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# THE AMBER TRAP

by Tabitha Mortiboy

SAMUEL FRENCH

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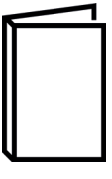
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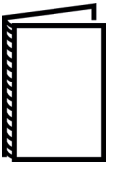
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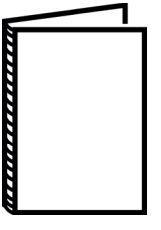
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tabitha Mortiboy is a playwright from London. She began her writing career in Bristol, where her first play, *Billy Through the Window*, premiered at The Wardrobe Theatre in 2015. *Billy* later transferred to Theatre 503 and to Underbelly at the Edinburgh Fringe, where it was shortlisted for the Brighton Fringe Excellence Award. In 2016 her second play, *Beacons*, was produced at the Park Theatre, London. *Beacons* was nominated for three Off West End Awards including Best New Play and Most Promising New Playwright. In 2017, she co-wrote *Bare Skin on Briny Waters* with Maureen Lennon for the Edinburgh Fringe, where it received a commendation for writing in the NSDF Edinburgh Award. As well as creating her own work, she writes alongside Bellow Theatre, a company she co-founded in 2013.e

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

/ indicates an interruption
... indicates a beat or hesitation
– indicates a fractional pause as a word is found
( ) indicates words which may not be spoken aloud

## CHARACTERS

**JO** – mid 50s
**KATIE** – early 20s
**HOPE** – early 20s
**MICHAEL** – 18

## THANK YOUS

Thanks to the women of Attic Theatre who trusted me to write my first play, and who gave me the courage to write many more. Thanks especially to Jenny Lee and Louise Hill, who guided me through my first steps in the world of professional playwriting. Thanks to the women at Damsel Productions, for having faith in this story from its conception. Thanks especially to Hannah Hauer-King for her indomitable talent, precision and energy, and for being such a wonderful collaborator and dramaturg, and to Kitty Wordsworth for working tirelessly behind the scenes to turn a dream into a reality. Thanks to B.B. for a lifetime of friendship and to my family for their endless love and support. Thanks also to my agent, Jonathan, for giving me confidence and guidance on my journey as a writer. Finally, a huge, heartfelt thank you to the beautiful and brilliant cast who gave this story its heart and its voice.

*For Caitlin, for always being beside me.*

## Scene One

*A corner shop, early morning.*

**KATIE** *is sitting on the checkout counter eating her way through a bag of oranges.*

**HOPE** *is brushing her teeth and watering a pot of sunflowers on the counter.*

*She crosses to the office to spit.*

**KATIE** *writhes in sudden pain.*

**KATIE** Fuck.

**HOPE** *skids back in.*

**HOPE** What?

**KATIE** Fuck.

**HOPE** What?

**KATIE** I bit my tongue.

**HOPE** Jesus, you gave me a heart attack.

**KATIE** It hurts.

**HOPE** Give it here.

**KATIE** Ow.

**HOPE** Come on, give it here.

*She takes the orange and splits a segment.*

Stick your tongue out.

**KATIE** No.

**HOPE** It's an antiseptic.

**KATIE** Is it?

**HOPE** Yeah.

**KATIE** I don't think it is.

**HOPE** It is, it's good. Go on, get it out.

**KATIE** *sticks out her tongue.*

**HOPE** *dabs down the orange.*

**KATIE** *recoils.*

Sit still. Sit still.

**KATIE** You're a dickhead.

**HOPE** It works.

**KATIE** *nurses her tongue.*

**HOPE** *toys with the sunflowers.*

**KATIE** They look good.

**HOPE** D'you reckon?

**KATIE** Yeah, I reckon you'll win.

**HOPE** I dunno. There's a bloke at the end who's grown them eight feet tall.

**KATIE** Is it judged on that?

**HOPE** No, but it's impressive.

**KATIE** You're gonna knock them all sideways.

**HOPE** I'm gonna?

**KATIE** Knock them all sideways.

**HOPE** Is that – what's that?

**KATIE** You're gonna win. You're gonna blow their socks off.

**HOPE** You're like my nan.

**KATIE** Am I? That's weird.

**HOPE** *kisses her playfully.*

**HOPE** But with better boobs / and less wrinkles / and less of a boner for the fit new postman /

**KATIE** Stop it / oi, stop it / no, don't say boner.

**HOPE** Why not?

**KATIE** (Because) It's your nan.

**HOPE** Alright, erection.

**KATIE** She's /

**HOPE** What?

**KATIE** She's a lady. She's a lovely old lady.

**HOPE** Alright, lady erection.

*They kiss and tussle as* **JO** *walks in.*

*Her left arm is bandaged in a soft splint.*

**JO** Morning ladies.

**HOPE** Morning.

**KATIE** Hiya, Jo.

**HOPE** You alright?

**JO***'s eyes dart to* **KATIE***, still sitting on the counter.*

**JO** I disinfected that last night.

**KATIE** How was it?

**JO** Horrible.

**HOPE** Oh shit, yeah.

**JO** It was horrible. It was excruciating. He wants to keep the house. He thinks he can keep the house.

**KATIE** Can he?

**JO** I don't know.

**KATIE** What, and her move in?

**JO** I don't know. I'll have to spend all the money I don't have on a dozy bloody lawyer.

**HOPE** I can't believe he's still there.

**JO** He's taken up the carpets and put down fancy fucking wood.

**HOPE** I wouldn't have gone.

**JO** I had to. To prove I could. To be a grown up, didn't I?

**KATIE** What d'you have to eat?

**JO** Lasagne.

**HOPE** Oh.

**JO** It was...really nice, actually.

**KATIE** D'you let on you were angry?

**JO** I think – no, I think I held it together.

**HOPE** It worked then.

**JO** Well.

**KATIE** Don't go again.

**HOPE** No.

**KATIE** You've done it now.

**HOPE** Yeah.

**JO** Yeah. I know. It's just part of me wanted to turn and leg it and part of me wanted to lie down and stay there. We had Ryan in that house.

**KATIE** *reaches for her hand.*

**KATIE** We love you.

**HOPE** We do.

**JO** Then get down off there.

**KATIE** *swings her feet off the counter and waggles her shoes.*

**KATIE** They're brand new, these.

**HOPE** They're lush.

**KATIE** So they won't be dirty.

**JO** Did you walk to work?

**KATIE** What?

**JO** Did you walk to work?

**KATIE** No. I biked in.

**JO** Did you walk your bike down an outdoor path?

**KATIE** Yeah /

**JO** Then wipe it down, Katie, there's food goes on there.

*She signals to the flowers.*

What – what are they?

**HOPE** They're sunflowers. They're sort of special sunflowers 'cause they grow... What?

**JO** You tell me.

**HOPE** They're traditional.

**JO** Are they? In September?

**HOPE** Well they're cheerful.

*She appeals to* **KATIE,** *who nods earnestly.*

**KATIE** They're perky.

**HOPE** I grew them on the allotment.

**JO** They're allergenic.

**HOPE** Eh?

**JO** They're an allergen. I've told you this, will you move them.

**KATIE** Flowers?

**JO** Yes. Flowers. Sunflowers. I told you this, I gave you that list, did you not bloody read it?

**HOPE** No, these are different, they're /

**JO** I spent – I don't have a printer and you've not replaced the ink, have you?

**KATIE** Sorry.

**JO** So I went to the library. I went to the local sodding library to print you those sheets so that Her Ladyship in management would stop panting down my neck about allergens and you didn't bloody read them.

**KATIE** Sorry.

**HOPE** I'll put them in the office.

**JO** Thank you.

**HOPE** But they're not normal sunflowers 'cause they bloom in the autumn /

**KATIE** Just /

**HOPE** Yeah. Sorry.

*She picks up the flowers and goes towards the office.*

**JO** They're lovely.

**KATIE** Yeah.

**JO** Sorry.

**HOPE** *exits.*

**KATIE** *pulls* **JO** *into a hug.*

**KATIE** Are you alright?

**JO** Mm.

**KATIE** He'll have bought that lasagne and put it in a baking tray.

**JO** No.

**KATIE** He will.

**JO** Well.

**KATIE** D'you want a reiki massage?

**JO** No thanks, love, not now.

**KATIE** *sets to work cleaning the counter.*

**HOPE** *swings back in and sidles towards the bag of oranges. She picks a few up.*

**HOPE** Right. Right watch this.

*She begins to juggle, her face bunched in concentration.*

**KATIE** Oh my God.

**HOPE** I cracked it last night. I had this sudden moment, this epiphany moment /

**KATIE** You're amazing.

**HOPE** Come here, I'll show you /

**JO** No. No, I am not mopping pulp off the floor.

*She intercepts an orange with her good hand.*

**KATIE** No, don't stop!

**JO** Right, listen. Listen, Katherine McCarthy. If I spend today having to make you work instead of trusting you to do it properly then you will wear /

**KATIE** No / no.

**JO** The hair net. So help me God. Now finish cleaning that counter.

**JO** *goes to the door and flicks the Closed sign to Open.*

**HOPE** *goes back to juggling.*

We're open ladies. Put –

*She swipes another orange.*

Put that down. And fix your hair.

**HOPE** *gawks at* **JO***'s aim.*

**KATIE** She played netball for Trafford.

**HOPE** Did you?

**JO** Goal defence.

**HOPE** Wow.

**KATIE** Yeah.

**JO** Yeah. Yeah we were good.

*She passes the fridges.*

Put those sarnies on sale, they've been sat there forever.

*She goes towards the office.*

**HOPE** Ey. Think big.

**JO** No.

**HOPE** Think big.

**KATIE** Go on, it does work.

**HOPE** Arms up.

*Reluctantly,* **JO** *raises her arms.*

Legs akimbo. And take a big, deep, powerful breath. And repeat after me, "I am Jo".

**JO** *(limply)* I'm Jo.

**HOPE** "And I am a positive, capable, wonderful woman."

**JO** I'm a positive, capable, wonderful woman.

**HOPE** "With no appreciation of horticulture."

**JO** *drops the stance.*

**KATIE** Did it work?

**JO** No, look, flip a coin for breaks, I've not done a rota. And the new boy's starting later. He's closing with you (Katie).

**HOPE** We don't need the new boy.

**JO** It's health and safety rubbish. I need two of you every shift, and you both need days off.

**HOPE** Why two of us?

**KATIE** Hope /

**HOPE** What?

**KATIE** Go on, pack it in.

**HOPE** I'm just asking why we need a bloke in here.

**JO** It's policy.

**HOPE** Why?

**JO** It's company-wide, it's every branch.

**HOPE** Why, what's gonna happen?

**JO** Will you just pipe down and do as you're told.

**HOPE** I just think it's bollocks, we don't need someone else.

**JO** I'll have you twenty-four seven, shall I?

**HOPE** No.

**JO** No. Right then.

**HOPE** It's just /

**JO** What?

**HOPE** It's fucking – bollocks.

**JO** Will you watch your mouth.

**KATIE** He might be nice.

**HOPE** Fuck off, fat chance.

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