

EXTRACT

One Star

a short play

by

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Cast

RAQUEL – 36, an entertainer

MASON – 21, a soldier

Setting

A smoking area.

Tallil, southern Iraq. Camp Terrendak.

Time

Evening. Around 11pm.

One Star

Tallil, southern Iraq. Camp Terrendak.

A smoking area. A bench with back rest. A tarp above, periodically during the play we hear it flap in the wind.

RAQUEL: I kept seeing these incredibly beautiful middle eastern structures. I was taken inside – it’s all concrete and barbed wires and behind it’s beauty, abandoned beauty. Everything is the colour of sand. The air, the sky, the uniforms, people’s skin, the sand - and this palace is the same colour. It’s made of hard sand and I’m walking on soft sand. So I walk into this room and they make me an instant coffee at this café bar and there are these baroque chairs and so I sit in one of those. Chairs he would’ve sat in. And above me there’s this massive chandelier, just hanging there, and on the wall there’s this framed Wallaby jersey. And when I saw that I thought we had taken over this palace – the palace belonged to us. And this is where the raffies are -

MASON: Soft cocks.

RAQUEL: So I get a briefing and they tell us what we can and can’t photo and then they tell us about the sleeping arrangements. Turns out I’m not even sleeping there. I’m sleeping down the road in another palace. His library. Did he read? So they take me to this other palace and I have to carry my stuff. My bag’s got wheels – I’m not a total idiot – but there’s these pebbles. Not pebbles, rocks – and the wheels kept getting stuck on the rocks. And my feet - the rocks – through my shoes. The soles of my feet are bruised.

MASON: I bet a foot rub would fix it.

RAQUEL: I bet it would too. I’d donate one ovary to science fiction to get a food rub. But ...

MASON: Yeah.

RAQUEL: So I’m wheeling the bag and I see these three guys fishing – these Yanks –

MASON: Better not let them hear you calling them that.

RAQUEL: US Troops?

MASON NODS.

RAQUEL: And they were fishing. Fishing? And I said “What are you hoping to catch.” And they said –

MASON: Saddam carp.

RAQUEL: Yes. There's four, hundred and thirty unrecovered bodies down there and the carp feed on that. And I said "Do you eat it?" And they said "God no." And I'm kind of thinking okay this is rude, Here's three US Troops catching this fish that they have no intention of eating and then they're going to kill people they have no intention of meeting.

MASON LAUGHS.

RAQUEL: So I get to this other palace where I'm sleeping. And I drop my bags. And then they say you've got to get ready cause you're going in to the lav. And I'm thinking, what are we doing in the lav? And then I realise there talking about a *lav*, not a *lav*.

MASON: Land Armoured Vehicle.

RAQUEL: The tank with wheels. And then someone's talking about an "IUD" – and I'm thinking do they still use those in the army but it's not "IUD" it "IED" –

MASON: Improvised Exploding Device.

RAQUEL: Which I'm hearing are pretty nasty. So anyway I'm hurrying now – and I'm used to doing everything in Raquel time but now I'm on Army time - to get in to the LAV but then they come and say – "No it's just a briefing." And then I'm thinking, well why did they ask me to get ready so quickly?

MASON: Hurry up and wait.

RAQUEL: As I'm learning. So now I do have time and I'm in this library – his library – and it's this beautiful big round room that obviously had lots of shelves with books in them – but it's been transformed by the Americans into these sleeping quarters – and around the outside there's these curtains made up from lots of different materials stuck together – and I'm kind of thinking it looks like a Hippy Commune, you know? But it's the furthest thing from a Hippy Commune - and there's this little curtained off area where you can go and use a computer – near the window – and I've got a bit of time now and no one's around so I go in and sit down and I'm waiting for the pages to loads – which is very slowly, no good for downloading porn - and I'm looking out the window over Saddam's carp and there's this other palace in the middle of the water and I suddenly realise that he may have sat right here – in this very spot – and gazed out on his lake and his palace and I'm thinking – "No, it's yours anymore. It's mine. This belongs to me."

MASON: But it doesn't.

RAQUEL: Of course but for that one moment it is. And so I'm waiting for the pages and it hits me – bang – I'm doing my emails in Saddam

RAQUEL: (CONT) Hussein's library. *Saddam Hussein's* library. So, what do you miss about Australia?

MASON: Sorry.

RAQUEL: Just asking what you miss most about Australia?

MASON: Is this for the show?

RAQUEL: Maybe.

BEAT.

MASON: Don't know.

RAQUEL: Don't know or not telling.

MASON: Not sure.

RAQUEL: Fair enough. (BEAT) So did you enjoy it?

MASON: Yeah.

RAQUEL: Don't sound too enthusiastic.

MASON: It was ...

RAQUEL: Brilliant, stupendous, magnificent?

MASON: Patchy.

RAQUEL: Oh.

MASON: Not you. You were great.

RAQUEL: Relieved to hear it.

MASON: And the comedian –

RAQUEL: Dickster.

MASON: He was funny. Accurate. But the singer –

RAQUEL: No?

MASON: Maybe it's just I don't like country or maybe she was just ...

RAQUEL: Crap?

MASON: I don't mean –