

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Classic Claustrophobia

by Jenny Rixon

EXTRACT

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77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
admin@australianplays.org
<http://australianplays.org/>
Tel +61 3 6223 4675 Fax +61 3 6223 4678

Classic Claustrophobia

CHARACTERS

- Tiffany Jamison:** aged 25+. Attractive, bordering on tarty. Tight outfit revealing a bulging pregnant belly.
- Margot Bercham:** aged 40+. Business-like, wearing a suit and an officious hair-do.
- Claire Filmer:** aged 25+. Casually dressed, pleasant-looking, conservative.

CHARACTER SYNOPSIS

- Tiffany:** sulky, moody, petulant. Flashes of being a bit 'blonde'. Has an 'insolent daughter' attitude toward Margot. Treats Claire with total disregard to the point of hostility. Generally unhappy with her lot.
- Margot:** confident and sarcastic. Very no-fuss. Bossy, loud, opinionated. Treats the others like children; Tiffany like a daughter. Claire with disregard.
- Claire:** genuine and polite. No hidden agenda. Keen to make a good impression. Intelligent and shows strength of character when challenged.

SCENE 1.

INT.ELEVATOR - mid afternoon.

Tiffany is alone inside the elevator as it descends to the Ground floor. She has her back to the audience as she checks herself in the mirror on the back wall and generally rearranges her underwear/scratches backside etc. whilst she's on her own in the lift. Turns slowly to reveal pregnant belly to audience as lift doors 'bing', lift comes to a halt and the doors open to allow Margot to enter.

- MARGOT So how're you going Tiffany – keeping well?
- TIFFANY Yeah...just great. This (*indicating pregnant belly*) is a big hit with the blokes. At least it stops me seeing how fat my ankles are getting.
- MARGOT Like that is it. Doesn't sound like you're enjoying being in the 'family way'.
- TIFFANY Not really...no.
- MARGOT I'm sure it will get.. er.. better, easier as you go along. Not speaking from personal experience of course but one learns to adjust to most situations the longer one's in them.
- TIFFANY Well, I doubt it. The bigger and more uncomfortable I get, the more I hate this whole pregnancy thing. No way out now though! (*Beat*).
Too bloody indecisive that's my problem!

MARGOT Well, at least you've got a good excuse for not sitting in on that God-awful afternoon meeting. I had to make up some lame excuse about a 'specialist' appointment.

TIFFANY 'Specialist...beautician'?

MARGOT You got it. Facial and pedicure – long overdue too!

TIFFANY Half your luck; I'm off to see my Gyno so he can poke around the cocoon.
(Beat).
And he can check out my bikini wax while he's down there.

MARGOT Lovely...amazing imagery.

Lift 'bings' and comes to a halt. Doors open and Claire backs into lift whist talking to husband off stage.

CLAIRE Goodluck – hope it all goes well. Will you be late tonight? Well – just give me a call so I know what to do about dinner.

Claire enters lift and nods briefly at Tiffany & Margot, then turns to close doors and check Ground floor has been selected. Lift doors close and lift jolts into action. All 3 ladies look a little surprised at the noise and roughness of the lift.

MARGOT Bloody old lifts. 'Bout time they replaced them. What the hell is that noise?

TIFFANY They always groan and carry on.

MARGOT Not like that..that really sounds sick.

CLAIRE *(Looking nervously around the lift).* I nearly took the stairs. Hate these old lifts. Do you think it's all right?

MARGOT Hard to say really – I can't say I've heard it carry on like this before.

TIFFANY And there is a bit of a smoky smell. *(beat)*
(To Claire) Oh - have you been smoking?

CLAIRE No – I don't smoke. But there is a 'fume-y' smell in here.

TIFFANY Christ I'm hanging for a fag. Come on you old battle box just make it to the ground.

MARGOT *(Shocked & disgusted)* You're not still smoking are you?

TIFFANY Occasionally – need it more than ever now. *(beat – looks at Margot’s judgmental expression)*
Don’t get all ‘Mum’ on me, I’ve cut back heaps!

The lift makes a loud grinding, screeching sound and jolts to a halt. All three women fall over and into each other. Lights go off briefly then flicker back on slightly dimmer than before.

ALL TOGETHER:-

MARGOT Christ!

TIFFANY Oh Shit!

CLAIRE Oh no...

TIFFANY You are bloody kidding me *(bangs door and buttons)* – it’s stuck!

MARGOT It really has broken down – holy shit!

CLAIRE Does this happen often?

MARGOT Never happened to me before.. and I’ve worked here 15 years.

TIFFANY No but it’s been threatening to. Well they’ll have to bloody fix it now..*(beat)* once they get us out. *(Looking and feeling lift buttons & walls)* Where’s the alarm or emergency button?

MARGOT It doesn’t have one. *(The other 2 women look at Margot horrified).* We were just discussing that at last week’s management meeting. We passed a motion to install one, and a phone - you know - an intercom system. Not a priority though. Ironic!

TIFFANY So how’re we supposed to let them know we’re in here?

Claire rummages in her bag for her mobile phone then moves around the lift trying to get reception. Margot decides to check hers as well. Tiffany is too distracted looking around lift in a panicked state.

CLAIRE No reception! Surely someone will know the lift is stuck!

MARGOT Well not necessarily. There is the second lift so no one will be waiting for this one to move in a hurry. And most, if not all staff, will be in the stop-work meeting.

TIFFANY Shit – that’s right. No one will be using the lift for hours!