

Cohabitation



by Jane Malone

COHABITATION

-a play in five acts

by Jane Malone

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SYNOPSIS

Fred and Gina are flatmates looking for love.
Kate and Simon have found love, but are flatmates.
Matt's greatest love is himself.

Set in Bondi Australia, as one lease begins and another comes to an end, 'Cohabitation' is the intimate tale of five vulnerable hearts, two very different households and one overcrowded café.

Inspired by Lamark's giraffes, neural Buddhists and the Flight of the Conchords, it's a back from the beachfront look at survival of the fittest, the power of music and falling in love.

SETTING

Bondi, one of Australia's most famous beaches. Home to the rich and famous, aspiring artists and middle class mortgagees.

STAGE

STAGE LEFT: Kate's Flat.
Small table with tablecloth, two stools on wheels, plants. Knitting, lyrics sheets, guitar, laptop, books, a low bed
Bright, colourful, spacious and tidy.

STAGE RIGHT: Fred's Flat.
Two armchairs, remote control, newspaper stand with copies of *The Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*.
Structured, minimalist.

CENTRE STAGE: Pub, Hospital, Kate's café, Outside by beach, Outside in park, Outside street, Bar near hospital, Outside court, Matt's apartment, Cliff.

TIME

Last Thursday night to Sunday lunch.

CHARACTERS

(All early thirties)

KATE: Pixy, warm, wears vintage clothing.

SIMON: Gregarious, open, funny, passionate.

FRED: Short, intellectual, wears dark rimmed glasses.

GINA: Femme fatale.

MATT: Tall, well-built, pretentious.

SONGS

Music and lyrics for Kate's songs written by, and can be obtained from, the author.

Each period is dominated
so that most men* fail to see
the tyrant who rules over them.

Albert Einstein.

*people.

1.1

KATE'S FLAT

SIMON is reading a street directory behind the table.

His legs are concealed.

KATE enters.

SIMON hides the directory.

KATE: Guess how many cappuccinos I made today?

SIMON: Umm... sixteen?

KATE: I've been working all day.

SIMON: Sixty-three.

KATE: Twenty-eight.

SIMON: Wow.

KATE: You have no idea if that figure's high or
 low do you?

SIMON: No.

KATE: It's low. Limbo low.

SIMON: GFC?

KATE: Either that or my foam.

SIMON: Your foam's the best in Bondi.

KATE: I know. And the reason I know is because my
 boss makes me write it every day on the
 café blackboard. 'Best Foam in Bondi'.

SIMON: Blame the GFC. We're not out of the woods yet.

KATE: Maybe I should be using more hyperbole: Best foam in the world or something. 'Bondi's Famous Foam'.

SIMON: Not sure, sounds less like milk and more like an ad for 'Bondi Rescue'

KATE: Have you been working??

SIMON: I wrote the opening for the oral for my application to the university.

KATE: I don't believe you.

SIMON opens his laptop.

SIMON: 'We want to acknowledge the traditional owners, the Gadigal people of the Eora nations on whose land we meet, and pay our respects to the Elders past and present'.

KATE: And?

SIMON: That's as far as I got.

He closes the laptop.

KATE: Would you call that a start?

SIMON: It's half a page.

KATE: Of what size font?

SIMON: I got wikied.

KATE: Wikied?

SIMON: I googled Eora nation and ended up on the Wikipedia page for Aborigine and then clicked on Wikipedia page for Michael O'Loughlin, and then on Wikipedia entry for the Swans and before I knew it I was transferring all the dates for next years games to my calendar. Wikied.

She notices the apartment.

KATE: What's happened in here?

SIMON: If you're referring to the absence of knitting on the floor and song lyrics cascading off the couch, you're looking at what's commonly known as a clean-up.

KATE mock amazement.

SIMON: Clean-up: meaning to make tidy, or presentable, free from dust and dirt.

KATE: Wow!

SIMON: Who'd have thought? Floorboards. For months I've thought we had shag pile.

KATE: Is that dinner on the stove as well?

SIMON: Affirmative.

KATE: You've started your application, you've cleaned the flat, you've made dinner...

SIMON shrugs.

SIMON: I'm going for flatmate of the month.

KATE: Well, seeing as you're my only flatmate, consider yourself awarded. What are we having?

SIMON: A Stir-fry try. Carrots, broch, few mushies, coriander and peanut garnish, and a side of roasted eggplant.

KATE: Sounds very Masterchef.

SIMON: I hope so. The guy at the 'Fruitologist' shop told me what to do with the eggplant.

KATE: He should know. He's an ologist.

SIMON: Ready when you are.

KATE: I'll just slip into something more comfortable.

SIMON: I love it when you do that.

1.2

FRED'S FLAT.

GINA and FRED enter, GINA carrying two bowls and forks.

Without noticing, GINA sits where FRED was going to sit.

GINA: Dinner is served.

FRED: Mmm..

GINA: Eggplant lasagne.

FRED: Looks great.

GINA: The eggplant was on special at the 'Fruitologist'. Three for three dollars. Use by today. *(She looks at her watch)* Made it by four hours.

FRED: *(indicating TV)* What's this?

GINA: 'What Not To Wear'

FRED: Is it an English show?

GINA: Uh huh.

FRED: About what not to wear.

GINA: Yeah.

FRED: In England.

GINA: Not necessarily. It's internationally syndicated.

FRED: So 'What Not to Wear Everywhere'?

GINA nods.

FRED: So the same fashion rules apply in the Cotswold's as they do on the Pacific Rim?

GINA: You're obviously not going to need an ankle length coat and ear muffs in the Cook Islands, but don't wear pencil skirts if you have a big bum, wear a belt if you have

a waist and don't save Spanx for special occasions, are pretty much transcontinental.

FRED: Spanx?

GINA: You don't want to know.

FRED tastes the food.

GINA: Did you want to watch something else?

FRED: No that's ok.

FRED reluctantly swallows the food.

GINA: Sure? I've seen this one before anyway.

FRED: So this was what not to wear everywhere last year?

GINA: The DVD box set's compulsory viewing for Retro parties.

FRED changes the station.

GINA: I've been wondering what sort of sport you're into. Soccer eh?

FRED: Football yes.

GINA: Who's playing?

FRED: Liverpool and Man U. The English Premier League. About football, in England. It's internationally syndicated.

GINA: I like what they're wearing.

FRED looks at his watch.

FRED: Right.

FRED stands.

GINA: Didn't you like it?

FRED: I thought I'd save the rest for lunch tomorrow.

GINA: Do you want dessert?

FRED: I'm catching up with an old mate at the bar at Icebergs.

GINA: Oh. Is he single?

FRED: Ah. I think he is actually.

GINA: I'm joking. It's just my default expression these days. Male. Eighteen to eighty. Pulse. Single? Must be gay, is he?

FRED: No. Just .. He only goes for supermodels. Well at least he used to.

GINA: I've been working so much I haven't had a chance to sample Thursday night in Bondi yet. But then what sort of a flatmate would I be if I started going out with one of your friends? Fast track to eviction.

FRED: Did you want to come?

GINA: I've got a big day tomorrow, I should probably do some washing.

1.3

KATE'S FLAT

SIMON is reading the street directory in bed. His shirt is off, a sheet covers his lower body.

KATE enters wearing pyjamas.

SIMON: Do you knock?

KATE: I've seen it before. Thanks for dinner.

SIMON: Thanks for slipping into something more comfortable.

She curtsies.

KATE: Seriously, the eggplant was delicious. You'd never have known it was almost off. I thought you were going out.

SIMON: Just needed a little siesta.

She sits on the bed.

SIMON: You right?

KATE: Just getting comfortable.

SIMON: I thought you already were.

KATE: You can always be more. I hope I'm an ologist in something other than foam one day.

SIMON: What would you be an ologist in?

KATE: Love stories.

SIMON: A Love Story-ologist?

KATE: I guess, or a Stories of Love-ologist. I had a couple come in today who'd been married for sixty years. They met at Uni. She said she knew he was the one the first time she saw him.

SIMON: How did she know?

KATE: She just did

SIMON: Right.
He's about to pull back the sheet.

KATE: *(suggestively)* Right...

SIMON: Out. I want to be on time. I'm meeting the guy whose help I need for the remaining ninety-nine and a half pages of my application.
She notices the book.

KATE: Why are you reading the street directory?

SIMON: It's a real page turner. You're on 7 B6 and before you know it you're on 9 D4.
She laughs.

SIMON: I had my last driving session today. Tomorrow I'm going for my licence.

KATE: Oh.

1.4

PUB

FRED enters.

FRED: There're some chairs over here.

GINA enters, fixing her hair.

GINA: And it's close to the door in case you feel like issuing an eviction. I won't hang around if, well, you know... I'll just say I'm here to borrow your keys.

FRED: What?

GINA: I locked myself out and I'm borrowing your keys. You've been single for a while, haven't you? You're going to learn a lot from me.

FRED: You think?

GINA: Lost keys is pretty standard. Who do you usually hang out with?

FRED: Kismo.

GINA: Kismo?

FRED: My imaginary friend. We met in primary school. Lost touch for a while, but then he found me again on Facebook.

GINA: Look at all these people! Doesn't anyone else have to work tomorrow?

FRED: Out-of-work actors, writers or singers currently working in call centres, waiting tables or retraining as yoga instructors, none of which means they have to be out of bed before ten.

GINA: I can't tell you how good it is to finally be in Bondi. Oh! Look at him! Such a Brad. Oh. That can't be his girlfriend. So not Angelina. So tell me about your friend..

FRED: What do you want to know?

GINA: Height, income and sperm count. I'm joking. As I said, eighteen to eighty, with a pulse.

SIMON enters. He's a wheelchair user.

SIMON: Sorry I'm late. The Masters Games are about to start and every lawn bowler with a Zimmer frame wants an accessible taxi.

FRED and GINA are shocked.

SIMON holds out his hand.

SIMON: Didn't think you'd heard.

FRED stands and shakes his hand.

FRED: No...

SIMON: Hi I'm Simon.

GINA: Gina.

SIMON: I was in an accident ... Left me needing this to get around.

FRED: Shit mate... What happened?

SIMON: Long story. Good to see you! It's a bit of a shock I know. Been hard to work out how to tell people who didn't already know. Do you send a group text, update your Facebook status? I'm fine, really. Can I get you a beer?

FRED: I'll go. *(to GINA)* Beer?

GINA: Actually I've just dropped in to borrow Fred's keys.

FRED: Yeah. But you can stay for one beer. Might be our last chance to have a drink together if there ends up being an eviction. Gina's my flat mate of three weeks and five days. We're currently both on probation.

GINA: Me more than him.

SIMON: Pardon?

GINA: Nothing. A beer'd be great.

SIMON: Beer'd be good thanks Mate.

FRED exits.

SIMON: So... probation..
He indicates she sits.

GINA: I move in for four weeks, if it's working,
I stay, if it isn't, I move out.

SIMON: Is it working?

GINA: It's working for me. A garage in Bondi
would work for me. There were forty people
interested in my room. I was just lucky to
be the only one who works really long hours
and had a fifty inch Flatscreen.

SIMON: Why Bondi?

GINA: Are you kidding? Anyone who's anyone lives
here and anyone who wants to be an anyone's
moving here. Not that I want to be just
anyone.

SIMON: Where do you work your really long hours?

GINA: A hospital.

SIMON: Nurse?

GINA: Doctor. But thank you.

SIMON: What do you mean?

GINA: Nurse's sexier. In Ferris Bueller's Day
Off, he wasn't sent a home visit by a
doctor. 'I heard that you were feeling ill,
headache, fever and a chill, I came to help

restore your pluck, 'cause I'm the nurse who likes to' What do you do?

SIMON: Not a lot at the moment. I think the official term is between jobs. Yeah, I'm on a career break. Taking some time before I pursue new opportunities. I'm hoping to do a PhD next year.

GINA: You'll be a doctor too then.

SIMON: And I'll definitely be using the title.

GINA: What in?

SIMON: Neuroscience. The brain.

GINA: *(She yawns)* Oh Sorry.

SIMON: You don't have to write the thing.

FRED enters with three bottles of beer.

FRED: For you, for you. So how've you been mate?

SIMON: Good.

FRED: I mean... You seem well.

SIMON: Yeah, you know, can't complain. Mean I could, but no one'd listen.

He laughs.

FRED: You still living round here?

SIMON: But might be moving soon... Deal was I'd just stay til I got my licence and I'm going for my test tomorrow.

GINA is confused.

SIMON: Hand controls. Like a fighter pilot. It's very Top Gun.

GINA: Take me to bed or lose me forever!

SIMON: Show me the way home honey.

GINA is uncomfortable.

SIMON: What have you been up to mate?

FRED: Same old. Work, rest, play. The Mars approach. And I'm one of the organisers of the BAN duathlon on Sunday.

SIMON: Sorry mate?

FRED: The red posters around.

He points to the walls.

SIMON: Oh yeah.

GINA: BAN stands for Bondi Action Network. That's the acronym.

FRED: We're a new local group hoping to provide a forum for the community to take its own steps on climate change. Set our own emissions targets, ban plastic bags, look at designated meat-free days....that sort of thing.

SIMON: Sounds great.

FRED: Yeah well someone had to do something.

SIMON: And the duathlon?

FRED: Is the launch. You should come down mate. I mean...

SIMON: No, sounds good. And a very Bondi way to launch.

FRED: Was actually going to be a triathlon, with an ocean swim across the bay, but we couldn't get insurance for the swim leg after the surfer was attacked by the Great White shark.

SIMON: Are you entering?

GINA: I'm more of the spectator type. But I'll be cheering, with signage: 'Go Fred. Best flatmate ever!'

SIMON: When did you get into fitness mate? You must have put on what, ten kilos?

FRED: I started training the day after you beat me to the TV job.

GINA: What TV job was this?

FRED: Simon and I both auditioned to be a panellist on a new ABC science show. Was going to be like Sixty Minutes, but just about science.

GINA: When was it on?

SIMON: It didn't go ahead.

GINA's phone beeps.

GINA: Sorry I'm on call. *(She answers)* Hi Gina speaking. Oh... No sorry, not groaning at you, I just thought I might get a bit of sleep tonight. See you soon *(She hangs up)* Sorry, new admission. But really nice to meet you.

SIMON: Yeah, you too. Don't forget your keys.

GINA: Do you mind?

FRED: Ahhh...

GINA: I'll leave them out somewhere.

FRED: I don't like leaving them out. Um. Sorry mate, can we do this another time. Been great to catch up... I should have said earlier, can only stay for one beer anyway.