

person. I consider that the author of this play is capable of writing a very good play if she will consider that the audience would prefer to love a stage character rather than dislike it.

"Where There's a Will There's a Way" is an interesting play, which would please an audience. A little more care in characterisation and in writing would have given this play a chance of a prize.

"Purl and Plain" is also interesting. It has as a motif the excellent warning not to judge by appearances.

"Sugar, Mrs. de Fish," contains very sound characterisation and shows a wise observation of types. It presents the woman's point of view very well. The dialogue is good.

"Glitter" sets the problem: What would you do if you suddenly inherited money unexpectedly? It is a good idea, well carried out in places, although the ending is prolonged.

"Anybody Can Act" has a good plot, well worked out, but the action is slow.

"The Signal"

Characters.

Mrs. Rudd, an old woman of nearly seventy, with a gentle face that has known some great sorrow and gnarled hands that have done hard work.

Kate Rudd, her daughter, aged about forty; a little severe in type, but a woman you would trust at the first glance.

Moira Shand, a young woman in the late twenties, carrying the evidence of former beauty, but worn and sad beyond her years.

The scene is the small living-room of a typical backblocks cottage. There is a log fire burning in an open hearth; three "easy" chairs of a primitive type, a few wooden ones, and a centre table. One door leads straight on to the narrow veranda, the other into the rest of the house. There is only one window, with the curtains drawn back to allow the light to enter.

SCENE I.

It is a late winter's afternoon, and old Mrs. Rudd is sitting by the fire knitting. The outside door opens and Moira Shand enters.

Mrs. Rudd: Well, dearie, it's a wild day.

Moira (who speaks with a soft Irish voice): And a wilder night coming. The wind is howling and shrieking and the dead trees do be groaning like lost souls.

Mrs. Rudd: What a girl for fancies! I believe you see spirits abroad sometimes.

Moira (shuddering): I did feel them about me to-night—poor wandering creatures that could find no ease.

Mrs. Rudd: You take little ease yourself. Come now, and draw up to the fire. Take off that wet coat. Is it raining already?

Moira: 'Tis but a wild scatter of drops, with more coming. When the

mists parted for a minute, I did be seeing right over the harbour, all those miles away. The breakers were white upon the bar, a line of angry, tossing foam. What a night for those that be out!

Mrs. Rudd: Come away from that window, child. It's a bleak prospect, and no use looking at it. We'll be

Mrs. Rudd: Nonsense. Beginning for you, more likely. You are so young.

Moira (bitterly): Young, is it? Me young?

Mrs. Rudd (smiling): Oh, no—most ancient. What is it—twenty-seven?

Moira: It is the heart and not the years, that do be counting.

"That this Female Freedom is a Farcical Failure"

is the subject of a Debate by the

Victoria University Debating Society

to be broadcast on relay by 2YA on September 11.

Affirmative

Mr. H. R. Bannister

Mr. H. J. Bishop

Chairman .. Mr. W. J. Mountjoy, jun.

Negative

Mr. M. Riske

Mr. A. E. Hurley

fine and cosy inside, in spite of the storm, for Ted left us a fine pile of rata logs. It seems strange without him, even for one night.

Moira: And we women like creatures upon a desert island, with the mist lapping us about! Ah, but it's nonsense I'm talking, for we're safe and snug within our four walls, though we've no neighbour for eight miles. Where's Kate?

Mrs. Rudd: Gone to have a last look at that young calf. It's a night when all young creatures need careful housing.

Moira: I did feed the hens and the dogs. Oh, I do be loving to think of all the creatures warm and happy!

Mrs. Rudd: Yes, it's difficult to rear animals in this high, bleak climate. Hungry land it is, and hard.

Moira: 'Tis ten years you and your son and daughter do be living here, is it not?

Mrs. Rudd (drops knitting and sits thinking): Ten years in August.

Moira: And 'twas the strange, lonesome place for you to be choosing, and you not reared to it.

Mrs. Rudd: I have not been unhappy, child.

Moira (softly): And I have been happier here every day that was passing. I might almost be thinking that joy was come again into the world, for 'tis a happy little house, and all the thoughts, and all the faces that are in it do be kind and peaceful.

Mrs. Rudd: You strange girl, with your quaint talk! It's living here so quietly with us all these years that has kept you so Irish. Sometimes I almost catch myself falling into it.

Moira: They are happy years—but happiness will be passing.

Mrs. Rudd: It's a quiet place for a young woman, and Kate and Ted both entering middle life. But it was a lucky chance that brought you to us in answer to that advertisement for help. I have two daughters now.

Moira (taking her hand): And my heart is gone from me for ever to you.

Mrs. Rudd: Poor little Moira! You were only fifteen when your mother died, weren't you?

Moira: Yes, fifteen, and life not beginning. Five more years, and it ending for ever.

Mrs. Rudd (gently): Dear girl, why do you hug your sorrows to yourself? Can't you trust us yet?

Moira (quickly): Yes, yes, I am trusting you indeed—but hasn't every heart its secret grief?

Mrs. Rudd (winces and then speaks low): Its secret grief—its secret grief! (Door opens and Kate Rudd enters.) Ah, here comes Kate at last!

Moira: You're wet and cold, dear heart.

Mrs. Rudd: What is it, Kate? You're white as a sheet.

Kate (quickly): Nothing, nothing. It's going to be a terrible night. I wonder whether Ted bought the bull?

Moira: 'Tis a long ride for him, and the roads cruel.

Mrs. Rudd: Yes, I wish it were possible to ring him up, but they haven't got the telephone. But he'll be safe and warm by now.

Kate: I'll see to tea, Moira. You've been going hard all day.

Moira (jumping up suddenly): The saints forgive me. I did forget to be shutting up the white sow, and she the fiend's self for wandering. I will be ringing now.

Kate: Nonsense. She's all right. Asleep in her sty, most likely.

Moira: But it was a promise I made to Ted. (Getting down coat.)

Kate: No, no, please don't, Moira.

Mrs. Rudd: What is it, Kate? You've had a shock. (She has been watching Kate.)

Kate: I tell you it's nothing. I'm silly and fanciful.

Moira: Is it you that is fanciful? Ah, talk sense now.

Kate (trying to be sensible): On a night like this the bush is full of noises.

Moira (half to herself): And voices and dark clutching arms.

Kate (sharply): Don't Moira, don't be so silly. (Recovers herself and takes the girl by the shoulders.) Why, lass, that's not like you to be so sad. It's your wild Irish imagination, and the storm coming.

Moira: It was maybe that, for I was full of fancies this night. I could be swearing there was someone creeping after me, stealing through the mist.

Kate (almost whispering): Moira, did you feel it too?

(At the moment the telephone bell rings sharply—one long and two short. The women give a startled cry and fall apart—then laugh.)

Kate: Well, we're a couple of sillies! Who could there be up here? And, there, the telephone now, to keep us from feeling lonely.

Moira: Yes, indeed, it is wonderful to be talking to the town and it thirty miles away! We do be very safe indeed.

Mrs. Rudd: And splendid to be able to speak to each other, ten families of us, scattered through all those miles of bush and mud. It's a great blessing to the backblocks, this telephone.

Kate: And how long we waited for it! But it seems to have taken our loneliness away. It doesn't matter that we only get our mail and our papers once a week. We can always get the latest news on the telephone.

(Telephone rings again. . . . Two short and one long this time.)

Moira: There's our ring now, Kate. (Kate goes to telephone and answers.)

Kate: Yes, Kate Rudd here. . . . Oh, it's you, Mr. Anson. . . . No, my brother is away. . . . No, not till to-morrow night. . . . I don't hear you very well. . . . You don't want to alarm us? What about? . . . Speak more slowly, please. . . . Yes, that's better. . . . An escaped what? . . . Oh. . . . Yes, I see. . . . No, we'll be careful. . . . Thank you very much. . . . No, we shan't worry, but I'm glad you rang. Good-night.

Moira (in a hushed voice): Kate, what is it?

Kate (trying to be very matter-of-fact): Only a fuss about nothing, I expect.

Mrs. Rudd (quietly): You had better tell us, Kate.

Kate (bravely): Of course I'll tell you. It's nothing to make a mystery about. Only a prisoner has escaped and the police seem to think he's making for the West Coast. They want everyone to be warned.

Moira (in a strange voice): Were they saying his name, Kate?

Kate: Mr. Anson didn't know it;

Mullard

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