

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Sold

by Suzie Miller

EXTRACT

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SOLD

CHARACTERS: Anthony (42)
Stan (30s or 40s),
Hilary (late 30s or 40s)
Mandy (21)
Gary (30s)
Jen (38)
Liina (39 - 42)

Anthony Watson is 42. He works at Statewide, a second rate real estate agency run by boss Gary. Anthony's co-workers include 2 other agents - Hilary and Stan - and receptionist Mandy. They each have their own desks. Mandy's is a reception desk with accompanying magazines. Stan's desk is littered with the little plastic models he collects, Anthony's has paper everywhere and Hilary's is streamlined and perfectly neat, with flash gadgets and corporate touches.

Please note that the monologues are to be spoken as if they are being spoken to 'the character's confidante' and while the actors may face the audience according to direction, these monologues are intended to be interior, self-reflections. The dialogue is intended to be fast paced and almost overlapping when in the office. The scenes can also almost overlap so that characters are coming onto the stage in readiness for the next scene, as the last scene is finishing.

Production is intended to be stylised and the above indications to be incorporated in the design generally. The set is envisaged to be an office that is offbeat, unnatural. It is a bit kooky and strange but the office has a 'dream house' ideal about it with a picket fence, perfect lawn possibly both inside and out. Flowers are possibly growing in and/or outside. The office interior is overpowered with office equipment, chairs on wheels (without backs) and in particular - filing cabinets. This equipment is used for all sorts of props and the place that many props are stored (so that they might pop up from nowhere). The filing cabinets are also used for stairs and home furniture in the scenes with Jen and Anthony, and other props as they arise – they can even be used as entry and exit points. While the audience is obviously aware of this unusual office, the characters live with it in complete normality. The strange nature of the office is a metaphor for the things we end up learning to live with – those strange elements of our lives that would at first have seemed wrong but then became incorporated into our lives and we cease to see them. It is not intended to be a joke just a twist on life, that is nevertheless at times funny.

Gary has a different piece of sporting equipment or a tool or a spray bottle of glue or pesticide each time he arrives on stage. This is never commented on. He has a space that is different to the others – Gary's space or office.

ACT 1

Scene 1

At the Real Estate Office of Statewide

ANTHONY: It's four years this week since Maya was born. Beautiful Maya. Four years since everything turned around. Slowly. Like watching a leaf die. I can pinpoint the exact moment things changed. People, relationships, dreams. Me. /

STAN: /Plant the seed, water the idea, and make sure you're around when the damn thing flowers. That's how you sell property. /

ANTHONY: /That's what this job is about. Building a life. Brick by brick. /

HILARY: /Every relationship is a contract. You just don't realise at the time that there's a non renewal clause. A deadline after which you can be sold off for half the price. /

ANTHONY: /Four years since the most exquisite and most desperate day of my life. /

STAN: /It's all in the juggle. Find the job, meet the girl, buy the home, have the children, upgrade the property, upgrade the income, upgrade the image. /

ANTHONY: /I see Maya. And I watch all those kids run out with her into the pre-school yard. /

STAN: /Upgrade, upgrade, upgrade. /

ANTHONY: /There's this one little boy who looks a bit like her. Like Maya. Same face, same complexion, same kindy bag. Big green dinosaur with yellow spots and a bunch of roses. I just stare at him. /

STAN: /Upgrade, upgrade, upgrade or you don't make the grade. /

HILARY: /Have to be; must be; strive to be: Slim, sensuous, good conversationalist, successful, alluring, tidy, gourmet, wrinkle free, well styled, cheerful. Must be cheerful. /

ANTHONY: /My doctor thinks I'm depressed and I'm like "yeah well, you try selling real estate in this market". *He laughs. Beat.*

It was a joke!/
/

HILARY: /Have to wax legs, go to the gym, take vitamins and apply face cream 3 times a day. /

ANTHONY: /So the doctor's not saying anything. He's giving me this look that makes me feel ... stupid. "Just give me the sleeping pills. Don't make everything such a big deal." I want to yell at him. But I don't.

It's hard to yell at a doctor. /

HILARY: /MUST look good. /

STAN: /Gotta keep moving. /

ANTHONY: /When I first held Maya I knew I'd work here until I made some good money. Get us moving. Then back to writing my novel. Start to live the life we imagined for ourselves. I don't imagine Dr Goldberg knows what that is. I don't know if he knows how to imagine. /

MANDY: /Statewide Real Estate. Amanda speaking.

Scene 2

Morning.

Sales meeting – with all the team. The dialogue is faced paced and sometimes almost overlapping.

GARY: Well - first meeting of a new season. Welcome team. Welcome to Summer and let's get the ball rolling. We have an exciting agenda today haven't we Mands?

MANDY: Yeah. Exciting.

GARY: We've got some spectacular news about young Mands don't we now?
Mandy? *Mandy nods.* Hilary has an exciting mystery – I've an announcement about the future of my agency, and Damn it, where's Stan?

ANTHONY: Stuck on the freeway.

GARY: His absence should be noted Mandy, take note.

ANTHONY: Yeah put it in the UN minutes Mandy. /

MANDY: / What are they? /

GARY: *to Anthony* / What's that supposed to mean?

ANTHONY: Nothing.

HILARY: Can we get on with it? I have meetings lined up all day.

GARY: Thanks Hilary. Agenda item no 1? *Beat.* Mandy.

MANDY: General Business.

Stan arrives, flustered.

STAN: Sorry I'm late, the freeway / was

GARY: /Can it Stan, if you can't make the meeting you're not just letting us down, you're letting yourself down, the buyers down, the sellers down/

ANTHONY: /Everybody's down! /

STAN: /Huge accident, bus veered off the road. /

GARY: /And you stopped to help, bless you Stan. Sit down. Lateness will not be tolerated for anything or anyone. Not even CPR.

STAN: I don't know what you're saying

GARY: CPR?

MANDY: Tell them your idea Gary.

Gary looks back at Mandy. Hilary looks at her – how come Mandy and Gary are so chummy? Mandy hands out sunglasses and visors – and indicates to the sales team that they are supposed to wear them. They each put them on.

GARY: Thanks Mands. We're gonna move property like they do in LA. It's Summer here now. Let's all imagine we're in LA – the sun is shining, things are moving, life is sunny and we're properties like hotcakes.

STAN: Oh great idea Gary.

MANDY: We could wear hot, sultry clothes, have some krispy cream donuts for morning tea! – really get into it.

GARY: Oh, that's the spirit.

ANTHONY: Yeah and now that Australia is part of the US, why not expand and open a branch of Statewide in Baghdad? Property booming there!

Stan is the only one who laughs, then he notices no one else is, so he stops.

MANDY: Every fun idea pisses Anthony off. LA here we are!

GARY: And to really get things moving we have Morrie the Mover back with us on Mondays for a power hour. The new season DVDs. Starting today.

HILARY: Fantastic!

STAN: Great.

ANTHONY: Shit.

GARY: The problem with you Anthony is that someone like Morrie is about the positive – about a new way of being, and you, you're all about the negative, shooting things down.

ANTHONY: I just don't need someone on a plasma screen with a hyped up fake American accent telling me how to behave, even if I happen to be here in sunny LA!

GARY: This is Real estate – the more you can learn the better you'll be at it.

HILARY: Your problem Anthony is that you don't like yourself. And I sympathise with that - you're hard to like, but maybe one of the backdated Morrie DVDs can help you with that!

ANTHONY: Ha ha, can we just get on with it.

GARY: Hilary?

HILARY: Oh yes. I have 2 pieces of exciting news. Get ready to be impressed.

MANDY: I'm the only one that knows about it, and it's going to blow you out of the water.

HILARY: Yes I have a new um admirer, who is helping me with the new approach.

MANDY: He's cute too. Used to work in an ad agency where my friend works. Rumour is he's a great fuck.

Hilary looks at her.

HILARY: For now I'm keeping it strictly business.

ANTHONY: OK, do we really need to hear this.

HILARY: My next piece of news was a suggestion from Mick actually. /

MANDY: /That's his name.

HILARY: He's into concept packaging. We can all have memo pads made up to be special for each of us. They've got a post-it back so that you can stick them on inspection sheets, pop them on letters etc. Friendly feel. Here I've had mine made up, and a sample for

you Gary and for you too Mands – *(she hands them out to Mandy and Gary and the in a different tone)* and I have some suggestions for the two of you.

Stan and Anthony smirk and roll their eyes at each other.

GARY: Well done Hil. And another wonderful piece of news here is that young Mandy is more than a pretty face, she is going to be our latest trainee.

(Hilary claps)

HILARY: Congratulations.

ANTHONY: Yeah, welcome to Californ – IA, Mandy.

STAN: Wonderful Mands.

GARY: So now Mandy here will be doubling as receptionist 'Amanda' and my right-hand man training on the job, 'Mandy'.

ANTHONY: Woman.

GARY: What?

ANTHONY: Right-hand woman.

Everyone looks at him like he is mad.

GARY: SO onto some big picture news. Karen and me are waiting to see if my son Sean is going to choose to come and live with us. If that's the case I'll need to have a manager for the agency. So you're all on notice. I'm looking for a winner, a leader, someone who will generate income – in both my agencies. So that's the challenge.

STAN: What if Sean stays with his mum up north?

GARY: See that is not a winner's attitude Stan. Right now your figures are right down and for this week at least you're on death row.

STAN: Shit.

HILARY: (To Mandy) That means his listings are so low that he has to go through the death notices and call up families.

MANDY: Why?

ANTHONY: So they'll pass over their family home for sale while they're still in a vulnerable state.

HILARY: The truth is they are often grateful aren't they Stan.

STAN: Yeah, except their dead. *Anthony laughs.*

HILARY: The estate are grateful Stan!

GARY: OK ok. Now look it's auction night tonight and we've got to move properties like there's no tomorrow. So I need lots of positive thoughts – you got it?

MANDY: Sure have.

STAN: I have a good feeling about tonight Gary.

GARY: You do? That's good Stan. *Beat.* Oh, and you Anthony – Liina Morrow ring any bells. She asked for you and only you.

HILARY: Liina Morrow! She writes for the paper.

MANDY: Yeah, all that glamorous stuff on Sundays. She called here this morning!

HILARY: I've got the perfect place – 4 bedrooms, pool.

GARY: She's selling and she only wants Ant.

HILARY: Why?

MANDY: She knows him.

STAN: You know Liina Morrow?