

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 Just Like Us

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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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...

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]

EDISON:

Just like us
Tonight they sound just like us
Unburdened from their life of woes
No nasty stories or 'I say sos'
They're just themselves
No right or wrong
They're in the skins where they belong

THE CHILDREN:

We hear them in their secret place
We see the laughter on each face
Each time they leave, each time they sigh
Each time they have to say goodbye
To the place where they feel young
To the place they can feel safe among
The others who are just like them

Their laughter peels back all the years
of hard work, sadness and the fears
That life's a let down at its best
That disappointment once confessed
Is hard to shake. And though we know
That they've chosen how their lives should go

They've forgotten, now, that once they lived

Just like us
Tonight they sound just like us
Unburdened from their life of woes
No nasty stories or 'I say sos'
They're just themselves
No right or wrong
They're in the skins where they belong

Their song is interrupted by a siren (think air raid warning or the nuclear attack signal from the 50s) and the SAFE KEEPER's pre recorded voice is heard from loud speakers across the town. It's oddly cheery in tone:

RECORDING:

It's 10pm and time we were all safely tucked up in bed. Please return to your homes. Remember, a sleeping town is a safe town.
Anyone remaining outside will be taken to the Citadel for Safe Keeping.
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Anyone remaining outside will be taken to the Citadel for Safe Keeping.

AUNT WORSELMAN: Already?

The happy scene starts to dissolve as the adults begin to hurry home.

DR BITTINGWORTH THE DOCTOR: I swear it gets earlier every night.

MRS HAMINGTON: Come on Arthur, drink up!

MR HAMINGTON: *(Who has just settled down to a new pint)* Just finishing my drink Gladys!

MRS HAMINGTON: *(With a hint of seemingly disproportional panic.)* There's no time for that! Come on!

FRAULEINE FISHBUCKET: Goodnight everyone!

FRED: Gertie. Emeline.

LADY TROCKLE: Be good Fred! We'll see you next week.

FRED: Good? I'll be positively angelic.

FRED chuckles and the lights twinkle once more. LT. TROCKLE opens the door for the FISHBUCKETS and a cold wind blows in, making the twinkling candles gutter and go out. Now, with just the fire for light, everything suddenly looks sinister. A beat as everyone feels themselves shudder quietly. Before the TROCKLES and FISHBUCKETS hurry away calling their goodnights as they go.

DR BITTING WORTH THE HEADTEACHER: *(Trying to conceal a sense of unease)* Time to shake a leg I think.

MRS HAMINGTON: Come on Arthur!

UNCLE WORSELMAN: Shall I pop round tomorrow? For the uh...

DR BITTINGWORTH THE DOCTOR: Mountain of elephant dung? Yes. You'll need a wheelbarrow or two.

DR BITTINGWORTH THE HEADTEACHER: *(As they hurry out the door)* Or ten! Goodnight!

UNCLE WORSELMAN: Ten! Excellent! I'll be there first thing.

FRED: Sweet dreams Elijah. You too Elizabeth.

MRS HAMINGTON: *(To her husband who has just opened a packet of pork scratchings)* Arthur, enough. We need to go.

FRED: Go on Arthur. Gladys is waiting.

UNCLE WORSELMAN and MRS HAMINGTON are waiting in the doorway with their coats on.

AUNT WORSELMAN: *(Leaning over the bar to kiss Fred on the nose)* Goodnight Fred. See you tomorrow. Arthur. Come on now.

She takes MR HAMINGTON by the arm and pulls him to the door. Where MRS HAMINGTON takes his other arm. Together they lead him unsteadily away.

FRED: Goodnight Arthur. Hope your head isn't too bad in the morning!

MR HAMINGTON: I don't see why we have to go so early. This is the only happy place we have left.

MRS HAMINGTON: Because it's not safe Arthur. You know why.

[SONG: THE BLACK DOG JIG cont...]

MR HAMINGTON: *(Sings)*
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

But still I see a trace
Of who we used to be
It's always you and me

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

Behind them, FRED laughs and the candles flicker back into life.

The children watch their parents leave, amazed at the secret selves they've seen them reveal. Somehow, the Black Dog Jig blurs into Just Like Us.

[SONG: JUST LIKE US cont...]

THE CHILDREN:
Just like us
Tonight they sound Just like us
Unburdened from their life of woes
No nasty stories or 'I say sos'
They're just themselves
No right or wrong
They're in the skins where they belong

Here in the dark, in dead of night
Far out of hearing, out of sight
They let themselves become once more
The people they were destined for
They feel at last what might have been
Before they learned how NOT to dream
Their future at their own command

Though when the grey-dawn comes at last
No matter what, that night, has passed
They shrink themselves once more within
Their adult selves. And so begin

To tutor us in how to be
Glum grown-ups with no sense of glee
And so the generations pass

EDISON:

Just like us
For once they were just like us
But if that's true then soon we'll be
Just like them. No more you and me

THE CHILDREN:

We'll teach our children with each song
The difference between right and wrong
And we'll forget where we belong.

DRAFT