Acting Edition

MAGGIE & ME

by Damian Barr & James Ley

Adapted from the Memoir
by Damian Barr

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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NOTE

This play by Damian Barr and James Ley is an adaptation of a work of non-fiction titled *Maggie & Me* by Damian Barr (published in 2013 by Bloomsbury), which is based on the life, experiences and recollections of Damian Barr. In some cases, names of people have been changed to protect their privacy and the privacy of others.

This script may have changed during rehearsals and may differ from the final production.

MAGGIE & ME was produced by the National Theatre of Scotland, and was first performed at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow on 7 May 2024. The cast was as follows:

WEE DB . . . . . Sam Angell (he/him)
MUM . . . . . Nicola Jo Cully (she/her)
DB . . . . . Gary Lamont (he/him)
MARK . . . . . Grant McIntyre (he/him)
MAGGIE THATCHER . . . . . Beth Marshall (she/her)
DAD . . . . . Douglas Rankine (he/him)
HEATHER . . . . . Joanne Thomson (she/her)

The creative team was as follows:

Writer . . . . . Damian Barr (he/him)
Sound Designer . . . . . Susan Bear (she/they)
Lighting Trainee . . . . . Leah Brown (she/her)
BSL Performance Interpreter/E . . . . . Amy Cheskin (she/they)
Producer . . . . . Laura Clark (she/her)
Director/Script Development . . . . . Suba Das (he/him)
Company Stage Manager . . . . . Marianne Forde (she/her)
BSL Performance Interpreter/E . . . . . Sarah Forrester (she/her)
Assistant Stage Manager . . . . . Reegan Graham (he/him)
Swing Technician . . . . . Paddy Hepplewhite (he/him)
Assistant Producer . . . . . Cait Irvine (she/her)
Technical Manager . . . . . Kyle Jessiman (he/they)
Deputy Stage Manager . . . . . Emilie Leger (she/her)
Movement Director/Associate Director . . . . . Struan Leslie
Writer . . . . . James Ley (he/him)
Lighting Programmer . . . . . Tom Lightbody (he/him)
Wardrobe Supervisor . . . . . Ruth Main (she/her)
Assistant Director . . . . . Matt McBrier (he/him)
Sound Supervisor . . . . . Fraser Mackie (he/him)
Set and Costume Designer . . . . . Kenneth MacLeod (he/him)
Costume Technician . . . . . Nicki Martin-Harper (they/them)
Audio Describer . . . . . Emma-Jane McHenry
Lighting Trainee . . . . . Shona M'gadzah (she/her)
Video Supervisor . . . . . Aoibheann Moriarty (they/them)
Costume Supervisor . . . . . Ailsa Munro (she/her)
Production Manager . . . . . Suzie Normand (she/her)
Casting Director . . . . . Orla O'Connor CDG (she/her)
Captioner . . . . . Alison Pendlowski
Lighting Supervisor . . . . . Jonny Reed (he/him)
Video Designer . . . . . Tim Reid (he/him)
Voice Coach . . . . . Jean Sangster
Lighting Designer . . . . . Katharine Williams (they/them)

CHARACTERS

MAGGIE THATCHER – (Played by one actor) We follow her from the Brighton bombing to her departure from No 10. She appears in different iconic outfits but always with her iconic hair. She is certain about everything until Wee/DB show the real impact of her policies. Is she more human than the monster we imagine?

WEE DB – (Played by one actor) We see him at eight, twelve and sixteen. We see him grow up. We meet him at eight in Superman pyjamas. He's then twelve in school uniform with a scruffy side-parting. Finally, he's sixteen with specs and curtains in the early 1990s. Everyone wants 'the best' for him but what does he want? Can he survive his childhood?

DB – (Played by one actor) thirty-two-year-old writer living in Brighton and married to Mike. We meet him trying to write his memoir… He ran away from his past but must now relive it in order to write *Maggie & Me*. He must face his worst fears. Can he survive it again? What forgotten joys will he find on the way? What is the cost of reliving?

MUM – 'She is five foot nothing, buzzes like a bee in a jar.' She loves her 'three gifts'. After divorce, she nearly dies of a brain haemorrhage but fights her way back then leaves violent Logan only to meet the alcoholic Dodger. She is always trying to do her best – *trying*. She is frail but strong. She is pure love but not always a good carer (of herself or others). She always has a tea towel over her shoulder.

DAD – 'He is six foot everything. My dad has superpowers.' A steel worker who loses his family, then his job and his identity. He hardly ever speaks but we feel his love very strongly. He is felt most often as a loving absence.

LOGAN – (He is not embodied but we witness his violence and hear him.) 'According to all the arguments I've overheard he's the man my mum leaves my dad for… not as tall as my dad but not as short as my mum, he fills every room so we can hardly breathe.' Father of DB's half-brother. He shows tenderness to his pigeons and Mum but terrorises and abuses Wee DB.

TINIE – Damian's valiant and adored tomboyish wee sister.

THE WEE MAN – DB's beloved wee half-brother, Logan's only son.

HEATHER – 'I don't know how we become boyfriend and girlfriend but that's what everybody starts saying about us so that's what we become. She's the only girl in our year without a fringe and she never covers her pink cheeks with blusher or anything. Hazel eyes unbothered by mascara hold your gaze. She's no slag. She doesn't care what anybody thinks or says about her. Heather is a good person and good for me, I think'. Smart, strong-willed, soul-mate in the past and present.

MARK – 'Mark Ellison changes my life just before the summer holiday at the end of Primary Five. He joins Keir Hardie Memorial Primary School at the end of term, his Jason Donovan haircut neat and new when we're all ready for a shear. My report card states "Damian has met his match this school year…" He's the fastest runner in the whole school. His parents are divorced, like mine. And he's funny, like me.' Seemingly self-assured sporty super twink. Can Mark ever accept himself?

DANNY – Damian's rough and tumble first pal and first crush; leader of a gang that bullies him. Kind to his pet canaries. Soft heart in a tough shell.

MISS CAMPBELL – A blend of all DB's fave inspiring teachers. Her hair appears to be two styles and colours at once – plum-purple spikes on top and a sleek black bob at the sides. The colours can't be natural and it's cool, way too cool for a teacher. 'We stare as one and she smiles at every single pupil.' DB's teachers are mostly good (when the law allows them). They are embodied.

We also hear about, or meet briefly, other characters including:

GRANNY MAC – DB's mum's mum, fiercely Catholic and full of classic Scottish sayings.

DODGER – feckless, but not evil, alcoholic boyfriend who replaces Logan.

CLARE – DB's very posh and entirely lovely literary agent.

MIKE – DB's husband in Brighton AKA Mr Hart.

DIANA ATHILL – famous memoirist and editor

SUE LAWLEY

TV NEWSREADERS

TWO POSH STRAIGHT FRIENDS

VAMPIRE

STORYTELLER

THERAPIST

LIBRARIAN

PADDY

MARY THE CANARY

JANE

YOUNG MUM

YOUNG DAD

ELAINE

JOHNNY

NOTE ON SET & STAGING

Our set is memory and all that it contains: hidden trauma and forgotten joys. It is full of triggers and talismans. These are revealed as the action progresses: nothing is ever taken away. The overall impression is of beautiful wreckage – a bombsite of glittering black slag alive with shocking pink spires of rosebay willowherb, books taking flight and all the items you might find in a 1980s/1990s Lanarkshire council house: black ash furniture, Kays Catalogues, a *Girls' World*. There are old televisions which serve many functions. Here is everything and everyone DB thinks he knows, love and fears. A world of dangerous play, of kinetic carry-on, a world to escape to and from.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(Darkness. We hear the Muppets' theme. We see **YOUNG MUM** *trying to get* **WEE DB** *into Superman PJs after his bath. A spotlight follows them, we don't see the set around them. This is the Past – it grows stronger through Act One, interrupting the Present before overwhelming it.)*

YOUNG MUM. Arms up!

WEE DB. *(Aged seven or eight.)* I love bath night!

*(***WEE DB** *puts his arms up but then flies around the stage.* **YOUNG MUM** *chases him. A screen comes on – we see Kermit the Frog with Superman.)*

YOUNG MUM. Look Damy, it's Kermit!

WEE DB. And Superman!

YOUNG MUM. Your favourite.

WEE DB. You're ma favourite!

YOUNG MUM. Ya wee sook.

*(***WEE DB** *allows himself to be caught by* **YOUNG MUM** *who almost finishes getting him into his PJs. He flies around again, chased by* **YOUNG MUM**.*)*

YOUNG MUM. You're getting too big for this. C'mon. Tinie's in her bed already and yer Daddy'll be in off his shift any minute. Well, he better be.

*(***WEE DB** *flies off, pursued by* **YOUNG MUM**.*)*

Damy! Damian Leighton Barr!

(Darkness.)

Scene Two

(We are in DB's fancy writing shed in Brighton. There are roses around the doors and windows. There's a landline phone on the desk and a big old laptop. Doors open onto the garden. We can see the light of DB and Mike's flat beyond. A calendar on the wall says 2008. **DB** *is at his desk.* **MIKE** *enters with a bottle of champagne.)*

DB. I did it! A publisher's bought my book!

MIKE. I'm so proud of you!

DB. Now I've just got to write it!

MIKE. You can do that, my clever novelist!

DB. Memoirist.

MIKE. I see we're not disputing the clever. What's the difference?

DB. A memoir is one person's truthful recounting of real events, and a novel is all made up –

MIKE. I do actually know – I've lived with you torturing yourself for years about whether or not to, what was it?

DB. Bestow upon my torrid life the forgiving gossamer of fiction.

MIKE. Thankfully Barbara Cartland lost that argument.

DB. I love you.

MIKE. It's all just typing.

DB. And since it all actually happened this'll be more or less just transcribing.

MIKE. You think?

DB. I think. Anyway, careful or you'll end up in it.

*(**MIKE** pops cork. Champagne spurts. **MIKE** pours two glasses.)*

MIKE. Before my time. To Maggie!

(They clink a toast.)

DB. Oh god you don't think people will think I'm a Tory? Maybe I should change the title?

MIKE. Maybe you should stop finding reasons to not crack on… but not quite yet.

*(**MIKE** kisses **DB** and leads him off. A canary flutters on. **DB** runs back for their champagne. As he does, the canary sings, then flies off. He's not sure if he saw it or not. He goes to **MIKE**.)*

Scene Three

(We see **DB** *going in his shed to write, sitting down then typing and deleting so he never gets beyond the title. The text appears on screens;* **DB** *reads snippets aloud.)*

DB. 'Maggie Thatcher was one of the few constants in my life. After my parents divorced, and my mum nearly died of a brain haemorrhage and was away in hospital for endless months, Maggie was always there. Everybody said she was a monster. But as is so often the case the real monster was closer to home. T-E-R-R-I-B-L-E P-R-O-S-E!' Delete, delete, delete!

*(***DB** *deletes.* **MIKE** *comes in with a cup of tea and a Tunnock's teacake.)*

Thank God.

MIKE. It's just a cuppa, but you're welcome. How's it going?

DB. I just don't sound like me.

MIKE. That's a first.

*(***MIKE** *kisses* **DB** *on the head and leaves.)*

DB. Don't go!

MIKE. *(From offstage.)* Crack on DB! You can do this!

Scene Four

(Inside DB's shed. His desk is full of cups of tea and empty Tunnock's teacakes. We see **DB** *faffing then sitting down then typing and deleting so he never gets beyond the title. The text appears on screens;* **DB** *reads snippets aloud.)*

DB. 'Our truths wait for us in our past on shelves like beautiful leather-bound books that we can just take down and peruse and then –' Our truths, our pasts, my h-o-l-e!

*(***MIKE** *comes in with a glass of wine and a Tunnock's teacake.)*

Thank God.

MIKE. It's just a glass of wine, but you're welcome. Progress?

*(***DB** *takes the wine glass and drains it.)*

That much?

DB. Everything I write sounds like Jerry Springer's Final Thought and I know my childhood was very Jerry Springer but

*(***JERRY SPRINGER** *flashes on to our screens:)*

JERRY. "Take care of yourselves, and each other."

DB. Did you…?

*(***JERRY** *winks and disappears.)*

MIKE. What does Clare say?

DB. I'm not phoning my agent and telling her I can't write.

MIKE. You wouldn't be the first. And you are allowed to not be perfect.

DB. Don't be ridiculous.

MIKE. Are you sure I've not accidentally married a Tory?

DB. I see no ring on this finger. Tony Blair promised me personally that you'd civilly partner me.

MIKE. He promised a lot. Save it all for *Tony & I*. And don't change the subject.

*(***MIKE** *leaves.* **DB** *raises his empty glass.)*

DB. Don't go!

Scene Five

(Inside DB's shed. His desk is full of cups of tea, wine glasses and empty Tunnock's teacakes.)

(We see **DB** *faffing then sitting down then typing and deleting so he never gets beyond the title. The text appears on screens;* **DB** *reads snippets aloud.)*

DB. *(Typing and talking.)* 'When I was 7 I had to rob the 50ps from our gas meter. There was a knack to getting it open and I had to remember how much I'd taken so I could put it back before the gasman visited…'

Do I want to tell people that?

(Typing and talking.) 'When I was 7 I was hungry by the middle of every week and could doodle in the frost on my bedroom window…'

Oh god, I sound like a Facebook nostalgia post.

*(***DB** *picks up a dictaphone from his desk and paces around talking into it.)*

(Into dictaphone.) I don't want people to know what I had to do to get here. I don't want to have to show them my black eyes and bruises – I don't want to have to write about him, about Logan. I don't want people to feel sorry for me. I refuse to be a novelty victim for Waitrose people. And I don't want people to blame my mum or my dad for any of this either because I love them…

*(***DB** *speaks into dictaphone with greater urgency.)*

(Into dictaphone.) Whose fault is this? What about personal responsibility? Maggie? Maggie? Maggie?

…I can feel all this shame and anger burning deep beneath the surface like the fires beneath the Bing, miles and miles under the ground, glittering black diamonds…"

*(***DB** *puts the dictaphone down and begins typing and spontaneous reading aloud as he goes. The words might appear on the screens behind him.)*

Fires burn beneath my feet. I've been warned that hell-red flames flicker and dance deep beneath the Bing and they'll eat up wee boys who don't do as they're told…

*(***MIKE** *comes in with a martini and a Tunnock's teacake.)*

Thank God.

MIKE. It's just a very strong martini.

*(***DB** *goes to take it but* **MIKE** *downs it in one.)*

How's it going? Don't answer. You're never here – you spend more time in the 1980s than 2008. You know you've missed the Beijing Olympics, the election of America's first black president and a whole global financial crisis?

DB. I'll catch the next one. I think maybe I was getting somewhere just then.

MIKE. Really? Because the present misses you. I miss you. Come home.

*(***MIKE** *leaves.)*

DB. I'm trying.

(A cloud of canaries flies into DB's shed, singing.)

We're trying.

Scene Six

*(**DB** is at his desk in his shed, staring at the empty page. He turns on the radio and we hear the StoryTeller theme; **DB** taps the radio and we hear "Desert Island Discs". Sue Lawley is interviewing Diana Athill.)*

DB. Oh god save me from another posh memoir…oh my country house was so draughty…

(Diana talks about her youth and self-consciousness.)

Same.

(She goes on.)

Yes, Diana!

(She talks about falling in love.)

Also, same!

(She continues.)

Danny!

(She mentions horses.)

What? What is it with posh women and horses?

(Sue and Diana discuss heartbreak and reliving one's past.)

Relive?

*(**DB** turns the radio off. **DIANA** can still be heard.)*

DIANA. Relive.

*(***DB** *puts the radio in a drawer. We hear* **MAGGIE***'s voice from the radio.)*

MAGGIE. Relive!

Scene Seven

*(**DB** is hosting a dinner party in his shed with **POSH STRAIGHT FRIENDS** – his desk is a dining table. Doors open to the garden. It's summer – end of the meal.)*

FRIEND 1. So, is your memoir going to be funny?

FRIEND 2. What were you like as a child, were you camp? And when did you, you know, come out?

(Two canaries fly into the shed and sing. **DB** *is thrown by this but his* **FRIENDS** *don't see them. They do notice they've lost* **DB**.*)*

FRIEND 1. Earth to DB? Damian, when did you come out?

FRIEND 2. When he came out of his mother!

*(**DB** snaps out of the moment as the canaries fly away.)*

DB. Well, the first man I fancied was...Superman! Then Han Solo.

FRIEND 1. So much hotter than Luke Skywalker.

DB. And I was obsessed with Surprise Surprise. I was better at Cilla than Cilla.

FRIEND 1 & 2. Cilla! Cilla! Cilla!

DB. Here's our Graham with a quick reminder. Surprise, Surprise! *(Beat.)* I was writing this hilarious scene today. When I was six or seven –

FRIEND 1. You must have been so cute at six or seven.

DB. I was. I was adorable. Anyway, I found this Coca-Cola bottle under the sink.

FRIEND 2. We were never allowed fizzy drinks.

FRIEND 1. Oh god me neither.

DB. I opened it and downed it. But it was creosote.

FRIEND 1. What's creosote?

DB. Wood stain. You know fences and garages…stables and summerhouses.

FRIEND 2. And you actually drank it?

FRIEND 1. You're lucky to be alive.

DB. So I'm told. So yeah, hilarious stories like that. Here's another good one… My best friend at the time – and first crush

FRIEND 2. Oooh. Crushes.

DB. Well Mark obviously. But first there was Danny. He was a Catholic

FRIEND 1. Does that matter?

DB. I'm half Catholic, half Protestant. It mattered.

FRIEND 1. So you knew you were gay when you were seven?

DB. Yes.

FRIEND 2. You don't sound sure.

DB. As sure as I am about anything. Just like you knew you were straight. Only your identity wasn't actually illegal at the time.

FRIEND 1. Well, of course… Thank God Labour finally got in. Not that they're much better now…

FRIEND 2. So did you and Danny…you know?

DB. You'll have to read the book.

FRIEND 2. You'll have to finish it first.

DB. And I loved Danny. Another time, Danny and his gang put me in this old wardrobe

FRIEND 1. Literal closet case. Love it.

DB. At the Bing

FRIEND 2. The Bing?

DB. The Bing was this big old slag heap, from the coal mines. It's a housing estate now. All these places are gone. I want to memorialise people and places that are gone –

FRIEND 2. Oh, that's good. You should definitely say that on your book tour.

DB. Yeah, so him and his gang, they put me in this big old wardrobe… he had to do it, to show them all he wasn't, I don't know…

(A canary flies in and **WEE DB** *runs on chasing it followed by* **DANNY**.*)*

DANNY. That's it, Barr, catch her. Just be dead gentle, right? But firm.

WEE DB. I can't. I'm rubbish.

DANNY. You can. Look. Gentle but firm, so she can't fly away – but don't crush her.

*(***WEE DB** *gets flustered.* **DANNY** *has to take the canary.)*

WEE DB. I'm sorry!

DANNY. Don't greet.

*(***WEE DB** *cries harder.)*

Don't. What is it? Is it your mum and dad again?

*(***DANNY** *hesitates then cuddles* **WEE DB**.*)*

FRIEND 2. And then what??

DB. Well, they put me in this big old wardrobe and hauled it to the top of the Bing and then they…they…

Scene Eight

*(**DB** is tossing and turning in the grip of a nightmare featuring the **VAMPIRE** from the movie Salem's Lot. We see a light come on outside his bedroom window. **DB** gets up. He opens the curtains. We see fog.)*

VAMPIRE. Damian...

DB. What?

VAMPIRE. Da-mi-aaan...

*(We see a figure float in fog. It's the **VAMPIRE** from Salem's Lot.)*

DB. Who's there?

VAMPIRE. Let me in, Damian.

DB. This isn't funny. Mike, Mike, wake up!

VAMPIRE. It's cold out here, Damy.

DB. Mike, he's here. Logan's here. Wake up!

(We now see lights on in windows all over the house then hundreds of lit up windows everywhere and at every window a floating vampire.)

VAMPIRE. I just want to play. Let me in.

*(In a trance, **DB** steps towards a window. As he reaches for the handle **MIKE** enters and grabs his hand. **DB** wakes up screaming.)*

Scene Nine

(In DB's writing shed. He's doing yoga. The canaries are roosting quietly.)

CLARE. Darling!

*(**DB** rushes to shut down the very blank screen with its accusatory cursor.)*

Forgive me dropping in – now this is what I call a proper writing shed – I did ring

DB. Really?

CLARE. Lots. And email.

DB. Oh, I've not been online.

CLARE. And your deadline has whooshed by

DB. Has it?

CLARE. Twice. I was visiting another client in Brighton so thought I'd just pop by. Isn't Mike lovely?

DB. Oh yes he's wonderful. Did he let you in?

CLARE. He did.

DB. What a doll.

CLARE. I even thought about joining the Facebook so I could check in. Writing a memoir really is the bravest thing

*(**CLARE** gets a bottle of wine from handbag, pours into two 'I'm writing, honest' mugs.)*

Especially with a story as…

DB. Colourful?

CLARE. Challenging

DB. Real?

CLARE. Dark

DB. Emotional?

CLARE. Devastating!

DB. You think?

CLARE. Yes, darling. Heartbreaking, heartwarming and just Scottish enough for the Sunday supplements. And the whole Mrs Thatcher thing seems really fun. Even the *Mail* is having to be honest about her little boom-bust birdies coming home to roost. But you…have some sympathy for the devil.

DB. Everybody hated her and I felt hated too.

CLARE. I don't see how anyone could hate a little boy.

DB. Please don't feel sorry for me.

CLARE. But you…respected her?

DB. We all want to be free to achieve our individual potential, don't we?

CLARE. Communism looks great on paper too, darling. Now, tell me… Deadlines are made to be missed, but how are you really?

DB. How am I really? What is even real any more?

*(***DB** *curls up in the foetal position and* **CLARE** *strokes his hair as he sobs.)*

Scene Ten

*(**HEATHER** drops by DB's shed – she's bringing an album of old photos. Big hug.)*

DB. Heather! Hello you.

HEATHER. Hello, me. Embarrassing old photos, as requested! This album is from 1988 to 1992. Our teenage romance.

DB. And pre-acne.

HEATHER. For you. And this one is 1992 to 1994.

DB. Are there any photos of The Bob?

HEATHER. Long burned.

DB. Agreed – it must remain forgotten.

HEATHER. And it definitely cannot be immortalised in your memoir.

DB. Please withdraw your consent so I can stop.

HEATHER. You told me you needed to do this. For you, for Mark, for all the reasons.

DB. I haven't even got to Mark yet – I can't face losing him again.

HEATHER. Just make sure Mark is fabulous.

DB. Some days I wish I could just give us all nicer stories. When I interviewed Armistead Maupin –

HEATHER. Did ye, aye? No, it is actually wild that you met him. I remember you getting the first *Tales of the City* book when we were here in Brighton. Past you would have pissed his pants.

DB. Past me did piss his pants! Anyway, he said to me that 'writing is bejewelling the elephant.'

HEATHER. Right then, you crack on with bejewelling your elephant.

DB. But it's a memoir – I've got to tell the truth. I can't work out if I'm scared that nobody will believe me or scared that they will?

*(**WEE DB** comes on with a portable cassette player and sits down. We hear **MUM** and **DAD** arguing offstage. **WEE DB** presses Play. We hear the StoryTeller theme. He turns it up to cover the arguing.)*

STORYTELLER. This is the story of The Boy Who Cried Wolf. All day long the sheep went Bahhh, Bahhh, Bahhh.

WEE DB. Bahhh, bahhh, bahhh.

STORYTELLER. And the boy watched over them. But he was bored, bored, bored. So, he made up a story… Help! the boy cried. Help! But nobody came. THE END.

*(The cassette clicks off. We can hear arguing again. **WEE DB** turns the cassette over and we hear another story start. **WEE DB** puts his hands over his ears.)*

HEATHER. I believe you. I know what happened. And so do you.

*(**DB** nods uncertainly.)*

Scene Eleven

*(**DB** is meeting with a therapist.)*

THERAPIST. So, what brings you to therapy?

DB. My agent.

THERAPIST. I see a lot of Clare's clients.

DB. Writer's block?

THERAPIST. Trauma, usually.

DB. I'm not traumatised. I'm fine.

THERAPIST. Are you?

DB. No, but I survived.

THERAPIST. That's not really how trauma works.

DB. How does it work?

THERAPIST. It's different for everyone. Often, re-engaging with our trauma can, in itself, be retraumatising.

DB. More to look forward to.

THERAPIST. Do you want to continue on this journey?

DB. I can tell my story and help people.

THERAPIST. Do you want to tell your story and help people?

DB. Yes, also, I have a contract. And bills to pay.

THERAPIST. Imagine you didn't have bills to pay.

DB. What's that like?

THERAPIST. There are less painful ways to earn a living. Is telling your story helping you?

DB. So far? Well, it's bringing everything I ever tried to forget back up but also, sometimes, it's like the sun breaks through and I find a nice bit but no I'm not really sleeping and when I do, I have the same

nightmare over and over. And every time I get to the bit about… I have to stop because I feel sick. And I'm getting these migraines, like my head is going to burst, like I even think I see things

THERAPIST. What things?

(Beat. Therapist gets up and puts an empty chair opposite **DB**.*)*

DB. What's this?

THERAPIST. Imagine someone sitting there and talk to them. Someone you struggled to speak with in the past or the present. Someone you're angry with? Someone you love? This is a safe space.

DB. Is there such a thing? Okay, my mum.

(2008 **MUM** *walks on and sits down. Therapist can't see or hear her.)*

MUM. Hiya son. You not working the day?

DB. She's here.

THERAPIST. Very good.

DB. No, she's actually here.

MUM. Who's this?

DB. She's my therapist.

MUM. What do you need one of them for?

DB. To help me.

(Beat.)

MUM. I was going to phone you. It's nearly your birthday.

DB. I know.

THERAPIST. What do you know?

DB. That it's nearly my birthday.

MUM. God gave me three gifts. It was 1976, the hottest day of the hottest summer and you were determined not to come out. I was going to phone you to see what you want. I've put away some socks and pants. Does Mike need anything?

DB. It's my birthday.

THERAPIST. You said.

MUM. So? It's not nice to feel left out. I'll get him some socks and pants as well. What do you need?

DB. What do I need?

THERAPIST. That's a good question.

DB. The safe warm childhood that ended the day you and my dad got divorced? The power to fix my past? A stable sense of self?

THERAPIST. Excellent. What would that look like?

MUM. Socks.

DB. Mum, can you tell me…when you and Dad got divorced…was he already with Mary the Canary?

MUM. That midden? That hoor maister? I don't know. I slapped her at the Grotto, half the scheme saw, remember?

DB. I remember.

THERAPIST. What do you remember?

MUM. Does she just say everything you say? And you pay for this? I don't know, son. I can't remember all that. My head, my nerves. You'll have me up to high doh. How come you're asking?

DB. I want to get it right.

THERAPIST. For who?

DB. For me, for her, for everybody in my story.

MUM. What does it matter now?

DB. And Logan? When did you meet him?

THERAPIST. Who is Logan?

*(**MUM** gets up to leave.)*

MUM. I can't do this. My head, my nerves. I'll always love you, son. Love doesn't run out. It's not like the gas meter. I'll always find extra love.

DB. Don't go.

THERAPIST. This is your session. These are your rules. You can make her stay.

MUM. Can he fuck. Bye-bye son. Don't ever forget how loved and wanted you are, Damian Barr.

*(**MUM** leaves.)*

Scene Twelve

*(**DB** is at his desk typing. **DB** is out of it.)*

MIKE. Your therapist did say it was OK to stop.

DB. It's so much harder than I thought it would be and darker...

MIKE. Is it all worth it?

DB. I know I'm missing out on my life here and now – I'm getting whiplash going back and forth. I made everybody laugh at that dinner the other week but drinking creosote is not funny. And those are just the stories I've managed to start.

MIKE. I don't want this for you.

DB. I can't even describe Logan. Every time I picture him I just want to run. But I have to keep going back, because if I don't go back I can't move forwards. Oh god, I sound like a fridge magnet.

MIKE. No, love, you just sound upset.

DB. I feel like all this, our life here in Brighton, could just be taken away. That my past could sweep it away – that all the happiness and love I have now are not as real as all the shit from my childhood. I've never lied.

MIKE. I know you haven't.

DB. But because I'm a journalist people just assume my mum was a teacher and my dad was a GP – and I've never lied about who I am or where I'm from. I'm not ashamed. But do I feel shame –

MIKE. Please just stop.

DB. I can't. I've signed a contract.

MIKE. Unsign it.

DB. It's starting to come to life and as it does I find these good bits too. There's Mark, there's Heather.

MIKE. But are the good bits worth it?

DB. I don't know.

Mike?

MIKE. What?

DB. Are we having chips?

MIKE. Yes! You asked for fish fingers and chips so yes, that is exactly what we're having.

*(***MIKE** *rushes out.* **YOUNG MUM** *walks in.)*

YOUNG MUM. Will I put the peas on? Your Daddy's late. Again.

DB. Where is he?

YOUNG MUM. Where d'you think?

*(***DAD** *comes home from the Ravenscraig carrying a big gift – very obviously a rocking horse.* **WEE DB** *runs in and clambers all over* **DAD** *who is dirty from his shift.)*

WEE DB & DB. *(As one.)* Dad!

MUM. Gie yer Daddy a minute. And get off him, he's filthy and you've just had yer bath.

DAD. Listen to your Mum. *(Beat.)* I got yous a wee present.

WEE DB. What is it?

DB. What do you think it is?

*(***WEE DB** *rips wrapping paper off.)*

WEE DB. A horsey!

DAD. A rocking horsey. And you're to share wi' yer sister.

MUM. And how much was that?

DAD. I won a wee line at the bookies.

MUM. Right – bed. Me and your daddy need a wee talk.

*(***WEE DB** *exits.* **MUM** *and* **DAD** *argue.)*

Another extra shift?

DAD. If we don't 'increase productivity' she's pulling the plug

MUM. Don't use her name in this house.

DAD. I never.

MUM. You better never. If I ever came near that witch – is she even a woman – I would not be responsible. And what about us?

DAD. It's yous I'm doing all this for. I'm knocking my pan out.

MUM. So am I.

DAD. I never said a word.

MUM. You never do. Go on then, I'll shut up. You say your piece.

DAD. I don't want to talk about it.

MUM. I'm at home all day every day and every room in this house is filled with her.

DB. Who?

MUM. Who do you think?

DAD. She was mine too.

DB. What are you talking about?

MUM. And you've hardly said two words since. You're at the Craig night and day. Your own weans hardly know what you look like.

*(**DAD** gets up.)*

DAD. I need my bath. Then my bed.

MUM. Am not finished.

DAD. I am.

DB. Don't go!

*(**DB** is struggling to hold on to his desk in his shed. The room is shaking, objects moving. **MUM** and **DAD** are almost fighting now. **DB** is trying to make them stop. We hear **TINIE** crying.)*

MUM. See what you've done! Tinie's crying!

DAD. I've done nothing!

DB. Stop this!

MUM. You said it!

DB. Please!

DAD. This is nobody's fault.

MUM. It's not my fault, I know that much.

DB. Please! Stop it! Please!

MUM. For fuck's sake Damian. Get out from under my feet!

*(**DB** is stunned. This pauses her for a moment.)*

Am sorry, am sorry, son. See, it's OK. It's OK. We're just going to go –

DAD. Don't do this. Don't go. Don't go to him.

DB. Logan. Please Mum. Please, don't. I don't want to be the man of the house, I don't, I don't.

*(**MUM** takes her engagement and wedding ring off and holds them.)*

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