

Love your poison 2008

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A ten-minute play
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CAST:

MICK forties

YOUNGER MICK twenties (ghost from the past)

ROSIE forties, she wears a wig or a headscarf

YOUNGER ROSIE twenties (ghost from the past)

BEN their teenage son

SETTING: changed by lighting. A lounge room late at night/A bush block

TIME: present but fluid.

Suggested music: 'You made me love you.' Doris Day

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The older couple are in their lounge room late at night. She is unwell limping and hunched over a stick. There is a drinks cabinet. She is rifling through it. Their teenage son is asleep in a bed on the other side of the stage. MICK enters, and watches her for a moment before speaking.

MICK What are you looking for?

ROSIE *(startled)* Don't do that! I thought you'd gone to bed.

MICK Tell me what you're looking forI may be able to help.

ROSIE Whiskey.

MICK It's behind the Vodka. *(She holds it up to offer to him one.)*

MICK No.

ROSIE Have one, it might make you feel better. Come on, what's your poison? *(He nods no and flops into a chair.)*

MICK I nearly bought tickets for us yesterday ...Hamilton Island. They had a deal in the window...I was going to surprise you.

ROSIE Well it's lucky you didn't. I hate surprises. And I hate tropical weather...besides, my orchids will be out soon and I want to see them.

MICK I might suggest it to Ben then and see what he thinks.

ROSIE No, we can all stay put!

MICK He'd enjoy a holiday.

ROSIE He has school. Exams start soon. (BEAT)
Bloody inconvenient isn't it?

MICK What? (*He knows what she is talking about.*)
I don't feel like talking when you're like this

ROSIE Well I do!

MICK Stop now please. You're getting breathless

ROSIE Yes I am.

MICK I don't have to listen to this. (*He gets up.*)

ROSIE I know what I want. Everyone prearranges.

MICK Okay times up!

ROSIE I want people to enjoy themselves...except for you of course.
(BEAT) If you don't like it ... leave?

MICK And what would everyone think...if I moved out now...when you need me to take care of you. You can't even get up the stairs anymore.

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ROSIE I can.

MICK Bullshit.

ROSIE Anyway, I don't give a rat's arse what people think...never have.

MICK Well I do.

ROSIE So, that's why you're still here.

SFX of the bush, the lights change. Older ROSIE can see the younger couple. He cannot. A young ROSIE wanders on stage she is in a bush garden. Her clothes are dishevelled. She is holding a dog lead in her hand. She looks disoriented and has blood on her forehead. Young MICK approaches her.

YOUNG ROSIE I've lost the dog.

YOUNG MICK Just now?

YOUNG ROSIE I let him off the lead and...

YOUNG MICK Which way did he go?

YOUNG ROSIE I don't know. He's probably half way to the creek by now.

YOUNG MICK He'll come back. *(BEAT)*

I'm sorry. I am...you...

YOUNG ROSIE What?

YOUNG MICK When you say things like that. I can't help it... I just... lose it.

YOUNG ROSIE I mean it this time. *(BEAT)*

YOUNG MICK When you said it you did...but not now?

YOUNG ROSIE No... now, I really do. (*Slowly and firmly*) I have to go.

YOUNG MICK No you don't. You just think you do. (*BEAT*)

Where would you go? (*She doesn't respond*) A few moments when things don't go your own way and you push me and you keep pushing me (*She looks at him in disbelief*) you do Rosie! You've been doing it for years... until one day I can't stop...

YOUNG ROSIE One day?! (*Upset*) It is not okay. Get it!

YOUNG MICK I said I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

YOUNG ROSIE Go back to the house and leave me alone. I need to think.

YOUNG MICK It won't... I promise.

YOUNG ROSIE It will and you know it will.

YOUNG MICK No, I hate this tooI do...it's...it's not me.

YOUNG ROSIE It is.

YOUNG MICK I could see that guy in town. What was his name?

YOUNG ROSIE Tried that.

YOUNG MICK Someone else then. Someone different. You make me an appointment. I'll go...I will this time. I promise.

YOUNG ROSIE See who ever you like. (*BEAT*)

YOUNG MICK Come here.

YOUNG ROSIE No.

YOUNG MICK Please.

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She turns to face him. He walks over and takes her shoulders, moves her hair from her face and inspects her head.

YOUNG ROSIE *(She touches it.)* It's starting to swell.

Younger and older voices overlap for the next four lines.

YOUNG MICK Let's get some ice onto it.

YOUNG ROSIE I feel dizzy.

MICK What is it? Are you all right?

ROSIE Yes.

The older ROSIE throws back her whiskey and closes her eyes. Lights change back to lounge room, young couple exit

MICK Come on. You've had enough. Time for bed isn't it?

ROSIE *(distant)* You go.

He exits and goes to sit on his son's bed. Older ROSIE is dozing in a chair on the other side of the stage. Son sits bolt upright in bed.

SON Am I late? My alarm didn't go off. *(He shakes the clock.)*

MICK No you're not late.

SON What time is it?

MICK Three almost four.

SON In the morning, how long have you been sitting there?

MICK Not long.

SON Why?

MICK Why what?

SON Why are you sitting here?

MICK Can't sleep.

SON Why not? (*MICK shrugs.*)

SON Is Mum up?

MICK She's prowling about downstairs.

SON Doesn't she need sleep?

MICK She does. But not as much as you...sorry mate I'll leave you to it.

SON Dad... what is it?

MICK Nothing. Go to sleep now. (*BEAT*)

SON You know you don't have to worry about me.

MICK I'm sorry for waking you. Go back to sleep.

SON Mum's all right?

MICK nods yes and exits. The son lies down and turns his back. MICK returns to find ROSIE asleep in a chair with a glass in her hand, he leans over and looks at her closely to make sure she is breathing.

MICK Time for bed now isn't it.

ROSIE Where...Why did you?

MICK It's four o'clock.

ROSIE What?

MICK Rosie it's me. You've been dreaming. (*She grabs him.*)

ROSIE It was us... we were young ...here in this room.

MICK It was a dream. I don't want to have to come back down here in an hour and carry you up. Come on I'm tired.

ROSIE I'll go when I'm ready.

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MICK You can't get...

ROSIE I can sleep on the couch. *(BEAT) (Softer)* Have a nightcap
with me.

He hesitates then walks to the bar and goes to pour her another whiskey.

No, I've had enough whiskey. I want what you're having.

MICK Don't mix now it's too late.

He holds up Vodka and looks at the bottle.

This would make you sick.

ROSIE I am sick

He carefully pours her vodka and hands it to her.

MICK Are you...(scared)

ROSIE No

*He stiffens as she quickly throws most of the drink down. He places the bottle on
the cabinet and leaves his drink untouched.*

ROSIE You just want this over so you can get on with... so you can
set yourself up with someone new.

MICK Stop it. You'll wake Ben...

ROSIE He's awake. I heard you whispering up there before.

MICK He's trying to get back to sleep.

ROSIE Why did you wake him in the first place? *(BEAT)*

MICK You should be ashamed of yourself.

ROSIE You've probably got someone already. I wouldn't put it past
you.

The voice comes in on top of last line. Young MICK and young ROSIE enter.

Only older ROSIE can see them. Lights change.

YOUNG MICK If I'd known you'd keep seeing him...that this would go on for so long. I did the right thing ...move on they said. A hiccup they said. Happens in the best marriages. She won't do it again. She wouldn't bloody want to! Or, would she? Would she be that stupid that selfish and stupid to think I'd put up with more...shit! *(He grabs her roughly.)*

YOUNG ROSIE Let go! *(BEAT)*

YOUNG MICK I tried to forget ...every one told me to forget, nothing to remember they said...it won't happen again eh! For sure mate, it's over. Bullshit!

YOUNG ROSIE It is.

YOUNG MICK You've got guts. I'll give you that ... in the beginning I liked that about you...but not now. *(She breaks free and runs off, he follows her.)*

OLDER ROSIE is distressed. OLDER MICK puts his arm around her.

MICK I know you don't mean what you say. Rosie, I'm here... waiting. I want to be here. *(BEAT)*

ROSIE *(suddenly vulnerable)* My dreams....scare me.

MICK It's the alcohol

ROSIE It's not. *(She holds her head.)*

MICK You don't mean the things you say. I've always known that.

ROSIE Stop saying that...I do. We've played a game where you've coped because you've convinced yourself I don't when I do. *(BEAT)* We've been bastards to one another. And now it's too late.

MICK Give yourself a break. Give me a break everyone makes mistakes. We we're young. For Christ's sake Rosie, we stayed together almost every one we know didn't make it!

ROSIE *(Angry.)* Don't you understand that's why I drink... to try to forget how gutless I was...how I wasted... everyone else was up and out and I was left *(she points outside)* screaming...screaming under a full moon.

MICK Wasted?! We have a fantastic son, our own home, the bush outside the back door, what more did you want?

ROSIE *(losing it)* I drink to drown my sorrows. And now they've learned to swim.

MICK What! I can't stand anymore of this. I have to go to bed.

ROSIE Listen to me! *(She reaches out to him)* I loved someone once and you bullied me into staying with you! *(BEAT)* There I've said it. It's duty...the only reason you're here. You're lying to yourself if you think it's anything else.

MICK What about loyalty?

ROSIE There's no love. *(BEAT)*

MICK Love. Huh. Have another drink.

He pours her more vodka.

ROSIE Can't we be honest.... without you getting all....

MICK What! Hurt, pissed off...angry. Get Real!

ROSIE That's what I want to do.

MICK You're nuts.

ROSIE I want to see him before...

MICK (*Angry*) You what!

ROSIE You heard me.

MICK (*Angrier*) He's not coming here.

ROSIE I have three months...four at the most. Can't I just do what I
need to do before...(*He pours her more Vodka.*)

MICK Drink up, you'll have forgotten about this by tomorrow.

ROSIE I won't (*Holds up the glass.*) Look, I'll stop now. I won't have
another drink...ever. (*She slams down the glass.*) If you just
listen to what I'm saying.

MICK (*cryptically*) You don't have to stop.

ROSIE What? (*BEAT*)

MICK Have another one. (*Suddenly he grabs her wrist roughly*)

ROSIE You haven't touched yours?

He hands her the glass

MICK Come on. You love your poison.

She looks at him with disbelief and slowly finishes her drink. BLACKOUT