

EXTRACT

SMELLS LIKE IMPULSE

Stephen Carleton

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by

Stephen Carleton

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CHARACTERS

The following list of characters was created to provide a class of 26 students with speaking parts. The number of extra parts within each of the social sub-groups below can be expanded or contracted according to requirements.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS (2)

Agent Provocateur

Agent Orange

SQUARE MOB (7)

Dweezil

Fleur

Annalise

Lily

Square #4

Square #5

Square #6

Square #7

HOMIES (5)

Homie #1

Homie #2

Homie #3

Homie #4

Homie #5

GRUNGE MOB (5)

Loni

Rhys

Grunge #3

Grunge #4

Grunge #5

Grunge #6

DRUGGIES (3)

Druggie #1

Druggie #2

Druggie #3

BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL MOB (3)

Buffy

Heather

Sydney

NEWSREADER (1)

SETTING

The original production of *Smells Like Impulse* was performed by Year 10 students at Darwin High School in 1997 and was created out of discussions and workshops with that group. Students wanted to use comedy to depict the various social sub-groups at their school. The intention was to satirise and lampoon social stereotypes and schoolyard hierarchies in order to up-turn superficial difference and bring people together. The following is the result.

The setting and physical references in the play reflect the Darwin students' physical and cultural location. These specific geographic and political references can be altered according to the location and experience of each group presenting it. The play was, for example, performed in Hamilton, New Zealand, in late 1998, and the Darwin-New Zealand references in the text were inverted for that production.

Because students were performing the music for the show and choreographing the dance numbers, they also felt strongly about including as many of their own pop cultural references in the text as possible – so please feel free to update those as required.

SMELLS LIKE IMPULSE

SCENE ONE

MUSICIANS are in their places on stage in the dark. Eerie music starts to play (X-Files Theme?). Music plays gently underneath as a NEWSREADER appears alone, in the dark.

N/READER Here is a special news bulletin. A young man aged around 15 years has disappeared in Darwin's inner city suburb of Fannie Bay. He was last sighted walking off through a section of dense rainforest on East Point Road heading toward the city on Wednesday night. Police are asking for anyone who saw him that night or may know of his whereabouts to come forward. The boy's name is Simon Fairfax. He is visiting from interstate.

Music continues playing as AGENT PROVOCATEUR and AGENT ORANGE appear downstage in a spot.

ORANGE I can't believe you dragged me halfway across the world to investigate a routine case about a teenage disappearance. He's only been missing for five days. This is a matter for the local police, surely.

PROVOCATEUR Ordinarily, Agent Orange, I would agree with you. But I've had my eye on this case for some time, and there's something about it that doesn't quite gel for me.

ORANGE What case? I just told you – Simon Fairfax has only been missing for ...

PROVOCATEUR Simon Fairfax is not the first young man to disappear from the East Point Road vicinity.

ORANGE I'm sure he isn't. Cyclone Tracy alone left several people unaccounted for in 1974.

PROVOCATEUR Agent Orange, I'm not talking about natural disasters here.

ORANGE What *are* you talking about then?

PROVOCATEUR Are you familiar with the story of Poinciana Woman?

ORANGE Agent Provocateur – I'm based in Vancouver. Of course I'm not familiar with local gossip and hearsay.

PROVOCATEUR According to local legend, Poinciana Woman is a real person who lived in the East Point area many years ago. She was sexually assaulted and brutally murdered by a man who was never punished for his crime. The Poinciana Woman's ghost is said to haunt the area. Every now and then to avenge her murder she comes back and randomly takes the life of a young male.

ORANGE Look, Provocateur, I have as much respect as you do for indigenous myth and culture. But that's all this is. Myth. There is no evidence here to suggest that Simon Fairfax has been murdered. And certainly not by a ghost. Police haven't even found a body yet.

PROVOCATEUR They never do, Agent Orange.

ORANGE Oh, come on. Do expect me to believe this?

PROVOCATEUR I'm not asking you to believe it, Orange. I'm just asking you to help me check it out.

ORANGE *(pauses and sighs. Looks at her watch)* Okay. But we'd better wrap this one up within the hour. I've got a shampoo ad to shoot tomorrow morning.

PROVOCATEUR Okay.

ORANGE Where do you suggest we start?

PROVOCATEUR I want you to research the history of deaths and disappearances in the vicinity since white settlement.

ORANGE Great.

PROVOCATEUR I'll speak to local kids around the same age and see what I can uncover.

ORANGE How come I always get the crappy desk jobs?

PROVOCATEUR You look better in moody indoor lighting.

ORANGE Do you really think so?

PROVOCATEUR Absolutely, yes.

ORANGE Oh. Okay. Cool. Let's do it.

They walk off. Lights down.

SCENE TWO

MUSICIANS burst into an energetic version of the Mission Impossible theme. Full lights up. Music maybe transforms into something contemporary to indicate schoolyard. Day. First day of final term. The various groups walk in, in synchronised formation, strike a pose that identifies them, and freeze (SQUARES, GRUNGE MOB, DRUGGIES, BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL MOB). The music finishes on a final note and everyone 'comes to life'. FLEUR and DWEEZIL walk to front of stage surrounded by other SQUARES.

FLEUR So, Dweezil, how long have you been in Darwin?

DWEEZIL My family just moved here from New Zealand.

FLEUR New Zealand? That's nice. Kind of ... remote. And exotic.

DWEEZIL Just remote, really.

LILY You should fit right into life in Darwin, then.

DWEEZIL Yeah.

ANNALISE *(trying to impress also)* Actually, there are many geographic and sociological similarities between Darwin and New Zealand – cyclones, crocodiles, jellyfish! *(realises she doesn't know what she's talking about)* I'll shut up now.

They stare at her.

FLEUR Thanks for that, Annalise.

ANNALISE *(shrinking to the background)* You're welcome.

DWEEZIL So who are all these people? You seem to hang around in groups a lot here.

FLEUR Yes. Those are the Grunge Mob. They're into ... well, grunge. Um. Those are the Druggies. They're kind of into drugs, I guess. *(the group all tut)* And those are the Bold and the Beautiful Mob. They're into themselves.

DWEEZIL Right. So what do you call yourselves?

LILY We don't call ourselves anything! *(reluctantly)* But other people call us ...

SQUARES ... squares.

LILY You'll fit right in!

SQUARES *(reassuringly)* Yes!!

DWEEZIL Thanks.

The HOMIES burst into the scene – hats pulled over eyes, baggy pants, carrying coke cans in one hand. They dance rap style all the time. Never walk.

DWEEZIL Who are they?

SQUARES *(distastefully)* Homies.

Loni steps back from her group and accidentally backs into Homie #1.

HOMIE #1 Hey, man! What did you touch me for?

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