

# Abel C. Mann, Processed Offshore

a short play

by Trevar Alan Chilver

## CHARACTERS

NARRATOR ONE	preferably female
NARRATOR TWO	preferably female
ABEL C. MANN	an actor, male
ORGANISER	
COASTGUARD	}

these characters can be played by the same actor, male

## ***Abel C. Mann, Processed Offshore***

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## Abel C. Mann, Processed Offshore

*ABEL stands CS, neutral position wearing boxers and a singlet, as NARRATOR ONE and NARRATOR TWO enter with their Box of Props.*

**ONE**

Once upon a time there was an actor.

**TWO**

An accomplished actor.

**ONE**

Not terribly accomplished,

**TWO**

but he was getting noticed.

**ONE**

His name,

**TWO**

in case you don't recognise him...

**ONE**

As if they wouldn't!

**TWO**

It's been a while.

**ONE**

His name was

**ONE & TWO**

Abel Charles Mann.

**TWO**

Or Abel C. Mann, as he likes to be called.

**ONE**

Well, liked to be called.

**TWO**

Back in the day.

**ONE**

Before the...

**ONE & TWO**

incident!

*Pause.*

**ONE**

It was a hot, humid summer.

*TWO hands ABEL a frilly, girly fan.*

**TWO**

There were bushfires raging in the south,

**ONE**

floods in the north.

**TWO**

And in the oldest,

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**ONE**

and grandest

**TWO**

city in the land,

**ONE**

the people were preparing to celebrate

**ONE & TWO**

a national holiday!

**TWO**

A celebration of the day the land was colonised

**ONE**

by a powerful nation

**TWO**

with lots of boats

**ONE**

on the other side of the planet.

*ONE relieves ABEL of the fan.*

**TWO**

The other side of the world!

**ONE**

The event organiser came looking.

*The ORGANISER enters and examines ABEL, inspecting him from head to toe, and comparing him to an image of Captain Arthur Phillip.*

**TWO**

He was searching for just the right person.

**ONE**

The right performer.

**TWO**

To play

**ONE**

the gallant sea captain!

**TWO**

The captain who led the fleet!

**ONE**

The fleet of foreigners

**TWO**

who colonised

**ONE**

the great southern land!

**TWO**

It was very exciting.

**ONE**

The whole city could barely wait for the big day!

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**TWO**

And what do you know? The organiser

**ONE**

chose Abel!

*The ORGANISER shakes ABEL's hand. ABEL grins wildly. The NARRATORS begin to dress him up as Captain Arthur Phillip.*

**TWO**

Abel was very excited.

**ONE**

As were we all!

**TWO**

It was a great honour.

**ONE**

It was an opportunity!

**TWO**

To show what he could do.

**ONE**

To put his face out there.

**TWO**

To become known in the industry.

**ONE**

To honour his country.

**TWO**

His nation.

**ONE**

His land.

*ABEL is dressed as Captain Arthur Phillip. NARRATORS present him to the audience and put a Union Flag in his hand.*

**TWO**

His role was simple.

**ONE**

He was to get in a boat,

**TWO**

a tall ship.

**ONE**

A very tall ship.

**TWO**

And he would land,

**ONE**

Just like that captain of so long ago.

**TWO**

And claim the land,

**ONE**

just like that brave captain did, centuries before.

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**TWO**

Abel was overjoyed.

**ONE**

He would do his country proud!

**TWO**

The big day came around.

**ONE**

There were fires in the north,

**TWO**

And floods in the south.

*ONE puts a paper bag over ABEL's mouth, he breathes into it.*

**ONE**

Abel was nervous.

**TWO**

You'll be fine!

**ONE**

But the sun rose over the site,

**TWO**

the landing place

**ONE**

where a new nation

**TWO**

was born.

**ONE**

A nation of migrants.

**TWO**

Of travellers.

**ONE**

Of interlopers.

**TWO**

Now, that's not very inspiring.

**ONE**

Well that's what they were.

*ONE takes a sausage in a piece of bread from the Box of Props and hands it to ABEL.*

**TWO**

The atmosphere was incredible!

**ONE**

There were flags and banners everywhere.

**TWO**

There were sausages to sizzle.

**ONE**

There were singers, and dancers.

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**TWO**

Indigenous dancers.

**ONE**

Indigenous artists.

**TWO**

Indigenous foods.

**ONE**

Oh, don't be ridiculous! As if anyone would...

*ONE sets up a mast with a sail from the Box of Props behind ABEL.*

**TWO**

And there was a tall ship in the harbour!

**ONE**

A tall ship in the bay.

**TWO**

A tall ship with its sails gleaming in the sunshine.

**ONE**

A tall ship with a brilliant actor on board;

**ONE & TWO**

Abel C. Mann!

**TWO**

The national hero!

**ONE**

The national icon!

**TWO**

The national star!

**ONE**

The people went wild!

*ONE relieves ABEL of the sausage.*

**TWO**

Well, as wild as you can while eating a sausage and watching indigenous dancers.

**ONE**

Abel raised his hand and waved to the crowds on shore,

**TWO**

while everyone on shore waved their sausages back at him.

**ONE**

Then, he climbed into the dinghy.

*ABEL turns his back to the audience and mimes climbing down a rope ladder.*

**TWO**

Not very gracefully.

**ONE**

Well there's no graceful way

**TWO**

to get out of a tall ship and into a dinghy.

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*ONE hands ABEL an oar.*

**ONE**

He rowed the dinghy

**TWO**

capably,

**ONE**

admirably.

**TWO**

He'd been practising for this day

**ONE**

on his swimming pool

**TWO**

in his back yard,

**ONE**

so he was a fine rower.

**TWO**

An able seaman.

*Pause. TWO winks at the audience for laughs. ABEL attempts to hit TWO, but ONE relieves him of the oar.*

**ONE**

But as he approached the shore...

**TWO**

Disaster!

**ONE**

Horror!

**TWO**

Woe!

**ONE**

A Coastguard,

*COASTGUARD enters, wearing a pair of Abbottesque budgie smugglers.*

**TWO**

of the new Coast Patrol,

**ONE**

in the new Coastal Observation Unit,

**TWO**

under the new CoastWatch Authority

**ONE**

in the old Coastal Protection Directorate

**TWO**

of the Department of Coastal Protection, Onshore Security and Nice Little Shells,

**ONE**

which was overseen by the Minister for Homeland Security, National Defence and Budgie Smuggling,

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**TWO**  
arrived.

*Pause.*

**ONE**

And

**TWO**  
he

**ONE**  
wasn't

**TWO**  
very

**ONE**  
happy,

**TWO**  
Jan.

**ONE**

He wasn't very happy at all.

**GUARD**

Excuse me sir, I'm going to have to ask you to stay on that dinghy, sir.

**TWO**

Abel didn't know what to do.

**ONE**

They always say,

**TWO**

"the show must go on,"

**ONE**

But it hadn't occurred to him,

**TWO**

that he might be breaking the law.

**ONE**

The new law.

**TWO**

About the boats.

**ONE**

About stopping the boats.

**TWO**

He was a citizen, after all.

**GUARD**

Do you have your passport, sir?

*ABEL looks for his passport, one at a time removing all his costume pieces and handing them along with his Union Flag to the guard to search the pockets, leaving him in his singlet and boxers again.*

**ONE**

He didn't.

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**TWO**

He didn't think he'd need it.

**ONE**

He didn't think it mattered if you were already in the country.

**TWO**

He didn't think it mattered if you were a citizen!

**ONE**

You see there'd been a change in the laws.

**TWO**

The prime leader;

**ONE**

the lead minister;

**TWO**

the elected official;

**ONE**

the one we all call

**TWO**

the 'Right Honourable' MP PM

**ONE**

had introduced a bill

**TWO**

that was passed in the green room;

**ONE**

passed in the red room;

**TWO**

passed to the postmaster,

**ONE**

who passed it all the way

**TWO**

across the sea

**ONE**

to the other side of the world

**TWO**

to gain the assent of the monarch;

**ONE**

the queen;

**TWO**

the lady of the house of Buck.

**ONE**

So it was passed into law

**TWO**

just the day before

**ONE**

and it said

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*The GUARD has put ABEL's costume back into the Box of Props and hands ABEL his oar again.*

**GUARD**

We are going to stop the boats.

**TWO**

and

**GUARD**

We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come.

*A beat.*

**ONE**

And that was that.

**TWO**

There was no getting around it.

**ONE**

The law,

**TWO**

the new law,

**ONE**

was quite clear:

**GUARD**

The government's decided that the circumstances will be by aeroplanes, and not by boats, so you can't come back into the country, sir.

**TWO**

But he was a citizen!

**ONE**

A national hero!

**TWO**

A national icon!

**ONE**

Not that it mattered.

**TWO**

Only aeroplanes,

**ONE**

never boats.

**TWO**

Boats are bad.

**ONE**

Planes are good.

**TWO**

And so, as fires raged in the south,

**ONE**

and swollen rivers flooded the north,

**TWO**

poor Mister Mann

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**ONE**

poor Abel

**TWO**

the wonderful actor;

**ONE**

the national hero;

**TWO**

serving his country;

**ONE**

serving his queen

**TWO**

had to be sent for offshore processing.

*ABEL begins to row away from the NARRATORS and the GUARD, who pause to watch him leave.*

**ONE**

On a foreign shore.

**TWO**

Which, of course, wasn't offshore at all.

**ONE**

Well, it was off this shore.

**TWO**

Though not very far.

**ONE**

But still,

**TWO**

But still, far enough to be forgotten.

*ABEL has stopped rowing. GUARD leaves.*

**ONE**

And a long way to swim

**TWO**

from that shore called 'off'

**ONE**

to this shore called 'on'

**TWO**

for Abel C. Mann,

**ONE**

the wonderful actor,

**TWO**

loyal to his country,

**ONE**

though it rejected him

**TWO**

for travelling to his country

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**ONE & TWO**

in a boat, and not a plane.

*Pause.*

**TWO**

How silly.

**ONE**

Foolish.

**TWO**

Incomprehensible!

**ONE**

Such a shame!

**TWO**

A loss to theatre!

**ONE**

A loss to the nation!

**TWO**

Such a tragic waste of potential!

*TWO relieves ABEL of the oar.*

**ONE**

There's a moral to this story;

**TWO**

a lesson we all must learn;

**ONE**

something to take home

**TWO**

and never forget:

**ONE & TWO**

acting is a mug's game.

*Lights snap out.*

*Finis.*