



ANDREW BOVELL has written extensively for theatre, film, radio and television. His stage plays include *Holy Day*, winner of the Victorian and Queensland Premier's Literary Awards and AWGIE for Best Play 2002; *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* (with Patricia Cornelius, Melissa Reeves, Christos Tsiolkas and Irine Vela), winner of the Queensland Premier's Literary Award, Jill Blewitt Award and AWGIE for Best Play 1999; and *Speaking in Tongues*, winner of the AWGIE for Best Play 1997. *Speaking in Tongues* has been produced widely throughout Australia, Europe and America. Earlier plays include *The Ballad of Lois Ryan*, *After Dinner*, *Ship of Fools*, *Shades of Blue*, *Distant Lights from Dark Places*, *Like Whiskey on the Breath of a Drunk You Love* and *Scenes from a Separation* (with Hannie Rayson). Screenplays include *Blessed* (with Cornelius, Reeves and Tsiolkas; winner of Best Screenplay at the San Sebastian Film Festival), *Edge of Darkness*, *The Book of Revelation*, *Head On*, *The Fisherman's Wake*, *Strictly Ballroom* (with Baz Luhrmann and Craig Pearce) and the multi-award winning *Lantana*. He recently completed the screen adaptation of John Le Carre's novel *A Most Wanted Man* due for release in 2014.

When the Rain Stops Falling, commissioned by Brink Productions, premiered at the 2008 Adelaide Festival of the Arts before touring to Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and Alice Springs. A new production opened at Perth's Black Swan Theatre in October 2011. The play has won Victorian and Queensland Premier's Literary Awards for Best Play, Adelaide Critics Circle Individual Award, AWGIE for Best Stage Play 2009, Best New Australian Work at the Sydney Theatre Awards and the Victorian Green Room Award for Best New Play. In 2010 it was produced in New York where it received five Lucille Lortell Awards and was named Best New Play of 2010 by *Time Magazine*. It has also been produced in London, Canada, Germany and Japan.

The Secret River was commissioned and produced by the Sydney Theatre Company for the Sydney Festival of the Arts in 2013 before touring to Canberra for the Centennial Festival of the Arts and Perth for the Perth International Festival of the Arts. It won five Helpmann Awards including Best New Work and Best Play. His most recent play is *Things I Know To Be True*.

HOLY DAY

(THE RED SEA)

Andrew Bovell



CURRENCY PRESS
The performing arts publisher

CURRENCY PLAYS

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Holy Day was first produced by State Theatre Company of South Australia at The Playhouse, Adelaide Festival Centre, on 21 August 2001, with the following cast:

EPSTEIN	Peter Docker
WAKEFIELD	Frank Gallacher
CORNELIUS	Cameron Goodall
GOUNDRY	Dino Marnika
LINDA	Rachael Maza
ELIZABETH	Mandy McElhinney
OBEDIENCE	Melodie Reynolds
NORA	Kerry Walker

Director, Rosalba Clemente
Designer, Cath Cantlon
Lighting Designer, Mark Shelton
Composer, Bernie Lynch
Assistant Director, Sam Haren

CHARACTERS

NORA RYAN, 40s, the hostess of the Traveller's Rest

OBEDIENCE RYAN, 17, Nora's daughter

ELIZABETH WILKES, 30s, a missionary's wife

THOMAS WAKEFIELD, 40s, a settler

LINDA, 20s, a traveller

SAMUEL EPSTEIN, 30s, a traveller

NATHANIEL GOUNDRY, 30s, a traveller

EDWARD CORNELIUS, 16, a traveller

SETTING

The white frontier. The mid-nineteenth century.

OPENING

A mission station.

Black clouds loom over a vast desert plain. Lightning cuts the sky on the horizon. Thunder rumbles in the distance.

A woman emerges from the remnant smoke of a fire. Her face is pale. Her hair has fallen. She is bleeding from a cut above her eye. She holds a shawl draped in her open hands. She is praying.

ELIZABETH: Do my justice, Lord, and fight my fight against a faithless people. From the deceitful and impious, rescue me. From the impure, protect me. For You, Lord, are my strength. Why do you keep me so far away? Send forth Your light and Your fidelity. They shall lead me on and bring me to the Holy Day. Then I will go to the altar of God. Then I shall eat of His body and drink of His blood, the blood of my gladness and joy...

A single gunshot is heard. The shawl drops from her hands.

A hundred crows darken the sky, startled by the shot.

ELIZABETH *is still.*

Now it is finished...

She does not move.

The sound of thunder in the distance.



ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

*The Traveller's Rest—a halfway house between distant settlements.
Dusk.*

NORA RYAN *is chopping wood. She handles the axe as well as any man. We watch the rhythm of her work, the arc of the axe and the split of the wood. She looks up at the sound of approaching thunder.*

OBEDIENCE, *a girl on the cusp of womanhood, comes to the door of the Rest. They listen as the thunder roles away to silence.*

NORA: Light the lamps, girl... Keep the night away.

OBEDIENCE *turns back into the Rest. NORA gathers her pile of wood.*

Let the world know we're here... As if the world cares.

A woman is standing on the edge of the clearing. We sense she has been there some time, watching.

LINDA: Missus...

NORA *looks up.*

Some work, Missus.

OBEDIENCE *watches from the door.*

NORA: [*seeing her*] Go inside.

OBEDIENCE *moves back into the Rest.*

I've got nothing.

LINDA: Some tucker then.

NORA: No.

LINDA: Just some bread, hey?

NORA: I said I've got nothing for you, now clear off.

Beat.

LINDA: Storm's coming, Missus.

LINDA *moves away into the darkness.* NORA *watches her go.*



Inside the Rest.

OBEDIENCE *moves away from the door from where she has been watching. She proceeds to light the lamps. She hums a sweet tune as she works. The glow from the lamps gradually reveals a simple bush cottage, tenuous shelter against harsh surrounds.* OBEDIENCE *becomes quiet as NORA enters with her pile of wood and places it by the stove. She stokes the fire as OBEDIENCE washes down the table in preparation for the night's custom.*

NORA: Who taught you that tune?

OBEDIENCE: No one.

NORA: Just came into your head, did it?

OBEDIENCE: Must've.

NORA: Those mission blacks been down here?

OBEDIENCE: No.

NORA: You stay away from them.

OBEDIENCE: It's just a song.

NORA: It's a bloody stinking English hymn and I'll not have it sung in my house. [*She stokes the fire and checks a pot on the stove.*] They talk to you much about God?

OBEDIENCE *shakes her head.*

Good, 'cause God's a big ugly whitefella. He doesn't come round here much 'cause he knows if he does I'll spit in his face and kick him in the arse.

OBEDIENCE *smiles.*

You think I'm joking.

OBEDIENCE: I heard...

NORA: Here we go...

OBEDIENCE: [*lighting the lamp at the door*] That the sun doesn't shine much in England.

NORA: That's true.

OBEDIENCE: That it rains all the time.

NORA: That's true too. It's a piss awful place. Now Ireland's another matter. The sun always shines in Ireland.

NORA laughs at the thought of it. OBEDIENCE sees something outside.

OBEDIENCE: There're travellers coming.

NORA moves to the door and looks out.

NORA: So the night might be worth something after all. Be ready, girl. They'll want to eat. [*Leaving*] And keep your tongue to yourself until I get back.

NORA moves into the back room. OBEDIENCE sets the table with three bowls and a loaf of rough bread.

Three travellers enter the Rest—NATHANIEL GOUNDRY, SAMUEL EPSTEIN and EDWARD CORNELIUS. They lay their swags at the door and take their place at the table as OBEDIENCE fills their bowls from the large pot on the stove.

A crack of thunder outside. OBEDIENCE starts. It quietens. She senses something. She looks to see the youngest of the travellers, EDWARD CORNELIUS, watching her. She moves away.

GOUNDRY breaks the bread into three pieces and passes them to his companions. They eat in silence, driven by the hunger from being on the road. CORNELIUS remains aware of OBEDIENCE, keeping her in the corner of his eye.

EPSTEIN: Some grog.

OBEDIENCE: [*quietly*] The mistress will come.

EPSTEIN: Speak up.

OBEDIENCE: The mistress has the key.

EPSTEIN: Where is she?

OBEDIENCE indicates out the back.

GOUNDRY: And your master?

OBEDIENCE is silent. GOUNDRY smiles, knowing now that there is no man here.

The wind is building outside. The walls rattle. Hessian billows. A gust takes the flame of the lamp at the door.

OBEDIENCE moves to relight it.

[To CORNELIUS] She's pretty, isn't she?

CORNELIUS *looks away.*

Got a touch of the chalk in her.

As OBEDIENCE moves back from the door GOUNDRY takes her by the arm.

You can have her if you want.

NORA *stands at the door. Her hair has been tied up.*

NORA: Eat your food, gentlemen. It might be your last. The road from here travels forever and you'll soon find yourselves on it if it's trouble you want to cause.

GOUNDRY *lets OBEDIENCE go.*

GOUNDRY: It's not trouble, Missus, just a bit of sport.

NORA: I've seen your kind of sport before.

EPSTEIN: We want some grog.

NORA: Then put your money on the table.

EPSTEIN places coins on the table. NORA sweeps them into her palm and disappears out the back.

GOUNDRY: No place for a woman, hey Samuel? Not alone. Least not a white one.

EPSTEIN: Leave it alone, Goundry. I'm too tired for it.

NORA *enters with a jug of grog and three mugs.*

GOUNDRY: What do you say, hostess? No place for a woman out here.

NORA: [*pouring*] I say the mouths of travellers are best left to eating than to wondering where a woman should or shouldn't be.

EPSTEIN: We're looking for work.

NORA: You won't find it here.

EPSTEIN: We heard there're farms out this way.

NORA: Most have tried and moved on. And taken their business with them. A few are still clearing. They might take you on for food and board.

GOUNDRY: Do you take us for blacks?

NORA: So you think you're worth a wage, do you?

EPSTEIN: An honest wage for honest labour, yes.

NORA: Why would men pay the likes of you when there's blacks that'll do the work for free?

GOUNDRY: There's nothing wrong with the likes of us. [*Beat.*] You want to mind what you say.

NORA: I'll say what I want in my own house, Mister.

EPSTEIN: We heard there'd been trouble with the blacks up here.

NORA: A few sheep speared. No more than that.

GOUNDRY: There's nothing but empty shacks for thirty miles back along that road.

NORA: It's the land that's driven them off, not the blacks. Men from the gutters of London who wouldn't know the difference between a sheep's arse and their wife's arse and wouldn't care if they did.

EPSTEIN: You think a free man has a choice how he makes a living out here.

NORA: Are you free men then?

EPSTEIN *doesn't reply.*

There's a farmer near here, two miles on, by the name of Wakefield. He likes to think he's a fair man. He might take you on. Now enjoy your drink and you'll sleep well tonight. You're lucky to be in before the storm.

GOUNDRY *is standing at the door, looking out to the bush.*

GOUNDRY: Two white men speared in the back not twenty miles from here. And a farmer and his wife burned to death in their shack. They say they had the woman before they killed her.

NORA: I've heard the story.

GOUNDRY: How do you sleep at night?

NORA: They don't bother me.

GOUNDRY: Still, I'd not have a blackfella on my land, even if he did work for free. Not when there's white men wanting the jobs.

NORA: Two with tongues that keep wagging and one with the sense to keep his still.

GOUNDRY: His eyes say clearly enough what he wants.

NORA: [*indicating* OBEDIENCE] The hand that touches her is food for my dog.

GOUNDRY: Come on, hostess. Extend your hospitality a little. We'll pay for her.

NORA: She's not for sale.

GOUNDRY: Then we'll take her for free.

NORA: [*to* OBEDIENCE] Out of here.

GOUNDRY: We've come a long way, woman, with nothing but the reputation of this Rest to drive us forward. We're in no mood to be denied.

NORA: If the reputation of my Rest travels far then you would have also heard that many have left it minus the poxy piece of meat that hangs between their legs and makes them a man.

OBEDIENCE *moves to the door*. GOUNDRY *moves to block her way*.

Leave the girl. She's all bone and wouldn't know what gives a man pleasure. Drink your grog and later, I promise, you'll have what you've travelled so far for. Even your mute companion, though he's far from a girl's dream, will have his fill... that is unless he's lost more than his tongue.

GOUNDRY: He's a dumb bastard but he lacks for nothing where it counts.

NORA: Is that so?

GOUNDRY: [*to CORNELIUS*] Show the hostess what you have. She wants to see if you're worth the trouble.

NORA: [*to OBEDIENCE*] Go.

OBEDIENCE *exits*. CORNELIUS *doesn't move*. GOUNDRY *clips him over the head*.

GOUNDRY: Show the woman or I'll strip you myself.

GOUNDRY *pulls CORNELIUS to his feet*.

NORA: [*to EPSTEIN*] Can't he keep his grog?

GOUNDRY: [*exploding*] You shut your mouth, you bitch.

CORNELIUS *looks to NORA, both knowing that they must share a humiliation to humour this man*. CORNELIUS *lowers his trousers*.

GOUNDRY *pulls up his shirt*.

What do you say, hostess?

NORA: He's man enough though still with the face... and I dare say the heart of a boy.

EPSTEIN: You've had your sport now, Goundry.

GOUNDRY *laughs as he ruffles the boy's hair*. CORNELIUS *pulls away as he does up his trousers*. GOUNDRY *goes to exit*.

GOUNDRY: I don't have the teeth for mutton. I'll take the lamb instead.

He exits.

NORA: [*to EPSTEIN*] Will you stop him?

EPSTEIN: Not when he's in this mood.

NORA: You weak bastard.

EPSTEIN: He's had nothing but the boy for months. He's out to prove something to himself.

NORA: Jesus...

NORA *follows* GOUNDRY *outside*. CORNELIUS *goes to follow*.

EPSTEIN: Stay out of this.

CORNELIUS *hesitates*.

The man is a demon and your life is worth more than the virtue of a black girl.



Outside the Rest.

NORA *follows* GOUNDRY.

NORA: Mind how you go then. For out there the blacks will see you before you see them.

GOUNDRY: You think I haven't handled a black before?

NORA: In a mob maybe, but not on your own. Not out there.

GOUNDRY *hesitates*.

If it's a woman you want and a man you are, then come on. I'm willing. I know how to please a man, Mr Goundry. And when you're done there'll be grog on the house. [*She senses she has him.*] Come on, the storm is nearly here and my bed is warm.

GOUNDRY: All right then... if I shut my eyes I might imagine that you're a whore worth having.

He heads back into the Rest. NORA *casts her eye out to the bush, then blows out the lamp at the door before she follows him in.*

