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THIS UNCHARTED HOUR

By Finegan Kruckemeyer

EXTRACT ONLY

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Original Production

The first performance of *This Uncharted Hour* took place at the Space Theatre, Adelaide in February 2007 in a production by Brink Productions, in a co-production with the State Theatre Company of South Australia. The cast was as follows:

LUKA	Nathan O'Keefe
PENNY	Elena Carapetis
ADAM	Paul Blackwell
SARAH	Michaela Cantwell
YOUNG MAN	Lachlan Mantell
SINGER	Emma Horwood
PIANIST	Jamie Cock

The play was directed and dramaturged by Chris Drummond, composed by Quentin Grant and Raymond Chapman-Smith, and designed by Gaelle Mellis, with lighting design by Geoff Cobham. All artists were involved in a number of creative developments.

Productions Since

2011 Theatre Royal subscription season, Hobart

Characters

LUKA	present and past (15-30)
PENNY	past, LUKA's mother (22-37)
ADAM	past, LUKA's father (22-37)
SARAH	past, ADAM's lover (early 30's)
YOUNG MAN	LUKA's stillborn older brother (ageless)

The Present (2007)

(scene one)

LUKA enters covered in dog's blood, the dog dead in his arms.

LUKA: I... have... just hit a dog. And... I guess I don't really know how to deal with that. I mean, I know it was just a dog and... not a kid or anything, thank god but, yeah, I don't know. I'm still quite shaken up.

I wasn't going too fast or not looking – I was concentrating, I was going at the speed limit. But, um... it came out too quickly, from nowhere, from off the footpath, and I didn't have time to brake, and so I hit it... yeah.

When I hit it, it didn't go under straight away. It went forward, and it hit the back of the car in front of me. And then... then I ran over it. That's when I ran over it.

I stopped the car. And I went back up the road. I walked up the middle of the road, and... and when I got to the dog it was so flat. It was so flat and there was a bone poking out of its stomach, out of the soft part. And I picked the dog up.

It was dead, but I picked it up and I saw it had this broken leash around its neck. So I found the pole with the other end of the leash on it. And I looked around at the shops near the pole, and I figured its owner must be in one of them.

And – I don't know – it seemed important to show them their dog, so I carried it in to all these shops. I must have looked like a fucking mess. People noticed me one at a time. This one woman, she turned around just as I was behind her... and...

She gave me the worst look. She really hated me. I thought it was her dog, but she just walked off. Maybe it was. It could have been. Maybe she didn't want to know it anymore. No – maybe she didn't recognise it. I'm not sure.

And then I looked at the dog, and I guess I looked at me holding the dog. And... it just all seemed so... Like, what did it matter who's it was. It wasn't anyone's dog anymore... because it was dead.

So I went outside, and – I don't know – I... I didn't know what to do. So I just lay it down. I lay it down next to a bin, like it was

rubbish, or like it was sleeping. Except it looked dead. It didn't look asleep.

I'm... I don't understand really how it all happened. I was just going to get coffee.

As LUKA exits...

31 Years Earlier (1976)

(scene two)

PENNY is revealed in the final moments of labour. She is re-gathering her energy to push when a YOUNG MAN enters and watches her - silence.

PENNY: You're the most beautiful man I've ever seen.

YOUNG MAN: I'm ready.

PENNY: What?

YOUNG MAN: [*Whispers*] Now.

PENNY: No!!

PENNY contracts as the YOUNG MAN disappears into the darkness. The space floods with starlight.

Music.

PENNY cries out in agony.

YOUNG MAN: [v/o] I am an atom – an atom in the finger of the boy who lies with his girl in a park on a day of long clouds. She loves him. He doesn't know. He doesn't matter. Soon I will leave him and move on. I will be a boat and an eggshell, a sunhat and a monster truck. I will be a politician and a whirlwind and the sound of rain. I will be the music that makes men cry. I will end up as one of the Seven Just sitting under the tree when the Kabbalah has eschewed its last sum to its last digit, when the Bodhisattva has donned its last incarnation. Then there will only be seven chosen to stay on and watch the leaves on the last tree, and I will be one of them, or the tree itself. And like the leaves caught in an April, autumn gust, they will eventually be denied nothing, and left to fly away. But

for now, I am in the finger of a boy. And he clicks his fingers.
And I am gone.

Silence.

PENNY is alone, curled up in a foetal position. She appears to be nursing something. ADAM enters. PENNY looks up. Their eyes meet. Fade.

(scene three)

Birdsong builds slowly. Grey dawn light. PENNY is asleep. ADAM rises.

ADAM: The first birds beat the man's alarm clock. He reaches his hand out the window and turns them off.

He stares up at the mountain – it too is still in bed, a blanket of fog pulled up to its chin. In the harbour, boats stir, awoken from nightmares of deserts with no end, their masts devoid of sail.

The man eats a silent breakfast and thinks about the boy that might have sat beside him at the table. But no – he dresses and puts on running shoes, for so long forgotten. Today he will begin again. Today life begins again. He lets himself out the front door and into the sunlight.

ADAM jogs.

The man is trying to outrun his sadness. It helps him think. His thoughts?

You dream of getting in a fight. No one likes you at work. Everyone liked the joke you made at the pub. Maybe you should quit work, and just tell jokes.

Why did you feel so scared when Penny fell pregnant? Why can't you feel anything since he died?

Children are dying all over the world. But you give to Greenpeace. But you always get a plastic bag. But you helped the old lady who fell over near the church. But you only gave the man his wallet back, and said there was no money in it. But you try to make one person in the world happy.

PENNY wakes.

ADAM: The shop's close early today – get eggs.

PENNY rises. She holds a baby's beanie to her chest. She walks through the space – alone in her house. Turning a corner she finds the nursery. She stops, buckles. The space contracts around her.

Darkness...

(scene four)

PENNY is alone. She holds a phone.

PENNY: Where are you, Adam?

Where are you? You said it would happen, and it has, and you're... where the fuck are you?

I'm in the bathroom – there's his nappies piled up. I'm looking at the washbasin. I should be washing him, Adam.

I should be holding his head just carefully, so he doesn't get water in his eyes! Where is he? You should be helping me wash him. You can't go out and leave me to wash him.

He needs to have a physical relationship with his father – he needs to get used to the feel of your hands washing him. You've got to...

Don't cry, Adam. Baby, don't cry. This is my tears. You've cried enough already. I need to learn how.

Teach me how to do this, Adam. Teach me how... teach me how to make it hurt less.

Silence.

PENNY: Come home and cry with me, okay. Come home quick... Okay.

The YOUNG MAN is there in the darkness.

YOUNG MAN: Are you there?

Silence.

PENNY: Yes.

Silence.

YOUNG MAN: Who?

PENNY: Me. Are you... in the bathtub?

YOUNG MAN: Yes. Can you come and get me?

PENNY: ...no. No. I'm pretty sure I can't.

YOUNG MAN: Are you okay?

PENNY: No. One minute everything's fine, then suddenly...

YOUNG MAN: Have you called anyone?

PENNY: Yeah. He's coming to get me now.

YOUNG MAN: Oh, good.

Pause.

PENNY: You... know. You know he can't really help you. I mean, he won't be able to reach you.

YOUNG MAN: No.

PENNY: You're going to be sitting there for a while.

YOUNG MAN: Yes.

PENNY: When you start to pass out, you'll get scared about being in water and maybe drowning.

YOUNG MAN: Yes.

PENNY: You'll be too weak now to climb out of the bath, so you'll just lock your knees and push your feet against the edge of the tub, and pray you don't slip in.

YOUNG MAN: I don't want to.

PENNY: I know.

YOUNG MAN: I can't see.