

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



All my Sleep and Waking

by Mary Rachel Brown

EXTRACT

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Scene 1

MARIA The dishes still had to be cleared. I was happy to do it, I was actually desperate to do it, so I cleared them and I couldn't tell you whether it took five minutes or two hours. I had to fight with my sister about who would wash them, just the idea that they could make you keep moving. I remember the dishes, the flat was spotless, one dead body, but besides that, fucking spotless. Dirty dishes upset Anne, she has her eye on the prize, she really lives like a lion my sister. How did I do those dishes? It was the body, the dead body, his eyes, his jaw, his dead face and I thought I'll just do the dishes and then Anne said, "No I'll do them" and I said, "I live here Anne and I will do the dishes". Then I finished and the water went down the sink, then the water came out of her eyes. I pretended I didn't notice. It was hard not to stare at her, I wanted to look at each drop, I wanted to collect them and study the anatomy of each tear, I wanted to find you in very drop. It was better to just keep making the tea and pretend I didn't notice. *(Pause)* All your clothes are still hanging up, like you could wake up in the morning and decide what to wear today.

ANNE I've cleaned your flat. Everything is in its right place, except you. I haven't done your room yet. She said she needs more time. I said 'no' to the cremation, I don't want you flying round in the air I breath, you would get stuck in my throat. I had some of your morphine, just a little bit, it didn't do much, just softened the edges, I was still able to drive the volvo home. I know I wasn't there, I held back with all my might. I wanted to see you so much, but I fought, it was hard, but I won, for the first time. It was very nice - the morphine, made things all caramel. There's some left, I'm going to finish it, no-one will know, I'm not going to kill myself. That dying you did was my best friend for a year.

MARIA I hate the silence, reminds me you have gone.

Scene 2

Maria and her Father's flat; the former family home. Living room.

Anne, Josh and Peter sit in the living room. There is a long silence to establish this as and estranged an uncomfortable family.

ANNE Your Aunt is remarkable, she's done everything, bathed him, fed him /

PETER marvellous /

ANNE She even resuscitated him.

PETER That was different, that was five years ago, it wasn't anything to do with his current problems, it was a different circumstance and event altogether, he was drowning he didn't have cancer.

ANNE Peter, I was just/

PETER Yes, right, right, of course; it was just separate that's all, not to do with the troubles, still it was a good thing she did, that resuscitation, successful, but it was the water, the lack of oxygen /

ANNE It saved his life.

JOSH What do you mean by 'the troubles'?

Maria enters.

ANNE Bowel cancer Josh /

JOSH I know that, I just wanted to know what 'the troubles' meant.

PETER We were just talking about that time you resuscitated dad.

MARIA Really.

PETER Well yes, very successful /

JOSH can he still eat by himself?

ANNE he has to be fed.

MARIA he's not eating at all now.

JOSH Since when?

PETER It saved him.

MARIA What?

PETER The resurrection, I mean resuscitation.

MARIA Yes it saved him, he's alive to die four years later, to live through four years of pain and shit and dying.

Pause

PETER It was five years ago not four.

ANNE Leave it.

Pause.

PETER I'm sorry, you have done everything Maria. We have left you with /

ANNE You've been amazing that's all we're saying, can't we concentrate on the positives here /

PETER I just - I couldn't - hopeless - I couldn't help. (*pause*) I'm sorry. Sorry Anne I interrupted you, go on, I know people say "sorry" and then the other one says "that's alright", it's not alright, I'm sorry. Sorry, Anne go ahead.

Pause.

ANNE he's lucky to have you /

JOSH Is he in pain?

MARIA Most of the time, no; he has morphine injections. I learnt to give injections when I was thirteen when my horse got sick; I had to inject penicillin into his rump every week for a week and now/

ANNE He's not a horse /

MARIA The moral of this story is feed your pets, give them medicine when they're sick, love them, worm the fucking things.

ANNE Don't swear.

JOSH For fuck's sake mum.

ANNE Josh!

MARIA Sorry.

Pause.

PETER So, so, how are your pets Josh? The umm, the watsamagigits?

JOSH I don't have any pets.

ANNE Yes you do.

JOSH Goldfish?...the goldfish?

ANNE Yes the goldfish.

PETER That's the ones.

JOSH Jesus!

MARIA What are their names?

ANNE Cathy and Heathcliff.

MARIA That's very literary, I mean it is romantic, well for fish; very ambitious names for goldfish really, did you name them?

JOSH No.

ANNE I named them.

MARIA That was generous of you, suppose it's good that they don't shit on the carpet as well and when they die you can just flush them down the toilet.

ANNE Enough!

MARIA There is no more, they die and you flush them I had actually finished what I was saying.

Pause.

Buzzer sounds.

Maria leaves.