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MEN SHOULD WEEP

by Ena Lamont Stewart

SAMUEL FRENCH

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MEN SHOULD WEEP

First produced by Glasgow Unity Theatre, in association with the Arts Council of Great Britain, in the Athenaeum Theatre, Glasgow, on 30th January, 1947 with the following cast of characters:

MAGGIE MORRISON	Bertha Cooper
JOHN MORRISON	Charles Dinning
GRANNY	Anna Welsh
ALEC	Tom Scott
JENNY	Shenah Dalgleish
EDIE	Kate Donaldson
ERNEST	Job Robley
LILY GIBB	Maisie Hill
ISA	Lilian Paterson
MRS WILSON	Alrea Edwards
MRS HARRIS	Elspeth Cameron
MRS BONE	Agnes Murray
LIZZIE MORRISON	Elizabeth Gray
1ST REMOVAL MAN	Edward Boyd
2ND REMOVAL MAN	Arnold Dunn

Directed by Robert Mitchell

Subsequent productions at Glasgow Queen's Theatre, Edinburgh Little Theatre, London Embassy and Glasgow Theatre Royal included the following Scottish Players: Betty Henderson, Jack Stewart, Russell Hunter, Eveline Garratt, Sybil Thomson, Marjorie Thomson, Carl Williamson and Anthony Currie

The play was revived at the Royal National Theatre in the Lyttelton Auditorium on 26th October 2010 with the following cast:

MAGGIE MORRISON	Sharon Small
JOHN MORRISON	Robert Cavanah
GRANNY MORRISON	Anne Downie
ALEC MORRISON	Pierce Reid
JENNY MORRISON	Sarah MacRae
ERNEST MORRISON	Connor Mannion
LILY GIBB	Jayne McKenna
ISA MORRISON	Moven Christie
MRS WILSON	Lindy Whiteford
MRS HARRIS	Karen Dunbar
MRS BONE	Isabelle Joss
LIZZIE MORRISON	Thérèse Bradley
1ST REMOVAL MAN	Ben Adams
2ND REMOVAL MAN	Joseph Creeth
ENSEMBLE	Mark Armstrong, Sally Armstrong, Louise Montgomery. Chloe Pirrie

Directed by Josie Rourke
Designer Bunny Christie
Lighting Designer James Farncombe
Music Django Bates

NOTES ON THE TEXT

Originally written for Glasgow Unity Theatre in 1947, *Men Should Weep* was revived to tremendous critical acclaim in 1982 by 7:84 Company Scotland and was subsequently seen at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, London, in 1983 and later at the Royal National Theatre in 2010.

With a cast of four men, nine women and two children, this extraordinarily moving play depicts, through the Morrison family, the harrowing effects of poverty-stricken life on the East Side of Glasgow in the depression of the 1930s. At the centre is Maggie, the mother of seven children ranging from baby to adult, who holds the family together in the grim tenement slum, coping with unemployment, TB, errant children, prying neighbours and a censorious sister. Bleak, forthright and without sentimentality, the play is nevertheless tempered by a spirited sense of humour and ends on a note of optimism for the future.

"Ena Lamont Stewart's searing play is rich in contemporary echoes, as well as being an evocation of a nightmare world where privacy was unknown and where lives were all but destroyed by cruel circumstance. What takes it beyond other run-of-the-mill studies of working-class life is its defiant faith in the human spirit and motivation for something more than mere survival. It is also the only piece of theatre which succeeds in dramatising the economics of women's labour, whether domestic or sexual."
GUARDIAN

"a powerfully resonant experience for today's audiences."
CITY LIMITS

"...it is an astonishing piece of work: open-eyed, warm-hearted, scrupulously fair in its portrayal of Glasgow tenement life in the Thirties; willing to leave to us the identification of economic villains offstage, and unwilling to applaud the working class simply for being working-class."
NEW STATESMAN

CHARACTERS

MAGGIE MORRISON
JOHN MORRISON, her husband
GRANNY MORRISON, his mother
LILY GIBB, Maggie's sister
ALEC, **JENNY**, **EDIE**, **ERNEST** } the family
MARINA, **CHRISTOPHER** } the babies (voices only)
ISA, Alec's wife
MRS WILSON, **MRS HARRIS**, **MRS BONE** } neighbors
LIZZIE, Maggie's sister-in-law
1ST REMOVAL MAN
2ND REMOVAL MAN

The action takes place in the kitchen of the Morrison home in the east end of Glasgow

ACT I
Scene One A winter evening
Scene Two Towards midnight of the same day

ACT II
Scene One A week later. Afternoon
Scene Two A month later. Afternoon

ACT III Christmas Eve afternoon

Time—1930s

ACT I

Scene One

The kitchen of the Morrisons' home in the east end of Glasgow. A winter evening. 1930s.

Right centre a window with a sink beneath: below this a door to bedroom. Upstage centre kitchen range. Left centre bed recess, curtained: below this a door to the outside landing. Another door left of the range leads to another room referred to as "the back parlour".

Nappies hang on a string across the fireplace and the table, dresser, etc., are in a clutter.

CHRISTOPHER, *the owner of the nappies, is asleep behind the closed curtains with* **MARINA**. *These children are heard but not seen.*

GRANNY, *a shawl over her shoulders, is downstage left in her rocking chair, sucking a sweetie. All that can be seen of* **MAGGIE** *is her posterior as she hangs out of the window.*

MAGGIE Edie! Ernie! Wull yous two come in oot o that when ye're tellt! If I've got tae cry on ye again, it'll be the worse for ye, I'm tellin ye. *(She sinks into a chair and sighs, then yawns widely)*

GRANNY *(giving a companionable yawn)* Eh deary, deary me! *(Singing, none too tunefully)* "When the weary seekin rest to thy goodness flee, when the heavy-laden…"

MAGGIE Aw, cut oot the music, Granny, ma heid's splittin. Time you wis in yer bed.

GRANNY No yet, Maggie. No yet. The nicht's ower lang when ye're aul.

MAGGIE I canna be as aul as I feel then, for the nicht's a hell o a sight tae short for me; seems I'm no sooner in ma bed than I've tae rise. It's a right for you wi naethin tae dae but sit there an gant.

GRANNY Aye...that's a I'm fit for noo! Sittin an gantin.

MAGGIE I wish ye could pit yersel tae bed. Ye're as much bother as anither wean.

GRANNY That's right, cest up whit ye're daein for yer man's aul mither! *(Whining and rocking)* Oh, it's a terrible thing tae be aul wi naebody wantin yae. Oh, it's time I wisna here!

MAGGIE Time I wisna here tae; I should be reddin up the place a bit afore Lily comes. Right enough, if a woman did everythin that ought tae be done aboot the hoose, she'd go on a day an a night till she drapped doon deid.

GRANNY Eh? Whit's that, Maggie? Wha's drapped doon deid?

MAGGIE There's naebody drapped doon deid, Granny; leastways, *no here*. You'll no drap! You'll just sit it oot like it was a second roon o the pictures.

GRANNY I'll be away soon. *(Nodding her head)* Aye. It'll no be lang afore I'm awa. Aye. Ma lif's ebbin. Ebbin awa.

MAGGIE Och, it's been ebbin ever since I met ye; but the tide aye seems tae come in again.

GRANNY *(setting up a terrible wail)* Oh, that's no nice! That's no a nice thing tae say! But I ken the way it is, Maggie; I'm just an aul nuisance, takin up room. I'll awa back tae Lizzie's the morn. *(She sets the chair rocking fiercely and cries)*

MAGGIE Ye're no due at Lizzie's till the end o the month and she'll no take ye a day sooner.

GRANNY Oh, I'll no bother ony o ye. I'll awa tae the poorhoose an John can hae me boxed and buried frae there. It's him the disgrace'll fa on, no me.

MAGGIE Och, Granny, stop yer nonsense! Ye ken fine there's nae such a thing leastways it's got a fancy name noo. Onyway, John and me wad never send ye onywhere.

GRANNY Ye send me tae Lizzie's.

MAGGIE Aye...well... Lizzie's tae tak her turn.

GRANNY She disna want me. She's aye crabbit, is Lizzie. She's got a tongue wad clip cloots. A she's interested in's ma pension book.

MAGGIE Aye she's a right skinflint, is Lizzie.

GRANNY She's aye been able tae keep her belly well lined, Lizzie. *She's* had nae hard times! No like me, a widdy wi weans tae bring up.

MAGGIE Uch, I ken a that. It's ancient history. I live in the present. One day at a time. And, ma Goad! That's enough.

GRANNY *(after a pause, sudden shout)* Goad bless Lloyd George! Him that gie'd us wur pension books. *(Singing)*
"GLORIOUS THINGS OF THEE ARE SPOKEN..."

MAGGIE Wheesht! Lay aff the hymns. Ye'll waken the weans.

Sure enough, she has: Christopher starts to cry.

There noo, see whit ye've done ye aul pest! And him teethin, tae.

She crosses to the bed and her head and shoulders disappear behind the curtain: she makes soothing noises.

Shoosh, shoosh, pet; go bye-byes.

Christopher continues to wail.

EDIE *comes in. She is about eleven, skinny and somewhat adenoidal. She wears a miscellaneous collection of cast-off clothing, her stockings are down about her ankles.*

EDIE Ma. Ma. Ernest won't come in. I tellt him, but he'll no. Ma. He said a bad word. He said: "Awa tae hell".

GRANNY *makes an exclamation of horror.*

GRANNY Oo! hell is whaur yon lad'll gang. He's needin a guid leatherin, Maggie.

MAGGIE I hevna the energy. *(To* **EDIE***)* See's ower yon sugar basin, Edie.

EDIE *hunts out the sugar bowl,* **MAGGIE** *dips the baby's dummy into it and retires again behind the curtain: the wails cease abruptly. She emerges.*

EDIE Ma. Ma. I'm hungry, Ma.

MAGGIE Oh, stummicks! Stummicks! Am I no seeck o folks an their stummicks. Get yersel a piece.

GRANNY It seems a lang while since I had onythin. There wouldna be a wee drap left in the pot, Maggie?

MAGGIE If you'll gae aff quiet tae yer bed, I'll mak a wee cup and bring it ben tae ye.

GRANNY Wull ye? A nice hot cup. Wi sugar and condensed mulk? And a wee bit bread tae dip?

MAGGIE Aye. Come on.

GRANNY *struggles out of her chair.*

That's the girl. Ups-a-daisy! Edie, pit the kettle on and then come and help me get yer Granny out o her stays.

EDIE *(wailing)* Aw Ma! Must I?

MAGGIE Dae whit ye're telt or I'll tell yer daddy on ye.

MARINA *(offstage, from behind the bed curtain)* Mammy, can I hev a piece?

MAGGIE Are you wakened noo? The lugs you weans has on you! Edie, get Marina a piece. And if ye drap the jeely on the bed, Marina, I'll gie ye the daein ye should have got for spillin yer co-co-a last night.

MAGGIE *takes* **GRANNY** *off left.*

EDIE *puts on kettle, cuts and spreads bread for* **MARINA** *and pushes it through the curtain.*

EDIE Mind oot, Marina; the jeely's runny.

EDIE *is busy with her own piece when there is a brisk knock on the outside door.*

EDIE *opens it to* **LILY GIBB**, **MAGGIE***'s sister: a spare, hard-mouthed woman in her thirties.*

Hullo, Auntie Lily. Mammy's busy pittin ma Granny tae her bed.

LILY Hullo. *(Calling)* Hullo Maggie!

MAGGIE *(offstage)* Hullo Lily! Edie! I want ye!

EDIE *(putting down her "piece")* Aw jings!

She trails reluctantly off, making a face.

MARINA *(offstage)* Hullo Auntie Lily.

LILY *(going to the bed)* Hullo! Are you no asleep yet? Whit's this ye're eatin? Bread and jam at this time o night! Are ye no ashamed o yersel? An y're a jammy; wait till I wipe yer fingers.

She has a hunt for a towel which she dips in water and disappears again behind the curtain.

There noo, off ye go tae sleep.

She stands in the middle of the kitchen and surveys **MAGGIE***'s muddle, sighs, takes off her coat and ties a towel round her waist, rolls up her sleeves, wonders where to start.*

From the back parlour comes the sound of Bertie coughing. It is a TB cough and it continues intermittently throughout the scene. **LILY** *takes from her shopping bag a tin of baked beans and a bottle of cough mixture, lays them down on the crowded table, then hunts for a teaspoon, wipes it, goes to the door, upstage left.*

Bertie! Bertie dear! I'm comin ben tae see ye. I'm comin wi something nice tae stop yer nasty cough.

She goes off with bottle and spoon.

MARINA *starts to sing.*

MARINA *(offstage)*

JESUS LOVES ME THIS I KNOW
FOR THE BI-BUL TELLS ME SO *(PAUSE)*
DID YE EVER SEE A DREAM WALK-IN?
WELL I DID.
DID YE EVER HEAR A DREAM TALK-IN?
WELL I DID.

Auntie Lily! Auntie Lily! I'm singin. D'ye no want tae hear me singin? Auntie Lil-ly!

MAGGIE *comes in at a run.*

She swoops down on **MARINA** *behind the curtain and extinguishes the song with a smart slap. A howl from* **MARINA**. **MAGGIE** *emerges with the dummy which she puts on the table.*

GRANNY *(offstage)* Maggie! Maggie! She's pullin the hair oot o ma heid!

MAGGIE *(hurrying back)* Edie! Whit're you daein tae yer Granny?

LILY, *coming back with bottle and spoon meets her.*

I'll be ben in a minute, Lily; Goad, if it's nae yin, it's anither.

MAGGIE *goes.*

MARINA *(offstage)* Auntie Lily, I'm wantin a drink.

LILY Ye're no gettin one. Go tae sleep.

MARINA *(offstage)* Auntie Lily, I'm needin a drink o wat-er !

LILY *gives her a drink.*

EDIE *comes in and goes across to the window.*

EDIE *(shouting out)* Ernest! Ernest! You've tae come in at once. Ma's gonna wallop the daylights oot o ye... Auntie Lily, Ernest'll no come in. I came in when Mammy shouted on me; but Ernest'll no come in, so he'll no.

LILY *(dry)* Fancy that! Aren't you a wee clever? *(Surveying her with distaste)* Pull up yer stockings. Have ye nae suspenders?

EDIE *Suspenders?* No.

LILY Well, have ye nae garters?

EDIE No, Auntie Lily.

LILY Well, have ye nae elastic in yer breeks?

EDIE I've nae breeks.

MAGGIE *comes in.*

LILY Maggie, hes she no got a pair o knickers tae her name?

MAGGIE They're wore oot. I'll see whit I can get doon at the Mission – if I've onything left efter settlin the grocer.

LILY *(despairing)* Maggie, ye're aye in the same pickle.

MAGGIE Lily, money disnae stretch. Ye pit oot yer haun for yer change and whit dae ye get? A coupla coppers. A ten shillingy note's no a ten shillingy note ony langer. I dinna ken whit they dirty rotten buggers in Parliament are daein wi ma money, but they're daein *somethin*. John says—

LILY Ach, I'm no wantin tae hear whit John says aboot they bliddy capitalists. I've heard it a. It wisnae they bliddy capitalists gie'd you a the weans, wis it?

MAGGIE *(with her hearty laugh)* No that I mind o!

LILY John should think shame o himsel.

MAGGIE Wit way? He's a man and I'm a wumman. We're flesh an blood.

EDIE, *all ears, looks from one to the other.*

EDIE Are you no flesh an blood, Auntie Lily ?

MAGGIE No, she's jist skin an bone.

Christopher wakens up and starts to cry.

He's teethin.

LILY He canna *aye* be teethin !

MAGGIE *dips the dummy in the sugar bowl and the crying stops as she disappears behind the curtain.*

Ye shouldna gie him sugar, Maggie; it's bad for worms.

MAGGIE Ach! Worms!

LILY Y're wastin him. As if it wasnae bad enough lettin him walk too soon and gie'd him rickets—

MAGGIE He has nutt got rickets!

LILY Whit else is bowly legs but rickets?

MAGGIE Bringin up weans is no as easy as it looks, Lily. Old maids are awfu good at the criticizin.

LILY I hope ye don't think I'm envyin you because you managed tae get the haud o a man. Look at ye! Dae ye never rin a comb through yer hair?

MAGGIE *(turning to the grinning, listening* **EDIE***)* Edie, rin you aff tae yer bed.

EDIE Aw, Mammy! No yet! *(She scratches her head vigorously)*

LILY Here! Has she got somethin?

MAGGIE Edie, wis you scratchin? Come here! *(She seizes her and examines her head without mercy. Heaving a sigh of relief and thrusting her away)* Thank Goad! That's one thing I wull not have in this hoose...a loose.

EDIE Mary Harris has got them, so she has. Teacher says so.

MAGGIE Mary Harris! And her up this very close! Jist wait till I get the haud of that lazy mother o hers, I'll gie her a piece o my mind. Listen you tae me, Edie, there's tae be nae mair playin wi Mary Harris till she's got her heid cleaned. We've no very much this side o repectability, but there's aye soap and water.

LILY Tae look at her, ye wouldna think it.

EDIE I wis playing in the back coort.

MAGGIE Nae back-chat. Get oot the soap and flannel and dae yer neck in case the teacher taks it in tae her impident heid tae look the morn.

EDIE *drifts around.*

EDIE Ma, I canna find the flannel.

MAGGIE Noo, whaur did I lay it doon? I did Christopher before he went oot ta-tas...

LILY How you ever find onythin in this midden beats me.

MAGGIE Oh, here it is. It beats me tae sometimes. Edie, bend ower the sink till I scart some o this dirt aff ye.

LILY D'ye no tak aff her dress tae wash her neck?

MAGGIE Awa for Goad's sake! It's no Setterday nicht.

LILY She's old enough tae dae it hersel. The way you rin efter they weans is the bloomin limit. Nae wunner y're hauf-deid.

MAGGIE I'm no hauf-deid!

LILY Well, ye look it.

MAGGIE I canna help ma looks ony mair than you can help yours.

LILY The difference is, I try. Heve ye looked in the mirror since ye rose the morn?

MAGGIE I havena time tae look in nae mirrors; and neither would you if ye'd a hoose an a man an five weans.

LILY Yin o they days your lovin Johnnie's gonna tak a look at whit he married and it'll be ta-ta Maggie.

MAGGIE My lovin Johnnie's still ma loving Johnnie, whitever I look like. *(Finishing off* **EDIE***)* Comb yer hair noo, Edie… I wonder whaur it's got tae?

They both look for the comb.

EDIE I canna find it Ma. Auntie Lily, could you lend us yours?

LILY *(starting to look in her bag, then thinking better of it)* I didna bring it the night.

EDIE I've nae beasts, Auntie Lily.

LILY Jist the same, I didnae bring it. Scram aff tae yer bed.

MAGGIE Aye, Edie, get aff afore yer feyther comes in frae the library.

LILY Oh, is that whaur he is?

EDIE *takes down from wall key to the outside WC and goes off.*

MAGGIE Whaur else wad he be? He disna go tae the pubs noo.

LILY Oh aye! I'd forgot he'd went TT.

MAGGIE Ye ken fine he's TT; but ye jist canna resist a dig at him. He hasna been inside a pub since Marina was born.

LILY That's whit he tells you, onywey.

MAGGIE My the tongue you have on you, Lily; it's a pity ye had yon disappointment; ye might hev been real happy wi the right man and a couple weans.

LILY *holds out her sleeve and laughs up it.*

LILY Dae you think *you're* happy?

MAGGIE Aye! I'm happy!

LILY In this midden?

MAGGIE Ye canna help havin a midden o a hoose when there's kids under yer feet a day. I dae the best I can.

LILY I ken ye do. I'd gie it up as hopeless. Nae hot water. Nae place tae dry the weans' clothes, nae money. If John wad gie hissel a shake...

MAGGIE You leave John alane! He does his best for us.

LILY No much o a best. OK. OK. Keep yer wig on! Ye're that touchy ye'd think ye wis jist new merriet. I believe ye still love him!

MAGGIE Aye. I still love John. And whit's more, he loves me.

LILY Ye ought tae get yer photies took and send them tae the Sunday papers! "Twenty-five years merriet and I still love ma husband. Is this a record?"

MAGGIE I'm sorry for you, Lily. I'm right sorry for you.

LILY We're quits then.

MAGGIE Servin dirty hulkin brutes o men in a Coocaddens pub.

LILY Livin in a slum and slavin efter a useless man an his greetin weans.

MAGGIE They're my weans! I'm workin for ma ain.

LILY I'm *paid* for ma work.

MAGGIE So'm I! No in wages – I'm paid wi love. *(Pause)* And when did you last have a man's airms roon ye?

LILY *Men!* I'm wantin nae man's airms roon me. They're a dirty beasts.

MAGGIE Lily, ye're mind's twisted. You canna see a man as a man. Ye've got them a lumped thegether. You're daft!

LILY You're *saft!* You think yer man's wonderful and yer weans is a angels. Look at Jenny...

MAGGIE *(instantly on the defensive)* There's naethin wrang wi Jenny!

LILY No yet.

MAGGIE Ye wis like Jenny yersel once and don't you forget it. There wis naebody fonder o dressin up and rinnin aroon wi the lads.

LILY I went oot respectable! No wi the the riff-raff o the toon, an a dressed up like a bloomin tart wi peroxided hair.

MAGGIE You mind yer tongue, Lily!

LILY I'm only tryin tae tell ye tae keep yer eye on her. I'm in the way o hearin things.

MAGGIE Whit d'ye mean? Come on! Whit're ye gettin at?

LILY I'm sayin nae mair. But jist you watch her. Yon Nessie Tait's a right bad lot, and her and Jenny's as thick as thieves.

MAGGIE *(troubled, sighing)* I canna blame Jenny for being fed up. Wi Granny aside her, and Edie snorin wi her tonsils. Jist the same, it hurts terrible tae hear her goin on an on aboot leavin hame. I'm sure it's no ma fault! I've din ma best! I've din ma best for every yin o them!

She starts to cry. **LILY** *stands and looks at her helplessly. She too sighs.*