

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 4: The Hamingtons

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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Mr Hamington leaves the Black Dog and wanders home. The Hamington household is preparing for FRED's memorial service tomorrow morning.

Mr Hamington (the butcher) is very upset and flustered so Mrs Hamington is helping him make the day's sausages. Perhaps there's a sense of forced 'soldiering on'. The children have been asked to help too but they may not quite be achieving 'helpful'.

Like many couples, the Hamingtons have developed an irritating habit of talking in questions. Their sons instinctively supply the answer to every question. It's not a big thing, it's just what they do, under their breath, all the time. It means that there's always a sort of hubbub under the scene and the whole thing feels a bit overwhelming.

When not otherwise distracted, the children ask each other questions pulled from quiz show cards (think trivial pursuit). The questions should be very difficult and esoteric. They know every answer. The children's questioning of each other becomes almost obsessive and the noise builds until, as the song begins, the parents can barely hear each other. Again, a (metaphorical) prize for the performer who improvises the most esoterically fascinating question and answer.

MRS HAMINGTON has been keeping herself busy. As MR HAMINGTON enters the kitchen she crumbles at his evident grief.

MRS HAMINGTON: (*Sotto voce so the children can't hear*) It's true then?

MR HAMINGTON: Did you really believe it wasn't?

MRS HAMINGTON: What's wrong with a bit of hope?

MRS HAMINGTON: What do I do now Gladys?

MRS HAMINGTON: (*Back to normal volume*) Have you called Rose back dear?

AUGUSTUS: He hasn't. He's scared of her.

MR HAMINGTON: Did she call?

EDISON: Twice. Mum was annoyed.

MRS HAMINGTON: Didn't you see my message?

AUGUSTUS: I doubt it. She didn't leave one.

MR HAMINGTON goes out to retrieve the message

MR HAMINGTON: Where did you leave it?

CASSIUS: Nowhere. She forgot to write it down.

MRS HAMINGTON: Isn't it on the telephone table?

EDISON: Not likely.

MR HAMINGTON: Have the boys moved it?

AUGUSTUS: We haven't seen it.

MRS HAMINGTON: Have you checked on the notepad?

CASSIUS: He hasn't.

MR HAMINGTON: Owch!

MR HAMINGTON returns with his finger held aloft – there's a small papercut

MRS HAMINGTON: What have you done?

CASSIUS: He's cut himself.

MR HAMINGTON: Can't you see?

CASSIUS: She's lost her glasses.

MRS HAMINGTON: Is it a papercut?

AUGUSTUS: Yes. He's a wimp.

MR HAMINGTON: Why does it hurt so much?

CASSIUS: Because of the density of nerves in the skin of the fingers.

MR HAMINGTON: How am I supposed to cope?

EDISON: By managing your emotions through meditation and grief counselling.

CASSIUS: Or a plaster. That'll help.

MR HAMINGTON: I never thought it'd be Fred. I've known him since... and now this? Why God? Why?

AUGUSTUS: Because a central divine plan is just an illusion mankind has created to save itself from despair.

MRS HAMINGTON: Jude must be devastated. Have you seen her?

AUGUSTUS: No.

MR HAMINGTON: I knocked. But no answer.

MRS HAMINGTON: Do you want a brandy? To help calm your nerves?

EDISON: He'd prefer a gin.

MR HAMINGTON: Is there any?

EDISON: No. She drank it all on Boxing Day.

MRS HAMINGTON: Didn't we buy some at Christmas?

EDISON: They did. Four bottles.

MRS HAMINGTON: Are these supposed to be chipolata or cumberland?

CASSIUS: Cocktail actually.

MR HAMINGTON: What did they order?

CASSIUS: Definitely cocktail.

MR HAMINGTON: Do you think my suit will still fit?

EDISON: Unlikely.

MRS HAMINGTON: Are the boys still playing that awful game?

AUGUSTUS: Yes. And it's not awful.

MR HAMINGTON: Have you told them to stop?

EDISON: Yes. Seventeen times this evening actually.

MR HAMINGTON: *(With head in a cupboard or trunk searching for his suit)* If you know she's told you seventeen times, why have you not stopped?

MRS HAMINGTON: Sorry Arthur?

[SONG: THE HAMINGTON'S LAMENT]

Throughout this song, the Hamington children continue to answer every question their parents ask.

MRS HAMINGTON:
What did you say dear?
What did you say?
Oh children will you put those cards away.

MR HAMINGTON:
Is that the Sage?
Have you put it in?
Oh boys! Please stop all that awful din!

Have you ironed my shirt?
Where's my funeral suit?
The pain in my heart? Now it feels quite acute.

MRS HAMINGTON:
Is the suit out of mothballs?
Does it even fit?
Did you get the mustard stain out of it?

BOTH:
He's gone
Hope
No Hope
No Hope
He's gone

MR HAMINGTON:
We needed his laugh
I needed his beer

MRS HAMINGTON:
Have you thought what to say at the eulogy dear?

MR HAMINGTON:
What can I say love?
About dear old Fred?
She said "For Safe Keeping" can that really mean dead?

MRS HAMINGTON:
Safe Keeping's the thing
That she does always say
Whenever she takes our beloved's away

And they never come back
So what do we know?

MR HAMINGTON:
Why do all the people we love seem to go?

BOTH:
He's gone
Hope
No Hope
No Hope
He's gone

The boys boisterous game leads to a small tussle, knocking over a chair.

MRS HAMINGTON:
Can you please be more careful?
What started this brawl?
Do you ever consider your actions at all?

The boys loudly object to being told off again.

Throughout this next section, the Hamington Sisters appear. They are very clearly witches. There are books and herbs and a cauldron.

MR HAMINGTON:
You've too many answers
Inside of your head
You know it just fills up my stomach with dread

That you'll end like my aunties
They knew everything
But where did it get them? Inside of a ring

Of blood-sausage made from
Their brilliant brains
No good comes to children who take such great pains

To show off their knowledge
To always be right
They thought they knew everything, yet late one night

A posse of blood thirsty villagers appear, wielding pitchforks and flaming torches and as they sweep around the Hamington Sisters, the women disappear in puffs of smoke.

The villagers, sick of their

know-it-all smarts
Came forward with pitchforks and hate in their hearts

MRS HAMINGTON:
They ducked them, as witches
On the witch-drowning seat
And ground up their bodies into sausage meat

MRS HAMINGTON:
It's a good lesson really
They learned just in time
That being too clever is simply a crime

So silence your cleverness
Get it wrong when you can
Or else you might end in someone's frying pan.

The posse of angry villagers somehow becomes a procession of mourners. As MR & MRS HAMINGTON join the procession, the NARRATOR presents the HAMINGTON BOYS with an ancient leather-bound book, wrapped in scarlet ribbon, that clearly contains all the wisdom of the ages. The boys immediately begin to squabble over who gets to read it first.

In the shadows, the Safe Keeper appears. She watches them.