

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Desire

by Alex Broun

EXTRACT

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Character Breakdowns

- LARA -** 21, very attractive but her face betrays the traces of someone who has started to lose their soul. Her "model" good looks and "up to date" clothes do not hide the fact that underneath is an "empty" young woman looking for something or someone to fill up the emptiness she feels. Lara is dissatisfied with her life and beginning to question the way she lives, uncertain that there is not a better way.
- GERALD -** 29, LARA's boyfriend. Handsome, overtly sexual and very fashionably dressed with a rugged charm and a super smooth exterior. The surface however only hides a much darker more complex interior.
- PATRICK -** 23, GERALD's flatmate. Intense, passionate and intelligent but also insecure, he has a boyish, naive quality. Patrick desperately wants to fit in, to be accepted as part of the scene but this goes against all his instincts.
- KATE -** 22, LARA's former schoolmate. Exuberant, vibrant and very witty. A failed relationship in the past Kate is looking for a new start in a new city. She is also flirting with the idea of a different way of living.

Act 1

SPOTLIGHT. **KATE**, FLICKING THROUGH A FASHION MAGAZINE.
AS SHE SPEAKS SLIDES ARE SHOWN: ADVERTISING IMAGES AND GLOSSY PHOTOGRAPHS OF WOMEN
AND MEN - SEPARATELY AND TOGETHER.

KATE: Why do we do it ? (SHOWING PHOTOS) Why do we spend our whole lives trying to look like this, or this, or even that ? What makes us spend every waking moment desperately striving to be beautiful ? For most of us it's impossible. We weren't born with perfect olive skin, crystal blue eyes and upward curving breasts or long dark locks, washboard stomachs and a tight bum that looks incredible in footy shorts. We don't perfect teeth, perfect figures or perfect muscles. We have hair that really isn't black or brown, eyes that are often so red you've forgotten the colour, that is if you can get past the rings underneath, pudgy little stomachs, disappearing chins, acne, rotten teeth, cellulite thighs, nobbly knees, love handles, third eyebrows, saggy tits, burst capillaries, big noses, pointy ears and fat arses. Not to mention the hair you have but don't want if you're a girl and the hair you don't have but want if you're a guy. We aren't ever going to look like that so what keeps us on the relentless quest for perfection ? Is it insecurity or vanity, self love or self hate, the desire to fit in or the desire to stand out, the need to be accepted or the wish to be admired ? Do we do it so that special person will fall in love with us or do we do it so everybody will love us ? Do we do it because we're mad or because we're sane, because we're sad or because we're happy, because we're bored or simply because we can ? Or do we do it because we're never satisfied ? Because no matter how much you've got you can never have enough. Anyway what's wrong with improving your appearance, making the best of what you've got, looking your optimum. Nothing, except sometimes, somewhere in all this obsession with surface, something gets lost. The image no longer reflects the reality. At some point the body takes over from the soul, and when that happens it's easy to forget where you came from and just who that beautiful person in the mirror really is.

AS **KATE** FINISHES AN IMAGE OF A GIRL SITTING AT A TABLE,
SMOKING A CIGARETTE APPEARS ON THE SCREEN.

THE LIGHTS FADE ON **KATE** AND LIGHTS COME UP ON EXACTLY THE SAME IMAGE - BUT NOW
RECREATED ON THE STAGE.

1. "Ask"

An inner city pub. Night.

THE GIRL'S NAME IS **LARA**.

SHE SITS AT THE TABLE, DRINK BESIDE HER, SMOKING A CIGARETTE.
SHE IS WAITING FOR SOMEONE, OR SOMETHING. IN THE BACKGROUND

WE CAN HEAR JAZZ MUSIC. LIGHTS COME UP ON:

GERALD WORKING BEHIND THE BAR. PATRICK SITTING ON A STOOL IN FRONT OF IT, DRINKING A CIDER.

GERALD: The first thing you've got to realise is that they want it as much as you.

PATRICK: You think so ?

GERALD: I know so. I mean you hear all that shit about girls not liking it as much and girls being harder to arouse but listen, I know - they want and they need it. Just like you and me.

PATRICK: I don't know.

GERALD: You've got to stop thinking it's all your fault - it's not. I mean sometimes you're doing everything right and the girl's the one with problems. Like I slept with this girl once and we did it for hours - and I mean hours - and she still didn't come. Now that's not my fault is it ? It's hers. I wake up later and she's having a wank. She starts screaming: "Gerald ! Gerald ! I'm coming !" What does she want me to do ? Stand up and applaud ?

PATRICK: Who knows ?

GERALD: Attitude Patrick. It's all attitude. Stop begging for it and go out and get yourself some. You know your problem. No

GERALD: (CONT) confidence. You've got needy eyes. No one goes for that. Believe in yourself. You are attractive. Girls are interested.

PATRICK: Not lately.

GERALD: That's because you're not projecting the right image. You're all insecure. How long's it actually been ?

PATRICK: Not sure.

GERALD: Come on. You can tell me.

PAUSE.

PATRICK: Six months.

GERALD: Six months ! Shit. You sure it's still working ?

PATRICK: Yes.

GERALD: Have you checked ? Maybe it's fallen off. The longest I've ever been without it is three weeks. The longest three weeks of my life.

PAUSE. LARA DRINKS.

PATRICK: So what happened to her ?

GERALD: The girl who couldn't ? We hung around together for a

bit, went out a few times, but in the end I just lost interest. I mean the sex had become non-existent and when it's all said and done, a fuck's better than a friend.

PATRICK: Is it ?

GERALD: You tell me. You see Patrick, what it's all about is recognising a need and then taking steps to satisfy that need. You don't need a friend do you ? You need a fuck. Am I correct ?

PATRICK: Well ...

GERALD: Am I correct ?

PATRICK: Maybe.

GERALD: Alright, so there's the need. Now we've got to take steps. Steps to satisfy. First of all we need an attractive young lady.

PATRICK: But -

GERALD: No buts Patty boy. You know what the man says - just do it , and do it now.

PATRICK: (LOOKING AROUND THE EMPTY PUB) There's no one around tonight.

PAUSE.

GERALD: (GESTURING TO LARA) What about her ?

PATRICK: Lara ?

GERALD: What's wrong ? You don't think she's attractive ?

PATRICK: Of course I do.

GERALD: What then ?

PATRICK: Gerald. She's your girlfriend.

GERALD: I don't have a girlfriend.

PATRICK: Well, you two are together.

GERALD: When we feel like it. What does that matter ?

PATRICK: (AFTER A PAUSE) Let me get this straight. Are you telling me to -

GERALD: Listen, I'm a man of the Nineties. I'm not possessive. I don't get jealous. There she is - take steps.

PATRICK: But she's your girlfriend.

GERALD: I just told you. I don't have a girlfriend.

PATRICK: Does Lara know that ?

GERALD: We have an understanding.

PATRICK: But Lara doesn't even like me.

GERALD: How do you know that ? Have you asked her ?

PATRICK: No but I can tell.

GERALD: How can you tell ? You're pretty good looking.

PATRICK: Sure.

GERALD: You could do with a new set of clothes but you're not too bad. I know lots of young ladies -

PATRICK: Lara is not lots of young ladies.

GERALD: True, but that doesn't mean she don't fancy you. Many's the occasion I've heard her say -

PATRICK: What have you heard her say ?

GERALD: "Patrick's looking good tonight". Things like that.

PATRICK: Bullshit.

GERALD: She has. And what about that time she kissed you ?

PATRICK: That was just a joke.

GERALD: Was it ? Low self esteem Patrick, low self esteem. The chances we miss in life due to low self esteem.

PATRICK: Gerald, I'm not you.

GERALD: But you could be. (PAUSE) So what's the problem ?

PATRICK: What do you think ?

GERALD: Alright, so she's had some lovers previously, one of them which happens to be me, but you're no Saint either.

PATRICK: I can't believe we're even discussing this.

GERALD: Look matey, what's important is the present. Living for today, not yesterday. I'm talking about right now. She's free tonight - take steps.

PATRICK: Why are you doing this ?

GERALD: I see a solution - I suggest it.

PATRICK: Gerald - I'm you're flatmate.

GERALD: And I'm giving the all clear.

PATRICK: You really wouldn't mind ?

GERALD: Not one bit. So what are you waiting for ? All she can say is no.

PAUSE.

PATRICK: Some other time maybe.

GERALD: Hopeless. Absolutely bloody hopeless. Well, can't say I didn't try. Better get some more beers. Back in a sec.

GERALD EXITS. PAUSE. PATRICK STANDS. HE WALKS SLOWLY OVER TO LARA. HE STOPS A FEW FEET AWAY. LARA LOOKS AT HIM.

PATRICK: Hi

LARA: Hi.

PAUSE.

PATRICK: What are you up to ?

LARA: The usual. And you ?

PATRICK: Not much.

PAUSE. **PATRICK LOOKS AT LARA.**

LARA: Is there anything wrong ?

PATRICK: Have you got the time ?

LARA: No, sorry.

PATRICK: Just thought you might.

LARA: Why don't you look at your watch ?

PATRICK: Oh, it's not working.

LARA: Right.

PAUSE. **GERALD RETURNS WITH BEERS.**

PATRICK: I might ask Gerald.

LARA: Bye.

PATRICK GOES BACK TO THE BAR.

GERALD: Change your mind huh ? Well, what did she say ?

PATRICK: Not a lot.

GERALD: Come on, how'd you go ?

PATRICK: I got to go to work anyway.

GERALD: Night shift again eh ? Does wonders for your social life.

PATRICK: (FINISHING DRINK) Don't remind me.

GERALD: Have fun.

PATRICK STARTS TO LEAVE.

GERALD: Oi.

PATRICK TURNS. GERALD PICKS UP PATRICK'S WALLET WHICH HE LEFT ON THE BAR AND THROWS IT TO HIM.

GERALD: Someone's got to look after you.

PATRICK EXITS. GERALD CONTINUES WORKING. LIGHTS CHANGE.

2. "Half a Person"

LARA'S house, the next morning.

SPOTLIGHT UP ON **KATE**, STANDING BESIDE THE FRONT DOOR. SHE IS WEARING TWO COATS, SEVERAL JUMPERS, BULKY TRACKSUIT PANTS, A COUPLE OF HATS, OLD BOOTS AND MONEY BELT. THERE IS A LARGE SUITCASE IN EACH HAND AND A HUGE BACK-PACK ON HER BACK.

SHE CHECKS THE ADDRESS. WITH SOME DIFFICULTY SHE KNOCKS ON THE FRONT DOOR. PAUSE. SHE KNOCKS AGAIN.

KATE: Lara. (CALLS) Lara.

LARA ENTERS, PUTTING ON A DRESSING GOWN. SHE OPENS THE DOOR.

KATE: Lara ?

LARA: Kate ? Is that you ?

KATE: Of course it's me. Who else would look like this ?
(THEY EMBRACE) How are you Larry ?

LARA: I'm alright. What happened ?

KATE: One of my bags busted. Had to put all the clothes on.

LARA: I meant last night.

KATE: I missed the bus. I was on the phone and I when I came out - it was gone. Had to get the train instead.

LARA: Who were you talking too ?

KATE: Just Michael.

LARA: Michael ?

KATE: Had to say goodbye. I tried to ring but no one answered.

LARA: I was at the Bentley Bar. Waiting for you.

KATE: Oops.

LARA: Forget it. You're here now.

KATE: That's right. I'm here. (CALLING) Sydney ! I love you !

LARA: You only just got here.

KATE: So what ? I'm already in love.

LARA: You'll get used to it.

KATE: I hope so.

LARA: Come inside. Take all those clothes off.

KATE: Yeah I better. I'm starting to feel like Gregor Samsa. Eeeh
 eeeh.

LARA: Who ?

KATE: You know ? The cockroach guy.

THEY GO INSIDE. **KATE** DROPS HER BAGS AND STARTS TAKING OFF
HER EXCESS CLOTHING.

KATE: I can't believe it. I'm actually here. How long's it been ?

LARA: Long time.

KATE: What you been up to ? You working ?

LARA: Just at a cafe - down the road.

KATE: No modelling ?

LARA: Now and then.

KATE: How glamorous.

LARA: Pays the rent.

KATE: Doing any painting ? (PAUSE) Can't afford the paint eh ?

LARA: Something like that.

KATE: Is there anything wrong ?

LARA: Just have woken up yet. How long you planning on staying ?

KATE: Not sure. Might be awhile. If that's alright of course ?

LARA: Not a problem. You got any money ? Sydney's pretty
 expensive.

KATE: Yeah I noticed. I got a cab here. 450 dollars - really ?

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KATE FINISHES REMOVING THE EXTRA CLOTHES. SHE IS NOW IN