



# EVERYWHERE

Nicky Bellenger

# **Everywhere**

**by Nicky Bellenger**

**Commissioned by Derby Theatre**

**Co-created with attendees to Derby Theatre and Universal Services for Carers'  
'Carers' Café' and members of Derby Theatre's Youth Theatre**

A play for young people

**July 2023**

# Everywhere

Roo's 13th birthday is approaching, but in the build up to the big day, something's not right at home. On the night mum disappears, Roo is convinced his parents are splitting up. But then there's a letter from the hospital, and three words turn the whole family's world upside down: 'Young-onset Alzheimer's'.

Cast size 10-30

Most suitable for ages 11+

## Creative team

Writer/Facilitator

Nicky Bellenger

Dramaturg/Facilitator

Simon Marshall

Youth Theatre Assistant

Amy Lambton

Senior Producer, for Derby Theatre

Stuart Allen

Cover design

Fluid Ideas

## Introduction

Dementia is a subject very close to my heart. Two of my grandparents lived with it and I have got to know many people living with the disease throughout my career to date. I am also a volunteer Dementia Friends Ambassador with the Alzheimer's Society, and when delivering information sessions to children and young people I have observed how capable, and willing, they are to talk about this disease. And yet, in 2023, there is still so much fear, stigma and misunderstanding surrounding dementia.

Although this is a play for young people to perform, I hope it will help adults to learn more about dementia too. Most of all, I hope it will help people to talk openly; to see people living with dementia in a positive light; to help people to live well with the disease, and to have hope for the future.

I would love to hear about your production. You can contact me at [nickybellenger@gmail.com](mailto:nickybellenger@gmail.com)

*N.B*

## **Acknowledgements**

This play could not have been written without the care, commitment, and guidance of the members of the Carers' Café at Derby Theatre. The café is attended by people living with dementia and their carers, who have advised on the content of the script from the very beginning of its creation. Heartfelt thanks to all members, and to Universal Services for Carers, who the café is delivered in partnership with.

Thanks to the members of Derby Theatre's Youth Theatre who, under the expert guidance of Simon Marshall, became incredibly invested dramaturgs and pushed an early draft of the play to a version I could not possibly have imagined alone. You give me hope.

This level of co-creation would not have been possible without funding from Arts Council England. Thanks also to Talking Birds, who provided valuable free residency space during the research and development phase of the project.

And sincere gratitude to Derby Theatre, who believed in the potential of this play from day one, investing funds, time, and space throughout its development. I am grateful that they continue to provide much needed support to people living with dementia and their loved ones through the Carers' Café.

[www.derbytheatre.co.uk](http://www.derbytheatre.co.uk)

[www.derbycarers.co.uk](http://www.derbycarers.co.uk)

## **Further information and support**

Attending a **Dementia Friends** information session with your cast and creative team will help you to understand more about dementia and how to support people living with the disease. Dementia Friends is an Alzheimer's Society initiative:

**[www.dementiafriends.org.uk](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk)**

**Alzheimer's Society:** [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

**Young Dementia Network:** [www.youngdementianetwork.org](http://www.youngdementianetwork.org)

**Dementia UK:** [www.dementiauk.org](http://www.dementiauk.org)

**Carers UK:** [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

For Young Carers:

**Carers Trust:** [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)

**Children's Society:** [www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/young-people/young-carers](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/young-people/young-carers)

**Action for Children:** [www.actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/children-and-families/young-carers/](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/children-and-families/young-carers/)

**Barnardos:** [www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/young-carers](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/young-carers)

**This play is available for youth theatres and schools to perform for free,** with thanks to the support of Derby Theatre and Arts Council England. If you have funds reserved for performance rights, we recommend donating them to a dementia charity of your choice.

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'I believe in kindness. Also in mischief. Also in singing, especially when singing is not necessarily prescribed.'

*Mary Oliver*

For Brenda and Mavis.

## **Cast size**

10-30

## **Characters**

(In order of appearance)

**ROO** - turns 13 in the play

### **FUTURE SCIENTISTS**

**JAMES** - younger Dad

**STELLA** - younger Mum

**MUM** - present day

**DAD** - present day

**SPUD** - the family dog

**GLADYS** - Roo's elderly neighbour

**PIP** - Roo's best friend

**ANNE** - Mum's friend from work

### **DOCTOR**

### **PIP'S MUM**

### **PIP'S MAMA**

**LUCA** - choir leader

**GROUP LEADER** - Young Carers' group

**GROUP ADMINISTRATOR** - Young Carers' group

**JAKE BARNES** - School bully

**TWIN 1** - Young Carers' group

**TWIN 2** - Young Carers' group

**BADMINTON GIRL** - Young Carers' group

## **Notes on the characters:**

The adult characters in the play should not be played as stereotypes or for laughs. Just play the truth of their emotions, with an understanding of the situation they are in in each scene.

The **FUTURE SCIENTISTS** are for you to make your own. Distribute the lines however you feel is appropriate, between however many actors you have.

## **Audience participation:**

At the end of your performance, you may want to offer space for your audience to share the memories they wrote down in Scene 5. Perhaps they could add them to a display on the way out, or to the set?

## **Notes on punctuation:**

A forward slash (/) denotes an interruption

An ellipsis (...) is a loss or search for words

A dash (-) is a cut off, sometimes from a character's own thought



## 1. LOVE

*A memory. A newborn baby cries.*

*JAMES (YOUNGER DAD) and STELLA (YOUNGER MUM) are in a bright hospital room with newborn BABY ROO. STELLA is holding BABY ROO and JAMES is sitting next to her. Neither can take their eyes off of BABY ROO. They look exhausted, but happy.*

*The FUTURE SCIENTISTS take a polaroid photograph of the three of them. On the flash of the camera, the memory freezes.*

*They pass the photograph to present day ROO, who has been watching the memory. He addresses the audience.*

ROO.           That's me! On the day I was born.

*BABY ROO makes a cute noise.*

I know, I was cute, right? Mum and Dad called me Andrew, but they've never actually called me that. Everyone calls me Roo.

Look at my Dad! What was he wearing?!

*The memory comes back to life.*

JAMES.       I can't stop looking at him...How are we supposed to get anything done?! How does anyone just... stop looking...

*(To BABY ROO)* Hello little Roo. Yes, it's Papa. Yes...I'm *still* looking at you! Yes I aaam!

STELLA.       *(Playfully)* Newborn babies can't see colour y'know...which I'd say is a good thing, because that jumper is... well, it's... offensive James! Where did you even...? As for the wellies... I can't even begin to/...

JAMES.       /I didn't exactly have time to coordinate an outfit! It was all such a.. a rush wasn't it?

STELLA.       Well...yeah...that's one way of describing it!

*They return to looking at BABY ROO, sitting in comfortable silence.*

ROO. Mum says Dad nearly missed it. You know, me being born. He was at the Lifeboat station, fixing one of the boats. Mum says he ran in just in time (*impression of mum*)“absolutely covered in muck!”. Dad says she could have done it all on her own anyway, (*impression of dad*) “being a midwife n’all”.

It’s weird to think I was a baby. I don’t remember being one.

*ROO moves in a little closer, to get a better look - fascinated by his younger self.*

JAMES. It almost hurts... how much I love him already, I mean. Does that sound a bit...

STELLA. No... he's a heartbreaker alright. I've even nearly forgotten about the *actual* pain.

*They fall back into comfortable silence for a moment, still looking at BABY ROO. They are clearly exhausted, but content.*

JAMES. Right...I think that pint of coffee is kicking in... I'll have to find the loos, or my bladder will never forgive me.

*JAMES stands to leave and becomes suddenly aware of the ridiculous outfit he is wearing.*

Blimey... I see what you mean about this to be fair! Hardly James Bond, am I! Right...

*He looks for his wallet.*

... Snickers?

STELLA. Huh? Oh... I don't think I could face anything... not yet. You have one though. There's a vending machine... just along from the loos, I think. Main corridor.

*He goes back to BABY ROO. As he does, ROO takes this as an invitation to move in even closer.*

JAMES. One last look.

*The FUTURE SCIENTISTS take a photograph of BABY ROO. They give this one to ROO as well.*

STELLA. He's not going anywhere James! And I thought your bladder was... y'know-

JAMES. Right...yes! Loo!...and snickers! (*To BABY ROO*) See you in a bit Champ. Sorry, no snickers for you. You need some teeth first! (*He kisses BABY ROO'S forehead*)

*The memory starts to melt away. ROO addresses the FUTURE SCIENTISTS.*

ROO. Okay... we can start now.

## **2. 86 BILLION**

*A room full of light, like stars. Twinkling, travelling, connecting. The FUTURE SCIENTISTS address the audience.*

*The character with \* next to their lines is a trainee and should be the same person throughout.*

- You have approximately 86 billion neurons inside your brain.
- That's 86 plus nine zeros, if you want to write it down.
- Ten times the number of people in the world
- and a third of the number of stars in the milky way.
- \* Incredible.
- Some neurons are so small you could fit 50 of them, side-by-side, inside the dot on top of the letter i.
- And they were all there from the very beginning
- meaning around 250,000 neurons had to be produced *per minute* before you were even born.
- \* Hard to get your head around, isn't it?
- Each neuron connects to hundreds of other neurons,
- all using electrical impulses and chemical signals

- to send information across your brain and through your nervous system.
- Travelling up to 200mph.
- \* If the traffic's good!
- Telling us what is happening around us
- and inside us,
- keeping our heart beating
- and our feet moving,
- helping us to learn an instrument
- or a language,
- to remember directions,
- or random facts.
- Like how ripening bananas glow under UV lights.
- \* Really?
- Yes. Blue.
- \* *(Impressed)* Woah! Cool!
- 86 billion neurons
- helping us to form relationships
- and have empathy.
- To feel butterflies in our stomachs
- and goosebumps down our arms.
- To feel jealousy
- joy

- fear  
\* surprise!  
- To experience  
ALL. love.

### 3. FIRST DANCE

*ROO's house. ROO is in the garden with SPUD. MUM and DAD are in the kitchen.*

MUM. *(Calls out to the garden)* Roo, come in now please, dad's dishing up in five.

ROO. *(Calls back)* Spud wants to play one more game.

MUM. And I suppose he told you that, did he?

*We hear SPUD bark from the garden.*

ROO. See!

*DAD throws a piece of spaghetti at the wall. It sticks.*

DAD. *(In his best Italian accent)* Perfetto! Grub's up.

*ROO runs in with SPUD.*

MUM. Eeee. *Perfetti.*

DAD. I thought spaghetti was masculine?

MUM. It is, technically. But it's also plural. So it ends in an i.

*ROO pinches some grated cheese from a bowl.*

ROO. Spaghetti should be free to choose its own gender identity.

MUM. *(Batting ROO's hand away)* Oi, paws off! Anyway, it's *Spaghetti perfetti.*

DAD. Is there anything your mum doesn't know?

ROO. Probably not!

*SPUD jumps up onto the chair.*

MUM. Ah, no, not up to the table. Down please.

ROO. He's practically human. You'll eat nicely, won't you Spud?

MUM. You didn't see where he was sniffing on his walk this morning. Down please.

*DAD dishes up. Everyone sits down to eat. ROO secretly feeds SPUD under the table.*

Roo, any more thoughts on what you want for your birthday?

ROO. Dad's giving me his record collection.

MUM. You can have an *actual* present as well you know!

DAD. There's some quality stuff in there... Bowie. Led Zep. Even a 7 inch single of Everywhere.

ROO. Everywhere?

MUM & DAD (*Singing dramatically together*). Ooooooh I wanna be with you/ everywhere!

ROO. /Oh God... make it stop! Spud said he's in agony.

*SPUD barks from under the table.*

Exactly, Spud!

MUM. Gosh, that takes me back. 1988... the Mecca Ballroom.

DAD. Think it's flats now. We had our very first dance to that song Roo.

ROO. Is it Fleetwood Mac?

DAD. Sure is.

ROO. Old music's got a pretty cool vibe. Other than when you both sing it!

DAD. Oi! Less of the 'old' Champ! It wasn't that long ago -

MUM. I wasn't really bothered after that first dance. You know... about your dad.

DAD. Hold on, who proposed to who?

MUM. Yeah, but that was... well, that was some time after, wasn't it.

DAD. You fell for me the second you met me. My moves were... *(He starts dancing)* i-rre-sis-tible!

ROO. Daaad! Stop being so... cringe.

*SPUD appears with a deflated beach ball in his mouth.*

Looks like Spud wants to go to the beach!

SPUD. Woof!

ROO. Can we? Mum?

MUM. It's a bit late... by the time we've cleared up and / sorted out -

ROO. /I'll buy us ice cream... with Gladys' pocket money.

DAD. She's still doing that?

ROO. Just pennies. And I have to promise to spend it on, like... doing stuff...nice things. She calls it 'memory money'.

MUM. She's a very good neighbour to you Roo.

DAD. Well, I'd say eating ice cream is a pretty nice thing to do...

MUM. Hey! Who's side are you on?! Let's just see how the time goes.

*They continue eating.*

Roo, I keep meaning to ask... any thoughts on what you want for your birthday?

ROO. Mum, we literally just had that conversation.

*MUM looks confused.*

ROO. Dad's records... remember? Like, *literally* just spoke about it.

MUM. (*Flustered*) Well, yes ... but you can have an *actual* present as well you know.

ROO. (*Irritated*) Mum, I know, you keep saying.

DAD. She's just taking the mick, aren't you Stell? Any excuse to make a dig at my record collection!

ROO. More like being a *stuck record*.

DAD. Oi. Don't be rude to your mum. She's got a lot on her mind at the moment...

*MUM looks lost.*

Right... you can clear up for that Roo. And let's save the beach for tomorrow. I'll see if the station will let me take you out on the new lifeboat, *if* you give mum less of that cheek.

ROO. Result!

SPUD. Woof!

DAD. How does that sound Stell?

*MUM is lost in thought.*

Stella?

MUM. Yes? Yes... sorry, yes, that sounds... good.

#### **4. DREAM**

*ROO is sound asleep inside a boat, drifting.*

*A baby cries. ROO wakes.*



*He's unable to find the source of the crying.*

*It continues.*

*He sings a lullaby into the air, to try and soothe it.*

## **5. EXPERIMENT**

*The FUTURE SCIENTISTS are at a conference, or a lecture, or an event of some sort. Find what feels right for you. Genuinely encourage the audience to participate.*

*The character with \* next to their lines is the same person as before.*

- Hello everyone.

- Thank you for joining us today.

- We are

ALL the Future Scientists.

- Underneath your seats you will find a piece of paper and a pen.

- Please have them to hand,

- we are going to need your help.

ALL This is an experiment.

\* Sounds exciting!

- *(Gesturing to audience)* Actually, can you join them?

\* You mean I can take part?

- Sure. Why not.

\* Oh, this'll be fun!

*They sit with the audience.*

- In a minute we will read out a series of words.

- For each word, we would like you to write down a memory that you associate with that word.
- Just a brief summary. We're not writing autobiographies here.
- For example, the word could be 'food'.
- \* Oh, I have one.
- Go ahead.
- \* I remember making cupcakes with my nan... I loved licking the mixture off of the spoon.
- You do know that uncooked flour has germs in it, don't you?
- It can make you really sick.
- \* Why are you spoiling my memory?
- Let's move on.
- *(to audience)* Okay... everyone got it? We say a word, you write the memory.
- The first thing that comes into your head.
- It can be anything.
- We won't read them.
- \* What if the person next to you does?
- No one will read them, unless you want them to.
- This is a safe space.
- Ready? First word:
- ALL Birthday.
- \* Oh lovely. *(To audience)* Is anyone celebrating a birthday today?

*They respond accordingly e.g. to wish someone a happy birthday or to move things on, if there aren't any!*

- Okay... let's bring it back to those memories.
- A memory associated with the word 'birthday'.
- First thing that comes to mind.
- Please write it down.
- We'll give you a minute or so.

*Pause for people to write.*

- Okay, second word:
- ALL Music.
- Same thing again. Please write down your memory.
  - Underneath the first one.
  - Just a summary.
  - There's no right or wrong.
  - It's your memory.
  - This isn't a test.
- \* *(To the rest of the audience)* It sort of feels like it, doesn't it?!
- Honestly. Not a test.
  - Music.
  - Please write down your memory.

*(Pause for people to write).*

- The third, and final, word is:
- ALL Love.

- \* Aww, I love that.
- Okay... So, once again, please write down a memory connected to that word.
- Love.
- \* Why those words?
- Why not?
- \* But...do they mean anything?
- Well, yes...they'll all mean something...to you.
- \* I'm not sure I get it.
- Just a minute or so to write down your third memory.

*Pause for people to write.*

- And we'll stop that there.
  - Thank you so much.
  - You can pop those memories to one side for now.
- ALL Thank you for your time.

## **6. BIRTHDAYS**

*ROO is at the front door of his elderly neighbour GLADYS' house. He is holding a casserole dish covered with foil. He takes a key from behind a plant pot and opens the front door.*

ROO. *(Calling out)* Gladys? It's Roo. We saved you some of Dad's spag bol. Shall I take it to the kitchen?

GLADYS. *(Calling back)* Come in love. I'm in the back room.

*GLADYS is sat at a dining table. The table is covered in photo albums, individual photographs and boxes.*

I've been having a bit of a sort out Roo.

ROO. Oh wow! That's a lot of photos.

GLADYS. Truth be told, I may have overdone it... getting them all out. There are more than I realised.

ROO. I can help.

GLADYS. You are a good boy. As it happens, I've found lots of you!

ROO. Really?! Can I see?

*ROO puts the casserole dish down and sits next to GLADYS.*

GLADYS. This box here... I must have photographs from nearly all of your birthday parties. Your parents always invited me. Bit too grown up for that now though, aren't you love. What is it this year? 11? 12?

ROO Close! 13.

GLADYS. Oh, I lose track these days...

*She searches for a photograph.*

Here you are! Your very first birthday. Oh, your mum put on a beautiful spread... I always remember the food!

*As she hands the photograph to ROO, the FUTURE SCIENTISTS bring the photograph to life. FAMILY, FRIENDS, MUM (younger) and DAD (younger) gather around 1 year old ROO. MUM hands everyone a party hat.*

DAD. He won't remember us wearing these!

MUM. James, please put it on. It's important... He'll remember how...loved he is...the feeling.

DAD. Because of a hat?! *(Playfully, to ROO)* Hello champ... Daddy isn't wearing his party hat but he still loves you lots and/ lots.

MUM. *(Threateningly)* /James...

*DAD reluctantly puts the hat on.*

MUM. Perfect! *(She picks up a camera)* Now, get in nice and close everyone. That's it... 3, 2,... oh hold on, what shall we say?

DAD. Rooster!

MUM. Okay... 3, 2, 1...

ALL. ROOOOOSTER!

*DAD pulls a silly face. As the camera flashes, the memory melts away.*

*Present day GLADYS passes an album to ROO.*

GLADYS. You're a bit older in these.

ROO. Is that you?! You look so...

GLADYS. ...Young?

ROO. I didn't wanna say that!

GLADYS. Well, I suppose I was once. How about this one Roo? My gosh, you kept us all on our toes when you started walking!

*She hands him another photograph. The FUTURE SCIENTISTS bring the memory to life. MUM (younger) & DAD (younger) are hosting another party for ROO with family and friends. 3 year old ROO is dancing with a balloon in one hand and a piece of cake in the other.*

MUM. He's definitely picked those moves up from you James.

DAD. Well then... I suppose my job here is done!

*YOUNGER GLADYS arrives. ROO runs to her.*

ROO. Gladdy, Gladdy, look... my cake! Gladdy, dance?

MUM. Roo! Let poor Gladys take her coat off first!

DAD. We're so pleased you're here Gladys.

GLADYS. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

*ROO wraps himself around GLADYS' legs. DAD takes a photo of GLADYS and ROO. The memory melts away.*

GLADYS. You keep looking through them Roo and I'll pop the kettle on. Oh, and there's a nice cheese scone in the larder with your name on, if you fancy it?

ROO. I'd better not... we just had tea. Thanks though.

GLADYS. Freshly made yesterday... won't take long to warm it up in the microwave...

ROO. Erm...well... are you sure?

GLADYS. Oh no, actually... perhaps you'd better not...

ROO. Oh.

GLADYS. I'm pulling your leg Rooster! So that's a yes then, is it?

ROO. Okay then, yes please! Thanks Gladys.

GLADYS. Knew you'd want one.

*GLADYS exits. As ROO continues to look through the photographs, more memories of birthdays come to life:*

*5 year old ROO unwraps a toy boat. His eyes light up.*

*7 year old ROO and his friends have a water fight on the beach.*

*As everyone sings happy birthday, 9 year old ROO attempts, but fails, to put a party hat on SPUD. Laughter.*

*11 year old ROO opens a door to a room full of friends, who all shout "SURPRISE!".*

*The memories melt away.*

*GLADYS returns.*

GLADYS. I could have sworn it was in the larder this morning...I'm so sorry Roo, I can't seem to find that scone...

ROO. That's okay Gladys, I'm really not hungry anyway. Honest.

GLADYS. What a stupid thing to lose... a cheese scone! Oh Roo, don't ever get old like me.

ROO. I can't promise that Gladys!

## 7. DREAM 2

*A laboratory. Scientists are busy working.*

*ROO puts on a lab coat and observes each scientist at work.*

*Each time ROO tries to help, the scientists turn their back on him.*

*It becomes a dance.*

*A struggle.*

*The scientists gradually pack up and leave.*

*ROO continues the dance alone. Determined.*

## 8. MISSING

*Home. It's late. SPUD is sitting by the front door, watching the rain. DAD is pacing the room. ROO and his best friend PIP are watching a film. It has been paused.*

ROO. Maybe she had to work late?

DAD. *(Frustrated)* Roo, will you stop? I told you already... I called the hospital and they said she left a few hours ago. I've tried everywhere.

PIP. *(quietly, to ROO)* Maybe I should go? Your dad seems a bit... stressed.

ROO. He's not normally like this... Please don't go.

DAD. I'm going to take the car out... see if I can find her.

ROO. Dad, what's going on?

DAD. *(looking for his keys)* Will you both be okay staying here? In case she comes home. Put your phone on loud/ please Roo.



ROO. /Dad... I said what's going on?

DAD. *(Snaps)* How many more times? I don't know, okay? And you asking me over and over isn't going to magically give me all the answers, is it?

*DAD grabs his coat.*

Look, I'm sure it's all... fine. Just... put your phone on loud please. And call me straight away if she comes back.

ROO. *(Annoyed)* Fine. You said already.

*DAD goes to retaliate but thinks otherwise. He leaves. SPUD joins ROO and PIP on the sofa.*

ROO *(As soon as the door closes).* What's his problem?

PIP. Dunno... your Dad's normally so chill.

ROO. They're splitting up. It's obvious. They've both been acting so... weird recently. What if she doesn't...

PIP. What? Come back? Your mum wouldn't leave you... Would she?

ROO. Maybe it's my fault. Dad's clearly fed up with me.

*Knock on the door. ROO answers. It's MUM, soaking wet. Her colleague ANNE stands next to her.*

ANNE. Hello Roo! Look who I have!

*MUM is crying.*

ROO. Mum, where have you been? Dad's gone to look for you.

ANNE. *(tries to keep it light)* Just fancied a little shower, didn't you Stell! Let's get Mum inside shall we, where it's nice and warm.

PIP. *(to ROO)* Told you she'd be back!

ANNE. Roo, perhaps you could find Mum a towel? Thanks darling.

*ROO leaves, hesitantly. PIP stays, unsure of what to do with himself.*

*SPUD sits at MUM's feet.*

ANNE. It's Pip isn't it?

*MUM suddenly becomes aware of PIP being in the room.*

PIP. Yeah. Shall I... shall I go and see if Roo needs my help?

ANNE. *(Tries to reassure him)* You're fine here. Don't worry love, we deal with way worse than this at work, don't we Stella?

MUM. Where's James?

ANNE. Roo said he's gone to look for you. That's right isn't it Pip?

PIP. Erh, yeah... it wasn't that long ago.

*ROO returns with a towel. ANNE wraps it around MUM's shoulders.*

PIP. *(To ROO)* Should I do something?

ROO. Like what?

PIP. I dunno. Your mum's still crying.

MUM. *(More to herself than anyone else)* I just wanted to get to work... but it felt like I was going in circles. It was like a... a fog, inside my head hovering... I couldn't shake it.

*(To ANNE)* I hadn't even noticed it was dark.

*DAD runs in.*

DAD. Anne, I drove past your car... I thought you must have been heading here... *(Angry)* Roo, what did I tell you about phones? Why on earth didn't you phone me?

ROO. I didn't have chance -

ANNE. *(Tactfully)* James, maybe now's not the time... Roo's being very helpful.

DAD. Right, it's just... I've been worried sick. Stella, where have you been?

You're soaked through.

ANNE. *(quietly, to JAMES)* She returned to the hospital, a few hours after she'd clocked out. She thought it was the start of the day.

ROO. What's happening?

DAD. Roo. Not now. *Please.*

ANNE. *(To JAMES)* Perhaps we could have a chat in the morning?

DAD. Yes, of course... yes... thanks Anne.

ANNE. She's starting to warm up, but I think she's still in shock. *(to STELLA)* I'll see you soon love. *(She gives her a reassuring hug)* You're safe now.

DAD. Thanks Anne... for -

ANNE. That's what friends are for, isn't it? Bye Roo, bye Pip.

*She leaves.*

DAD. *(Unsure of the next steps but trying to sound upbeat)* Right then... Let's see... Rooster, how about sticking the kettle on? *(To MUM)* Nothing like a nice cup of tea to make everything better, is there love?

*ROO starts to leave, annoyed at DAD and looking cautiously at MUM as he does so.*

DAD. And bring the biscuit tin in Champ - I think mum's favourites are in there.

*ROO leaves.*

PIP. *(To DAD)* Shall I... do you need me to... Do you need me to go?

DAD. Sorry Pip... perhaps that's best... Do you want to give your parents a call? I mean, do you think they'll be able to come and get you?

PIP. Eh, yeah... yeah I think so, um... yeah, I'll call Mum.

*ROO returns and sees PIP making a call.*

ROO. Pip? What are you doing?

DAD. Pip's going home, Roo.

ROO. Why?

PIP. *(On phone)* Mum? Yeah... can you pick me up from Roo's?

DAD. Roo. Please don't argue.

ROO. This is so unfair. It's not *our* fault that this/

DAD. /Roo. What did I just say?

PIP. *(On phone)* Yeah, don't worry, I'm good.

ROO. But it's not. Why should he have to go? Mum's home now.

DAD. You're not 5 Roo, so stop with the tantrum.

PIP. *(On phone)* Okay, see you in a bit.... Okay, I will... bye Mum.

ROO. *(To PIP)* You don't have to go Pip.

PIP. It's alright, I don't mind.

ROO. Eugh, this is shit.

DAD. *(Raised voice)* Roo. Enough.

ROO. Well, it is. It's really, really *shit*.

DAD. Upstairs. Now.

*ROO storms off.*

PIP. I think I'll start walking back...

DAD. I'd rather you waited here Pip.

MUM. I'm so, so sorry.

## 9. EXPERIMENT, PART 2

*Back with the FUTURE SCIENTISTS at the conference, or wherever you decided.  
The character with \* next to their lines sits back with the audience.*

- Welcome back everyone.
- We hope you had a productive break?
- Apologies for the lack of biscuits. Demand on digestives is high, apparently.
- We hope you had plenty of time for networking.
- \* *(To the audience member next to them)* I can't stand that word, can you?
- Now then, let's take a look at those memories again.
- The ones you wrote down.
- Birthday,
- music,
- love.
- Can you remember the year that each memory took place?
- Roughly.
- It's not a test.
- \* So they keep saying!
- Depending on your age,
- which you do not need to disclose,
- there is a high chance that those memories took place between the ages of 10 and 30.
- The 'reminiscence bump'.

- \* The what?
- ALL Reminiscence bump.
- It's a period in your life that becomes the most memorable time,
- when lots of big life events happen.
- Lots of firsts.
- First day of uni
- First job
- First car
- First time travelling alone
- First kiss
- First heartbreak
- \* I'd choose to forget that one.
- A time when you really work out who you are.
- ALL Your identity.
- Who you hang out with.
- Your political views.
- Your taste in music.
- How you dress.
- What kind of person you really want to be.
- And then, after your 30's, you tend to slow down a bit.
- \* Not everyone. We can't keep up with my nan!
- True... not everyone,

- but most.
- Settle down.
- Buy a house.
- Get married.
- Stay put.
- Build up a pension.
- Etc etc.
- \* Sounds serious.
- So when we think about memories, we go back to our 'reminiscence bump'.
- Age 10-30.
- The exciting,
- scary,
- life changing bits of our life.
- \* What if we don't want to forget the bits over 30? The things we do when we're *old*?
- (*looks to the audience, cautiously*) I'd be careful with that word!
- \* Sorry, I mean older.
- Well then you've got to keep it exciting.
- Keep on your toes.
- Keep trying new things
- Keep going to new places
- and meeting new people.

- ALL            Keep making memories.
- \*              Excuse me? Before we move on... what should we do with these?  
*(gesturing to their memories)*
- Hold onto them.

## 10. DIAGNOSIS

*Inside a doctor's examination room. MUM & DAD sit together. The Doctor addresses DAD throughout the scene.*

DAD.            Say that again?

DOCTOR.      Your wife has Young-Onset Alzheimer's.

DAD.            That can't be a thing... older people have Alzheimer's. Stella's mum had it, didn't she Stell?

*MUM doesn't answer.*

DOCTOR.      I have a large number of pamphlets here, with all the information you need. Local services and charities who could help you.

DAD.            We looked after her until it was too tricky. She went into a nursing home. A nice one.

DOCTOR.      We can try her on a drug that may slow down the progression but, as I'm sure you already know, it is progressive and there is no cure.

DAD.            ...Stella is 52.

DOCTOR.      I recommend she stops driving and she should consider early retirement, especially being a midwife. To minimise risk.

DAD.            She used to think I was your dad, didn't she Stell? Used to get people mixed up. She still laughed though... loud! Used to hear her down the corridor, when we visited.

DOCTOR.      You might want to start discussing a care plan, whilst she still has capacity.

DAD.            Perhaps she should do that memory test again? *(To MUM)* You had a



lot on your mind that day didn't you love? It's not normally that bad.  
*(Trying to make light of the situation)* And the question about who the Prime Minister is... well... how's anyone supposed to keep up with that these days?!

*MUM remains silent. Determined not to reveal her feelings.*

DOCTOR. I won't need to see her again, unless any symptoms become particularly troublesome.

DAD. Just let her do the test again./ Please.

DOCTOR. /The bloods and scans all point to the same conclusion. I am sorry.

DAD. So that's it?

DOCTOR. Unless you have any further questions? That's it from me.

DAD. *(Getting desperate)* Stella? Tell the doctor you'll do the test again.

*MUM calmly gathers the pamphlets.*

DOCTOR. I'm sorry, I *am* stretched for time.

DAD. Stella? Tell him.

MUM. *(Hiding all emotion)* Right, come on James... the shopping's being delivered at 4 and I don't want Roo to see his birthday cake before the big day.

*MUM grabs her coat and leaves the room. DAD is frozen to the chair.*

## **11. CONCERN**

*PIP'S house. DAD is in the car outside, SPUD has taken ROO's place on the passenger seat and ROO is at the front door. PIP'S MUM answers and gestures ROO inside.*

DAD. *(Calls out)* Bye then Roo!

*PIP'S MUM approaches JAMES, who lowers the car window.*

PIP'S MUM. Hi James. How're things?

DAD. Ah, you know... busy! You sure you're okay having him overnight? He's been a bit... you know... of a *teenager* recently!

PIP'S MUM. Absolutely fine.

DAD. Right, thanks. And 10 o'clock pick up?

PIP'S MUM. He can stay later, if you need him to?

DAD. No, 10 will be fine. Thanks.

PIP'S MUM. James... I hope you don't think I'm prying but... is everything okay? With Stella, I mean? Pip mentioned something about her going missing?

DAD. Oh, yeah... that was just... she's fine. It's fine. Right then, if he's any trouble, just give me a /call.

PIP'S MUM. /I told Pip that it'd be nothing. Only, he was a bit... concerned. About Roo as well, I mean... He said Anne had to help out, or something?

DAD. (*Impatient*) I'm sorry he was... *concerned*, but there's really nothing to worry about.

PIP'S MUM. Well... you know where we are anyway...if you ever need/anything.

DAD. (*Short*) /We're fine.

*PIP'S MAMA comes out to the car.*

PIP'S MAMA. James, I've got that money for you, for the raffle tickets.

DAD. (*Short*) Not now. I have to go.

PIP'S MAMA. (*Taken back*) Right... only, you did say you needed it today?

*DAD starts pulling away.*

PIP'S MUM. Send Stella our love, won't you?

DAD. Sure.

PIP'S MUM. Alright. Take care.

PIP'S MAMA. (*Annoyed*) Bye then.

*DAD leaves.*

PIP'S MAMA. Something I said?

*PIP calls from the doorway.*

PIP. Can we play Fortnite please?

PIP'S MAMA. (*To PIP*) You've got 20 minutes until dinner's ready.

PIP'S MUM. (*To PIP's MAMA*) Don't worry, it wasn't you. I'll tell you later.

*PIP'S PARENTS head back inside.*

## 12. CHOIR

*MUM is in the car with ANNE, who is driving.*

MUM. Can't believe you agreed to come!

ANNE. It's what friends do, isn't it?

MUM. Yeah, but... a choir!

ANNE. You wait 'till you hear me sing, then you'll wish you hadn't asked me!

MUM. I can't remember the last time I sang in front of people. Other than Roo... and James... and poor Spud!

ANNE. I reckon it'll be a laugh. I watched some of their YouTube videos last night...they're actually really... well... they're not bad at all!

MUM. (*Tongue in cheek*) For people with dementia, you mean?

ANNE. (*Hits Mum's leg, playfully*) Oi! You know what I mean!

*They drive in silence for a moment.*

MUM. We still haven't told Roo.

ANNE. You know what I'm going to say, don't you?

MUM. I know... I *know*. We'll tell him soon. I just need James to be on board first. He's still...struggling, so how can we expect Roo to be ok with it all?

ANNE. You might be surprised... Anything I can do to help?

MUM. *(She sighs)* Just make it all go away?

ANNE. Wish I could Stell.

MUM. Did I tell you about that Dr?

ANNE. Honest answer?

MUM. I've told you a few times, haven't I?

ANNE. Yeah, but I'm happy to listen again. Get it all out.

MUM. He didn't even look at me, Anne. Not once. His whole... shpiel... was delivered to James, like I wasn't even in the room.

ANNE. You know it's not you though... We've seen it plenty of times at work, haven't we? Lack of bedside manner... Too clever for their own good. Well... some of them, anyway.

MUM. It just made me feel so... so small. And it all felt so... I dunno... final. Retirement, care plans... I'm not there yet... am I?

ANNE. Not if I can have anything to do with it. If you leave work, I'm following!

*MUM is suddenly upset, but tries to stop herself from crying.*

ANNE. *(Notices mum is upset)* Right then... time for a vocal warm up I think. Watcha got for us Radio 2?

*She puts the car radio on. Anne-Marie and Niall Horan's version of EVERYWHERE is playing.*

MUM. Oh God! Of all the *bloody* songs Anne! That's *our* song!

ANNE. *(Playfully)* I think you'll find it's everyone's song actually...

MUM. Fine. This isn't *our* version anyway.

ANNE. (*Trying to sound young*) Sometimes you've just gotta embrace change Stell. Y'know... get with the programme and that.

*ANNE starts singing along, loudly, and terribly! MUM laughs and gives in, joining in with the singing.*

### 13. RESEARCH

*PIP'S bedroom. After school.*

PIP. Show me.

*ROO hands Mum's diagnosis letter to PIP, who tries to take it all in.*

ROO. I've read it a few times. It says right there (*pointing to the letter*) She has Young *something* Alzheimer's.

PIP. Young-onset. Shit... Your poor mum... and your dad... I'm sorry Roo.

ROO. It's just...big. Thanks for being sorry but... y'know... you don't need to -

PIP. To be honest... I don't exactly know what that is... don't old people get Alzheimer's?

ROO. Yeah, I think so.

PIP. Or is that dementia?

ROO. I dunno. No one's told me.

PIP. So they definitely don't know? That you know, I mean.

ROO. Nope.

PIP. (*Handing the letter back to ROO*) You should tell them. That you've read it.

ROO. Why? They clearly don't want me to know, so what's the point? Dad's still being shitty with me anyway.

PIP. I'm going to Google it.

*PIP grabs his laptop and starts searching. ROO pulls the pamphlets from his bag.*

ROO. These were with the letter as well. I've read a bit, but... it's a lot of information.

PIP. *(Reading)* Okay... this website says there are about 900,000 people with dementia in the UK. That's loads, isn't it?

*ROO doesn't answer.*

So we could be walking past people with it all the time?  
Like...everywhere. How would you even know?

ROO. *(Making a dig at parents)* Yeah, especially if they don't tell anyone.

PIP. *(Continues reading)* And this Young-onset thing, that your mum has... so that's for people under the age of 65... Loads of them must have kids... like you, I mean...How old is your mum?

ROO. 52. *(He suddenly remembers something)* You know Jake?

PIP. Jake? *(Thinks)* Jake Barnes?

ROO. Yeah. He took the piss once... out of my mum, when she came to pick me up. She doesn't know or anything. He said... *(embarrassed to say it)*

PIP. What?

ROO. He said... "what's your Nan doing at the gate, is she lost?"

PIP. Twat! He's an absolute... *twat!* What did you do?

ROO. Told him to fuck off.

PIP. Nice.

ROO. I know she's older than other mums... and I kinda wish she wasn't... especially now. If Jake finds out about this he's gonna love it, isn't he.

PIP. Ignore him. He took the piss out of me for having *two* mums once. He hasn't even got two brain cells. Tossler.

ROO. It's just... *shit*. It's really shit. I've been thinking it'd be better if she

had...like...cancer, or something. I know that sounds bad... but at least cancer could be fixed. This is just gonna get worse.

PIP. I don't think cancer does get fixed.

ROO. Well, Jake wouldn't take the piss though would he?

PIP. I dunno... nothing surprises me with him. (*Looking at the pamphlets*) They should teach us this kinda stuff at school. It's actually interesting.

ROO. I think adults are too scared to talk about it... sometimes.

PIP. Really? This would be way more helpful than... I dunno... what's that thing Mr Quinton was banging on about today?

ROO. Algebraic manipulation?

PIP. Yeah. That.

Is it weird? Now your Mum has this, I mean? Like... is she different?

ROO. Dunno really...Like, sometimes she seems totally fine... just... normal mum. And then sometimes...I dunno... she repeats stuff... or sh forgets words and stuff. She gets them a bit mixed up. Or stops in the middle of a sentence.

PIP. Oh my god, my mum does that *all the time*. So annoying. (*Realises he's said the wrong thing*) Sorry Roo... I know it's not, y'know... the same.

ROO. S'ok. Dad's so stressy. He's really pissing me off. Acting like everything's normal but snapping all the time, even if I just breathe.

PIP. Maybe you should tell him Roo?

ROO. He'd be so mad if he knew I took this. (*Spots the time*) Shit, I'd better go.... I said I'd make tea.

PIP. Oh wow! Good luck to Stella and James! Remember when you made lasagne in year 7 and nearly set the school on fire?

ROO. That was *not* my fault. Miss told me the wrong number for the oven.

PIP. Ah yeah... it was Miss' fault that you put it on, like... 5 *million*

degrees... sure...

*ROO starts gathering his things.*

Roo? I hope you don't mind but... well, I told my mums about what happened...with your mum... getting lost.

ROO. Please don't tell them about this Pip.

PIP. They seemed worried. I think they just want to help... Maybe they could talk to your parents?

ROO. Thanks Pip, but I don't think it'll help. See you tomorrow, yeah?

*ROO starts to leave.*

PIP. *(calls after him)* Please don't give your parents food poisoning!

ROO. *(Playfully)* Twat!

#### **14. REHEARSAL**

*A church hall. It is the end of the choir's rehearsal. There is a buzz. People are chatting, excitedly, as they gather their things and say their goodbyes, including MUM and ANNE. The choir leader, LUCA, approaches MUM.*

LUCA. Stella, Anne, well done this evening. It's all coming together nicely. How are you finding rehearsals? You seem to have fitted in really well.

MUM. We're loving it, aren't we Anne? I think I'm doing more laughing than singing though!

ANNE. She's one to keep an eye on Luca!

LUCA. Well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about actually,/ you see -

MUM. /Oh god, I'm sorry... I hope I've not made a bad first impression? I'm not always completely aware of what I'm doing, if I'm honest... how I'm behaving I mean, now I've got this/

LUCA. /Oh, no, not at all. No... that's not why I wanted to speak to you... sorry, I should be more direct. I wanted to ask you a favour actually... you know we have the concert coming up? At the Theatre Royal?



MUM.           *(curious and concerned!)* Yes...

LUCA.           Well, I wondered if you'd be up for singing a solo, Stella? You've got a really brilliant voice.

ANNE.           What did I tell you Stell? I said, didn't I, in the car... you're brilliant! She's hidden it from us for all these years you know!

LUCA.           Well? What do you say Stella?

MUM.           Blimey. You've put me on the spot a bit there... I'm not sure if I can... you know, what with... And it's all so... public.

LUCA.           You can choose the song. We've got time to learn something new... Perhaps something you really connect with? And I'll be here to help you, all the way.

ANNE.           You'll have everyone's support, no doubt about it.

MUM.           What if I forget the words? Or if... if I'm just not... right, on the day... Some days I struggle to even get myself dressed without some sort of hiccup, let alone sing solo in front of... how many people?

LUCA.           Just a few.

ANNE.           A few hundred you said earlier! *(Realises that hasn't helped to persuade STELLA)*. But you can totally do it Stella. Imagine they're all naked! That's what they say to do, isn't it?

LUCA.           I'll help you. With whatever you need on the day.

ANNE.           You'll be bloody brilliant!

MUM.           Who knew having dementia would lead to me doing this? I must be mad... *(She thinks)* Right. Go on then... I'll do it.

LUCA.           Yes Stella!

MUM.           And I can choose the song?

LUCA.           Entirely your choice.

MUM.           I think I have an idea...

## 15. EVERY CLOUD

*ROO & GLADYS are in GLADYS' garden. GLADYS is sitting on a comfortable chair, a blanket on her lap. She is holding the diagnosis letter. ROO is on the grass at her feet. They are looking up, spotting shapes in clouds.*

GLADYS. I still can't see a dragon, even if I tilt my head. I shall have to take your word for it... You always have had an eye for detail.

ROO. ... Remember that painting I did for you? Of dad's boat?

GLADYS. There have been many paintings, Roo! They're all in the bureau... bottom drawer.

*Brightly coloured paintings come into view. Perhaps they float down gently from the sky?*

ROO. You kept them? All of them?

GLADYS. Of course! (*playfully*) They'll be worth a fortune when you become the next...what's-his-name? Picasso!

ROO. (*Joining in with the joke*) Don't worry, I'll share my riches with you Gladys.

Got another one. (*Points at a cloud*) That one looks like Spud's head!

GLADYS. (*Pretending*) Oh yes... I can see that.... Yes, very clear.

ROO. You don't have to pretend!

GLADYS. Hey, give me some credit kiddo!

*They continue cloud gazing in silence for a while.*

Have you spoken to your Dad yet, Roo? (*Gesturing to the letter*) This is... this is quite serious. You know that, don't you?

ROO. Yes. But no, I haven't. There's no point. He'll just snap.

GLADYS. I see...

*As she reminisces, FUTURE SCIENTISTS reenact the memory.*

I remember the day they brought you home... from the hospital. Tiny, you were. Well, I've never seen a look quite like the one on your dad's face! You won't remember it of course... *(She waits for ROO to respond to her joke, but he has gone quiet).*

Wide eyed... and younger, almost. A mix of pride and fear. I can still see it so clearly. If someone asked me to paint a picture of what love looks like, I'd paint your dad's face, on that day... when they brought you home.

*The memory melts away.*

ROO. He doesn't look like that now though does he? He doesn't really look at me at all, to be fair.

GLADYS. It's still there Roo... the love. He's just got a lot on his plate... I can't possibly imagine how he's feeling. *(She looks at the diagnosis letter)* As for your poor mum... well... it must be quite the shock. Poor Stella.

ROO. *(Suddenly opening up)* I feel angry. And then I feel bad... for feeling angry. Which just makes me feel even more angry again... which is just... shit.

Sorry. For swearing, I mean.

GLADYS. It's not your Dad's fault, love.

ROO. I know that. It's not anyone's fault. I think that's why I'm so... angry.

GLADYS. Do you want me to tell them? About you finding the letter?

ROO. No... thank you.

GLADYS. Think about it Roo. It might give them both one less thing to worry about.

## **16. THIRTEEN**

*It's the morning of ROO's 13th birthday. He is in the living room with DAD, who is sitting next to a bin bag full of wrapping paper. A record is playing. MUM enters wearing a child's party hat.*

DAD. Oh here we go...you can always rely on your mum to continue the party hat tradition!

MUM. Yours is in the kitchen James... don't go thinking you've got away with it!

DAD. *(Quietly to STELLA)* Did you get it ready?

MUM. Did I get what ready?

DAD. *(Trying to be discreet)* You know... the *thingy*... with the *(he mimes blowing out candles)*.

ROO. It's okay, I know you've got me a cake. You do this every year!

*MUM looks worried.*

DAD. Stell?

*She starts searching the room - in cupboards, behind things, becoming more distressed as she searches.*

DAD. *(Concerned)* It's okay... we can do it later love. You don't mind, do you Roo?

MUM. *(To herself)* I hid it. I put it somewhere... somewhere *safe*. For god's sake...it's a cake. Where on *earth* did I put it?

ROO. *(Reassuringly)* Don't worry mum, I'm not bothered.

MUM. *(Snaps)* Well, I'm... *bothered*, Roo. I spent time choosing that bloody cake for you... How on earth can someone lose a *bloody/* cake?

DAD. /Come on Stell, it's not Roo's fault.

ROO. Dad... it's fine.

MUM. Perhaps if you'd had a little more... involvement in preparing for today, James, then this wouldn't have happened in the first place.

DAD. Now come on, that's a bit -

MUM. Well, it's fine for you... isn't it? Give him a few records and a "happy

birthday champ” and your job is/ done.

ROO. /Please don't argue.

DAD. Stella. Try to calm down.

MUM. Year after *bloody* year... *I'm* the one who has to remember to buy the presents, *I'm* the one who sorts the cake out, plans the party,/ sends the invitations -

DAD. /I really think we should talk about this later... It's Roo's birthday.

MUM. Exactly! It's our son's birthday! And I wanted it to be... perfect. But it's not now, is it? Because I've lost the *bloody, stupid* cake.

ROO. Mum... Please don't get upset. You always make my birthdays so...

*He searches for the word.*

/special

DAD. /Memorable.

MUM. I used to.

*Beat.*

*(Composing herself)* Right...sorry... you're right. We can do the cake later. I'm sure it'll crop up. *(Trying to lighten the mood)* Besides, plenty of fun things ahead.... You'd better start getting yourself ready Roo...Pip will be here soon. I'll check the kitchen.

*MUM leaves.*

DAD. Sorry about that Rooster. Mum's been a bit... well... distracted recently. She didn't mean/ to snap.

ROO. /Dad, it's okay, I know about the... the thing.

DAD. What thing?

*ROO takes the diagnosis letter from his pocket.*

ROO. This.

DAD. Where did you...? We've been looking everywhere for that Roo. You shouldn't have that.

ROO. *You* shouldn't leave things on the side if you don't want them to be found.

DAD. Don't chat back. This is serious Roo.

ROO. Exactly. So you should have told me.

DAD. You don't need to know about this yet. It's not... it's not conclusive. There might be more tests she can have.

ROO. Looks pretty conclusive to me.

DAD. I'm sorting it.

ROO. I'm not stupid, Dad. I knew something was up. That's why she went missing, isn't it? That night?

DAD. Come on... not now. Mum will be back in in a minute and she's really trying to make today special Roo.

ROO. I'm 13. You should have told me.

DAD. Only just 13!

*MUM enters with the cake, candles lit.*

ROO. I want to help Dad.

MUM. That sounds serious! Help with what love?

DAD. Oh, we were just talking about - (*notices the cake*) Oh hey! You found it! Well done. Where was it?

ROO. (*Angry*) Stop it! Both of you. Stop... *lying* to me. You think I can't cope with stuff, and it really... *pisses* me off.

MUM. Woah, what's brought this on?

DAD. Roo found the letter...from the hospital.

MUM.           *(Serious)* You shouldn't have read that Roo.

ROO.           See! This is it... this is what you both do. You just... hide stuff and...treat me like I'm some stupid, little... *kid*, but I'm not a kid anymore... I'm fucking thirteen.

*ROO throws the letter down and storms off. DAD calls after him.*

DAD.           Roo, you watch your mouth or/ I will

MUM.           /James. Let him. He's right... we should have told him. He has a right to know.

DAD.           No, actually, I don't think he does. Not yet...It's not time yet *(he grabs his coat)* I'm going out.

MUM.           James? Where are you going?

*DAD leaves, slamming the front door. MUM is left alone.*

MUM.           It was *my* letter.

*She blows out the candles. As she does, strings of fairy lights light up.*

## **17. FAIRY LIGHTS**

*The FUTURE SCIENTISTS. This could be a dance or movement sequence. A video. An animation. A song. Make it yours.*

ALL.           Imagine.

- Imagine your brain.
- Imagine we have stepped inside
- and it is full of thousands of tiny lights,
- like fairy lights,
- strung across at all angles.
- And each of those lights is responsible for a different skill,

- or function
- of the brain.
- Like communication,
- decision making,
- controlling your emotions,
- and understanding language.

ALL. Beautiful lights

- scattered across lobes.
- Shining.

ALL. Brilliant.

- Now imagine something less bright,
- less beautiful,
- is causing some of those lights to flicker
- or dim
- or switch off.
- That less bright,
- less beautiful thing

ALL. is dementia.

- A disease of the brain.
- Not just 'getting old'.
- Not just 'getting forgetful'.
- A disease.



- To be diagnosed.
- To be treated.
- Treated seriously.
- ALL. To be cured.
- One day.
- And every person with dementia is different,
- ALL. unique.
- So the lights will flicker differently,
- in different orders,
- in their own unique ways.
- Not always bright.
- Not always dark.
- Good days
- and bad days.
- When someone is diagnosed with dementia
- it may feel like all of the lights have
- ALL. stopped shining.
- But they haven't.
- Look closely.
- Imagine.
- Inside.
- Thousands of lights.

- So many, still shining.

- So many, still

ALL. beautiful.

### 18. DREAM 3

*A laboratory. Scientists are busy working.*

*ROO puts on a lab coat and takes centre stage. Confident.*

*The scientists watch his every move: curious, eager to learn from him.*

*It becomes a dance. Smooth and in sync.*

*The scientists gradually pack up and leave, confident ROO has it in hand.*

*ROO continues the dance, joyfully.*

### 19. LETTERS

*MUM is sitting on her bed, surrounded by paper, pen in hand. Next to her is a beautiful, decorative box. She starts to write, hesitant at first. As she grows in confidence, her writing pace quickens. It is as if she is unable to write fast enough. She reads what she has written out loud.*

MUM. Darling Roo. I'm sorry, I know you hate it when I call you that! But 'Dear Roo' felt too formal. And you are my darling. My darling boy. You always will be.

I wanted to write you some letters, to tell you things, whilst it's all still clear... in my head.

*ROO unexpectedly enters the room. MUM tries to hide the papers and box, in a fluster.*

ROO. Mum, can I go to - *(He notices the box)* What's that?

MUM. Oh, nothing love, just sorting some things out... paperwork... boring stuff.

ROO. Why are you hiding it?

MUM. Hmm? I'm not hiding it love. Not at all. I was just packing up.

ROO. Mum... please don't hide anything else from me.

MUM. Okay... you're right... well... I was writing you some letters.

ROO. Letters?

MUM. For later. Much later. When, perhaps, I can't... tell you things.

ROO. But you can tell me now, can't you? Like, not in a letter.

MUM. I suppose so... yeah, I suppose you're right! I just thought it might be nice for you to have something... from me... to keep.

*Beat.*

Roo, did you tell Gladys? About what's happening? With me.

ROO. I'm sorry, I just needed to tell someone... about the letter.

MUM. Okay. I need to know if anyone else knows...

ROO. I told Pip... He helped me. And I think his Mums know now... Is that okay?

MUM. It has to be, but I'd like to tell people *myself* from now on...when I'm ready. Do you understand why?

ROO. Yeah. I'm sorry Mum.

MUM. It's okay. I'm glad you had their support.

*ROO goes to leave but hesitates in the doorway.*

ROO. Dad isn't talking to me. Not like he used to.

MUM. Try to be patient with your Dad Roo. This is really difficult... for all of us. He just needs a bit more time... to get his head around it all. He's getting there.

ROO. He makes it feel like it's my fault. Or like I'm making it worse.

MUM. Oh love, that couldn't be further from the truth.

*ROO sits on the bed with MUM, who consoles him.*

You know, the doctors were adamant that we weren't going to be parents... your Dad and I. We were heartbroken. And then... you appeared! The best surprise we could ever have hoped for.

*ROO is silent. Suddenly younger. MUM takes a pamphlet from the pile of papers she was going to put inside the box.*

I found this... it's a group for kids, like you, who are helping to look after someone...like me. No pressure to go, but I thought it might help you... if you talked to other people your age... give it a think anyway.

ROO. *(Taking the pamphlet)* Maybe. Thanks... Maybe Dad should do the same.

MUM. You could be right Roo. And it might give you both something to talk about...

ROO. What about you though?

MUM. Me? You don't need to worry about me Roo, I've got Anne. And... *(hesitates)*

ROO. What?

MUM. Well, promise you won't laugh at me?

ROO. Mum, what have you done?!

MUM. I've joined a choir. With Anne. For people like me... with... dementia.

ROO. Like, actual singing and stuff?

MUM. That's what a choir does, isn't it?!

ROO. Valid.

MUM. So? What do you think?

ROO. Do you like it?

MUM. I love it.

ROO. Then it's cool.

## 20. CIRCLE METHOD

*A community hall. A Young Carers group meeting. ROO sits in a circle with GROUP LEADER, GROUP ADMINISTRATOR, TWIN 1, TWIN 2 and JAKE BARNES. ROO is holding the pamphlet that Mum gave to him. He has been placed next to JAKE. Both look uncomfortable.*

*GROUP ADMINISTRATOR is passing round a plate of digestive biscuits. GROUP LEADER addresses the group.*

GROUP LEADER. Lovely. Thanks Jackie, I think everyone's had a biscuit now. So, if it's alright with everyone, we'll make a gentle start. Now/

ROO. /Excuse me.

GROUP LEADER. Oh, are you okay there?

ROO. Sorry, I just wondered what time this ends?

GROUP LEADER. Oh, yes, sorry... it's Roo isn't it?

GROUP ADMIN. *(Jumps in)* 6:30. It's on the flyer.

GROUP LEADER. Yes, thanks Jackie. Yes, we finish at 6:30.

ROO. I think my Dad's picking me up at 6.

GROUP LEADER. Okay, that's fine. But for next week, it's 6:30. Is that okay?

*BADMINTON GIRL runs in, out of breath and dressed in sports clothes.*

BADMINTON GIRL. I'm so sorry I'm late, the traffic was/ really bad.

GROUP LEADER. /Don't worry, don't worry, we've only just started. There's a seat just there for you. Catch your breath and Jackie will get you a biscuit. Thanks Jackie.

*BADMINTON GIRL looks confused, but obeys instructions.*

GROUP LEADER. So... welcome, everyone, to our Young Carers group. And a special welcome to our new members - we're so pleased you're here. This is a safe space and there's no pressure to share anything you don't want to share...

*BADMINTON GIRL raises her hand.*

GROUP LEADER. Oh... just hold that thought for now, if you can? Just whilst I finish the introduction. Is that okay?

BADMINTON GIRL. Well, it's just, I'm not sure if... if I should be here.

GROUP LEADER. It's okay, people often feel like that in their first meeting.

TWIN 1. We were so nervous when we first came, weren't we?

TWIN 2. We were. Like, *really* nervous.

TWIN 1. And you're not the only newbie.

TWIN 2. (*Gesturing to ROO*) Yeah, he's new too.

TWIN 1 & 2. We'll look after you.

BADMINTON GIRL. It's not that, it's just/

GROUP ADMIN. /Sorry to interrupt, but it might be worth introducing the Circle Method?

GROUP LEADER. Yes... thank you Jackie. Jake, perhaps you'd to explain the Circle Method?

JAKE. (*Reluctant*) Can someone else?

GROUP LEADER. You're normally so good at helping.

JAKE. I don't feel like it/ today.

GROUP ADMIN. (*Interrupts*) Well, it's simple really. Each week we use Circle Method to take it in turns to go round the circle to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak.

GROUP LEADER. Thank you Jackie. So, unless something is urgent/

GROUP ADMIN. /It prevents interruptions.

GROUP LEADER. *(they take a breath)* Quite. So, unless it's urgent, we will follow the Circle Method, if that's okay with everyone? So... would you like to start Roo? Perhaps you'd like to tell us why you're here?

ROO. Erm... can someone else go first please?

GROUP LEADER. Okay... that's okay. Jake, would you like to help put Roo at ease? As someone who's been coming for some time now, perhaps you could introduce yourself?

JAKE. Do I have to?

TWIN 1. Shall we start?

TWIN 2. I was going to say that!

GROUP ADMIN. *(Impatient)* Remember the Circle Method everyone!

GROUP LEADER. Yes, thank you Jackie. Jake... I'd really like you to start please. Why don't you tell us why you come to the group?

JAKE. Fine. Well... my grandad has dementia... and cos I live with him, and my nan...I have to help him... and stuff.

GROUP LEADER. Beautiful. Thank you Jake. Roo, would you be happy to share now?

ROO. Erm... okay. It's my mum... who has dementia.

TWIN 1. No way! Our dad has it.

TWIN 2. What type?

ROO. Erm... Young-Onset... Alzheimer's. I think.

TWIN 1. No way!

TWIN 2. Samesies!

GROUP ADMIN. *(Raised voice)* Circle Method, please!

GROUP LEADER. *Thank you Jackie, but it's okay. This is all lovely stuff. Thank you so much for sharing Roo - that's really brave. Twins, perhaps you could talk to Roo next week? If that would be helpful Roo?*

ROO. Erh... yeah... okay.

TWIN 2. We'll help you.

*BADMINTON GIRL's bag falls off of her lap. Shuttlecocks spill out onto the floor. She quickly picks them up, embarrassed.*

TEAM LEADER. Whoopsy! Not to worry. Perhaps you would like to introduce yourself now? What brings you here?

BADMINTON GIRL. Well... actually... erm... I'm supposed to be at badminton club... hence *(she gestures to the shuttlecocks)* ... I think I got the wrong time?

TEAM LEADER. Oh gosh, why didn't you say?

BADMINTON GIRL. Well... I was trying when I ... anyway, it's okay. Actually, I think my neighbour has it. Dementia, I mean. And maybe this might be... I dunno...helpful/

GROUP ADMIN. /Sorry to interrupt, but if you come and see me at the end, I can take your details and give you one of our flyers.

GROUP LEADER. Thank you Jackie. *(To BADMINTON GIRL)* You're very welcome to join us. And we can certainly help you to learn more about how to help your neighbour.

TWIN 1. Can we do another Dementia Friends session?

TWIN 2. That's where our badges are from!

GROUP LEADER. Well... there are enough new starters, so that's probably a good idea.

TWIN 1. Roo... how old is your mum?

ROO. *(Conscious of JAKE)* Oh... I'd rather not... erm...

TWIN 2. Our dad was 55 when he first got it.



TWIN 1. You're not alone Roo. We all help each other, don't we Jake?

JAKE. *(Embarrassed)* Yeah.

GROUP LEADER. Loooovely stuff. Okay, well I think we'll pause there. I'm conscious you need to leave early Roo, so we'll have a short biscuit break and hopefully we'll see you next week?

*The group start talking amongst themselves as GROUP ADMINISTRATOR passes round the biscuits.*

JAKE. *(Awkward)* Roo... I'm... well... I just wanted to say... I'm sorry. About your mum.

ROO. *(Taken back)* Right... yeah... erm, thanks.

JAKE. You'll be alright y'know... I mean... you'll be different... but you'll be alright.... Anyway, see you tomorrow... at school?

ROO. Yeah... maybe. I mean, probably. Anyway... thanks.

JAKE. S'alright. You'll come back, won't you? To this, I mean.

ROO. Yeah... I think I will...

*ROO collects his things and goes to leave.*

GROUP ADMIN. Oh Roo, please take some digestives with you. *Someone* made an error with the order. We've got far too many!

*He takes a handful.*

GROUP LEADER. See you next week Roo. We look forward to having you back.

ROO. Thanks. Me too.

TWIN 1 & 2. Bye Roo!

GROUP ADMIN. *(Calling after him)* 6:30 finish!

GROUP LEADER. *Thank you, Jackie.*

## 21. DREAM 4

*ROO is sound asleep inside a lifeboat, drifting.*

*A baby cries. ROO wakes.*

*He spots MUM nearby, cradling a baby.*

*The crying turns to giggles and baby chatter. A happy sound.*

*ROO moves towards MUM. Their worlds become one.*

*He sits with her.*

*They sing a lullaby together. Soothing.*

*They are content.*

## 22. EVERYWHERE

*The Theatre Royal. The auditorium is full and the sound of an excitable audience can be heard. A band is warming up. ROO, DAD, GLADYS, PIP, PIP's MUM and PIP's MAMA are all sitting together in the audience.*

GLADYS. I feel so nervous for her! A solo! How many do you think are here Roo?

ROO. *(Looks around at the rows of seats)* Lots!

PIP. She's mega brave... I'd be bricking it!

DAD. Gladys, has Roo told *you* what she's singing? I know he's been helping her...

GLADYS. Afraid not, love. It's all so exciting isn't it! I can't remember the last time I came to the theatre. I had no idea what to wear!

ROO. Dad, please try to chill. She's ready.

DAD. She just didn't seem herself this morning. Her speech... it was more... jumbled than normal.

ROO. Probably just nerves - she'll be fine.

DAD. I dunno... I think it was more than that.

PIP'S MAMA. James, are we allowed to take pictures? It'd be a shame for Stella not to have any.

PIP'S MUM. I saw a sign saying no photos, but they're recording it.

*The band stops warming up as members of THE CHOIR start entering the stage. The audience slowly starts to go quiet.*

GLADYS. Oh, look! Here they come!

DAD. My hands are sweating.

ROO. She's got this.

DAD. Are you sure she was alright, when Anne picked her up?

ROO. Dad, stop worrying!

DAD. Where is she? I can't see her.

GLADYS. Front row! Next to Anne.

*As THE CHOIR gets into formation, LUCA steps forward to address the audience. MUM and ANNE are in the front row. ANNE is holding MUM's hand, but is unable to resist waving to ROO and co. with her other one. MUM is holding a lyrics sheet in the other hand. She remains looking forward.*

LUCA. Good evening, one and all, and welcome to tonight's special performance of 'Voices Together'. I've been fortunate enough to be working with this wonderful choir for... gosh... a number of years now. And in this time we've sadly lost some of our friends, who I'd like to think are all here with us this evening... in the music we are about to sing... But we've also made some fantastic new friends in recent years. One of whom has bravely agreed to sing a solo in our first song of the evening. Please... put your hands together for...

Stella Johnson.

*Applause. LUCA gestures to MUM to step forward, into the spotlight. MUM is frozen to the spot. ANNE tries to encourage her but she doesn't move. The auditorium falls into silence.*

DAD. She's not moving. Why isn't she moving?

GLADYS Oh dear, come on Stella. We're all here for you.

*MUM stumbles slightly and drops her lyric sheet. ANNE picks it up for her.*

LUCA. Whoops! Not to worry Stella. Ready?

DAD. I need to go down there. She shouldn't be doing this. It's all too much.

ROO. *(To himself)* Come on Mum. Deep breath.

DAD. *(Starts to stand)* I'm going down there.

ROO. *(Holds Dad's hand, encouraging him to sit)* Dad, it's okay. Just give her a minute. She wants to do it. She *can* do it.

*DAD hesitantly sits back down, not letting go of ROO's hand.*

*The band start playing the introduction to EVERYWHERE by Fleetwood Mac. ANNE encourages MUM to look up to where DAD and ROO are sitting.*

ROO. *(Waving at Mum)* Dad, she's looking! Wave to her! Wave!

*DAD and GLADYS both join in with the waving. Followed by the rest of the group.*

*As MUM spots them all it is like a weight has lifted. She smiles, returns the wave, and steps forward. ANNE mouths a 'thank you' up to ROO.*

DAD. *(Struggling to contain his emotion)* It's Everywhere. They're playing Everywhere. That's our song....

ROO. Surprise!

DAD. *(Tearful)* I'm *not* crying...

*PIP'S MAMA passes a tissue down the row for DAD, and gets one ready for herself and PIP'S MUM.*

*THE CHOIR perform their version of EVERYWHERE. It's uplifting. Totally joyful. As the performance continues, MUM grows in confidence. Shining. Her solo is a huge success.*

*At the end of the performance, the whole choir takes a bow to a rupture of applause and cheers.*

*LUCA steps forward and holds MUM'S hand in the air, encouraging her to take a bow of her own. GLADYS let's out a 'whoooo' and PIP and ROO stand up to clap. The atmosphere is electric.*

*The sound of the applause slowly turns into background noise, as MUM looks up to DAD and ROO in the audience. Everyone else appears to fade away, until it is only the three of them there - as if it was only ever the three of them there.*

*MUM takes one more bow, slower this time, more considered, and blows each of them a kiss.*

### **23. THE BRIGHTEST LIGHT**

*Home. ROO and DAD are in the kitchen, preparing lunch together. SPUD is getting under their feet, hoping for scraps.*

DAD. I'm sorry I haven't taken you out on the boat for a while Rooster. I guess we've been a bit...well... busy... with other things.

ROO. It's okay Dad. It can wait.

DAD. Things might be a bit less... fun, sometimes... not all the time though. We'll still do stuff... you and me. And mum.

ROO. Dad, it's fine. I understand.

DAD. Roo... I'm trying to... y'know...to talk. To apologise, actually...You shouldn't have found out the way you did...

ROO. I *am* sorry I took the letter. I didn't mean to upset you... I just -

DAD. You didn't do anything wrong Roo. We should have told you. Your mum wanted to actually... but I think... well, I think when you got angry... I got angry too...

ROO. Noticed that.

DAD. Fair comment! I didn't understand why though... at the time, I mean. But I've been chatting to people...at the group. It helps, doesn't it?

*ROO has gone quiet.*

Sounds cheesy but... I wanted to save her... or fix it... or... just make it better or something. I thought I could do that before you even found out... I think what I'm trying to say is that I was angry because I knew, really ... I knew I couldn't.... y'know, fix things.

ROO. So... why were you angry with me?

DAD. That's what I'm trying to say Roo... I wasn't. I was angry with myself, I think... or with the dementia... or just the whole thing... with it being out of our control.

*ROO nods in agreement.*

I'm kicking myself... I should have just talked to you... I didn't realise you thought I was angry with you... that must have been...

ROO. Shit?

DAD. Yeah... that must have been shit. I'm sorry Roo... really. But as for your mum... she's a smart cookie... she knew all of this before I'd even accepted it was happening.

ROO. She's the best.

*They carry on preparing lunch in silence for a moment, reflecting on what's been said.*

DAD. She needs us though Roo. We'll need to... y'know... to step up a bit now. We'll be a team.

*MUM quietly enters the kitchen, pausing in the doorway to take in ROO & DAD talking. Relieved.*

We're both so proud of you. With how you're dealing with it all.

MUM. *(Playfully)* Come on chatterboxes, how long does it take to make a salad?

DAD. *(Places the tea towel over his arm, like a posh waiter!)* Apologies madame, lunch shall be served shortly madame.

ROO. *(Joining in with the joke)* Champagne madame?

MUM. How lovely... but what are we toasting?

ROO. You!

DAD. *(Raising a pretend glass)* Yes, to your Mum... Stella Johnson.

ROO. Come on Mum, raise your glass!

*The three of them raise their pretend glasses in the air.*

DAD. Cheers!

MUM & ROO. Cheers!

*SPUD barks.*

ROO. Yes Spud!

DAD. It's like drinking the stars.

### **EPILOGUE (Version 1)**

*(If the statistics or progress in dementia research has not changed significantly since this play was written, in 2023, then feel free to use the following epilogue. If this feels dated, please use Version 2.)*

*ROO takes pride in putting on a lab coat. He gestures to the FUTURE SCIENTISTS, inviting them back on stage.*

ROO. I'm ready.

*The FUTURE SCIENTISTS and ROO deliver the following:*

ROO There are 900,000 people living with dementia in the UK

- and 55 million worldwide.

\* Although there is currently no cure for dementia

ALL behind the scenes,

- investment in dementia research is growing.

- Neuroscientists
  - Geneticists
  - Mathematicians
  - Engineers
  - Software developers
  - Doctors
  - Charities
- ROO People with dementia and their families,
- \* friends
- and communities,
  - are all contributing to research,
- ROO all determined to change things for the better,
- working to find the causes of dementia,
  - to find new treatments,
  - to slow it down.
  - Clinical trials
  - Focus groups
  - Memory walks
- \* People jumping out of planes!
- Running great distances
- ALL and performing plays!
- ROO To help people with dementia to be accepted,



- understood,  
- supported,  
- and to live well  
ALL until a cure can be found.

ROO There are approximately 86 billion neurons inside our brains.

- A third of the number of stars in the milky way.  
- Helping us to collaborate,  
- to share skills,  
\* to acquire knowledge,  
- and solve complex puzzles.

- 86 billion neurons  
- enabling us to care,

ROO to love,

ALL to have hope.

*End.*

## **EPILOGUE (Version 2)**

*(If things have progressed significantly in the world of dementia research since this play was written, in 2023, you may want to do your own research and to add to, or edit, the text below.)*

*ROO takes pride in putting on a lab coat. He gestures to the FUTURE SCIENTISTS, inviting them back on stage.*

ROO. I'm ready.

*The FUTURE SCIENTISTS and ROO deliver the following:*

ROO            This play was written in 2023.

-                At the time it was written

\*                there was no cure for dementia

-                and for every one dementia researcher

-                there were four researchers working on cancer. But,

ALL            behind the scenes,

-                investment in dementia research was growing.

-                Neuroscientists

-                Geneticists

-                Mathematicians

-                Engineers

-                Software developers

-                Doctors

-                Charities

ROO            People with dementia and their families,

\*                friends

-                and communities,

-                were all contributing to research,

ROO            all determined to change things for the better,

-                working to find the causes of dementia,

-                acting to slow it down

- and to find new treatments.
- Clinical trials
- Focus groups
- Memory walks
- \* People jumping out of planes!
- and running great distances

ROO to help people with dementia to be accepted,

ALL understood,

- supported,
- and to live well
- until a cure can be found.

*The section below is a suggestion. It can be edited, to include your discoveries of progress that has been made.*

- The year is now [INSERT YEAR].

ROO There are [NUMBER] people living with dementia in the UK

- And [NUMBER] people worldwide.

- Progress is still being made.

- Since 2023, there have been the following discoveries:

[YOUR OWN LIST OF DISCOVERIES - ADD ANYTHING YOU FIND POSITIVE/HOPEFUL - IT COULD BE A TREATMENT, A BREAKTHROUGH, A STATISTIC]

- And people continue to:

[LIST OF THINGS PEOPLE ARE DOING e.g. FUNDRAISING CHALLENGES, SPECIFIC RESEARCH.]

END THE LIST WITH:]

ALL           and perform plays!

ROO           There are approximately 86 billion neurons inside our brains.

-             A third of the number of stars in the milky way.

-             Helping us to collaborate,

-             to share skills,

\*             to acquire knowledge,

-             and solve complex puzzles.

-             86 billion neurons

-             enabling us to care.

ROO           To love.

ALL           To have hope.

*End.*