

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Signatures

by Angela Costi

EXTRACT

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This script is distributed by The Australian Script Centre
77 Salamanca Place Hobart 7004 Tasmania Australia
email admin@ozscript.org
www.ozscript.org
ph +61 3 6223 4675
fax +61 3 6223 4678

Signatures Play

The Premise of the Play:

To have a future and find a purpose that is meaningful to your existence, you need to be reconciled with your past and the duality within you.

The Setting:

Inside the “Real World” and the “Spirit World” of an abandoned building inspired by the captivating and mysterious homestead known as Pirra which is situated at Serendip Sanctuary on the outskirts of the township Lara, in rural Victoria.

A stage setting that embodies these two worlds. The Real World of the abandoned building being highlighted by its main room (sometimes referred to as its “heart room”). The Spirit World is far more nebulous in character although it holds the physical form of the Spirits. It’s a place where shadows are reality and light moves like mischievous fairies. These two Worlds are separated by a framed window which acts as a portal.

The Characters:

Real World

The Gang of Five who are initially 15 years old and then 17.

Kyri	Physical-based: into sports and body discipline. For eg. basketball, martial arts, soccer, skate boarding...
Reni	Really ambitious to make it in the world but also loves having a good time and socialising to the max.
Peter/Pete	A Goth that is a practising pagan. Secretly loves exploring the world of bi-sexuality and androgeny.
Nat	Into the scientific and the biological worlds, and the structure and form of things. A constant question that plagues his mind: how does that work?
Chewy	This nickname has stuck because of her constant question: anyone got a chewy? Into the arts, from painting to performing, dancing and writing poetry.

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Youth Tribe Characters

Amber	from Chewy's Gang
Chelsea	from Reni's Gang
Snapper	from Kyri's Gang
Steph	from Pete's Gang

Council of Distorted Characters

Councillor Long Nose	Head of the Executive Chamber and Council member for the "Inquisitive Electorate".
Councillor Blue Nose	Council member for the "Regal Electorate".
Councillor Pig Nose	Council member for the "Swine Electorate".
Councillor Red Nose	Council member for the "Blotto Electorate".
Minute Secretary	A very small person in a very high chair, with an incredibly large pen and an incredibly small note pad.

Spirit World

Archetypal in nature yet allowing for idiosyncratic qualities to layer them.

Pirra	The Girl Spirit of the abandoned building.
Pivot	Pirra's Father Spirit, who is the collective spirit of the Fathers of Geelong; they built strong buildings and developed industry into a thriving regional centre.
Serendip	Pirra's Mother Spirit, who is from the land and is indigenous. She is inspired by the delicate and nurturing Serendip Sanctuary.
TG	Pirra's Brother Spirit, who is the new breed of enterprise. He is inspired by the new combination of business and leisure approach to Geelong's City hub.

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- Avalon** Pirra's Sister Spirit, who is the noble and dignified home breeder. She is inspired by the respectability associated with the Avalon homestead.
- Shadow Quick** An Energy Spirit from the domain of shadows and Pirra's adviser.
- Fairy Light** An Energy Spirit from the domain of lights and Pirra's adviser.

Alter Egos and Hidden Fears (Black Theatre Puppetry)

- Harsh Task Master** Derived from the Japanese warrior tradition, a leader of the spiritual high order of martial arts.
- Five Faces of Warning** Derived from the spiritual interpretation of the Mask as being another identity for the wearer, assimilating with their own.
- Two-Headed Snake** Derived from the reflection of the Evil and the Good found in the One; on one hand the Snake symbolises temptation of the Devil while on the other hand, the Snake embodies the love and joy of fertility and creation.
- Earth Mother** Derived from the Ancient symbol of female existence and the abundance she exudes and offers.
- The Ba Bird** Derived from the Ancient Egyptian Ba Bird, the carrier of the soul.
- The Black Crow** This bird is the death warning for Spirits; it tears away the essence of a Spirit's existence.

Scene One Pirra is just a Myth

A soundscape of Pirra's past life including the tribal elders of the You Yangs, the young "emotional" girls, the drunks... races into a sonic implosion and then silence, as Pirra floats in the darkness, in limbo, forever out of reach.

Song (Pirra's Melancholia)

They say the world is your oyster
when you're young
you're young
you don't have to eat it
take your time to explore it
dream in a bed made of shell
and when you awake, remember to float
with the day into dusk and the night into dawn
'cause your future is a mountain away
when you're young
you're young
your future is a mountain away

Pirra has floated to her bed of silence but still very much unreachable. Her family encircle her like a Chorus of Conscience.

Pivot *(interjecting)* Start climbing today

TG *(an echo of his father)* Climbing today

Avalon One day you'll make it to the peak

Serendip Coooooeee your thankyous

to those who believed in you

Pirra *(pretending to be receiving an award but knowing she is far from it)* Love you Mum and Dad

for believing in my worth

Together: Pivot Your stability **Pirra** My stability

Together: Avalon & TG Your energy **Pirra** My energy

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Together: Serendip Your heart **Pirra** My heart

Pirra *(her lament)* My fantasies to become nothing
and do nothing but Be
must be tucked away

Chorus (Family) Must be tucked away

Pirra Hidden from the material world
whispered to no-one in the spirit world
I had to become something! Or else...

Chorus (Family) *(building up to a faster pace with each line, and taking a line each)*

Refurbished
Renovated
Demolished
Redeveloped
Repainted
Restored
A new look
A makeover
A facelift
A star is born!

Pirra To be me, Pirra
was not enough in any world.

The music fades away and into the voice of Pirra, beginning to tell the Myth.

Pirra On the outskirts of a small country town called Lara, a sanctuary
of lake and land grew.

Serendip Preserve your energy sweetheart. *(referring to the audience)* You
don't owe them your story.

Pirra I am no more than a myth. You have to let me say my peace.
(continuing her story) The lake and land grew to maturity and

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contained the spirit of a blossoming woman, my mother,
Serendip.

As Pirra unfolds the Myth, it is played via puppetry, using the framed window as a micro-stage. [The symbolic or Real World image of the Characters is displayed ie. Serendip is shown as a Wildlife Lake, Pivot is shown as a Township....]

Pirra Serendip Sanctuary attracted many a nature lover and also the spirit of progress, wooing and seducing Serendip into a prosperous resort. The spirit of progress being my father, Pivot – the leader of the Pivotonians! The commercial spirits of Geelong. Turning Geelong into a business empire – Pivot Stoves, Pivot Fertiliser, Pivot Ice and Cool Stores, Pivot Roofing... they did battle with the big capital giants, the Melbournians. Pivotonians and Melbournians, the clash of spirits, fighting over the prize of Capital State.

TG *(can't help himself, like a footy cry)* Caaan the Pivots!

Pirra But they lost.

Pivot We should have won.

Pirra Serendip was there to comfort Pivot when they lost the battle. Pivot visited her regularly, relaxing in her soothing waters. And soon Serendip gave birth to Avalon, my older sister. Avalon, the spirit of the Estate, with my mother's good looks and my father's zeal, Avalon became the toast of the district. She hosted many a debutante ball and all the well-heeled spent time in her chambers. And today she is a most accommodating museum of period refined living. *(mockingly)* If you haven't visited Avalon, my dear, you are really on the outer.

Avalon How dare you mock me! *(remembering her sister's condition)*
Preserve what you have left...

Serendip ... to come back to us, to your world.

Pirra Next came TG, my brother, the spirit of the business district. He's just a younger version of father in many ways, you can see the both of them spending quality time together in the clock tower of the T&G Building. Reminding all of us that time is of the essence.

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TG Now wait on. All work, no play makes Geelong a dull boy... I'm not like him.

Pirra Then came me. The mistake really. They had their perfect set. Avalon was mother's pride and joy. TG was father's...

Pivot/Serendip How can you say that?/ That's not true. *(but at the same time, both Parents feeling sheepish in front of their other two)*

Pirra Like I said, I'm the dark building of the family. I'm the abandoned building, the one people say is haunted. Pirra, you may have heard of me? *(pause)* I was very useful in the past.

Pivot You don't need to bring up your past dear.

Pirra *(pause)* I was an alcoholics retreat... a Tobacco Company turned me into a cigar making factory – Mother went hysterical over that one. And Father hated the time I was a home for “emotionally disturbed girls.” Mostly teenage pregnancies. I miss those girls. When they left I felt really abandoned, until the artists came along and turned me into a gallery and theatre, and a place for a party every second night... *(reminiscing)* a bunch of talented crazies... they left too... I took up the habit of sleeping... but one day I was disturbed from my slumber... the Gang of Five invaded my personal space...

Pirra glides her hand over the framed window and mist covers the abandoned building section of the stage. One by one the five young friends, Kyri, Nat, Reni, Pete, Chewy, have toppled into the main heart room of the abandoned building, through hitching up an outside window.

Scene Two The Special Place within the Heart Room

Kyri, Nat, Reni, Pete and Chewy are in Pirra, the building, for the first time. It is early evening, the building is in darkness. Nat is inspecting the chimney for heating possibilities, with the only torch.

In the Spirit World, Pirra, is watching with her Energy Spirits.

Reni Didn't I tell you nobody lives here.

Chewy You sure nobody lives here? It feels so warm, like someone...

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Kyri Don't start... ghost stories are not useful right now. Pete and Reni you check the rest of the rooms... *(looking outside the building)*
I'll make sure nobody followed us.

Reni Our olds think we're at the movies, don't they? Nobody knows we're here.

Pete I'm not going in any more rooms without protection.

Chewy This place is special, I can feel it. We can be like squatters...

Kyri *(to Chewy)* Get real. *(to Pete)* It's not a brothel Pete, you don't need no "protection".

Pete Garlic or a charm and some white candles.

Kyri That's rubbish.

Pete Then you go.

Chewy I'm hungry. Has anyone got a chewy?

Nat suddenly prods the chimney with a stick to see if the flue is blocked. This takes Pirra by surprise and she lets out a scream which filters through the building.

Kyri *(grabbing hold of Pete, out of panic)* What was that?

Pete *(holding Kyri too but not so much out of panic, rather out of warmth)* Maybe that's a sign. We shouldn't be here.

Chewy I don't know, I may be wrong, but I feel something's here...

Kyri realises he's been holding onto Pete and disentangles himself quickly.

Pete *(looking up at the ceiling)*

Oh Goddess of the Dusk and Dawn

We come to you in peace

We bring you our respect

And trust you will protect us.