

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Nailed

by Caleb Lewis

EXTRACT

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CHARACTERS:

MAY	a young, pregnant Aboriginal girl
JOE	a young man
DENNIS HOLLIT	an older man
DOLLY HOLLIT	an older woman

Act One: Family

Somewhere in Australia. 1959

Night.

The clouds hang in the sky, bloated and pregnant. It could rain at any moment.

A peal of thunder.

A shed. Poorly lit. The shed is dank and musty, crowded with animals and old, dead farming machinery. A pull-down ladder leads up to a loft in the roof. A rooster crows. The shed door opens.

Two men help a young girl through the door and lay her down in some hay. She has short hair; she is nearly due.

Hollit Anything else?

Joe Just a place to bunk down. We've been driving all day.

Hollit You on the run?

Joe No, sir.

Hollit Cos if somebody's after you.

Joe Nobody knows we're here.

Hollit I do.

Joe If you're having second thoughts we can go.

Beat.

Hollit Where are my manners? You hungry? I'll bring out some sandwiches.

Joe No thanks, mate. I'm dead on my feet; May's out like a light. We just need to sleep.

Hollit Past her bedtime, is it?

Joe Yeah, it's late. Plus we had an early /start so ...

Hollit /How old is she?

Joe ... Sixteen.

Hollit Don't lie to me, son, how old is she?

Joe Fourteen.

Hollit whistles.

Joe You her guardian, are you?

Hollit Are you?

Joe I'm looking after her.

Hollit I can see that.

Joe What's that supposed to mean?

Hollit Nothing. *(Laughs)* Oh relax; I'm just fooling with you.

Joe I love her.

Beat.

Hollit Tough day?

Joe Yeah.

Hollit Tough night coming. Get some sleep.

Joe nods. Hollit takes a good look at May.

Hollit She's dark.

Joe Half-blood.

Hollit What's with the haircut? She looks like a fella.

Joe She's my black rose.

Hollit You her white knight?

Joe I used to be.

Hollit Kid'll have a tan.

Joe I told ya, that's enough.

Hollit You put a bun in that oven and it's bound to come out burnt.

Joe Shut your trap right now; she's half-blood, I told ya that.

Hollit All right, all right; I'm just surprised, that's all. Make yourselves at home.

Hollit goes to leave.

Joe We're in your shed!

Beat.

Hollit ... I know it don't look much, but it's warm; it's shelter; you got a roof over your head. Might be fun, eh? Camping out for the night.

Joe Help us out?

Hollit I can't. There's no room; you know that. If there was it might be different. But there's not.

Joe Except out here.

Hollit 'Cept out here.

Joe So if there was a room?

Hollit I'd even fluff up your pillows myself.

Joe What about Tommy's room?

Hollit No.

Joe It's empty.

Hollit It's full of junk.

Joe So we'll clear it.

Hollit No.

Joe Just shuffle things round a bit.

Hollit No, you won't. It's a nursery, get it, not a bloody deck of cards. You won't go near it ...

Joe But there's a bed

Hollit It's broken.

Joe I'll fix it.

Hollit You can't.

Joe I fix things. That's what I do.

Hollit Not this! You and the gin stay here.

Joe Don't you call her that!

Hollit You're not coming inside.

Joe She's got a name.

May May.

May sits up groggily.

Hollit Yer awake?

Right. I'm sorry, kids. It's a single bed.

Joe So?

Hollit I don't see a ring on her finger.

Joe It's a bit late for that, mate. The horse has already bolted.

Hollit I don't keep gin in the house.

May I got a name.

Hollit Listen, darlin'.

May May.

Hollit May; Dennis. Look, you seem like a lovely girl. The thing is I got no room inside. You don't mind staying out here do you?

Joe I don't believe this.

Hollit The missus is asleep.

Joe She'll understand.

Hollit She doesn't know.

Joe Let me talk to her.

Hollit Not yet! Sorry, love, that's final, I'm sick of talking about it. If you are on the run, you're better off hiding out here anyway.

Joe She's pregnant.

Hollit ...

Joe Do you want her to get pneumonia?

Hollit ...

Joe What about the baby?

Hollit ... The wife's asleep. It don't come easy. I won't have you crashing about in there and waking her up. Let it drop; let it bloody drop.

Beat.

Joe How 'bout the couch?

Hollit I'm on the couch.

Joe ...

Hollit Dolly's in the bedroom, I'm on the couch. In that great big empty house. Are you happy? Any more questions? Any more demands? Any more nosing through other people's business? I've got nothing for you. Not in the nursery, not on the couch, not in the house. I have here in the shed and outside; so pick a spot and stop complaining.

Hollit winces, he grimaces in pain.

Joe Hollit?

Hollit ...

Joe Den?

Hollit I'm fine.

Joe You sure?

Hollit nods.

Joe I'll get Dolly. *(He heads for the door)*

Hollit No!

Joe Okay *(He stops)*

Hollit I'm fine.

Joe Yeah.

Beat.

Joe Dennis?

Hollit ...

Joe You got any pillows?

Hollit You got blankets over there and there's plenty of hay. You want some sandwiches? I'll bring some out later. You'd be surprised how cosy you can make it out here: A real love nest.

May has a contraction; she buckles in pain.

May Oh, God!

Joe Is the baby coming?

Hollit Now don't you take the Lord's name in vain.

May Go! (*She buckles again*) Joe!

Hollit Don't you talk to me like that, you little black bitch!

Joe Dennis, go easy. We'll be fine. Rest. Thanks for your help.

May You heard him.

Hollit Now listen -

Joe She's in a lot of pain.

Hollit Teach her some manners.

Joe I will.

Hollit She belongs in a hospital / I'm doing you a favour.

May /Don't want no white-bread hospital. Let 'em take my baby like they took me.

Hollit I want you gone once it's over.

Joe Thanks, Dennis.

Hollit Thank you. Keep clear of the machinery. And mind the pony, she's foaling. I'll bring out some sandwiches later.

Hollit exits. Joe and May are alone.

May Bastard.

Joe He's helping us out.

May I'm talking to you.

Joe I'm gonna make things right, May. I stuffed things up, I know

that. I got a plan now. A new go for us. I'm gonna make things sweet again, I promise. Like they used to be.

May Get me some water.

Joe hunts about and recovers his canteen.

Joe Here.

May Maybe we shouldn't stay here. Maybe you should take me back.

Joe Is that what you want?

May ...

Joe I can't... The car - The windshield's shattered; we lost both headlights. I pushed it far as I dared but that sky's bruised up like a boxer's ribs. When the sun's up it'll cut through this murk and we'll be on our way. May, tonight's insane. Wouldn't get one mile down the road. Not with a storm coming and the roos out -

May Why are we here?

Joe I told ya, the car - We were lucky to make it this far. Don't mind Hollit, I used to work for him, his bark is worse than his bite. We'll sleep here for the night and then tomorrow we'll take off. We're together again, May, don't you want that?

May Do you love me, Joe?

Joe Course I do. I'm gonna take care of you. I've got a plan.

May Gonna be a family.

Joe takes off his wet shirt and dabs it on her forehead.

Joe We'll be right. You'll see.

May What if they find us?

Joe Hospital, maybe. Not here.

May You sure?

Joe They'll be looking on the roads. Halfway houses, that sorta thing.
No one'd be fool enough to go out looking tonight.

May What about the car?

Joe I pushed it off the road. Tomorra I'll knock the windscreen out.
She'll be apples to drive, come sunup. Just have to cop a bit of
dust, is all.

May I don't like it here.

Joe I missed you, May.

Beat.

May Reckon they'll find us.

Joe No way.

May I won't let them take my baby.

A low rumble of thunder.

It begins to rain.

End of Scene