



**All in a Row**

**Alex Oates**



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Bloomsbury Publishing Plc  
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK  
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA

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First published in Great Britain 2019

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: PB: 978-1-3501-2607-7

ePDF: 978-1-3501-2608-4


eBook: 978-1-3501-2609-1

Series: Modern Plays

Typeset by Mark Heslington Ltd, Scarborough, North Yorkshire  
Printed and bound in Great Britain

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Paul Virides Productions, Evelyn James Productions  
and United Theatrical present

# ALL IN A ROW

by Alex Oates

*All in a Row* received its world premiere  
at Southwark Playhouse on 18 February 2019



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## CAST

<b>Tamora</b>	Charlie Brooks
<b>Martin</b>	Simon Lipkin
<b>Gary</b>	Michael Fox
<b>Laurence</b>	Hugh Purves

## CREATIVE TEAM

<b>Director</b>	Dominic Shaw
<b>Designer</b>	PJ McEvoy
<b>Puppet design and direction</b>	Siân Kidd
<b>Lighting designer</b>	Rachel Sampley
<b>Sound designer</b>	Benjamin Collins
<b>Movement consultant</b>	Esther Huss
<b>Assistant director</b>	Annabelle Hollingdale

## PRODUCTION TEAM

<b>Production manager</b>	Callum Finn
<b>Assistant production manager</b>	Bex Snell
<b>Company stage manager</b>	James-Paul Hayden
<b>Deputy stage manager</b>	Zoe Leonard
<b>Press representation</b>	Kate Morley PR
<b>Photography</b>	Nick Rutter
<b>Cover artwork</b>	Rebecca Pitt
<b>Assistant producer</b>	Jarred Ted Page
<b>General management</b>	Paul Virides Productions
<b>Producers</b>	Paul Virides Productions Evelyn James Productions United Theatrical



## **CHARLIE BROOKS** | *Tamora*

Charlie Brooks is a regular fixture on British television.

Charlie rose to prominence playing the role of Janine Butcher in BBC One's flagship series *EastEnders*. Her portrayal earned her National Television Award nominations as both Most Popular Newcomer and Most Popular Actress, alongside numerous other nominations and wins.

Charlie's other extensive television credits include: *Robin Hood*, *Love Soup*, *Angel of Death* and *Bleak House* (all for BBC), *Suspects* (Channel 5) and *Wired* (ITV).

On stage, Charlie received critical acclaim for her portrayal of Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Curve, Leicester) and as Sandra in *Beautiful Thing* (Arts Theatre and national tour), amongst others.

Charlie's most recent credits include the world premiere of *Monogamy* at Park Theatre, Teresa Phillips in the national tour of *How the Other Half Loves*, Tina in Jimmy McGovern's *Moving On* (BBC One), the short film *Fog* for the Oscar winning team Film London and Vida in *Tightrope* (BBC Radio 4).

As herself, Charlie has appeared on numerous television shows including: *The Chase: Celebrity Special*, *Celebrity Juice*, *Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special*, *Harry Hill's Alien Fun Capsule*, *Loose Women* and *I'm a Celebrity . . . Get Me Out of Here*, which she won in 2012.



## **SIMON LIPKIN** | *Martin*

Theatre credits include: Mr Poppy in *Nativity! The Musical* (UK tour); Rat in *The Wind in the Willows* (London Palladium); Nathan Detroit in *Guys and Dolls* (Phoenix Theatre); Lou Lubowitz in *Miss Atomic Bomb* (St James Theatre); Bill Sykes in *Oliver!* (Grange Park Opera); The Proprietor in *Assassins* (Menier Chocolate Factory); Man (lead) in *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (Arts Theatre); The Lorax

in *The Lorax* (Old Vic); Touchstone in *As You Like It* (Southwark Playhouse); Barlow in *I Can't Sing – Harry Hill X Factor Musical* (London Palladium); Lonny Barnett in *Rock of Ages* (Shaftesbury Theatre); Galahad in *Spamalot* (UK tour); Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland* (Nuffield Theatre); Willard in *Footloose*, Sammy in *The Wedding Singer* (UK tour); Blake in *Austentatious* (Landor Theatre); Nicky and Trekkie in *Avenue Q* (Noël Coward Theatre); Gad in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (New London Theatre); Leopold in *Never the Sinner* (Kenneth More Theatre).

Television credits include: Rocky in *The Amazing World of Gumball* (Cartoon Network); *Ricky Zoom*; Nollar in *Doctor Who* (BBC); Marcus in *Casualty* (BBC); Liam Hayes in *The Bill* (ITV); *No Strings Attached* (BBC), *Harry Hill's Teatime* (Sky).

Film credits include: Hugo in *Show Dogs* (Open Road Films); Jerry Poppy in *Nativity Rocks!* (Mirrorball Films); Chief Elf in *Nativity III* (Mirror Ball Films); *The Muppets' Most Wanted* (Walt Disney), *The Harry Hill Movie*.

Further credits include: concert: Buddy/Roy in *Honeymoon in Vegas* (London Palladium); and workshop: The Wicker Husband in *The Wicker Husband* (Stiles and Drewe).



## **MICHAEL FOX** | Gary

Theatre credits include: Frankie in *A Lie of the Mind* (Southwark Playhouse); Billing in *An Enemy of the People* (Chichester Festival Theatre); Orlando in *As You Like It* (Transport Theatre – Luxembourg and UK tour); Stephen in *Leaves on Glass* (Room One Productions); Claudio in *Measure for Measure* (University of the West of England); Morten in *An Enemy of the People* (National Theatre); *Edmund Kean* (Watford Palace Theatre).

Television credits include: Andy (series regular) in *Downton Abbey* (seasons five and six – ITV/Carnival); Gavin Webster in *Midsomer Murders* (ITV); Ken Wilding in *Endeavour* (Mammoth Screen); *Marvellous* (Tiger Aspect); Shem in *The Ark* (BBC/Red Planet); Luke in *New Worlds* (Company Pictures); Kevin in *Little Big Mouth* (ITV); Harry

Roswell in *Family Affairs* (Channel 5); Ronnie in *Mrs Bradley Mysteries* (BBC).

Film includes: Andy in *The Downton Abbey Movie* (Carnival); *Dunkirk* (Warner Bros.); Bobby in *Good People* (Millennium Films).



## HUGH PURVES | *Laurence*

Hugh trained as part of the inaugural year of The Curious School of Puppetry in 2016. Since then, he has worked as both a puppet performer and designer for theatre, film and television.

Theatre credits include: *Clementine's Fabulous Roadshow* (Mark Mander Productions); *Vivaldi's Four Seasons* (Shakespeare's Globe).

Film and television credits include: *Possum* (The Fyzz Facility); *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (Lucasfilm); *Monty & Co.* (Pipkins Productions); *Shabake Nim* (Manoto TV).

## ALEX OATES | *Writer*

Alex is a writer, based in Northumberland. He has been shortlisted for the Old Vic 12, longlisted for the Bruntwood Prize, and nominated for Best New Play at the Offie Awards.

Theatre includes: *Rules for Being a Man* (All In Productions, UK tour); *Mutations* (rehearsed reading, Pleasance Islington); *Pig* (Silent Uproar in association with Hull Truck, New Diorama, Marlowe Canterbury and ACE); *Hansel* (Assemble Fest, Hull); *Silk Road* (VAULT Festival 2018, Live Theatre, Newcastle and Assembly, Edinburgh); *People Will See Me and Cry* (The Story Project, Arcola Theatre); *Fan Fiction* (rehearsed reading, St James Theatre); *Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear* (Parker Theatre, New York); *Time Warner Ignite* (Old Vic Tunnels); *Zombie Nation* (24 Hour Plays, Old Vic).

Film, television and radio includes: *Match Not Found* (Bytesized Entertainment, web series); *The To-Do List* (pilot, BBC Three Comedy); *North vs South* (pilot, BBC Comedy North); *EastEnders E20* (staff writer); *Get Ali* (Constant Productions); *Silk Road* (Wall to Wall Media); *Our Liam of Lourdes* (BBC Radio 4).

## **DOMINIC SHAW** | *Director*

Dominic grew up in Jersey and trained at Performers College, Essex.

Credits as Director: *Secret Garden* (Barn Theatre, Cirencester); *A Memory for Forgetting* (Arcola Theatre); *Bubonic* (Ambassador Theatre Group workshop); *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Guildford School of Acting); *Catch Me if You Can* (Ambassador ATG workshop); *Avenue Q* (GSA); *Silk Road* (nominated Best Director, Offie Awards – Trafalgar Studio 2, VAULT Festival 2018, Live Theatre, and Assembly, Edinburgh); *Get Got* (C too, Edinburgh); *Fan Fiction* (Reading, The Other Palace); *Forthcoming: Next Door* (White Bear Theatre); *Thirteen Days* (The Other Palace).

Credits as Associate Director: *Kinky Boots* (Adelphi Theatre); *Beautiful – The Carole King Musical* (Aldwych Theatre); *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (Savoy Theatre/UK tour); *Legally Blonde* (Savoy Theatre/UK tour/Australia/Vienna).

Staging for television: *Olivier Awards* 2016 (*Kinky Boots*), 2015 (*Beautiful*) and 2011 (*Legally Blonde*); GStarRAW 2013 advertising campaign (Rankin Photography); *New Year's Eve Live 2012* (Sydney); Comic Relief 2008 (*Hairspray*); *Tonight's the Night* (ITV).

Dominic is a guest teacher at GSA, Arts Educational Schools and The London Stage School.

Performing credits include: Elton John and Tim Rice's *Aida* (original German cast); *Saturday Night Fever* (Capitol Theatre, Düsseldorf); *Wicked* (original London cast); *Hairspray* (original London cast); *Royal Variety Performance* (2006/2007).

## **PJ MCEVOY** | *Designer*

PJ designs sets, costumes and projection content, and holds a first-class BA (Hons) in Professional Production Skills from the Guildford School of Acting.

Credits include: *Fanatical: A Sci-Fi Convention Musical* (Playground Theatre); *A Little Princess* (Royal Festival Hall); *One Minute, The Secret Garden* (Barn Theatre, Cirencester); *Doubt* and *A Parable* (Southwark Playhouse); *Outlaws to In-laws* (King's Head Theatre); *Legally Blonde* (Alexandra Theatre); *The Dover Road* (Jermyn Street Theatre); *Some Girl(s)* (Park Theatre); *The Pillowman* (Aberdeen Arts Centre); *Alice in*



*Wonderland* (Guildford Shakespeare Company); *Hatched 'n' Dispatched* (Park Theatre).

Credits for drama schools include: *Sweet Charity* (Royal Northern College of Music); *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Arts Educational Schools); *Crazy for You, Fanatical* (Mountview); *Spring Awakening, Goodnight Mr Tom* (British Theatre Academy); *Dear World, Carrie, Thoroughly Modern Millie, Catch Me if You Can, Honk!, Spelling Bee, Snoopy!!!, Hands on a Hardbody, On the Town, Henry IV, V and VI, LIFT: The Musical, Songs for a New World, The World Goes Round, The Gut Girls* (Guildford School of Acting); *Little Women, The Witches of Eastwick, The Fix* (Performance Preparation Academy).

As Assistant Designer to Jack Galloway: *The Drowned Man* (Punchdrunk Theatre, Temple Studios); *Batman Live* (world arena tour).

PJ also designs paper props and graphics for shows across the West End, most notably the Golden Tickets and Wonka Chocolate Bars featured in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

[www.pjbydesign.com](http://www.pjbydesign.com)

## **SIÂN KIDD** | *Puppet Designer*

Siân moved into puppet design and direction in 2018, following her work as a puppeteer after graduating from Middlesex University in 2009. She performs regularly as a storyteller with The Embers Collective and with her puppet company, Mirth and Misery, which she founded in 2012.

Theatre credits include: *The Boy Who Climbed in to the Moon* (UK tour); *Pinocchio* (ARC, Stockton); *Troll* (Little Angel Theatre); *Labrat* (Jacksons Lane); *Beasty Baby* (Polka Theatre); *Beauty and the Beast* (Norwich Puppet Theatre); *Royal de Luxe* (Liverpool); *Tim and Light* (UK tour). Associate Directing: *The Winter's Tale* (National Theatre); *Box of Delights* (Wilton's Music Hall). Directing: *Aurora* (Greenpeace); *Death Puppet Klezma Jam* (UK tour); *Microbodyyssey* (Alphabeti Theatre).

Television and other credits include: *Diversity Essentials* (Video Arts); *Shabake Nim* (Manoto TV); *Birdseye* (Art War Entertainment); *Moon Rabbit* (Ivy League Records).

Siân is a guest lecturer at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and Falmouth University, and the puppetry tutor with the Creative Dimensions Trust.

## **RACHEL SAMPLEY** | *Lighting Designer*

Rachel trained at Rose Bruford, the University of the Arts, Philadelphia and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

Lighting Design credits include: *Imogen Heap: Mycella Tour* (world tour); *Some Small Love Story* (Streatham Space Project); *The Last Five Years* (The Other Palace Studio); *Silk Road* (Trafalgar Studio 2); *Nele Needs a Holiday* (Latitude, Ovalhouse, Summerhall); *The Famous Five* (C venues); *Finishing the Picture* (Finborough Theatre); *Amanda Palmer Solo Show* (Patreon London); *Future Voices* (Southwark Playhouse); *Roles* (V&A); *Orpheus* (The Vaults); *Madonna or Whore* (Assembly Roxy, The Vaults); *NeverLand* (The Vaults, Theatre Deli Sheffield); *We Live by the Sea* (59E59, Greenwich Theatre, Adelaide Fringe, SoHo NYC, Pleasance Edinburgh); *Tortoise and the Hare* (tour); *The Great Gatsby* (Guild of Misrule); *Becoming Mohammed* (Pleasance Theatre, London); *dirty butterfly* (Bread & Roses Theatre); *Threads* (Hope Theatre); *The Joy of Bellydance* (Sadler's Wells, Lillian Baylis Studio); *Disaster! the Musical* (Charing Cross Theatre); *Back to Blackbrick* (tour); *Royal Air Force Concert Band* (tour); *Scheherazade and 1001 Nights* (Lillian Baylis Studio and tour); *People of the Eye* (Summerhall); *Strawberry Starburst* (Blue Elephant Theatre); *Hamlet* (Cockpit Theatre); *Low Level Panic* (Bread & Roses Theatre).

## **BENJAMIN COLLINS** | *Sound Designer*

Benjamin has been writing and recording music from a young age; he worked early on with producers James Sammon and D.A. Doman. He is a sound and media designer, holding the position of Media Director at the Barn Theatre.

Other credits include: Recording Engineer, *Just So* (Barn Theatre); Projection Designer, *The Hound of The Baskervilles* (Barn Theatre); Projection Director, *One Minute* (Barn Theatre); Content Creation, *Dark Sublime* (Trafalgar Studios); Audio Engineer, 'A Song For Cirencester' (Charity Single); Sound Design, *Super Awesome* (Workshop).

## **ESTHER HUSS** | *Movement Consultant*

Esther trained in Theatre Dance at London Studio Centre.

She works as a freelance dancer, choreographer and teacher in both the professional and community dance sectors.

Credits as Choreographer/Movement Director include: *Ghost*, *Mary Poppins*, *Hairspray*, *Scrooge* (Sadler's Wells, Lillian Baylis for Daylight Day Centre); *Trinkets* (Tate Britain); *Speaking Bodies* (New Diorama Theatre); *We Are Here* (Stratford Circus).

Performing credits include: *Turandot*, *Faust*, *La Calisto*, *A Midsummer Marriage* (Royal Opera House London); *About Us* (Oxford Modern Art Gallery, Oxford House, Siobhan Davies Studio); *Festival* (Queen Elizabeth Hall); *Kool Down* (Somerset House); *Punk* (Barbican Centre); *Guest Suites UK Tour* (Royal Opera House Clore Studio, York Minster, Plymouth Barbican); *Planeta Ka* (Unicorn Theatre).

Esther co-founded and continues to run the inclusive dance company Dandelion Collective. She was recently awarded a creative development grant, funded by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

## **ANNABELLE HOLLINGDALE** | *Assistant Director*

Annabelle trained at The Manchester School of Theatre.

Credits as Resident Director: *Spring Awakening* (Hope Mill Theatre).

Credits as Assistant Director: *Heathers* (The Other Palace); *Legacy: A Mother's Song* (Assembly Venues).

## **CALLUM FINN** | *Production Manager*

Callum is a freelance production manager who holds a BA (Hons) in Production and Stage Management from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Recent theatre credits include: *Grandad's Island* (UK tour); *Pinocchio* (UK tour); *Cinderella and the Beanstalk* (Theatre503); *A Crag Path Christmas* (Aldeburgh Jubilee Hall); *Seussical* (Southwark Playhouse); *Drowned or Saved?* (Tristan Bates Theatre); *Daisy Pulls It Off* (Park Theatre); *Hamlet* (Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company, Vanbrugh Theatre). He has also worked on the feature films *All Is True* (KBTC)

and *Artemis Fowl* (Disney). Previously Callum worked as Deputy Head of Production at RADA.

### **JAMES-PAUL HAYDEN** | *Company Stage Manager*

James has been working in stage management for seventeen years, having graduated from Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama.

Most recently James has been the Company Stage Manager for *Nativity! The Musical* (UK tours). Prior to this he was Stage Manager for *Beautiful – The Carole King Musical* (Aldwych Theatre), *Billy Elliot the Musical* (Victoria Palace Theatre), *Top Hat the Musical* (Aldwych Theatre) and *Evita* (European tour). He was also the Production Stage Manager for the UK tour of *Beautiful*.

Other credits include: *Mary Poppins*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Tonight's the Night*, *The League of Gentlemen*, *Whistle Down the Wind*, *Woman in Black*, *Corpse!*, *Bombshells*, and the pantomimes *Dick Whittington* and *Aladdin*.

Following *All in a Row* James will be Company Stage Manager for *On Your Feet*, the story of Emilio and Gloria Estefan, playing at the London Coliseum this summer.

### **ZOE LEONARD** | *Deputy Stage Manager*

Zoe trained in Theatre Production at Guildford School of Acting.

Credits include: Company Stage Manager, *The Secret Garden*, *One Minute*, *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Just So* (Barn Theatre, Cirencester); Stage Manager, *Silk Road* (VAULT Festival/Live Theatre, Newcastle); Assistant Stage Manager, *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Salisbury Playhouse); Stage Manager, *Sarah and Duck's Big Top Birthday* (Leeds Playhouse/The Egg, Bath); Stage Manager, *Salad Days* (Union Theatre/Theatre Royal Bath); Assistant Stage Manager, *Working* (Southwark Playhouse).

### **JARRED TED PAGE** | *Assistant Producer*

Jarred's production credits include *Chasing Bono* at the Soho Theatre and the upcoming production of *Lipstick: A Fairy Tale of Iran* at the Omnibus Theatre.

Selected credits as an actor include: *Saturday Night Fever: The Musical*, *Aladdin*, *The Twelve Tenors*, *Rock Around the Clock*, *Patience*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*.

## **PAUL VIRIDES PRODUCTIONS** | *Producer and General Manager*

Paul Virides Productions is a producer of theatre, especially new writing, in London, New York and around the UK. It was formed in 2015 as Shrapnel Theatre, initially to produce the 25th London anniversary production of Jim Cartwright's *Two*, launching the Above the Arts studio space in the West End.

Shrapnel was created by Paul with playwright Isla van Tricht, and during 2015–17 produced four of her plays, as well as new work by other playwrights and composers in Edinburgh and London. Following the New York transfer of *Underground* in 2017, Isla left the company to focus on her writing projects, and subsequent Shrapnel productions include *Silk Road* (Trafalgar Studio 2, VAULT Festival 2018 and Live Theatre, Newcastle) and *H.R.Haitch* (Union Theatre). Shrapnel became Paul Virides Productions in October 2018.

In 2018, Paul was awarded the Stage One Bursary for New Producers, and now runs PVP full-time. He has worked as a producer of theatre and live events since 2011, where he cut his teeth running TakeOver Festival for York Theatre Royal in summer 2012. After leaving York, he took his first show to Edinburgh, and on returning home to London, joined Hartshorn–Hook Productions as their associate producer.

With Hartshorn–Hook, Paul worked on dozens of productions, including *Rotterdam* (Olivier Award for Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre – Theatre503, Trafalgar Studios, 59E59 Theaters New York and Arts Theatre); *Away from Home* (national and international tour); tribute shows to The Rat Pack and The Blues Brothers which played in the West End, Edinburgh and the Seychelles; *American Idiot* (Arts Theatre); and *Richard II* (House of Commons and Arcola Theatre).

Paul left Hartshorn–Hook in 2016, joining Iris Theatre as marketing manager for their 2017 summer season of outdoor theatre at the historic St Paul's Church in Covent Garden, where they presented *Macbeth* and *Hansel & Gretel*. His role continued with *Xmas Factor: All Stars that Christmas*, and then *H.R.Haitch*, *The Tempest*, *The*

*Three Musketeers* and *Arabian Nights* through 2018. He left Iris in October 2018 to focus on running PVP.

## **EVELYN JAMES PRODUCTIONS** | *Producer*

Evelyn James Productions is a new theatrical production company dedicated to promoting and supporting new and innovative theatre. EJP was set up in 2018 by Stephen and Jonny Godbold, a father and son team with over ten years' experience in the industry between them, and Sarah Jewell MBE.

Prior to EJP, Stephen produced two national tours of a musical version of *A Christmas Carol*, culminating in a successful run at the Charing Cross Theatre in London, and Jonny has worked professionally as a performer in shows such as *Top Hat*, *Guys and Dolls* and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* in the West End, around the UK and internationally.

EJP launched in August 2018 with *Silk Road* at Trafalgar Studios, a co-production with Paul Virides Productions, and several more productions are being planned over the coming years.

## **UNITED THEATRICAL** | *Producer*

United Theatrical is a London-based theatre production and management company founded by James Yeoburn and Stuart Matthew Price.

Current and previous credits include *A Spoonful of Sherman* (international); *Magic Mike Live* (London's Hippodrome Casino); *Silk Road – How to Buy Drugs Online* (Trafalgar Studios and Live Theatre, Newcastle); *Beirut* (Park Theatre); *A Spoonful of Sherman* (UK and Ireland tour); *The Addams Family* (UK and Ireland tour – two Whatsonstage Award 2018 nominations including Best Regional Production); *The Addams Family* (MES Theatre, Singapore); *Room* (Theatre Royal Stratford East, Dundee Rep, Abbey Theatre, Dublin), *Honeymoon in Vegas in Concert*— directed and conducted by Jason Robert Brown (London Palladium); Alan Menken, Lynn Ahren and Mike Ockrent's *A Christmas Carol* (Lyceum Theatre); *State Fair* (Cadogan Hall); *One of Those* (Tristan Bates Theatre); *Before After, Picture Perfect* (St James Theatre); Andrew Lipka in his UK debut; UK debut of Broadway writing duo Kerrigan–Lowdermilk (St James Theatre). In 2016 United Theatrical launched the London Musical Theatre Orchestra – an orchestra dedicated to playing the very best



quality musical theatre in concert in London, the UK and internationally.

In 2018 United Theatrical launched a six-figure investment fund spanning a range of major theatre projects in the West End, London and the wider UK, as well as internationally.

***The producers would like to thank the following for their support:***

Glynis Barber; Amy Beadel; Katie Brayben, Joel Harper-Jackson, Alan Morrissey, Dianne Pilkington, Simon-Anthony Rhoden and Teele Uustani; David Byrne and the team at New Diorama; Jamie Chapman Dixon and Iwan Lewis; Julie Clare; Lizzie Clay; Richard Darbourne; Rob Ellis; Laura Elmes; Vicky Graham; Debbie Hicks; Eti Meacock; Jacob Moore; Rochelle Parry and James Tobias; Steven Peters; Kate Powell; Katie Sheridan; Joseph Smith, Louise Goodman, Suzie Brewis and the whole Stage One team; Rika Virides; Bertie Watkins; and the whole team at Jamie Wilson Productions.



## Preface

They say write what you know – I knew I couldn't write a play from an autistic person's perspective, but I could write a play that featured autism through the eyes of other neurotypical people and through their predicament look at the way some neurodivergent children are treated by the system and society.

I worked with learning disabled adults and children for over ten years, specialising in challenging behaviour, and have had the great pleasure of meeting a number of autistic people and their families. It was a job that challenged me, moved me and gave me a great insight into the life of raising a disabled child. Often this is joyous but sometimes it can be incredibly difficult; families can find themselves in positions where they feel scared, isolated or trapped. It feels like something of a taboo to talk so openly about the challenging behaviour that occasionally accompanies disability in this way.

But what if it really is too hard and what if you aren't equipped to meet your child's needs in your own home? It's a difficult question but one I've encountered in my work. What makes these questions even more difficult is many of them don't have perfect answers. Social care in the UK may be markedly better than it was fifty years ago but we still live in a country where residential schools, designed to help our most vulnerable, are run as private businesses, constantly looking over their shoulder for Ofsted. There are many parents who will be currently dealing with this question in the UK and it's their story I wanted to tell.

In telling their story I knew there was no way I could leave out their son, Laurence. While in the dialogue Tamara and Martin may voice their darkest worries and fears for Laurence I was certain that having his presence on stage would leave the audience in no doubt about their absolute love for him.

Laurence is one autistic character with an extremely profound learning disability and set of behaviours including violence. He is by no means intended to be a representative of the whole autistic spectrum and the people within it. I'm a massive supporter of inclusivity in art: I'm currently working on three different projects that feature learning disabled performers, all playing characters with the same disability as their own. I believe people with learning disabilities should be given the chance to tell their own stories and the stories of others wherever appropriate.



Laurence is a character with a level of disability that would make it impossible for him to appear in a play, especially a play like this one.

The task of portraying a non-verbal eleven-year-old with severely challenging behaviour is something I decided to do through puppetry. This has proved to be a controversial decision and I am saddened that some people have taken offence.

Laurence's character lacks agency in his own future. His fate is decided for him by neurotypical people and in many ways he is manipulated by the system he is within. This is one factor that informed the choice of puppetry but not the primary one.

I've always loved puppetry – the way talented artists can observe life and distil it into an essence that captures the heart of a human being can often be breathtaking and illuminating. It's this spirit I wanted to bring to Laurence, to create a portrayal that does justice to his incredibly unique personality while still keeping a respectful distance. I went to university with Siân Kidd and admire her skill in puppet design. She's worked with some of the best puppet companies and she has also worked for years with disabled people. The minute Siân heard about the puppet idea she was convinced that this was an effective way to portray Laurence and began firing ideas. Different materials and practices, all heavily influenced by two years of research and development and years in the field of autism, all came together to build Laurence. During this process we included autistic people and parents of people with a similar level of autism to Laurence, and they all felt that the puppet was effective. We also have two autistic members of the team directly responsible for the characterisation of Laurence.

This is the second full play Dominic Shaw and I have created, and it's definitely the largest. I'm incredibly humbled to see the amount of enthusiasm that everybody who has come on board is bringing to this project. It seems that autism and disability are something that most people to some degree have experience of but not many people know about the extremes and difficulties. I hope this play can add to the conversation about the parenting of a severely autistic child.

Alex Oates



# All in a Row

*For Sahm*



## **Characters**

**Tamora**, *a feisty thirty-six-year-old mother*

**Martin**, *a childish thirty-five-year-old father*

**Gary**, *a well-built twenty-year-old carer*

**Laurence**, *an eleven-year-old autistic boy puppet*

## Scene One

*A living room in a modern flat. There is a big flat-screen TV upstage.*

**Gary enters with Laurence. Laurence is a puppet of an eleven-year-old autistic boy. Laurence jumps on to the sofa and starts bouncing; he makes shrieking happy sounds.**

**Gary** Down. Laurence. Get down.

**Laurence and Gary play for a little while; Laurence is super happy. Laurence leads Gary to the fridge and takes out a pizza.**

**Gary** Pizza! Smart asking, you are so good. But can you remember, we already had two pizzas!

*He puts the pizza back in the fridge.*

How about we play with your Scrabble?

**Laurence opens the fridge again and Gary shuts it laughing.**

**Gary** Ok! Who wants a piggy back? Yeah, piggy back!

**Laurence excitably climbs on Gary's back or shoulders and they run around the flat a bit. Gary puts Laurence down after a while.**

**Laurence heads straight back to the fridge.**

**Gary** Ok, yeah, look I want to show you something.

*He grabs a piece of paper and a marker pen and writes down a message for Laurence.*

**Gary** See we have had dinner, pizza was dinner, Now it's choosing, next bath, then bed. Yes. Choosing. No. Not pizza.

*Tense moment when Laurence could head back to the fridge but instead leads Gary to the TV.*

**Gary** Good boy! Well done!

**Laurence hands an iPad to Gary.**

**Gary** I know. Film. Can you say film? Laurence?  
Film. Fi-lm?

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**Laurence** *shows no interest in speaking and pushes the iPad towards Gary.*

**Gary** Ok. Ok. One day.

*He turns on the iPad and Finding Nemo begins to play.*

**Laurence** *is ecstatic, jumping around before settling to watch it with Gary. At first the volume is way too loud.*

**Gary** Too loud. Too loud.

*Volume reduces.*

Good boy. Well done.

#### Scene Two

**Martin** *is in the space, lost in thought of what he'd like to say to Tamora if he had the courage.*

**Martin** We're in Richmond Park and he's running ahead of me. I say running. He's jumping, going for it. Jumping. I'm keeping up because you know. I don't want. He can be. And his teeth are.

Well, I'm keeping up and I'm thinking about imprints. One of those fucking theories that you'd have read. Imprints. I'm thinking as I'm running after him. About imprints.

**Tamora** *is giving a presentation to a group of young women at a technology college. She has a veneer of over-enthusiastic happiness but she's actually distracted with thoughts of Laurence.*

**Tamora** I was in a different country to him, my husband. Although at the time he wasn't my husband. He was a potential husband, a glimmer of a husband, a hope, a lottery ticket of a husband.

He was working in Scotland. Away from home, from me and I thought about him. Often. This was before we could all Skype or Facetime on our phones. Of course I could call him if I wanted to but I didn't particularly want to speak to him. I just wanted to feel his presence, I suppose, to be connected to another human being. To feel less alone.

**Martin** I'm scanning the park. What if those imprints we leave in time. Are like OHP paper. Every day another transparent sheet of plastic on top of the other still existing as like a memory of the place in a time frame or something. I don't know I'm not a scientist but if I could just peel back a few years' worth of sheets. Eleven years worth of sheets. Maybe. In the park, if a gust of wind just blew them away. *(Beat.)* And he's bouncing now. And I see all of them out in the park. Every trigger. Ray Ban clad dentists walking designer dogs with perfect children following like ducks on a string. My stomach turns. I try to pity them. I try. But if I could remove just a few sheets, an inch of clear film to when you and I walked through this park. Not even to go back in time. Just to see you and to see me and to see that naive fucking hope. *(Beat.)* He keeps jumping.

**Tamora** That's when I had the light bulb. What if I could hear, or see his heart beating? Just to know, he's there. This was the genesis of Heart2Heart. *(Pause.)* My baby. One of my babies, I have a son, but in many ways, this is my brain child, my prodigal. I'm gonna show you it now and I want to hear the excitement.

*She clicks the remote for her PowerPoint and an image of the Heart2Heart prototype appears on screen.*

This is the Heart2Heart mark 3. When I received my first investment straight out of uni, which was . . . a hundred grand from a government enterprise scheme, I assumed it would be easy and we'd have it on the shelves by Christmas of that year. Ten years later, three more grants, twelve very patient angel investors, two less patient investors, one lawsuit, one company liquidation, five trips to Beijing, one entrepreneur of the year award, two road-tested prototypes. The dawn of 3G, the bloody invention of 4G and God knows how many bottles of wine, here we are. Almost ready to launch.

**Martin** And he stops jumping, he has seen one of those, em, families. With a girl, I dunno maybe eight or so, she's

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definitely younger and by God is she smaller. She has a, like a hoop, it's a hula hoop she's playing with and he bounces. Now at this point I'd normally notice and redirect him but I'm still looking at the fountain you see, thinking of your bent elbow as you supported yourself when I nervously stooped my lips towards you. Imprinted. First of all this girl screams, puts up a fight as he's trying cleave the hoop from her hand. He's making the noise. You know. The warning siren, I know he will bite. Soon.

**Tamora** So you're in a long-distance relationship, put the little sensor on your finger, just looks like a ring.

**Martin** I sprint over and the parents of the little girl. At first looks of sympathy and understanding of what our boy is, the aww bless him, life must be so hard, let him have it, darling, he's one of those. They change when they see what he's going to do, when he bares his teeth. They change. Get this fucking animal away from my precious offspring.

**Tamora** Next you have the vibrating, glowing receiver, you can put it in your pocket or on a necklace, wear it on a band on your arm if you literally want to wear his heart on your sleeve.

**Martin** Just as he is sinking his teeth into her arm I jump in and get him in a kind of a headlock. He opens his mouth, and I see her arm. I thank God he didn't break the skin. Or a bone, her arm is so tiny, so fragile, her skin, like wet papier mache, is beginning to rouge.

**Tamora** The idea is it picks up his heart beat and using wifi connection or 4G it electronically beams it to you and the little totem vibrates and glows softly in time with his and vice versa, so you can feel each other.

**Martin** He's screaming at me. Her father. The political correct shine of pity long gone. Where he might have once bought himself a smug feeling of charity now all there is, is anger. Paternal rage. And I can't help but smile, and love it, and wish it was me sinking my teeth into that little girl's arm, to get one over on this smug bastard.



**Tamora** I know what you're thinking, Fitbit, Apple watch, they all do heart beat, but it's not the same, they're multi-functional, this product is designed to be solely based around human connection

**Martin** Then our boy turns on me, unhappy with all the shouting, the order of the park falling apart and he doesn't hold back with me, as you know, biting and screaming. People are starting to notice, I kind of get him on the floor and hold him down. Press his arms by his side. The kind of restraint they call child abuse, the only kind that stops him biting you. People are crowding around. A policeman walks over.

**Tamora** It's a relatively simple idea, but it has snowballed.

**Martin** I say that I'm very sorry. I'm his dad, he's autistic, he's upset, he'll calm down in a minute, he needs peace. I look like a kidnapper, a grown man holding a child to the ground, pressing his biting mouth onto the earth. But they believe me. They walk away and it's me and him on the floor and I release him and the adrenaline goes and he shits himself. I can see the low in fibre shit forming a kidney shape in his pants. I look around and everyone else has gone back to pity. Fine.

**Tamora** Without actually releasing the product I've managed to sustain myself and my company for a decade.

**Martin** I walk him home, ruffle his hair, stick him in the shower, hose him down. I put him to bed.

**Tamora** This prototype and business model has cost more than many people earn in a lifetime.

**Martin** It was about a week after that I started shitting on your pillows.

**Tamora** Would I go back and do it all again? I honestly don't know. That's the great thing about being young, you don't have to. Wisdom's nothing more than life's consolation prize.

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**Martin** Actually I started pissing on your books. In the battery port of your iPad. Your make-up table. Why? A break from playing Xbox? Because I could. Because if you can't beat 'em join 'em. It feels good. I can see why he does it. It's like a drug. I craft the grass stains on your cushions, I graffiti with your eyeliner on your bedroom walls. I start fires with the toastie machine. Turn your hair straighteners on when you're out. Smash your mirrors. I started biting myself. To see how it feels. Biting. I'd often wondered, is it as easy as biting through steak? Not really no, but you feel a juicy burst when the skin goes.

**Tamora** What I'd say to you is, forget the glass ceiling, it's only there if you believe it exists, and I refuse to believe it exists.

**Martin** But I didn't do it. There is no way I would have ever have done it. I love him too much to risk losing him. Every bite. Every sticky wet wipe. I love him and I wouldn't lose him.

**Tamora** Thank you.

### Scene Three

**Martin** *enters the living room and busies himself; he's bored and wants to make conversation with Gary.*

**Martin** You know the words.

**Gary** Yes.

**Martin** When you're unemployed tomorrow you'll be able to add it to your CV.

**Gary** It's an invaluable skill.

**Martin** A CRB check, a driving licence and an ability to recite the whole of *Finding Nemo*.

**Gary** And *Cars*.

**Martin** And *Cars*.

**Gary** I miss *Pocahontas*

**Martin** We all miss *Pocahontas*.

**Gary** Still, it gets easier day by day.

**Martin** If only he'd watch more films with fuckable cartoons, ay?

**Gary** I suppose.

**Martin** I mean it. Maybe when he hits puberty.

**Gary** One can hope.

**Laurence** *gets up and takes Martin to the fridge.*

**Martin** Cheeky monkey! I bet you've already had dinner.

**Gary** And seconds

**Martin** You cheeky monster! Look, oh it's Nemo!  
(**Laurence** *sits down again.*) There's a market for Disney porn you know. Twisted stuff.

**Gary** (*politely changing subject*) He's looking tired.

**Martin** Beauty sucking off the beast. Not saying I'm into it. I don't go there, Gary, just saying there's a market.

**Gary** There's a market for everything these days.

**Martin** Snow White, the thing about those Seven Dwarfs is they have normal-sized cocks.

**Gary** He's had a pizza but I think he wants more.

**Martin** It's like a bukake party with those dwarfs, Gary, bukkake! Do you know bukkake, mate?

**Gary** I'd rather not.

**Martin** One Snow White, Seven Dwarfs all jizzing on her face. They should rename her 'Off White', really. Not saying I'm into it but when you see it you have to click, right? Send it round your mates.

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**Gary** Right.

**Martin** You have to click.

**Gary** Right. I suppose.

**Martin** Tam thinks you did it.

**Gary** What?

**Martin** Tam thinks you did it, she wouldn't say it, too polite to say it, but she believes you're the one who did it.

**Gary** Did what?

**Martin** Made the call, Gary.

**Gary** Which –

**Martin** Oh don't bullshit a bullshitter. The call. Social services, the call.

**Gary** It wasn't me, mate. Honestly, not me, why would I want to?

**Martin** It's not that she blames you, you are an employee, you have to follow procedure. If you see bruises.

**Gary** Honestly, mate, got the wrong guy.

**Martin** Cover your bases, make a call, anyone would do it. You have to protect yourself.

**Gary** I didn't . . .

**Martin** Or else it could turn on you. You don't want to look like a child abuser. They have a safeguarding policy for a reason, son.

**Gary** I understand the policy just I didn't make the . . .

**Martin** In this climate as well, even the sniff of abuse and you're scum, you'll have Iceland shoppers smearing badly spelled insults on your front door. Getting petitions to have you relocated.

**Gary** Marty!

**Martin** Putting dead little animals through your letter box. Excrement. That's why we have to report these things, anyone would understand your motivation.

**Gary** It wasn't me. I wouldn't want to put myself out of a job.

**Martin** Of course I know that Gary, that's what I said to Tam. I said Gary, he has a car to insure and a flat, a cat right?

**Gary** Yeah.

**Martin** You wouldn't want to lose this gig with Laurence. You understand that bruises are normal with a kid who turns into a pitbull when he doesn't get an extra pizza.

**Gary** Yeah.

**Martin** And you make certain allowances – some of the bruises are probably caused by you too so you wouldn't have called social services. That's what I said. She's just stressed mate. It's stress.

**Gary** It's understandable.

**Martin** Exactly. Understandable. He's been ok though?

**Gary** He's been fine. Great.

**Martin** Great. (*Beat.*) And your cat?

**Gary** Yeah fine too.

**Martin** Excellent. Love cats. Love 'em. It was one of her theories actually. Cats. That they could help him. Cure him. Well, actually no, the first theory was that they caused it, caused him to have it, you know, through toxoplasmosis. After that though. Then it was maybe they could help.

**Gary** Is it the poo thing? Toxo – what was it?

**Martin** Plasmosis, parasite that lives in cat shit, you breathe it in, makes you like cats.

**Gary** Is that real?

**Martin** Yeah, creates little holes in your brain, lives there, breeds there. Not only that, it makes you more likely to take risks. There are scientific studies.

**Gary** Nature terrifies me. That's fucked-up.

**Martin** Makes sense though if you think about it. We all have our own adaptive strategy. It's like life. Like business. Makes sense. The parasite. Tiny. Wants to survive so it starts off tiny, gets into the mouse, makes the mouse more risky, and it does, scientific studies.

**Gary** Right, yeah?

**Martin** Cat eats mouse, yeah, parasite now lives in cat.

**Gary** We don't eat cats.

**Martin** That's why it comes out in the shit – it's tiny so we change the litter box or touch the cat's arse and it gets into our mouth.

**Gary** Hey presto.

**Martin** Good business model. Mouse to cat to human. Without having to actually do anything. Like Tam really, she hasn't actually made anything solid. She plays business woman of the year very well but really she hasn't sold a single unit, has she?

**Gary** I mean I don't really know.

**Martin** Not anything. Just develops the idea, and gets grants, flogs the idea to stupid people. Angel investors? Idiot investors. She lays her little eggs of greed. Sometimes she does earn money for motivational speaking, that's ironic. She stands in front of kiddies and lays little eggs of hope. Little shitty parasites.

**Laurence** *is starting to become unsettled; he stands up and walks about.*

**Martin** Did he just have the one pizza?

**Gary** Two pizzas.

**Martin** Enough. Laurence. You ate enough. E-nough. Full-up. Do you understand?

**Gary** Oh he understands, whether that's enough.

**Laurence** *makes a Makaton sign.*

**Gary** That's cake.

**Martin** I know that's cake. Do we have any?

**Gary** No. No cake.

**Martin** No cake, Larry, no cake, you've had enough. Good boy. Sit down. Down. Good boy,

**Laurence** *jumps up and down, beginning to get upset.*

**Gary** He wants the –

**Martin** The pink Mr Kiplings, I know. Doesn't even eat them. Puts them in a line.

**Laurence** *starts to make a sound that means he is getting really upset, it's like a warning siren.* **Martin** *takes out a cookery book.*

**Martin** Daddy make you? Jesus it's wet – has he pissed on these books again? Cake?

**Laurence** *throws the book back at him; he's still making the noise and bouncing about.* **Martin** *and Gary* *are becoming increasingly tense.*

**Gary** It's the Mr Kipling.

**Martin** He's gonna blow. Mr fucking Kipling, they're barely edible. Come on, Larry!

**Laurence** *turns it up a notch.*

**Gary** Time out. Down. Larry. Time out. Stop it now. Naughty. Naughty.

**Martin** For fuck's sake.

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**Laurence** screams and goes for **Martin**, trying to bite, scratch and pull hair. **Gary** gets in between them and pulls **Laurence** away. They tussle in the living room for minutes until **Gary** manages to get him on the sofa with a cushion holding him down. **Martin** watches in despair.

**Martin** Thanks, mate.

**Gary** Are you ok? Did he get you?

**Martin** No he didn't. Fucking fondant fancies! Why's it me?

**Gary** It's not personal, he just rages.

**Martin** He's my kid, not the fucking Incredible Hulk. For fuck's sake. It's Tam. Indulged him. When he was smaller you could, it was cute. Now he's a machine.

**Gary** Good boy. Calm. Calm. Waiting.

**Martin** He stopped?

**Gary** Yeah. He's calmer.

**Martin** Fuck's sake, not tonight, Larry, fuck's sake.

**Gary** He's ok. Good boy,

**Martin** I'll text Tam, tell her to swing by the shop and get some Mr Kipling.

*Sound of a door opening.*

Or not. She will be unbearable. Tonight. You've been warned.

**Tamora** enters with a bag full of wine and a takeaway pizza.

**Tamora** How are we? How's the little man?

**Gary** He just had a bit of a incident.

**Tamora** Did he get you?

**Gary** No.



**Tamora** Lovely, I don't mind him biting us.

**Laurence** *takes Tamora to the fridge; the guys look on nervously.*

**Tamora** Pizza! Good asking! We can do better than that!

*She takes a takeaway pizza box from her bag. Martin and Gary roll their eyes at each other. Laurence is super happy now and jumping about.*

**Martin** Yeah! Is Mummy giving you a pizza! Is Mummy breaking the rules! Is she? Is she?

**Tamora** It's his last . . . it's tonight isn't it.

**Martin** Mummy spoiling you, yes she is. Is Mummy on the wine already? Yes she is, yes she is.

**Tamora** Half now and half in twenty minutes. Mummy will set a timer. Gary, do you have the iPad?

**Gary** I'll set a timer. Plate. Larry. Plate.

**Laurence** *puts half the pizza on a plate and eats it.*

**Tamora** Thanks. How are you, Gary?

**Gary** Fine, thanks. All good.

**Tamora** I'm so pleased.

**Martin** How are you, darling?

**Tamora** You know. Ticking along. Good day? Xbox was it?

**Martin** Helping with Laurence actually.

**Tamora** Great. *Nemo* is it?

**Gary** Third time today.

**Tamora** I do miss *Beauty and the Beast*.

**Martin** Really?

**Tamora** What was it? Pizza?

**Gary** Cake.

**Tamora** Those awful pink things. Gary, could you get him to eat in the other room?

**Gary** Sure, Larry, should we go and eat in the play room, come on.

**Martin** Fucking Mr Kipling, oh if I could only go back in time – no Mr Kipling, they're not exceedingly good, try coal mining.

**Tamora** Busy day today.

**Martin** I bet he was northern – ey up Kipling, lad, those cakes. Below par, son.

**Tamora** A technology college for girls. You'd have liked it. All those teenage . . .

**Martin** And what kind of colour is pink for a cake, son. By gum no.

**Tamora** You'd have liked it.

**Martin** I imagine I would have. Inspiring was it?

**Tamora** It was my usual.

**Martin** But you were inspiring today yes? Not talking about technology no? You did say technology college?

**Tamora** So you do listen.

**Martin** Some times. On rare occasions. It has been known to happen. And did the little faces glow with enthusiasm like a percolating lava lamp?

**Tamora** I was quite distracted.

**Martin** Did they think, one day I can be like the lady up there, if I try hard.

**Tamora** All I could do not to cry.

**Martin** One day I too can spend ten years making a prototype.

**Tamora** I've been like this for the last few weeks. Better to get it over with. Better to be done. Rip off the plaster. It's time. Right.

**Martin** Time.

**Tamora** Is he packed?

**Martin** Sorry?

**Tamora** His bags, I packed them once but he keeps taking the clothes out. Is he ready and packed?

**Martin** I don't know. You could ask Gary who is paid to work with him and is politely pretending he can't hear our snipes.

**Tamora** Gary, is he . . .

**Gary** He's packed, Tam. I put all his stuff in a case while he had a nap, left the hard Play-Doh. Didn't think he'd want it.

**Tamora** No, good. Thank you.

**Gary** Read him the social story but maybe we should go over it again.

**Tamora** Social story. Of course. I'm sure it will help, he's bright you know. He is bright. I'll be right back. Must plug my phone in.

*She exits.*

**Martin** I warned you. God help me after tomorrow. When it's just the two of us. Eleven years it's been, never the two of us. Can I pay you to keep coming? Pay you to just sit there and watch *Finding Nemo* so she has to maintain a basic pretence of kindness?

**Gary** I don't think Tam would go for that.

**Martin** No. I don't suppose. Have you seen the brochure?

**Gary** For?

**Martin** Ridgemount. Have you seen it?

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**Gary** The horses.

**Martin** I don't buy it. What are they selling?

**Gary** It looks nice.

**Martin** Exactly. Too nice. What kind of school has a brochure. I'm not buying a timeshare. I'm not looking to go to Center Parcs.

**Gary** It looks nice.

**Martin** Do you really think that?

**Gary** It's not really my place to . . .

**Martin** Do you think this is a good idea?

**Gary** I . . . dunno

**Martin** Oh come on, we're mates! We are mates!

**Gary** Well, he's gonna grow isn't he. Residential schools are full of kids and . . .

**Martin** What?

**Gary** If he keeps biting people.

**Martin** Then? Spit it out.

**Gary** There's no perfect answer.

**Martin** You don't think it'll work?

**Gary** It's worth a try.

**Martin** Sure. But you don't think . . .

**Gary** I think it's worth exploring.

**Martin** But you don't think it'll work?

**Gary** I have mates who work in places like that and it's tricky.

**Martin** Tricky?

**Gary** They have to comply to all these regulations we don't.

**Martin** Restraining?

**Gary** Right, it's not easy to get him into a proper hold is it?

**Martin** They can just put him in his room.

**Gary** You're not allowed to hold the door.

**Martin** So what?

**Gary** I just think it's tricky.

**Martin** I said this.

**Gary** I'm not saying he shouldn't go.

**Martin** I fucking said this.

**Gary** I'm just saying it's tricky.

**Martin** What, you think he'll be expelled? Sectioned?

**Gary** It's not out of the question.

**Martin** Sectioned?

**Gary** . . . (*Gestures to mean 'Yeah'.*)

**Martin** What does it even mean? Sectioned?

**Gary** It's not that bad.

**Martin** No?

**Gary** No, it's like, like a psychiatric hospital.

**Martin** Great.

**Gary** They, keep you in there.

**Martin** Drugged?

**Gary** Sometimes sedated yeah and then bring you out of it to try new medications.

**Martin** It's fucking sick.

**Gary** They let you out when you stop biting.

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**Martin** When you stop thinking, when you stop being you. How long can you be sectioned?

**Gary** I dunno.

**Martin** You do know.

**Gary** Honestly.

**Martin** Alright what did your mate say.

**Gary** Well, it varies doesn't it.

**Martin** Come on, Gary!

**Gary** Anywhere from months to years. (*Pause.*) It might not happen, it probably won't.

**Martin** He's getting bigger.

**Gary** Yeah but the school could be great.

**Martin** Fuck's sake.

**Gary** I don't know. There's no perfect answer.

**Martin** Then what?

**Tamora** (*offstage*) Oh God, not again, Laurence, my fucking pillow.

**Martin** *barely contains his grin.*

**Gary** Oh God he hasn't, I've been watching him all day, he must have done it when I was at the toilet. Bollocks. Will she kill me?

**Martin** She won't be best pleased. It's not your fault though. She won't.

**Tamora** *re-enters.*

**Tamora** You little bloody monster. I won't miss this.

**Gary** Tam . . .

**Tamora** Third time this week.

**Gary** I'm so sorry.

**Tamora** (*trying to convince herself*) No, I won't miss this.

**Gary** I didn't think I left him alone.

**Tamora** It's not your fault.

**Gary** If you want to take the dry cleaning out of my wages.

**Tamora** What, don't be daft. It's just. Today.

**Gary** Yeah.

**Tamora** In some ways it's fitting. A going-away present. You have to laugh don't you.

**Gary** I suppose.

**Tamora** Reminding me there are things I won't miss. That's the key. Isn't that awful. Can a mother say that?

**Martin** Was it your good pillows, love?

**Tamora** The goose feathers, yeah.

**Martin** They're a bastard to clean.

**Tamora** It's like he knows!

**Martin** *opens a beer.*

**Martin** Can I get you a beer, Gary?

**Gary** I shouldn't really, I'm at work.

**Martin** Go on, it's your last night.

**Tamora** He's responsible for Laurence.

**Gary** Thanks all the same.

**Laurence** *is starting to shift about, making noises.*

**Tamora** He looks tetchy, is he? Tetchy?

**Martin** It's the cake.

**Tamora** He could have an upset stomach. Has he got a temperature? All that wheat, it's not good for him.

**Gary** I got him to eat some melon.

**Tamora** You did! Good boy! Who's a good boy, eating melon for Gary. How did you do it?

**Martin** I'll get cake. Won't be a minute.

**Tamora** Thanks darling.

**Martin** *leaves.* **Tamora** *opens a bottle of wine and pours herself a large glass.*

**Tamora** How did you do it?

**Gary** Shapes. First I made squares and he played with them, put them in a line according to the size. Then. Balls, used your truffle scoop. He loved it.

**Tamora** Genius. You're a marvel, that's genius. Melon. Ha. What next? We could try him with apple.

**Gary** We should have.

**Tamora** (*remembering*) Yes, maybe they will try him with apple. I'll tell them.

**Gary** Good day?

**Tamora** You know. Long.

**Gary** I heard the prototype arrived. Sounds really great.

**Tamora** Really?

**Gary** Yeah, very promising.

**Tamora** It looks like three batteries gaffer taped to a vibrator, but it won't when it's finished.

**Gary** Impressive all the same.

**Tamora** Thanks, still a work in progress I guess. It's coming along. How are you?



**Gary** Yes. Great.

**Tamora** And the cat?

**Gary** Cat's good.

**Tamora** Excellent.

**Gary** Tam. I just wanted to say. Before we . . .

**Tamora** I dropped by the school on the way home.

**Gary** Yeah?

**Tamora** A governors' meeting. I was thinking, I wonder . . . I know right, me at a governors' meeting, but I'm a major donor for the school and frankly I think they let anyone join.

**Gary** The governors?

**Tamora** Yes, some of the parents, shocking. I was there and you know what I'm thinking, I'm wondering if they revoke your special parent card.

**Gary** Special parent card?

**Tamora** Well, not actually a card but the parents of the kids with special needs all flock together as it were, it's depressing. Instead of talking about how our kids passed a piano grade we congratulate each other on children walking to the shops alone or moving an eye to the left.

**Gary** Everything's relative.

**Tamora** But I worry. I think. Do they ever? Look down on you. Couldn't cope, you know?

**Gary** I really don't think they're like that.

**Tamora** I just get so frustrated thinking that maybe . . . Take Gemma, I mean . . . it's hard, sure, you need to get that wheelchair in the car using the bloody lift thing and change her and wash her and feed her. It's hard. But . . . she can't eat actual food, can she? So at least you can control that.

Let's be honest, she can't move fast can she? Gemma's mum, is she thinking, 'That mother, she can't look after her own'. I mean does she understand? I could do Gemma, if Laurence was Gemma, God forbid, but if he was Gemma I could do that, I could wheel him about, I'm confident in that. I don't know. You've gotta laugh.

**Gary** Yes. I saw the photo book they made him at school.

**Tamora** Isn't it wonderful?

**Gary** It's very touching. He's so happy in all of them.

**Tamora** Did he like that? Does he recognise people? I wonder about that. If I Skype him. Would he be able to recognise me, or would he bat the iPad away? Stare blankly like I'm a Space Invader or a Tetris piece.

**Gary** He did seem to.

**Tamora** At least he didn't piss on it.

**Gary** Before he leaves. I just wanted to say.

**Tamora** Right. You don't have to . . .

**Gary** You are a great mum and I know it's hard.

**Tamora** That's sweet, thank you.

**Gary** And I know how much you love him and fight for him. (*Beat.*) What I'm trying to say is it wasn't me. I know there's procedure, I know. But my loyalty is with you guys and I'd never have dropped you in it.

**Tamora** I don't doubt that.

**Gary** Good. As long as you know.

**Tamora** I don't want to know who told them. Someone did. It happened. Done.

**Gary** Yeah.

**Tamora** Exactly.

**Gary** Probably the school.

**Tamora** It's done now. It'd have happened anyway wouldn't it? We'd have realised it had to happen. Oh God, it's just I keep having pangs of empty nest. Can I get you a wine?

**Gary** Well, am I not responsible for?

**Tamora** Oh, Martin's right, it's your last day.

*She pours Gary a glass of wine.*

**Tamora** Sometimes I think I should just get him drunk, then he'd at least be sleepy.

**Gary** That's one way.

**Tamora** God, don't tell anyone I said that. It's just, well, you know. Sometimes we'd all like an easy way out. When they interviewed you what did they actually ask? Was it with two police?

**Gary** Yeah it was two police – basically they just invited me in.

**Tamora** To the station was it?

**Gary** Yeah, they put me in an interview room.

**Tamora** I'm sorry you had to.

**Gary** I don't mind, I'd rather he's safe you know.

**Tamora** Of course, as would we all but you're not a criminal.

**Gary** I know that, as did they. They just showed me the photos of his bruises, I mean I'd seen them anyway, asked if I knew where they came from. It's like they didn't quite get it.

**Tamora** Thank you!

**Gary** I mean he's strong, when you're holding him, and he's fighting sometimes, bruises. He's going to get bruises. It's nothing compared to the bite marks you have on your arms.

**Tamora** Hard to make that case though.

**Gary** You know when I was young I was always out scraping my knee.

**Tamora** Exactly right – did they order a review?

**Gary** Of course not.

**Tamora** An eleven-year-old has a few bruises, let's have an investigation, a police report, a social worker report, mark the family out of five in eight separate categories and determine his future.

**Gary** It doesn't really seem fair.

**Tamora** How would your mum take it do you think? Points out of forty to decide if you were safe at home.

**Gary** My mum would flip.

**Tamora** Right, it's crazy. Have you seen the categories they're assessed on? Warmth of family bond. Fucking warmth.

**Gary** It's mad isn't it.

**Tamora** Two out of five, I'm warm right? I'm practically fizzing with maternal pride. I donate thousands of pounds to the special kids, I go to coffee mornings with the special mums. I'm every fucking special woman, they're all in me. Two out of five.

**Gary** The identity, that is an insult.

**Tamora** Oh the identity, one out of five, because he doesn't have a specified religion. Excuse me if I won't sign up to some regime so you can categorise my child. He is fully aware of his identity as a member of the congregation of Pixar and Disney, he is a fully paid up member of the arranging objects into straight lines society. Chairman of the smooshing pizza into carpet and vice president of shitting on pillows covenant. Identity. Sorry.

**Gary** It is a bit ridiculous.

**Tamora** You must be sick of hearing this.

**Gary** Not at all.

**Tamora** Sometimes I need to vent. I'm warm, I'm fucking flushing.

**Gary** I feel it, Tam, I know you're warm.

**Tamora** Thanks, Gary.

**Gary** It's only because he can't speak.

**Tamora** Sometimes I think he can, he just chooses not to.

**Gary** I wish he could.

**Tamora** Don't, I have these recurring dreams where he just comes into my room one morning and speaks. No shitting on my bed, no biting, no demanding pizza, he just talks.

**Gary** Would be amazing.

**Tamora** Weirdest thing, in this dream, he has an accent. Speaks like a 1960s news reader, RP accent and just starts performing Keats.

**Gary** Poems?

**Tamora** 'Ode to a Nightingale', every time. Without fail.

**Gary** That is great. Well, you never know.

**Tamora** What?

**Gary** You never know, I read this article the other day . . .

**Tamora** Get him a cat, get him a horse, get him an iPad, take him to Lourdes. Got those T-shirts. Lourdes! Of all the crap not to believe in. Still, what we do, ay. What we do.

**Gary** They just asked if I knew where the bruises came from. I said no, I said could be anywhere. I said I don't believe that anyone in Laurence's circle of support would ever hurt a hair on his head. Intentionally.

**Tamora** Thanks. It means a lot.

**Gary** Anytime.

**Tamora** I just need to forget about it.

**Gary** Did you really take him to Lourdes?

**Tamora** We had a Catholic babysitter who suggested it, ridiculous isn't it.

**Gary** What was it like?

**Tamora** Hell, ironically, hot, humid caves with crutches hanging from the roof like jagged teeth in Satan's yawning mouth.

**Gary** I heard it actually has a good clubbing scene.

**Tamora** Lots of bingo nights, I recall – it's like Butlins but with even more Irish.

**Gary** See any miracles?

**Tamora** I had a bowl of Shreddies that made a shape the double of Graham Norton, no miracles no.

*The pizza timer goes off. **Laurence** jumps up excitably; he tries to take the box.*

**Gary** Get a plate

**Tamora** You're so good with him.

**Gary** Plate.

**Tamora** You don't mind about the pizza?

**Gary** Course not. Just, he needs to eat off a plate.

**Tamora** We're going to miss you.

**Gary** Here we go, buddy.

**Laurence** *excitedly rushes off with the pizza.*

**Tamora** How about your love life? Any more settled?

**Gary** You know, all over the place.

**Tamora** Tell me.

**Gary** It's nothing too exciting.

**Tamora** Please. I need to be reminded excitement still exists beyond the rush of fear when he attacks me.

*She tops up his wine.*

**Gary** You really want to know?

**Tamora** I'm a captive audience.

**Gary** I've been using apps.

**Tamora** Really?

**Gary** Yes, okcupid is alright.

*She is gaining in excitement. She gets a vicarious thrill from hearing him talk about it.*

**Tamora** And what, you just message girls? How many?

**Gary** Hundreds, fishing really. But if you look at a success rate of about 10 per cent then if you message one hundred girls that's ten dates, isn't it?

**Tamora** That's quite amazing. Well, good on you. Seriously. Is it for you know . . . Mainly.

**Gary** I'm looking for something a bit more meaningful.

**Tamora** Sure, but you must find, that women on there, are casual. A lot of them. Are they?

**Gary** Well, obviously some are looking for no strings.

**Tamora** And do you carpe that diem?

**Gary** Sorry?

**Tamora** I mean do you take the bait? No strings – I mean you're young.

**Gary** I'd like a relationship.

**Tamora** It must be thrilling

**Gary** I'd like to find the one.

**Tamora** Of course. Well, that's sensible, you're sensible.  
Well done.

**Gary** I think he needs the toilet.

**Tamora** Right. Yeah of course. Take him. Good boy,  
Laurence.

**Gary** *heads over to Laurence and makes the Makaton symbol for toilet; he leads him offstage. Tamora is mortified with herself and downs the glass of wine; she fills it up again.*

*She walks over to the social story on the table and opens it. She quickly decides she can't read it and puts it back on the table.*

**Martin** *returns with fondant fancies and a six pack of beer. There is an awkward silence as he decides where to put himself.*

**Tamora** You're particularly pungent tonight, dear.

**Martin** *smells his shirt.*

**Martin** Do you blame me?

**Tamora** Why should today be different.

**Martin** Don't start.

**Tamora** Do you have to get stoned to be in the same room as me?

**Martin** With my question deflector shield I bounce it right back at you except I replace the word stoned with drunk.

**Tamora** Very cute.

**Martin** Shield claims a victory. The crowd roars.

**Tamora** It won't make it easier.

**Martin** Deploy cloak of substance abuse, open inventory of denial-based tools.



**Tamora** There you go. Were you always like this?

**Martin** I imagine so – my face may be a little fuller now. Fondant fancy? I hear they're exceedingly good.

**Tamora** I hate the things.

**Martin** Of course you do

**Tamora** It's the . . .

**Martin** The food colouring?

**Tamora** The E numbers, hideous.

**Martin** Well, thank God he doesn't eat them.

**Tamora** Exactly.

**Martin** If they heard at school. We'd fed him E numbers, they'd call an investigation, have him taken off us.

**Tamora** That's not funny.

**Martin** I'm surprised they left him here tonight.

**Tamora** Don't.

**Martin** If we're not fit parents.

**Tamora** We are fit parents.

**Martin** If he needs 'more care than we can provide and a constant support structure'.

**Tamora** We are fit parents.

**Martin** I'm surprised they left him here.

*They have nothing to say to each other; they mill about for a moment. She gestures towards the social story.*

**Tamora** Have you seen this?

**Martin** Cruel isn't it?

**Tamora** That's what I thought. Like some slow torture.

**Martin** Have you read it?

**Tamora** I couldn't.

**Martin** Really? It's in very simple language, lots of pictures.

**Tamora** Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit.

**Martin** Shall I read it to you?

**Tamora** No, I'll avoid it all together.

**Martin** We have to read it to him together. He has to know from both of us.

**Tamora** He knows anyway. Of course he knows. He keeps unpacking his bag.

**Martin** Smart as a whip.

**Tamora** At least he got something from me.

**Martin** Besides your love of pizza.

**Tamora** Besides that.

**Martin** It wasn't Gary.

**Tamora** Sorry?

**Martin** It wasn't Gary who made the call.

**Tamora** I know it wasn't.

**Martin** You thought it was.

**Tamora** I didn't.

**Martin** You did!

**Tamora** Not seriously.

**Martin** You wondered.

**Tamora** But not seriously. Never for a minute. Not Gary.

**Martin** I said not Gary. You said it could be. I said no, I said think of the cat.

**Tamora** Well. What does it matter?

**Martin** Just thought you should know I was right.

**Tamora** I'm happy for you. He thinks probably it was the school.

**Martin** Really, the school? After everything you donate?

**Tamora** I don't know. They have procedure. Everyone is terrified of being the one on the end of the finger.

**Martin** I know you are.

**Tamora** What was that supposed to mean?

**Martin** Nothing.

**Tamora** No. What did you mean?

**Martin** Oh, for Christ's sake I was having a laugh, stone me! (*Beat.*) Do you think it was?

**Tamora** The school?

**Martin** Yes. Would they?

**Tamora** I suppose anything's possible.

**Martin** But after everything you do for the school. All you donate. I ought to email them.

**Tamora** Don't do that. We don't know.

**Martin** Did I say I ought to, I meant I did email them.

**Tamora** You're joking.

**Martin** Not joking no. I emailed them.

**Tamora** What did you say?

**Martin** I just said . . . (*Avoiding revealing the email.*) I mean do you never hate them? He goes to a special school and not one of his teachers has a kid with special needs. Not one. They all work with ours and go back to their own little nest with perfect little kids. I don't like to be pitied.

**Tamora** What did you put in your email.

**Martin** And with their targets and objectives it's actually quite expensive keeping Laurence in the class, with two to one support minimum it's not cheap. They all have the bruises and bites too I mean you've got to understand why it might have been tempting for them to think, maybe, if Laurence wasn't in the class days would be easier. You know. So I emailed and I said I hope you're happy. Or words to that effect. If you didn't want him you could have just told us and we would have kept him. At home. Our home. Or words to that effect. Because we do. We want him.

**Tamora** (*angry*) What a ridiculous thing to do

**Gary** and **Laurence** *enter again.*

**Tamora** *has to hide her anger.*

**Tamora** Here's my boy. Here's my favourite boy. Look what Mummy got you. Look what we got you.

**Martin** What Mummy got you?!

**Tamora** Mr Kipling!

**Laurence** *bounces up and down happily and tears open the packet of cakes; he places them in a line.*

**Gary** I sometimes wonder what he sees in that.

**Tamora** Order. It makes sense.

**Gary** He gets that from you then?

**Tamora** I know I have days when I feel like I want everything neat and tidy.

**Gary** I suppose.

**Martin** Shame he then tries to merge them with the carpet.

**Gary** It must be nice to live in a world where you don't care about mess but you love a straight line.

**Martin** This one time, he got the Scrabble letters, and arranged them till they spelled Brad Andalman.

**Tamora** For weeks we had no idea what that was about. Not the foggiest.

**Martin** We asked at school. Brad?

**Tamora** Thought maybe it could be the bus driver.

**Martin** Thought maybe he meant bread or bad. Bed even.

**Tamora** Then one day Martin was with him watching *Nemo* and –

**Martin** In the credits there it is. Brad Andalman, third colourist.

**Gary** Really?

**Martin** See, he is so clever in so many ways.

**Tamora** He is.

**Gary** Yeah. (*Beat.*) You can visit him right? Whenever you want?

**Tamora** Oh God of course. Yeah. And it's an amazing place. They have horses on site, he can go horse riding. And you never know, what if they have a breakthrough.

**Martin** There won't be a breakthrough.

**Tamora** Miracles could happen.

**Martin** Did she tell you about Lourdes?

**Gary** I heard about Lourdes.

**Martin** What a load of fucking loonies. I spent so long wondering if anyone's ever pissed in the communion wine.

**Tamora** Jesus, Martin!

**Martin** It never went through your mind? All those faithful, drinking from the same cup, someone must have one day.

**Tamora** Don't be disgusting.

**Martin** Or at least spread a cold sore.

**Gary** He has a point.

**Martin** Yes! Thanks, man, you know cold sores are herpes?

**Gary** I did actually know that.

**Tamora** In front of Laurence?

**Martin** I just think it's a horrible thought, one horny nun gives a father a little light relief, takes communion and the whole congregation has it shining on their lips. Spreading the good news a little too literally.

**Tamora** I'm sorry about him.

**Martin** My wife doesn't like to think about sex.

**Tamora** Not with you dear. (*To Gary.*) I'm very sorry about him.

**Martin** My wife likes to apologise for me.

**Tamora** I really am.

**Martin** She apologises a lot. I admire that about Laurence sometimes – he never apologises. Never.

**Tamora** Would you stop?

**Martin** She doesn't realise we are entitled. Everyone's entitled to be a bit eccentric when they are in our situation, darling.

**Tamora** Martin.

**Martin** It's like if someone has a terminal illness. You show up at a party and everybody has been told already. So you get to be a bit eccentric, a bit out there – it's a good thing in a way, they're already on your side.

**Tamora** There's eccentric and there's obnoxious, dear. Have some more wine, Gary.

*She exits.*

**Laurence** gets up and takes **Martin** to the fridge.

**Martin** Let me guess, Larry. Can I phone a friend? PIZZA! Ding ding. Come on let's sit down.

*They sit and watch Nemo. **Martin** tries to get up to get a beer or his tobacco tin, but **Laurence** hugs him tight. He tries again. He's not going anywhere. **Gary** realises what he wants and passes it to him.*

**Laurence** is excited about a moment in the film.

**Gary** He loves this bit. Did you ever think about getting him a fish?

**Martin** We had a fish, he smashed the tank.

**Gary** Shit, was it OK?

**Martin** Yeah, I gave it CPR.

**Gary** Did you?

**Martin** No. It died.

**Gary** Did you have pets growing up?

**Martin** I did not have pets.

**Gary** Do you believe in reincarnation?

**Martin** Jesus, Gary, we're pulling out all the big guns tonight.

**Gary** Ever wonder about it?

**Martin** Reincarnation. Nope. I had an acid trip once where I was pretty sure that I'd cracked the universe and meaning of life but then got distracted by an orchid that was moving like an octopus.

**Gary** Understandable. It's just. I wonder about it.

**Martin** Right. What do you wonder?

**Gary** Well, sometimes I wonder.

**Martin** You do wonder don't you.

**Gary** If people with special needs are animals wrongly reincarnated into human form.

**Martin** Right.

**Gary** Because sometimes he seems so intuitive, it's like he's operating on another level . . .

**Martin** Wait, wait, go back to the animal thing.

**Gary** I mean, it's not . . .

**Martin** No, go on. Which animal?

**Gary** Well, Laurence in a lot of ways is a bit like a puppy.

**Martin** Wonderful! A puppy!

**Gary** He jumps about excitedly when he's happy to see you. He bites things.

**Martin** Shits wherever he wants.

**Gary** Exactly. He loves to be tickled, he's tactile. Sleeps a lot. Eats a lot. Doesn't really communicate all that well.

**Martin** And does this theory extend to all people with learning disabilities?

**Gary** I haven't really thought about it that much.

**Martin** Are you saying that quadriplegics are in fact not just people with the awful misfortune to be born doubly incontinent and unable to move any limb but are in fact slugs who strayed into the line for reincarnation to human form?

**Gary** It was just a thought.

**Martin** Word of advice. Never say that in public. Ever again

**Gary** Ok. I'm sorry.

**Martin** Possibly the most idiotic thing anyone has ever said since someone told Mr Kipling he could bake. At least they haven't been smooched yet.



**Gary** It's a matter of time. Do you think you should read the social story with him?

**Martin** Want to see something?

*He produces a box and opens it, it's the prototype Heart2Heart.*

**Gary** Is that?

**Martin** This is it. The empire Tam built.

**Gary** It does kind of look like a vibrator

**Martin** This'll be a laugh.

*He takes out the receiver; it's a red piece of plastic. He turns it on and it beeps.*

**Martin** It's alive!

**Gary** Won't she mind?

**Martin** Oh probably – don't tell her. Hey, Larry. Can Daddy have your hand?

**Laurence** *ignores him.*

**Martin** Can you get me his hand, mate?

**Gary** I'm not sure . . .

**Martin** Give me his hand, Gary.

**Gary** *slowly touches Laurence's hand and with slow movement*

**Martin** *slips the bracelet on to Laurence's arm. The device starts to beep in time with Laurence's heart and flash.*

**Gary** That's really cool!

**Martin** *looks at the device on Laurence's wrist and strokes his hand.*

**Martin** I don't think I know how to live without him. (*Beat.*) Silly isn't it. He has his routines and he freaks out if you take them away, loses his shit completely – so do we.

**Gary** He won't be far away.

40 All in a Row

**Martin** It's Darlington, mate, do you even know where that is?

**Gary** Up north?

**Martin** Two hundred miles up north.

**Gary** Jesus. Was there nowhere closer?

**Martin** Apparently not.

**Gary** Well, there's good train links.

**Martin** Save it.

**Gary** Sorry. I do think though, I think in time you'll realise . . .

**Martin** Realise what? That he's fucked. That he's expelled, sectioned, chemically lobotomised?

**Gary** I didn't say he would –

**Martin** You didn't have to, I'm not an idiot.

**Gary** I'm sorry I said that earlier.

**Martin** Don't be. At least someone isn't kidding themselves.

**Gary** He could really take to it.

**Martin** She needs to hear this.

**Gary** She doesn't.

**Martin** Don't tell me what my wife needs. I know what my wife needs.

**Gary** Sure. Sorry.

**Martin** So they're not allowed to hold doors?

**Gary** No.

**Martin** So what, they'd just let him run around biting people?

**Gary** If they can't get him an approved hold they'd have to.

**Martin** You'd think they'd just use common sense.

**Gary** Kids though, like Laurence, they're vulnerable.

**Martin** If he's biting people just get him in his room till he calms down, it's for his own good.

**Gary** I know but red tape isn't it.

**Martin** It's bollocks. Dark ages, we're in the dark ages.

**Gary** I worked for an agency once. They sent me to work with this woman who was a bit like Larry.

**Gary** She spent the first forty years in an institution. She had no teeth, mate. Back then, if kids bit then they pulled their teeth out. And she was sterilised, so she couldn't get pregnant.

**Martin** By the other patients?

**Gary** Or by the staff.

**Martin** Fuck.

**Gary** They're vulnerable.

**Martin** How do we know this school is any better?

**Gary** Red tape.

**Martin** Yeah but if that gets him kicked out.

**Gary** I didn't say there was an answer.

**Tamora enters.** **Martin** is worried about the residential schools and a bit pissed off with **Gary**.

**Martin** Lovely. Well this is a civilised night. Gary here was just telling me how he thinks our son is a puppy wrongly reincarnated into human form.

**Tamora** Really? Wouldn't that be strange. Never say that in public!

**Gary** No, believe me I won't.

**Tamora** *tries to make Martin jealous by bringing up Gary's love life.*

**Tamora** Did you know Gary is internet dating? He'd like to start a family.

**Martin** Really? That's brave. Doesn't all of this scare you? There's no tests, you know. Or scans, to see if they're . . .

**Gary** I know.

**Martin** We didn't know.

**Gary** I wouldn't mind.

**Tamora** (*Beat. Changing the subject again.*) Two police. They had him in with two police. You must have been scared, Gary.

**Martin** Of course he was scared. I was scared – weren't you?

**Tamora** Terrified.

**Gary** Yeah, it wasn't something I'd like to repeat.

**Martin** Did they ever ask –

**Tamora** 'They'?

**Martin** The police, or the social workers, did they ever ask about what you thought should be done for Laurence?

**Gary** Not really.

**Tamora** That's not fair, Martin.

**Martin** Not really? Something like that? Did they?

**Gary** They asked if I thought it was a good idea for him to remain with one-to-one care.

**Martin** And you said?

**Gary** I said I don't know.

**Martin** You don't know?

**Tamora** None of us do.

**Gary** I'm sorry I wasn't sure, I didn't want to say the wrong thing.

**Tamora** Quite right.

**Martin** (*backing down*) Fair enough, I suppose nothing any of us could say or do. For the best really.

**Tamora** They have horse riding there. Did I mention?

**Martin** I think you did, dear, yes.

**Tamora** He'll love that.

**Martin** Gary has concerns about residential schooling, don't you, Gary.

**Tamora** Really?

**Gary** Not concerns.

**Martin** Not concerns? No?

**Gary** Just square peg, round hole.

**Martin** Square peg? Larry, God love him, is a spiked dodecahedron peg.

**Gary** (*changing subject*) I was wondering. Are you going to give him a prototype?

**Tamora** Pardon?

**Gary** To take away – will you give him a prototype of your heart thing?

**Tamora** No. No he'd chew it. Besides it's stupid isn't it? I don't want to hear his heart beat when he's not with me. I'll hear it pound when he's upset and think he's in trouble or something.

**Gary** shoots a look to **Martin** – *they shouldn't have put it on*

**Laurence. Gary** tries to surreptitiously remove it but **Laurence** won't keep his hand still.

*Awkward silence.*

**Martin** People are quick to point out this problem with it.

**Tamora** My husband is quick to point out this problem with it.

**Martin** And the Apple watch.

**Tamora** Yes I know, the bloody Apple watch, but they still give me grants, don't they?

**Martin** In many ways I think it was a fine venture. Kept a roof over our heads.

**Tamora** Somebody had to.

**Martin** Ten years. It's amazing how long people will believe in something for such little return.

**Tamora** I believed in it at the start.

**Martin** And now?

**Tamora** It's a romantic notion overblown.

**Gary** I think he should go to bed soon.

**Tamora** Leave him till he puts himself to bed. He can choose tonight.

**Gary** I put his social story over there.

**Tamora** We ought to read it to him.

**Gary** It's probably a good idea.

**Tamora** One more glass of wine.

**Martin** I'll make sure his bed's made.

*He leaves.*

**Tamora** I'm sorry about him.

**Gary** Don't be silly. The amount of stress. Honestly. It's very understandable.

**Tamora** Stress. Our world is a study in life under stress.

**Gary** It must be hard.

**Tamora** He's terrified about life without Laurence.

**Gary** I know, it's a big change.

**Tamora** Can I tell you something awful?

**Gary** What?

**Tamora** I'm excited. A little bit. Is that wrong?

**Gary** Not at all.

**Tamora** I feel so bad every time I think about it. When I think that maybe it's not the worst thing for me. To wake up and not to have to be scared about what could happen if I play the day the wrong way. If the iPad runs out of battery. You know?

**Gary** It can be scary. Sometimes, I feel a little intimidated.

**Tamora** It's not wrong. And I love him I really do but he needs more than this, right? He needs horse riding. Right?

**Gary** It's going to be so good for him.

**Tamora** You had concerns?

**Gary** Nothing major – I told Martin, maybe ask him.

*Beat.*

**Tamora** Do you ever worry you might hate him?

**Gary** Not really. Laurence?

**Tamora** Because he's something that you can't control and he's there and he'll always be there and he'll always need looking after, even after you're dead, he'll be there on his own, and he's so vulnerable. How do you think that makes me feel?

**Gary** He won't be on his own. He'll never be . . .

**Tamora** But he won't be with me, will he?

**Gary** . . . Not always.

**Tamora** I'm sorry, Gary, you don't want to hear it. It's just none of my friends understand, really.

**Gary** I totally get it, Tam.

**Tamora** (*beat*) Tell me about your dating, Gary. Tell me about the women you're meeting. Are they fit?

**Gary** Yeah. Some of them.

**Tamora** Tell me, do you believe in love?

**Gary** I guess so.

**Tamora** Do you believe in karma?

**Gary** I've never thought about it.

**Tamora** Do you believe that we are punished for mistakes we've made?

**Gary** I don't. I believe shit happens to some people and we deal with it and that's the world. It's not always fair.

**Tamora** Do you think I'm a bad mother? Do I work too hard? Should I be sadder to see him go? Should I pull the hair of the social worker in the morning? Because I kind of want to. Does that make me sick? Should I snap my wine glass and put it through my eye?

**Gary** I think you're a great mother.

**Tamora** Do you think I'm attractive?

**Gary** Yeah I suppose so.

**Tamora** Do you speed date, Gary? If you were speed dating with me would you tick me?

**Gary** I don't know.

**Tamora** Would you tick me, Gary? Come on, I'm joking! Lighten up. Would you tick me?



**Gary** I guess. If I didn't know you.

**Tamora** On internet dating, Gary. Would you click me? Do you want to click me?

**Gary** This doesn't feel appropriate.

**Tamora** Would you get your mouse on me? Would you scroll me?

**Gary** I'm not sure.

**Tamora** Flick through my profile. Tick, flick, click? Would you?

**Gary** If it was appropriate.

**Tamora** Really? Want some news? Nothing ever feels appropriate in life. Nothing ever happens how you'd like it. Why don't you kiss me?

**Gary** I need to go now.

**Tamora** Kiss me. I'm your employer. Kiss me.

*She forces herself on him. He stands frozen.*

I was just having a bit of a laugh. Jeez. Gotta laugh haven't we. Haven't we?

**Gary** I hope it goes well tomorrow. Honestly, you have been a lovely family to work for.

**Tamora** You're not leaving. Please. I'm sorry about that. Sometimes I just feel like, what the heck. Do what you want to do. That's my advice to you. Don't waste a second.

**Gary** I'll contact you about how I can visit him.

**Tamora** Gary, please, you've been in our home two years.

**Gary** I'll be back, I just feel tonight you need space.

**Tamora** Sure. If you must. You must. Your cat. Can I get you a taxi?

**Gary** I'll be fine it's not too late.

**Martin** *heads back in.*

**Gary** I'm off, mate.

**Martin** No, surely not?

**Gary** I really need to hit the road. Thank you for everything.

**Tamora** Let the poor boy go, leave us to the mad house.

**Martin** You haven't watched the end of *Nemo* though, mate.

**Tamora** He has to get back to his cat!

**Martin** Laurence will miss you.

**Gary** Yeah, I'll miss him.

**Martin** Thanks for everything.

**Gary** You're welcome.

**Martin** Except having our son taken off us.

**Gary** Sorry?

**Martin** Yeah, not quite so grateful for that one.

**Tamora** Marty!

**Gary** I didn't do anything that would –

**Martin** No sure of course you didn't, why would the carer do it? I said it's fine anyway, totally understandable, you're covering your arse.

**Gary** I wasn't at all.

**Martin** And I wouldn't expect you to think about us for a second – after all you believe, what? They're all animals?

**Gary** I'm leaving.

**Martin** Yeah. Goodbye. I hope you know the gaping hole you have created in this family. Taking away my son. Our son – you have caused more damage in our household than Laurence ever has in his decade of destruction.

**Gary** I DIDN'T CALL SOCIAL SERVICES!

**Martin** Don't lie!

**Gary** I'm not!

**Martin** You are!

**Gary** I'm not lying!

**Martin** You are lying! Think I'm stupid? The social worker said it wasn't the school so who else could it be?!

**Gary** It wasn't me!

**Martin** You're lying.

**Gary** I'm not.

**Martin** You are!

**Tamora** I called them. It was me. Now leave him alone.

*Beat.*

**Martin** What?

**Tamora** I phoned them. We couldn't cope. We can't cope.

**Martin** What are you talking about? I don't understand.

**Tamora** Sound out the syllables

**Martin** We can cope perfectly! He has a wonderful life, he has a great life, Tam!

**Tamora** No he doesn't. He goes to school, he comes home and wades through a swamp of resentment just to get to the iPad to put on *Nemo* for the thousandth time. He sits and watches it over and over again. Is that a life?

**Martin** He's with his family where he belongs.

**Tamora** There is no shame in admitting we can't cope. We don't have to play happy families all day long. I am sick of looking at him and feeling guilty because I can't look after him – you know what that's fine!

**Martin** We can look after him.

**Tamora** No we can maintain him, keep him in clothes – it's not the same as giving him a life You know for the longest time the worst part of all this was I thought it was my fault. I believed in love so much, this romantic notion, but not with you. I never did, Martin. And I worried that every bad feeling, every betrayal, gathered and formed into negative energy and made him who he is.

**Martin** I love him how he is

**Tamora** So do I, he is the light of my life! The absolute light.

**Martin** We are a family.

**Tamora** Yes. Yes we are – but that's not enough.

**Laurence** *is becoming unsettled.*

**Martin** I love him and I love you.

**Tamora** Grow up.

**Martin** This is growing up? Having him taken away?

**Tamora** Yes. Because we can't cope!

**Martin** We can!

**Tamora** No we can't, why can't you see!

*Suddenly the Heart2Heart starts beeping in **Martin's** pocket.*

**Tamora** What is that?

**Martin** It's, I thought it was funny.

**Tamora** You didn't. My God you are such an idiot.

*The beat becomes faster and faster.*

**Martin** I always knew you cared more for this fucking invention – it's not even good, Tam. But I thought it could serve an actual purpose, what with your son leaving us.

**Tamora** You didn't think.

**Martin** You know you're right. I didn't think. I should have realised that our marriage is exactly the same as this piece of formed plastic you flog. You sold me the fucking lie.

**Tamora** Oh nice.

**Martin** Do you even love him?

**Tamora** How dare you ask me that.

**Martin** Do you ever play with him? Cos I do?

**Tamora** Of course I play with him!

**Martin** It seems all you ever do is work.

**Tamora** For Christ's sake, you can't go through life just playing.

**Martin** There it is.

**Tamora** There are no life skills to be found on the Xbox.

**Martin** I'm living.

**Tamora** Barely – all you do is smoke. You wonder why I don't want to fuck you – you smoke so much you can't get it up.

**Martin** As opposed to the alcohol.

**Tamora** I drink to drown you out.

**Gary** I think we should all just have a sit-down.

**Tamora** I drink to forget.

**Gary** Guys, it's upsetting Laurence.

**Martin** You stay out of this.

**Tamora** Don't speak to Gary like that.

**Martin** Oh, great, stick up for the carer.

**Tamora** At least he has a job, at least he can get laid, at least he can control Laurence.

**Martin** I shat on your pillows.

**Tamora** What!

**Gary** What!

**Martin** Yeah, I shat on your pillows! It was me! Like son like father. And you know what I'm fucking glad I did. I didn't know why it felt so good at the time. But it did. It felt fantastic!

**Tamora** You turn my stomach.

**Martin** You turned your back on us.

**Tamora** You don't deserve me.

**Martin** You don't deserve children.

*The beeping from **Laurence's** Heart2Heart has been getting faster and faster till he loses his cool and attacks **Tamora**. Both **Martin** and **Gary** wrestle him off her for a long time.*

**Martin** Are you alright?

**Tamora** Yes. No worse than last time.

**Martin** I'll get his meds.

**Tamora** You can go, Gary.

**Gary** I don't mind staying if he's still upset.

**Tamora** Don't be silly, get going. Let me pay for your taxi.

*She takes out a fifty-pound note.*

**Gary** That's too much.

**Tamora** Take it.

**Gary** Thanks. I'll keep in touch.

**Martin** Thanks, mate.

**Gary** See ya then.

**Martin** You got my number, if you ever want to see a film. Call.

**Gary** (*lying*) Sure. Good luck. Bye, little man, I'm gonna miss you.

**Martin** Say bye bye, Laurence. Bye.

*They watch Laurence for a second. Nothing. Gary leaves. They sit speechless in the aftermath for a while.*

**Tamora** He's cut his lip. Do we have ice?

**Martin** I'll get some.

**Tamora** Thanks.

*He gets some ice and gives it to her. She lovingly puts it on Laurence's lip.*

**Tamora** Can you get him a drink?

**Martin** Coming right up.

**Tamora** Thanks.

**Martin** Orange juice?

**Tamora** Diluted.

**Martin** Got it. (*Beat.*) Are you sure you're not hurt.

**Tamora** I'm fine.

**Martin** He's calmer now.

**Tamora** He is. Calm. Angelic even.

**Martin** I know you love him.

**Tamora** More than anything in the world.

**Martin** I've thought it too. You know. I don't beat myself up about it.

**Tamora** What's that?

**Martin** You can love someone and wonder what it would be like if they were someone else. That's OK.

**Tamora** I know.

*She picks up the social story.*

**Martin** I can't read him that story.

**Tamora** We have to.

**Martin** It will kill me.

**Tamora** It's not about you.

*She goes to sit with **Laurence** and give him his drink. **Martin** watches lovingly.*

**Martin** I'm sorry.

**Tamora** What?

**Martin** Don't make me say it twice. If I could have done anything.

**Tamora** Hindsight is . . .

**Martin** In the beginning. In the park.

**Tamora** The park?

**Martin** Yeah, you remember.

**Tamora** It was a long time ago.

**Martin** Richmond Park. It was sunny.

**Tamora** Sunny? I remember I was cold.

**Martin** It was July. How don't you? And. By the fountain.

**Tamora** In Richmond Park? A fountain?

**Martin** When I kissed you.

*Beat.*

**Tamora** I do remember. (*To **Laurence**.*) When you were born and they put you in my arms. (*Back to **Martin**.*) And we were children. Two kids in a hospital room clinging on to another kid.



**Martin** What happened?

**Tamora** I grew up. Do you think it'll be ok?

*Beat.*

**Martin** They do have horses.

**Tamora** Making that call was the hardest thing I've ever done.

**Martin** Harder than marrying me?

**Tamora** I knew you'd hate me.

**Martin** I know why you did it.

**Tamora** Good.

**Martin** I don't think I'll ever forgive you.

**Tamora** I didn't think you would. I did it anyway. Because it was right for him.

*Pause.*

**Tamora** I don't know.

**Martin** Will he be ok?

**Tamora** I don't know.

**Martin** Will we be ok?

**Tamora** I do want you to be happy you know.

**Martin** I know.

**Tamora** Gary had concerns?

**Martin** What?

**Tamora** About Ridgemount, concerns?

**Martin** Oh yeah.

**Tamora** What were they?

**Martin** He thought –

**Tamora** Were they bad?

**Martin** He (*Beat.*) he worried it would get expensive, all that travelling for us.

**Tamora** That was it?

**Martin** Yeah, stupid really. I told him we had it covered.

**Tamora** He's a sweet guy.

**Martin** Yeah, he thinks it'll be the making of Larry.

**Tamora** I hope so.

*She picks up the social story and puts it in front of **Laurence** who is calmer. **Martin** is slouched on them.*

**Tamora** Laurence has one more sleep at Mummy and Daddy's house and it is ok. Laurence will be moving to Ridgemount Farm where he will have a new home. Mummy and Daddy will come and visit Laurence once a month. Laurence will have a new life at Ridgemount and will live with his friend. This is ok. Look, a picture of the horses. Laurence will have lessons at Ridgemount. This is Ridgemount, it's ok.

*She takes **Martin**'s hand and they watch the final scene of Finding Nemo as a family.*

*The end.*





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