

# VICIOUS TREATS

**Five stories for the New World**

By

Alex Broun

email: [abroun@bigpond.net.au](mailto:abroun@bigpond.net.au)

(C) Alex Broun 2004

<b>The Plays</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>The Gift of the Gun</b> WILLIAM/BEN	<b>3</b>
<b>Saturday Night Newtown, Sunday Morning Enmore</b> MATTHEW/CLAIRE	<b>18</b>
<b>Rumpole of the Sydenham Line</b> CLAUDIA/GRAEME/LYNNE	<b>28</b>
<b>The Celine Dion Songbook</b> PAUL/TRACEY	<b>39</b>
<b>The First Fireworks</b> DAWN/HELEN	<b>50</b>

**NOTE ON CAST:**

Vicious Treats can be performed by a cast of 6 with the following doubling:

<b>ACTOR 1 (50-60) –</b>	<b>WILLIAM/GRAEME</b>
<b>ACTOR 2 (20s) –</b>	<b>BEN/MATTHEW</b>
<b>ACTOR 3 (30s) –</b>	<b>PAUL</b>
<b>ACTRESS 1 (50-60) –</b>	<b>LYNNE/DAWN</b>
<b>ACTRESS 2 (20s) –</b>	<b>CLAIRE/HELEN</b>
<b>ACTRESS 3 (30s) –</b>	<b>CLAUDIA/TRACEY</b>

VICIOUS TREATS : PLAY1

**The Gift of the  
Gun**

### **Cast**

**WILLIAM**            50s

**BEN**                 Late teens

### **Setting**

Bare room in a deserted warehouse.

### **Time**

Monday. 9am.

### **Production History**

**The Gift of the Gun** was first performed at Short & Sweet 2003 at the Newtown Theatre, Sydney. Directed by George Ogilvie.

It was then produced as part of 'Vicious Streaks' at the Darlinghurst Theatre, Sydney in 2004. Again directed by George Ogilvie.

Next it was produced as part of Shorter & Sweeter 2004, the best of Short & Sweet 2002-2004, at the Studio, Sydney Opera House before touring to the Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne and the Parramatta Riverside Theatres. Production again directed by George Ogilvie.

In 2005 it was produced at the BareStage Theatre, Red Bluff, California, USA as part of Six 10s @ Eight, New Plays Festival. Directed by Bryon Burruss. The production was also recorded for broadcast on National Public Radio (NPR) in the USA.

**The Gift of the Gun.**

A bare room. 9am.

In darkness music begins. A Chopin Etude.

A spotlight comes up on a child's mobile of bright coloured shapes. Red triangles and yellow rectangles, floating in space.

Lights come up on **WILLIAM**. He sits on a chair down left. He is well dressed in an expensive suit and shiny shoes.

To his right is a bare table. On it two objects : a yellow box and a red triangle. Beside it a plain black sound system. There is a door upstage.

The spotlight fades on the mobile. The music remains.

There is a knock at the door. The music is suddenly cut off.

**WILLIAM:** It's open.

**THE DOOR OPENS SLOWLY AND BEN ENTERS. HIS FAIR HAIR IS SLICKED BACK AND HE WEARS A BRIGHTLY COLOURED RED SINGLET AND YELLOW PANTS. HE CARRIES A SMALL BACK PACK.**

**WILLIAM:** Close the door.

**BEN CLOSES THE DOOR.**

**WILLIAM:** No problem finding the address ?

**BEN:** Place seems deserted. You must be the only one here.

**WILLIAM:** It's scheduled for demolition.

**BEN:** Whatever blows your mind. I'm Ben.

**WILLIAM:** My name is William. Come over here so I can look at you.

**BEN PUTS DOWN THE BAG. HE WALKS SLOWLY TOWARDS WILLIAM. WILLIAM INDICATES FOR HIM TO WALK UP AND DOWN.**

**BEN WALKS IN FRONT OF WILLIAM. WILLIAM WATCHES HIM.**

**WILLIAM:** Excellent.

BEN: Blonde enough for you ?

WILLIAM: Perfect.

BEN: Clothes alright ?

WILLIAM: You've done very well.

BEN: Not leaving anything to chance are you ?

WILLIAM: Best not to.

BEN: Any more special requests ?

WILLIAM: Not just yet.

**PAUSE. BEN LOOKS AT WILLIAM.**

BEN: So, having a good day ?

WILLIAM: So far.

BEN: (WANDERING AROUND ROOM) Do you live here ?

WILLIAM: Of course not.

BEN: It doesn't look too cosy. Is there a bathroom ? I might need to clean up afterwards.

WILLIAM: Unfortunately not.

BEN: How about some towels ?

WILLIAM: I do apologise.

BEN: It's alright. I've got some of my own. Keep them for little emergencies.

**BEN OPENS UP HIS BAG. HE TAKES OUT SOME TOWELETTES.  
HE HOLDS UP A SMALL CASSETTE PLAYER.**

BEN: How about some music ?

WILLIAM: Not at the moment.

**BEN PUTS THE CASSETTE PLAYER AWAY. HE STANDS.**

BEN: So what will it be ? Giving. Receiving. Or are you just interested in some oral ? You look like you really like to suck dick.

WILLIAM: Absolutely not.

BEN: Oops. Didn't mean to offend you. I don't often have new clients. Too popular with my regulars. They get great service so they ask for me again and again. Hopefully you will too.

WILLIAM: A once off will be sufficient.

BEN: Don't be so hasty. Wait to see if you like me. (PAUSE) I don't usually go to someone's place. You never know what could happen. But Terio said you come highly recommended and you'd make it worth my while.

WILLIAM: You'll be well compensated.

PAUSE. **BEN BEGINS TO UNBUTTON HIS PANTS.**

WILLIAM: What are you doing ?

BEN: Don't you want to watch me.

WILLIAM: God no. No offence.

BEN: Most people say I've got a great body.

WILLIAM: You look very firm.

BEN: Would you like to touch me ?

WILLIAM: No, but thanks for offering.

BEN: I could lie on the table.

WILLIAM: That won't be necessary.

PAUSE.

BEN: Look, I don't mean to sound ungrateful. But could we get started. I've got to be back for one of my regulars at eleven.

WILLIAM: Certainly.

BEN: Well ? What would you like me to do ?

WILLIAM: Go to the table and lift up the red triangle.

BEN: Oh, so that's it. Toys.

WILLIAMS: Objects from my childhood.

BEN: Kinky.

**BEN GOES TO THE TABLE. HE LIFTS UP THE TRIANGLE TO REVEAL A REVOLVER. BEN RECOILS IN HORROR.**

BEN: Oh fuck. Fuck !

**BEN RUNS FOR THE DOOR. HE TRIES THE HANDLE. IT IS LOCKED.**

BEN: Jesus. Help me. Help me.

**HE BANGS ON THE DOOR.**

BEN: Help me - please !

WILLIAM: As you said the warehouse is deserted.

**BEN SCRAMBLES FOR HIS BAG. WILLIAM STANDS.**

BEN: Stay away from me. I've got a panic button. In two minutes they'll be security from the service all over the place.

WILLIAM: Please Ben - I'm not going to hurt you.

BEN: (SEARCHING THROUGH HIS BAG) You stay away from me.  
(PULLING OUT BUZZER) Got it.

WILLIAM: There is no need to panic.

BEN: That's not how I see it.

WILLIAM: I'm standing still and I'm putting my hands above my head.  
(**WILLIAM RAISES HIS ARMS.**) There is only one revolver in the room and I am not intending to touch it. I am completely powerless.

BEN: Why should I believe you ?

WILLIAM: You are welcome to search me.

**BEN DOES NOT MOVE.**

WILLIAM: I am not going to hurt you. And as your manager said you will be extremely well paid for your services.

**BEN, HOLDING THE BUZZER IN ONE HAND, MOVES SLOWLY TOWARDS WILLIAM.**

HE PATS HIS POCKETS AND FEELS HIS PANTS.

WILLIAM: Nothing except the clothes on my back.

**BEN STANDS BACK.**

BEN: What the fuck is going on ?

WILLIAM: May I put my hands down ?

BEN: Okay, but keep them where I can see them.

WILLIAM: Thank you.

**WILLIAM LOWERS HIS HANDS.**

BEN: Is this like some weird S and M thing ?

WILLIAM: (HE SMILES) After a fashion. Try to look at me as just another client.

BEN: Pretty weird fucking client.

WILLIAM: Who is paying you very well for your services. Lift up the yellow box.

BEN: I'm not touching anything else.

WILLIAM: May I remove it then ?

BEN: How do I know it's not a bomb or something ?

WILLIAM: It's not. (PAUSE) Would you like to leave ?

BEN: Absolutely right.

WILLIAM: The key for the door is hidden somewhere in this room.

BEN: Where ?

**BEN BEGINS TO SEARCH AROUND THE ROOM.**

WILLIAM: Let me remove the box and then I'll tell you.

BEN: Tell me now.

WILLIAM: Not until I remove the box. (INDICATING BOX) May I ?

PAUSE. **BEN NODS. WILLIAM MOVES TOWARDS THE BOX. BEN'S EYES FIX ON THE GUN.**

BEN: Stop !

PAUSE.

WILLIAM: Why don't you pick the gun up ? It might make you feel safer.

BEN: I've never held a gun in my life.

WILLIAM: Then now would seem a good time to start.

PAUSE. **BEN GINGERLY PICKS UP THE GUN.**

WILLIAM: How does it feel ?

BEN: Cold.

WILLIAM: It'll warm up.

BEN: Is the thing-a-me on ?

WILLIAM: Yes, the safety catch is on. Would you like me to show you how to take it off ?

BEN: Stay where you are. It's fine the way it is.

WILLIAM: As you wish. May I remove the box now ?

**BEN NODS. WILLIAM LIFTS THE BOX TO REVEAL THREE NEAT PILES OF CASH. BEN IS DRAWN TO IT. WILLIAM STEPS AWAY.**

BEN: Shit.

WILLIAM: Touch it. It's yours.

**BEN PUTS DOWN THE BUZZER. HE PICKS UP SOME OF THE MONEY.**

BEN: This is for me ?

WILLIAM: All of it. Not bad for a morning's work.

BEN: You must be into some pretty weird shit. What do I have to do ? Let you stick a rat up my arse.

WILLIAM: Nothing as vulgar as that.

BEN: Then what the fuck do you want me to do ?

WILLIAM: I want you to give me a gift.

BEN: Listen mister, I don't think I'm selling what your buying.

WILLIAM: You're more than capable.

BEN: So what is this gift ?

WILLIAM: It's in your hand.

BEN: You want me to give you a hand job with the cash ?

WILLIAM: The other hand.

**BEN LOOKS AT THE GUN. PAUSE.**

BEN: (REALISING) You're fucking mad.

WILLIAM: I can assure you I am perfectly sane.

BEN: Not from where I'm standing.

WILLIAM: All my life there has been an absence of control. I have been perpetually at the mercy of others. The whim of chance, fate, circumstance. But through it all one piece of information has been a considerable source of comfort for me. The knowledge that there was one pivotal moment in my life that if I acted quickly enough, I could control. Completely. The time, the place and the mechanism of my death.

BEN: And you chose this room - and me ?

**WILLIAM NODS.**

BEN: But why do you want to die ?

WILLIAM: The reasons are not important. Suffice to say I have them. You don't need to know why. Indeed it's perhaps better if you don't.

BEN: I'm kind of involved here. What you're asking me to do is likely to cause a few bad dreams down the track.

WILLIAM: As I said this is one event that I can control. And I choose to keep my reasons private. That's what I want and on this day I am getting what I want. I'm not asking you to do something that far from your usual gamut.

BEN: Killing people is a little out of my ordinary work day.

WILLIAM: You carry out a service. Give people a bit of a thrill. I'm not asking for anything quite so ... grubby.

BEN: I think will be just a bit messy.

WILLIAM: I'm asking you to carry out a service.

BEN: You got the wrong boy. I give blow jobs.

WILLIAM: But that's not what I want.

BEN: Yes it is. You're asking me to give you the ultimate blowjob.

WILLIAM: Don't be vulgar. That's not how I want it.

BEN: Some clients like it if I talk dirty.

WILLIAM: I would be grateful if you could restrain from it.

BEN: Always want to give client satisfaction.

WILLIAM: And you can do that. Completely.

PAUSE.

BEN: You do understand you only get to do this once. I can't come back tomorrow.

WILLIAM: I'm well aware of the consequences.

BEN: This isn't like some test is it ? I'm not being filmed for some stupid reality TV show.

WILLIAM: I do understand that this must come as quite a surprise to you. Look at it rationally.

BEN: You're a fucking psycho.

WILLIAM: At this moment I would imagine you desire two things. The first would be to leave this room as soon as possible.

BEN: You're right there.

WILLIAM: The second would be to take that money with you.

BEN: The thought had crossed my mind.

WILLIAM: Now I'm going to tell you where the key is hidden and you will be able to leave. But first I need you to do one more thing for me ?

BEN: You want me to sing you a song Willy ?

WILLIAM: Please Ben.

BEN: You have someone else you'd like me to bump off ?

WILLIAM: This is for your protection.

BEN: What ?

WILLIAM: In the draw of the table you will find a pair of gloves and a cloth. I want you to put the gloves on.

BEN: Why ?

WILLIAM: Just do it ! (CHANGE) It's for your benefit.

**BEN REACHES UNDER THE TABLE AND PULLS OUT THE GLOVES AND THE CLOTH.**

WILLIAM: Thank you. After it's done you will wipe the handle of the gun with the cloth. You will then put the gun in my hand and wipe the door handle on the way out. No one will ever know you were here.

BEN: Suicide ?

WILLIAM: Precisely.

BEN: Then why don't you just do it yourself ? Why do you need me ?

WILLIAM: Because that's not how I want it.

**BEN PUTS ON THE GLOVES.**

BEN: Okay. I've put on the gloves. Now, where's the key ?

WILLIAM: Reach under the table.

**BEN FEELS UNDERNEATH THE TOP OF THE TABLE. HE PULLS OUT A KEY.**

BEN: Thank Christ for that. See you later you sick fuck.

**BEN HEADS FOR THE DOOR.**

WILLIAM: Do you love your life Ben ?

**BEN STOPS.**

BEN: What do you think ?

WILLIAM: Look at what's sitting on that table. I'm offering you a new life.

**BEN TURNS. HE LOOKS AT THE MONEY.**

BEN: Maybe I'll just take the money anyway.

WILLIAM: I'll have you tracked down and killed within the hour.

BEN: You've really thought of everything.

WILLIAM: What is so abhorrent –

BEN: Ab – what ?

WILLIAM: Abhorrent. Awful. What is so awful about what I'm asking you to do ? How am I different from a thousand other Johnnies you've serviced ?

BEN: I've never called anybody a Johnny. Unless they wanted me to.

WILLIAM: And what about what I want ?

BEN: Look, I just never thought about killing anybody.

WILLIAM: You're a service man. I'm asking you to provide a service.

BEN: It's more than that.

PAUSE.

WILLIAM: Tell me, is there anything you like about your job ?

**BEN SHRUGS.**

WILLIAM: Anything. Anything at all

PAUSE.

BEN: Once I was with this guy, from Telly. He was like - famous. And afterwards he had this big smile on his face. I liked that. I made him happy.

WILLIAM: And if you did this it would make me very, very happy. Would it make any difference if I was lying here stuck full of needles, tubes coming out of every orifice ?

BEN: Yeah. That would be different.

WILLIAM: How would it be different ? I want to die Ben. Why can't I die when and how I chose ? Surely I deserve that dignity.

BEN: I just wish you hadn't involved me.

WILLIAM: And then you would miss out on the chance for a new life. We are the same - you and I.

BEN: No we're not.

WILLIAM: We both have a life we don't want. You're giving me a way out and I'm giving you a way out. No one loses.

BEN: Except maybe the wallpaper.

WILLIAM: Don't think about it anymore. Just do what I ask then pick up the money and leave. Begin your new life.

PAUSE. **BEN PUTS DOWN THE GUN.**

BEN: I think you should get somebody else.

HE STARTS TO LEAVE.

WILLIAM: But I chose you.

**BEN STOPS.**

WILLIAM: You're not here by accident Ben. I could've got hundreds of people to do this. Some would've gladly done it for kicks. You were handpicked for this occasion.

BEN: I was ?

WILLIAM: Terio didn't know exactly what I wanted you for but he knew I needed someone very special. I came to his office and I went through the catalogue. I chose you from all the other boys. Remember the parade.

BEN: When we all had to walk up that stupid catwalk ?

WILLIAM: I was there. Behind the glass. So I could see you in the flesh. So I knew I was making the right choice. And your clothes. They were handmade specifically to your measurements.

BEN: They do fit well.

WILLIAM: Everything had to be perfect for this one moment. I want it to be exactly how I imagined. That's why it has to be you. You're the one I chose. The one I want. The angel of my demise.

BEN: Angel ?

WILLIAM: I want to sit here nice and straight with my hands on my knees and close my eyes. I want you to stand here and put the gun to my head. I want to feel the steel point pressed against my temple and smell the sweet blend of your sweat mixing with your perfume. I want to taste the saliva building in my mouth. I want to hear the soft click of the gun cocking and then feel the explosion against my skin as the bullet enters my skull - a millisecond before my blood and brains are splattered against this wall. Then my nerve endings will be numb and the screaming inside my skull will finally stop. My angel will have given me my blessed release. (PAUSE) Please Ben. Give me my parting wish. This final gift. I want there to be an end to it.

BEN: You really want to die that much ?

WILLIAM: Yes.

PAUSE.

BEN: Let's get it over with.

WILLIAM: Thank you.

BEN: Don't say anything else. I want to start forgetting this ever happened.

**WILLIAM TAKES OUT A REMOTE. HE POINTS IT AT THE SOUND SYSTEM AND PRESSES A BUTTON. MUSIC: CHOPIN ETUDE.**

**WILLIAM SITS IN THE CHAIR. BEN MOVES OVER TO HIM. WILLIAM HOLDS OUT HIS HAND.**

BEN: What ?

**WILLIAM INDICATES THE GUN. BEN HANDS HIM THE GUN. WILLIAM TAKES OFF THE SAFETY CATCH. HE HANDS THE GUN BACK TO BEN.**

BEN: Ready ?

**WILLIAM SITS UP STRAIGHT AND PUTS HIS HANDS ON HIS KNEES. HE TAKES TWO DEEP BREATHS THEN CLOSES HIS EYES.**

WILLIAM: Now.

**BEN PUTS THE GUN TO WILLIAM'S HEAD. HE CLOSES HIS EYES AND PULLS THE TRIGGER. THE GUN CLICKS.**

**BEN OPENS HIS EYES. HE PULLS THE TRIGGER AGAIN AND AGAIN. THE GUN CONTINUES TO CLICK. BEN BEGINS TO LAUGH.**

BEN: You are without doubt the sickest fuck I have ever met in my entire life. And believe me - I've met some sick fucks.

WILLIAM: I'm sorry I had to be sure

BEN: Okay, so what do we do now ?

**WILLIAM PULLS A SINGLE BULLET FROM HIS POCKET.**

WILLIAM: Now, we load the gun.

**THE LIGHTS FADE.**

**VICIOUS TREATS : PLAY 2**

**Saturday Night Newtown,  
Sunday Morning Enmore**

## **Cast**

**MATTHEW**

**CLAIRE**

## **Setting**

Matthew's room in a share-house in Enmore.

## **Time**

Sunday Morning.

## **Production History**

**Saturday Night Newtown, Sunday Morning Enmore** was first produced at the Newtown Theatre, Sydney as a part of Short & Sweet 2002. Directed by Mark Cleary.

It was then produced as part of 'Vicious Streaks' at the Darlinghurst Theatre, Sydney in 2004. Directed by Lee Lewis.

**Saturday Night Newtown, Sunday Morning Enmore**

**MATTHEW**'s cluttered and grubby room. Sunday morning.

**MATTHEW** and **CLAIRE** lie sprawled in the bed. Slowly **CLAIRE** wakes. She sits up and looks around, trying to work out where she is.

She looks at **MATTHEW** lying in the bed alongside her. She lifts the sheet and looks at herself. She lifts the sheet and looks at **MATTHEW**.

She suppresses a groan. Carefully she gets out of bed, trying not to wake **MATTHEW**.

She delicately picks her way around the room, recovering her clothing. She puts a few pieces on, and with the rest in her arms, makes her way for the door.

She tries the door but it appears to be locked. She re-positions the clothes under her arm and using both hands manages to open the door. But as she does she drops a shoe. It falls to the ground with a thump.

**CLAIRE** spins around to look at **MATTHEW**. He doesn't move. **CLAIRE** eases her way through the door.

**MATTHEW**: Making a quick getaway.

**CLAIRE STOPS.**

**CLAIRE**: You're awake.

**MATTHEW SITS UP.**

**MATTHEW**: Didn't mean to interrupt you.

**CLAIRE**: I didn't want to wake you.

**MATTHEW**: Very considerate.

**CLAIRE TURNS TO LOOK AT MATTHEW. MATTHEW FINDS A T-SHIRT AND PUTS IT ON.**

**MATTHEW**: It's okay. You can still go.

**CLAIRE**: You're awake now. I'll stay.

**MATTHEW**: Then why are you holding the door open ?

**CLAIRE CLOSSES THE DOOR. SHE MAKES HER WAY BACK INTO THE ROOM.**

MATTHEW: At least you didn't have to do a coyote ?

CLAIRE: Sorry ?

MATTHEW: Chew your arm off rather than waking me. You weren't faced with that particular dilemma.

CLAIRE: Don't be so stupid. Now if I can just find a spot.

MATTHEW: Sorry. Bit messy.

CLAIRE: No, it's fine.

**CLAIRE PERCHES ON A CHAIR AND FINISHES DRESSING.**

CLAIRE: Where are we ?

MATTHEW: Enmore.

CLAIRE: Enmore ? But last night we were in Newtown, weren't we ?

MATTHEW: Now we're in Enmore.

CLAIRE: How did we get here ?

MATTHEW: Walked. Or should I say I walked. You staggered.

CLAIRE: I really don't remember. What were we drinking ?

MATTHEW: I was on lite beer. You were drinking - well pretty well anything you could get your hands on.

CLAIRE: Drowning my sorrows.

MATTHEW: Tough week ?

CLAIRE: That I do remember. Are the buses running by now ?

MATTHEW: Should be.

CLAIRE: I better get going.

MATTHEW: Church ?

CLAIRE: Very funny. Got to help my mum. She's having some people for lunch.

MATTHEW: Where does she live ?

CLAIRE: (AFTER A PAUSE) Tasmania.

MATTHEW: You've got a long trip in front of you then.

PAUSE.

CLAIRE: Look, I'm sorry.

MATTHEW: It's okay.

CLAIRE: I just usually don't do this.

MATTHEW: Who said I do ?

CLAIRE: I mean I'm not accustomed to being in this situation.

MATTHEW: Absolutely.

CLAIRE: Last night ... I guess I sort of lost control. Went a little crazy.

MATTHEW: Let yourself go.

CLAIRE: Did things I wouldn't do under normal conditions.

MATTHEW: You mean normally you wouldn't go home with me ?

CLAIRE: I'm sorry. That must sound awful.

MATTHEW: It's okay. I gather I'm not exactly your type.

CLAIRE: No, it's not that.

MATTHEW: You mean I am your type ?

CLAIRE: I've just had a terrible week. I mean a really terrible week.

MATTHEW: Gary.

CLAIRE: How do you know about Gary ?

MATTHEW: You mentioned him last night. Several times.

CLAIRE: I did ? He ...

MATTHEW: Dumped you on Thursday -

CLAIRE: For no reason.

MATTHEW: And then last night he was there with -

CLAIRE: That bitch. He was all over her, and ...

MATTHEW: You discovered there may have been a reason after all.

CLAIRE: So as you can understand I was a little ... emotional.

MATTHEW: And so you end up -

CLAIRE: In Enmore.

MATTHEW: With me.

PAUSE.

CLAIRE: (HEADING FOR THE DOOR) Look, I'm just going to go.

MATTHEW: You know it doesn't have to be like this.

CLAIRE: Believe me - it does.

MATTHEW: What are you actually taking away from here ?

CLAIRE: What ?

MATTHEW: What are you actually leaving here with ?

CLAIRE: Only what I arrived with. I hope.

MATTHEW: So there is no tangible evidence that you were ever here.

CLAIRE: Do you want my panties as a souvenir ?

MATTHEW: Do you want mine ? (PAUSE) Think about it. When you walk out that door you will take away absolutely nothing from last night.

CLAIRE: Except for a whopping headache and some -

MATTHEW: Some what ?

CLAIRE: Look - I really have to go.

MATTHEW: Say it.

CLAIRE: Some less than perfect memories.

MATTHEW: Exactly. The only thing you take with you is your memories - which I would imagine won't be tremendous. But it doesn't have to be like that.

PAUSE.

CLAIRE: Listen - I like you. Your sweet. A bit odd but sweet. But like I said - you're really not my type. And now I've got to go.

MATTHEW: What if you remembered last night differently ?

CLAIRE: What are you talking about ?

MATTHEW: You heard me.

CLAIRE: I can't change my memories.

MATTHEW: Can't you ? Have you ever tried ? Your memories of last night are pretty hazy at best.

CLAIRE: You can say that again.

MATTHEW: You can't even remember how we got here ?

CLAIRE: True.

MATTHEW: So what if you decide what to remember ? Make up your own version of events.

CLAIRE: If only it was that easy.

MATTHEW: It is that easy. Who would you have like to have spent last night with ?

CLAIRE: I don't know.

MATTHEW: Gary ?

CLAIRE: After what that bastard did to me ? No way.

MATTHEW: Then who ? If you could chose anybody you want. Play along.

CLAIRE: Alright. (PAUSE) I don't know. Brad Pitt maybe.

MATTHEW: Tricky. How about someone who looked just like Brad Pitt ?

CLAIRE: But with black hair.

MATTHEW: Perfect. Now what's your favourite men's name ? Play along.

CLAIRE: I've always like Nathan.

MATTHEW: Okay. So you spent last night with a man named Nathan who looked just like Brad Pitt. Except with black hair.

CLAIRE: There's only one problem - I didn't.

MATTHEW: I'm the only person who knows that and I've forgotten already.

PAUSE.

CLAIRE: Okay. If I spent last night with Nathan - where did he come from ?

MATTHEW: You tell me. Where do you like to go on holiday ? Greece, Spain -

CLAIRE: Nathan sounds French.

MATTHEW: Perfect. So he was a charming and sexy -

CLAIRE: If he looked like Brad Pitt - very sexy.

MATTHEW: Very sexy Frenchman who had to fly back to Paris this morning but not before you had the most incredibly intense night of lovemaking you have ever experienced.

CLAIRE: I did ?

MATTHEW: You two just clicked. It went on for hours. Much better than you ever had with Gary.

CLAIRE: You can say that again.

MATTHEW: He made you feel like no man has ever made you feel before. Made you experience more pleasure than you ever felt possible.

CLAIRE: (LOOKING AT BED) What little I can remember, I wouldn't say it -

MATTHEW: *Nathan* was incredible. You were incredible. Together you set the night on fire.

CLAIRE: But where did this happen ?

MATTHEW: What's your favourite hotel ?

CLAIRE: I went to the Park Hyatt once.

MATTHEW: Room four three two of The Park Hyatt. Your room looked out straight on to the harbour. Nathan was staying there on business for the week.

CLAIRE: Before he flew back to Paris ?

MATTHEW: There was this huge four pillar bed in the room which you almost broke. Not to mention what happened in the bathroom.

CLAIRE: In the shower ?

MATTHEW: It went on and on.

CLAIRE: (SHE SMILES) It was unbelievable.

MATTHEW: You were unbelievable. It was a one in million. The best night of your life.

CLAIRE: But didn't anybody see me leave with you ?

MATTHEW: You dumped me at the bus stop. Then he drove by in his -

CLAIRE: Convertible Black BMW.

MATTHEW: He stopped and asked you for directions.

CLAIRE: We got talking.

MATTHEW: Next thing you knew you were back at The Hyatt.

CLAIRE: Sipping French champagne.

MATTHEW: The whole thing seemed like -

CLAIRE: Magic.

MATTHEW: Destiny.

CLAIRE: But hold on. I'm not going to be a one night stand for some travelling French man.

MATTHEW: This is just the beginning. He's filthy rich. He's flying you to Paris. In fact he wouldn't go until you promised -

CLAIRE: To fly over to see him.

MATTHEW: Exactly. Your meeting him in two weeks time - -

CLAIRE: At midnight.

MATTHEW: On top of the Eiffel Tower.

CLAIRE: He's so romantic.

MATTHEW: He's a dream come true. The next morning after breakfast he kissed you goodbye.

**MATTHEW KISSES CLAIRE.**

MATTHEW: And whispered something in French in your ear.

CLAIRE: It sounded like poetry.

MATTHEW: And you walked out the door.

CLAIRE: More like floated.

MATTHEW: Dreaming of when you would meet again in Paris -

CLAIRE: Under the stars.

MATTHEW: On top of the Eiffel Tower.

CLAIRE: One final kiss.

**CLAIRE KISSES MATTHEW.**

MATTHEW: And you were gone.

CLAIRE: Dreaming of the moment -

MATTHEW: When we would meet -

CLAIRE: Again.

**CLAIRE EXITS. MATTHEW ALONE, WATCHING WHERE SHE HAS GONE. HE SMILES.**

THE LIGHTS FADE.

END PLAY.

**VICIOUS TREATS : PLAY 3**

**Rumpole  
of the  
Sydenham Line**

**Cast**

**CLAUDIA**            a lawyer, 30-40

**GRAEME**            a Greenkeeper, 50-60

**LYNNE**             Claudia's secretary

**Setting**

Claudia's office in the city

**Time**

Week day, 9.30am.

**Production History**

**Rumpole of the Sydenham Line** was first performed in 2003 as part of Bondi Shorts at the Bondi Pavilion Theatre, Sydney. Directed by Kris Plummer and Juliette Ferrier.

It was then produced as part of 'Vicious Streaks' at the Darlinghurst Theatre, Sydney in 2004. Directed by Lee Lewis.

**Rumpole of the Sydenham Line**

City. Office, 9.30am.

**CLAUDIA** sits at her desk, sipping coffee from a styrofoam cup. She is staring at a piece of paper in front of her. Pause.

**LYNNE** enters.

**LYNNE:** Mr Davids.

**CLAUDIA DOES NOT RESPOND.**

**LYNNE:** Mr Davids.

**CLAUDIA:** (STARTLED) Sorry.

**CLAUDIA LOOKS AT LYNNE.**

**LYNNE:** He's here.

**CLAUDIA:** Oh . Okay.

**PAUSE.**

**LYNNE:** Should I show him in ?

**CLAUDIA:** Yes. Yes.

**LYNNE EXITS. CLAUDIA STANDS. HE WALKS TO THE WINDOW. HE LOOKS OUT. HE TURNS TO FACE THE DOOR. PAUSE.**

**GRAEME ENTERS.**

**GRAEME:** Claudia.

**CLAUDIA:** Graeme.

**GRAEME:** Why do you call me that ?

**CLAUDIA LAUGHS.**

**CLAUDIA:** Because that's your name. Sit down. Yes.

**CLAUDIA GETS A CHAIR FOR GRAEME. GRAEME SITS.**

CLAUDIA: You made it in okay ?

GRAEME: I'm late. Missed the train.

CLAUDIA: Well you're here now.

GRAEME: It was on the station as I was walking up. I saw it but I just couldn't get there in time.

CLAUDIA: Nonsense.

GRAEME: My legs - they're too old.

CLAUDIA: But you're here now.

GRAEME: Old.

CLAUDIA: Nonsense. (**CLAUDIA SITS.**) And that's why you've come to see me. The reason for your visit. I mean – you don't mind, do you ?

GRAEME: Mind ?

CLAUDIA: If we get straight to it. I have a ten o'clock.

GRAEME: I understand.

CLAUDIA: I mean it would be great to chat, to ... catch up – but ten o'clock.

GRAEME: It's alright.

CLAUDIA: Good. Well then, it's as you said. Your problem is –

**GRAEME LOOKS AT HER.**

CLAUDIA: Trains.

GRAEME: I don't have a problem with trains.

**OVERLAPPING:**

CLAUDIA: (**HOLDING UP PAPER**) Then they have a problem with you.

GRAEME: The only problem I have –

CLAUDIA: This was faxed to me this morning.

GRAEME: is that I missed that one this morning.

CLAUDIA: It's from their solicitors.

GRAEME: When I was young I would've caught it -

CLAUDIA: These are serious questions.

GRAEME: A hop, a skip and a jump and I would've been –

CLAUDIA: Please !

SILENCE.

CLAUDIA: Ten o'clock. Now, if I am to understand correctly - you boarded the train at 9.45pm last Tuesday.

**GRAEME NODS.**

GRAEME: I was coming home from work.

CLAUDIA: You're still at the Golf Club ?

GRAEME: (NODDING) Tuesdays I stay till they finish the watering.

CLAUDIA: You entered the carriage in which Mr Grant was seated.

GRAEME: No. That's not right.

CLAUDIA: It's not ?

GRAEME: I got on at Erskineville. He didn't get on till the next stop. St Peters.

CLAUDIA: (HOLDING UP PAPER) That's not what it says here.

GRAEME: I got on at Erskineville. He got on at St Peters.

PAUSE.

CLAUDIA: Are you absolutely sure ?

GRAEME: Yes.

CLAUDIA: Absolutely. I mean – it does change things.

PAUSE. **GRAEME NODS. CLAUDIA WRITES SOMETHING DOWN.**

CLAUDIA: So you didn't sit next to Mr Grant ?

GRAEME: He sat next to me.

CLAUDIA: Then why do they say you sat next to him ?

GRAEME: You need to ask them that. He sat next to me.

CLAUDIA: But why ? Why in a completely empty carriage, with every other seat vacant – why would he choose to sit next to you ?

**GRAEME SHRUGS.**

GRAEME: Maybe he wanted some company.

**GRAEME SMILES. CLAUDIA LOOKS AT GRAEME. PAUSE.**

CLAUDIA: In an otherwise empty carriage ?

GRAEME: He wanted to sit next to me.

PAUSE.

CLAUDIA: Now, you were already drinking at that stage.

GRAEME: It was only a beer.

CLAUDIA: It's still alcohol.

GRAEME: They gave it to me at the club. I was hot.

CLAUDIA: That doesn't change the law.

CLAUDIA: But it was only –

**CLAUDIA HOLDS UP HER HAND.**

GRAEME: Your ten o'clock.

CLAUDIA: Thank you. Now you were drinking the beer and what happened next ?

GRAEME: Well I could see him, watching me. Sort of - out the corner of his eye. He was watching what I had in my hand. The beer. Watching me bringing it to my lips. He had little crinkles on his head. And he was sweating.

CLAUDIA: And what did you do ?

GRAEME: Well I guessed he was thirsty. So I turned to him and asked him if he wanted some.

CLAUDIA: If he wanted some ? What were your exact words ? Please be precise. It could be important.

GRAEME: I'm not sure.

CLAUDIA: Please. Try.

**GRAEME THINKS.**

GRAEME: Well, he was watching me so I turned to him and I raised the beer a bit. I had it in a brown paper bag. I pulled down the paper

CLAUDIA: You pulled down the paper ?

GRAEME: So he could see what it was and then I said ...

CLAUDIA: Yes ?

GRAEME: I said ... "You look thirsty. Would you like some ?"

CLAUDIA: Yes ?

GRAEME: I think that was it.

CLAUDIA: You pulled down the paper.

GRAEME: Yes.

CLAUDIA: And you said -

GRAEME: "You look thirsty. Would you like some ?"

**PAUSE. CLAUDIA SITS BACK.**

CLAUDIA: You are aware that it is illegal to drink alcohol on trains ?

GRAEME: It was only a beer.

CLAUDIA: (TO HERSELF) Ignorance is not a defence anyway.

GRAEME: I didn't think he'd mind.

CLAUDIA: Do we have a defence ?

GRAEME: Don't see why it's such a big deal.

CLAUDIA: Why did he sit next to you ?

GRAEME: Why'd he have to go and report me ? I can't afford no fine.

**CLAUDIA LOOKS AT GRAEME. PAUSE. SHE STANDS.**

CLAUDIA: Fine ? Do you think if it was just a fine I'd bother to get you in here. He's suing you. Mr Grant is suing you for a very considerable sum of money.

GRAEME: I was just drinking a beer.

CLAUDIA: Mr Grant is an alcoholic. He *was* a recovering alcoholic. He'd just spent three weeks in a very expensive treatment facility, paid for by his employer, and was on his way to some meeting to celebrate a month without drinking – which is meant to be some kind of a landmark or something.

GRAEME: That's why he didn't drink any.

CLAUDIA: No, not then. But the thought of that beer stayed in his mind so when he got off the train he didn't go to the meeting as planned. He went straight to a bottle shop and brought two large bottles of Vodka. He consumed those within the next several hours –

GRAEME: Two whole bottles.

CLAUDIA: Where after he staggered to his car - I have no idea where that was parked or how he found it in his inebriated state – but somehow he managed to locate it and drive to his home. But on reaching his home he mistook the front path for the driveway and drove his car into the living room, destroying the car and the living room. His long suffering wife, who had up until then – I can't fathom exactly why – promised to give him one more chance said enough was enough, took the children and promptly filed for divorce. This was all too much for poor Mr Grant so he went on a real bender and two days later arrived at his place of work. His long suffering boss, who had also up until then given him one more chance, took one look at him, said enough was enough and promptly fired him. Mr Grant became so enraged at this that he attacked his employer, pushing him down the stairs whereon said employer broke both legs and his jaw.

PAUSE.

GRAEME: Probably should've taken that beer.

CLAUDIA: It's not a joke ! Do you think it's a joke ?

GRAEME: No.

CLAUDIA: He's suing you for the car, the house, the job, the injuries to his boss, the emotional trauma to his wife and children and his own suffering – both physical and mental. It will run into millions of dollars.

GRAEME: But I wasn't driving the car.

CLAUDIA: But you were drinking on the train – where you were not meant to be drinking -and you set in motion the whole unfortunate chain of events.

GRAEME: But he could've seen anybody drinking.

CLAUDIA: He says that he knew how sensitive he was to the sight of alcohol and so he had worked out a route to get from his work to the meeting without being confronted by people drinking.

GRAEME: He could've bumped into someone on the street.

CLAUDIA: But he didn't. And even if he had - to him all he had to do was reach the sanctuary of the alcohol free train and then he would be safe. But he wasn't safe because of you and your one little beer. That's what Mr Grant says.

GRAEME: Is that what you think ?

CLAUDIA: It doesn't matter what I think.

GRAEME: It matters to me.

**CLAUDIA LOOKS AT GRAEME.**

CLAUDIA: My ten o'clock.

**CLAUDIA SITS.**

GRAEME: So what are we going to do ?

CLAUDIA: I have no idea. Maybe somebody at the Golf Club will lend you the money.

GRAEME: I just work there.

CLAUDIA: It was a joke. (PAUSE) In cases like this I usually try to counter sue but I have absolutely no idea what to sue him for. All he did was get on a train.

GRAEME: That's all I did too. It's not my fault. He sat next to me.

CLAUDIA: As you said.

GRAEME: I was just minding my own business.

PAUSE.

CLAUDIA: Yes ... yes you were.

GRAEME: I was minding my own business –

CLAUDIA: And he came and sat next to you. He initiated the contact.

GRAEME: That's right.

CLAUDIA: The carriage was empty. You had the reasonable expectation that he would sit somewhere else. But he didn't. He was at fault. That's why they said you approached him.

GRAEME: But I didn't.

CLAUDIA: Of course you didn't. Yes, this might work ... This - lunatic, this - anti-social animal, this - *alcoholic* blundered over to you and nearly fell on your lap. He violated your personal space. He harangued you until in self defence you offered up the only possession you had. A tiny can of beer. He got what he deserved. He got what was coming to him.

GRAEME: He just sat next to me.

CLAUDIA: And for that – he will pay !

PAUSE. **CLAUDIA OPENS THE DOOR.**

CLAUDIA: I'll draw up the letter. Lynne will see you out.

GRAEME: Is it going to be alright then ?

CLAUDIA: Maybe. Maybe not. But there is some light at the end of our very dark tunnel. And at least if it doesn't work it'll tie them up in some red tape until I can think of something that will.

**GRAEME COMES TO THE DOOR. HE LOOKS OUT. HE LOOKS BACK AT CLAUDIA. PAUSE.**

GRAEME: I'll be going then.

CLAUDIA: Thanks for coming in. And give my love to Janine.

**GRAEME LOOKS AT CLAUDIA.**

GRAEME: Your mother and I haven't lived together for two years Claudia.

CLAUDIA: Of course. Well ... you should probably give her a call, Dad. (SLIGHT PAUSE) My ten o'clock.

**GRAEME STARTS TO EXIT. HE STOPS AND LOOKS BACK. PAUSE. CLAUDIA SMILES. GRAEME SAYS NOTHING.**

**GRAEME TURNS AND EXITS. CLAUDIA CLOSSES THE DOOR.**

PAUSE. **CLAUDIA WALKS SLOWLY TO THE DESK. SHE RESTS BOTH HANDS ON IT, LOOKING DOWN.**

**LYNNE ENTERS**

LYNNE: Miss Davids. Your ten o'clock is here.

**CLAUDIA DOES NOT RESPOND.**

LYNNE: Miss Davids ? Are you alright ?

**CLAUDIA TURNS AND STANDS UPRIGHT**

CLAUDIA: Ten o'clock. Yes. Show him in. Show him in.

**LYNNE EXITS. CLAUDIA STANDS WATCHING THE DOOR.**

LIGHTS FADE.

END PLAY.

**VICIOUS TREATS : PLAY 4**

**The  
Celine Dion  
Songbook**

### Cast

**TRACEY** a wife and mother, 30s

**PAUL** her husband, 30s

### Setting

Kitchen of a semi-detached house.

### Time

Night.2am.

### Production History

**The Celine Dion Songbook** was first produced as part of Ten by Ten at The Darlinghurst Theatre in Sydney in 2002. Directed by Ian McGregor.

In 2003 the play was chosen for reading at The Last Frontier Theatre Conference, Valdez, Alaska.

It was then produced in 2004 as part of Vicious Streaks by ROAR Theatre Company at The Darlinghurst Theatre, Sydney. Directed by George Ogilvie

In 2005 **The Celine Dion Songbook** was produced as part of The Festival of Ten at SUNY Brockport in Rochester, USA. Directed by Dick St George. The play was awarded third place for best play in the festival.

**The Celine Dion Songbook.**

Kitchen. 2am

**PAUL** sits at the kitchen table, a cup of coffee and notepad and pen on the table in front of him. He is still. Long pause. **TRACEY** enters, holding a syringe.

**TRACEY:** He seems to be quiet now.

**TRACEY PLACES THE SYRINGE IN A DISPOSAL UNIT. SHE REMOVES HER GLOVES. SHE GOES TO THE SINK AND WASHES HER HANDS, THEN SHE BEGINS CLEANING SOME SMALL BOTTLES. NEXT SHE OPENS A SMALL BOX FULL OF VIALS. SHE BEGINS CHECKING THEM, HOLDING THEM UP AGAINST THE LIGHT.**

**TRACEY:** Darling, I said he seems to be alright. We must go to Doctor Bourke again tomorrow. I'm running out of Dexihedrine. Have we still got that spare script we got last month from Doctor Ryan. We should get some Tamochotil at the same time. We must remember to claim for that. I don't think we got the full amount. We can get sixty percent, I think. What did we get last time ? Do you remember that nice lady we spoke to who said we could get sixty percent ? I think it was Barbara. Or Betty. Something beginning with B. Do you remember ? Darling ?

**PAUSE. TRACEY CLOSSES THE BOX. SHE GOES TO THE TABLE AND CHECKS PAUL'S COFFEE. SHE TAKES THE CUP AND GOES BACK TO THE SINK.**

**TRACEY:** Finished ? Another one ? What's the time ? Maybe we should go to bed. You have to drop me off on the clinic before work. I have to pick up those Test results. I'll just give him the Lachmose. (PAUSE. SHE STOPS AND LOOKS AT PAUL.) Paul ?

**PAUL:** Peter will be six in September.

**TRACEY:** That's right.

**PAUL:** September the twenty first.

**TRACEY:** Yes.

**PAUL:** How many Doctors do you think he's seen in that six years ?

**TRACEY:** (LAUGHS) What ?

PAUL: How many Doctors do you think he's seen in that six years ?

TRACEY: I heard you - it's just such an odd question.

PAUL: One hundred and thirty seven.

TRACEY: What ?

PAUL: (INDICATING PAD) I've worked it out. One hundred and thirty seven.

TRACEY: Well, it's a lot. I guess it could be right.

PAUL: Trust me. That's an average of twenty two point eight per year.  
Give or take.

TRACEY: Give or take what ?

PAUL: You can check it if you like.

TRACEY: I haven't got a calculator.

PAUL: It's right.

PAUSE.

TRACEY: What's your point ?

PAUL: Nothing. Just an interesting statistic.

TRACEY: (SMILING) Maybe we should put up a chart. Keep score.  
Another coffee or bed ?

PAUL: How much money do you think we've spent on those one  
hundred and thirty seven doctors ? Roughly.

TRACEY: I have no idea.

PAUL: One hundred and forty thousand dollars. Give or take.

TRACEY: It could be. The insurance did cover some of it. Before it ... .

PAUL: Not too mention - needles, syringes, medications, pills, ampules,  
gloves, cotton wool, disinfectant, rubber sheets, thermometers,  
blood pumps, stethoscopes -

TRACEY: Again, I don't see your point.

PAUL: But this is the big one. Money, Doctors - they don't come near this one. Time. How much time do you think has been spent in seeing those Doctors, in administering those medications, in monitoring that faint little heartbeat ?

TRACEY: He's your son. It shouldn't be about time.

PAUL: Fourteen hours a day. Fourteen hours a day for three hundred and sixty five days a year for six years. Let me do the sums for you. (READING FROM THE PAD) Fourteen hours times three hundred and sixty five days equals five thousand, one hundred and ten hours per year. Five thousand one hundred and ten hours times six years, give us a grand total of thirty thousand, six hundred and sixty hours. That's one million, eight hundred and thirty nine thousand and six hundred minutes.

TRACEY: So you can count.

PAUL: Or one hundred and ten million, three hundred and seventy six thousand seconds.

TRACEY: And I would not take back one single second. (PAUSE) Paul - please. It's late. Peter needs his Lachmose. I'll just give him his shot and we'll go to bed. You just need some rest for those tired eyes. And tired brain - after all those sums.

PAUL: How many children in the world suffer from Peter's condition ?

TRACEY: I don't think they know.

PAUL: Give or take.

**TRACEY LOOKS AT PAUL. PAUSE.**

PAUL: Humour me.

TRACEY: Well Peter is the only one in Australia. That we know. There's that little girl in Scotland. We spoke to her mother. The boy in India we heard about. There were two in Germany. And that girl in Japan. Wasn't there a couple in China ?

PAUL: Three. That's one in England, one in Scotland, one in India, one in Japan, two in Germany and three in China. That's of course that we know. There could be many more - in Africa, Thailand, perhaps the States.

TRACEY: Perhaps.

PAUL: But of those we know, what was the maximum age any of them reached ? The maximum.

TRACEY: I couldn't tell you - off hand.

PAUL: I think you can.

TRACEY: It's not something I like to think about.

PAUL: I'm asking you to think about it.

TRACEY: Honestly I couldn't -

PAUL: Give or take.

TRACEY: I wish you would stop saying that.

PAUL: Give or take.

PAUSE.

TRACEY: Well, the Indian girl was five when she passed away, I think. And the three in China were a bit younger.

PAUL: Four. All three died when they were four.

TRACEY: The girl in Scotland was at least seven. And I'm sure the boy in Germany was older than that.

PAUL: Seven years, five months and fourteen days.

TRACEY: The girl in Germany is still alive and so is that girl in Japan.

PAUL: They are both two years old.

TRACEY: You must remember of course that they're making advances all the time. Doctor Robinson said that they're making real breakthroughs. And the girl's mother in Scotland. She said if they'd used more Lachmose, she's sure she would've made a least another year.

PAUL: But she didn't. Seven years, five months and fourteen days. (PAUSE) How old is Peter ?

TRACEY: I still don't see your point.

PAUL: How old is Peter ?

TRACEY: I'm giving Peter his Lachmose. You should go to bed.

PAUL: Five years, ten months and eighteen days. *If*, and it's only if, he were to match that boy in Germany that would give him seventeen months and twenty six days. That's not even a year and a half. And that's if he makes it that far.

TRACEY: I still don't get your point. (SILENCE.) (GOING TO THE BOX)  
I'm giving Peter his shot.

PAUL: My point is this : that even if you took his blood pressure every five minutes, consulted every specialist in the whole country every day, pumped him full of Lachmose till he couldn't take anymore, took one thousand tests and fed him a million pills - the most, the absolute most that you could hope for is that he might - just might - live for another year and a half.

TRACEY: Where is this going, Paul ? Where are you taking me ?

PAUL: Eighteen months. Five hundred and forty days. Two thousand, one hundred and sixty hours. If you're lucky.

TRACEY: Some children don't live even that long. Every hour is precious.

PAUL: If - you're lucky.

TRACEY: If *we're* lucky. There's always the first time.

PAUSE. **TRACEY** PREPARES THE NEEDLE. **PAUL** GOES TO HER AND TAKES THE NEEDLE.

PAUL: Give it up.

TRACEY: Paul - give me the needle.

PAUL: Give it up.

TRACEY: Give it to me.

PAUL: (MOVING AWAY) Give it up.

TRACEY: I don't understand what you're doing. Give me the needle.

PAUL: Give - it - up.

TRACEY: What are you doing ?

PAUL: Your obsession to keep this child alive. It's sucking you dry – from the inside out. Ever since the second he was born you've had this obsession. No matter what it took, no matter how many Doctors, no matter what the cost, no matter how much time - just so he could have a few more precious seconds of his miserable existence.

TRACEY: You're tired. You don't know what you're saying.

PAUL: A few more wheezy breaths to help stretch out your futile quest.

TRACEY: Your son's name is Peter. Call him by his name. But you can't. It's too painful. It hurts too much.

PAUL: Do you really think he's happy ? Do you think Pete likes being jabbed every five seconds, poked and prodded all day and all night - never a second's peace. Watched every moment in a glass cage - like a bloody lab rat. The poor little kid. If it was up to him he'd have left us years ago. Left his never-ending pain filled excuse for a life. Christ, he's only holding on because he sees you're so obsessed with prolonging his agony.

TRACEY: I'm going to bed.

**PAUL TAKES OFF HIS WEDDING RING. HE HOLDS IT UP.**

PAUL: I have this ring.

TRACEY: I have one too.

PAUL: I was married eight years ago. My wife was a beautiful young woman. Intelligent, funny, full of life. Then I had a child. We knew from the start, something was wrong. He wasn't going to make it.

TRACEY: There's always the first time. There's always one.

PAUL: And somewhere, I don't know quite where and when , but somewhere - I lost my wife. That beautiful young woman became a desperate, tired hollow shell - who just couldn't forgive herself for giving birth to an imperfect son.

TRACEY: Peter is my child. I am his mother. It's my duty to give him the best possible care I can. You're his father - it's your duty to protect him as best you can.

PAUL: I have done my duty. I have done more than my duty. I have given Pete all the time, money and love that I could possibly give. I have no more left. I have done enough. Now I want my wife back. I want my marriage back. I want our life to start again.

TRACEY: There's always one.

PAUL: It's time to give my son what he wants.

TRACEY: And what he wants is to be left to die !

PAUSE. **PAUL GOES TO TRACEY, HE TAKES HER HAND.**

PAUL: Give it up my wife. Let him go. We've done enough. Stop blaming yourself. It wasn't your fault. Or mine. It was a fluke. A lucky chance. One in ten million. We are not too blame here.

TRACEY: Then who is ? Why was my son born imperfect ? Why was he chosen for this condition ? This affliction ? Why did he have to suffer this horrendous pain ? If we're not too blame - then who is ? Who will pay for this ? Who will bear this burden ? Who will cherish his little life ?

PAUL: He has no life.

TRACEY: Who else will make him live ?

PAUL: No one can make him live.

TRACEY: I love my son.

PAUL: And I love him too. That's why I know it's time to let him go. (PAUSE) I'm not going to take the blame anymore. I've blamed myself for long enough. I'm too tired to do it anymore. We have given Pete six years. We have done all that was asked. Now it's time to let him go.

TRACEY: We can do more.

PAUL: Just for tonight, just for one moment, just for Pete - don't give him the Lachmose. Let it go. Give it up.

TRACEY: We all have to die sometime.

PAUL: Pete's time has come.

PAUSE.

TRACEY: It's nearly two am. It's late. We're tired. I'm going to forget this conversation ever happened. Put it aside as an awful dream. I'm going to take my son his medication.

WE HEAR A COUGH OFF, THEN A FAINT CRY. **TRACEY GOES TO PAUL.**

TRACEY: I'm going to give my son what he needs.

THE CRYING GROWS LOUDER. **TRACEY** REACHES FOR THE SYRINGE. **PAUL** GRABS HER HAND.

PAUL: What happened to our plans ? Our hopes ? Our dreams ? You were going to start your own business. You were going to make dresses, just like you did on our wedding day.

TRACEY: Things got in the way.

PAUL: He got in the way. We were going to have another child. And another. We were going to have a family.

TRACEY: We do have a family.

PAUL: We have one sick kid, wheezing and coughing his way to an early grave.

THE CRYING GROWS LOUDER AND THEN SUDDENLY STOPS. SILENCE. **TRACEY** BEGINS TO STRUGGLE.

TRACEY: I must go to my son.

PAUL: You've done enough.

TRACEY: Don't make me choose.

PAUL: He's not going to live.

TRACEY: Don't make me choose.

PAUL: We've done all that we can.

TRACEY: (SCREAMS) Don't - make - me - choose !!!

**TRACEY** STRUGGLES AND BREAKS FREE OF **PAUL** BUT SHE SLIPS AND BUMPS INTO THE TABLE. THE BOX OF PILLS FALLS TO THE FLOOR, SPILLING PILLS AND SMALL BOTTLES EVERYWHERE.

**TRACEY** SCRAMBLES TO PICK UP THE PILLS AND PUT THEM BACK IN THE BOTTLES.

PAUL: No Tracey. You chose. Pete or me. Right now. You make a decision because in front of god, I swear. I have no more to give, I want my life back. I want my marriage back. When I stood at that altar, beneath those trees, on that day - this is not what I wanted. This is not what I dreamt of.

PAUL: (CONT) This is not why I took those vows. I don't want this to be my life. I'm not going to let it be my life anymore.

**PAUL TAKES OFF HIS RING. HE LAYS IT ON THE TABLE.**

PAUL: Time to choose. Life or death. Us or him. Duty or love.

TRACEY: I love my son. I want my son to live.

PAUL: So do I. But whatever we do. No matter how hard we try. He won't. He can't. He's going to die. Don't fight it any longer. Don't make it any harder for him. Let him go.

TRACEY: I can't make that choice.

PAUL: Then let me.

**PAUL PICKS UP THE SYRINGE. HE GOES TO THE SINK AND SQUIRTS THE LACHMOSE DOWN THE DRAIN.**

TRACEY: (RUNNING TO HIM) No. No !!! You murderer. You've killed my son.

**SHE COLLAPSES TO THE FLOOR - CRYING.**

TRACEY: They'll be a trial. They won't let you get away with this. You will die.

**TRACEY LIES SOBBING ON THE FLOOR. LONG PAUSE. PAUL GOES SLOWLY TO THE SINK. HE PICKS UP THE COFFEE CUP AND WASHES IT. HE PUSHES THE CHAIR UNDERNEATH THE TABLE AND CLOSES THE NOTE PAD.**

PAUL: I'm going to bed. I'm going to sleep. Tomorrow - our new life will begin. (HE STARTS TO LEAVE.) I'll leave the light on.

**PAUL STARTS TO LEAVE. TRACEY REMAINS ON THE FLOOR**

PAUL: Turn it off when you come.

**PAUL EXITS.**

**LIGHTS FADE.**

**VICIOUS TREATS: PLAY 5**

**The First  
Fireworks**

**Cast**

**HELEN**

**DAWN**

**Setting**

A park bench.

**Time**

New Year's Eve.

**Production History**

**The First Fireworks** was first performed as part of 'Vicious Streaks' at the Darlinghurst Theatre, Sydney in 2004. Directed by George Ogilvie.

**The First Fireworks.**

Sydney, Australia. New Year's Eve. Close to midnight.

A bench on a hillside.

**DAWN**, a frail woman in her sixties enters, wearing a white hospital gown. Her feet are bare. She slowly makes her way to the bench. She sits on the bench, panting heavily.  
Pause.

**HELEN**, a well-dressed woman in her late thirties enters.

HELEN: Mum ? Mum !

SHE GOES TO **DAWN**.

HELEN: What are you doing ? Dad's going out of his mind.

DAWN: He'll be alright.

HELEN: The whole hospital's turned upside down. Everybody's looking for you.

DAWN: But you're the only one who found me.

PAUSE.

HELEN: How did you get up here ?

DAWN: There's a hole in the fence.

HELEN: I know but how did you get up here ? The steps almost killed me.

DAWN: I'm not sure.

PAUSE.

HELEN: It's a good spot. Wonder more people don't get up here.

DAWN: They don't know about the hole.

PAUSE.

DAWN: Shouldn't you be at your party ?

HELEN: I was until Dad called and told me you'd vanished.

DAWN: He will be annoyed.

HELEN: Dad ?

DAWN: No. What's his name ?

HELEN: You know his name.

DAWN: Do I ? What is it again ? Gordon, Gormond –

HELEN: Garan.

DAWN: That's right – Garan. Sounds like some kind of rash. "Oh no. I've got a nasty case of Garan on my arse."

HELEN: Mum, he's my husband.

DAWN: More fool you. I always liked that other one. Simon. He was –

HELEN: Wet.

DAWN: Considerate. He was always so nice to me.

HELEN: Probably fancied you.

DAWN: Me ? Really ?

HELEN: Really.

DAWN: But I'm thirty years older than him.

HELEN: Trust me.

DAWN: Garan reminds me too much of someone else.

HELEN: Who ?

DAWN: My husband.

HELEN: Dad's alright.

DAWN: You try being married to him for forty years.

PAUSE.

HELEN: Come on, we better get you back.

DAWN: I'm not going back.

HELEN: Don't be silly Mum. Come on.

DAWN: Helen – I'm not going back. I hate that awful room full of all that stuff. People keep ringing me and saying "What can I bring you ?" I say, "Don't bring me anything !" I don't want any more things.

**DAWN TAPS THE BENCH ALONG SIDE HER. HELEN SITS.**

DAWN: Beautiful clothes. They look very expensive.

HELEN: They are. So I guess Gormond is good for one thing.

DAWN: (TAPPING HELEN'S STOMACH) Maybe two.

DAWN: How did you work it out where I was ?

HELEN: It wasn't hard. New Year's Eve. Where else would you be ?

DAWN: My chair. My view. Surprised you remembered where it was.

HELEN: Come on Mum, it hasn't been that long.

DAWN: Five years.

HELEN: Five ? Really.

**DAWN NODS. PAUSE.**

HELEN: I still remember when you first brought me here. I was eight years old.

DAWN: Long time ago.

HELEN: I remember it like yesterday. We got here just as the sun was going down. My little legs got tired so you had to carry me up the last fifty steps. And I kept asking: "What is it Mum ? Why are we here ?" And you just smiled and said : "We're going to my chair. The best view in the city."

DAWN: I remember.

HELEN: And I kept asking: "But what are we going to see ?" And you wouldn't answer. You just put your finger over my lips and said:

DAWN: "You'll see my love."

HELEN: And then when it got dark you pointed to the sky and said “Look” and suddenly the sky was full of light. Huge explosions of colour. Orange, pink, blue, green. And noise. Terrible noise. I had to cover my ears the explosions were so loud. I’ll never forget it. Looking up at that clear night sky, the colour and the stars. The muffled explosions ringing in my ear. It was my first fireworks.

DAWN: You never forget your first fireworks.

PAUSE.

HELEN: Did you ever bring Dad here ?

**DAWN SHAKES HER HEAD.**

DAWN: No matter how much I loved your father I needed to keep something to myself. And this was mine. My chair and my fireworks.

HELEN: But you brought me here.

DAWN: Back then when I thought of you - it wasn’t like we were two people. We were the same person so it made sense to bring you. I knew it would mean the same for you as it did to me. Maybe I thought you needed to see it.

PAUSE.

HELEN: Do you still think that ? We’re one person.

DAWN: Sometimes. (PAUSE) I knew you’d come. I knew you’d find me. I wanted it to be just the two of us. Me and you.

HELEN: It’s not fair to Dad. He should be here too.

DAWN: I’ve said my goodbyes to him. And besides forty year’s of being a wife, thirty years of being a mother. About time to just be me.

HELEN: Mum –

DAWN: This is my last fireworks Helen. And I wanted to share them with you. If I can’t play favourites now, then when can I. (PAUSE) Can I tell you something ?

HELEN: Of course.

DAWN: Big secret. Biggest secret ever. Never told before.

HELEN: Tell me.

DAWN: Not even your father knows.

HELEN: Cross my heart and hope to die.

DAWN: Before you were a born - I always wanted a boy.

HELEN: Mum !

DAWN: My own little Tiger Tim. My Percy Piddler.

HELEN: Mum !

DAWN: But once you came out – once I saw the child you were, the woman you were growing into – I got down on my hand and knees and thanked God for sending me such a gift. I have been so lucky to have you as my daughter. (PAUSE. **DAWN PRESSES HER EAR TO HELEN'S STOMACH.**) Promise me something.

HELEN: What ?

DAWN: That you'll bring her one day to watch the fireworks. And tell her about me.

HELEN: Of course.

DAWN: What was, what is and what is about to be. Three generations of Pringles.

HELEN: Our name is Heath.

DAWN: My husband's name is Heath.

HELEN: Mum !

DAWN: My name is Pringle. And so is yours. Helen Pringle Heath.

HELEN: It's actually Rogers now.

DAWN: But you're still a Pringle. You are continuing in a long line of proud, strong Pringle women. (PAUSER) I remember when we almost lost you. About a month before you were due.

HELEN: Don't remind me. I still get goose bumps.

DAWN: I woke up in the middle of the night. Blood everywhere. Neil rushed me to the hospital. I was haemorrhaging. Seemed you were just too big for me to keep inside. They thought they were going to lose you. And me. Had to get you out – right away.

HELEN: Christ.

DAWN: And they did.

HELEN: Lucky for me.

DAWN: Your father sat beside my bed all night. Holding my hand. I think that's why I made it through the night. Hung in so long. Just looking up at his eyes. I knew he wouldn't be able to bear losing me. So I pulled through. I survived. Like my mother before me and her mother before. We're survivors. Just like you. That's why I never had any more children.

HELEN: I feel like I should say sorry.

DAWN: Why? We already had the most wonderful child you could hope for. A beautiful baby girl. How could we begrudge God that.

**HELEN WIPES AWAY A TEAR.**

DAWN: Don't be sad my daughter. I've had a good life. People who loved me. A husband who worshipped me. A daughter. I had a home. I had a family.

HELEN: I'm going to miss you.

DAWN: And I'm going to miss you. Just don't be so successful in your work you forget to be a good Mum. And if Gormond ever starts rooting around – tell him to piss off.

HELEN: Thanks for the advice.

DAWN: Your welcome.

**HELEN SMILES. DAWN LIES DOWN ON THE BENCH. SHE PUTS HER HEAD ON HELEN'S LAP.**

DAWN: I'm just going to lie down for a little while. Wake me up when they start.

HELEN: Mum ...

DAWN: Quiet now. No more words. (BEAT) No ... more ... words.

**DAWN** CLOSES HER EYES. PAUSE. WE HEAR A DISTANT EXPLOSION.

FIREWORKS EXPLODE OVER HEARD, SHOWERING THEM IN  
BRIGHT BURSTS OF COLOUR.

HELEN: Mum ... It's starting. (**DAWN** DOES NOT RESPOND.) It's starting.

BUT **DAWN** DOES NOT MOVE. **HELEN** WATCHES THE FIREWORKS.

FADE.