

Dallas Angguish

Bath Party

A One Act Play

SETTING: 1983. Toowoomba, Queensland. A bathroom and lounge room in a once elegant timber house. The interior is slightly dilapidated. The bath is of the antique, cast iron claw and ball variety. The lounge room is sparsely furnished with an old Genoa lounge suite and a standing lamp. On the lounge room wall there are some posters of alternative bands from the 80s. Three doors lead off the lounge room. One is clearly the front door, the others bedroom doors.

THE CHARACTERS

Allie: A young woman of eighteen years old. She is pretty but does not believe that she is. She wears heavy make-up in the style of a 1980s “alternative”. She’s thin and boyish. Her hair is black and cut in a spiky, proto-gothic style typical of the period.

Zara: Allie’s cousin. A woman in her mid-twenties. She’s attractive and confident. She has a voluptuous shape and knows it. Her hair is long and bleached blonde.

Danny: A young man of eighteen years old. Good looking in a geeky way. He wears glasses.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

A single spotlight illuminates Allie, just enough to make out her face and shoulders. She has heavily made-up eyes and ruby red lips. Her face is framed by a spiky haircut that defies gravity.

ALLIE: *(directly to audience)* It's a week night. I'm eighteen, just. My cousin Zara and I are having a bath party. The idea is to drink some wine, smoke some dope and take turns in the tub. While one bathes the other entertains, takes advantage of dry fingers to roll joints and ensure that the prerequisite candles remain lit. I construct exquisite joints, despite the fact that I don't smoke. My rolling ability is the result of a digital dexterity that I put down to years of nail-biting that makes the tips of my fingers extremely sensitive *(she wiggles her fingers at the audience)*. Like eye-less, mouth-less worms that sense through the surface of their skin.

Allie starts rolling a joint. Lights come up to reveal Zara in the tub. The tub is overflowing with bubbles. Allie watches as Zara twirls her long blonde hair in her fingers, anchoring a long strand around her left thumb, the rest is spread over the side of the tub like pale seaweed. Allie is sitting on a stool by the bath. A wine cask is perched on the edge of the tub near her. After finishing with the joint, Allie watches Zara gaze at herself in a mirror fixed to the side of the tub with an extendable arm. Zara is checking her skin for imperfections that she knows she won't find. Allie tries to see herself in the mirror as well, but Zara has positioned it so that this is difficult.

ALLIE: *(almost to herself)* I hate my eyes.

ZARA: They're a bit like a zombie's eyes aren't they? Sort of grey with yellow flecks. They're kind of squinty too. But I suppose they wouldn't be so bad if you weren't scowling all the time.

ALLIE: You'd scowl too if you were me *(she takes a sip of wine)*. I'm a shy, kind of Jewish, sort of Scottish kid with punky hair living in Toowoomba, Queensland. That's more than enough reason to frown.

ZARA: It's only your mother that's a Jew.

ALLIE: That's all you need to be Jewish.

ZARA: And you could have a normal haircut.

ALLIE: I don't want a normal haircut. I like my hair the way it is.

ZARA: Whatever babe, but if you get stared at and treated like a freak, it's really your own fault.

Pause.

ALLIE: *(looking in mirror)* They're not that bad are they? I mean, when I'm not scowling, my eyes aren't too hideous.

ZARA: You have to admit that your eyelids are a little thin....

ALLIE: Do I?

ZARA: Well yes. It's probably a genetic inheritance from your mother's side that you can't do anything about. You *are* a bit of a mongrel breed. You said so yourself.

ALLIE: But, the eyeliner helps doesn't it?

ZARA: It's hard to know. I can't remember what they look like without all that makeup.

ALLIE: *(directly to audience)* I don't like the way I look. I haven't left the house without make-up for years. My skin hasn't been directly exposed to oxygen or sunshine since I discovered liquid foundation when I was 14.

Allie anxiously looks back into the mirror.

ZARA: Don't worry Allie, despite your thin eyelids, you're not *completely* ugly.

ALLIE: Gee, thanks Zara.

ZARA: Don't mention it. It's what I'm here for.

ALLIE: *(still anxiously looking in the mirror)* That boy I met the other day, Danny, he said I look a bit like Debbie Harry, you know from Blondie, but with black hair.

ZARA: Yeah right, you wish *(she notices the hurt look on Allie's face)*. I'm not being mean or anything, but he *does* wear glasses.

Zara turns the mirror away so that Allie can't use it. She sighs in a satisfied kind of way.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* His glasses aren't very thick. Danny's glasses I mean. He can see just fine. And he did say I look a bit like Debbie Harrie.... *(she smiles a little, remembering, then looks back to the audience)*. Zara's such a bitch... but I don't need the mirror anyway. I can see myself in the bubbles on the edge of the bath. It's a little soapy and distorted but if I turn this way I can just about.... Oh no, the bubble popped, I've gone, vanished into oblivion.... *(smirks)* How very eighties of me.

Allie's attention swings back to Zara. Candlelight illuminates Zara's face as she inwardly ponders.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Look at her. She wants me to ask her what she's thinking, but she'll let me know soon enough. She can't ever keep anything to herself *(she takes another sip of wine)*.

ZARA: Do you think David Bowie really slept with Iggy Pop? Or was the whole thing just hype to sell records?

ALLIE: *(to audience)* She actually says stuff like that. Stupid stuff. I shall smirk at her to show her my disdain.

Allie smirks at Zara.

ALLIE: I don't think being gay sells records.

ZARA: Babe, you're so naive... it's not gay, it's bisexual.

ALLIE: I don't think bisexuality sells records either.

ZARA: But look at Boy George!

ALLIE: That's different. He's kind of sexless, like a rag doll...

ZARA: *(snidely)* Wouldn't that be *fag* doll babe?

ALLIE: *(to audience)* She thinks she's smart, but saying things like that proves that she isn't. *(to Zara)* Whatever. He hasn't publicly admitted that he's gay. His teeny-bopper fans would drop dead if he did.

ZARA: Like those eyebrows don't *scream* gay!

ALLIE: Yeah, the eyebrows give him away. He should admit it. It's 1983, it's not like it's the middle-ages.

ZARA: It's still the middle-ages *here* Babe.

ALLIE: Queensland isn't the *most* backward place in the world.

Zara looks at Allie incredulously and rolls her eyes.

ZARA: You're joking right?

ALLIE: I know it's a police state and that we've got Joh Bjelke-Petersen and that if you're anything but a white, male, peanut farmer you get hassled by the cops day in and day out. But apart from that it's okay.

ZARA: *(looking condescendingly at Allie)* You're totally deluded babe, Queensland sucks.

ALLIE: The weather's nice....

ZARA: If you like sweating like a pig. Why are you defending this shithole? Of all people Allie, you should hate it here.

Allie doesn't respond. She looks down at the floor and worries the bathmat with her toes while sipping her wine.

ALLIE: If you hate it here so much maybe you should go back home, now that you're not at college anymore I mean. Your parents are still in western Sydney aren't they? Rooty Hill or somewhere?

ZARA: Don't say that name!

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Being from Rooty Hill makes Zara feel that she's not as sophisticated as she likes to think she is. I like Zara to feel that way. I think it's good for her. Kind of therapeutic, you know. *(to Zara)* Which name? *Rooty Hill?*

ZARA: *Don't say that again.*

ALLIE: Whatever... I still think that if Boy George can't admit he's gay in 1985, bisexuality definitely wouldn't have sold records in the seventies.

ZARA: Whatever....

Zara puts more water in the tub and begins to wash her legs with a bright pink cake of strawberry scented soap. Lights go down.

ACT ONE

SCENE 2

Lights come up. Allie is rolling Zara another joint, even though Zara still has one lit in her mouth. Plumes of smoke spiral from Zara's mouth like from a breathing chimney. Allie watches the smoke snake toward the ceiling.

ZARA: What do you want to do with your life Allie?

Allie's face shows that she has no idea what she wants to do with her life. She shrugs her shoulders.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Zara is sure that she's going to be a superstar of some variety: actress, pop icon, courtesan. She should know better, especially as she's just been booted out of the acting course at the uni in Toowoomba, and it's the easiest course to get into in the whole country. She couldn't get into any in Sydney, so she moved here.

ZARA: What did you want to be when you were little?

ALLIE: Nothing really...

ZARA: Well, you've achieved your goal already haven't you babe. *Nothing*, get it? *(in answer to the perplexed look on Allie's face)* I asked you what you wanted to be when you were little and you said nothing and, well, that's kind of where you are, isn't it babe.

ALLIE: Yeah, good one Zara. *(to audience)* See, I told you she's a bitch....
(she takes a long drink of wine). I've only been living away from home

for a month or so. I can't be expected to have everything sorted out already. According to my parents, particularly *The Mother*, I'm a runaway. The day of my eighteenth birthday I packed my Doc Martens, my three tutus and seventeen tiaras and moved out. I didn't move out to improve my career prospects but to get as far away from my parents as possible. I need to live with people of like-minds. There aren't many like-minds in Toowoomba, which is the only town in Australia to have its very own chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, so I moved in with Zara. She isn't proving to be very like-minded at all. I'm sure she has a white hood in the back of her closet somewhere....

ZARA: So, you've no idea what kind of job you'd like to do?

ALLIE: Job? I've never even *thought* about getting a job. *(to audience)* My mind's been firmly set on a life of nightclubbing and underground fashion ever since I was twelve and I saw my first David Bowie video on *Countdown*. Thus, this beautifully constructed brocade lap-lap I'm wearing *(she shows her ankle length lap-lap to the audience)*. Chez trendy, no?

ZARA: You flunked out at school too didn't you? So university isn't an option either.

ALLIE: I didn't flunk out. I was expelled for dying my hair blue. They told me that if I wanted to stay at school I had to change it back to a natural colour.... So I dyed it the most vibrant red I could find. *(to audience)* My pleas that red is a natural colour fell on deaf ears as they goose

marched me off the grounds. Despite my less than satisfactory school career, I still think I'm a 'uni' kind of person. But when I was at school my priorities were hairspray and eyeliner, not homework.

ZARA: All for the better really, I mean, you're not very bright. The most serious study you've done is in the pages of Cleo, and even that makes your head spin. You're not going to get into uni reading that.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Okay, so I'm not über smart or anything. But she's no Einstein either. *(to Zara)* I've learnt lots of things from Cleo I'll have you know.

ZARA: Like what?

ALLIE: I've learnt all about vaginal orgasms...

ZARA: Lot of good that'll do *you*....

ALLIE: *(interrupting)* And, I learnt how to milk prostates. *(to audience)* Which are not, I now know, a kind of long-haired rabbit from Eastern Europe.

ZARA: Oh my god, you're such a pervert. What do you plan to do with that information?

ALLIE: Join the public service?

ZARA: Don't be ridiculous. What do you want to *be* Allie?

Allie ponders a moment. She uses her foot to worry at the bathmat again, taking more sips of wine.

ZARA: Well?

ALLIE: I have no idea.

ZARA: You have to have some idea.

ALLIE: None.

ZARA: I've always wanted to be an actress, always, or a singer, like Stevie Nicks...

ALLIE: From Fleetwood Mac?

ZARA: Obviously, babe.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Zara thinks it's hip to know the names of singers from superbands. It isn't. *(to Zara)* Stevie's cool. Trampy but cool.

ZARA: You know, I have this connection with Stevie, on a psychic level. I think we were lovers in a past life.

ALLIE: But you're not a lesbian.

ZARA: So? I was a man in my last life.

ALLIE: Oh.... Was she a man too?

ZARA: Don't be ridiculous.

ALLIE: Sorry...

ZARA: Stevie and I are so alike it's uncanny. Everyone says so.

ALLIE: You have the same hair.

ZARA: And we're both very expressive dancers...

ALLIE: Maybe you were Modernists in your last lives.

ZARA: What's a Modernist?

ALLIE: An internationalist....

ZARA: *(interrupting)* Oh, well we're both very cosmopolitan.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* That clinches it then *(rolls her eyes)*.

ZARA: Pass me the joint babe, I need a little toké.

Allie passes Zara the joint. Zara draws heavily on it, holding her breath for an extended moment before blowing dirty clouds upwards to the ceiling fan.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Watching Zara smoke makes me think of a puffer fish spewing clouds of noxious gas into the sea.... I'm always thinking things like that; metaphorical things.

ZARA: *(patting Allie's hand)* It must be sad to have no ambition. Poor thing, I hope you discover who you're meant to be, as I have.

ALLIE: *(almost to herself)* One of my high school teachers told me that everyone had one thing, no matter how insignificant, at which they could excel.

ZARA: That sounds fair enough. What do you think your one thing might be?
Think about it. Look deep within yourself.

Allie thinks for a moment.

ALLIE: No idea.... I just keep thinking that the teacher 'retired' (*Allie forms apostrophes with fingers*) because of a homosexual scandal. (*to audience*) Gay-sex-scandals are par for the course these days but when I was at school they were practically unheard of. That teacher was a real pioneer. Good for him, little devil.

Allie resumes her contemplation. After a moment, Zara apparently decides that she's been in the tub long enough.

ZARA: Pass me the towel babe, I'm getting all wrinkly.

Allie hands her the towel. Zara climbs out of the bath and proceeds to dry herself. It's now Allie's turn to bathe. She hesitates to undress, reaching for a towel to cover up.

ZARA: You needn't be shy around me. Actors don't see bodies the way ordinary people do. We're like doctors. We see the body as a tool. Nothing more, nothing less.

Allie ignores Zara and wraps the towel around herself, over her clothes. She very awkwardly undresses, as someone might at the beach. But Allie clearly has little experience at undressing this way. She soon gets tangled up in her clothes, struggling to remove the lap-lap. She very nearly falls head first into the tub but recovers at the last minute and manages to divest herself of her clothing without further drama. Zara watches Allie with a look of amused condescension. Allie shoots

her a single embarrassed glance before she slips into the bath, using the towel to shield herself from Zara's critical gaze. She moves the bubbles around so that nothing too private or personal is on show.

ALLIE: *(to herself)* One should never let anyone see your no-nos.

ZARA: What?

ALLIE: Oh, it's just something The Mother used to say: "One should never let anyone see your no-nos nor your boo-boos". *(to audience)* My Mother called privates 'no-nos' and nipples 'boo-boos', as though nipples were a shameful mistake. *(she does an impression of her mother wagging an angry finger)* "Nobody needs to know what's in your moneybox but you," she used to say, meaning that one's underwear should remain like Fort Knox, un-assailed and un-plundered.

ZARA: Your mother's a lunatic.

ALLIE: Maybe, but The Mother is *my* lunatic so I'd rather you not call her that.

Zara wraps the towel around herself and sits down on the stool. She takes up the joint and continues smoking.

ZARA: You're such a conflicted thing Allie. If you'd just admit that your mother doesn't love you and never did you'd be a lot better off. You'll never overcome your issues until you accept that.

Allie is clearly hurt by this. She's quiet for a long moment, just staring into the bath water. Zara looks uneasy but unrepentant.

ZARA: Besides, she's my aunt, if only by marriage, so I can say what I want about her. It's not my fault your mother is ashamed of you.

Pause.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* I've always been a disappointment to The Mother *(she takes a sip of wine)*. But when it comes to nipples, I never disappoint. I keep my no-nos and boo-boos closely guarded. As for my 'moneybox' – it took me years to work out that I shouldn't keep my lunch-money there. My knickers I mean. At the age of nine, for reasons of both comfort and hygiene, I reverted to the use of pockets.

Allie reflects for another moment.

ALLIE: *(to Zara)* I'm not an actor and have no desire to be, so my body will remain covered.

ZARA: Suit yourself.

Allie lies back to soak. She makes her hands tugboats that move around the bath, gathering more globules of bubbles to better cover her no-nos and boo-boos. Zara rests her joint in an ashtray and tightens her towel, plumping her breasts as if to make them more prominent.

ALLIE: For someone so oblivious to bodies you're very fond of showing yours off. No visitor to our house is spared the sight of your boobs.

ZARA: *(smiling)* I like my breasts. I'm certainly not ashamed of them.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* She's not kidding. Her breasts are her totems. She bares them as a kind of territorial display. She's forever pressing them against windows, squishing them on windscreens, jiggling them in people's faces. It's a kind of sickness with her. *(to Zara)* Just because you're proud of them doesn't mean you have to flop them out every other second.

ZARA: You're such a silly thing Allie! So prudish.

ALLIE: I'm not, I'm just modest.

ZARA: Same diff. You know modesty is just a cover for low self-esteem. It's as clear as day that you're uncomfortable in your own skin. It's not that I don't have any sympathy for you. You don't have any boobs to speak of and your nipples are like little dried up raisins, you poor thing.

Allie moves more bubbles up against herself, hiding her body. Her head droops a little, she looks crestfallen, ashamed.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* It's true. I don't have any boobs. I couldn't jiggle them even if I wanted to. My body is a nuisance. Something I cover up, disguise and make-over.

Zara wraps a towel around her head in a kind of turban.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* She thinks she's Carmen Miranda now.... If I close my eyes and concentrate, I can visualise her dying a painful death a million times over.... *(opens her eyes)* I'm always visualising such things. Nasty things.

ZARA: You just need to relax into your body. Let it speak in its own voice.

ALLIE: I don't think my body has a voice.

ZARA: Of course it does.

ALLIE: Well I don't think I want to hear it.

ZARA: Why not?

ALLIE: Because the other noises it makes aren't very pleasant.

Zara pooh-poohs Allie and leaves the room with a dramatic swish of towels and hair.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* In case you haven't noticed by now, Zara is annoying. I only live with her because I can't afford the rent by myself. *(she hesitates, afraid to make this next admission)* And I don't have any friends. It's a situation that makes me feel bitter.

Zara has left a joint smouldering in the ashtray. This irritates Allie. When she goes to put it out, she sees Zara's stockings hanging on a rail above her head. She finishes her glass of wine, then grabs the stockings, takes the joint and stubs it out on them and gently hangs them back up.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* I've been known to scissor out the crutch of her panties as well. I do things like that. Kind of sick things.

Allie reclines in the tub and stares up at the ceiling. Lights go down.

ACT ONE

SCENE 3

Lights come up. Allie is settled into the tub and is apparently contemplating something. She turns her head to the audience and, in a relaxed and lazy kind of way, refills her wineglass from a cask on the edge of the tub and addresses them.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* I've been thinking about that one thing I might be really good at. The problem is, I've never even imagined there might be such a thing. My family were not what you might call nurturing. You might call them hostile and totally frigging crazy. The Mother was disinterested and detached.... She had a painful childhood that left her deranged – well, it left her a Jew for Jesus, if you can imagine such a thing. My father was a truck driver. He was a genius in one way and one way only: at totally crushing your spirit. One of his favourite sayings was: "Shit in one hand and wish into the other and see which one fills up first."

Allie smirks, looks back up at the ceiling, remembering. After a moment, she turns back to the audience.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* I'm pretty good with make-up... Maybe there are career possibilities in that direction? You know, suburban beautician, cosmetics sales, funereal make-overs. None of those sound very glamorous though.... That gay teacher said that we should do what we're good at and that we'd know what we're good at because people would tell us. But no-one's ever told me that I was good at anything.

Admittedly, I've never applied myself to anything long enough to get good at it. The only thing I was known for as a child was lazing about. There aren't many career possibilities in that direction: artist's model maybe, or human mannequin, or a couch tester. Couch testing might be nice but it's not exactly a booming industry. And I have way too many body image issues to consider modelling for a living, especially if nudity is required, which is likely.... Other than when bathing, I avoid nudity at all costs. I find nudity a disagreeable quality in both myself and others. When nude I feel... well, I feel *naked*; as in exposed. A lanky bird plucked of its feathers. A sheepdog bereft of shag. A cat without claws. An under-filled sausage without its skin. That kind of thing.

A Telephone rings in the lounge room. Allie sits up, her shoulders tense.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* That might be Danny. The boy I met the other day. He asked me for my number and I gave it to him. No boy has ever asked me for my number before...

Allie hurriedly reaches for a towel and goes to get out of the tub to answer the phone.

ZARA: I'll get it.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Oh no.

Allie freezes in her position, clutching the towel to her body, her face a mask of anxiety. A spotlight comes up to show Zara, now dressed but still with damp hair, answering the telephone.

ZARA: Hello, Zara speaking.

Allie is on tenterhooks, her body tense in its frozen position. She cranes her ear towards the sound of Zara's voice.

ZARA: Hello? Hello? *(she sighs with irritation)* Hello?

Zara hangs up the telephone.

ALLIE: *(calling out)* Who was it?

ZARA: A hang up. *(sensing Allie's anxiety)* Why? Who are you expecting to call?

ALLIE: No-one.

ZARA: *(walking to the bathroom door)* Don't be embarrassed, you can tell me Allie.

ALLIE: *(after a reluctant pause)* That boy Danny. He asked for my number.

ZARA: Oh honey, your poor thing. Don't delude yourself. He's not going to call you.

ALLIE: He said he would.

ZARA: Trust me babe, I know a lot more about men than you do. He's not going to call.

Zara walks away, a smug smile on her face. The spotlight on the lounge goes down.

Allie sighs and relaxes back into the tub, discarding the towel.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* He really did say he'd call me. I'm not deluded. I think he likes me. Zara hates it when boys like me. She wants them all to herself. She practically screams if anyone pays me a compliment. I mean, it doesn't happen that often, but when it does she nearly pees herself with jealousy.... *(she takes a sip of wine)* I've not received many compliments in my life. So few that I vividly remember the only compliment my father ever gave me. Isn't that sad? That I remember it so clearly.... It wasn't even a proper compliment. I was in Grade Five. I'd received a high mark on a creative writing assignment. We'd all been given an obscure topic to write about. I suppose the idea was that the more obscure the topic, the more creative we had to be to come up with something good. My topic was 'The Life of a Dot'.

She raises her eyebrow at the audience, as if to say, 'dumb huh?'

ALLIE: *(to audience)* My story was about an ink dot that lived on a piece of paper. It was a very misunderstood dot. Its life story was essentially one of transformation. From being wet in the ink pot to dry on the page. From being in a book, to being torn out and made into a paper boat which was then set adrift in a stream. From there the paper boat, and the dot along with it, biodegraded and settled as sediment on the

bottom of the sea. This scum was eaten by a bottom dwelling fish and was transformed into its flesh. The fish was then caught and eaten and so the dot became part of a human being. When the human being died his body rotted into the ground and fertilised a tree. The tree was cut down and turned into paper upon which a dot was placed. And so forth, around in circles like that.... *(pause)* I was excited by the good grade and so I read the story to my parents in the car on the way home from school. My father's response was to turn to The Mother and mutter, "I'll say one thing for that one... got an imagination." *(pause)* It was said begrudgingly and with an inbuilt insult: he couldn't think of another good thing to say about me. He couldn't even be bothered to say it straight to me. He always acted as if I wasn't really there. As if I was a kind of ghost. Added to this insult was the fact that he was on record as loathing any form of creativity. He saw all art as 'wanking' *(she takes a long drink of wine)*. My father was always mean to me.... I embarrassed him.

For a moment, Allie looks like she might start to cry. She wipes at her eyes and tries to pull herself together, but a few mascara tinged tears roll down her cheeks.

ALLIE: *(to herself)* Oh look, the bubbles in my bath are bursting in sympathy for me.... Good Lord *(she wipes vigorously at her eyes, takes in a deep breath)*, I'm as drunk as a nun on Sunday. *(to audience)* Crying is a luxury I don't often indulge. In fact, I haven't cried for years. Tears, sobbing, crying, these are activities that I avoid. Tears transform one into an ugly yawping beast. I don't want to be the girl who sobs, the girl

who cries. I don't want to be the girl who's found in toilets at nightclubs, sobbing, bawling, blowing her oozing nose. There's one of those girls for every pub and club toilet in the world. I don't want that job. I don't want to be the misery guts girl. I hate that girl. But... I could be the girl who writes. The girl whose words go out into the world and change things....

Allie hops out of the tub, awkwardly covering herself with the towel that she then wraps herself up in. She goes to the lounge room. She flicks on the lamp and rummages around to find a pen and paper. Still wet and sudsy, she plops down onto the lounge and begins to scribble.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* It's my first ever poem. Like all poems written by teens in the Eighties it will be full of angst and melancholy. I love those kinds of things; 1980s things.

Allie continues writing. In the meantime, Zara re-enters and sits down on the couch. She elaborately brushes her hair, but her focus is increasingly on what Allie is doing. When Allie stops writing and re-reads what she's written, Zara's curiosity gets the better of her.

ZARA: What is that?

ALLIE: Nothing.

ZARA: I can see that you've written something. What is it?

ALLIE: *(cautiously)* It's a poem. It's entitled 'Death is a Bubble'.

ZARA: Let me read it.

ALLIE: No.

ZARA: What's the point of writing if you won't let anyone read it? Give it to me.

ALLIE: No. But... I'll read it to you.

ZARA: Okay then, read it.

ALLIE: *(nervously)* 'Death is a Bubble' by Allie. I dance in a quagmire/My life is lived in a bubble/All that comes is trouble/I am writhing/But surviving/Despite my bleeding severed heart/Death/Like life/Is a flash in the pan/A big sudden-death big-bursting bubble.

Tense Pause.

ZARA: Wow *(unpleasantly surprised)*. It's great babe.

Zara continues brushing her hair, with a little more aggression than she had been before.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* It's unlike her to miss an opportunity to destroy me. She must be so stoned she's forgotten to be mean.

ZARA: *(begrudgingly)* You have a real talent, you should write more.

Allie looks at the audience, her eyebrows arched in surprise. She hugs the notepad to her chest.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* This is it. This is my one thing. I feel like a desert lotus, blossoming under a slight drizzle of acknowledgement. Just like the misunderstood dot, I'm transformed. From this moment onwards, I will be a writer. *(to Zara)* I think I know what I want to be now...

ZARA: Oh, and what's that?

ALLIE: A poetess. I want to be a poetess.

ZARA: A *poetess*.

ALLIE: Yes.

ZARA: Well, I suppose stranger things have happened...

The Telephone rings. Zara swiftly reaches out to answer it.

ZARA: Hello? Oh, not again. Hello? Hello? Oh, I don't need this *(she hangs up frustrated)*.

ALLIE: Another hang up?

ZARA: *(sarcastically)* Worked that out all by yourself did you? You're such a smart little thing. *(pause)* I don't know why you're hovering over the phone. He's not going to call you.

ALLIE: He said he would.

ZARA: Well, he won't. Trust me.

ALLIE: *(suspicious)* How do you know he won't call?

ZARA: I just know.

ALLIE: How?

ZARA: (*meanly*) Let's just say if he was going to call anyone, it would be me.

ALLIE: You?

ZARA: Yes.

ALLIE: But he doesn't even know you.

ZARA: He knows me just fine.

ALLIE: But why would he call you?

ZARA: I'm more what he wants.

ALLIE: What? You mean bottle blonde?

ZARA: Maybe. Boys do love blondes. But I'm also just more what a boy like Danny wants. Any boy for that matter.

ALLIE: You mean that you put out?

ZARA: That, *and* I've got the assets that boys desire, if you get my drift.

ALLIE: I can't believe you. You could have any boy you want, but you want Danny just because he likes me.

ZARA: Look, I don't want to be mean, but no boy is ever going to like you once they know your little secret.

ALLIE: (*anxious*) Please, tell me you didn't say anything to him?

ZARA: Well, Danny and I did have a little talk. Don't look so shocked. It's not right that he doesn't know Allie. I couldn't keep it secret from him in good conscience.

ALLIE: You *told* him!?

ZARA: Yes I did. He deserved to know.

ALLIE: Why? Do you hate me that much?

ZARA: Oh, stop being silly. You're such a dramatic little thing.

ALLIE: If you call me *thing* one more time I will strangle you with your own hair.

ZARA: Well, isn't that just lovely. I try to do the right thing and I get threatened. Lovely. Just lovely.

ALLIE: It was up to me to tell him. Not you. How dare you.

ZARA: What difference does it make who told him. Once he found out he wasn't going to have anything to do with you anyway. So really, there's no difference between you telling him or me doing it. No difference at all.

ALLIE: (*furios*) Okay, fine. I'll tell you something that's going to be different from now on...

ZARA: (*nervous*) What?

ALLIE: I don't want you near me anymore. From now on, we're not friends, we're not family. We're just two people who share a house.

ZARA: If you cut me out, I won't come crawling back.

ALLIE: So consider yourself cut out.

ZARA: And who are *you* going to find to be your friend in my place?

ALLIE: Anyone. Anyone would be better. You were never really my friend. A friend wouldn't treat me the way you do.... I'm just your torture toy.

ZARA: What's that supposed to mean?

ALLIE: You're like a cat with a hamster, keeping it alive to prolong the pleasure you get from tormenting it. I'm just a hamster to you, that's all.

ZARA: (*mockingly*) Why a hamster? Why not a mouse?

ALLIE: I don't like mice. Besides, hamsters are cuter.

ZARA: Nothing you say is normal. Nothing you do is normal. *You're* not normal.

ALLIE: I'd rather be abnormal than cruel. And you're cruel Zara. You think boys don't like freaks; well they don't like cruel bitches either. And neither do I. That's it. I'm not putting up with your shit anymore.

ZARA: You'll regret this Allie. If you haven't noticed, you don't have a lot of friends. Freaks like you never do.

ALLIE: Just leave me alone and get out.

ZARA: Fine (*standing and moving away*), I'll go. But from now on, I'll make sure everyone in Toowoomba knows about your little secret. *Poetess*. Don't make me laugh. You'll never be a poetess!

ALLIE: (*hurt, despite herself*) You said you liked my poem....

ZARA: It's not because you can't write that you'll never be a poetess. God Allie, do I have to spell it out?

ALLIE: Yes, spell it out. Why can't I be a poetess?

ZARA: Because you're a *boy* stupid! Boys are *poets* Allie. Boys are poets not poetesses.

Pause.

ALLIE: (*to audience*) Oh, did I forget to mention that little detail? The fact that I was born a boy? It's only a little secret to sit on... well (*she smirks*), not that little, but not huge either....

ZARA: Don't you realise what a freak you are? Don't you realise that your own parents are ashamed of you?

ALLIE: (*coldly*) Shut up. You don't know anything about my parents.

ZARA: I know perfectly well how your parents feel. They never stop complaining about what an embarrassment you are. About how on your first day at school all the other kids thought you were a girl

dressed in a boy's uniform. About how in high school, when the other boys were all playing football and chasing girls, you were dying your hair and teaching yourself how to sew!

ALLIE: Well, a girl needs a hobby.

ZARA: But you're not a girl Allie! You're not a girl! You're so deluded. Is it any wonder you don't have any friends. If anything, you should be grateful that I bothered to be your friend at all.

ALLIE: I'd rather have no-one than have a friend like you. Leave me alone. Get out.

ZARA: My pleasure!

Zara storms out leaving Allie alone on the couch.

Pause.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* My birth name is Alex. Everyone has always shortened it to Allie.

Pause.

ALLIE: I'm sorry if you feel deceived. *(Allie tears up but determinedly doesn't cry)* Are we still friends?

The lights go slowly down.

ACT ONE

SCENE 4

Lights come up. It is a little while later. Allie is still sitting on the couch. She's now wearing a red satin bathrobe of oriental design. Her eyes are closed. The Telephone rings. Allie opens her eyes, and reaches out to answer it.

ALLIE: Hello? Danny?! *(she looks at the audience, surprised and excited)* You called.... Yes, I know you said you would but Zara.... *(she smirks)* Yes, Zara is crazy... Really? You want to come over? But... but I thought Zara told you...? *(Allie beams at whatever Danny is saying)*.... You, you don't care what Zara says? *(she looks shocked)* Okay..., okay. I'll see you soon. Bye, bye.

Allie hangs up the phone, shaking.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* He's coming over, Danny, the boy with the glasses. I'm not deluded after all. He really does like me. And he knows. He knows.

Allie looks down at herself, dressed just in a robe. A look of alarm rises on her face.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Oh God! I'm a mess! I have to get ready.

At precisely that moment, there is a knock at the door. Allie freezes, looking at the audience with an even more alarmed expression.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Oh no....

Zara enters from her bedroom door.

ZARA: Who's that at this hour?

ALLIE: I think it's Danny. Don't let him in. I have to get dressed.

Zara smirks wickedly, goes straight to the door and opens it. Allie freezes in terror.

ZARA: Danny! Come in!

Danny, a good looking young man wearing glasses, enters. He has on black jeans and a black t-shirt. He stops dead in his tracks when he sees Allie standing there in nothing but a robe.

Danny: Wow! *(smiling)* Don't you look cute in your robe!

Zara looks disbelieving and somehow disappointed by Danny's statement.

ZARA: Cute? You've got to be kidding?

Danny: I'm not kidding. I think she looks adorable.

ZARA: Well, you must be mad.

Danny: *(to Zara)* Haven't you got something better to do Zara, like climb back into your coffin before the sun comes up?

ZARA: *(shocked)* Oh whatever, you can have each other.

Zara storms out again. Once she's gone, Danny goes over and kisses Allie on the cheek.

Danny: I meant it you know.

ALLIE: Meant what?

Danny: That you look adorable. All nice and clean. And red is your colour.

ALLIE: Th... thanks.... You got here quickly.

DANNY: I called from the phone box just around the corner.

ALLIE: Oh.

DANNY: It was me that was hanging up.

ALLIE: It was? Why?

DANNY: I didn't want to talk to Zara.

ALLIE: Oh.

Allie stands there awkwardly. Not knowing what to do. Danny sees the still full bath and moves towards the bathroom.

Danny: Excellent. Are you having a bath party?

ALLIE: We were, Zara and I, but we're out now.

Danny: Oh, come on, let's get back in before the water goes cold.

Danny heads into the bathroom and pulls off his shirt. He sees the cask of wine.

Danny: Ooh, wine. May I?

ALLIE: Sure, I'll get you a glass.

Danny: No need, we can share. I haven't got cooties. Have you?

ALLIE: No, no cooties.

He pours himself a glass of wine, then sits down on the edge of the stool. He pats the other side of the stool as an invitation for Allie to share it with him. She hesitates then sits down on the stool with him. They're both on the very edge of the stool, Danny looks comfortable but Allie looks nervous. Danny takes a sip of wine, then hands Allie the wineglass for her to hold as he takes off his shoes and socks. Allie gulps down the wine and refills the glass, looking at the audience with a face filled with anxiety and anticipation.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* I can't believe this is happening. He must really like me.
But... but what if he wants me to get naked? I can't do that. I just can't.

Danny has now removed his shoes and socks. He takes back the wineglass and refills it. He takes a sip, smiling at Allie.

Danny: I'm so glad I met you Allie.

ALLIE: You are?

Danny: Yeah. I never thought I'd meet someone like you in Toowoomba.

ALLIE: Someone like me?

Danny: Yeah, you know *(he nods in the direction of Allie's pelvic region)*.

Allie looks a little uncomfortable. She pulls the robe closer around herself and clasps her hands in her lap.

ALLIE: So, you really don't mind?

Danny: Mind? Why would I mind? No, I think it's fantastic.

ALLIE: *(to audience)* Well, that's a first.

Danny undoes his belt and slides it out of his jeans. As he goes to unbutton the jeans, Allie grabs his hand to stop him undressing any further.

ALLIE: Wait, don't.

Danny: What's wrong?

ALLIE: I just... I just think I should get to know you better before I see you naked.

Danny: Okay. Well, what do you want to know?

Allie clearly doesn't know quite what to say or ask. Danny takes her hand, looks enquiringly into her face.

Danny: You have such beautiful eyes, like speckled granite.

ALLIE: *(to audience, thrilled)* Can you believe that? Speckled granite! *(pause)*
Oh, to hell with the consequences...Here goes nothing....

Allie leans in to kiss Danny. Danny is clearly confused and abruptly jerks back.

Danny: What are you doing?

ALLIE: *(confused)* Trying to kiss you stupid.

Danny: Kiss me? Oh, Allie, sorry, but I don't see you that way.

Allie is confused, embarrassed.

ALLIE: So, so you don't like me?

Danny: Like you? Of course I *like* you. But, I'm not attracted to you.

Tense Pause.

ALLIE: (*devastated*) Because I'm not a girl?

Danny: (*kindly, amused*) No, stupid. Because you *are* a girl.

ALLIE: What?

Danny: Allie, I'm gay. I like boys.

Danny gets up, grabs a towel and covers himself while he takes off his jeans and underwear and hops into the tub. He drops his clothes and the towel on the floor once he's in the tub. Allie looks down at Danny's underpants. She gingerly picks them up. They're skimpy leopard-print briefs.

ALLIE: (*to audience*) Well, I wasn't expecting this. If I'd seen these first I'd have known he was gay straight away (*she drops the briefs back down*). (*to Danny*) So, you're gay?

Danny: Yeah, I thought you knew?

ALLIE: No, no I didn't.... So, why are you here?

He leans up out of the tub a bit and kisses her on the cheek.

Danny: Because I want to be your friend.

ALLIE: But... but you know that... that I have a... a...

Danny: A winky? Sure I know. But it takes more than a little winky to make you a boy.

ALLIE: *(mildly offended)* It's not that little.

Danny: Even if it was enormous it wouldn't make you a boy. You're a girl Allie. I'm sorry, but I'm not attracted to girls. Even ones with gorgeous sparkling eyes....

ALLIE: So, so you just want to be friends?

Danny: Yeah. I think you're excellent and think we'd be great friends. There aren't many like-minded people in Toowoomba you know.

Allie looks at the audience at the word "like-minded" and sighs with a kind of happy relief. She sits quietly a moment, not knowing quite what to say.

Danny: *(a little nervously)* Don't you want to be my friend Allie?

ALLIE: Yes, yes of course I do *(she leans over to kiss him on the cheek)*. A friend is exactly what I want right now.

Danny: Excellent.

Danny lathers up the soap and begins to wash his chest.

ALLIE: Excellent.

Allie's eyes well up with tears. She looks away so that Danny doesn't see. Happy tears stream freely down her face. The lights dim until there is just a spotlight on her face. Then the lights all go out.

THE END

Author Bio

Dallas Angguish is a writer based in Australia. He has been published in a number of journals - *Lodestar Quarterly*, *Retort Magazine*, *Bukker Tillibul*, *TEXT* - as well as in a number of anthologies, including *Dumped* (1999), *Bend, Don't Shatter* (2004) and the US edition of *Dumped* released in 2003. *America Divine: Travels in the Hidden South*, A collection of Dallas' travel pieces set in the South of the USA, was published in 2011 to very positive reviews. For more info: www.dallasangguish.com

Citation: Angguish, D. 2012. 'Bath Party', *Polari Journal*, 5 (April 2012), www.polarijournal.com/resources/Angguish-Bath-Party.pdf (accessed <insert date>).