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MAY QUEEN

by Frankie Meredith

SAMUEL FRENCH

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MAY QUEEN was produced by Roundabout 2021: A Paines Plough and Belgrade Theatre Coventry Production, part of Coventry City of Culture 2021, on 29 July, 2021 and then toured the UK. Directed by Balisha Karra, Designer Lydia Denno, Lighting Designer Richard Howell, Sound Designer Kieran Lucas, Associate Sound Designer Bella Kear, Movement Director Kloe Dean, Assistant Director Kaleya Baxe, Dramaturg Sarah Dickenson, Dramatherapist Wabriya King, Casting Director Jacob Sparrow, Costume Supervisor Rhiannon Hawthorn, Movement Support Esme Benjamin, Lighting Programmer Sam Ohlsson, Company Stage Manager Aime Neeme, Technical Stage Managers Benjamin Smith, Philip Thackray, Rehearsal Stage Manager Ella Stewart, Stage Management Support Ruth Porter.

The cast was as follows:

LEIGH . . . . . .Yasmin Dawes

With Thanks To: V&A Productions and Abbie Morgan

CHARACTERS

LEIGH – sixteen

All other characters can be voiceover or played by one actor. If using different actors, the lines spoken by other people are indented.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Regular text when Leigh is talking to us

italics when she's in a convo chattin to someone else

indent italics when it IS someone else.

space indicates length of pause

/ cut off

... trail off.

*** change of scene/location/vibe

struck text spoken or implied, your choice.

&

This is very much a Coventry play, please keep all references and setting in Cov. Try to find an actor from this area or at least one that can do the accent.

FOR ALL THE TEENAGE GIRLS
(and those of us who have been and those of us who will).

*(**LEIGH** walks to the edge of the stage.)*

(A peach dress.)

(A ritual.)

Godiva, Godiva will you bury them?

Godiva, Godiva will you bury him?

A sign of hope in peaceless times
A sign of hope in peaceless times

A shining light amongst the darkest nights

A shining light amongst the darkest nights

One day the tide is turning
And nothing will be left for them Godiva will you bury them?

Godiva will you ride again?

And when your silent rage will come

No man will be the chosen one Godiva,

Godiva will come
Godiva, Godiva will come

Godiva will you finish him? Godiva, Godiva will come

Alright?

I'm Leigh. The *May Queen.*
Although you probs seen the posters,
that's why you're here?

thanks for coming.

thankyouthankyouthankyou.

you alright?

alright?

I like your top.

you're meana say 'i like your dress'.

thank you.

although it ended up soaked in blood.
proper covered, goes everywhere dunt it?
and mum struggled get the stains out.
she was piiiiissed off.

now you wanna know how it gets soaked in blood right?

not mine.
chill out.

I'll tell ya.

THIS IS THE STORY ABOUT...

THIS IS A STORY OF...

THIS

IS

MAY QUEEN...

***

After the absolute shitstorm that has bin the last couple of years my area – Coventry…

(Responds to any audience acknowledgment. encourage it.)

…wanted to celebrate with a folk-festival.
To honour All-Things-English

whatthefuuuck?

why does it feel so weird when we do anything,
what's that word?
…*patriotic.*
Like the Americans love a flag,
they all have um in their front gardens
and on hats n things, they don't give a shit.
and the Portuguese!
The Portuguese cafe down our road is litch covered in their flags.

But as soon as anyone puts a St George's up it's like,

urgh…

So for this England Festival they want things like,
May-pole,
Morris dancin,
May Queen.

I'd never even heard of a May Queen before. Which basically meant emailing someone at the council (if you were a girl in a CV postcode between the ages of fifteen to seventeen) and they was gonna invite you for an interview and see if you were Queen material.

It became this massive thing at school like,
everyone wanted to do it.
I think after being cooped up for a coupla years we
was all just buzzing to put on a dress.
Peeps were chattin about it,
talking in class about it,
dm'in about it.
we had GCSEs coming up but this is all anyone would
speak about.

it became like, **proper important**.

So when I went home and asked my mum if i could put
my name in, she gave me this cute smile, and told me
'she already had'.

my mums LOVES shit like this. like proper loves it.
she's a *girls* girls.

good job she's got three of us.

girls

...apparently all the way up until I was born they
thought I was gonna be a boy.
True story.
They had a name picked out.
She'd bought loadsa shit from like Next or somewhere,
that was blue,
all of it was blue.
My dad was buzzing his tits off.

This woman at mum's work had tied one of her rings
to a piece of string
and held it over the bump.
it went in a circle

so they said i would be a boy.

Then at the scan, I had my legs crossed so the lady doing it said she couldn't really tell but I think it's a boy,

cheers love,

any way... I wasn't.

So when I came, after seventy-three hours, my dad stormed out. Just like, walked straight out of the birthing room. Punched a wall, bought a Lucozade from the vending machine, came back in.
And said.
'we're still calling it Ashleigh'
he left three weeks later, for good.
And mum hasn't called me Ashleigh since, but Leigh, always Leigh.

She knows how to pick um my mum.
Which is weird coz she's really, what's it...perceptive?
but when it comes to men it's like she's had a fuckin lobotomy.
when we watched the news, about a body that's been found or summin, she's all
'oh *he* did it, look at his eyes'
or she'd like pick someone out from the background and be like
'them, it's them. look at their eyes'.
she's right ya know.
most of the time.
thing is
all her boyfriends
have those crazy fuckin eyes.

But, she does sweet stuff like put me up for the May Queen.

So when we got the email telling us i was being invited for an interview

oh my days, she went off it.
she was dancing round the kitchen
with me and my sisters, the baby.
she even shared her box of wine wiv us.
which tastes like absolute shit but we was just happy
to be having a drink.
my mum, gets up, on a chair,
holds up her glass
my older sister who's vaping out the window
(coz we dunt know what it does to the little ones yet)
rolls her eyes,
as mum starts:

(As mum, tipsy.)

Here's to my baby
my middley
my Leigh
she is the one, who is so pretteeey,

muuum

i knew she would do it
nuffin else to it

mum you can't rhyme two 'its'.

shhh it's my speech

and just as she drew her breath
for another verse of this *beautiful* poetry,
a bird fuckin flies IN the window that ma sister's sittin at,
she loses everything and jumps down,
screaming.
my little sister joins in
coz my big sister shit her up
and the baby starts crying
coz she don't wanna be left out.

my mum calm as anything stays on her chair
smiling
saying