



HEARTH

by Fleur Murphy



LAB KELPIE

An Australian New Writing Theatre Company.

HEARTH

by Fleur Murphy



LAB KELPIE PRESS
www.labkelpie.com



First Published in 2022

by Lab Kelpie Press,

Office 4, 57 Vincent St. Daylesford, VIC, 3460, Australia

publishing@labkelpie.com

www.labkelpie.com

Copyright: *Hearth* © Fleur Murphy, 2022.

COPYING FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

The Australian *Copyright Act 1968* (Act) allows a maximum of one chapter or 10% of this book, whichever is the greater, to be copied by any educational institution for its educational purposes provided that that educational institution (or the body that administers it) has given a remuneration notice to Copyright Agency (CA) under the Act.

For details of the CA licence for educational institutions contact CA, 11/66 Goulburn Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000; tel: within Australia 1800 066 844 toll free; outside Australia 61 2 9394 7600; fax: 61 2 9394 7601; email: info@copyright.com.au

COPYING FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Except as permitted under the Act, for example a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All enquiries should be made to the publisher at the address above.

Any performance or public reading of *Hearth* is forbidden unless a licence has been received from the author or the author's agent. The purchase of this book in no way gives the purchaser the right to perform the play in public, whether by means of a staged production or a reading. All applications for public performance should be addressed to: Lab Kelpie, Office 4, 57 Vincent St., Daylesford, Victoria 3406; email: licensing@labkelpie.com.

PERMISSIONS FOR SOUND RECORDINGS & MUSIC

Some playscripts will require specific published sheet music or sound recordings for which performing rights may need to be separately licensed. Producers are advised to contact the Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA; apraamcos.com.au) for more information on music licensing requirements.

Printed by Griffin Press.



A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

Contents

HEARTH

1

Theatre Program at the end of the playtext

For Chris and Grace

Thanks to

*Tom Royce-Hampton, Raimondo Cortese, Jane Harrison,
Sibyl Kempson, Declan Greene, Ben Adams, Emma Fawcett,
Tom Holloway, Fiona Stafford, Michele McNamara and the
VCA 2019 Masters of Writing for Performance cohort.
Lyall Brooks, Adam Fawcett and Lab Kelpie Press.*

The first staged reading of *Hearth* was presented at VCA in November 2019 with the following cast and creative team:

John	Geoff Paine
Barb	Maggie McCormack
Tom	Oliver Tapp
Matthew	Sandy Rumble
Abbey	Domenica Garrett
Voice	Alexandros Pettas
Director	Tom Royce-Hampton
Dramaturge	Emma Fawcett

Hearth premiered at La Mama Courthouse on 18 May 2022 with the following cast and creative team:

John	Geoff Paine
Barb	Carole Patullo
Tom	Kurt Pimblett
Matthew	Martin Blum
Abbey	Sonya Suares
Director	Tom Royce-Hampton
Producer	Fiona Stafford
Set & Costume Design	Chantal Marks
Lighting Design	Clare Springett
Sound Design	Max Royce-Hampton & Tom Royce-Hampton



Wominjeka.

La Mama Theatre is on traditional land of the Kulin Nation. We give our respect to the Elders of this country and to all First Nations people past, present and future. We acknowledge all events take place on stolen lands and that sovereignty was never ceded. La Mama is financially assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council – its arts funding and advisory body, Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) Fund - an Australian Government initiative, the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria, and the City of Melbourne through the Arts and Creative Partnerships Program. We are grateful to all our philanthropic partners and donors, advocates, volunteers, audiences, artists and our entire community who assisted with the La Mama rebuild. Thank you!

www.lamama.com.au



Australian Government
RISE Fund



CHARACTERS

TOM, turning 18. The biological son of John and Barb.

MATTHEW, around 35. The adopted son of John and Barb.

JOHN, early to mid 60's.

BARB, early to mid 60's. She is in the very early stages of undiagnosed dementia.

ABBEY, around 35. Matthew's girlfriend. Not from Australia.

VOICE, around 35. Police Officer, Sergeant Lauren Reid.

(The ages listed are what they would be in 2009.)

SETTING & TIME

The scenes that take place in the Robinson family home are set on 7 February 2009 (Black Saturday), unless otherwise indicated in the stage directions.

Other scenes are set in the past or future, at various locations which may or may not be specified.

All of the scenes with the Voice are post-bushfire.

Scenes between Matthew and Tom that are in 'The Clearing' are not necessarily literal. Some lines or moments may happen in their heads or may be dialogue that is actually happening – there is the feeling of the past, present and future all existing in the same space.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

- / indicates where the next line should begin in order for dialogue to overlap.
- at the end of text; indicates a line interrupted.
- on its own; indicates a look/moment/pause not conveyed by words.

I encourage the production to collaborate with performers and creatives from diverse backgrounds in the realisation and presentation of this work.

SCENE 1

The clearing. Bare, blackened tree trunks and branches surround. Grey-white flecks gently fall from the sky. Tom and Matthew enter. They are silent for a long while, then...

TOM Can I call... What do I?...

MATTHEW I'm -

TOM I'll call you...
What?

MATTHEW Matthew.

TOM Brother?

MATTHEW Matthew.

—

TOM Can I call you Matt?

MATTHEW No.

TOM Matty?

MATTHEW No – Matthew. I'm Matthew.

TOM Are you?

MATTHEW —

TOM Say... Say all the things I want you to say.
Now. Come'on.

MATTHEW Now?

TOM Yeah, now, here.

MATTHEW Like what? What do you want me to say?

TOM Brother —

MATTHEW What is it you're wanting to —

TOM Why don't you talk to me?

2 HEARTH

MATTHEW I / do.

TOM Why?

MATTHEW I do Tom –

TOM You're Matthew –

MATTHEW Matthew, / yes, your –

TOM Brother. Geez so formal Matthew.

–

MATTHEW Do you know what you want me to say?

TOM You're my brother.

MATTHEW Do you...

Do you know...?

Tom...

Tom?

–

Tom...

SCENE 2

The Robinson family home on a 46-degree day in January 2009, the height of summer – ‘bushfire season.’ It’s morning, around 8am. A radio can be heard. The content playing is indistinguishable, but it gives the impression that it’s a local community radio station. A smoke alarm sounds – piercing and loud.

BARB Oh no oh no oh no!

JOHN Love?

BARB *(Opening the oven)* It’s ruined.

JOHN What is?

BARB It’s burnt.

JOHN It’s ok.

BARB I had a shower and...

Oh shhhhhhhhh!

Barb flaps a tea-towel at the smoke alarm.

JOHN It’ll stop –

BARB That darn thing! Shush it!

I told you the batteries needed looking at. It’s too sensitive.

The smoke alarm sound ends.

JOHN You just need to stop burning things.

BARB I did... I didn’t...John...

JOHN That was a joke. I’m sorry.

BARB I forgot.

JOHN I’m sorry.

4 HEARTH

BARB —

JOHN We can make an ice-cream cake, or super sundaes or something. It's too hot for cake cake.

BARB There was a good one, from the Woman's Weekly – a camera.

JOHN You made that for him last year.

BARB Oh?... Well...

JOHN I found your stash.

BARB My what?

JOHN In the pantry.

BARB My stash?

JOHN You don't hide them very well. I'm like a bloodhound – I can sniff sweets out... Liquorice Allsorts.

BARB God, they're probably from 91.

JOHN Liquorice doesn't go off.

BARB I ate them by the barrel then.

JOHN We can have a huge Birthday Sundae – Smarties, Jellybeans...

John goes to playfully kiss Barb.

BARB Ah, don't...

John makes playful sniffing sounds, like a 'bloodhound' sniff-kissing up her arm. Tom enters from outside wearing shorts and a singlet, a camera hangs around his neck. He is red-faced and dripping with sweat.

TOM Gross! Don't make me throw up.

BARB Tom, help me. Stop your father!

TOM Go for his gut!

BARB Tom!

TOM Mum...

Tom takes his camera off from around his neck, places it on the nearby table and tries to tickle John to free Barb from his grasp.

JOHN Two against one, that's not fair.

Tom gets John in a headlock.

JOHN Ah, you stink!

TOM Breathe it in Dad!

JOHN Uncle! Uncle! My back!

TOM Too weak.

JOHN Stop! Come on!

Tom releases John.

TOM Can't hack it / old man.

JOHN That's done it. I've got to sit.

TOM Faker.

BARB He always looks out for his Mum. *(Giving Tom a big hug and planting a kiss on his cheek.)*

TOM Muuuuuuuuum! Sloppy.

JOHN I'm going to need another shower.

BARB Ohh, you too – *(Pulling away from Tom.)*

TOM Me first.

JOHN It's stuck to my neck.

TOM Pit-stink. I tried to beat the heat but...

JOHN Up early?

TOM Too hot. Couldn't sleep.

BARB Get anything good?

6 HEARTH

TOM Yeah, the freaky sunrise, ‘cos of the smoke.

BARB Can’t wait to see them.

JOHN What about near O’Donnell’s? A shot of the valley from the claw tree.

TOM Nah, it’s too brown and boring. It’s better when it’s green. You see more shape, definition and stuff in the land.

BARB You can find beauty in anything though.

TOM Mum, that’s so arts-wanky.

BARB I loved that one of the coke can at the creek – covered in ants. The colours, I loved the colours in that. I think you’ve got an eye.

TOM Mum.

BARB I can’t help myself. Who’s going to tell you you’re wonderful when you’re away in Melbourne?

TOM You can still tell me – on the phone.

BARB Do you have a timetable yet?

TOM Not ’til next week.

BARB You might only have a few classes so you can save money and catch the train –

TOM Mum...

BARB You can stay here until you work out whether you like it.

TOM I’ll like it, don’t worry.

BARB But –

TOM Dad?

JOHN Mate –

TOM Dad.

BARB You can save some money...

JOHN Love.

BARB —

JOHN —

TOM Mum, did you burn my cake?

SCENE 3

The clearing.

MATTHEW I'm around 3, maybe?
Here in this... the backyard.
There's a small pine, about yay high.
We stand, eye to eye.
A tiny radiata. Not native, but one day
naturalised.
Dad takes his sunglasses off and sticks them in the
branches.
"Hello Matthew," he says. One of his classic,
funny voices...
"Give me a hug. I'll try not to prickle – just
tickle."
Ribbs in stitches, I laugh until snot comes out my
nose.
Together we take it out of the pot and tease its
roots.
The smell of dark earth.
Grubby hands wipe away hair from my eyes.
Shoo the flies.
We place it gently in the hole and push the earth
around its base.
Pat pat pat – stomp stomp stomp.
Ha, that broad grin across his face.
The breeze, it whisper-rustles through towering
gums.

Secure. Here it will grow, among the other trees.

We stand – A father's hand on shoulder.

A son, eager to please.

Every Christmas we decorate the pine – I decorate it.

It's mine.

I'm in charge of putting the star on the top.

For a while I can do it on my own –

Tippy-toe-hop.

Then I stand on a chair, then a stool, then a step ladder –

Then...

Then, it grows so tall that I need him.

On Dad's shoulders I sit.

Reaching high.

But if I was on his shoulders now, I couldn't reach it.

SCENE 4

An interview. Post-bushfire.

BARB Do you know that you can't move the eggs?

VOICE Sorry?

BARB If you do then the mother will abandon them.
So, I'm conflicted because she's shitting all over
the deck. Excuse my French –

VOICE It's fine.

BARB I get the pressure hose out each morning. At first
she was afraid of the noise. It's loud. Loud. She'd
fly off and then I'd feel so worried the eggs would
get cold while she was gone. They need to stay
warm.

VOICE Oh, this is the bird you were telling me about –

BARB Pigeon –

VOICE Yes, ok. Right.

BARB Now she doesn't even flinch. She just sits there.
She's bunkered down – nesting – in my hanging
pot. She never flies off. There hasn't been any
poop there for the last four days. She's not even
pooping. She just sits on those damn eggs.

VOICE So what's the problem then? There's no mess.

BARB But there will be. Do you know how much mess
a mother and two baby birds will make? So much
poop. Poop – poop all over! Why didn't she make
it in one of the trees? So, if I move her, move
the hanging basket out to a tree so she doesn't
poop on my deck, then she'll leave them. So you
see? You see why it's tricky?

VOICE I do...

BARB What if the eggs never hatch?

VOICE Why wouldn't they?

BARB Because I scared her earlier. They might have got cold, be duds now.

VOICE I don't think you need to worry about that.

BARB She could be sitting, sitting on them for... for.... God knows how long?

VOICE Barb, do you.... I don't think you need to worry about them.

BARB John won't let me go home and check. I'd like to go home. Why can't you visit us at home?

VOICE Barb –

BARB None of this is mine...

VOICE Barb... We need to have a chat, ok?

BARB We are. We are.

VOICE Yes, but we need to chat about Tom now. Would you like me to get John?

BARB Why?



LAB KELPIE PRESS

New Australian Writing



LAB KELPIE

An Australian New Writing Theatre Company.

Lab Kelpie is a theatre company dedicated to the production of new work by Australian playwrights.

A not-for-profit organisation with a board of experienced and passionate industry professionals, we are strong advocates of new writing and aim to support Australian playwrights by developing, presenting, touring and publishing their work, encouraging our writers to take risks and inspire audiences with the themes and messages they want to explore.

 /labkelpie

 @labkelpie

 @labkelpie

labkelpie.com

HEARTH

by Fleur Murphy

**A coming-of-age birthday party.
The threat of an approaching bushfire.
A deeply held family secret.**

It's the 7th of February 2009 – forever known in Australia's history as 'Black Saturday.' It's also Tom Robinson's 18th Birthday. Celebrations kick off at the Robinson's Kinglake home and nothing seems out of the ordinary. But tensions start to rise between Tom and his older brother Matthew, along with the temperature outside, and before the ice-cream cake has time to melt a deeply held family secret is revealed.

Cover: Kurt Pimblett and Martin Blum by Chris Tomkins



LAB KELPIE PRESS
www.labkelpie.com

