

SEPARATING THE DUST

WRITTEN BY DARREN BREALEY
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SEPARATING THE DUST

After the funeral service for Mrs Virginia Cromwell, their sons Michael and Chad discuss their mother's Final Will and Testament. The mourners have left, their kind thoughts exchanged. The sandwiches and tea have been served. It's no secret to the boys their late mother's Final Will and Testament has been divided equally. Chad makes his announcement to contest the Will for his lions share; Michael defends his ground. Chad's wife, Raelene makes her true feelings known about Michael to both of them, which only aggravates the underflow of smouldering years of unspoken hatred between the three of them. The little church on the hill where the funeral service for Mrs Virginia Cromwell was held prepares for another funeral service to be held at five.

Separating The Dust was first performed at The Mount Players One Act Play Festival, The Mountview Theatre, Macedon, on 17 July 2010, as part of the Victorian Drama League One Act Play Festival circuit with the following cast:

<i>Michael</i>	...	Stephen Mitchell
<i>Chad</i>	...	Aston Elliot
<i>Raelene</i>	...	Ingrid Gang

Chad and Michael say their final thank you to the attentive mourners at their Mother's funeral at the Church hall. A couple of tables hold an array of plates with half eaten sandwiches and biscuits, dirty tea cups, saucers and spoons; one table is centre stage right and the second table down stage left. Two chairs sit up sage left. A small pile of Records of Service sit to one side of one of the tables. A couple of used records litter the floor underneath. Raelene is in the kitchen washing cups and saucers.

SEPARATING THE DUST

RAELENE enters with a black plastic garbage bag and walks to Chad. MICHAEL moves some plates of food around the stage right table as CHAD sits on the edge of the stage left table staring at the coffee cup in his hand. Raelene communicates with Chad and then exits.

MICHAEL: I guess mum would've enjoyed the service.

Pause.

MICHAEL: Chad, do you think Mum would've enjoyed the service?

CHAD: I suppose, if she was here to see it.

MICHAEL: She was here. In spirit.

Pause.

MICHAEL: I'd like to think she is watching over us.

CHAD: She's dead, Michael. Get used to it.

MICHAEL: It's no one's fault she's dead.

CHAD: If you had bothered to make sure I got your call...

MICHAEL: Don't start that again.

CHAD: My fault is it?

MICHAEL: All I said was Mum would've enjoyed the Service.

CHAD: Do you think we can enjoy the Service again next week, Michael?

MICHAEL: Very funny.

CHAD: It's not my fault.

MICHAEL: Jesus Christ, what is up your arse?

CHAD: If there's anyone here with anything up their arse, it's you.

MICHAEL: Frank and I didn't feel it would've been appropriate.

CHAD: If Mum is watching over us, she'll know now won't she? Didn't the Priest say they *know-all* when they walk into the light.

MICHAEL: If she does know, she'll forgive me.

CHAD: How convenient.

MICHAEL: What's wrong?

CHAD: You lied to Mum about everything. You made me lie for you.

MICHAEL: I didn't lie to Mum about everything.

CHAD: You came out a bit late didn't you?

MICHAEL: It's my life, Chad. I'll do with it as I want.

Pause.

CHAD: I never understood how you could pretend to get along with people; smile at them, act as though they were your best friend, but you never really gave a flying fig about them. People come and go so quickly in your life Michael; I'm amazed you even know their name. I have no idea what you find so appealing about those sorts of people.

MICHAEL: I'm not even going to justify that with a response.

CHAD: Because you know I'm right.

MICHAEL: You have no idea.

CHAD: You have no sense of family.

MICHAEL: Oh very good – thou of the great judgement. Hypocrite. You're so quick to judge me about my life and yet you have no time to analyse your own mistakes.

CHAD: I married Raelene because I love her.

MICHAEL: You married Raelene because she was the only slapper who'd sleep with you.

CHAD: At least I can get a woman to sleep with me.

MICHAEL: Have you told her about Sally, your last wife? The one you made have an abortion against her will? The one you left in hospital to recover with no support? The same one you tapped on the shoulder the next night because you had the urge? You didn't mind the blood and split stitches from the surgery, was it to prove a point?

Chad throws a cup at Michael, missing him. Chad manoeuvres Michael against the stage right table, cups and plates fall to the ground.

CHAD: You're lucky I don't split your lip right here and now. If we weren't at Mum's funeral, this would be your day and I'd be shedding tears of joy.

MICHAEL: I've always felt your warm loving hatred since puberty.

CHAD: Wonder why?

MICHAEL: I constantly do.

CHAD: I didn't appreciate you sucking on my best-mate.

MICHAEL: I didn't think anyone knew about that.

CHAD: Yeah. Well you thought wrong.

MICHAEL: If the truth be known, it was him who came onto me one summer's afternoon. I don't quite remember what he said or how he made the first move, but I do remember we had a torrid affair for about three years.

CHAD: I don't want to know.

MICHAEL: I think you need to know.

CHAD: No. Not really.

MICHAEL: You're the one carrying the extra baggage.

CHAD: You have an answer for everything, don't you? *It wasn't my fault I sucked...*

MICHAEL: Are you two still friends?

CHAD: Haven't seen him since he left home to live with his girlfriend and two kids.

MICHAEL: So what, I never stopped experimenting.

Pause.

CHAD: The only thing that stopped me from telling Mum the truth were the tears in her eyes and the hurt it would've caused.

MICHAEL: You mean you didn't want to take responsibility for your little brother's life. No one said you had to, but for some bizarre reason you feel it's your God-given right.

CHAD: At least I can say I live my life honestly.

MICHAEL: Bully for you.

CHAD: Who was there to fix things? Who was the one she called on to maintain her house?

MICHAEL: Sir Chad, saviour of the white goods.

CHAD: I didn't see you installing her ceiling fan, fixing the television or replacing the spindle in her dishwasher.

MICHAEL: I didn't see you out shopping with her or going out to lunch and a movie, sharing a laugh.

CHAD: That's because she treated me like a son and not like a girl.

MICHAEL: I spent time with her.

Pause.

CHAD: But you never told her?

MICHAEL: Maybe I did.

CHAD: You're full of shit.

MICHAEL: This is great.

CHAD: What?

MICHAEL: You keep on arguing with me, even at Mum's funeral.

CHAD: If you had bothered to make sure I got your call, she wouldn't have choked to death on her lunch.

MICHAEL: Where was the Nurse?

CHAD: I've yet to deal with them. They'll be spitting teeth before I finish, but you, neglecting your responsibilities and your mother.

MICHAEL: What do you want from me?

CHAD: Well, let's see. Dad died two years ago. Mum today. I'm happily married to Raelene. Have two beautiful kids. A house. A job. Friends. You know what, I want nothing from you. I don't need nothing from you. I don't want you in my life. That's what I want. Nothing.

MICHAEL: Throwing me away like everything else in your life that doesn't fit.

CHAD: I threw you away a long time ago, Michael. I'd have nothing to do with you, except Mum and Dad kept bitching about how unfair I was being to my *little* brother.

MICHAEL: Must've killed you. Every time I saw you, you did you're best to make me feel unwelcome.

CHAD: ...and like old times, you kept coming back for more. You don't know when to give up, do you?

MICHAEL: I did it for your kids.

CHAD: Oh yes, Uncle Michael. How they miss you, not.

MICHAEL: I'm attempting to break tradition here.

CHAD: Tradition?

MICHAEL: Dad's family was broken, our family are broken, and I didn't want their family to be broken. Now that Mum and Dad are dead, we're all they have.

CHAD: You silly little boy. They have Raelene's family. They're not your kids and if they see you again, it'll be too soon.

MICHAEL: They'll grow up not knowing me.

CHAD: Now you understand the general idea.

MICHAEL: Jesus you're a cold bastard.

CHAD: It's been over forty years of knowing you that's given me the strength to feel this way. Only if you could know what it's like to know you. You would've killed yourself by now.

MICHAEL: You wish.

CHAD: Grow up and move on.

MICHAEL: Have you blocked out our childhood?

CHAD: The dream childhood. What a wonderful short fifteen years that was. I got out of there as soon as I could.

MICHAEL: Yes, I noticed. I remember seeing less of you the older I got.

CHAD: Being left alone with Nana whenever they had an urge to fly somewhere.

MICHAEL: It wasn't all that bad.

CHAD: They were *number one* parents.

MICHAEL: It's taken me a long time to understand; they did the best they could.

CHAD: I don't believe that for a second.

MICHAEL: And how are you faring for Father of the Year?

CHAD: I'm there. That's what they need and that's what I'm giving them.

MICHAEL: Maybe they need more?

CHAD: They get everything they need.

Pause.

CHAD: You've been the number one cause for our family embarrassment.

MICHAEL: I've had enough of this shit. I can't believe I've stood here for this long listening to you spouting venom.

CHAD: That's what you're good at, running away when it gets too hard. Leave me and Raelene to clean up the mess.

MICHAEL: Why didn't you have the guts to say this in front of Mum when she was alive?

CHAD: She didn't want to see what you were really like; she didn't want to know the truth. No, no one could say a nasty thing about her golden child.

MICHAEL: Oh that's rich.

CHAD: Go on, piss off.

MICHAEL: I'll leave when I am ready.

CHAD: Don't bother turning up to the lawyer's office for the reading of the Will.

MICHAEL: I was mistaken, I thought it would've been Raelene to make that judgement.

CHAD: She did.

MICHAEL: Clever. And you're the one contesting the Will, whilst she sits back and watches everything unfold?

CHAD: Raelene.

RAELENE enters carrying an empty tray. Chad moves to the right stage table, Michael to the left stage table.

RAELENE: Yes honey? *That* still here.

MICHAEL: It is *my* mother's funeral.

RAELENE: Was your mother's funeral.

CHAD: What time is the Lawyer's office?

RAELENE: Three o'clock. We'll call you.

MICHAEL: No need, I'll be there.

CHAD: No you won't.

MICHAEL: We both know Mum's Will is fifty-fifty.

RAELENE: Is it?

MICHAEL: Yes, it is.

RAELENE: We'll see about that.

MICHAEL: Keep your dirty little fingers off my Mother's possessions.

RAELENE: Michael, we know you were close to your mother, but she's gone now.

MICHAEL: Thank you for your fake sentiment.

RAELENE: Someone's in a mood?

CHAD: Honey, I want to get out of here.

RAELENE: As soon as we're done.

CHAD: Honey...

RAELENE: No.

Raelene gives Chad a kiss.

RAELENE: Have you been discussing the Will?

CHAD: Yes honey.

RAELENE: And is the poofter turning up?

CHAD: He won't, if he knows what's good for him.

MICHAEL: (*slams plates on table*) The poofter is standing right here.

Pause.

CHAD: Don't worry sweetheart. Mother's real wishes will be realised.

MICHAEL: Listen to you two. This bint has no claim.

RAELENE: This bint was there caring for mother whilst you were finding your...

CHAD: Head space.

Raelene and Chad share a laugh.

MICHAEL: Thank you for being the stand-in guy, but that's no reason to contest the Will.

CHAD: You forget little brother; it's not just about you and me anymore. I also have a wife and children to look after and if my wife is looking after our mother, then who is looking after our children?

MICHAEL: You are, being Father of the Year.

CHAD: But something's got to give. It's not all party nights and sweaty men.

MICHAEL: Is that what you think my life consists of, drugs and sex?

RAELENE: Isn't that the life expectancy of your type?

CHAD: Don't forget the musicals and show-tunes they share at dinner parties...

RAELENE: When they're not at the dance parties.

MICHAEL: You two need to grow up.

RAELENE: Don't see us crying out to mummy every time something doesn't go our way. 'Oh mummy, I wasn't invited by Chad and Raelene to their dinner party'. 'I wasn't invited to the announcement party for the baby'. 'I wasn't told about the wedding'. 'Chad didn't ask me to be his Best Man'.

MICHAEL: Did it ever occur to you those things were important to me?

RAELENE: That isn't going to work for me. You tell your Mother one thing and your Step-mother another and both ring me to complain about how upset you are.

MICHAEL: You obviously did something wrong to get those phone calls? Of course I'm going to tell them I wasn't invited. They gave me the third degree for not turning up.

RAELENE: You're a liar, a manipulator and you can't be trusted.

MICHAEL: Why didn't you tell me you were pregnant? I found out third-hand you were pregnant. Why wasn't I invited to dinner? You've never asked me over to your house once, not even for coffee.

RAELENE: I don't want you poisoning our children with lies and your way of life.

CHAD: If I see you within five feet of that Lawyer's office this afternoon, I'll smack your head so hard you'll be sticking your toothbrush up your arse to clean your teeth.

MICHAEL: Oh, that's original.

CHAD: I mean it Michael, stay away.

MICHAEL: Are you threatening me?

CHAD: No, I promise you. Stay away.

MICHAEL: Come anywhere near me and I'll sue you.

CHAD: Oooh, I'll sue you. Girl.

RAELENE: Leave it be, baby. No point in getting yourself upset over that.

MICHAEL: I'll see you at the Lawyer's office. Minus the bint.

CHAD: Show my wife some respect.

MICHAEL: Why should I?

CHAD: 'Cause you won't enjoy my fist in your face.

MICHAEL: It's weird, your constant put-downs and verbal abuse seem to be normal conversation with you, but this is the first day you have threatened me.

CHAD: Feels good, doesn't it?

Pause.

MICHAEL: I've never hidden behind my mother's skirt.

CHAD: No, you've been wearing it.

MICHAEL: Good bye, Chad. Your false promise to mum to remain civil has lasted about three minutes. I hope she is watching over us so she can see what a shallow bastard you are and how you've lied to her.

CHAD: That's one thing I'm proud of, I've never lied to her.

MICHAEL: What do you call this?

Chad punches Michael in the face, Michael falls back onto the stage left table and then the floor, almost everything on the table falls to the floor.

CHAD: I call it giving you what you've deserved for a long time.

*Chad picks Michael up by the scruff of the shirt and punches him repeatedly.
Raelene kicks Michael in the stomach, breaking Chad's hold.*

RAELENE: Now who's mummy's boy.

CHAD: Feel better?

RAELENE: I've waited ages to kick my boots in.

CHAD: Can't really leave this piece of shit here for the Priest to pick up.

RAELENE: I suppose people have been doing that all their lives.

CHAD: C'mon, let's pick it up and throw it outside.

RAELENE: We'll tell the Priest he's passed out from grief.

CHAD: That's why I love you sweetheart; you've got a wicked imagination.

RAELENE: I'm sure you married me for more reasons than that?

CHAD: You bet I did.

Raelene backs up to the stage left table.

RAELENE: You like the way I look?

CHAD: Yeah.

RAELENE: The way I feel?

CHAD: You know you get me hot, (*lifting Raelene onto the table*) come on, baby.

RAELENE: Let's show what your little brother is missing out on.

MICHAEL: I don't want to look at you two...

CHAD: Clear the table.

Raelene swipes all remaining items off the stage left table onto the floor.

MICHAEL: What are you doing?

RAELENE: Something you're type is missing out on.

CHAD: You are a dirty little girl.

RAELENE: Yes, I am.

CHAD: Bad girl. Bad, bad girl.

RAELENE: I'm a bad girl.

MICHAEL: What do you think you're doing?

RAELENE: That's right; you've never done this before.

MICHAEL: I've seen animal planet.

RAELENE: You don't know what we're doing.

MICHAEL: This is our mother's funeral. Stop it.

CHAD: See little brother, this is what it's all about.

RAELENE: God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.

CHAD: We'll tell the Priest it's a re-enactment.

MICHAEL: Stop it.

RAELENE: Make us.

Michael pushes Chad off Raelene.

MICHAEL: You're both perverted.

Chad and Raelene hang onto each other, laughing.

MICHAEL: I'm suing you and that slut of yours.

CHAD: You and whose army.

MICHAEL: Me and the photographic evidence from the hospital. I'm not walking away from this.

CHAD: Dead men don't walk.

RAELENE: *(Laughing)*
What've you got planned.

CHAD: I've got some room in my boot. We could take a drive down to the reservoir and take it for a swim in my car.

MICHAEL: You're so funny.

Michael attempts to leave. Chad takes hold of him by the collar.

CHAD: Let's see how funny I am when you're blowing bubbles at the fish.

MICHAEL: Let go. I'm out of here.

CHAD: I don't think so.

MICHAEL: Let go.

CHAD: Or what, you'll slap me?

MICHAEL: *(breaks free)* Get your filthy fingers off me.

RAELENE: Let it go, baby.

CHAD: No one's going to take away what is rightfully mine.

MICHAEL: You have been smoking too much weed.

CHAD: Drugs aren't cool.

MICHAEL: And what is rightfully yours?

CHAD: The entire Will.

MICHAEL: Fat chance.

Chad attempts to punch Michael in the face, but he moves out of the way.

MICHAEL: What the hell is the matter with you?

CHAD: You.

Michael attempts to leave. Chad grabs him in a headlock and walks him about the stage.

CHAD: I've had enough about hearing, *poor Michael*, who can we blame; it's not Michael's fault? I've had enough of the shit. The fights. Mum and Dad taking your side in everything that goes wrong.

MICHAEL: Let it go, Chad.

CHAD: I can't. I can't let go. I'm not going to let go. I'm going to get even. I'm not going to walk away from it all. You have to blame your pathetic little life on someone.

MICHAEL: It's over Chad. Let me go. It's over.

Chad throws Michael to the ground.

RAELENE: Let it go, baby. It's not worth it Chad.

CHAD: Right here, right now.

RAELENE: I can hear the Priest coming.

CHAD: I can't hear anything.

MICHAEL: You're not listening.

RAELENE: Let's go home for a bit, honey.

CHAD: Later sweetheart. Daddy has to finish off this long awaited business.

MICHAEL: You come anywhere near me...

CHAD: Oh, but I haven't even started with you.

MICHAEL: What ever your problem is...

CHAD: This time you don't get off crying for help. There is no one else to get you out of it.

MICHAEL: I've always thought you wanted Mum's stuff.

CHAD: Have you?

MICHAEL: Years ago, but never on the day of her funeral. I thought it would be between her and me.

RAELENE: I have no hand in your mother's Will.

CHAD: No little brother.

Chad flips the stage left table on its side.

CHAD: It's between you and me.

MICHAEL: It's always been between you and me.

CHAD: I only have a problem with you.

MICHAEL: Exactly.

CHAD: This is where my problems end.

RAELENE: Let's go home baby.

Pause.

CHAD: After I've done this.

Chad produces a handgun from underneath his shirt.

RAELENE: Chad.

MICHAEL: Oh shit.

Michael hides behind the stage left table.

CHAD: That's right Michael, smell the fear. Taste it. Hear its voice. The very last noise you'll hear is the sound of your flesh breaking open when this little beauty explodes inside you.

MICHAEL: No.

CHAD: Oh, but yes, Michael. Yes. It will. Bang. Then moments later the bullet will tear at your flesh and drill into your body, exploding when it hits an organ. That's how they work. There'll be a little tiny hole in the front of you and a bloody great big one in your back. At least you'll look good in your casket. That's your main worry, how pretty you will look when you're dead?

MICHAEL: This is insane, Chad.

RAELENE: He's really not worth it, honey.

Chad manoeuvres Raelene against the stage right table, some plates fall to the floor.

CHAD: I've dreamt of this day for years. I've played it through my mind. You'd be standing there, crying. *No Chad. Don't Chad.* My poor little brother going to finally get what he's deserved. I've been adding it all up, adding up all the shit you've put me through, the lies, the explanations, justifications. Most go for Lawyers and Courts and sue for millions of dollars, thinking it's the only way to get justice, the only way to say *I'll show them*. Spending all that money, time and who wins, eh? Who wins? I'll tell you who wins, the bloody Lawyers win with their fancy holidays, sports cars and breast implants for their girlfriends. I have the answer here, twenty cents and it's all over. I can have all the, *I'll show 'em* I want. No head screw-ups, no reliving past memories. Just throw you away. Raelene is right, you're not worth it. You're not worth the entire head screw-up. And it's only costing me twenty cents.

RAELENE: Baby. Calm down. You'll be wasting your own life.

CHAD: But at least I'll get out in twenty-five, less on good behaviour. I can come out with a life to take up and get on with. But, Raelene, this shit won't, he'll be dead. That's such a good feeling to know, it's me serving justice.

MICHAEL: Do this, and not now, but sooner or later, you'll regret it.

Chad picks Michael up with the barrel of the gun in his mouth.

CHAD: Haven't you listened to a word I've said. This isn't a flash in the pan thought; I've been scheming this for years. It ain't going to stop here.

RAELENE: Honey. Chad.

Chad forces Michael to the floor with the gun to the back of his neck.

CHAD: Now, lick my boots.

MICHAEL: No.

Pause.

CHAD: You want the first bullet in the back of your neck so it can shatter your spine, or do you want it in your head and blow your brains to mash? Lick my boots.

MICHAEL: I can't.

CHAD: But you can.

RAELENE: Chad.

MICHAEL: OK.

Michael licks one of Chad's boots.

CHAD: That's a good boy. Clean, boy. Clean.

MICHAEL: I'm sorry Chad.

CHAD: Now he's sorry.

MICHAEL: Please don't kill me.

CHAD: You liked looking at me so much in the shower when you were twelve, how about taking a look now.

MICHAEL: Chad, that's disgusting.

CHAD: Mine not good enough for you?

MICHAEL: You're my brother.

CHAD: Someone's a little choosy. You liked looking at it before.

MICHAEL: But, you're my brother.

CHAD: That's never stopped you from looking at it.

MICHAEL: I wasn't looking at it.

CHAD: Of course you weren't.

MICHAEL: You've got it wrong.

CHAD: So I'm constantly told.

Michael is on his back. Chad pulls down his pants zipper, falls to his knees either side of Michael's head and crouches in front of Michael's face.

MICHAEL: I can't do this.

Pause.

CHAD: Then how about this.

Chad hits Michael on the back of the head.

MICHAEL: Take the lot, you pig. Take it.

RAELENE: Honey, it's time to go home now. Let's go...

CHAD: He's agreed to the Will, but he hasn't agreed to die.

***** Truncated *****

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