

**EXTRACT**

**SUNSET STRIP**  
**SUZIE MILLER**



CURRENCY PRESS  
SYDNEY

[ ] the  
uncertainty  
principle

GRIFFIN  
INDEPENDENT

*In loving memory of Leonie Zurnamer:  
Your humour, wisdom and courage still give us strength,  
guidance and so many laughs.*

‘Courage is found in unlikely places.’

— *J.R.R. Tolkien*

‘There is no value in life except what you choose to place  
upon it and no happiness in any place except what you bring  
to it yourself.’

— *Henry David Thoreau*

## CURRENCY PLAYS

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*Sunset Strip* was first produced by The Uncertainty Principle and Griffin Independent at The SBW Stables Theatre, Sydney, on 14 June 2017, with the following cast:

PHOEBE	Emma Jackson
TEDDY	Simon Lyndon
RAY	Lex Marinos
CAROLINE	Georgina Symes

Director, Anthony Skuse

Assistant director, Graeme McRae

Producers, Kate Armstrong-Smith and Laurence Rosier Staines

Set and costume designer, Emma Vine

Lighting and projection designer, Verity Hampson

Sound designer and composer, Benjamin Freeman

Stage manager, Gayda de Mesa

## **CHARACTERS**

PHOEBE, about 36, beautiful, fragile, impulsive, charismatic, a single mother whose children are not with her

CAROLINE, about 38, Phoebe's older sister, a lawyer who lives in the big city, clever, serious, in control

TEDDY, two years older than Caroline, Phoebe's lover, a small-town musician, has come to a certain peace with his own demons

DAD (RAY), 60s, once a success in the local mine, he would fish the lake on weekends for its multitude of fish; now has dementia, yet on occasions is lucid and capable of a deep knowing of his situation

## **SETTING**

Sunset Strip: a holiday area of shacks built around a dying lake in New South Wales, just outside Broken Hill. Families once holidayed there but now the lake has completely dried up and the homes surround a dust bowl.

## **NOTES TO DIRECTOR**

Do not be afraid to make parts of the play funny—even silly at times!

While much of it is a coping strategy, the cancer jokes and the irreverence with which cancer and dementia are treated is done as a way of allowing us to be connected to such life events, rather than them being 'other' to our own lives. There is a deep underlying respect for the characters inherent in the work.

/ indicates interrupted dialogue.

This play went to press before the end of rehearsals and may differ from the play as performed.

## ACT ONE

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### SCENE ONE

*Afternoon light*

*Shack*

*No birdsong*

*This is 'Sunset Strip'*

*Once a mecca for holidaymakers to bathe in the lake's clear waters*

*Now an almost-deserted dust bowl*

*Miners' families flocked here for years, but children's laughter,  
swimming, fishing and boating have now all disappeared*

*PHOEBE walks in and out turning light switches on and off*

*She puts music on*

*She dances and sings alone and with expression in a 1950s kitchen*

*Behind her is a tank with two goldfish*

*CAROLINE walks up the path with her wheelie luggage*

*At one point she stops, lets go of the luggage, winces at some pain  
under her right arm*

*Repositions then starts wheeling the case again*

*She approaches the back flywire door of a fibro shack*

*Opens backdoor and watches an unsuspecting PHOEBE inside*

*Smiles*

*PHOEBE is dancing*

*Sees CAROLINE*

*Shrieks*

*PHOEBE: Fuck!*

*She's here*

*You're here*

*No hesitation*

*Leaps into CAROLINE's arms*

Can't breathe  
Just can't breathe

*Strokes CAROLINE's hair*

Still beautiful  
Your hair  
It's still so beautiful

CAROLINE: [*laughing ironically*] Look at you  
What a tan!

PHOEBE: [*making a sad bear face*] Was it just terribly difficult to get  
away?

Of course it was  
You poor love

CAROLINE: Where's Dad?

PHOEBE: [*calling out*] *Dad!*

CAROLINE: [*calling out*] *Dad!*

PHOEBE: You might find Dad quite ... amusing

CAROLINE: Dad?

PHOEBE: You just have to get used to him is all

He's just—

You've been away for so long

CAROLINE: Not by choice Phoebe

PHOEBE: [*rushing in*] No. No of course not

And I would have been over to see you, of course

If things were different

[*Calling out*] *Dad Dad Dad!*

I would have brought the kids down

Had a holiday

CAROLINE: Hardly a holiday

PHOEBE: Well a holiday from life

And a chance to be there—

With you

*DAD appears*

DAD: Yes

Well I'm here aren't I?

PHOEBE: Look who's here Dad?

PHOEBE *throws an arm around him and removes some food from his face*

DAD: No need, no need

But I will tell you what I do need  
Some nice loin chops  
That's what I do need

CAROLINE *was moving toward an embrace, but how? Not sure*

PHOEBE: It's Caro Dad

Caroline. She's come over from the city  
To see us  
She's here for a stay

DAD *steps back*

CAROLINE: So great to see you looking so well  
God I've really missed you

PHOEBE: Isn't it great?

Dad

DAD, *unsure, then recovers*

DAD: And some of that nice asparagus

That would help as well  
No time for tea-breaks now my love

CAROLINE: Okay?

PHOEBE: What a great idea, chops and asparagus

Isn't it great to see Caro Dad?

Caroline

Back in the old house

DAD: The old house

Have you told your daughter to come for dinner?

*Weird silence*

CAROLINE: Dad?

It's me  
Caroline

Dad?

DAD: Caroline

CAROLINE: Yes me!

PHOEBE: Your daughter

DAD: I know that

CAROLINE: [*relieved*] Thank God I thought you were being a bit  
dippy /

DAD: I know who my daughter is

PHOEBE: 'Course you do Dad

DAD: She lives in the city, in town  
Very successful she is, isn't she?

PHOEBE's *been there before*

*Tries to have fun with it*

PHOEBE: Yes Dad, sooo successful

She's a lawyer in town isn't she Dad

CAROLINE: —

DAD: She's my clever daughter

PHOEBE *finds this so funny*

PHOEBE: I know she's the *clever* one isn't she Dad

And the beautiful one

She's the wonderful sister of the two

DAD: Oh yes

She's very clever yes

But as for ...

PHOEBE: Phoebe

DAD: Her mother here thinks the world of her

CAROLINE: [*to PHOEBE*] What's going on?

PHOEBE: I told you it was ... different

He's like this one minute and the next he's right back in the land  
of now

CAROLINE: But—

He doesn't even know me

PHOEBE: He will

Don't worry

DAD: So chops and asparagus

PHOEBE: Asparagus

DAD: Tell the girl

[To CAROLINE] Did you get that?

I must go

I have so much work to finish

CAROLINE: Work? What work?

DAD: Deal with the miners

They're all in a fluff about some strike

*He leaves*

PHOEBE: Some days he still goes to the mine even though a) it isn't there anymore! And b) he hasn't actually moved from out the back He comes home full of news of this one and that one

It used to make me sad, but now I see the funny side

[Laughing] We have these whole discussions about Bill Parker's car troubles and Mordy's problems at home. It cracks me up

CAROLINE: It's not funny

You never told me he was this bad

PHOEBE: I didn't want to worry you with that

You had so much to think about

And really ...

I mean 'chops and asparagus'

He does amuse me no end

*They laugh, CAROLINE awkwardly*

CAROLINE: It's awful

He doesn't even know who we are

PHOEBE: I'm sorry Caro

It must be a shock

Of course

But he has his good days too, don't worry

CAROLINE: You were laughing at him

PHOEBE: [a threat?] I live with him Caroline

CAROLINE: It's just not funny

PHOEBE: So what is it then? Tragic?

You think I don't know that?

*Silence*

You should have seen them assessing him  
 I was hoping it might be a good day  
 But—  
 He was at his worst  
 Thought one of those stuck-up slags was the old bat that used to  
 live across the road

*Tries not to laugh*

She was beside herself  
 He was so ... 'affectionate'!  
 'Inappropriately so'

Serves her right  
 She was a right old cunt

CAROLINE: [*laughing*] Phoebe please

*Beat*

PHOEBE: [*instantly serious now*] They took my kids Caro

My babies  
 They took them and then came in here and, and  
 Had the cheek to look at me like that

CAROLINE: I know

I know  
 But—

PHOEBE: But? But? But?

CAROLINE: But nothing

Of course nothing  
 Nothing

PHOEBE: Won't even tell me where they are

Who's with them Caro?  
 I mean what psycho stranger has my kids?  
 My kids!

They didn't even take Lila's blanky  
 She can't sleep without it  
 She'll cry and no-one will know why

CAROLINE: Shhh shhh

It's all going to change now  
 You've done everything right

All they said  
Completely by the book  
You're doing so well  
Right?

PHOEBE *nods*

And now I'm here

PHOEBE: Thanks so much for coming  
For being here

You know I would have come to town for you  
When you needed someone  
If I could have, you know ...  
I would have been there in a heartbeat

CAROLINE: I know /

PHOEBE: In a heartbeat

CAROLINE: Of course

PHOEBE: But with all this

The—

And the restrictions and the people I had to check in with /

CAROLINE: It's okay

PHOEBE: But everything's good now—with you—  
Isn't it. [*It's a statement rather than a question*]

CAROLINE *nods*

Just a really bad memory, hey?

*Silence*

CAROLINE: I'll take him out on the boat tomorrow

He might—

Maybe that will jolt him back

PHOEBE: Yeah do that

Take him out on the boat!

Just the two of you

Only ones on the lake

Just like old times

CAROLINE *is grinning, teasing*

CAROLINE: What—?