

EXTRACT

Five houses for Harriette

A short play

By

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Cast

HARRIETTE – Younger (18-30. Scenes 1, 2 and 3)

HARRIETTE – Older (45–58. Scenes 4 and 5)

DARIUS

MR COHEN

BRUCE

DAVINA

(Writer's Note on doubling: The play may be performed with a cast of three. The roles of DARIUS, MR COHEN and BRUCE may be played by the same actor. The roles of HARRIETTE YOUNGER and DAVINA may also be played by the same actress.)

Time

1970 to 2010.

Settings

Various houses and apartments around Sydney, Australia.

(Writer's Note on location: The play is nominally set in Sydney, Australia but the writer encourages directors and producers to re-locate the play to wherever it is being performed, changing place names as required.)

Five Houses for Harriette

1. 1970. Newtown. Harriette is 18.

HARRIETTE: This is it. This is home.

DARIUS: Not the word I would use. Home – no. Dump – yes.

HARRIETTE: It's home. For now. And aren't you meant to be selling me on the place?

DARIUS: Listen lady, you are at this dump. You are desperate. Me no need to sell you anything.

HARRIETTE: It's my first time.

DARIUS: For what?

HARRIETTE: Away from the family. The parents. Anywhere will do.

DARIUS: Now you're talking. Welcome to anywhere.

HARRIETTE: How much?

DARIUS: The lady wants to get down to business.

HARRIETTE: Don't want to lose out.

DARIUS: Trust me. Anyone who misses out on this place is not the loser. Don't you want to at least check the ...

HARRIETTE: The what?

DARIUS: The powder room.

HARRIETTE: Oh, no. I'm sure it works.

DARIUS: Sometimes. \$75.

HARRIETTE: A month.

DARIUS: A week.

HARRIETTE: I was expecting a little –

DARIUS: Lady, it's a dump. It's not free. Do you a special deal? Darius favour.

HARRIETTE: How much?

DARIUS: Usual price \$75. For you - \$75.

HARRIETTE: That's a favour?

DARIUS: I throw in a smile for free.

HE SMILES. PAUSE.

HARRIETTE: I'll take it.

DARIUS: Woosh. Lady – you drive a hard bargain.

HARRIETTE: Thank you.

DARIUS: I get you the key. If I can find it. (HE TURNS TO GO. BEAT. RETURNS) Listen, lady. You seem like nice lady – a little crazy but nice. This not a good area for nice lady. This very bad area. Newtown. Last week someone left an axe in Room 13.

HARRIETTE: On the floor?

DARIUS: In the door.

HARRIETTE: Is No.13 on this floor?

DARIUS: Next door. Now I like making money like any good Aussie but you sure you want to do this.

HARRIETTE: Mr Cholostpolous.

DAROUS: Please, call me Darius. It's shorter.

HARRIETTE: Darius. I grew up in a very nice area in a very nice suburb of the very nice North Shore. Where my very nice parents would both sit up and wait for me to come home at the very nice time of 10pm. Now I'm at University. I finally talked my parents in to letting me move out of home. I want to be the farthest from nice as I can be.

DARIUS: Congratulations. You made it. Now, just watch out for the axes.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

2. 1977. Rose Bay. Harriette is 25

HARRIETTE: It seems very expensive.

MR COHEN: It's a very beautiful home. Look at this kitchen. Brand new. Polished wooden floor boards. Skylight.

HARRIETTE: It's a little beyond my budget Alfred.

- MR COHEN: Please, call me Mr Cohen.
- HARRIETTE: It's still very expensive Mr Cohen.
- MR COHEN: Where else should a renowned young doctor live.
- HARRIETTE: I haven't even finished my internship yet. I'm not even qualified to operate.
- MR COHEN: Yes, but you will be very soon. Lots of very complicated procedures. Complicated procedures are very expensive. Perhaps we can work out a discount. I have a problem with my gall bladder.
- HARRIETTE: Sorry to hear it.
- MR COHEN: You do the operation for free. I give you rent free.
- HARRIETTE: For how long?
- MR COHEN: Two weeks. At least.
- HARRIETTE: I do a free operation – if that was even possible – I'd be hoping for a little more than a few weeks rent free.
- MR COHEN: Okay. One month – providing you sign a lease for two years.
- HARRIETTE: You drive a hard bargain.
- MR COHEN: Thank you. (BEAT) Harriette – I only do this because I am friends with your parents. They say the place you stay in now is terrible. Dirty.
- HARRIETTE: I kept my flat very clean.
- MR COHEN: On the outside, leaks in roof and dangerous area. Criminal element.
- HARRIETTE: There were a few unexpected axes.
- MR COHEN: Yeesh. I haven't shown this apartment to anybody else. I save it for you. It has a large bedroom, en-suite with marble bath, study, dining room, this beautiful kitchen and even a view of a lovely (LOOKING AROUND) ... tree.
- HARRIETTE: (LOOKING OUT GARDEN) It is beautiful. What is it?
- MR COHEN: I forget the name. But in spring it is very colourful. Bright purple flower.