

SHADOW IN THE DARK

written and directed by Joe Woodward



first presented at The Canberra Theatre Centre, Courtyard Studio in December 1995.

Synopsis:

Denise is a young teacher haunted by a shadow figure since her childhood. She secretly lusts after a talented student from her english class and records her thoughts in a diary which falls into the wrong hands. After breaking up with the boyfriend, she is working back one night in the school when a shadowy figure confronts her in the staff room. Who is it? The dialogue is one way. The figure is silent but will not let her pass. Slowly, she comes to understand what the figure wants. But WHO it is confounds her. Her failure to understand leads to a horrific murder. The chilling and horrific result of this meeting forms the core of the play.

When first produced, audiences were sitting on the edge of their seats and very "jumpy". In some respects, SHADOW IN THE DARK defines the parameters of *SHADOW HOUSE PITS*. The psychological, the erotic and the boundaries between audience and performer are challenged in this daring play.

SAMPLE TEXT

*Denise moves from the table and straddles a chair as if it were a man.
She faces directly an individual in the audience.*

DENISE: Ah Sam. You little turkey. I would like to fuck you. Fuck you.
Fuck you ... Sammy ... Professionals never think that way ... do they!
Like I wrote in my diary: "Sam, I would love to hear you recite your
poems while I suck you 'till you come in my mouth. Little boy Sam.
Sammy ... Surprised Sam. Awkward Sam. Sensitive Sam. Ah ... he's the
one I like best. Sensitive Sam. Deep Sam ..." Ah ... deeper Sam. Hmmm ...
I could make you bleed Sam.

She begins to almost writhe on the chair.

DENISE: My diary!

*Denise runs to the desk, picks up her bag and rummages through it.
She is trying to find her diary.*

DENISE: My diary! If that little shit has ... I'll kill him!

She can't find it.

DENISE: Oh my god!

*The external door is heard opening and closing again. She is frantic.
Foot steps come up the corridor. She suddenly goes still and then rushes
to search her desk. She finds it in her top drawer. She is relieved. Then
opens to some relevant pages.*

DENISE: Oh I'm a terrible person. *(She giggles)*

She places the diary into her bag. The footsteps come closer.

DENISE: Oh Mells. What did you forget? Mells! (*She calls*)

Suddenly she remembers something.

DENISE: Wait a minute!

She grabs the diary again and opens to a key page and studies it.

DENISE: You bastard. How dare you! My diary ... Mells! Mells!

The footsteps are heard moving up the corridor towards the entrance to the office. But they stop just prior to approaching the door.

SILENCE

The is a sharp cracking sound and a flash of light. Denise screams in shock. The full light does not come back on. The room is now lit only from the corridor light.

DENISE: Christ what was that? Damn.

She is aware of someone silhouetted at the door but can't make out who it is.

DENISE: Ahhh ... You gave me a terrible fright. Did you see what happened here? Was it some kind of electrical blow out or something? Look, please don't play games. It's Sam is it? That's not you is it Sam? Who are you? You're playing games. You want to play! Is this what it's all about? Is it Sam? (*She grabs the diary*). You couldn't resist. You came in here often enough to work out when I'd be alone. When no other teachers were about. And when the place was empty. And I was careless. Right! Right!

SILENCE

DENISE: Look, I don't care. It's late. I'm tired. I've had a bit to drink. And I'm out of here.

She grabs her bag. Stuffs it with the bottle. The lemon and a few of the papers. She then goes to pack in the diary.

DENISE: This is a serious invasion of privacy, you know. You can't just go reading someone's private diary without their permission. You might have thought you'd get away with it Sam. But you made a mistake. The book mark. I never leave it in the last page.

She holds up the book mark.

DENISE: But you ... you didn't realize that did you! You're going to be in heaps of trouble. You can't do this Sam. You've gone too far.

She packs it into her bag.

DENISE: Now out of my way.

She goes to leave. But as she approaches the door, the Figure moves towards her and she makes out its shape and form. She sees its face covered in bandages, like one of those 1930s horror film mummy figures. She freezes. Gasps and glares into the figure. The Figure casts a shadow across the floor of the office.

DENISE: Ah! Who are you? Trying to frighten me! Okay! You succeeded. I'm frightened. What do you want me to do? Try to rush past you through the door way and out the building? You're blocking my way. I'm alone; in an empty room, in an almost empty building ... and there's you blocking my only exit. Yeah. You got me. I'm scared. Now what? Do I rush to the telephone and call security? Triple "0"? But of course, if all goes to plan, the phone won't work. Right? *(She looks around the room)* Or worse! There ain't no phone.

PAUSE

DENISE: Pardon me for making light of the situation, but somehow, it's all familiar isn't it! Alone woman with a bad guy. What are you going to do?

Slice me up. Get a hard on from my screams? Get a fix on my fear? Huh ...
I've read that script. So, dear shadow, there's no surprises there.

She hurries to the essays on her desk.

DENISE: It's all in here. Unwholesome writing from year nine and ten students. Here it is: "psychotic shadow in the dark rips woman fodder for unseemly pleasure". So here we are. What's your blurb? Your face is covered.

But you just stand there. Got something to hide! You see me. But I can't see you. You know something I don't. You even set the scene. Lights out. Lights up. And you got me centre stage. But now what? Huh ... huh!

She grabs her bag and goes to push past the figure.

DENISE: Whoever you are, I'm not happy. And you're going to be in a lot of strife.

She walks right into the figure who suddenly reacts and throws her back into the room.

DENISE: Who are you?

She grabs the knife and holds it defiantly towards the figure.

DENISE: Think before touching me again, you bastard.

PAUSE

DENISE: But you remain still. Watching me. Not letting me pass ... but watching. Are you waiting for something? (*No answer*) What are you waiting for? Creep! What's going on inside your anonymous head? Eh! What are you thinking of?

She tries to study the shadowy figure.

DENISE: I move ... (*She moves*) Your head moves. I go to leave and you brace yourself for a struggle. (*Pause*) But still, you don't come in. You just look. Look through hidden eyes. Expecting a show: a performance! You want me frightened. You want me to ACT frightened? Huh! You want the fear running through me so you can pounce when you're good and ready! Is that it? You want some naked little mouse squeaking aloud as you toy and poke it. Just like in all those movies? Naked in the shower as you watch waiting to strike. Is that it? Where's your chainsaw? You look pretty smug: Knowing that no woman in my position will ever talk to you this way. Hay! Has your video broken down? Who are you?

She is interrupted by a young voice calling her.

CHILD'S VOICE: (*Off stage*) Denise ... Denise Denise ...