about you, you'll see all sorts of fragments of our life together. The cigarette burns in the furniture. Her books. Here's one.

[He puts down the pipe and takes a book from beneath the blankets.]

Rather lumpy. The Little Company. And something she wrote that might be appropriate.

[He quotes from the book.]

'I suppose you're right about beginnings,' he said, 'After all, if you want to tell the story of one human being very exhaustively where do you begin?'

[He places the book down gently.]

Perhaps they are relics. Or talismans. Touch them. Feel the aura. Please make yourself at home. Pop the kettle on. Use the toilet if you like. I'm sure Eleanor will be along in a moment. Thank you. Thank you for coming. People are so shy.

[Dr. Dark flops back on his pillows, exhausted.]

Lights crossfade to the booklined loungeroom of the Dark's house.

ELEANOR DARK sits in her fur coat at a small desk working on an old typewriter. Beside her an enormous pile of manuscript. Also a tea cup. She types quickly. Tchaikovsky's sixth symphony is playing on an old gramophone. She snatches the sheet of paper from the typewriter and adds it to the pile. Inserts another sheet and begins again. The telephone rings. She curses under her breath, rises, and leaves the room. The phone stops. Beyond the glass French doors, the garden. A bearded figure climbs on to the patio. He/she peers in at the glass doors. Tries one of the windows. It opens. She clammers awkwardly over the sill, into the room. Breathless. She examines the book shelves. Takes down a book; opens it at random; holds it to her nose. Sniffs. Gives a satisfied sigh. She goes to the typewriter on the small table; reads what is in the roll. Snorts. Her fingers hover over the keys. She hits one key. Tap. She shivers. Sits at the chair. Types a sentence. She glances at the top page of the manuscript. She takes a couple of pages and stuffs them inside her shirt and trousers as insulation. She takes off one shoe. Pokes a finger through the hole in the sole. She takes another page of manuscript and stuffs it inside the shoe. Before she can get it back on there is a noise from upstairs. Thump thump thump. A door slams. In panic she looks about for somewhere to hide. Dashes behind the curtain leaving her shoe at the foot of the desk. Eleanor returns. She sniffs the air. She goes to the French doors. Opens them, (they're not locked), steps out on to the patio. She looks up at the sky. She takes up a pair of red flags and waves them mysteriously towards the horizon. She puts the flags down and comes back into the room. Closes the doors. She takes off her coat and hangs it on the back of the chair. She turns to her desk and sits. Before she can begin typing she notices the shoe on the floor. Picks it up. She takes the page of manuscript from it,

uncrumples it, recognizes it as hers. She examines the pile and realizes that several more pages are missing. She looks swiftly about the room. She sees Eve's feet, protruding from under the curtains.]

ELEANOR:

All right come out. I know you're there.....Yes, you.

EVE:

No.

ELEANOR:

Come out at once. Don't make it worse for yourself. I've got a gun.

[The curtains tremble. The bearded EVE emerges sheepishly from behind the curtain. Her hands up. They stare at each other.]

My God you're a woman.

[Eve shakes her head.]

Take off that ridiculous disguise.

EVE:

Uh uhh.

ELEANOR:

Quick sticks.

EVE:

Uh uhh.

ELEANOR:

Take it off.

EVE:

Shan't.

ELEANOR:

You shall. Would you like me to set them on fire?

[Eve peels off her false whiskers.]

Who are you?.....Answer me.

EVE:

By whose authority do you ask me that?

ELEANOR:

This is my house. What have you done with my manuscript? Speak up.

[Eve pulls a page of the manuscript from her shirt. Eleanor snatches it and retreats a step; begins to smooth it out.]

What on earth are you doing with this?

EVE:

Keeping warm.

[Eve produces further pages.]

ELEANOR:

Have you any idea how valuable this is?

EVE:

Touchy. It's not worth a brass razoo until some publisher offers you a contract. At the moment it's just insulation with words on it.

ELEANOR:

I mean valuable to me.

EVE:

That's different. Cultural value. Would you mind if we heard a bit?

ELEANOR:

I most certainly would.

EVE:

Just a sentence.

ELEANOR:

Not on your.....Get away from that.....Don't touch.....

[They struggle over the page from the typewriter. Eve wins. She reads:]

EVE:

"Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril."

ELEANOR:

What did you say? That's not mine.

EVE:

No, it's mine. It came to me in a flash.

ELEANOR:

No, I mean that's - isn't that Dorian Gray?

EVE:

It's mine. I typed it, I wrote it.

ELEANOR:

Without the effort of having thought of it first.

EVE:

Great words, great thoughts, great literature what's the difference?

ELEANOR:

You seem very knowledgeable on the matter.

[Eve sits at the desk. She takes a sheet of pink paper from her pocket, inserts it in the typewriter and begins typing.]

EVE:

My dear little creature, I only ever type on pink paper. Pink paper is the only medium by which truly great literature should see the light of day.

ELEANOR:

And what is truly great literature?

EVE:

You're asking very big questions which I don't have time to answer.

ELEANOR:

Tell me your name. Speak up. Before I call my husband.

EVE:

[Eve pulls the sheet of paper out.]

Wilde. Oscar Wilde.

[Pause. She folds and pockets the paper.]

ELEANOR:

Indeed....What are you doing here?

EVE:

You have the audacity to ask me that?

ELEANOR:

I think I do.

EVE:

Oh..... Well I'm here to see the doctor.

ELEANOR:

The usual practice is to make an appointment during consultation hours. Unless it's an emergency.

EVE:

Oh it is, it is.

ELEANOR:

Are you injured?

EVE:

Nothing like that. I've lost something. Something priceless. I just wanted to see the doctor.

Are you the nurse?

ELEANOR:

I'm the - He's the husband..

EVE:

Is he here at all? The doctor. Doctor Savige?

ELEANOR:

Doctor Savige? This is the home of Doctor Dark.....I'm his.....Are you connected with?.....Don't come near me. If I scream he'll come running.

EVE:

But I saw him down the back chopping wood. With an axe. He wouldn't hear.

ELEANOR:

Eric! Eric!.....I'm going to fetch him.

EVE:

And leave me alone with your manuscript? Is that wise? Where's your gun?

ELEANOR:

What gun?

EVE:

You said you had a gun. I do so love guns. They're so - masculine. Where's yours?

ELEANOR:

I'm a writer. I make things up.

EVE:

Ah - imagination

ELEANOR:

Actually, I do have a piece of lead pipe.

EVE:

So you don't actually have a gun? Well I have a knife. Yes. Here it is.

[Eve pulls a large machete from beneath her coat. She wields it recklessly. Pause.]

ELEANOR: