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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

THE SAVAGE

by David Almond

SAMUEL FRENCH

ISBN 978-0-573-13240-7

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THE SAVAGE

The Savage was first performed at Live Theatre, Newcastle on 30 June 2016. It was directed by Max Roberts, Jamie Jackson as associate director, design by Alison Ashton, choreography by Lee Proud, music by Beth Brennan and audio visuals by NOVAK. The cast was as follows:

BLUE BAKER	Dean Bone
THE SAVAGE	Dean Bone
JESS	Kate Okello
ELAINE	Kate Okello
MAM	Dani Arlington
HOPPER	Adam Welsh

CHARACTERS

BLUE BAKER – a boy
OLDER BLUE BAKER
THE SAVAGE – a wild boy
MAM – Blue's mother
JESS – a young girl, Blue's sister
HOPPER – an older boy
ELAINE – a girl
MRS MOLLOY – a teacher
DAD – Blue's Dad
BOYS & GIRLS
MR STOKOE – a farmer
MRS STOKOE – a farmer's wife

SETTING

A town on Tyneside, between the city and the wilderness.

TIME

The present.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is a tale about a good and troubled boy, Blue Baker. He writes a story about a savage and the savage comes to life in the real world. Right from the start, my own story, *The Savage*, has been changing and growing and seeking new shapes. I wrote it first as a short story for TV. It was broadcast by ITV with wonderful illustrations by Keith McIntyre. It wouldn't keep still. I wrote it again, this time it in a longer form, and worked with the great artist Dave McKean to turn it into a graphic novel, published by Walker Books. Then Max Roberts came along and asked if I'd be interested in creating a stage play for Live Theatre. I pondered a few ideas, then here came *The Savage* again saying, 'Recreate me.' And so I rewrote it as a play, taking it from the page onto the stage. It has scenes that don't exist in earlier incarnations; it has brand new characters, including Blue's good friend, Elaine, who is crucial to the drama's progress; it has movement and music

Blue Baker and his savage stand and speak and move before us in a real space and not just in our imaginations. That's the power and strangeness of all stories, of all drama. They keep on shifting and changing, just as we do. The real and the imaginary come together to give life to our thoughts, our emotions, our fears, our dreams. I feel very close to this tale. I feel a real fondness for Blue; for his sister and his mum; for his friends; even for Blue's enemy, Hopper; and of course for Blue's savage, created by Blue's writing, by the marks he makes upon a page.

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for Max Roberts

BLUE *writing at kitchen table.* **MAM** *and* **JESS.**

MAM What you writing, Blue?

OLDER BLUE The last bit. This bit. The bit where we're sitting in the kitchen, years later, right now.

MAM Years later than what?

OLDER BLUE Than when it all happened. Than when I wrote the rest of it.

He has a box with the story in it.

MAM 'The Savage'?

OLDER BLUE Yes.

JESS The story with the pig farm in it?

OLDER BLUE Yes.

JESS That was so funny!

MAM The one you haven't wanted me to read?

OLDER BLUE Not till now. It all seemed too complicated, too private, too weird. I knew I'd want you to, one day.

MAM Are you sure?

OLDER BLUE Yes. It's time to let it go.

He passes the box.

It's for you, Mam. And for Jess. And for Dad.

MAM Oh, Blue.

OLDER BLUE You won't believe it, but everything is true.

She opens the box.

You won't believe it, but everything is true. I wrote a story called 'The Savage' about a savage kid that lived in a cave under the ruined chapel down by the Tyne, and the kid came to life in the real world. I started it in Mrs Molloy's class. It was soon after Dad died. This is it. And I'm sorry about the spelling, and the swearing, but I was younger then, and I was all in torment.

****

Classroom.

MRS MOLLOY Be messy. Be free. Be wild. Don't worry about plotting and planning or where it comes from or where it's going. Just put a pen in your hand and write, children, write! Fill the empty spaces with your marks and words. Just write!

GIRL #1 About what, Miss?

MRS MOLLOY About anything. About the things in the world you love or hate. Things in the real world all around us. Things that live only in imagination. Truth and lies, inventions, adventures, dreams, strange creatures.

GIRL #1 Wizards and dreadful ogres!

BOY #1 My little sister eating worms that day!

BOY #2 Maniac teachers!

GIRL #2 Knights and dragons!

BOY #3 A lad gets to play for the Toon and he scores a hat trick against the deadly Mackems! Yesssss!

GIRL #2 Football! Why's it always football?

BOY #3 Cos football matters! Yeeees!

BOY #4 A murder story. A crazy Tyneside axe man chopping kids to bits. Chop, chop, chop, chop! Die! Die!

MRS MOLLOY Oh!

ELAINE A girl who loves swimming turns into a seal.

MRS MOLLOY Lovely, Elaine!

BOY #5 A love story, Miss. A lad falls in love with a lass in his class and they get married and have lots of bairns and they live happily ever after. It could be Blue and...

MRS MOLLOY Thank you, Leonard. Anything at all, class. Write a funny tale! Write a happy tale! Be messy! Be wild! Off you go. One word then another, one sentence then another, one step then another. Maybe you'd like to just sit and read today, Blue. Blue. Or maybe just sit and draw.

BLUE Read *what*? Draw *what*?

MRS MOLLOY Or you could write about what happened. It could help you to move forward. You could write down your feelings.

BLUE Oh aye? So what'll I say? One day we're an ordinary canny family, and I'm an ordinary canny kid, not a care in the world, then bang, everything changes. One day Dad's there with the rest of us. The next his heart stops and he isn't. What you supposed to write about that? You write, It's a nightmare. You write, It's absolutely horrible. You write, All I want to do is bliddy scream.

MRS MOLLOY Oh Blue. And please don't swear, Blue.

BLUE Why can't I swear? What's the use of swearing if you can't bliddy swear about this?

Chanting/music.

Stories! Wizards and fairies and 'once upon a stupid time'. This happened and this happened and it all turned out happily ever after. I need blood and guts. I want me words to go mad! I want to be mental! And feelings! Where's the words that can tell what feelings are?

BLUE *writes suddenly, savagely, grunting, seeking his story.*

There was... There was...

MRS MOLLOY Was what, Blue?

BLUE There was a... How should *I* know?

Music[*]*. Riverbank.*

ELAINE Look, there she is again.

BLUE Who?

ELAINE The seal on that mudbank. See? She was here yesterday. Hello, seal! There's a salmon leaping. There's kittiwakes and curlews. Me Granda said if you fell into it when he was a kid, you'd be getting your stomach pumped in the RVI.

BLUE Aye, me Dad said that.

ELAINE Now he says you can imagine how it was, years before all this existed. It's like the wild's finding its way back. It's beautiful.

BLUE Beautiful?

ELAINE You know it is. Look, it jumped! There! Again! Brilliant!

BLUE I didn't see.

ELAINE Look out, fish, that seal's on its way! Look at her. Look at her whiskers, look at her face. It's all so rich, Blue. And down beneath us there's tunnels and mines, and ancient bodies deep in the dark. And look at that ancient stonework, and that bit of old dock, and those old staithes and jetties, and that chopped-off factory chimney, and The Sage and The Baltic, and hotels and restaurants, and that lovely new bridge that's shining in the light. Look – all those people walking and cycling in the sun. See, Blue? See? There's stuff from centuries ago, thousands of years ago, and it's all mixed up with everything that's now. Salmon jumping where there was just floating filth. Its all so weird. Don't you think the world is weird, Blue?

BLUE Is it?

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ELAINE It is! You know it is. Everything's in us as well.

BLUE What is?

ELAINE Everything that's ever been. The ancient pits and the pitmen walking in them. The boys and the girls that died down there. The shipbuilders and the clog dancers and the fishwives that walked on the quays to sell their fish. And the Tyne is flowing through us and salmon and seals are swimming in us and kittiwakes screaming and curlews calling. We're modern kids, modern Geordies standing by the Tyne but everything that's gone before is in us. It's like your Dad, Blue. He's inside you, isn't he? He's not gone.

BLUE Yes, he has.

ELLA But not from your memories. Not from the things that make you you. Me granddad says we're civilised and wild. He says that he's dead ancient and dead young. He says that I'm young and ancient, too. You know what I mean, Blue. You do!

HOPPER Hoy! Ratface! Oh excusez-moi! I did not mean to intrude. You'd be just about to start your shagging, were you? That's OK. I'll just sit back here and watch.

BLUE Hell. Hopper. Him. Always bliddy at me, always bliddy there.

BOY #1 Just keep away from him, Blue.

Go to the police, Blue.

MRS MOLLOY I know. He's awful. Just steer clear, Blue. He is getting some counselling, I know that. Goodness knows he needs it. Such an upbringing. Such troubles. I know it seems impossible, but we have to try to feel sympathy, even for the Hoppers of this world.

BOY #2 Toughen up, man, Blue. We'll mek a gang. We'll get rocks and sticks and we'll ambush the bastard and kick his heed in. Smash! Wallop! Bliddy crunch! Tek that, Hopper! Who's in?

BOY #3 You're joking aren't you?

BOY #4 No way. Not me.

BOY #5 Have you told your Dad?

DAD Oh, son. There's always been Hoppers and there always will be. He's had a tough time. You know about his Dad, don't you?

BLUE Aye.

DAD He's just jealous of you, son.

BLUE Jealous?

DAD You're a happy lad from a happy home. And sad to say, he's not. I'll go down and see him. I'll do what I can.

BLUE Will you?

DAD Course I will. I'll have a word with him.

BLUE A *word*? What'll that do? You should smash his face in. Smash! Crunch!

DAD Oh, aye? Can you imagine me, doing that?

BLUE No I couldn't. Did I want that kind of Dad? Yes! No, no. But I wish...

HOPPER Oh, forgive us, Dogbreath. I'm forgetting. You're gannin through some grief, of course. Mebbe you're not up to it. Would you like us to tek over?

ELAINE You're disgusting.

HOPPER Am I? Ah, well.

ELAINE Come on, Blue.

HOPPER Oh, hang on. I nearly forgot. I've got a little story for you, pal. It's all about your Dad. Now that's got your attention. But mebbe I shouldn't. Ah, gan on, then. I will.

ELAINE Come on, Blue. Don't listen.

HOPPER Ah but he's hooked now, eh? He can't not listen to a lovely tale about his dear old Dad. So make yourself comfortable. So. Your Dad. He's at our door, just a couple of weeks back. Did you knaa that? Didn't think so. Anyway, he says you've been whingeing about us. Hopper's been nasty, Daddy. Hopper's

been cruel. Hopper's been calling us horrid names, dear Dad. Is that true? I can see by your look that it is! The tale's already coming true! Anyway, I stand there watching him and I think, if this bloke had any guts he wouldn't be standing there whingeing. If this was a proper man that was really worried about his son he'd have his fists up. He'd even have a weapon on him. So, you knaa what I do? I stand in the doorway and watch this wimp and I take a puff on me fag and I look him right in the eye and I say, 'Piss off and die, fatso.' Haha! Piss off and die! And isn't that the weird thing? It works, doesn't it? Would you believe it, it works That's what you get if you mess with Hopper. Hopper bliddy magic!

ELAINE *goes for him. They struggle.*

Ha! She's got more fight in her than that useless Dad of yours! What a bliddy savage!

Letter falls from his pocket. **ELAINE** *snatches it.*

ELAINE Aha! Hopper's got a letter, Blue! Oh it's from his Daddy locked in jail. It says, Dear Eric...

HOPPER Give it back!

She feigns tearing it.

Don't do that!

ELAINE Mebbe I should, dear Eric. After all, you cannot even read it, can you? Dear Eric, blah blah blah...

HOPPER *grabs it back.*

HOPPER Aye it's from me Dad. Me Dad in jail but at least I've got a Dad. A Dad that says he loves us and he'll see us soon. You'll not be getting many messages from your Dad, will you, Dogbreath? He'll not be telling you he'll see you soon. So why not just piss off and die like he did? Why don't you both piss off and die? It happens. Hopper tells you to die and bang, you bliddy die.

HOPPER *leaves.*

Music. At home.*

BLUE Where's Jess?

MAM Tea at Susie's.

BLUE Is she all right?

MAM Yes!

BLUE Are you all right?

MAM Yes! Are you all right?

BLUE Yes!

MAM Then that's all right, isn't it?

BLUE I'm going upstairs.

MAM Don't. I'm sorry. She's fine. Don't worry about her. It's worse for you.

BLUE What is?

MAM Jess will hardly remember him. You'll always know what you missed. Lads need their Dads to grow up right.

BLUE I'll grow up right.

MAM Will you?

BLUE Aye. And I'll get a job and look after us all.

MAM Will you? What kind of job?

BLUE One that gets me loads of cash. I'll be a singer. I'll play for the Toon. I'll be a writer!

MAM Oh, aye, that'll make you a millionaire!

BLUE Me stories'll make people laugh and cry and they'll say, Write more, write more!

MAM I'm sure they will.

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BLUE We were writing stories just today.

MAM What about?

BLUE About anything. 'Be free! Let your imagination fly!'

MAM Mrs Molloy.

BLUE Aye, Mrs Molloy. Look.

MAM What a mess. It's like when you were a bairn. I can't make head nor tail of it. There was a... There was a what?

BLUE Don't! Give it back!

MAM There was a what, though?

BLUE I don't know. I'm trying to find out, Mam!

MAM There was a bliddy mess, that's what there was! Look at the state of it. You can't put that in front of Mrs Molloy, can you? I don't think people will look at that and say, Please write more!

BLUE You don't understand! I'm going upstairs.

MAM Don't, Blue. I'm sorry. I'll clear a space on the table. I'll help you with it.

BLUE Help me?

MAM I used to be good at stories. I could help you to find out what there was.

BLUE No.

MAM It'll be like when you were little.

BLUE It's me that's got to find it!

MAM And hey, mebbe you'll be a bit tidier if I'm sitting at your side.

BLUE I'll do it upstairs, mam.

MAM On your own?

BLUE Aye, on my own. All alone.

MAM Blue, you've got to...

BLUE Got to what?

MAM I don't know. I don't know what you've got to do.

BLUE Good. Neither do I.

MAM You've got to... I don't know what anybody's got to do. I've lost somebody, too. I'm in pain, too.

BLUE I know that, Mam.

MAM Do you? Do you? Go on, son. Do your story all alone.

He leaves.

Oh, Blue. Oh, Jess. Oh, me.

BLUE *in his room.*

BLUE Be free! Let the imagination fly! It's crawling and creeping and howling, not flying. Everything's pitch black. The room at the top of the house is a hole deep down inside the earth. The boy is lost and all alone. All alone in the tormented house, he sits there with his story. All alone, he writes. There was a...

(writes) It was the day of Harry's debut for the Magpies. A girl dreamed that she grew curlew's wings. The boy woke in the dead of night and heard the killer on the stairs. The moment he first saw her, he knew that it was love. Blablablablablablabla. What crap! There's a kid called Hopper and I hate his guts. There's a kid called Hopper and I hate his bliddy guts. There's a... What crap! There is... There was... Once upon a time there was... One day in the far-off future there will be... I'm useless! Be a writer? Me, a writer? What a joke! Me Dad died. Me Father died. One day he was with us and the next... He was fit as a lop and happy as a sandboy and he died. And it was... And it was... And he left a wife, and a son, and a daughter. Right out of the blue, he bliddy died! How can that happen? Right out of the blue! Right out of nowt!

Agh! How can I write? I'm hopeless.

There was a... There was a...

Bliddy Hell! There was a savage!

There was a savij livin' down by the tyne.

He had no famly and he had no pals and he didn't no where he cum from.

He didn't no wy he wos here in the world.

He culdn't talk.

He livd on berrys and rabits and fish and stuff lyk old pies that he pinchd from bins at the back of greenacers resthome.

He livd in a cayv under the rooind chapel.

His wepons were old nives and forks. And a ax that he nickd from franky finnigin's alotmint.

(chants, dances) There was a savage!

There was a savage, come out of the darkness

There was a savage come out of the night.

He come from scribbles, marks and scratches

He come from crawling, creeping, howling

He come from nowt, from out of the blue.

He come from Blue! He come from Blue!

And the savage. He was truly absolutely

And completely bliddy wild!

He howls.

MAM *(from downstairs)* Blue! You OK, Blue?

Knock at bedroom door.

Blue?

She opens door.

You OK, son?

BLUE Yes!

MAM What on earth you up to?

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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