EXTRACT

DESIRE

a play in two acts

by

Alex Broun

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“You shut your mouth

How can you say

I go about things the wrong way?

I am human and I need to be loved

Just like everybody else does.

- **The Smiths**

“How soon is now?”

"Surface surface surface"

- **Bret Easton Ellis**

"American Psycho"

Characters

LARA
GERALD
PATRICK
KATE

Time

The present.

Scene

Sydney, Australia.
Various locations around the inner city.

Notes on the Music

Each scene is named after a specific song by either U2 or The Smiths. It is hoped the lyrics of these songs will give the audience, actors and directors a key to a greater understanding of each scene. Except when in the nightclub (Act 1: Scenes 4,5,6 and 7) it is possible that a portion of each song could be played immediately before the scene it gives its name to.

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.

DESIRE

was first performed by

The New Mercury Theatre

at

The Crossroads Theatre
Sydney, Australia

On April the 8th, 1994

with the following cast:

PATRICK:	**Morgan Smallbone**
LARA:	**Christine Stephen-Daly**
KATE:	**Dee Smart**
GERALD:	**Christopher Mayer**

The production was directed by the author and designed by **Greg Perano.**

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 stuff 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 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.