

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Spaghetti Wars

by Philip Deally

EXTRACT

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The Spaghetti Wars

The characters

Youngsters

- Anna Daughter of Capricio
- Angelo Son of Monti
- Marcello Angelo's cousin
- Nino Anna's cousin
- Ben Friend of Marcello and Angelo
- Giuseppe Betrothed to Anna

Adults

- Capricio Father of Anna - set in his ways and over-bearing.
- Anna's mother As above.
- Monti Father of Angelo - set in his ways. A battler.
- Father Carusso An old eccentric priest.
- Aunt Isobel Aunt to Anna. A little scatty. Always in black.
- Councillor The local Italian bureaucrat.

Spotlight slowly appears on the stage

Narrator

Once upon a time there were two families who journeyed from Italy...to work in the land of opportunity...immigrants in a migrant world... refugees from discontent. They live in Melbourne now...in a suburb they call home...making pasta for hungry new and...normal Australians. A clean plate in the land down under...serving the growing appetites of a growing community. Mothers and fathers...sons and daughters...friends and enemies...like everywhere else. But the world's a funny place...full of fantasy and tension. Like pillows and prayers we wish away what troubles us...and when we wake life pulls us back...keeping us tied to who we are. *(Pause)* We live and we truly learn. When should fate take a back seat? When is luck more a nuisance than a blessing? Questions we all ask...just to catch us off guard. Life is like that...sort of catches you off guard *(grins)*. Witness for yourselves then...this domestic tale.

(Fade down to B/O)

Act One

Scene 1

General lighting revealing two large groups working in a factory making and packing pasta. Music plays: 'Fortune Teller' by The Throb. One group SL and one SR. Both groups are in boiler suits and hats of their respective pasta 'clans'. The two groups stand on the stage CL and CR, facing each other. There's a rush and they begin to hit each other in slow motion with pasta-coloured snake door-stops. They freeze then face each other with aggressive stylised Italian body language. One group shouts at the other: 'Fettucini' and the other shouts, 'Ravioli'. Snap B/O.

Two characters, a boy and a girl appear DSL and DSR. Spots are lit on Anna while Angelo is in darkness, then alternate.

Anna

Well...let's see. All I know is pasta really. Pasta and school. *(Frustrated)* I like school but I definitely need to make some changes...you know...to meet people, maybe meet someone special. I'm not complaining. Mum says people who complain don't know how lucky they really are *(pause)*...so I must be really lucky. She hired my aunty Isobel to give me extra lessons. She was a teacher once. It's so I can get ahead and be successful, but I think it's just for show. Dad really wants me to work in the factory when I leave school doing the books or something. He likes the idea that I might be smart. I don't mind. I want to be smart. *(Pause)* There's just something missing that's all. But I like the factory...the smells and talking to the people and things...they've got great stories about the old country. I like to imagine the people and places *(Pause)*. But it's always the factory in the end. *(Pause)* I even dream

of pasta. Pasta hairstyles. *(Flat)* Maybe I should be a hairdresser. *(Changes tone)* We live in St Kilda. That's in Melbourne. My name is Anna...Anna *(pronounces her surname carefully)* Capricio. My family came from Sicily to Australia in the 50's to start 'a new life'. They're good at it...making pasta I mean *(like a slogan - she gestures)* 'Papa's Pasta'. I was just little then, but I still remember my island...the hills and playing with other children. Leaving nearly killed me. This is my home now. I feel guilty sometimes about leaving. I don't know why *(pause - hesitant - looking to her left)*...there's another factory.

Cross fade to the boy.

Angelo

My name is Angelo Monti. I pack pasta for my dad at his factory after school and on holidays. *(Gesture of 'same old thing')* 'Perfect Pasta Packed Perfectly'. Nice bit of alliteration. Pasta and soccer. I play soccer because it seems like the thing to do. My real love is writing...and reading. I like to go down to St Kilda beach and write, or read. At the moment I'm writing *(pause)* a love story...but I don't tell anybody, except maybe Marc. His real name is Marcello...he was named after some film star. He's my cousin. We're all Australians now...new Australians...except some of the others call us Dagos or Wogs. I hate it but I don't let it bother me the way it does my dad. I try to make a joke of it. I tell him he should reply: '...that's right...never a Day-gos by that I don't feel lucky...'. That always makes him smile. Stupid really...but it all helps doesn't it. *(Pause)* It's hard to write something I don't know much about. Pasta and school...that's me. Anyway...how should I know what love is at my age. I love my parents. I love the factory. I love writing. *(Pause)* Maybe the greatest tragedy of all is that we don't get loved the way we want. *(Rolls his eyes)* Pheeww! Dad always says I'm old for my age...old and serious. *(Pause)* I like working in the factory. All the noise and colour. We came from Sicily on the migrant scheme. My folks still speak Italian around the house. They say it keeps them in touch with the old ways...the old values. My dad says I'll inherit the business one day if I work hard enough. He says people who work hard reap all the rewards...*(pause)* and if the Capricios don't undersell us...we'll be fine. *(Looks to the right)* They're our rivals, our *enemies* my dad says. He thinks that way. They come from Italy too. We're supposed to hate them. And I guess I do *(pause)*...although I'm not sure why.

Fade to B/O while music plays: 'You're Sixteen' by Johnny Burnette. The mother of Anna enters the space. She's dressed ostensibly in domestic garb, over-the-top make up and large feet. She's wearing a mask.

Mother

(USR - ostensibly Italian). There you are. What's the matter with you...always daydreaming. You will drive me crazy one day I swear. *(Play with the movement contradictions of this next line)* What did I do to get such a loony. God is punishing me I know it. You were such a sweet little girl...and now you're a teenager. Give a big kiss to your mama.

Anna

Where else would I be mum? *(She's kissing her)*. Don't mama...you're slobbering.

Mother

Mothers don't slobber. *(Pause)* I have a surprise for you.

Anna

(Unimpressed) What is it?

Mother

We'll tell you tonight at dinner. I'm cooking your favourite.

Both

(Said quickly to each other) Chicken Ravioli with basil sauce and a touch of white wine and a dob of cream sprinkled with parsley.

Mother

I can't wait to tell you. I'm so excited. Tell me you are going to be excited, tell me...

Anna

(Flat) I'm excited. *(The mother pinches Julia's cheeks)*.

Enter Anna's father - Capricio.

Father

There she is...aah...is this a girl or what...*(singing)* "...I just a met a girl called a Aaannnaaa...aa...aa" *(as in West Side Story's Maria except he doesn't quite get the rhythm)*. Ah what a film! Such dancing and singing. But always trouble...trouble with boys...trouble with romance...trouble with money. But not with my Anna. *(Pause)* Tell her now for Pepe's sake...the poor girl will go out of her mind and probably have an accident. *(Lights change as he goes into a Scrooge-style monologue)*. I'd have to pay compensation and keep her for the rest of her life. *(Pause)* On the other hand I could put her to work in the factory. She wouldn't complain or eat too much. She would pack all day, never saying a word...*(he's pleased with this possibility)*. All's fair in love and war eh. *(Back to mother and Anna)* Go ahead and tell her...what harm would it do...after all...

Mother

To Anna - pinching her on the cheek Every mother wants their daughter to be happy...to have a good future. *(Long pause - grinning)* What do you think of Giuseppe? *(Anna tries to speak)*. Never mind. Giuseppe's father has also agreed...is this a match made in heaven or what. When you turn 18 you'll marry him. What do you think of that? You'll have plenty of time to get to know one another. He's always liked you, and he's a hard worker too. Isn't that right papa?

Anna

(Completely taken aback) What...

Father

Sure is. At work he's like a slave...always doing this or that...making the others work harder...checking the mixture...cleaning the tanks...what a boy!

Anna

(Taken aback) I...

Father

Speechless for once. Quick mama, get the camera!

Anna

(Joking) Shut up dad. *(Moving away and thinking - apprehensive)* Sounds OK I guess. Giuseppe's nice...isn't he?

Mother and father

Of course he is!

Anna

But what if I don't like him!

Experimental music - briefly the two parents do a quick shocked frenetic 'dance' in response to this - something resembling tortured birds.

Anna

(Interrupting) But if you like him...I guess it's alright. My head's dizzy. Like lots of swimming fish in my head or something. *(Aside - disbelief)* Married? Bloody hell!

Mother

My little sardine. *(Pinching her cheek)* You're the loveliest girl in all Italy...uh...Melbourne...uh...St Kilda. Anyway...he'll be lucky to have you...eventually. Who knows...one day you'll both be running the business while your papa and me lie on the beach drinking Carltons Drafty.

Father

(Pinching Anna's cheek) You're a wonderful girl, Anna. A little strange at times, but basically bellissimo. You'll get your chance to see him tomorrow night...at the restaurant garden. You like it there. A real Aussie Bar B Q...with the Sicilian touch. What do you think of that?

Anna

(Supportive) Yes dad, sounds great. Married...eventually...*(turning to the audience)* What'll I wear? Must be the best thing that can happen to a girl I guess...*(laughing)* except having food named after you.