EXTRACT

Just Once

a play

by

Alex Broun and Charlotte Broun

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This play won The Sydney Theatre Company's Youth Commission's Scheme in 1985 and was read at the Australian National Playwright's Conference later the same year.

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Just Once

was first performed by The Australian Theatre for Young People
on Thursday 17 July 1986 at The Rocks' Theatre, Sydney
with the following cast (In Order of Appearance):

ASTRADYNE:	Imogen Banks
GEORGE:	Lisa Hensley
FLETCHER:	Daniel Cordeaux
RINO:	Morgan Lewis
MAN:	Larry Turnbull
WOODS:	Mark Ferguson
YOUTH:	Felix Williamson

The production was directed by Colette Rayment
Assisted by Adam Cook
Designed by Genevieve Bluett
Dramaturgy by Nick Enright

"There is another world, but it is in this one."

- Paul Eluard

"You know what happens?
People go to the movies instead of moving."

- Tennessee Williams,
THE GLASS MENAGERIE.

Characters

RINO	thirteen
FLETCHER	his best friend, eighteen
GEORGE	Flectcher's girlfriend, seventeen
CONSTABLE MARK WOODS	a young Cop, twenty one
ASTRADYNE	a dealer, early twenties
MAN	well dressed, mid forties
YOUTH	Private School boy, late teens

Setting

Kings Cross, Sydney

Time

Summer, mid 1980s

Synopsis

JUST ONCE takes place on a hot summer city night in King's Cross, Sydney, Australia. It tells the story of three teenagers caught up in a lifestyle with no rhyme, nor reason.

The play attempts to show their anger, disappointment and frustration with the world and with themselves.

The play also explores the fantasies (and substances) they use to escape from day to day life, and shows how for some, at certain points, the only way to go is out.

Act 1

Scene 1

Saturday Night 10pm. Summer.

SCENE: A SMALL LANE AT THE BACK OF A PUB. THERE IS A STAFF ENTRANCE TO THE PUB UP LEFT WITH SOME STEPS BELOW IT. TWO LARGE GARBAGE BINS SIT DOWN RIGHT. GIG POSTERS COVER THE WALL.

THE LIGHTS COME UP TO SUGGEST STREET LIGHT. "THE HOWARD ELIMINATORS" CAN BE HEARD PLAYING INSIDE THE PUB.

ENTER **ASTRADYNE** THROUGH STAFF DOOR, WITH AN UNLIT CIGARETTE IN HER MOUTH. SHE LOOKS LEFT, THEN RIGHT. SHE OPENS HER HAND TO REVEAL $40. SHE COUNTS IT THEN HIDES THE MONEY IN AN INSIDE POCKET. SHE LIGHTS THE CIGARETTE AND EXITS.

ENTER **GEORGE**, ALSO THROUGH STAFF DOOR, WITH A DRINK IN HER HAND. SHE SITS ON THE PAVEMENT AND PULLS OUT TWO HITS OF SPEED. SHE PREPARES THEM ON A SMALL MIRROR. ENTER **FLETCHER** THROUGH STAFF DOOR, CARRYING TOBACCO. PAUSE. **GEORGE** KISSES HIM.

FLETCHER: Just making sure you're alright.

GEORGE: I can look after myself. What you got?

FLETCHER: Tobacco, for Uncle Bob. Six pack of McCarver's Special Blend. He asked me to get it when I phoned him this arvo. Cost me thirty bucks! (PAUSE) Have you thought anymore about coming up with me? Uncle Bob says he'll give you a job too. He'll pay us fifty bucks a week each, cash. So - what do you say?

GEORGE SNORTS TWO LINES. SHE STANDS AND LETS THE SPEED TAKE EFFECT.

GEORGE: Excellent song. (SHE WALKS TO **FLETCHER** AND INDICATES SPEED) In your considered opinion Fletcher, one line or two?

FLETCHER: Can't you forget about that for one second?!

FLETCHER KNOCKS THE SPEED FROM **GEORGE'S** HAND.
GEORGE LOOKS AT WASTED SPEED.

GEORGE: Brilliant Fletcher! Brilliant! You owe me twenty bucks.

FLETCHER: You're always out of it. I can never talk to you.

GEORGE: Out of it. I'm not always out of it. Well ... not much. Not now.

FLETCHER: Then listen to me. All I'm trying to tell you is that I want you to come to the country with me.

GEORGE: Why?

FLETCHER: Why do you think? It'll be just like that day in the gardens. Once you get up there, once you get that fresh air inside you, you'll forget about everything else and just worry about being happy. And I know we can be happy. (PAUSE) I want you to be with me.

PAUSE.

GEORGE: Okay. I'll come. But if I don't like it after a week I can go. No questions asked.

FLETCHER: Suit yourself. But I'll tell you now, once you get up there - you won't want to go.

GEORGE: We shall see what we shall see, Fletcher. How do we get there?

FLETCHER: Dawn train. Tomorrow.

GEORGE: Tomorrow?

FLETCHER: It's the quick or the dead.

GEORGE: Got enough money for the tickets?

FLETCHER: Well, I did. The tobacco cost me more than I thought. But don't worry, me and Rino know how to fix that. I'll come and get you later. (HANDING **GEORGE** TOBACCO) Mind this for me would you?

GEORGE: (PUTTING IT IN HER BAG) Sure.

FLETCHER KISSES HER.

GEORGE: See you soon.

FLETCHER RUNS OFF LEFT. **GEORGE** EXITS INTO THE PUB AS **RINO** ENTERS RIGHT, READING A "STAR WARS" COMIC. HE ACTS OUT THE STORY TO AN IMAGINARY AUDIENCE.

RINO: 'Star Wars. Chapter four: In battle with Darth Vader. The story so far ...' (TO AUDIENCE) We're kind of in a hurry now, so pay attention. ' Hans Solo, Chewbacca and Luke Skywalker have been captured by Imperial Forces and taken aboard the Death Star, the all but invulnerable battleship of the Empire.

THE **MAN** ENTERS FROM THE LEFT. HE WATCHES **RINO** FROM A DISTANCE.

RINO: However, our heroes have somehow managed to escape and rescue the beautiful Princess Leia from her prison cell deep inside the space fortress. But as we pick up the story, Darth Vader's Storm troopers have cornered the valiant rebels in a cell corridor. (PRODUCING A COATHANGER AND USING IT AS A LASER PISTOL) "Solo, they're getting closer." "Tell me something I don't know kid." "Quit complaining. Just get us out of here." "Aaaaaoooohhh!!!" Suddenly Hans is struck down by a fearful blast.

RINO FALLS TO THE GROUND. THE **MAN** SMILES AND STARTS TO MOVE TOWARDS **RINO**. SUDDENLY HE NOTICES SOMETHING OFF RIGHT. THE **MAN** EXITS.

RINO: "This looks like curtains kid." "Give me your gun." "What can you do?" "Aaaaaoooohhh!!!" With amazing courage Luke charges at the Storm troopers, firing both pistols.

CONSTABLE MARK WOODS ENTERS. HE WATCHES **RINO** SILENTLY.

RINO: "You show 'em kid." Somehow Luke manages to clear a passage to a tiny metal slot in the wall of the corridor. "Quick everyone, down this chute." But before anyone can move, Luke is sucked down by a fearful blast of hot air. As Luke is propelled down the chute head first, he is horrified to see massed wreckage below. It was the garbage chute! He speeds out of control (**RINO** REELS BACKWARDS) into the (**RINO** CRASHES INTO **WOODS**. PAUSE. THEN AS HE TURNS TO FACE **WOODS**) rotting carcass of a series XY Android.'

RINO LOOKS AT **WOODS**. **WOODS** LOOKS AT **RINO**. WOODS TAKES THE COATHANGER.

WOODS: (MOVING AWAY) Turn out your pockets.

RINO DROPS HIS COMIC AND TURNS OUT HIS POCKETS. THEY CONTAIN A PHANTOM RING, NEATLY FOLDED PIECE OF PAPER, TWO DOLLARS AND A HANKIE. **WOODS** SORTS THROUGH **RINO'S** BELONGINGS. **WOODS** FINISHES. PAUSE.

WOODS: Alright. Put 'em away. (INDICATING COATHANGER) What do you use this for?

RINO: Nothing. I was just mucking around. I found it in one of those bins.

WOODS: (CONSULTING NOTE BOOK) Then you wouldn't know anything about a Blue Laser, licence number BFG 108, that went missing from the corner of Orwell and Victoria streets at approximately 11.15 pm on Thursday January the 16th.

PAUSE.

RINO: No.

WOODS: Pellizerro isn't it?

RINO: How do you know?

WOODS: We got a call from some Social Worker bloke this morning, asking if we'd seen you.

RINO: Did you really? I must be pretty important if they're out looking for me eh? But hold on, how did you know I was me?

WOODS: You mean there's more than one thirteen year old boy of Greek parentage living on the streets who thinks he's Luke Skywalker?

RINO: My name's Pellizerr - o.

WOODS: That's what I said.

RINO: So I'm Italian, not Greek. All Italian names end in I or O, like Embitti or Pellizerro, and all Greek names end in o-u-s. Like Kaligeropolous.

WOODS: I'll keep it in mind. (WRITING IN NOTEBOOK) Name?

RINO: But you already know it?

WOODS: Full name?

RINO: Rino Giovanni Pellizerro.

WOODS: Place of residence. You do have a place of residence don't you?

RINO: Yes. 17 Namoi Road, Matraville.

WOODS: Postcode?

RINO: 2036.

WOODS: Phone number?

RINO: 9558 - Where's Bruce?

WOODS: Who?

RINO: Bruce McDonald. He's a Jack too.

WOODS: You mean Constable McDonald?

RINO: He said I could call him Bruce.

WOODS: I don't think so. Phone number.

RINO: 9558 5974. Where's Constable McDonald then?

WOODS: He got transferred midweek. I'm his replacement. Constable Woods.

RINO: They sent him away?

WOODS: They didn't do anything. He asked for a transfer. School last attended?

RINO: Matraville Boys' High.

WOODS LOOKS AT **RINO**.

RINO: But why would he ask for a transfer?

WOODS: Don't ask me. I only met him once. Father?

RINO: Vincenzo Pellizerro. But he's dead.

PAUSE.

WOODS: Mother?

RINO: Gabriella Pellizerro.

WOODS: Does Mrs. Pellizerro know you're wandering around the streets alone, after ten on a Saturday night?

RINO: I'm waiting for somebody.

WOODS: Who?

RINO: Constable McDonald. We always meet here every Saturday night when he gets off. Didn't he even leave a message for me?

WOODS: No.

RINO: He didn't even say goodbye.

PAUSE.

WOODS: (LOOKING AT COMIC) Thirteen eh?

RINO: Yeah. Are you shocked?

WOODS: I'm shocked you're still reading Star Wars' comics. (INDICATING COATHANGER) Are you sure you found this in one of those bins? You do realise that it's a criminal offence to have this in your possession?

RINO: I was just playing.

WOODS: Being a minor I could charge you with Possession of Implement.

RINO: You could.

PAUSE. **WOODS** MOVES AWAY.

WOODS: You haven't heard of a heroin dealer called The Piper have you? He sells in the pub. Italian origin.

RINO: No. Why?

WOODS: A few of his clients decided to clean up their act recently, so he's -

RINO: Been giving them Hotshots has he?

WOODS: What's a Hotshot?

RINO: (LAUGHING) What's a Hotshot? How long have you been a cop? Okay. When junkies go clean, the dealers get worried they'll turn them in, so they get 'em. They track 'em down and inject them with bad stuff. Junkie dies, dealer's safe.