

The Glenfiddich Solution

by Michael Olsen

Characters: Dr Carl Evans 50s (M)
Glenda Carmody 40s (F)

Lights come up on a modern Gold Coast apartment. There is a modern lounge suite in the centre. It is dark—but messy. There are food scraps, newspapers and clothes strewn all over the place.

DR CARL EVANS, 50s, enters carrying a small wooden crate of Glenfiddich 12 year old single malt scotch whisky. He wears shorts, T-shirt and runners. He also carries a plastic bag. He puts the crate on the coffee table and sits on the lounge, exhausted. There is a pain in his stomach which makes him pant for a little bit till he regains his composure. He removes his runners. He then takes out a pair of old ugg boots from the plastic bag and puts them on. He stands up and tests out the boots. He then tries to open the crate—from various different positions—without success. Finally in frustration, he swears.

CARL: Shit!

The lights come on. GLENDA CARMODY enters. She carries with her a mop, a bag and cleaning gear (vacuum, mop, bucket).

GLENDA: Party's over, mate.

CARL: Who the hell are you?

GLENDA: Who the hell are you?

CARL: My name's Carl Evans.

GLENDA: Good one. Don't mind me then. Close the door on the way out.

Glenda goes about preparing to clean the apartment. Carl is dumbfounded.

GLENDA: You guys sure made a mess. The day after Schoolies Week is the busiest time of the year.

CARL: Who are you?

GLENDA: Me? I'm Glenda. I'll be your cleaner today. *(Pause)* I think you're leaving, sunshine.

- CARL:** I told you my name. I'm—
- GLENDA:** Yeah yeah Carl something-or-other. I've always been bad with names.
- CARL:** This is my place.
- GLENDA:** No it's not. It belongs to some puncy doctor from Melbourne.
- CARL:** That's me.
- GLENDA:** Oh.
- CARL:** Yes.
- Glenda looks closer at Carl.*
- GLENDA:** Doctor Carl? The one on TV who flogs the magic krill oil you rub on your bunions and they just disappear?
- CARL:** That's me.
- GLENDA:** I want my money back. I tried that shit. Didn't work. I've still got this bad one right here on the side of my toe. Hurts like hell.
- CARL:** You don't have to clean up today.
- GLENDA:** I won't be around tomorrow to do it. Besides, can't stand seeing the place like this.
- CARL:** Really, I insist.
- GLENDA:** It doesn't clean itself, you know.
- CARL:** I'm sure, but really, can you just leave?
- GLENDA:** I won't be long at all.
- CARL:** I insist.
- GLENDA:** No no, I have to do it.
- CARL:** Look, I could have you sacked.
- GLENDA:** I don't work for you. I work for Tim, the property manager, and he won't sack me because I'm the best he's got.
- CARL:** Please. Please. I would like to be left alone.

- GLEND A:** I don't think you're alone, mate. What's that? (*pointing to the crate*)
- CARL:** Nothing.
- GLEND A:** Nothing? Don't give me that. What's in it?
Glenda goes over to the crate and inspects it.
- CARL:** I can't tell you.
- GLEND A:** It's not something illegal, is it? Like buddha sticks or coke?
- CARL:** No.
- GLEND A:** Being a doctor it's not heaps of meth precursor?
- CARL:** What? No!
- GLEND A:** Well, it could be—
- CARL:** It's a crate of 12 year-old scotch whisky—Glenfiddich to be precise.
- GLEND A:** What a shame. I hate whisky. (*looking more closely at the crate*) That's a lot of whisky.
- CARL:** Are you satisfied now? Can you please—
- GLEND A:** That's a lot for one man to drink.
- CARL:** Yes it is.
Glenda looks at Carl a moment, and finally nods.
- GLEND A:** I got it. I'll be right back.
Glenda hurries off. Carl tries to relax, but realises that she will return, which she does in a moment, holding a large roll of clear plastic.
- CARL:** What are you doing?
Glenda unrolls the plastic on the floor in front of the coffee table.
- GLEND A:** You can do it on the plastic.
- CARL:** What are you talking about?
- GLEND A:** I've seen it all before, you know. Don't think I haven't.

- CARL:** Seen what?
- GLENDA:** It goes by various names: the Johnnie Walker Special, The Glenlivet Express, the Drambuie Highway.
- CARL:** What the hell are you talking about?
- GLENDA:** In this situation, I suppose you'd call it the Glenfiddich Solution. It should take about 4 or 5 bottles to do it, if that.
- CARL:** I am not here to do what I think you think I want to do.
- GLENDA:** Really? Well, just to be sure, do it on the plastic so I don't have to clean up too much of a mess.
- CARL:** I honestly don't know what to say!
- GLENDA:** Don't mind me, just go about your business and I'll make sure the apartment stays nice and clean.
- Glenda resumes cleaning up the apartment.*
- CARL:** I can't believe what you're suggesting.
- GLENDA:** You don't have to. Just don't make a mess, that's all.
- Pause*
- CARL:** I can't.
- GLENDA:** What?
- CARL:** I can't—do it with you here.
- GLENDA:** I don't see why not. It'll take a while.
- CARL:** It's a private thing.
- GLENDA:** Really? If you want to do it, just do it. Simple as that.
- CARL:** Please.
- GLENDA:** You do your thing, I'll do mine.
- CARL:** The plastic.
- GLENDA:** What about it?

CARL: It means you'll be legally responsible, you'll have a part in all this.

GLENDA: Why do you want to do it anyway? Aren't you a millionaire?

CARL: Doesn't stop you getting pancreatic cancer.

GLENDA: That's a bad one. Here let me have a look.

Glenda goes over to Carl and looks at him.

GLENDA: Fatigue, weakness?

CARL: Yes.

GLENDA: Jaundice?

CARL: Yes.

GLENDA: You do look a bit yellow. Pain here?

Glenda places her hand on the upper part of Carl's belly. Carl gasps.

CARL: Yes.

GLENDA: Sorry. OK. What stage are you up to?

CARL: Stage Four.

GLENDA: Oh my goodness. And there's nothing to be done?

CARL: It's metastasised. Liver, lungs. I'm not gonna make it.

GLENDA: Have you got a second opinion?

CARL: You're the seventh person I've seen. All my mates have given me the same diagnosis.

GLENDA: How long?

CARL: Six months, tops. *(Pause)* I'm dying, cleaning lady.

GLENDA: The name is Glenda, and to all intents and purposes, you are not dead yet.

CARL: That's what this afternoon was going to rectify.

GLENDA: Of course.

CARL: Alcohol has always been a good friend, and now I need it to see me painlessly, insensibly, on my way.

GLENDA: You sure there's nothing you can do?

CARL: Nothing. Nothing that maintains my dignity, anyway. Nothing that isn't going to result in my hair falling out and shitting my pants and seeing my family in pain.

GLENDA: That's what happens when you're in a family. You get to share everything, the highs and the lows. You do have a family, don't you?

CARL: Wife and three kids.

GLENDA: Boys? Girls?

CARL: Two girls and a boy.

GLENDA: Age?

CARL: They're teenagers.

GLENDA: It'd hurt at any age.

Carl starts to get upset. Glenda goes over and sits beside him, puts her arm around him.

GLENDA: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bring them up. I know what it's like when someone close to you dies.

CARL: What—I mean, what happened with you?

GLENDA: My son Jason died. He was only 22. He was a lovely boy. Bit of a dreamer, you know the kind? Always off in his own little world.

CARL: He was 22 you say? You mean—this was only recently?

GLENDA: Two years ago.

CARL: Shit. *(Pause)* How—how did he die?

GLENDA: Drugs. Once they get into you you can't fight them. They take over. They're in charge.

Glenda pulls out a small tin.

CARL: What's that?

Glenda pulls out a joint, holds it up for inspection.

GLEND A: Usually after I've finished cleaning, I'll sit down and have a puff and just watch the sun come up, like it's doing now. It's another day. I'm still here, and it's another day, and I have no idea what's going to happen. It's an adventure.

Glenda pulls out a lighter, lights the joint, takes a puff, then hands it to Carl.

CARL: I don't know if I should, I mean—

GLEND A: What harm can it do you now?

Carl chuckles, takes the joint, has a puff.

CARL: I had the same idea.

GLEND A: What's that?

CARL: Watching the sunrise.

GLEND A: What do you think's gonna happen today?

CARL: I know what's gonna happen.

Pause

GLEND A: Your family doesn't know you're here, do they?

CARL: Of course not. They're two thousand miles away in Melbourne.

GLEND A: You know you've got to tell them.

CARL: The lawyer will tell them.

GLEND A: What?

CARL: Don't worry. I've organised everything. I've made all the arrangements.

GLEND A: Legally. Money-wise, yes, but you're about to open up this huge hole in their lives that they'll never understand.

CARL: They'll understand.

GLEND A: Your kids won't. Your wife won't. "For better, for worse, for richer for poorer." Wasn't that in your vows? This is the worse bit.

CARL: I don't want them to see me like this.

- GLEND A:** I'll admit, the ugg boots are pretty weird, especially for Queensland.
- CARL:** Ha ha. I've had them for—well, forever. When I was packing—the little packing I did—I saw them and thought, why not? I like the feel of them, the wool. I've had them for years.
- GLEND A:** I'm not here to stop you, you know.
- CARL:** Really? Could have fooled me.
- GLEND A:** I just think you should let those you love know what's going on.
- CARL:** I don't want to let anyone know.
- GLEND A:** There must be someone you'd tell, someone close
- CARL:** Well...
- GLEND A:** Yes?
- CARL:** Don. I'd tell him.
- GLEND A:** Who's Don?
- CARL:** He's my best friend. He was my best man. We met in a fight.
- GLEND A:** You fought him?
- CARL:** No no. We were 15, 16 at the time. It was outside the local pub one night. We'd been hanging around trying to scab a drink or two, when these two guys came out looking for a fight. For some reason they took an instant dislike to me and started laying into me. Don was there and laid them both out flat. He'd been doing martial arts after school and I guess he just put it all into practice. We've been friends ever since, even when I went through med school we still kept in touch. There was something just obvious and real about it. I had med school, he did a mechanics apprenticeship. There were girls and jobs and then marriage and kids and he's been there through it all.
- GLEND A:** And he doesn't know?
- CARL:** No.
- GLEND A:** You should ring him. Right now.
- CARL:** I bet he's sleeping off a big night at the trots. He likes to go and have a flutter.
- GLEND A:** He's going to want to take your call.

- CARL:** Isn't that a shame. I have no phone. All I brought with me was a credit card. I left my wallet at home.
- GLENDA:** (*pulling out her mobile*) Use mine.
- CARL:** It's OK.
- GLENDA:** You think he'd understand, though?
- CARL:** Of course. Ever since Rebecca.
- GLENDA:** Rebecca?
- CARL:** His daughter. She was stillborn. Such a perfect little face nestled in this white knitted bonnet. Honestly she looked like she was sleeping. The worst thing in my life was seeing Don carry that small coffin into the church. I wanted so much to rush up and take it off him, take that pain away.
- GLENDA:** A pain he had to bear himself.
- CARL:** They had three boys after that. Funny thing was, I was so upset I even wrote a poem about it, about Rebecca.
- GLENDA:** You don't strike me as the poetic type.
- CARL:** It just came out of me that night when I got home. I never gave it to them. I felt it was intruding on their grief.
- GLENDA:** I'm sure they would have been touched.
- CARL:** We'll never know.
- GLENDA:** It sounds like your friend Don would know what's going on here.
- CARL:** What is going on here?
- GLENDA:** You're simply afraid. You're hanging on so tight, and for what? The end is coming, there's nothing you can do about it, but you're angry as if life has dealt you a losing hand, and you've decided to take it out on those closest to you by shutting them out of this last moment to be a part of your life.
- CARL:** Everyone ultimately must make their own way.
- GLENDA:** So damn them all, you don't love them. We're all selfish little units running around without a thought or a care for anyone else.

Pause

CARL: Even if I wanted to I can't get the bloody crate open.

Glenda gets up and takes out a pocketknife. She works it under each side of the lid, till she can lift off the lid. She reaches in and pulls out a bottle.

GLENDA: Let me get something.

Glenda goes into the kitchen and returns a moment later with two glasses.

CARL: I thought you said you hated whisky.

GLENDA: I do, but the thought of a person drinking alone—I hate that even more.