

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre

True Adventures of a Soul Lost at Sea

by Kit Lazaroo

EXTRACT

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Cast

Olley Fletcher - a young woman

Dido Morris - a woman in her early thirties

Constable Dougal Morris - Dido's husband

Dr Rufus Plank - an impoverished doctor

The play is set in a tiny Australian coastal town in the middle of the nineteenth century. Due to its extreme isolation, its inhabitants have developed their own "dialect".

The set consists of a kitchen table of weathered wood, and three odd chairs. (In the original production, the table doubled as jetty, boat, prison and gallows.)

1

Sound of pencils scratching on paper as the lights come up. Dougal, Dido and Plank sit at the table and scribble fervently and secretively into their private notebooks, unaware of each other. They murmur to themselves in a strange underwater language.

Olley stands centre stage facing the audience.

Dido: Ouy. Shamouwr. Aiyrr shwiyr.

Dougal: *(overlaps Dido throughout this)* Ouy. Shamouwr. Aiyrr shwiyr.

Dido: Memhrh shwiyr.

Dougal: Memhrh shwiyr.

Plank: Hhroush ahyair.

Dido: Hhroush ahyair.

Dougal: Hroush ahyair.

Plank: Shhh whhh yhhh.

Dido: Shhh whhh yhhh.

Olley: The strange adventures of a soul lost at sea. By Olley Fletcher. Orphan. Dear reader, as you peruse these pages, I beg you to consider this thing. How could I, a poor motherless unlearned girl, born and raised in ignorance, come to know of all these wonders, if not through the witness of mine own eyes.

She drops in a heap on the floor. Dougal jumps to his feet.

Dougal: Olley Fletcher. Be this true! We long took you dead and drowned. *(He touches her to check she really is alive)* You member me don't you?

Olley: Course I do. .

Dougal: Tide, lass. Best up quick now.

He helps her to her feet, but she wobbles and slides back down to sit.

Olley: All gone boneless.

He helps her up again and this time holds on to her for longer.

Dougal: So blow me over. *(Pause)* You wait now. Go and get help. *(Gently lets go of Olley, turns towards Dido and calls out.)* Dido! Down on the beach now!

Dido is secretively writing. She quickly hides her writing material and stands.

Dido: Hands all caught up, my love. Making pastry for your pie. You won't want it tough.

Dougal: Young Olley Fletcher. Washed up with the cuttlefish.

Dido: Olley Fletcher. Dead?

Dougal: Not a scrap of it.

Dido: Must be dead.

Dougal: Been speaking to me right now.

Dido: Not drowned after all?

Dougal: Not drowned, but alive. Come down and see for yourself.

Dido: You know I can't do that. The day be full enough. Bring her up here.

Dougal looks at her, confused.

Dougal: Right then.

He turns around to face Olley and Dido sits back down.

Dougal: Come on then. We'll get you high and dry.

He takes her by the hand but she looks over her shoulder, back at the sea.

Dougal: What, lass?

Olley: Clouds. Were clouds.

Dougal: Were clouds right enough. Whole sky were black that day you went.

Olley: Were under water, my clouds.

Dougal: Now you know that's not right. Clouds be in the sky, not in the sea. Here we go, high and dry. Dido? Look who we got then.

Dido stands up again.

Dido: Goddy scrape me! Where've you been?

Olley: Been swimming.

Dido: Swimming! It's a long time to go swimming. You must've grown a tail. Let me look at your skin. See if you sprouted scales.

Dougal: Go gentle now. Be all coddled inside her nut.

Olley: S'not a nut.

He touches the crown of her head gently.

Dougal: What's it be, then?

Olley: Be a treasure box.

Dougal: So it is.

Dido takes Olley's hand and pats it.

Dido: Poor lamb. Look at you. All washed up. You tell me everything. All you've been through. From start to finish. Tell me what come of your boat.

Olley: I don't remember no boat.

Dido: Your Dad's boat. You went out chasing mackerel. The both of you.

Dougal: Wasn't mackerel, Dido. Was whitebait.

Olley: I don't remember no boat.

Dido: You just about grew up in that boat.

Dougal : Maybe it's too soon for membering. Thirsty, then?

Dido: Maybe all that salt got into your brain. You take a nice big drink of water and then you can sleep. Like a little puppy. Nothing in this world sleeps as long as a puppy.

Olley: I want to go home.

Dido: You got no home now. Caught fire the day you two disappeared. To all our surprise. Up in smoke. What a puzzle!

Olley: I had a cat.

Dido: There, you remember something.

Pause

Olley: He flicks his tail when he got angry. *(Pause)* My Dad?

Dougal and Dido glance at each other.

Dougal: Never made it to shore.

Olley: Drowned?

Dougal: Looks that way to me, lass. Looks that way to me.

Dido: Can't be so sure now though. If the goose can pull through.

Dougal gives Dido a look of warning.

Dido: Come home with Dido. That's big enough fussing for one day.

2

It is night. The wind can be heard whistling on the shore. Dougal is writing in a book, at the table. Olley appears, sits down on one chair, sighs, gets up, sits at another chair, etc.

Dougal: Got the fidgets? I'll make you a drink of warm milk.

Olley: I drunk some already.

Dougal: Be it the dark? Put a lamp next your bed if you like.

Olley: Nothing wrong with the dark. Dark lets you float. Over roofs. Over rocks.

Dougal: You fly out of your bed?

Olley: You know what I mean.

Dougal: You look through people's windows?

Olley: My mind does. Looks at them sleeping in their beds.

Dougal: What do they look like?

Olley: Some twined up together. Some flapping about. Some be loneful and sad. Feel like they're drowning and nothing to stop them. No rope. No plank. Down down down.

Dougal: Not me. Sleep like a babe. Never miss a wink.

Olley: Never?

Dougal: *(Lying)* No, never. *(Pause)* You don't go looking at us, do you? Me and Dido sleeping?

Olley: *(Lying)* No, never. *(Pause)* Why aren't you in bed now?

Dougal: Can't.

Olley: Why not?

Dougal: I got reports to write.

Olley: What reports?

Dougal: Police work reports. I make document on all the ructions of the day.

Olley: Do you make a document on me?

Dougal: Yes, I do. Just now I do.

Olley: What does it say?

Dougal: Found on the beach this morning, one Olley Fletcher, missing thought dead these last fortytwo days. Still missing thought dead, her father, York Fletcher.

Olley: Is that all?

Dougal: Miss Fletcher boneless on her feet and full memoryless. That's all.

Olley: You call me Miss? Show me where you wrote Miss.

She takes the book from Dougal and looks inside it hungrily.