

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# Room for Night and Day

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by Kit Lazaroo

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EXTRACT

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# ROOM FOR NIGHT AND DAY

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## CAST LIST

Molly	a traveler, in her thirties
Lourdes	a local woman, also in her thirties
Albina	the mother of Lourdes
Blackie	a cousin of Lourdes
Ito	a friend of Blackie
Mr Cho	an aging shopkeeper
Ghost	a young female ghost, can be played by Mr Cho

## SETTING

All the scenes take place in a run down guest house. While the setting could be in the mountains of East Timor, the play does not try to portray this country or its people in a realistic way and the design and performances should not aim for any objective reality.

Where the stage directions refer to rooms and doors, these may be suggested by transparent screens, by lighting, or simply through performance.

## Scene 1

*A heavy wooden door opens onto a long room, which was once the reception area and dining hall of a small guest house in a mountainous area. The room is now bare with cracked and peeling walls. A yellow door and a blue door open into smaller rooms, and at the far end of the room, a curtain hides the working part of the house. Near this curtain is a ladder which leads up into a little attic room over the main room. At the opening of the play, the room is lit by a modest candle in front of a blotchy framed photograph on a shelf, and from outside come sounds of early evening - dogs, horses, goats are restless and someone is chopping wood.*

*A dog sneaks through the front door, pants and whines, sniffing along the skirting board. Its shadow leaps up along the walls. Albina comes through the curtain with a stick - she is a fierce looking woman whose hair is elaborately dressed with several ornaments. She stamps her foot and swings her stick at the dog.*

Albina:        Sai! Sai! (Go!)

*The dog slips out again. Albina heaves the creaking door shut. She goes back out through the curtain.*

*The front door opens again to let in Blackie, a wild barefoot young man. He has an old biscuit tin, which he opens. He takes out a lace mantilla which is very tattered and holds it up in front of the candle. Its shadow falls across the walls. Choosing a tear worse than the others, he laboriously mends it with needle and thread.*

*Meanwhile, Mr Cho also enters through the front door. He crosses the room very quietly as though not wishing to disturb anyone, climbs the ladder to the attic and sits on a stool. He takes out some money and counts it over and over as though he expects to find more than there is.*

*Lourdes comes through the curtains - she moves quickly as though used to getting things done. Standing in front of the candle, she closes her eyes, as though praying.*

*There is a knocking on the door. Nobody moves. The door opens a little and Molly's face looks in. The door opens wider and Molly pushes a heavy crate on stage. A traveler from Australia, she has more of the hippy about her than the seasoned backpacker, and her eyesight isn't the best. She sees Blackie, goes over to him tentatively. He continues as before, as though he doesn't see her. Unnerved, she backs away. She goes back out the door and returns pushing another, and then a third, heavy crate. Now Lourdes finishes her prayer.*

Lourdes: Good evening.

Molly: I'm sorry to come so late. The bridge was broken. We nearly got swept away. The water came up to the windows. *(Pause)* You know who I am. Molly Hardy. Mr Cho is expecting me. His brother. Chong Cho. In Australia.

Lourdes: Molly. Welcome.

Molly: Look.

*She opens one of the crates and pulls out some second hand books.*

Molly: There's more than a thousand. I'm going to teach Mr Cho, the Dewey Classification. *(A moment of uncertainty)* I've come to the right place, haven't I? The yellow house past the cross roads. And here you are, Lourdes, just as he said. It is Lourdes, isn't it? Of course you are, what am I saying? *(She looks in one of the books)* The Complete Book of Gardening. Plant propagation is one of the most fascinating of the garden arts and one from which it is possible to gain much pleasure. *(Closes the book)* I thought you would like this one. Chong Cho said you had a beautiful garden. This means a lot to me. My books have found a home. They'll be safe here. *(Points to the yellow door)* Is this the room?

Lourdes: It's going to be a dark night, so many clouds. Where do you plan to stay?

Molly: *(Slightly unnerved)* Chong Cho said you took guests. *(Pause)* Could you tell Mr Cho I've come? Mr Sim Cho?

Lourdes: Don't you worry about anything. We'll find you a room. Excuse me.

*Lourdes exits. Molly sits on one of her crates. She glances across at Blackie.*

Molly: I hope I'm not disturbing you. You're the man who drives the Cho Brothers' truck. Or your truck, now. Sardines and rope. Pleased to meet you. Blackie. Chong Cho said you sleep with your eyes open. That's how I know you. Sorry. I just wanted to say hello. So I don't seem rude. But maybe if you're asleep you can't hear me. I'll stop now. *(Quietly)* Sorry. Shhh!

*Silence. Blackie looks at her crates.*

Blackie: They seem heavy. Hurt your back.