

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Johnny Flip's Fate

by Chris Howlett

EXTRACT

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CHARACTERS

Fate
Anna
Johnny Flip

JOHNNY FLIP'S FATESCENE ONE

The lights come up on Fate's dark, cramped den. There is a bay window on the back wall, through which can be seen a shifting, amorphous gel of kaleidoscopic colour. A computer on a desk and several towering stacks of paper crowd the room. Transparent communication pipes cross the ceiling. A tight claustrophobia binds everything.

There is the muted but distinct sound of a ceaseless human chatter.

Working at the computer is FATE, dressed in business shirt and slacks. He picks up one of the sheets of paper.

FATE

(reading)

Mrs. C. L. Magenta, born in a spinach bush, due to expire under the wheels of a semi-trailer. Can't wait.

He types on the computer. Picks up another sheet of paper.

Mr. J. Droff, born in a viper nest, due to expire from a poisonous dart attack. Lucky old Mr. Droff. (Beat) Actually, that's quite unusual.

He types again. Picks up another sheet of paper.

Mr. Yamamoto, born in loose attire - (Beat)
Hang on.

He double-checks the paper.

Damn comedians.

Fate picks up a nearby phone and dials.

(into phone) Births and Deaths? It's Fate. Yes, I do normally knock, ha ha and I haven't heard it before, either. (Beat) Mr. Yamamoto is about to be born in loose attire. (Beat) Yes, I imagine it would be painful, I'll send it back up.

He slams the phone down.

I'm the fucking lynchpin.

Fate stuffs the sheet of paper into a communications tube. He watches the monitors.

Ridiculous little creatures.

Behind him, ANNA appears. She hesitates in the entrance.

I hate them, Anna.

ANNA

I know.

FATE

Useless sacks of meat and muscle.

ANNA

They're only human.

FATE

That's the problem. (Beat) It's like watching a comedy routine. These animals can always find a fresh and ingenious manner in which to fuck it all up. (Beat) Somebody should put them out of their misery.

ANNA

There's nothing you can do.

FATE

I'm sick of it.

Anna crosses to the window.

ANNA

The Void is so beautiful. Soothing.

FATE

It's just the Void.

ANNA

I could stare at it for hours.

FATE

Don't you?

ANNA

Yes, I think I'm addicted.

Fate bangs the computer impatiently.

FATE

Where are you?

ANNA

Are you looking for someone?

FATE

Yes. His name is Johnny Flip.

ANNA

Is he somebody very particular?

FATE

You don't know the half of it.

ANNA

I remember when you came looking for me.
It was so flattering to be sought. I was
so young. (Beat) You were so charming.

Fate grunts.

It's funny how things turn out, isn't it?

FATE

Things turn out the way I make them.

ANNA

Not strictly speaking.

FATE

Did you want something? I have a lot of
work to do.

ANNA

Yes, of course you do. (Beat) Fate?

FATE

Yes?

ANNA

Do you know what day it is?

FATE

Every day is the same.

ANNA

It's our anniversary.

Pause.

FATE
Happy anniversary.

ANNA
I shouldn't have mentioned it.

FATE
What am I supposed to say?

ANNA
You could make an effort.

FATE
It's too late for that.

Pause.

ANNA
Why are you looking for him?

FATE
Don't worry about it.

ANNA
I remember when you used to tell me everything.

FATE
(sing-songy)
Oh well.

ANNA
Don't be a bastard.

FATE
Shut up - *clone*.

Anna recoils.

ANNA
Thanks.

FATE
What? You are a clone.

ANNA
You don't have to say it like that.
(Beat) I'll leave you.