

# Un-Australian Day

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a short play

by

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**Cast**

BART

LUKE

STAN

**Setting**

A park, overlooking the harbour, somewhere in Australia.

**Time**

Morning, January 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Un-Australian Day by Alex Broun**

A park, overlooking the harbour. Morning, January 26<sup>th</sup>.

**BART** ENTERS. HE CARRIES A BAG AND ESKY.

HE LOOKS FOR A GOOD SPOT THEN PLACES THE ESKY AND BAG DOWN. HE TAKES OUT A LARGE GREEN AND GOLD BLANKET AND SPREADS IT OUT ON THE GRASS, CLAIMING HIS TERRITORY.

NEXT HE PULLS OUT A FREE STANDING AUSTRALIAN FLAG AND PLACES IT ON THE ESKY. HE STANDS BACK FOR A MOMENT LOOKING AT IT WITH SOME PRIDE.

**LUKE** ENTERS. HE TOO HAS A BAG AND ESKY AS WELL AS A FOLDING CHAIR. HE FINDS A SPOT AT THE BACK OF THE STAGE.

BART: (SEEING **LUKE**) Morning.

LUKE: Morning.

BART: Good day for it.

LUKE: Sure is.

**LUKE** OPENS UP HIS CHAIR AND POSITIONS IT.

BART: You're all set.

LUKE: Thanks.

BART: Chair looks good. Sturdy. What's a chair like that set you back ?

LUKE: Can't remember.

BART: Fifteen bucks, twenty ?

LUKE: Maybe ten.

BART: Ten ? That's a bargain. Should get myself one – save the bum. Next year.

BEAT. **LUKE** CONTINUES UNPACKING.

BART: See that bloody grey ghost ?

LUKE: Ghost ?

BART: Parking ranger. Seven in the morning and she's already handing out tickets.

LUKE: Didn't see her.

BART: She's there - pen at the ready, ticket in hand, watching – waiting.

LUKE: Guess she's just doing her job.

BART: Filling her quota more like it.

LUKE: Quota ?

BART: Each ghost has got a certain figure – the number of cars they've got to book each day – or else, goodbye. (SHOUTING OFF STAGE) That's why they're out at seven in the morning, when they should be at home in bed, keeping their hubby warm – if they've got one. Bloody Un-Australian that's what it is. Un-Australian. (TO **LUKE**) But no fear. I've got a plan.

**BART GOES TO HIS BAG. HE PULLS OUT A BAG OF COINS.**

BART: Call it my "Reserve Bank." See what I do is go along and see which cars are about to expire and then I top up their meter. That way the ghost can't knick them.

LUKE: How often you do this ?

BART: Most days. Pop out of work on my lunch time. And around home on weekends. Do a bit today.

LUKE: That's very good of you.

BART: All part of the service. (PUTTING OUT HAND) Bart.

LUKE: (SHAKING HANDS) Luke.

BART: Good to meet you. Do you know what one of those ghosts tried to do one day ? Book me. Me ! Said it's against the law to top up somebody else's meter. Wasn't even Australian. From Sri-Lanka or something. Bangladesh. It's the quota. That's what he's worried about. So I say "Alright, go on. Book me." He looks at me – just looks at me - peeing his bloody pants and he says: "I'll let you off – just this time." Let me off ? I'm letting him off. Should go to his boss, the papers, immigration. Get him sent back. One way ticket to nowhereville.

**LUKE BEGINS TO UNWRAP A LARGE BANNER.**

BART: That's a good one. Need a hand.

LUKE: It's okay. I've done it before.

BART: Bullshit. Give me that.

LUKE: Thanks.

**BART** TAKES ONE END OF THE BANNER AND UNROLLS IT. **LUKE** TIES THE OTHER END UP ON A POLE.

BART: Sheesh, it's a beauty. Nice and thick. How long it take you to make?

LUKE: Couple of months.

BART: Hand painted too I'll bet ?

LUKE: Best way to do it.

BART: Puts my humble offering to shame.

LUKE: Not at all. It's the thought that counts.

**BART** HAS UNWRAPPED THE BANNER THE WHOLE WAY. HE HELPS **LUKE** TIE UP THE OTHER END.

THE BANNER IS NOW VISIBLE. IT HAS AN ABORIGINAL FLAG ON IT AND READS: *"INVASION DAY 2007. SAY SORRY – NOW !"*

BART: Yep – a beauty. Now let me get a good look. Read your patriotic message.

**BART** STANDS BACK AND PUTS ON HIS GLASSES. HE READS THE BANNER. PAUSE.

BART: You'll need to take that down.

LUKE: Sorry ?

BART: I said – you'll need to take that down.

LUKE: No I won't.

BART: Yes you will. Or I'll do it for you.

**BART** MOVES TOWARDS THE BANNER, **LUKE** CUTS HIM OFF.

BART: You'll want to get out of my way.

LUKE: No I won't.

**BART** TRIES TO GO PAST AGAIN, **LUKE** AGAIN BLOCKS HIM OFF.

BART: Listen, just take the bloody thing down – before anybody sees it.

LUKE: That's the idea.

BART: It's January the 26<sup>th</sup>. We're here to celebrate Australia. Not – not –

LUKE: What ?

BART: Go on with all this crap.

LUKE: What crap ?

BART: Don't you get smart with me.

LUKE: You show your flag. I show mine. What's wrong with that ?

BART: Your flag ? Your flag ! You're about as black as a snow flake.

LUKE: It's the flag I choose.

BART: I don't care if you choose the Swastika. Take it down.

LUKE: It's the flag of my country – just as much as that one is.

BART: That is not the flag of my country. It's the flag of deros and child abusers.

LUKE: And no white Australian has ever been drunk or committed child abuse.

BART: Not as many as your lot.

LUKE: And who introduced indigenous Australians to grog in the first place ? Rum Corps - ring a bell ? An ancient and proud civilisation, one of the longest on earth –

BART: Bullshit.

LUKE: Read your history book. If you can.

BART: Oh very smart dickhead.

LUKE: An ancient and proud civilisation with no alcohol equivalent in their culture because they have no need to get blotto on a regular basis.

BART: Could've fooled me.

LUKE: And what does white man do ? To this pure and uninfected beautiful culture – gives them 80 proof rum and syphilis. And any who survive they round up and shoot.

BART: Clearly missed a few.

LUKE: What's the point of even talking to you ? That's my flag. My flag. And it – and I – am not going anywhere.

**LUKE** GOES OVER AND SITS ON HIS CHAIR, HE BEGINS TO UNPACK LEAFLETS FROM HIS BAG. PAUSE. **BART** APPROACHES.

BART: Look, Luke wasn't it ? I'm telling you this for your own good. Other people'll be here soon and they'll like that sign about as much as I do. And some of them won't be as reasonable as me. For your own sake – just put it away – now. I'll help you.

LUKE: What is so wrong with my sign ?

BART: What's right with it ?

LUKE: Everything.

BART: The "flag" for starters. What does that mean ?

LUKE: Come on Bart. Even you can work it out. The black represents the people, the red the earth and their relationship to the land, and the yellow is the sun, the giver of life.

BART: And ?

LUKE: What about Cathy Freeman ? Remember when she won the Gold medal and carried the flag around the stadium. You liked the flag then didn't you Bart ?

BART: Well that's different. She also carried the proper flag and she's a real one.

LUKE: Real dero and child abuser ?

BART: No, a real aboriginal. Not some try hard do gooder.

LUKE: Isn't that what you are ? With your "Reserve Bank."

BART: I'm keeping the bastards honest.

LUKE: Just like me.

BART: I'm not a bastard.

LUKE: That's a matter of opinion. (MOVING TO **BART'S** FLAG) I mean look at this. What is it ?

BART: It's the flag of my country.

LUKE: And mine.

BART: Then start acting like it.

LUKE: What ? I should bow before this. The flag of another country.

BART: It's Australia.

LUKE: With the Union Jack in the corner – Your Majesty.

BART: My grandfather died for that flag.

LUKE: And he'd turn in his grave if he knew idiots like you were still saluting it.

BART: You leave my grandfather out of it. He died in the fall of Singapore, trapped on a Jap prison boat, sunk by the bloody Yanks. I won't let you use him in this. Not him.

BEAT.

LUKE: Alright, I shouldn't speak for him. But many other people's grandfathers were killed too. In their own land.

BART: Yes, but not by me so I don't understand why I should say sorry.

LUKE: When did your family come here ?

BART: 1856. Ninth generation Aussie.

LUKE: You're not apologising for yourself. It's for what your ancestors did.

BART: My ancestors didn't kill anybody.

LUKE: Are you sure of that ? I bet mine did.

BART: That's your problem.

LUKE: And if they didn't then what about the guy on the next farm or the next ? Did they "clear" the land ?

BART: What if they did ? Why should I apologise for them ?

LUKE: Then don't apologise for killing innocent human beings. Just apologise for taking their land.

BART: I didn't take anybody's land.

LUKE: Yes you did. You own your house don't you ?

- BART: Who said it was theirs in the first place ?
- LUKE: You are kidding.
- BART: Where was the churches, the buildings, the schools – anything at all that showed the lands was theirs.
- LUKE: The greatest achievement of the aboriginal people was that in 20,000 years they didn't alter the landscape one iota. Unlike white man. In two hundred years he's ripped everything he can out of this country leaving it a scarred carcass.
- BART: (LOOKING AROUND) Not bad scarring if I say so myself.
- LUKE: It's unsustainable. We can not rip everything we can out of this country and expect it to just keep giving. We're bleeding it dry.
- BART: Bloody greenie too.
- LUKE: You against that as well ?
- BART: Look, when we got here they hadn't done anything with the land. Just a few mud paintings and stone arrow heads. How were we meant to know who owned what ? Took us to develop it. Build it up. Make this country what it is now.
- LUKE: So, they hadn't done anything with the land ?
- BART: That's right.
- LUKE: Undeveloped, so that gave you the right to ...
- BART: Now you're getting it.
- BEAT. **LUKE GOES AND STANDS ON BART'S BLANKET.**
- BART: Hey, what are you doing ? Get off there.
- LUKE: What's wrong ? You haven't done anything with it ?
- BART: My blanket.
- LUKE: Got your name on it ?
- BART: That's my esky.
- LUKE: It's not on the blanket.
- BART: Yeah but -

LUKE: But what ? It's undeveloped. Nothing on it. How am I meant to know it's yours ?

BART: I hadn't got set up yet. I was just about to and you turned up.

LUKE: Sounds familiar.

BART: I helped you with your sign.

LUKE: So you did.

BART: And then I turned around –

LUKE: And your land was gone.

BART: Look get off my blanket.

LUKE: No.

BART: Get off my blanket.

LUKE: No.

BART: Get off or I'll –

LUKE: You'll what ?

BART: I'm not scared of you.

LUKE: And I'm not scared of you.

BART: Yeah. What are you going to do ?

LUKE: Most days – I'd get off the blanket about now. Point proved. Go back to my chair. But this day, this morning – I'm not quite sure how far I'll go.

BEAT. THE TWO MEN FACE EACH OTHER.

BART: I'm taking your chair then.

**BART MARCHES OVER AND SITS IN LUKE'S CHAIR.**

LUKE: Great.

BART: I'm sitting in it.

LUKE: Very nice.

BART: No sign, sitting vacant – mine.

LUKE: Well spotted.

BART: Mmmm, very comfy. Don't need the blanket anymore – got the chair. Much better.

LUKE: And the esky ?

BART: You wouldn't ?

LUKE: I would.

**LUKE PICKS UP THE ESKY AND PLACES IT ON THE BLANKET.**

LUKE: On my property now. Guess it's mine as well.

BART: You bastard.

LUKE: (PULLING OUT FOOD) Sandwiches. Sausage and salad.

BART: My wife makes those.

LUKE: (TAKES A BITE) And very nicely too. Mustard. And what's this ?  
(PULLS OUT BEER) Nice cold beer. This is public property.  
Hope the Ghosts don't see this. Better get rid of it quick.

BART: You wouldn't. Not a man's beer ?

LUKE: (OPENS IT AND DRINKS) Like you said – deros and child abusers.

BART: (GRABBING **LUKE'S** BAG) Two can play that game mister.  
Guess this is mine.

LUKE: Have fun.

**BART GOES THROUGH THE BAG. ALL HE CAN FIND ARE LEAFLETS AND STICKERS.**

BART: What's all this crap ?

LUKE: Read up – you might learn something.

BART: I tell you one thing, I'm not putting any coins in your meter. That Grey Ghost can go for their lives.

LUKE: Actually I came in on the train.

BART: Well that's just great.

LUKE: Perfect.

BART: (SEEING SOMETHING) Oh shit.

LUKE: What ?

BART: Shit !

**STAN** ENTERS.

STAN: Morning Bart.

BART: Mr Talen. What are you doing here ?

STAN: Come to wave the flag. Like you. And what a great (READING) ... banner. (BEAT) I never knew you felt like this.

BART: Oh, it's not mine. I'm minding it for a friend.

STAN: A friend ? I see.

BART: No, not a friend. Some guy.

STAN: Really ? I'll leave you to it then.

**STAN** EXITS. AS HE DOES HE PASSES **LUKE** WHO WAVES THE FLAG. **STAN** NODS. BEAT.

BART: Oh shit shit shit shit shit.

LUKE: Who was that ?

BART: My soon to be ex-boss.

LUKE: Don't worry. I'm sure he's very liberal minded.

BART: Alright. You win. Just get off my blanket.

LUKE: Don't want to win.

BART: You can even keep your bloody sign.

LUKE: I was never taking it down.

BART: Just put down my sandwich, stop drinking my beer and get off my bloody blanket.

LUKE: Very territorial.

BART: Now !

LUKE: If you can answer me one question.

BART: Whatever.

LUKE: You sure ?

BART: Anything. Just get off.

LUKE: I have this conversation with a lot of Australians and they say a lot of different things but one thing is always the same – they all get so angry. So what is it about that flag, the aboriginal people and the word sorry that gets you so worked up ?

BART: Because it's not my fault !

LUKE: Then you admit there was someone at fault.

BART: You're twisting my words.

LUKE: So – no one is at fault.

BART: That's right.

LUKE: For the stealing of a nation, the unearthing of a culture, the genocide of a people.

BART: That's right. No one at fault. Never happened. All crap.

LUKE: Do you really believe that ?

BART: Yes. No. I don't know.

LUKE: You don't know ? Really ?

BART: Yes.

BEAT.

LUKE: Well, that's a start.

**LUKE** GIVES THE BEER AND SANDWICH TO **BART** AND GOES BACK TO HIS CHAIR. HE BEGINS TO LAY OUT HIS PAMPHLETTES.

**BART** SLOWLY SITS ON HIS BLANKET. HE LOOKS AT HIS BEER, TAKES A SWIG. HE TAKES A BITE OF HIS SANDWICH AND MUNCHES SLOWLY BUT WITHOUT ANY JOY.

THE LIGHTS FADE.