

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



# After You've Gone

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by Sue Ingleton

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EXTRACT

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### AFTER YOU'VE GONE :CAST LIST

**ELIANE** dead (died of a drug overdose, but actually murdered on the night that WW2 was announced) mother of Lucinda. Twin sister of 'Maidey' Marion. Was divorced from her husband Robert at the time of her death and very wealthy, left her house to her spinster sister plus an allowance and the rest of her fortune to Lucinda. Outrageous, glamorous wayward woman in a society whose rules she kept breaking. She is a ghost.

**MAIDEY** (Marion) 49 yrs. Spinster(Same actor as Eliane) Twin sister of Eliane and completely opposite in personality. Unmarried. Inherited Eliane's house and a small amount of money. Cold, loveless and closed down but obsessively wanting to find her sister's murderer.

**JOY** 49 yrs Blousy and widowed. Husband, Elliot died in the war. Very witty, abrasive & funny, and cynical. Friends now with Coral and Maidey, was friends with Eliane- she liked her french champagne and lifestyle. Complains (boasts) that Harold, Coral's husband seduced her. Glad to be free of her husband. Alcoholic but she can certainly hold her liquor.

**CORAL** 49yrs. Married to Harold who is missing in action presumed dead (5 years now). Relieved he's not coming back. Things were very bad between them when he went to war. Her only son Stephen was killed in action in 1943. She has re-established herself and enjoys being single. She is a fusspot. She cannot control, nor does she understand her only living child, her daughter, Brenda.

**BRENDA** is nearly 17 and has lived through the war during her most formative years. She is numb when it comes to her father, who never noticed her, and her mother, who drives her mad with her fussing and her hatred of anything that 'turns' her on (music, movies etc). She is the rebel, the one who will go out and change the world. She flirts openly with Chuck and taunts Lucinda's apparent weakness.

**HAROLD** 50yrs.'the Lord Mayor' turns up. He is a doctor. Posted missing in action in Greece in 1941 he has been in Italy. He has been actually living in a tiny village where he has been helping the local population (medically) and has fallen in love with an Italian woman. He has come home to say farewell and tie up loose ends.

**LUCINDA**, just turning 21, Eliane's daughter. Returns to the place where she grew up to announce her engagement to an American pilot, Chuck and tell them she is going to live in America. Coral took her in (momentarily) after Eliane's death, then she went to boarding school near Sydney. She finds out that Harold is her father, when visited by the ghost of Eliane. But even ghosts dont tell the whole truth, that is left to the living.

**CHUCK** (Charles) American WW2 pilot, out of his depth completely. Loyal, aims to please, incredibly polite as only Americans can be. Loves Lucinda. Is taking her home to meet Mom.

## AFTER YOU'VE GONE

-a horrible comedy-  
by Sue Ingleton©

### THE STAGE

Coral's large living room with an alcove at the back from which the dining room opens (SR) and the kitchen (SL). In the living room there is a sideboard for the bar, a record player of the era. Naturalism is not encouraged by the author. The front door also opens offstage right from the alcove, or whatever! Its 1946. Fairly large country town in NSW, unnamed. (or this could be changed to Vic).

The play is in real time and takes place on the evening of Sunday, Sept 3 1946, exactly seven years to the day that World War two was declared and Eliane died.

### ACT ONE

**Brenda, alone on the stage, dances to 'You're the top' and sings the song.**

**Coral enters and watches her dance. Brenda is very good but Coral doesn't want to know that. She sees her as a lazy, un-ambitious girl.**

CORAL

Have you quite finished?

BRENDA

Probably, now that you're here.

CORAL

That'll be enough of that language, if only your father was here you'd never dare to speak to your mother like that.

**Brenda has mouthed the last words- its like a record that's played everytime she's done something wrong. She takes the record off the turntable**

BRENDA

Mother, I know you're perfectly happy that father's not here. Your life, since he died, has been exactly to your liking. You've got enough money to live on, you don't have to work, you can sit here in this house and smugly not do anything.

CORAL

Brenda, how dare you use that tone to me. I dont know what's the matter with you children today.

BRENDA

I don't feel like a child, not after what I've seen.

CORAL

*(ignoring her comment, bitter and accusing, desperate to place her blame on someone)*  
As if it hasn't been enough that this family's been devastated by the war. First I lose your father then your brother. Do you know what it's like to lose a child?

BRENDA

How could I?

CORAL

Exactly, How could you! Now I'm all upset. They'll all be here in a minute and -after the whole business today- I would have thought you'd have somewhere else to go.

BRENDA

Nope

CORAL

What about all those ghastly friends of yours that hang around the Milk Bar near the pictures?

BRENDA

They're not my friends.

CORAL

Really? That's not what it looks like to me. I've seen you swanking around down there like you were born in the gutter-

BRENDA

Your prejudice is, is -

CORAL

You don't even know the meaning of the word do you? Pre-judgement, that's what it means . It's obvious that you have absolutely no judgement at all. At least I have a certain modicum of intelligence, enough to know when somebody's a no-hoper.

BRENDA

Are you saying I'm a no-hoper?

CORAL

I'm not saying anything of the sort! I'm saying you're just a lazy, selfish girl who's careless and sex-crazed-

BRENDA

Why? Because I like to dance and get out of this miserable place once in a while?

CORAL

Right. Well, why aren't you off with your 'gang' now?

BRENDA

I'm staying to see Lucinda's boyfriend

CORAL

He's not her boyfriend, he's her fiancée, at least she's got the decency to want to get married.

BRENDA

I'm surprised anyone'd ask her, she's such a mouse. Just as well she's loaded.

CORAL

Money isn't everything. She's had a hard time of it and don't you forget that.

BRENDA

*(under her breath)*

How could I? You never stop reminding me

CORAL

*(ignoring her remark)*

Having a mother like that, who then ups and commits suicide; never really knowing her father,-

BRENDA

Well, almost the same as me except you haven't committed suicide- yet.

CORAL

And I'm not planning to either, Miss Smarty Pants, I wouldn't give you the pleasure.

**The doorbell rings**

**Brenda is putting on another record. Cole Porter 'Anything Goes'**

BRENDA

I'll answer it.

CORAL

That'll be auntie Joy. Just try to be polite will you? The Lord Mayor's coming later, you know.

BRENDA

*(from the alcove)*

Do you want me to curtsy?

CORAL

Just answer the door!

**Brenda goes out to the door  
Coral collapses on the chair.  
The music starts**

CORAL

Oh god, Harold you rotten bastard, leaving me with all of this. Dying is so easy, compared to living. I think going to war is the most selfish act a man can do. Its so typical.

**Sound of ladies in hall. Cole Porter 'Anything Goes' getting louder.  
JOY and MAIDEY enter. JOY has brought her own bottle of gin.  
To the music, without talking about it the women pair off and dance.  
JOY dances with BRENDA and MAIDEY dances with CORAL in a stylised  
weird way. At the end CORAL collapses on a chair.**

JOY

Get up, Coral and fix me a drink!

CORAL

God in heaven, Joy, I just sat down.

MAIDEY

It's been a big day for you, hasn't it?

CORAL

You can say that again

MAIDEY

It's been a big-

JOY

Shut up, Maidey! Don't worry, I'll get myself a gin and tonic. I've been saving this gin for the end of the war and it certainly is that.

MAIDEY

It's been over for a few months now, Joy.

JOY

I know, I know, but I also needed an 'occasion' and this is the occasion.

CORAL

Yes fancy all that fuss and honour for Harold.

MAIDEY (sourly)

Yes, fancy

JOY

I thought that afternoon tea they provided was absolutely abysmal. I know there's still rationing going on but really and truly, even I could have rustled up something better than that lot.

**Joy gets up and goes to the sideboard**

CORAL

I didn't even notice it. Will you pour me one, have you enough?

JOY

Heaps dear. Before he went off to war, Elliott bestowed on me his stash of gin and whisky. The whisky's all gone of course, finished the last bottle at the end of '44- whisky's a most civilised way to drink alone whereas drinking gin alone is always quite depressing, don't you think, Maidey?

MAIDEY

I don't drink alone.

JOY

Really? Who *do* you drink with?

**She laughs at her own little joke**

MAIDEY

I don't drink at all- you know that.

JOY

You used to! I remember some of those parties of Eliane's and Robert's where the champagne flowed like wine-

MAIDEY

That was before the war-

CORAL

How can champagne flow like wine, Joy?

JOY

God knows but it'll be years before I see a good French champagne again-

MAIDEY

I have a cellar full of it

JOY

Really! You mean not only did she leave her house to you but there was a cellar full of booze as well? My god. When's the party, Maidey?!

MAIDEY

I don't give parties, Joy you know that.

**Joy under her breath says**

JOY

Yes I know that. Its a pity the wrong sister died

MAIDEY

What?

JOY

It's a pity your sister died, I said.  
So, what'll it be?

MAIDEY

Water, with a dash of lime.

JOY

Are you sure? We don't want you to pass out, you know.

**Maidey gives her a sour look.**

**Joy at the sideboard making drinks. She hands Maidey the water. And pours in a dash of lime**

JOY

(to Maidey) Live dangerously!

**She hands Coral a gin**

Chin chin, Coral! Here's to the future, if there is one-  
ah, Brenda, you look a bit pique-do you want a wee  
nip?

BRENDA

Certainly do.

CORAL

Definately not

BRENDA

Why not? I'm nearly seventeen, for heavens sake.

JOY

Oh, let her have a gin and tonic, you mean old thing.

CORAL

Its not necessary for everyone to become alcoholics  
just to make you feel better