

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Biographical Details

by Van Badham

EXTRACT

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Characters:

The Auto-Biographer, female, 20s

Scene:

A room furnished only with photographs.

For Sam Grafton.

Music plays: Bob Dylan's "Idiot Wind"

This is a photograph of my Christening. Here is my mother, holding me – Dad who is holding a beer and looking out of the photograph (because he wanted a boy, probably), Nanna, Uncle Neil, various friends of my parents with seventies haircuts, my uncle Robert, his wife Hilary and my cousins who are two and three. Hilary smiling very broadly, my mother looking tense, my Nanna looking sort of happy, sort of heartbroken at the same time.

My grandfather, my father's mother, died only two months before I was born. It was cancer and it happened very quickly. My Mum got sick and almost miscarried, Nanna trying to look after Mum, my mother's brothers are both useless so Aunty Hilary organised the funeral. What takes place just after this photograph is taken is that my Mum puts me into a bassinet for some sleep and everyone helps themselves to more beer. How it comes up, I don't know but something is said about my grandfather's funeral and my mother mentions to Hilary that she was kind of hurt that Hilary had the funeral take place on my mother's birthday. The words mum uses here are "really fucking pissed off" and she says them several times, at which point Hilary – who's been into some cask wine – says "I don't know why you're so upset, Barbara. It's not like you ever loved your father, anyway."

"Get out of my house, you fucking whore!" screams my mother "You fucking slut pigfarmer's daughter!" – this is actually true. Hilary marches into the house, dumps me out of the bassinet *she owns* onto the floor – my mother chases her out the front of the door, screaming "How dare you touch my baby!". Mum grabs the bassinet and wallops Hilary with it. Hilary hits the ground. Mum hits her and hits her and throws the bassinet on the ground and then LEAPS on Hilary's neck and starts choking her "I loved my father AND YOU KNOW IT AND YOU KNOW IT!" Nanna is in the house looking for me, because I've rolled under a bed. It's Dad who comes out to the street, with a couple of mates behind him – and he sees Mum choking Aunty Hilary in the gutter. And he sees it. And he sees it. And he just sort of stands there, watching Mum choke her and one of his mates calls out "Yeah, Barbara, strangle the posh bitch!" but it's not until Uncle Robert comes out that Dad actually does anything to rip them apart. Describing this moment,