

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Hidden Dragons

by Shirley Van Sanden

EXTRACT

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Scene 1

Music: Slow drums.

Actors 2&3 enter at opposite sides from behind the audience carrying flags. Actors 2&3 fly flags over the heads of the audience as they move towards each other at the centre. In the centre, they fly flags past each other over the heads of the audience. Then each crosses over to the other side of the audience. They repeat this two more times, moving closer to the stage. As Actors 2&3 are moving through the audience, Brendan enters and gets into bed.

Actors 2&3 climb up to the stage and stand on the two plinths. They begin a kata with the flags that leads into the first dragon dance. The music builds in intensity as Brendan dreams.

Brendan enters his dream and sees the dragon kata as an attack on him. He calls to his Nanna to help him and tries to defend himself. Actors 2&3 manipulate the dragon flags. The dragons battle, twining around each other. At times the actors swap the flags they are manipulating by throwing them across to each other and using the flagpoles as weapons. Brendan is frightened and confused, finding himself in the middle of what he sees as a dragon fight. The dragons seem to change their focus from fighting with each other to attacking Brendan. Brendan defends himself.

After what appears to be a dangerous point in the fight for Brendan, the dragons fly past him and exit. The flags are stored on the pillars. Brendan is back in his bed asleep and calling to his Nanna in his dreams.

BRENDAN: Nanna! Help me, Nanna!

Scene 2

The music softens. Popo enters through the curtains on the archway.

POPO: Sin Lung, why you fight the dragons?

BRENDAN: *(Brendan is still fighting his way out of sleep.)* Nanna! Help me, Nanna!

POPO: Sin Lung, why you fight the dragons?

BRENDAN: *(Almost awake)* I'm not fighting the dragons, Nanna! They're attacking me! Help! Help! It's just a dream, the same old freaky nightmare.

POPO: *(Singing)* Happy birthday, to you, happy birthday to you, happy birthday to Sin Lung...

BRENDAN: Nanna? You're still here?

POPO: I cannot miss your dragon birthday, just because I'm dead. What a big boy, twelve years old!

BRENDAN: Eleven years old, Nanna!

POPO: In Chinese years you are twelve!

BRENDAN: When I was born I was zero years old, not one!

POPO: Very special birthday, you are growing up, Sin Lung.

BRENDAN: My name's Brendan. Call me Brendan, Nanna, not Sin Lung.

POPO: Then you call me Popo not Nanna! *(She pronounces it Nana)* Stupid name, Nana! It sound like banana! If anyone is banana it is you, Sin Lung, yellow on the outside and white on the inside.

BRENDAN: *(Defensive)* I'm not a banana, I just don't like calling you Popo. None of my friends call their grandmothers Popo. Besides, it sounds like tropical fruit. You're Nanna, and I don't speak Chinese! *(NB: Popo is pronounced like paw-paw, hence the reference to tropical fruit.)*

POPO: We speak Cantonese, not Mandarin or Hokkien...

BRENDAN: Mandarin! Who ever heard of talking fruit!

POPO: *(Singing)* Bananas in pyjamas, are coming down the stairs...when you were small you like to watch talking bananas...

BRENDAN: No I didn't...

POPO: ... but Chinese invented talking fruit first! Chinese invent everything first! Be more respectful, Sin Lung!

BRENDAN: I just prefer the name Brendan.

POPO: Brendan... *(Tries to pronounce 'Blendah' and fails)* ...Hayah! Too hard to say! Sin Lung is your name.

BRENDAN: My Chinese name. My real name's Brendan.

POPO: Sin Lung means dragon.

Popo goes into Kung Fu Dragon Stance, then signals for Scottie to enter. She moves upstage and stands. Scottie enters.

BRENDAN: All my mates call me Brendan. It means sword and you know what swords are used for, Nanna? Slaying dragons, that's what! I'm *Brendan the Dragon Slayer.

SCOTTIE: Brendan the Dragon Slayer.

BRENDAN: Scottie?

SCOTTIE: In every generation there is a chosen one; he is the slayer...

BRENDAN: *(Happy)* Scottie!

Brendan and Scottie have a pillow fight. Scottie gets the better of Brendan by tricking him.

SCOTTIE: Got you, Chop Suey! That's dragons one, slayers nil!

BRENDAN: That's not fair, Scottie. You got me by surprise!

POPO: Hayah! If Brendan such a good name, what for he call you Chop Suey?

Brendan and Scottie roll their eyes at Popo's interjection.

BRENDAN: It's just a nickname. It doesn't mean anything.

SCOTTIE: I call him Lewie Chop Suey because his last name is Lewie.

BRENDAN: It's Liu.

SCOTTIE: Yeah, but Lewie rhymes better with Chop Suey.

POPO: Cheh! Lewie! Okay, okay. Sin Lung let his friend call him stupid name, but his Popo cannot call him by his real name, must call him Brendan.

SCOTTIE: *(Sniggering and imitating Popo's accent.)* Blendah!

BRENDAN: Oh, Nanna!

POPO: Hayah! I dead only 23 hours and 48 days and already they talk back to me. No respect! Banana, cheh!

Scottie mines peeling and eating a banana. Brendan is not impressed.

BRENDAN: What are you doing in my bedroom, Scottie?

SCOTTIE: Just dropped in to say Happy Birthday?