

THE MEETING PLACE

WRITTEN BY DARREN BREALEY

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THE MEETING PLACE

Who do you find living in a tree lined suburban street? A suburban family of five, as Craig and Sheryl apathetically deal with the death of their love. Their three children, David, Michelle and Rick relentlessly struggle with denial, contempt and rebellion. The sibling rivalry abounds with our protagonist David, openly discussing his sexuality within the realms of his family home. Whilst his father is never home to behold a view on leadership and with his mother abstaining from the truth, David struggles to hold his own place in the world. His circle of friends comforts him, however his longing for acceptance from his family remains poignant.

The Meeting Place was first performed at The East Melbourne Hotel (E.M.H.) 9 October 1996 with the following cast:

<i>CRAIG ANDERSON</i>	...	<i>Simon Laidler</i>
<i>SHERYL ANDERSON</i>	...	<i>Elizabeth Penny</i>
<i>DAVID ANDERSON</i>	...	<i>Adam Turnbull</i>
<i>MICHELLE ANDERSON</i>	...	<i>Clare O'Sullivan</i>
<i>RICK ANDERSON</i>	...	<i>Raphaul Summut</i>
<i>SIMON</i>	...	<i>Tim Constantine</i>
<i>ADAM</i>	...	<i>Paul Henderson</i>
<i>KYM</i>	...	<i>Irene Guzowski</i>
<i>RED</i>	...	<i>Simon Laidler</i>
<i>BOOGA</i>	...	<i>Luke Jelleff</i>

Set in modern times in a family situation, this suburban family is torn out of the bitchin' kitchen into the night streets and jungle parkland. The main set is of the kitchen in the Andersen's house. It's early morning on a Saturday. A door to the lounge room down stage left. The base of the staircase sits up stage left. A servery up centre stage left with continuing bench, fridge, stove and oven through to stage right. The back door is up stage right. A window and sink underneath is centre stage right. A table and six chairs sit canter stage.

THE MEETING PLACE

It's 6:30 a.m. and RICK is preparing to go surfing with his friends. He is making sandwiches in the kitchen at the servery. MICHELLE tiptoes through the back door. MICHELLE enters.

RICK: Where've you been?

MICHELLE: Rick! Just been out...

RICK: Adam again, huh? You know what mum and dad think of him.

MICHELLE: Yes. I know. I really don't care.

RICK: I like Adam, in his own weird way.

PAUSE.

MICHELLE: What'd you mean by that?

RICK: He likes to spend loads of money then works to get more. Dumb idea.

MICHELLE: Don't be so childish, preposterous cretin. He loves me...

RICK: Yeah, if you want to go out with a wanker.

MICHELLE: He's not a wanker!

SHERYL appears at the top of the stairs in her dressing gown.

SHERYL: Why are you dressed like that Michelle? Where have you been?

MICHELLE: Out with Adam. We were talking, drinking coffee. Next thing...

SHERYL: Well, get upstairs and get changed. Straight to sleep. You hear me.

RICK: More like bonking your brains out in the back of his car...

MICHELLE: Mum!

SHERYL: I'll have no more of that in this house.

RICK: *(uninterested)* Yeah.

MICHELLE: Goodnight mum.

SHERYL: We'll talk later!

MICHELLE: Yes mum.

MICHELLE exits upstairs.

SHERYL: Where are you off to young man?

RICK: Mum, like every other Saturday morning. I'm going surfing.

SHERYL: Don't get smart Rick. You concentrate on your homework and not your sister's problems. It'd make life a lot easier.

RICK: Yes mum.

PAUSE.

SHERYL: Why do you have to be so mean to your sister?

RICK: 'Cause she's stupid.

SHERYL: (*correcting him*) Because.

RICK: (*aloof*) ...Because.

SHERYL: She's not stupid. Have you done your homework?

RICK: Baaah! The black sheep of the family.

SHERYL: You just need to show a little...

RICK: ... compassion. Yeah I know.

SHERYL: What's wrong with, compassion?

RICK: Yes mum.

SHERYL: What time you coming home tonight?

RICK: (*slang*) Doe know!

SHERYL: (*correcting him, sarcastic*) Don't know!

RICK: You never do.

SHERYL: Excuse me? What did you say?

SILENCE.

SHERYL: What did you say...

CRAIG appears on top of the landing.

CRAIG: What's going on then...

RICK: Nothing. I was just leaving!

RICK exits through the back door.

CRAIG: Rick, where are you going? Come back...

SHERYL: He's gone surfing, like he always does on a Saturday.

CRAIG: Honey, you o.k.?

SHERYL: Help me make breakfast? Coffee?

CRAIG: What was that all about, Hon?

CRAIG places some glasses and cutlery on the table. SHERYL switches on the kettle and begins to prepare breakfast.

CRAIG: What are you doing to today?

SHERYL: Oh, thought I would do some washing, clean the house. Maybe wash the dog.

CRAIG: Is that all?

PAUSE.

SHERYL: What?!

CRAIG: Is that all? What are *we* going to do?

PAUSE.

SHERYL: Maybe *we* can go out somewhere?

CRAIG: I must go to the office this morning.

SHERYL: *(to herself)* Marriage was meant for two...

CRAIG: Sorry?

SHERYL: What time will you be home?

CRAIG: This afternoon. There's a great new play on, it's called...

SHERYL: Dancing! Yes, I'd like to go dancing.

CRAIG: Dancing hey, when I get back from work, we'll talk about it then.

SHERYL: Sure.

PAUSE.

CRAIG: Have you seen Michelle this morning? She suppose to be coming to the Agency to study our clients who pay rent. Something to do with her Psychology studies.

SHERYL: What sort of people are they?

CRAIG: How would I know - all sorts of people rent. I thought she could learn something from it.

SHERYL: Let her sleep in. I mean it's been a busy week for her at Uni. She's coming up to exams next month, so she'll need all the rest she can get.

CRAIG: She was determined to come along. I've had to change my schedule for her. My secretary is expecting her.

SHERYL: Let her sleep in dear. She can go next week.

CRAIG: No, we're too busy next week.

SHERYL: Well how about the week...

CRAIG: We're busy for the next eight weeks and by then she'll be in the middle of her exams. It'll be too late. I'll wake her and...

SHERYL: Your breakfast is ready. It's getting cold, you'll be late for the office.

CRAIG: I'll be back in a moment. I'm only going to ask Michelle if she wants to come along.

SHERYL: Craig...

SILENCE.

CRAIG: Yes?

SHERYL: Don't...be too long will you.

CRAIG: No, I'm just going to Michelle's room.

CRAIG exits upstairs.

CRAIG: (off) Michelle, why are you still dressed in the clothes...

MICHELLE: (off) Adam and I were out last...

CRAIG: (off) Out where? Have you any idea what this makes you look like?

MICHELLE: (off, childish) Daddy...

CRAIG: (off) No! Come down stairs now. Let's see what your mother has to say about this.

SHERYL: Oh shit!

CRAIG and MICHELLE march down stairs.

CRAIG: Your daughter was out last night, tramping around with that good for nothing Adam.

SHERYL: Why, just last week, you were saying what an upstanding person he was.

CRAIG: That was last week, before I knew he was making my daughter look like a tramp.

SHERYL: Michelle is not a tramp.

CRAIG: Sheryl, let's not change the situation here - Michelle has been out...

MICHELLE: All night with Adam and I wasn't being a tramp!

SHERYL: There, see. She wasn't being a tramp!

PAUSE.

CRAIG: Sheryl?

MICHELLE: I'm not a tramp Dad, I was only with Adam.

CRAIG: Michelle, you're only nineteen years old and I'll not...

MICHELLE: Nineteen years old daddy, old enough to do what...

CRAIG: Not while you're under this roof, you'll play by the house rules.

SHERYL: People please. Let's not loose control.

MICHELLE: I'm going to my room.

CRAIG: Sit down!

SHERYL: Craig...

CRAIG: I put aside my time for you, I change my schedules for you, I make plans for you. I pay for the University you attend, so you can become a Psychologist. I stay awake at night, hoping, hoping that you're happy and what do I get, what do I get? I get slapped in the face by a contemptuous daughter who doesn't appreciate the things I do for her and a wife, who lies to me!

SILENCE. CRAIG storms up stairs and slams the bedroom door.

MICHELLE: Why does he do that? I'm old enough to have a little freedom aren't I?

PAUSE.

SHERYL: Yes dear.

MICHELLE: I'm allowed to go out at night aren't I?

PAUSE.

SHERYL: Yes love.

MICHELLE: Then why does he hate me? I love Dad, yet he screams at me all the time.

SHERYL: He'll understand one day love. You go back upstairs and get some sleep.

PAUSE.

MICHELLE: Yes Mum.

SHERYL sighs. MICHELLE exits up stairs, passing DAVID on the way down.

DAVID: Morning.

MICHELLE: Morning.

PAUSE.

SHERYL: Morning David.

DAVID: Morning Mum. How are you on this bright and beautiful day?

SHERYL: Shut up.

DAVID: Mother, really.

SHERYL: Well it hasn't been a good start.

DAVID: So the neighbors told me.

SHERYL: Would you like some toast David?

DAVID: Yes please. What was all the commotion about?

SHERYL: Nothing that concerns you.

DAVID: Has Michelle been out all night again with Adam?

SHERYL pours DAVID a glass of orange juice.

SHERYL: Yes. Orange juice?

DAVID: Yes please. Can't Dad accept that Michelle is old enough...

SHERYL: (*passes jam*) No unfortunately.

DAVID: Can I have the jam please?

SHERYL: Michelle has met Adam and has been happy with him for a long while, what about you?

DAVID: Adam's not my type.

SHERYL: Don't be smart, you know what I mean.

PAUSE.

SHERYL: There are plenty of nice girls out there.

DAVID: Name three.

SHERYL: What about Sonya?

DAVID: That fat thing...

SHERYL: David please. She's very nice. What about Debbie?

DAVID: If you like girls who tie up cats to washing lines and set them alight.

SHERYL: She was only five then.

DAVID: She's still weird.

SHERYL: What about...

DAVID: Not Leanne Robinson! She makes Captain Hook look like Alice In Wonderland. She's a butch...

SHERYL: Eat your breakfast!

DAVID: Well, you started it.

PAUSE.

SHERYL: What are you doing today?

DAVID: Simon, Kym and Robyn are going to a new nightclub and I thought I'd go with them.

SHERYL: You won't meet any nice girls out at any nightclub you know.

DAVID: (*eating his toast*) I don't intend too.

SHERYL: What was that David?

DAVID: I said I know.

SHERYL: Know what?

DAVID: I won't meet any nice girls.

SHERYL: So why go?

DAVID: Because everyone else is going. That's why.

SHERYL: Would you do the same off a cliff?

DAVID: If it was the trendy thing to do, yeah.

SHERYL: David?

DAVID: Mother, really.

SHERYL: Well, I do worry about you. I mean you never bring any girls home. Who is in your life?

DAVID: Who's in yours?

SHERYL: Your father of course.

DAVID: Is that all? - pity.

SHERYL: What is that supposed to mean?

DAVID: It means that you ask too many questions.

SHERYL: Well, I'm being serious.

DAVID: You should chill out a little.

SHERYL: I feel very chilled thank you, young man.

DAVID: 'Young Man', more compliments.

SHERYL: Have you finished?

DAVID: With what?

SHERYL: With giving me a hard time!

DAVID: What is wrong with this damned household...

SHERYL: ...I won't have language like that this morning...

DAVID: ...No mother and we won't shout at each other or scream or anything bad at all.

SHERYL: ...What is that...

DAVID: ...Mum, look at us, arguing already and it's only been ten minutes this morning.

SHERYL: ...David, you're...

DAVID: ...You're so right.

PAUSE.

SHERYL: So what about your girlfriend? What's her name?

DAVID: Mum. I don't have a girlfriend.

SHERYL: Why not?

DAVID: Because I'm... too busy at work, that's why.

SHERYL: That pub can wait. There must be a nice girl at work.

DAVID: Mum, that pub happens to be a five star hotel.

RICK storms through the back door, mumbling.

RICK: "Hits from the bong...". (*Looks at SHERYL*) I'm goin' back to the club.

SHERYL: Rick!

RICK: Ooh Ma...

DAVID: (*impersonates Rick*) Da know, Bro!

RICK: What fag? What would you know about surfing anyway? Cripple!

DAVID: Cripple? Social cripple.

RICK: Sodomite!

SHERYL slaps ***RICK*** on the back of the head. ***SILENCE.***

RICK runs up stairs.

SHERYL: You come back here right this instant, dirty little foul-mouthed shit!

DAVID: Mother, leave it!

SHERYL: What would your father say.

DAVID: Probably the usual.

DAVID impersonates ***CRAIG.***

DAVID: Rick, don't talk like that. You got to show some respect!

SHERYL: That's not funny.

PAUSE. RICK'S stereo can be heard from his bedroom. Surfing/Grunge style music.

MICHELLE: (off) Rick, turn that music off, now!

DAVID: How do you cope with being a parent?

SHERYL: It's not easy.

MICHELLE: (off) Rick, are you listening to me. Turn that music off!

SHERYL: Oh god, Rick turn the music down!

DAVID: Dad won't do anything drastic, will he?

***** Truncated *****

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