

Jimmy and Cook

a short play

by Trevar Alan Chilver

CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN COOK: yes, that Captain Cook, still in his 50s, but 250 years later.

JIMMY: young Koori man in his early 20s.

INTRUDER: a very young father trying to feed his family by armed robbery. Wears a balaclava and long sleeves/pants so that no race can be attributed to him.

SETTING

Jimmy's flat, where Captain Cook also lives. A table and 2 chairs.

Jimmy and Cook

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Jimmy and Cook

CAPTAIN COOK, in full 18th century regalia, enters with a plate of toast with Vegemite, and sits. His manner shows naval precision; he dabs a serviette at the corners of his mouth after every bite. He is reading A History of Australia by Manning Clark.

JIMMY enters. Though he might have been well dressed when he left, he is returning from a big night out on the town, and is somewhat dishevelled.

COOK

Good morning Jimmy. You've had a pleasant evening, I assume?

JIMMY

Hey, James! How's it hanging, mate? You left early last night. Tammy was just getting interested!

COOK

I told you, Jimmy, I'm married.

JIMMY

Maaate! Bess died like two hundred years ago! How long are you going to hold on? That ship's sailed, man; you've got to live!

COOK

I assure you, young man, I've lived quite enough in my 250 years on this earth. Quite enough. Here, have some of this Vegemite. Excellent extract, this. If we had this on the *Endeavour*, I'd have been able to get them all off Tahiti before the... unpleasantness.

JIMMY

Yeah, deadly stuff. Too deadly.

JIMMY unloads his pockets and sits down. Along with a wallet, phone and other accoutrements, he takes a sextant out of his pocket and puts it on the table.

JIMMY

Here, you left your sextant at the club. I tell you, I had fun trying to explain why I had that with me, and what it was. Sure did the trick, though. You should have seen the babe...

COOK

Jimmy, I've told you before, I don't want to hear of your sexual exploits. It's really doing you no good. You should find a nice young lady and settle down. I don't mind finding another place to live.

JIMMY

No, James, mate, you don't understand. You're the best flatmate I've had. This place is ship-shape, now; we've got soap in the soap dispenser, you've cleaned out the storage area. And I never knew the walls was white, eh! Too deadly. When I figure out how to sell all that gold you're paying me for rent, I'll be set. You can't go.

COOK

Nonetheless, Jimmy. You should settle down with a nice young woman. That lovely miss Jamison was a fine young lady. Do you think her father would approve of you?

JIMMY

Bazza? Bazza wouldn't approve of anyone, 'specially a blackfeller. Doesn't matter, though, mate. She'd go for it.

COOK

Good heavens. I don't think I shall ever get used to ideas like that. Fancy taking a woman's word over that of her father.

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JIMMY

Well of course, mate, she can think for herself.

COOK

Think for herself? A woman? Don't be ridiculous. They're too busy feeling for all and sundry to think about anything.

JIMMY

You know, they didn't used to let us blackfellers think for ourselves either.

COOK

What? Good heavens, your people always seemed quite civilised to me. Terribly clever sort as I saw it. Didn't trust us in our big ships, and that was wise. We had to go an awfully long way to even get a decent glance at your folk. Not like those damned Tahitians. Couldn't keep away, they couldn't. And my men didn't help with all their philandering and so on. Dreadful business. I did try, you know.

JIMMY

Don't beat yourself up. You did your best.

COOK

I should have done more. I really should have. And then they were off, and, well, it says here they've thought I was dead all this time!

JIMMY

What's that?

COOK

Oh, a splendid little history of Australia. Manning Clark. Fascinating. Terribly sad business some of it, but then, they built this lovely bridge over Port Jackson! Look at it! Port Jackson bridged! That's the genius of English steel, Jimmy. Sheer genius! You know, I'd never have even thought of bridging Port Jackson.

JIMMY

Ah, you mean Cadi.

COOK

Cadi?

JIMMY

Yeah, Cadi. That's what my mob call it.

COOK

The bridge?

JIMMY

Nah, the harbour. Port Jackson. It's called Cadi.

COOK

Cadi. Yes, it does have a nice ring to it. Wish I'd got hold of one of your ancestors to chat with when I was there in 1770. Cadi's a much better name than Port Jackson. Can't even remember the blighter I named it after.

JIMMY

I guess his name was Jackson.

COOK

Well, it wasn't Port, I'm confident of that.

They laugh.

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JIMMY

You really should get out more James. I could take you to see the Harbour Bridge if you like.

COOK

Oh, no. I don't think I could cope with seeing Sydney. Not now that I've read all of this.

JIMMY

Still, I reckon we should go. Does you no good being all couped up like this.

COOK

Oh, I'm not couped up. I have books, there's a lot to catch up on when you've been locked up in a Tahitian prison for a couple of centuries. I haven't even started looking for a history of New Zealand.

JIMMY

Don't bother, nothing happened there. Anyway, I should get to bed. Good night, James.

COOK

Good morning, Jimmy.

JIMMY exits. COOK returns to reading.

Lights fade.

Lights rise. COOK enters with a couple of Vegemite sandwiches and C.W.Bean's account of the Great War. He sits. JIMMY enters. He is wearing only a pair of sleep shorts.

JIMMY

Did you hear that?

COOK

What's that?

JIMMY

That noise, like someone was trying to break into the house.

COOK

Jimmy, it's the middle of the day; the front door's unlocked. They wouldn't need to break in.

JIMMY

Shit.

JIMMY exits.

COOK

I didn't hear anything. Come have a Vegemite sandwich.

JIMMY returns.

JIMMY

James, you can't leave the doors unlocked. What if...

COOK

But if I'm right here, it's not as if someone's just going to walk in and...

JIMMY

How do you know? I'm sleeping; keep the doors locked!

JIMMY storms off. COOK takes a bite of sandwich. JIMMY re-enters, walking backwards, hands in a 'surrender' position. The INTRUDER follows, gun aimed at JIMMY.

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INTRUDER

Alright, where's the... (*he sees COOK*) Oh! Caught you getting ready for a bit of role play, did I? (*to JIMMY*) You sick fucking poofers! Well, I won't hold you up long; hand over your cash, get your valuables, and no one gets hurt. (*to JIMMY*) Or at least, not by me, eh?

COOK

Now look here, my good man...

INTRUDER

I'm not here to play games, rent-boy! Get the cash!

JIMMY

James, I think you should...

COOK

You want me to hand over...

JIMMY

He's got a gun!

COOK

Now look here, I am Captain James Cook of the Royal Navy, explorer of Terra Australis Incognito and discoverer of New South Wales. I don't know who...

INTRUDER

I'm not here to play games like you are; hand over...

COOK

Look, I've been imprisoned in Tahiti for two and a half centuries, and I'm not about to...

INTRUDER raises his gun and shoots at the ceiling then aims it back at COOK's head.

INTRUDER

I said I'm not here to play games. Now get the stuff, or the next one goes through your pretty little hat.

JIMMY

Just get him your stuff, James, it's not worth dying for!

COOK

Good heavens, it's Tahiti all over again.

JIMMY

He's got a gun, James, a gun. This isn't like getting mugged in Earl's-bloody-Court, he'll kill us.

INTRUDER takes hold of JIMMY and holds the gun to his side.

INTRUDER

I'd listen to your boyfriend there, mate.

COOK

Gracious me, I wish I'd never discovered this continent! It's been nothing but grief! Apart from that lovely bridge, of course.

COOK exits. INTRUDER keeps the gun to JIMMY's side. Pause.

JIMMY

So, is that a gun in your pocket or are you just glad to see me?

INTRUDER

No bloody jokes, mate!

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COOK returns, carrying a treasure chest with 'Guzmàn' embossed on it, which he places at the INTRUDER's feet and opens, revealing it to be full of gold ingots.

COOK

There.

INTRUDER

What the fuck is that?

COOK

Gold.

JIMMY

Tahitian gold.

INTRUDER bends down to look at it.

COOK

Well, actually, they don't have gold in Tahiti. That's from South America, or at least I'm guessing so, because it has this Spanish-sounding name—Guzmàn—on the chest, see?

JIMMY

Who's Guzmàn?

COOK

You know, I've been wondering that for nigh on two centuries. It's beyond me. The blessed thing just turned up on the beach in front of my cell back in...

INTRUDER

What the fuck do you expect me to do with this?

COOK

Well, I don't know. What does one normally do with fifty pounds of solid gold in twenty-first century Australia? Jimmy here accepts it for rent. There's a spare room.

JIMMY

James, seriously!?

INTRUDER points the gun at COOK again.

INTRUDER

I've got kids to feed, what good is this going to do me?

COOK

Sounds like you need a vegetable plot. You know, in Tahiti the taro grows prolifically, and it's amazing what you can do with it. I've made some wonderful dishes with...

INTRUDER shoots the ceiling again.

COOK

Well you needn't get so...

JIMMY grabs his wallet from the table and pulls out a twenty dollar note.

JIMMY

Look, I've got twenty bucks. It's all the cash I've got.

INTRUDER takes it.

INTRUDER

What about him?

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JIMMY

He's given you all he's got! Look at him, he's been in prison for two hundred years, and he pays the rent in gold.

COOK

I also clean a little.

JIMMY

Yes, he also...

INTRUDER

Shut up! I've got seven kids to feed! What good is...

JIMMY

Seven kids! How are you old enough to...

INTRUDER

They're not all mine; three of them are just the missus' ones, two of them are ours, and the oldest two are from bitches that just up and left when the going got tough.

JIMMY

Shit mate, that sounds tough.

INTRUDER

Yeah, well my rent takes everything I earn. The only way I can feed the little buggers is to rob people better off, eh.

JIMMY

Yeah, I know what you mean. Sounds like you're a really good dad, mate.

COOK

Sounds like irresponsibility if you ask me.

INTRUDER

Did I ask you?

JIMMY

He didn't ask you, James.

COOK

No, well that seems to be his trouble. Not taking good advice.

JIMMY

He's right you know.

INTRUDER

Alright, I made a few mistakes, sowed a few too many wild oats... I've still got to feed them!

COOK retrieves his vegemite sandwich from the table.

COOK

Here, Vegemite sandwiches are wonderful. Full of vitamin B, folate; you know if we'd had these on that last voyage...

INTRUDER

Oh shit! Why do I always pick the loser houses?

INTRUDER leaves with the \$20 and a Vegemite sandwich. JIMMY follows and returns immediately.

JIMMY

That's why we keep the door locked.

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COOK

Do you think he's gone?

JIMMY

Yeah, he's gone.

COOK pulls a fifty dollar note out of his hat.

COOK

Good. Because I was sore afraid he would find this Golden Drink Voucher you gave me last night.

JIMMY laughs.

JIMMY

Oh you're too deadly, eh!

COOK

You see, Jimmy, this is why you need to settle down. Find yourself a nice young lady and make an honest woman of her. One woman can't have so many children so fast.

JIMMY

Aye, aye, Captain.

COOK chuckles.

COOK

I haven't heard that in a long time.

JIMMY

I might give Paula Jamison a call.

COOK

Splendid.

COOK exits. JIMMY picks up a phone and inhales, psyching himself up. COOK returns carrying a jar of Vegemite. He opens it, dips his finger in and sticks it in his mouth.

JIMMY

You know that stuff's full of salt? You'll give yourself a heart attack!

COOK

Oh, I've had a good innings, Jimmy. Death doesn't seem too bothered about me.

JIMMY dials. COOK takes another dip at the Vegemite.

COOK

By the way, Jimmy, what did that fellow mean when he called me a 'rent boy'?

COOK sticks his Vegemited finger in his mouth.

Lights snap out.