

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Parallax Island

by Maude Davey & David Pidd

EXTRACT

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Act One

Song: Sail Across The Water, Verse One. By Jane Siberry

love is trembling - trembling like the little bird we hold within our hands
love is bending - bending towards the worried brow, here, let me wipe away your tears
love is kneeling - above the upturn body the ever-upturned face
love is missing - all the words are broken, help me, I cannot find my way, no I can't, I need
you love, come on love

will you sail 'cross the water and lay your wisdom down?
and love will you sail 'cross the water and tell us what you've found?
and love will you sail 'cross the water and hold us when we drown?
and love will you sail 'cross the water ?
is anybody listening...?

There is the sound of waves crashing.

Lights up. A man rows toward a shore. He lands. Steps out of the water. He is dressed in a British uniform from the 1800s. He plunges the Union Jack into the earth of the island.

Blackout.

Lights up. A man rows toward a shore. He lands. Steps out of the water. The island is a naked woman, lying there. He pulls his penis from his pants. It is a flagpole. The Union Jack unfurls from it.

Blackout.

Lights up. A man rows toward a shore. He lands. The sound of waves crashing dies out. A woman enters, with an armful of firewood.

Him: Ahoy there!

Her: Fuck off.

Him: Sorry?

Her: Fuck off.

Him: I just got here.

Her: And now you can fuck off.

Him: Oh what a lovely warm welcome that is. Ahoy there. Fuck off.

Her: Go on. Fuck off.

Him: But I haven't done anything.

Her: And you're not going to. This is my island and I don't want you here.

Him: Why not?

Her: Because I came here to be alone, I did not come here to look after anyone else.

Him: I don't want you to look after me.

Her: Yes you do.

Him: No I don't

Her: You do.

Him: I don't.

Her: You do.

Him: I don't.

Her: Have you got any food?

Him: No.

Her: Any water?

Him: No.

Her: Any money?

Him: No.

Her: Then you can fuck off.

Him: I have worked very hard to get here. I have been rowing for days. I have braved storms and heavy seas. I have been lost, I have drifted in a vast ocean with no way of telling which way was the right way. I have fought off pirates and strange creatures I couldn't name which threatened me from the depths. And after all this back-breaking, heart-breaking labour, when all my hope was gone, and I was beginning to think that I should stop struggling and let myself slip into the cool embrace of the sea, at last I saw this island. And my heart lifted, and I took up the oars again and I rowed, breaking the latest scabs off my blistered hands, pushing with all that was left of my might towards what I thought might be a sanctuary. A few moments of rest on dry land, maybe a mouthful of sweet water and some leaves or a bit of dry grass to chew on. And this is the welcome I get?

There is a long pause.

Her: You can have a bit of water. And some food. And then you can fuck off.

Him: Thanks.

They speak the following together, without pause, speaking the different words on top of each other.

Both: I know what you're thinking, you're thinking, Oh great!

Him: ...a man...

Her: ...a woman...

Both: ...to do the...

Him: ...fixing, kill the food, do the building...

Her: ...washing, get the food, do the cleaning...

Both: ...someone you can boss around. Well I came here to get away from all that...

Him: ...sister!

Her: ...mister!

Both: ...so you can forget it right now!

Him: What are you doing?

Her: Building a fire.

Him: Right.

They go about building the fire. He wants to stack them neatly in a square, she prefers the circular stack. When one is not looking the other rearranges the wood. The following dialogue overlaps, neither really listening to the other.

Him: You're doing it the wrong way...

Her: This is the way I always do it...

Him: ...there has to be room for air to come in underneath the logs...

Her: ...this is a very windy island, you have to stack them close...

Him: ...so the fire can breathe. Fires need air...

Her: ...it'll just blow out...

Him: You're doing it wrong!

Her: Go away. Stop it. Go over there and leave it alone. I'll do it by myself.

Him: All right, I'll leave it alone, you can do it by yourself.

She lights the fire. He comes over and starts enjoying the fire. During the following exchanges they eat and drink.

Him: How long have you been here?

Her: Six months.

Him: You seem to have everything sorted out.