

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



All my Friends are Leaving Brisbane

by Stephen Vagg

EXTRACT

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CAST LIST

MICHAEL

25, white collar worker, GPS/university background, highly intelligent.

ANTHEA

24, accountant, GPS/university background; insecure, romantic, and good fun at a party.

TYSON

25, **MICHAEL**'s best friend since school, a blokey "man's man".

KATH

24, **ANTHEA**'s flatmate; holds a low opinion of Brisbane.

SIMONE

Mid-20s, arts degree, "alternate" looking (Zoo, Empire, etc); artistic pretensions but genuinely nice.

STEPHANIE

Early 20s, **MICHAEL**'s girlfriend; quiet.

JAKE

25, schoolmate of **MICHAEL** and **TYSON**'s, quintessential yuppie.

1. INT ANTHEA'S HOUSE

A dark stage.

FLIGHT ANNOUNCER : Flight K232 to London from Brisbane via Sydney, Manila and Rome, now boarding at Gate 15.

Strains of a song from a Brisbane band can be heard (the "theme song") as the lights come up on a female sitting on a couch in her dressing gown. She is ANTHEA, attractive, 24 and highly-strung. There is a knock on the door.

ANTHEA : In here.

MICHAEL walks in, a good-looking, relaxed 25 year-old wearing a suit and carrying a bucket of ice cream

MICHAEL : Only me.

ANTHEA : Hi.

MICHAEL : I called your work. They said you were sick.

ANTHEA : Sick enough.

MICHAEL holds up the ice cream.

MICHAEL : Brought you this.

ANTHEA smiles and holds out her hands. MICHAEL passes over the ice cream.

MICHAEL : Too weak to get up, obviously.

ANTHEA starts devouring the ice cream while MICHAEL looks on, making himself comfortable.

ANTHEA : Thought you were watching videos with Tyson tonight.

MICHAEL : He's going to pick me up here later on.

ANTHEA : Cool, he can give me a lift.

MICHAEL : What for?

ANTHEA : Dinner with Beck and Aram in town.

MICHAEL : A-ha - so you're not that ill. Why no work today?

ANTHEA : As if you ever need a reason, Michael.

MICHAEL : Yeah, but you've been down lately. Everything OK?

ANTHEA : Jacqueline left for London today.

MICHAEL : Who's Jacqueline?

ANTHEA : My secretary.

MICHAEL : So?

ANTHEA : All my friends are leaving Brisbane.

MICHAEL : Get some new friends.

ANTHEA : I can't - I'm too old.

MICHAEL : You know, Anthea - you didn't even like these "friends" of yours that much when they were here.

ANTHEA : But at least they were near me.

MICHAEL : You want to be like everyone else? You want to be a sheep? Fine. Go to London. Go to Sydney. You know what you'll do there? You'll hang out with people from Brisbane, you'll sit around and talk about Brisbane, and you'll go out and do exactly the same things that you did when you were in Brisbane.

ANTHEA : Yeah, but I won't be in Brisbane.

MICHAEL : You only want to move because it's the "thing to do". "Ooh, I'm 24, I've got my PY, I've gotta go to London". You're a sheep, Anthea - if everyone jumped off the Storey Bridge would you do it?

ANTHEA : There'd probably be a good reason for jumping if everyone else was doing it.

MICHAEL : That's the attitude that made you do a degree you didn't want to do –

***ANTHEA** puts her hands over her ears.*

ANTHEA : I'm not listening ...

MICHAEL: Go out with a guy you didn't really want to go out with -

ANTHEA : I can't hear you...

MICHAEL : And now you say you [want to leave Brisbane] -

ANTHEA : (SIREN NOISES) Wooh-oooh, wooh-oooh...

***ANTHEA** removes her hands from her ears.*

MICHAEL : (CONT) And now you say you want to leave Brisbane when you don't really want to.

ANTHEA : We can't all be perfect like you, Michael.

MICHAEL : I know, but you can try!

***ANTHEA** finishes her ice cream and takes the empty container into the next room. **MICHAEL** gets up and crosses to the front of the stage to talk to the audience.*

MICHAEL : That's Anthea. No, not my girlfriend, but a good friend. (TO HIMSELF) Shit – going out with Anthea... No thanks. (PAUSE, THEN TO AUDIENCE) Oh, come on – don't look at me like that. I'm just being honest. She's good looking, she's a great girl, but trust me – you wouldn't want to go there. You don't believe me? Well – how should I put this... you know those women who always seem to be single and move in cycles - every eligible guy around gets a turn? Anthea's one of those. She gets these crushes on guys, she chases them 'til she gets them, they start liking her... then, all of a sudden, she gets sick of them and its "Sayonara, Sweetheart". You know the sort of person I'm talking about? She's already been through most of my single friends and workmates – as well as some of the ones who aren't single. At the moment she's got a crush on a mate of mine called Jake. Watch this. (TO **ANTHEA**) You know, Anthea...

ANTHEA O/S : Yes?

MICHAEL : I know why you really want to go to London.

ANTHEA O/S: Really?

MICHAEL : And it's a bad idea.

ANTHEA O/S: I haven't the slightest idea what [you're talking about]...

***ANTHEA** walks back into the room.*

ANTHEA : What do you mean it's a bad idea?

MICHAEL : You and Jake were a shitty couple in Brisbane and you'd be a shitty couple in London.

ANTHEA : Is that right?

MICHAEL : When he left it only served to put a dying relationship out of its misery. It was a mercy killing.

ANTHEA : You don't know the whole story.

MICHAEL : Yes I do – you told me everything.

ANTHEA : Relationships can change, Michael.

MICHAEL : Well, they'll have to change the hard way. Because after he does his two years in London he's going to Vancouver or something.

ANTHEA : Uh-huh – that's where you're wrong.

MICHAEL : How?

ANTHEA : He's coming back to Brisbane and he's going to buy a unit in Paddington.

MICHAEL : What!

***ANTHEA** nods.*

MICHAEL : Bullshit.

ANTHEA : He said just the other day.

MICHAEL : He told you this?

ANTHEA : Well, he told Kath.

MICHAEL : Deadset?

ANTHEA : (NODDING) I could go over there... Who knows what could happen...

MICHAEL : (NOT LISTENING) That's... that's... ah, that sort of stuff really shits me!

ANTHEA : It's worth a try, Michael.

MICHAEL : Not you – Jake. He does his obligatory 2 years in London and he moves back to his obligatory trendy inner city apartment. And why?

ANTHEA : I'm sure you'll tell me.

MICHAEL : All his friends are doing it. And you know why?

ANTHEA : Good investment opportunities, close to work, [a place to live]...

MICHAEL : No - "Sesame Street".

ANTHEA : Oh, of course. That was going to be my next choice.

MICHAEL : Think about it...

ANTHEA : Come on...

MICHAEL : Think about it - before the '80s everyone ran a mile from inner city suburbs. Now they're trendy. And why - because the people who live in them are the first generation who grew up watching "Sesame Street".

ANTHEA : C'mon...

MICHAEL : You've got these multicultural neighbours living in renovated townhouses, who all work in the arts, hold street parties and spend all their spare time at the local 7-11. Homosexuals, drug users, eccentric characters who live in trashcans...

ANTHEA : There was that guy who looked like the lead singer off 'Hot Chocolate'...

MICHAEL : Your typical idealised inner-city demographic.

ANTHEA : What's your point?

MICHAEL : So all these yuppies like Jake move in to the inner city because they're attracted to this bohemian lifestyle; they're trying to make up for their own bland existences by borrowing someone else's.

ANTHEA : That so?

MICHAEL : They've been raised thinking they should live a life like that one day - without ever taking the time to think about what they really want.

ANTHEA : Paddington's hardly bohemian.

MICHAEL : Yeah, now it isn't – now all the yuppies have moved in, destroying what it was that attracted them in the first place. See the dangers involved?

ANTHEA : No. You're hurting my brain.

MICHAEL : In a way, really, it's the same reason you've got this thing for Jake. In our society it's considered normal to have a certain One Person who is meant to be your life partner. Everyone's supposed to have a Love of Your Life - and Jake's yours.

ANTHEA : So that's why you're with Stephanie? Because you're supposed to have a Love of Your Life and she's yours?

MICHAEL : No, I've never pretended Stephanie's the Love of My Life. I realise our relationship is basically superficial.

ANTHEA : "Basically superficial". What does that mean?

MICHAEL : It means I'm not saying I won't ever meet the future Mrs. Michael Graves [one day] –

ANTHEA : Ms -

MICHAEL : Sorry – but until then –

ANTHEA : The poor girl...

MICHAEL : (IGNORING HER) Until then I'm not going to pretend I'm in love with my girlfriend just because I'm the right age to settle down, or we've been going out for the requisite number of months.

ANTHEA : Have you told her this?

MICHAEL : Are you fucking crazy?

ANTHEA : So you're saying I only like Jake at the moment because I think I have to like someone?

MICHAEL : Exactly.

ANTHEA : You've spouted some crap in your time, but I think we have a new winner...

MICHAEL : That's because you're like most people, who don't realise they get their ideas from somewhere else. You know, no-one would fall in love if they didn't think they had to.

ANTHEA : I don't know. I reckon people can love each other.

MICHAEL : If we lived in a society which enforced polygamy, instead of having people standing around saying "why can't I find the right one?" they'd be saying "why can't I find the right five?".

ANTHEA : Hmmm.

MICHAEL : You disagree?

ANTHEA : It's better than your theory about "Battlestar Galactica" having a Mormon subtext. I don't know, Michael. I don't know everything. Unlike you.