

Fate's Steady Hands

This play is free to download and perform. The only condition is that you must **email Alex at abroun@bigpond.net.au** and let him know **where and when you produced his script**, listing the **director, cast and theatre**. If you have any production photos send them along as well and they may just end up on this website.

A ten minute play

By

Alex Broun

Email: abroun@bigpond.net.au

www.alexbroun.com.au

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Cast

SAM

RICHARD

Setting

An office, morning

Fate's Steady Hands by Alex Broun

BEAT.

RICHARD: Sam

SAM: Richard

BEAT.

RICHARD: You're in my office.

SAM: Yes.

BEAT:

RICHARD: And you're wearing one shoe.

SAM: Yes.

BEAT.

RICHARD: Why are you only wearing one shoe ?

SAM: I had an itch.

RICHARD: Of course you did. (BEAT) So you're wearing one shoe and you're standing in my office. Perhaps I should ask why ?

SAM: I'm exploring the complex nature of love.

RICHARD: Of course you are.

SAM: I'm wondering if you can control it.

RICHARD: Control ...

SAM: Not control. Choose.

BEAT.

RICHARD: Choose who you do or don't love ?

SAM: That's it. I'm thinking you can control it.

RICHARD: Yes ?

SAM: Yes. I think there is a point where choice is possible.

RICHARD: I thought love was meant to be overwhelming. True love.

SAM: Eventually. But wouldn't you agree at the start that there is a moment where you can actually feel yourself falling in love ? Your heart makes you an offer – accept or deny ? Example : I'm standing at a table and I'm looking into the eyes of this girl I know, soft blue eyes, her strange crooked nose, black curly hair. And I'm bathing in these wonderful words that are flowing from her lips, soft red lips, clinging on every syllable. Her complex, intriguing phrases are like the most long awaited sun storm and I'm catching every drop I can with my mind, body, soul. Now at this moment I can feel it. The faint flicker inside my stomach, a warm glow beginning in my chest and spreading out to every corner of my being like floating in a soft warm, delightfully scented bath. I can actually feel myself falling in love with this magical, wondrous human being. It's like a tap – the pressures building up and the torrent is ready to burst forth and all I have to do is give it a little nudge. But what if I sense that she won't feel the same way, that my burgeoning emotion is actually doomed for a long and very torturous extended winter of unrequitement. Can I just nudge the tap the other way ? Lock up the torrent before it has a chance to consume me ? Choose to say no ?

RICHARD: Sounds nice, if it's possible.

SAM: Increasingly I believe that it is.

RICHARD: So is that what you did ? Shut off the torrent.

SAM: No.

RICHARD LAUGHS.

SAM: Not on this occasion.

RICHARD: And ?

SAM: An exceedingly long and extraordinarily dark winter in prospect. But I do think it's possible. Even if I wasn't successful on this occasion.

BEAT.

RICHARD: No.

SAM: Yes ?

RICHARD: The answer is no. I don't think you can control it. Tap or no tap. If you really feel that way – if you're really falling in love with someone then you can't stop it. It's impossible. It leaks out anyway. Drips out the side, bursts from the pipes, blows the tap

out of the wall. And then you're fucked. You get so overwhelmed you feel like your drowning in a sea of love and only that one unique person can save you.

SAM: And if they don't.

RICHARD: You drown. In a sea of love.

SAM: Not as pleasant as it sounds. Listen, I've had mental anguish, physical agony but nothing – nothing can compete with emotional pain. Like having your guts cut out with a rusty razor blade.

RICHARD: Unless the unique one returns your ardour.

SAM: Then maybe you both drown.

RICHARD: In the sea of love. Now that would be a pleasant way to go.

SAM: But not a realistic outcome for me. The chances of this person returning my feelings are like this box of matches to this room.

RICHARD: Rather small.

SAM: Rather.

RICHARD: So this is happening now ? I thought you were referring to some historical event.

SAM: No this is a current dilemma.

RICHARD: Who is she ? Anybody I know ?

SAM: Quite well. She's your wife.

BEAT.

RICHARD: What ?

SAM: I would've thought crooked nose would've given it away.

RICHARD: It's not crooked. Makes her sound like a witch. It's a bump, a very sweet and sexy little bump. And her eyes are green. Not blue.

SAM: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

RICHARD: Well that is one beauty I would request you not to behold.

SAM: Like I said, I'm trying to keep the tap turned off.

RICHARD: Very wise or your winter will be very long and considerably without comfort – or company.

SAM: As I said ... (HOLDS UP THE MATCHBOX).

RICHARD: But it's not just this room. You should be comparing that to this whole building. The whole city.

SAM: You positive it's that slim ?

RICHARD: Yes.

SAM: Yes.

BEAT.

RICHARD: What does that mean ?

SAM: I said 'Yes'.

RICHARD: Don't try to tell me she returns your - Don't tell me she has given you any kind of encouragement ?

SAM: I said 'Yes'.

RICHARD: She's my wife. She loves me. She isn't holding back any torrent. The tap is most definitely turned off.

SAM: I said 'Yes'.

RICHARD: Well good. Keep it like that.

BEAT.

SAM: You've spoken to her about it.

RICHARD: No. Of course I haven't.

SAM: The building, the city.

RICHARD: I know my wife.

SAM: So do I.

RICHARD: You do not know my wife. You've met her at a few social gatherings, the Xmas party – tops. You've hardly said five words to her.

SAM: There have been other occasions.

RICHARD: Okay. Okay. Now I'm trying to stay calm but I want you to be very clear on one point – I love my wife very much and if you are telling me that something is going on between you two then I may not be able to practice too much restraint. I'll probably murder you on the spot.

SAM: And her too ?

RICHARD: I love her. I'll forgive her. It'll take time but I'll forgive her. Or maybe I won't and I'll just kill her too. So ?

BEAT.

SAM: Nothing has occurred.

RICHARD: I'm glad to hear it.

SAM: Physically.

RICHARD: Dream on dickhead ! I know my wife and she loves me. She isn't interested in you. Wouldn't be, couldn't be.

SAM: I'm glad you're so secure.

RICHARD: You bet I fucking am. And what gives you the right to dis-gorge all this shit ? Spew it out over my office floor. Your little infatuation is inappropriate and frankly pathetic so you should've just kept it to yourself till it passed.

SAM: So you're saying that my infatuation will pass ? That your wife is not worth loving ?

RICHARD: No my wife is imminently worth loving. Just not by you.

SAM: But I can't help it. You said yourself the tap can not be shut off.

RICHARD: Yes it can. Turn the bloody tap off.

SAM: "The answer is no." It's unstoppable you said. I can't.

BEAT.

RICHARD: Occasions ?

SAM: Yes ?

RICHARD: You referred to occasions. Tell me about them.

SAM: There have been two.

RICHARD: Two ?

SAM: The first was when I was at the shopping centre near where I live. Your wife does some volunteer work.

RICHARD: She works at the Cancer Council three days a week. Kind soul that she is.

SAM: Noble. I nearly ran into her. In my car. She was pulling out of her spot, I was looking for one. We got out just to check there had been no damage. Recognition. A brief conversation.

RICHARD: Brief ?

SAM: Yes.

RICHARD: She didn't mention it.

SAM: Hardly worth it. I'm sure it meant nothing to her.

RICHARD: And the second ?

SAM: I was walking down Pitt Street around lunchtime. I saw her standing at a high table in the Coffee Club, sipping a skinny latte. Again, recognition.

RICHARD: When was this ?

SAM: Tuesday.

RICHARD: I was meant to meet her for lunch. My meeting ran over.

SAM: I went in. Said hello. Asked if I could join her. She said:

RICHARD: "Yes ?"

SAM: I ordered a Skinny Latte as well. The conversation soon got quite animated, we shared a number of similar ideas, theories, realisations. I decided I was hungry. She decided she was too.

RICHARD: Lunch ?

SAM: We ordered two foccacias. Salami and rocket for me, tuna and salad for her.

SAM and RICHARD: No cheese.

SAM: And we stood at the high table, grabbing the odd quick nibble in what soon developed into a fascinating and lively discourse on a surprisingly wide range of subjects.

RICHARD: You ate foccacias and chatted ?

SAM: For over an hour. She didn't mention it ?

RICHARD: She said she had lunch with a friend.

SAM: It was standing there in that café, watching her lips move, her soft voice folding into my ears, her nuances absorbing me - I quickly realised that without much encouragement I could fall completely in love with this graceful, generous, highly intelligent woman. After I left the café I walked out on to the street and a busker was playing a very sad tune on his saxophone. Something lost and lonely. It was then that I realised the pressure was beginning to build behind my tap.

RICHARD: Enough with the tap. Has there been any more contact ?

SAM: Post Foccacias and lattes ?

RICHARD: Yes ?

SAM: No.

RICHARD: Good.

SAM: Not in a physical way.

RICHARD: Meaning ?

SAM: We've exchanged a few text flourishes.

RICHARD: Initiated by ?

SAM: Me. Hands up. But responded to. Somewhat eagerly if I might add. As it turns out your wife gives extremely good text.

RICHARD: I didn't even know she knew how to send a text message.

SAM: Oh she does. And very skilfully.

BEAT.

RICHARD: So what are you going to do now ?

SAM: I'm thinking of telling her.

RICHARD: That you ...

SAM: That the torrent is about to burst forth.

- RICHARD: Hope you don't use those specific words.
- SAM: Yes.
- RICHARD: Your constant use of the word 'yes' is really starting to piss me off. Just how do you suppose to communicate this specific information to my wife. Email, text, homing pigeon ?
- SAM: I was hoping to meet her for another coffee. This time pre-arranged. Doppo skinny lattes. With your permission of course. The important thing is to be true to what you feel. The rest is in fate's steady hands. Yes ?
- RICHARD: Let me get this straight, you're asking me if you can meet with my wife to tell her that you love her.
- SAM: That I have potential to fall in love with her.
- RICHARD: And for this you want my permission ?
- SAM: You can not live without love.
- RICHARD: But that love doesn't have to be with my wife ? Let me save you – "Yes".
- SAM: Yes. Let's look at the reverse – say I didn't tell you. Went behind your back to organise some clandestine meeting with your wife. Wouldn't that be worse. At least I'm being upfront. Letting you know what I feel. Where you stand. Isn't that the most appropriate course of action ?
- RICHARD: The most appropriate course of action is to forget about what you feel for my wife.
- SAM: And if I don't.
- RICHARD: I'm not sure what I'll do. (PICKING UP PAPERWEIGHT)
Perhaps I'll explore the complex nature of this paperweight. Do you think that would do the trick ? A few short, sharp whacks to the skull. Yes ?
- SAM: Probably.
- RICHARD: You know the funniest thing about all this. If of course it was at all funny rather than stupid, pathetic and baffling but the funny thing is that you are telling this to the man who doesn't only happen to be the husband of the object of your unfortunate desire, he also happens to be your boss.

BEAT.

SAM: I'm fired right ?

RICHARD: You are so fired.

SAM: Completely ?

RICHARD: Totally.

SAM: The end of the day ?

RICHARD: Fifteen minutes should be sufficient – (VOLUME BUILDING) to put your shoe back on and fuck off !

SAM: Will do.

BEAT.

RICHARD: Something else ?

SAM: Just one more thing – is your wife at home ?

LIGHTS.