

CAUTIONARY TALE

A new musical about growing up and growing glum

Book and Lyrics by Rebecca Atkinson-Lord
Music by Rebecca Applin

With additional material by Mark Iles

Bonus Scene The Black Dog

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Cautionary Tale is a show about finding hope and spreading joy when all seems lost. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we've lost our chance, for the time being, to work on developing the show as we had planned but we'd still like to share the joy.

For a limited time, we're sharing extracts from the score, lyrics and script of *Cautionary Tale* online so you can get a flavour of this show by reading, rehearsing and performing some of it in your own home.

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In the first instance, all licensing enquiries should be directed to Rachel Daniels at Berlin Associates racheld@berlinassociates.com.

NARRATOR:

Our awful adults are riding high on their ponies of self-righteousness. It would seem, wouldn't it, that they know all the answers? That they never felt the flutterings of mischief or remarkableness. It would seem, to the casual observer that the adults of Gloaming never strain against their civic cage, that they never ache for a moment of delight. That they never need Keeping Safe.

Yes. It would seem that way indeed.

But, as any sweet old granny will tell you – things aren't always what they seem.

There is one place that the children of Gloaming have never managed to set foot. The Awful Adults have fiercely guarded the only place where any of them really feel truly happy and like all children, the more forbidden something is, the more curious they become. But try as they might to penetrate its mysteries, no child has ever seen the inside of The Black Dog, an establishment shrouded in a fug of forgetfulness that is known to sell magic draughts in the finest tradition of quiet inebriation.

The interior of The Black Dog is revealed. It's a pub of infinite cosiness and welcome. It is lit by hundreds of candles, glowing warmly. This is the only place in Gloaming where the colours still gleam and in the fireplace a roaring fire chases away the shadows that hang on the town. It's as though this is where all the hope and joy has come to hide. It's busy. All of the adults are here. Apart from the SAFE KEEPER. She's probably stalking around outside looking for joy to crush.

FRED, the proprietor, and JUDE WORSELMAN, his girlfriend, are bustling about stoking the fire, pouring drinks and generally being excellent hosts. Somewhere, there's someone with a fiddle playing some sort of folksong. Over the chatter, FRED sings.

[SONG: A LITTLE BIT OF WHAT YOU NEED]

FRED:
Light the candles
Pour the beer
A little bit of laughter here

A little bit of what you need
Does you good

When times are hard
And you feel bad
And all your joy
Has turned to sad

A little bit of what you need
Does you good

AUNT WORSELMAN:
You're what I need
To make me smile
To hear your laughter for a while

FRED:
A little bit of what you need
Does you good

AUNT WORSELMAN:
The kids will grow
Just wait for when
Our lives can be our own again

FRED:
One day my love
You'll be my wife
One day at last
We'll live our life

BOTH:
The day will come
We have to trust
That we'll be free
And more than just

A little bit of what we need
Will do us good

So light the candles
Pour the beer
Find hope where there was only fear

A little bit of what you need
Does you good

FRED is talking to the DOCTORS BITTINGWORTH as he goes about his business. They are very clearly old friends.

FRED: You're joking! So what did you do?

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE BARRISTER: *(Laughing)* What could we do? We had to call the zoo and apologise.

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE DOCTOR: They were quite nice about it. Considering.

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE BARRISTER: Although there was some difficulty over the cleaning bill. Apparently Borage has a laxative effect in pachiderms.

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE DOCTOR: *(fighting back a grin)* The poor keeper.

FRED laughs, and for a moment the world glows brighter.

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE DOCTOR: On the whole it was much less trouble than fishing my car out of the river. And at least we don't have any more pets they can squash.

UNCLE WORSELMAN: *(Spotting an opportunity)* And I bet you've lots of lovely fertiliser for the roses!

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE DOCTOR: More than we could ever use. Come and help yourself Titus.

UNCLE WORSELMAN *is very pleased.*

FRED: (Serious now) And she hasn't done anything?

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE BARRISTER: We don't think she knows. Apparently Gertie's kids were up to some nonsense with lightning bolts at about the same time so we think we're safe.

FRED: Lightning bolts Gert?

FRAULEINE FISHBUCKET: Don't talk about it Fred. We're lucky she didn't take them away for Safe Keeping.

AUNT WORSELMAN: This is the second time isn't it?

FRAU FISHBUCKET: The third. There was a car crash a while back. Maeve lost her temper. Sometimes, I just don't think I can carry on.

LT. TROCKLE: Little Maeve? But she's only so big *(indicating with his hand)*. She's just a little girl.

AUNT WORSELMAN: Little girls have big emotions Cyril. And you know it's always worse when they feel things.

FRAULEINE FISHBUCKET: They just have to learn not to feel so much then don't they?

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE BARRISTER: It hardly seems fair though. Stopping them... well. Living. Does it?

FRED: It's not just them it stops from living though is it?

FRAULEINE FISHBUCKET: We learned how to be safe. And it was the best thing for us.

LADY TROCKLE: Quite right. They need to learn how to get on.

MRS HAMINGTON: And it is safer this way. Remember that boy who died? Sebastian Something? His poor mother. It's much safer nowadays.

AUNT WORSELMAN: Is it? Do you feel safe?

The Awful Adults all shift uncomfortably

I think it's got worse with time. Our granny used to say that it was never like this before. And even when we were kids... You remember? Arthur? Fred?

FRED: *(Mock serious)* I don't know what you mean Jude. I have always been the model citizen you see before you.

MR HAMMINGTON: *(Possibly spitting out his beer with a laugh).* Model citizen?

FRED: That's right Arthur. I can't weave a spell with my music like you or move things with my eyes the way Elijah can. And I never threw lightning bolts at a teacher like you Emeline. Nor made my girlfriend fly like you Gertie. And the only time I went climbing with Cyril, I got stuck about six feet up and cried so much they had to call my mum to come and fetch me.

AUNT WORSELMAN: And yet you've borne it with such good humour.

FRED: Just a little chuckle to lighten the mood. Where's the harm in that?

LT. TROCKLE: Little chuckle? It was your laugh that gave me the courage to ask Rose to marry me. And look where that got me!

LADY TROCKLE: Cyril!

Everyone laughs. As Fred laughs, the room brightens. Like a ripple of joy emanating from him.

FRED: Careful Cyril – without Rose to guide you through life you'd be lost!

LT.TROCKLE: *(Kissing her)* Quite right indeed.

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE BARRISTER: And after the twins were born, I just wanted to run away. If you hadn't come round with those teddy bears to make us all laugh, I never would have been able to keep going.

DOCTOR BITTINGWORTH THE DOCTOR: So that elephant is at least partly your fault Fred! I'll expect you bright and early with a shovel!

Fred laughs again and the room glows bright.

FRED: That hardly seems fair!

FRAULEINE FISHBUCKET: Remember when I first fell in love with Emmy and she kept flying off into the clouds without knowing why? I was so embarrassed. But when I told you how I felt about her and what was happening you laughed so hard that it gave me hope.

FRAU FISHBUCKET: I miss flying.

FRULEINE FISHBUCKET: You know it isn't (that I don't love you)... I just can't let myself (feel it).

FRAU FISHBUCKET: I know. I just miss it.

There's a moment where they all think about what they miss.

FRAULEINE FISHBUCKET: We were just kids.

AUNT WORSELMAN: So are they. But we're crushing them just the same. *(Beat)* What do you think they'll remember when they're our age?

DR BITTINGWORTH THE DOCTOR: Well, my daughters will probably laugh about the time Daddy had to dig through a pile of elephant dung to get to the front door.

Laughter again. The room glistens.

[SONG: THE BLACK DOG JIG]

MR HAMINGTON:
Remember how it went Fred
The good times that we spent Fred
How can so many years have gone
There's far too many wrinkles on
This handsome face

FRED:
But I still see a trace

Of who we used to be
It's always you and me

MR HAMINGTON:
Remember when
Elijah lifted us so high
That you got sick on Gladys and
Puke rained down from the sky?

DR BITTINGWORTH THE BARRISTER:
Oh Arthur don't embellish
The old times with such relish
And then forget the time we met...

FRED:
You owe dear Jude here quite a debt
She saved your life

MR HAMINGTON:
It's time she was your wife
She's loved you far too long...
Have I said something wrong?

DR BITTINGWORTH THE DOCTOR:
The time when Titus grew those
Trees with leaves of gold

LADY TROCKLE:
The gleaming trees of Gloaming were
So wondrous to behold.

LT. TROCKLE:
The time you threw that lightning
Was really something frightening

FRAU FISHBUCKET:
More scary than the time you fell
Whilst trying to climb the citadel?

MRS HAMINGTON:
We nearly died a hundred thousand times
But god it was such fun
Our lives had just begun

MR HAMINGTON:
The things we did

When we were careless, young and free
That laugh of yours still echoes round
Every happy memory

One by one, the children seep out of doorways from where they've been spying on their parents. Or, perhaps, the adults suddenly become children and the scene flips to show them spying on their older selves.

NARRATOR:

It's a curious truth that no one can ever quite imagine their parents as children. As the remarkable young people of Gloaming watched their parents glowing with hope for the first time in their young lives, they saw the tiniest flicker of what once might have been.

[SONG: JUST LIKE US]

DRAFT