

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Difficult to Grow

by Sofie Laguna

EXTRACT

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Pete Flick

Pete Flick is somewhere in his 40's – a small, flighty man riding the edge of panic. He has an appealing twinkle in his eye and a 'way with the ladies'.

I'm Pete Flick and I'm fast. I think things that come and go so fast you have to be quick to catch them and if the things I think get too fast then I can run - up and down, round and round, faster and faster so the things I think can't catch me.

I live in a Home for fast thinkers who need Medication. We stand in a line every morning and wait for our green drink in a white cup. When it gets to my turn in the line I knock back my drink, hold out my cup and say *more please miss*. Miss says *no more Pete you've had quite enough* and I say *never enough for Pete Flick!* Then I give her my fast eye wink and light myself a fag.

I'm a Chain Smoker because time between smokes is nothing time when the only thing to do is shake or run. I buy my fags from around the corner and when I'm out of Johnny Cash I pick butts up off the road outside the home and smoke them. Or I spy myself a passer by and I say *spare a cigarette miss or mister?* and they say no with a fright and I have a laugh, pick myself a butt up off the road and smoke that.

I started smoking when I lived with me Mum. We lived in a half house, just the two of us. She sat in a brown flower chair and ate all day. She filled up the whole chair and in some places she spilled over. She said *pop down the shops and pick me up some bikkies be a good boy* so I picked her up anything she wanted because a cuddle with my Mum's a swim in a cream bun *good good good*. When the top of my head touched the bottom of her chin and my ear was pressed close I heard a small drum and I heard the wind blow through a dark train tunnel in out in out, somewhere inside her. She said the only thing to ease the pain was a nice cake a hot chip a soft steak *pop down the shops love be a good boy*.

She didn't give me no cuddle when I got to smoking. Willy Lescock from across the road

showed me how. He said *suck it you little freak* and then he swung the street cat round by the tail, round and round 'til he let it go with a big *I FUCK PUSSSSSYYYYY!!!*

I was a boy who couldn't learn but I could run. I ran round the block twice for no reason, I ran up and down our street looking for a new bike or someone else as fast as me but the other kids went to school for learning. I stayed home with me Mum and asked her every day *where's my Dad? where's my Dad?* and every day she said *you ask me that like I et him for dinner!* Then she'd laugh her jelly laugh and say *no more questions Pete my boy, make me a milk shake and sit on my knee.*

I know she never ate my Dad for dinner but maybe he fell through a hole in the floor and she never took no notice or maybe he was in the shed fixing me up a new bike and she locked the door behind him and forgot to ever open it again. That would explain why I never had no bike.

When I got big she called me her little man and hardly ever got out of her chair. I could hear the wind in the tunnel somewhere inside of her getting louder and louder. Even with the telly on all the time I could hear it 'til one day a train smashed right through my Mum and off she went to the hospital in a truck that screamed. Mrs Lescock took me for one visit and I saw my Mum lying in a one person bed and I said *where's my Dad? where's my Dad?* My Mum pushed out a voice I never heard before, she pushed it through the loud tunnel wind and she said *Your old Dad wasn't man enough for us - he left when he found out his only son was a bit different.* Then she gave me a cuddle full of shakes and water. I said *Mum can I pop down the shops for you and be your good boy* and she said *you are my good boy you are my good boy.* Water was coming out of me, out of my eyes and nose, running down me, down my legs, out my toes and across the hospital floor. The room was swimming in my water. My Mum shut her eyes and I pressed my ear close to the drum and the tunnel but the drum was quiet and the wind was gone and now I only hear it sometimes, if I smoke smoke smoke and run run run.