EXTRACT

The Green Classroom

A one-act play

by

Alex Broun

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To my wonderful Aunts

Wilga

Dot

Mickie

June

Thank you for all your wisdom, love and support

And for living such amazing lives

Your nephew Alex

Cast

MARIO (MICKIE)	Eight years old
WILGA	Nine years old)
	)
DOT	Seven years old) - Her sisters)
	)
JUNE	Six years old)
MINNIE	A young aboriginal girl, eight years old
W.J (JIM)	Father of Mickie, June, Dot, Wilga and Jimmy
LIZZIE	Minnie's mother, employed as a "Washer Woman" in the Broun household
GRAHAM WOOD	Teacher appointed by the Aboriginal Protection Board
BOB RICHARDS	Regional Director of the Aboriginal Protection Board
JIMMY	Five years old, Mickie's little brother

Scene
Various locations around Bassendean, a sheep and cattle property in the New England region of New South Wales

Time
Summer, 1928

Notes on Casting

The Green Classroom is designed to be performed by a cast of five women with a mix of indigenous and non-indigenous actors. The actors playing the children may be of any age from young teenagers to elderly, whatever the director feels works best.

The following distribution of roles is suggested:

Actor 1	MICKIE
Actor 2	W.J. and JUNE
Actor 3	WILGA, WOOD and JIMMY
Actor 4	DOT and LIZZIE
Actor 5	MINNIE and BOB

1. The Verandah of the main house. Sunset.

MICKIE and **W.J**.

MICKIE: But I don't understand.

W.J.: It's very complicated.

MICKIE: But you said she could go to school.

W.J.: And she can.

MICKIE: But not with us.

W.J.: When you're older you'll understand.

MICKIE: I'm almost twelve.

W.J.: When you're big.

MICKIE: I'm bigger than Dot and June.

W.J.: When you're as big as me.

MICKIE: Daddy, I'll never be as big you.

PAUSE.

W.J.: Come and sit here with me child.

MICKIE SITS NEXT TO **W.J.**

W.J.: Sometimes it's best for people to do things by themselves.

MICKIE: Mother says we should do everything together. That way we can look after each other.

W.J.: But sometimes people need to be kept apart. Remember when we found that lamb last week?

MICKIE: She was all broken.

W.J.: And how did that happen?

MICKIE: The foxes.

W.J.: The foxes got in and hurt the lamb. And what would happen if we didn't keep the foxes and lambs apart?

MICKIE: They would all get hurt.

W.J.: That's why we had to fix the fence. So we could keep the foxes and lambs from getting hurt. We have to keep them apart. It's best for both of them.

MICKIE: So Minnie can't go to school with us or the foxes will hurt the lambs?

W.J.: That's not what I mean.

MICKIE: Minnie can't go to school with us because she's a lamb?

W.J.: No.

MICKIE: Because she's a fox?

W.J.: No child.

MICKIE: Then who are the foxes and who are the lambs?

W.J.: I'm not saying anyone's foxes or lambs.

MICKIE: Then why did you say it?

W.J.: What I'm saying is that you and Minnie are different. And sometimes - not all the time - but *sometimes* you have to do things by yourself.

MICKIE: But she plays with us.

W.J.: But it's better if you go to school separately. She'll still be going to school. I've written to the board to ask them to build a new school room for Minnie and the other children. And they're sending a teacher all the way from Sydney.

MICKIE: But I want her to go to school with us.

W.J.: Sometimes in life we can't always get what we want.

MICKIE: Why not?

W.J.: Because sometimes people have to be kept apart too.

MICKIE: When times?

W.J.: At night. We sleep in our house and Minnie's family sleeps down by the creek.

MICKIE: But Daddy they don't have a house.

W.J.: They're comfortable alright. That's how they prefer to be.

MICKIE: You better tell Uncle Malachi about that then.

W.J.: Why?

MICKIE: Some night's he sleeps down by the creek too.

W.J.: That's a different kind of fox among the lambs. (BEAT) Do you remember when June got sick last year?

MICKIE: Mama had to wash her hair with that smelly soap.

W.J.: And you remember how June kept crying?

MICKIE: She didn't stop for two days.

W.J.: Well June got sick like that because she was with the other children.

MICKIE: Did they have creatures in their hair too?

W.J.: Yes and they went into June's hair. Do you want to get sick like June?

MICKIE: But Minnie doesn't have creatures in her hair.

W.J.: Some of the other children do.

MICKIE: But not Minnie. So she can go to school with us.

W.J.: Child - you can't do that.

MICKIE: Why not?

W.J.: You can't separate Minnie from the other children.

MICKIE: But you just said sometimes you have to keep people separate.

PAUSE.

W.J.: Alright Minnie can go to school with you. But only Minnie.

MICKIE: (BURSTING INTO A SMILE) Thank you Daddy!

W.J.: But only if the new teacher agrees. The board is paying for a special schoolroom and he might want Minnie to be taught there.

MICKIE: When can I ask him?

W.J.: He's coming tomorrow. You can ask him then.

MICKIE: I will.

W.J.: Mickie, you know you're daddy's only doing what's best for you?

MICKIE: Yes Daddy – but Minnie's not a fox.

LIGHTS CHANGE. **W.J**. EXITS.

2. The yard in front of the main house, the following morning.

MICKIE WALKS ACROSS TO JOIN **DOT** AND **MINNIE**, WHO HAVE ENTERED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE. THEY SING THE FIRST VERSE OF HENRY LAWSON'S "FREEDOM ON THE WALLABY"

ALL: (SINGING) Australia's a big country an' Freedom's humping bluey
An' Freedom's on the Wallaby Oh dont you hear her cooey
She's just begun to boomerang she'll knock the tyrants silly
She's going to light another fire and boil another billy

DOT IS WRITING A LIST. **MINNIE** IS HELPING HER.

DOT: Midge, Tippo, Flossy, Streaker

MINNIE: Why do you call him Streaker?

DOT: Because he streaks in front of the other dogs to get the Rabbits. Judy, Trixie, Pranks

MINNIE: Pranks?

DOT: Because he can do tricks. Tiny, Too - that's Tiny's puppy - Togo -

MICKIE ALSO HAS A PAD AND PENCIL.

MICKIE: Dot Broun! What are you doing?

DOT: Making a list.

MINNIE: We're writing down all Dot's dogs. Then Dot's going to draw pictures of them.

MICKIE But you can't make a list.

MINNIE: Why not?

MICKIE: Because I also want to make a list and Minnie's got to help me.

DOT: Why is your list more important than mine?

MICKIE: Because it's my list.

DOT: That doesn't make it more important.

MICKIE: Yes it does. I have to write down my horses. And everybody knows horses are more important than dogs.

DOT: Are not!

MICKIE: Are too!

MINNIE: But Mickie - we've already started.

MICKIE: How many more have you got to go?

MINNIE: I don't know. How many dogs have you got Dot?

DOT: About fifty.

MICKIE: Fifty! But that will take forever. Or at least until lunchtime.

MINNIE: I'm sorry Mickie. But Dot was first.

DOT: So there.

DOT POKES OUT HER TONGUE.

MICKIE: But I've only got six horses.

DOT: Six? That won't make a very good list.

MICKIE: (TO **DOT**) It will if you draw nice pictures of them. You do such nice pictures Dot. Why don't we do my list first and then I'll help you and Minnie do your list?

DOT: Why should I do that?

MICKIE: Because you're my sister and you love me. (BEAT) And I'll give you some of my Easter eggs.

DOT THINKS.

DOT: Okay.

MICKIE GOES TO SIT WITH THEM. SHE WRITES IN HER PAD.

MICKIE: First there's Merry Legs.

DOT AND **MINNIE** LAUGH.

MINNIE: Why do you call her Merry Legs?

MICKIE: Because that's her name. Next there's Alice, then Pet, then Splodger.

DOT AND **MINNIE** ROLL AROUND LAUGHING.

DOT: You can't call a horse Splodger.

MICICKIE: Yes I can.

MINNIE: But Mickie - it's such a silly name.

DOT: Splodger!

THEY LAUGH LOUDER.

MICKIE: Dot Broun and Minnie Bowden - you stop laughing at my horses.

DOT: But it's so funny.

MINNIE: Splodger!

THEY LAUGH AGAIN.

MICKIE: Stop it. I didn't laugh at your dogs' names.

DOT: But my dogs' name's aren't silly.

MICKIE: Yes they are. (SHE GRABS **DOT**'S LIST) What about Flossy? How can you call a dog Flossy?

DOT AND **MINNIE** ARE SUDDENLY SERIOUS.

DOT: What's wrong with Flossy?

NNIE: Flossy is a good name for a dog.

JUNE ENTERS, HOLDING A WOMAN'S WEEKLY. SHE TAKES UP A POSE.

JUNE: Do you think I look like Mary Pickford?

PAUSE. DOT, **MICKIE** AND **MINNIE** ALL BURST INTO LAUGHTER.

JUNE: What did I do?

WILGA ENTERS.

WILGA: Miss Bridekirk says you must come in now.

ALL (EXCEPT WILGA): Wilga, Wilga
How does your garden grow?
With rotten snails and puppy's dogs tails
And chicken heads all in a row

WILGA: That's not true.

ALL EXCEPT WILGA: Yes it is.

WILGA: The cosmos grew and so did the Snap dragon. It's not my fault it won't rain. And Daddy said there wasn't enough water in the tank to water them.

JUNE: (TO **WILGA**) Then you should plant flowers that don't need water.

MINNIE: All flowers need water June.

JUNE: (TO **MINNIE**) No they don't. What about Daisies?

MICKIE: Why don't Daisies need water?

JUNE: Because they're daisies silly. They grow everywhere.

WILGA: Miss Bridekirk says you must come in. It's time for our Botany lesson.

DOT: We're going to learn what's not growing in Wilga's garden?

WILGA: Miss Bridekirk says you must come right now. All except you Minnie.

MICKIE: Sorry Minnie.

MINNIE: Don't worry. I'll stay and finish off Dot's list.

DOT: But you don't know all their names.

MICKIE: You should make them up. Better than Dot's names anyway.

DOT: (TO **MICKIE**) Quiet Miss Splodger.

MICKIE: Don't worry Minnie. I spoke to Daddy and he says you can come to school with us soon.

MINNIE: I can go to school? With you?

JUNE: You can study geography and Maths and writing.

DOT: And how to look like Mary Pickford?

MINNIE: I would like that.

WILGA: (TO **DOT**, **JUNE** AND **MICKIE**) You have to come now. Or I'll be in trouble.

DOT: We might stay here then.

WILGA: Dot! How awful.

MICKIE: Here Minnie - you mind our lists.

DOT AND **MICKIE** GIVE HER THE LISTS.

DOT: We'll come back as soon as Miss Bridekirk lets us.

DOT, **MICKIE** AND **WILGA** EXIT.

JUNE: Bye Miss Minnie.

MINNIE: Bye Miss Pickford.

JUNE SMILES AND EXITS. **MINNIE** ALONE. LIGHTS CHANGE.

MINNIE EXITS.

3. The Green Classroom, the next day.

MICKIE AND **MR. WOOD** ENTER.

MICKIE: My name is Mickie Broun.

WOOD: My name is Mr. Wood.

MICKIE: That's not really my name but.

WOOD: Don't end a sentence with a preposition.

MICKIE: Sorry. Mickie isn't really my name.

WOOD: That's better. And what is your name?

MICKIE: Mario. You want to know why?

WOOD: Certainly.

MICKIE: It was because when Uncle Mario went missing in the war and mother said that her next child would be called Mario no matter if it was a boy or a girl. So I'm Mario. But everybody calls me Mickie. After the song.

WOOD: Which song?