

CAUTIONARY TALE

A new musical about growing up and growing glum

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Music by Rebecca Applin

With additional material by Mark Iles

Script extract 1: The Trockles

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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Lady and Lieutenant Trockle sit on their dark wooden dining-thrones in a darkly draped dining room. Their home reflects the unique talents of the various members of the family: climbing ropes, antique crampons, maps of mountains, maps generally, compasses, etc etc... Perhaps there's an overabundance of woven or knotted things – lace doilies, macramé plantpot holders, tapestries, embroidery, knitting. Perhaps the children all wear clothing carefully knotted and knitted from wool and string.

The Trockle adults sit very still and very straight. Almost as though they are frozen in place. Think the Angelica Houston Addams Family meets American Gothic. Around them, the Trockle children scurry like monkeys, they are full of fidget and energy. They climb curtains to knot the brocade tassels together, then they knot the curtains to the table cloth. They tie their father's bootlaces together without him knowing. They tie their mother's intricate braids to the back of her chair. They knot ribbons and string and rope and wires and chains across the room like a web. Maybe there's even a knotted hosepipe in there somewhere. The Trockle dog (Tatty) is a ball of dreadlocks and braids. The children are a flurry of movement. When everything they can possibly knot is tied, they turn to each other and, in a circle, begin to braid each other's hair into complicated lattices and nets.

LT. TROCKLE:

And so I said to him "You can't just keep laughing like that, willy nilly. It puts us all in danger". Well. That showed him and I think that going forwards/...

LADY TROCKLE: Yes, very good dear. Well done.

LT. TROCKLE: Yes, going forwards I think that/...

LADY TROCKLE: Was Jude there did you say?

LT. TROCKLE: Jude?...

LADY TROCKLE: Jude Worselman dear. You know (*gesturing*) with the hair?

LT. TROCKLE: Hair? No, I...

LADY TROCKLE: You know she and Fred...

About now, one of the Trockle Tots starts weaving their own hair to the dog.

[SONG: THE TROCKLE'S TALE]

As the Trockles sing, The Baron, in full scouting regalia and his lady-love appear. They dance a tango intently, sexily, dangerously, until she tumbles down to her death with a bright blue scarf trailing from her throat to his hand.

LADY & LT. TROCKLE SING:

LADY TROCKLE:
Stop doing that! It drives me potty
To comb out tangles in hair so knotty
Good children should be smooth and sleek

LT. TROCKLE:
Mild mannered, kind, well dressed and meek
With hands employed in useful work
Not tied up with some silly quirk
For knotting string all day and night

LADY TROCKLE:
And tying ribbons much too tight

Stop doing that!
Stop doing that!

BOTH:
We prayed it wouldn't come to this
When we first entered wedded bliss
But when the stork at last arrived
That spiteful, wretched bird contrived
To bring us little Marigold
In awful Baron Trockle's mould –

LADY TROCKLE:
You know the Baron don't you dears?
Well just like him, you'll end in tears.

LT. TROCKLE:
Like you, he twirled and pulled and twined
And when corrected often whined

THE BARON:
"I cannot keep my fingers still!
I have to knot for good or ill!"

LADY TROCKLE:
Stop doing that!
Stop doing that!

LT. TROCKLE:
At first he hoped he'd found his calling
As Head Boyscout

LADY TROCKLE:
(Oh! How appalling!)

LT. TROCKLE:
With Bowline, Boom Hitch, Boa knot
Dog shank and Windsor, he knew the lot
But ill he brought, without a doubt
When once he'd met the Chief Girl Scout
They fell in love – two hearts entwine
But here, let me please underline
That there's no happy ending here

LADY TROCKLE:
(STOP FIDGETING! That's better dear!)

LT. TROCKLE:
He loved to plait her long blonde hair
And weave adornments with great care
That lovingly she wore. Please note
That one she wrapped around her throat.

LADY TROCKLE :
A long, thin scarf of azure hue
To match her girl-scout dress of blue

LT. TROCKLE:
But one day walking with his dear
Beloved wife, on Wigan pier
The waves had crashed upon the wood
The floor more slippy than rightly should
Have been allowed.

LADY TROCKLE:
(But let's not dwell)

LT. TROCKLE:
You see my dears she slipped and fell
And reaching out to save his love
He caught her scarf from up above
And there beneath the pier she dangled;

LADY TROCKLE:
You see she'd been completely strangled!

As the song ends, the Trockle children have been uncharacteristically still and attentive for a moment as Johnny surreptitiously reaches under his father's chair.

LADY TROCKLE: My dears, you must stop this silliness. Or the most terrible things will happen to you. And mummy and daddy wont be able to do a thing to help!

LT. TROCKLE: Yes! I think going forwards/ we'll (have to put a stop to this..)

LADY TROCKLE: Now off to bed with you!

LT.TROCKLE: *(Standing to usher the children out to bed)* Yes, chop chop, up the wooden hill now...

Knowing what is about to happen, the children run off in pursuit of more things to tie. Their father striding after them trips and falls, pulling the table cloth and all manner of dining detritus down upon himself. Tatty the dog starts yapping in excitement as LADY TROCKLE screeches at her husband.

LADY TROCKLE: Oh, do stop being silly Cyril!

LT. TROCKLE: I'm at the end of my rope with this nonsense Rose!

LADY TROCKLE: Well they're your children – all this rope business comes from your side. I'm shattered myself.

LT. TROCKLE: My side? No that's not on etc etc etc...

The TROCKLE adults continue to bicker as they untangle themselves and exit. (A prize for the performer who improvises the best string/tangle related pun¹.)

¹ To be clear – that prize is the joy of the audience. Don't expect a box of chocolates.