

SHADOWS OF ANGELS

FLEUR MURPHY

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Shadows of Angels was first performed at the Adelaide Fringe Festival in March 2012 with the following cast and crew:

Good Femme - Kara Stacey Merrin
Old Femme - Rosemary Johns
Man Femme - H. Clare Callow
Pretty Femme - Erin Dewar

Director - Chris Saxton
Lighting Design - Chris Saxton / Fleur Murphy
Lighting op/Stage Manager - Fleur Murphy
Costume - Fleur Murphy

Characters:

Good Femme: One of the first female Police Officers in Australia. Single, 25-30 years old. (Based on Lilian Armfield)

Old Femme: Older woman, 50-60 years old, who runs an illegal abortion clinic in the 'secret room' of her alteration business.

Man Femme: Is a woman who is living, quite convincingly, as a man. (Based on Eugenia Falleni)

Pretty Femme: Young woman, quite 'pretty', around 17 years old. Works as a low level prostitute for one of the local Madames.

Setting:

Melbourne, Australia - 1929.

OLD FEMME

A light tap at me door –
a nervous knock.

I know that sound well.

And in me midst of trying to tidy the mess of spools of cottons and
scattered fabric,

though it is hard and slow because of me age
and stiff back,

I am called to once again answer the door.

I take a moment to calm meself, as the last one left me feeling a little
flustered –

frustrated!

Door, open. There she is, with grimy man at side.

Probably the one that did it.

Caused it.

Her to have to come and see me.

This one is quite young though,
around fourteen or fifteen?

Little duck.

Her body and soul pale with fear.

“Come in”, I say - but hold up me hand to the gentleman with her.

“Not you. We don’t need you in the mix.”

He is left in the hall to sit and play with the brim of his hat.

Spinning it ‘round and ‘round in his hands like a blessed rosary.

Me patience is thin.

I have no time for her fear,
for their exchanged looks of concern,
after the morning I’ve had.

This one better go through with it. Christ knows the money is badly
needed.

I excuse the mess in the sewing room as we pass through
but I sense that the chaos surrounding her doesn’t calm her nerves.
Over to the wardrobe and a jingle of keys...

then another...

and we are through.

She follows close behind.

Remembering to be wiser this time, I ask her for the coin up front.

A brown envelope emerges from under the tattered garments she holds.

I flick through and carefully count...

All there.

We can begin.

“Alright duck, hop on the bed for me.”

She fumbles and stutters, “What do I do with these?”

Holding out her poor, shabby dresses to me.

“I don’t wannem. Pop them on the floor there by the door, along with
your undergarments.”

She does this while I go over to me tray and check over me instruments.

A silver smile they give me.

All ready.

She goes to sit – notices some marks on the mattress and hesitates.

“Come on!” I say. Me impatience growing more and more obvious.

She jumps at me snap, like she’s dancing on hot coals.

MAN FEMME

Hurried, she scrambles out my door.
Good riddance!?

Good luck, I think.

A favour I did her. Paid her way more than her pieces of tin were worth.
But I am in a good mood now, despite my gross generosity,
as I sift through her wares and pinch out
the ring...

As I hold it in my hand I think of...

My girl.

The thought softens me. Shoulders start to relax, roll in a little –
head bows slightly.

A moment of prayer for this Magdalene.

Moment brief though as she also stirs a rage within me.

Her image dances,

flickers,

through my mind.

Seductive.

Luring. Her lying with others...

Tonight...

Tonight I will go to her.

Make her see.

Save her from her sins.

Up from my place
and steady out the door.

Onto the street. Into the thick of it. Through the slums of Regent Street.

I can feel the heat of the sky start to give
as the cool beginning of evening slowly appears.

The blue above starts to turn almost a...

Like a, a bleached violet?

As I look up I see the chalk outline of a happy half-moon...

and a tiny,

almost invisible star.

I make a fickle wish.

A promise to myself that this night will deliver an outcome.

An end to one thing or another.

Up in the distance I can see the pub, hear the slurred laughter of those
gorging themselves before the 6 o'clock cut off.

I act on the impulse to join them. Perhaps I can pocket a few more
trinkets.

For fun... Because I can.

Step,

heavy thud,

onto the step and in the front door.

The pub is full of dock workers.

A sea of grey and grit.

Over near the corner I see a familiar face – “Freddy!”

Frederick “The Tailor” Dennis.

Always dressed in his finest old suit, no matter the weather.



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