

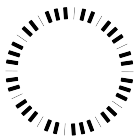
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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

HEAVEN EYES

by David Almond

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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HEAVEN EYES

Heaven Eyes was staged by Pop-Up Theatre in Edinburgh, Scotland on 2005 and toured nationally in 2005. It was directed by Mike Dalton, with sound by James Hesford. The cast was as follows:

ERIN LAW

Krissi Bohn

JANUARY CARR

Adam Piercy

MOUSE GULLANE

Oliver Judge

HEAVEN EYES

Eva Crompton

GRAMPA

Mark Carleton

CHARACTERS

ERIN LAW - a teenager
JANUARY CARR - a teenager
MOUSE GULLANE - a young teenager
HEAVEN EYES - a young teenager
GRAMPA - an old man
MAUREEN - teacher/social worker
WILSON CAIRNS - a teenager
GHOST MAM - ghost of Erin's mother

SETTING

A children's home, Whitegates, by the River Tyne.
The Black Middens, a mudbank on the River Tyne.
An abandoned printing works by the River Tyne.

TIME

The present.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wanted to write about three kids who run away from a children's home. I put them onto a raft and sent them down the River Tyne. At the start, I didn't really know who they were, where they were headed, what they'd discover. So the story was a journey of exploration for me as well as for them. I grew to feel very close to Erin, January and Mouse. I admired their courage, their refusal to be downcast by their troubled pasts, their yearning for freedom. Like them, I was astonished by their encounter with the strange girl, Heaven Eyes, and her scary Grampa, by the discovery of the saint in the mud, by the story of Heaven Eyes' past. Everyone in the story has lost so much, but each one of them has a great capacity for happiness. They're drawn together by friendship and love. As they prepare to return home, they've created a new kind of family which will be the foundation of their future lives. As Heaven Eyes says, this is a 'dark and wet and filthy tale' but it's also a story filled with hope. I wrote it first as a novel, which has been published around the world, then worked with Mike Dalton and Pop-Up Theatre to recreate it as a play. It's now been produced many times, and has toured the UK. The brave kids who set out on the raft that day just keep on travelling, in search of happiness and freedom.

for Sarah Kemp and John Cobb

ACT ONE

1

Whitegates, a children's home beside the River Tyne.

ERIN *is in her room, twisting and turning in yearning and distress.*

JANUARY *is on the riverbank, violently hammering at his raft.*

MOUSE *digs in the dirt outside Whitegates with a spoon.*

*The sound of the river, of mud and water, of **WILSON CAIRN**'s breathing/whispering in the darkness.*

WILSON CAIRNS *works at a table, making figures from clay. He calmly moulds them, holds them up, inspects them, breathes on them. He sets them around him in a ring.*

WILSON Put them back, lift them out again. Breathe. Live, little ones, live. Move. Move. Live, little ones. Live.

He continues to work.

Whitegates.

ERIN *is in her room, with her treasure box. She lifts her treasures. She touches them, smells them, is entranced by them.*

ERIN A lock of your hair. Your parrot earring. The photograph of us together in our little house. This photograph of me before I was born, swimming deep inside you. Your Sunset lipstick. Your Black Tulip nail varnish. Your Dark Velvet perfume.

Mam. Mam.

Blurred memory of laughter, of ERIN playing with her mother in a garden.

Mam... Mam... Mam...

JANUARY *is by the river, making his raft. He hammers, inspects his work with fierce pride, hammers again.*

JANUARY, MOUSE and ERIN *with their words and actions develop a spell/incantation.*

JANUARY We'll get out of this. We'll sail away forever. Freedom. Freedom. Freedom.

MOUSE *digs head-downwards in the dirt with a spoon.*

Scrape...scrape...scrape. He looks at what he finds, laughs, throws it away.

MOUSE What's in here? Nowt. Nowt. Nowt.

He takes a mouse, Squeak, out of his pocket, speaks to Squeak.

Nowt. Nowt. Nowt.

ERIN Mam... Mam... Oh, Mam...

JANUARY *hammers.*

Bang...bang...bang.

JANUARY Freedom!

MOUSE *digs. He finds a plastic dinosaur, a five-pence piece.*

MOUSE Nowt...nowt... Aha!

ERIN Oh Mam!

JANUARY Freedom!

WILSON *forms his clay.*

WILSON Live, little ones. Live.

MAUREEN Circle time! Circle time! Come on, children. Gather round. Circle time!

Children start to gather in the circle.

Erin Law!

ERIN *looks up. She returns to her ritual.*

Erin Law! January Carr! Sean Gullane!

They all look up. MOUSE scampers to the circle. JANUARY hammers. ERIN paints a little lipstick on. The children sit disinterestedly in the circle.

Quickly, children. Oh, good boy, Sean. Look at this muck. Digging again! What *can* you hope to find? Erin Law! January Carr! Circle time!

MOUSE *sits down. He whispers to Squeak.*

JANUARY *hammers more quickly, more violently. He stands up, looks at the raft he's made.*

JANUARY Beautiful.

MAUREEN January Carr!

He goes to the circle.

I see you've been busy again, January.

She takes the hammer from him.

What is it this time?

JANUARY Time machine.

MAUREEN Very good! Take your place, dear. Is Erin with you?

JANUARY No.

MAUREEN Erin Law! Erin Law! Don't stay all alone!

ERIN replaces her treasures in her box. She goes to the circle.

Hello, dear. Last again?

ERIN I don't need circle time.

MAUREEN runs her fingers across ERIN's lipstick, wipes it with a tissue.

MAUREEN We all need circle time, Erin. You don't want to turn out like...

ERIN Like what?

MAUREEN Wilson Cairns!

WILSON turns, doesn't come to the circle, continues to make his clay figures.

Perhaps not. Now, gather round, my lovely children. My lovely poor damaged children. Shall we continue to rebuild your lives?

ERIN and JANUARY wave silently at each other.

Do not be frightened or embarrassed. There is nothing that we cannot say. Each of us is damaged. Each of us is shaped by trouble. Each of us must tell our tale. So feel free, and dig deep. Now, who would like to... Sean. Would you like to start?

MOUSE puts Squeak into his pocket. He tries to ignore MAUREEN...

Oh, Sean. What's troubling you today? Would you like to share?

MOUSE Nowt. Nowt's wrong.

MAUREEN Tell Maureen and your friends. Is it your dear lost daddy again?

MOUSE No. No.

MAUREEN Come along, Sean. Build on what you know. Your father once worked on the quayside here. You have a photograph of him in his overall. He tattooed this on your arm before he went away. PLEASE LOOK AFTER THIS LAD. He got the idea from a book about a bear. And this is all in your own Life Story Book. And you think that he is in Africa now, or... Come along. Build your tale. Rebuild your life. Remember more. Imagine more.

ERIN Let him alone.

MAUREEN Pardon?

JANUARY She said leave him alone.

MAUREEN You're angry today, aren't you, Erin?

ERIN No, I'm not. Just leave him alone. Stop poking and prying.

MAUREEN Oh, Erin, you have such a heart. And such a far-away look sometimes. Tell us where you are.

ERIN Here. In this damn dump.

MAUREEN We're only trying to help you.

ERIN Help!

MAUREEN You see, children like yourselves...

ERIN What do you mean, children like ourselves?

MAUREEN You know what I mean, Erin. It gives me no pleasure to say so, but you are children who will never be the world's favourites.

ERIN There's nowt wrong with us. We can do anything we want to do. Anything!

MAUREEN We're only thinking of your happiness.

ERIN But I *am* happy.

MAUREEN Pardon?

JANUARY She says she's happy.

MAUREEN But how can she be? How can you be? Let's go on.
Anybody?

JANUARY It was a stormy winter night.

The others turn to him.

It was a stormy winter night. It was January. There was sleet and snow and it was bitter cold. She was freezing, she was petrified. She was really young and really lovely and she was desperate. She loved her tiny little baby that much but how could she look after him when she was that young and that poor? He was just a few days old. That night she wrapped him up in blankets and put him in an orange box. She took him out into the bitter night. She kept in the shadows as she got closer to the hospital. She was shaking with cold and pain and love. She waited till there was nobody, then she run the last few yards and put him on the doorstep of the hospital. She kissed him one last time, then she rushed back into the night. She knew they'd find him straight away. She knew he'd be safe. She knew that! She's been crying ever since, every night before she goes to sleep, remembering her little tiny baby. Every night. Every night.

MAUREEN Thank you for sharing, January. It was lovely.

JANUARY It was bollocks. But it could be true.

MAUREEN Of course it could.

JANUARY And she loved me. She left me there because she loved me. She knew she couldn't care for me.

MAUREEN Of course she did.

JANUARY And she'll come back for me.

MAUREEN Sorry, dear?

JANUARY She will. She still loves me and wants me and one day she'll come back for me.

MAUREEN Yes, dear. We'll write it all out in your book with some lovely details. Anybody else? Or is it chocolate biscuit time?

The circle breaks up.

ERIN What you looking at?

MAUREEN Pardon?

ERIN You. Looking at.

MAUREEN Why are you always so...

ERIN Ha!

MAUREEN I used to think that, of all the children here, you'd...

ERIN What?

MAUREEN I always thought...that if I'd had a daughter, she'd be...

ERIN Ha! That's it, isn't it? If you'd had a daughter, you'd have looked after her better than my Mam did. If you'd had a daughter, she wouldn't have ended up in Whitegates. If you'd had a daughter, you wouldn't have been useless and gone and died like my Mam did. Say it! Go on, say it! You'd have been better than my Mam! Better than any of our Mams!

She pulls away, leaves the room.

3

ERIN's room. ERIN enters, slams the door behind her.

ERIN Bitch! Cow!

A knock at the door.

Clear off!

JANUARY puts his head round the door. He comes in.

I'll kill her, Jan. That's what I'll do. Stab her or...

JANUARY Bullets, man. That's the best way. Or a massive axe.
Chop, chop. Or stick a snake in her bed. Sssss!

ERIN Aye.

JANUARY Anyway, you'll soon be far, far away. We're leaving!

ERIN Again?

JANUARY Aye!

ERIN Good!

JANUARY And this time we're not coming back.

ERIN Good!

JANUARY We'll sail away for ever!

ERIN Good! What d'you mean, sail?

JANUARY On the water, on the river, on the briny, on the deep
blue sea. I've made a raft!

ERIN A what?

JANUARY It's beautiful.

ERIN You're mad!

JANUARY I know. Just like you. Ancient doors and planks and
paint and varnish. Wait till you see it, Erin!

ERIN We'll sink.

JANUARY I know we will!

ERIN We'll drown.

JANUARY I know we will! Where's your spirit of adventure, man?
Just me and you and the raft and the river...

ERIN Sailing away...

JANUARY And the sky and the stars...

ERIN Drifiting, drifting...

JANUARY Freedom, Erin. Freedom!

MAUREEN (*from outside*) January Carr! Is that you I can hear
in Erin's room?

JANUARY Listen to her.

MAUREEN January!

ERIN (*mocking*) January.

Aye!

JANUARY Can you feel the water?

ERIN Aye!

JANUARY The way it rocks you. And the spray on your face?

ERIN Aye. Aye.

JANUARY We'll go today.

ERIN Yes! Shall we?

JANUARY Freedom, Erin.

ERIN Freedom!

MAUREEN January Carr!

JANUARY Today! Today!

He leaves.

ERIN *in her room. She's packing a rucksack.*

ERIN Crisps, biscuits, tin of Coke, soap, shampoo, a little towel.
Three pounds twenty-seven... Last will and testament.

She writes.

I, Erin Law, leave everything to the good bairns of Whitegates.
I love you all. Sorry that my everything is next to nowt.

She folds the will, puts it into a drawer. She takes down her cardboard treasure box. She puts on touches of the make-up and perfume. She looks at the photograph of herself in the womb as if from an outside world.

Mam, Mam...

Memory.

MAM'S VOICE Hello, little swimmer. Hello, little swimmer deep inside. Can you hear me? Not long now till you come out. Oh, and what a time we'll have! Come on! Oh, sweetheart! That's right. There you are! Oh what a beautiful baby. What a clever girl! What does the sheep say? Baa baa. What does the cat say? Miaow miaow. Say mama. Mama. Walk to mummy. Sing to mummy. Oh look at you now. So big and strong! Oh, what a time we're going to have.

ERIN Mam. Mam...

MAM *comes to ERIN.*

MAM Erin. Erin.

ERIN Oh, Mam.

They hold each other. MAM sings "My Bonnie".

I'm going away on January's raft.

MAM I know that. Shh.

ERIN A bird! Look! A bird!

A bird flies rapidly over them, perches on a window, flies out.

MAM The bird of life.

ERIN Bird of life?

MAM We come into this world out the dark. We dunno where we come from. We dunno where we're going. But while we're here in the world, if we're brave enough, we flap our wings and fly. You understand?

ERIN I think so.

MAM Go on. Jan'll be waiting.

ERIN You'll be with me?

MAM I'll be with you always. Go on. Flap your wings. Fly away.

WILSON CAIRNS *continues making clay models.*

WILSON Live, little one. Live.

ERIN *comes to him.*

ERIN We're running away, Wilson.

WILSON I know that. Did you see him move?

ERIN I'm not sure.

WILSON Nor am I.

ERIN We're going down the river.

WILSON I know. Sometimes when I breathe and whisper on them, they start to...

ERIN They're lovely, Wilson.

WILSON You got to find the life in them. Or breathe the life in them.

ERIN You'll do it, Wilson.

WILSON You take them out. You put them back. You try again. Live. Live. Listen.

ERIN Listen to what?

WILSON Dunno, Erin. Sometimes I hear it, though. Do you think there's somebody moving us, breathing on us?

ERIN Don't know, Wilson.

WILSON Nor me. D'you think I'm ugly? Fat, ugly, horrible Wilson Cairns?

ERIN I think you're lovely, Wilson. And very clever.

WILSON My mum died and then my dad died and I was all alone. I can't even remember them. Just like darkness everywhere.

ERIN I know that, Wilson. Will you think of us?

WILSON I'll look out for you. And you'll come back again.

ERIN Will we?

WILSON Yes. And if you don't, I'll make models of you, and draw you back and keep you safe.

JANUARY *appears nearby.*

JANUARY Erin!

ERIN *kisses WILSON on the cheek.*

ERIN Goodbye, Wilson.

She leaves.

WILSON Put them back. Take them out, try again. Come back again. Don't stay deep down in the dark. Come home again.

6

ERIN and **JANUARY** approach the river.

JANUARY Spit on the past.

He spits.

Gan on. Spit on the past.

She spits. They spit together.

Good lass! Howay! Fly!

MOUSE sees them. *He follows.*

It's here.

He claws aside litter and rubble to expose the raft.

Come on, my beauty.

He shows the doors: ENTRANCE; DANGER; EXIT. There's a rope and two paddles. There's writing painted in red.

Entrance. Danger. Exit. And here's me curse.

ERIN (*reads*) May anyone who steals this raft be ferried straight to Hell. To Hell?

JANUARY To damn and blasted HELL!

He drags it towards the water.

Frightened?

ERIN No. Petrified.

JANUARY It's easy. We hoy it in, then we jump, then we go. Easy.

ERIN Hell's teeth, Jan.

JANUARY What we got to lose?

ERIN Me life.

JANUARY What's that worth?

ERIN Nowt.

JANUARY Exactly. Nowt. But we've got each other just like always.
We can do anything, Erin. You said it. Anything!

ERIN Aye! Anything.

MOUSE comes up behind them.

MOUSE Look what I found.

He shows ERIN a little plastic dinosaur.

JANUARY Shove off, you!

ERIN A dinosaur! It's lovely, Mouse.

MOUSE And look. Five pence. I'm rich! You're going away, aren't you?

JANUARY Shove off, I said!

MOUSE Take me with you. Me and Squeak.

JANUARY What?

MOUSE I'll pay you.

JANUARY Go home!

MOUSE I've got no home. I'm just like you.

JANUARY You, like me?

MOUSE Aye. I've got nowt, nobody, nowhere.

JANUARY You've got your stupid mouse.

MOUSE And he must have loved us, too.

ERIN Eh?

MOUSE Me Dad. Just like your Mam loved you, just like Jan's Mam loved him. Just like Squeak loves me. He writ this on me arm. Shows he wanted to keep us safe. *Please look after this lad.* I'm right, aren't I?

ERIN He must have loved you very much, Mouse.

JANUARY You'll drown.

MOUSE Nobody'll miss us. Nobody'll miss none of us.

ERIN Jan. There's three people. Three doors.

JANUARY Hell's teeth, Erin.

ERIN I'll look after him.

JANUARY If you... I'll murder you! Murder!

MOUSE holds out his coin.

MOUSE A single to Hell, please.

JANUARY takes the coin.

JANUARY What am I doing?

He drags the raft to the water. They topple it in.

Howay, then. All aboard.

JANUARY takes ERIN's hand. ERIN takes MOUSE's hand.

Jump gently.

They breathe, gather courage.

Not too hard. One, two...

They jump.

Freedom, Erin! Aaaaaaah! Freedom! Help!

MOUSE Help!

ERIN Help! Mam! Help!

The raft spins into the night.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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