



multiplay  
drama

# small

Holly Robinson



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## **Characters**

IVAN, *founder and CEO of Krolik Lapin*

ZARA, *COO of Krolik Lapin*

KATHY, *a senior doctor*

MARCUS, *a doctor*

MEGAN, *a clinical psychiatrist*

CHARLIE, *an education expert/teacher*

BRAD, *a nurse*

MATT, *an editor of a newspaper*

DOM, *a journalist*

HARRIET, *a participant*

TIMMY, *a participant*

ANNIE, *a participant*

OLIVIA, *a participant*

LUCY, *a participant*

LIAM, *a participant*

ADAM, *a participant*

LOUISE, *Annie's girlfriend*

DARREN, *Lucy's estranged father*

ROSIE, *Olivia's twin*

## **Note**

The stage directions are sparse but there could and should be a real physical language to the play.

# indicates a pause.

Things should feel clinical. Experimental. Possible.

Lines in [square brackets] should not be read and are just to indicate an unfinished thought.

(Somewhere under everything is a childlike wonder. A magic.)

### **Excerpts from the Participants' Tapes**

TIMMY. Right then. Well hello.

HANNAH. They thought it might help if we explained. Or tried to.

ADAM. You might not understand yet why I would do this – that's okay. One day you will.

ANNIE. It's extremely surreal to be talking to myself in the future. Very weird. Hello!

LIAM. I want to believe I'll see the stars again.

OLIVIA. I hope she's forgiven us. I hope she visits us. You. Me.

LUCY. They said you'd be well looked after. And I think, I think you deserve that.

LUKE. It's my last chance.

TIMMY. I can't wait to just be able to run and run and run –

### **Lucy & Darren**

LUCY. Thanks for agreeing to meet me and answering all those / questions.

DARREN. Of course. It's, I'm. I'm so pleased you got in touch. It means. Um.

LUCY. You haven't asked me why / I need to know –

DARREN. It's not my place to ask. I'm just so glad to have met you again. Really. I.

LUCY. Well. Thank you.

DARREN. Was, there, was there anything else? You know. Now you've got down whether my third-aunt-twice-removed ever had kidney stones. I'm not trying to turn this into – but if there is anything else you want to know.

*She hesitates.*

LUCY. Actually –

DARREN. Because you can ask me anything.

LUCY. Well –

DARREN. There's lots of stuff that, yeah, I'm not, you know, proud of. But I'll tell you anything. Explain anything.

LUCY. That's really –

DARREN. Everything between me and your mum. We were very, very young. You know. Too young really. So I don't blame her for taking you back to, to. At least it got you that nice accent instead of my / twang.

LUCY. I don't want to talk about Mom.



DARREN. Oh, right. Of course. It must still be. When I found out. I was. [Winded.] You know.

LUCY. Yeah, I –

DARREN. Only had that once before, you know. When I. At the hospital when you. Did you know I was there, when you were born? I was there. I held you before your mum actually. I was around a lot when you were [younger]. I don't suppose you remember.

LUCY. No. I don't.

DARREN. Right. I've got photos. I could show you. The photos.

LUCY. Actually, that's sort of, what I wanted to ask you about –

DARREN. I've got loads of photos. Of you. And me. And your mum. Before you and when she was – pregnant. There's a great one at a fancy-dress party. She did Madonna with the – *(He mimes cone boobs, realises what he's doing, stops.)* You can have them all. The photos.

LUCY. It's not photos, I want.

DARREN. No, of course. Photos aren't the same as, as uh memories and / all that –

LUCY. Will you let me get a word in? Jesus. I know you've got a lot to say. But I really did come here to ask some questions? Specific questions. And I wouldn't even be here if Mum was still. I don't have anyone to ask. Mum, Nanny and Grandpa. They're all. They're all dead.

So the only person left from my – is you. You were round until I was – what – five.

DARREN *goes to answer but stops himself.*

I don't remember, really. But you're the only one left. A total stranger, really. Like yes a stranger who sort of has my eyes which is very. But a total stranger who apparently doesn't know when to stop talking.

So please. I know this is. But I just want to ask you –

DARREN. You can ask me anything.

LUCY. Was I happy? When I was a child? Was I happy?

### **Pre-Screening**

ZARA/MARCUS/KATHY/BRAD/MEGAN/CHARLIE. Hello

Hi

Good afternoon

Thanks so much for

Taking the time

We've just got a few

Pre-screening

Completely routine  
 Simple but slightly personal  
 Questions  
 As you know – we're looking for  
 Healthy  
 Men and women  
 Women and men  
 I know those categories seem antiquated  
 Male and female participants  
 Between the ages of  
 Twenty-one to twenty-six  
 For this initial phase  
 For this first stage  
 So that's what the questions are trying to determine  
 You can stop at any time  
 You don't have to answer  
 But in order to progress to the  
 Next stage of screening  
 You must answer every question  
 Are you ready?  
 Shall we begin?

IVAN. Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

### **Timmy & Harriet**

TIMMY. Why are you crying?

HARRIET. That's. I'm not. It's the eye drops. They were doing my eye test.

TIMMY. Right. So that was your physical assessment. When's your physical screening? Have you passed your psych eval yet?

HARRIET *looks uncomfortable*.

Sorry – that's.

You're probably not meant to ask.

#

Bit forward, eh?

*He laughs – a kind of childlike guffaw.*

I'm just absolutely fascinated by all this. Turned me into a right geek. 'Have you passed your psych eval.' Piss off, Timmy.

*She is charmed enough by this to answer.*

HARRIET. Not forward. I just, we've just [met] –

TIMMY. No, course not. Like I said. Right geek. Never liked science before. I liked geography. Did geography at Manchester. Well I thought I liked geography but I think I actually just liked school. Being around your mates constantly, you know. Uni was good for that. Did you go?

HARRIET. To Exeter. For my undergrad.

TIMMY. Fuck, you've got a master's. I wanted to do that. Doss about a bit more but not clever enough really. Not that it's dossing. Sorry.

HARRIET. It is a little. I'm getting my PhD. Was getting. Am getting.

TIMMY. Yeah, tenses start getting tricky, don't they?

HARRIET. Yes. They do.

TIMMY. What's your PhD in?

HARRIET. Um.

TIMMY. Is that private too?

HARRIET. No, it's just. It's in children's literature.

TIMMY. Wow. Fuck me. The psychiatrist is going to have a field day with that.

Sorry, I'm joking. I didn't know you could do that.

HARRIET. Yeah, a couple of places do it.

TIMMY. *Harry Potter* and stuff?

HARRIET. I mean, you can do. A lot of people do. I think it's a bit like doing geography and only caring about oxbow lakes.

TIMMY....

That was a geography joke! That was funny! No one tells geography jokes. Oxbow lakes. What do you do then? Something less mainstream than oxbow lakes?

HARRIET. My thesis is on, um, *Peter Pan*. Which is still quite mainstream, I suppose. That's why I laughed. Before, when you asked why I was crying. In the book, Wendy asks Peter –

TIMMY/HARRIET. Boy, why are you crying?

HARRIET. Have you read it?!

TIMMY. No but there's this really old film, you probably haven't heard of it, it's *Peter Pan* but there's baseball too and –

TIMMY/HARRIET. *Hook*.

TIMMY. Remember when they all chant his name, Ru-fi-o! Ru-fi-o! Ru-fi-o!

Do you think – do you think that's what it'll be like? Like – like sort of –

HARRIET. Neverland?

TIMMY. That's stupid, isn't it? Like I said. Ignore me!

*She is charmed enough by this to answer.*

HARRIET. My psych eval is tomorrow. Somehow, I don't think my thesis choice is going to be the stickiest point.

TIMMY. Ha. Fuck.

Then all steam ahead until January 3rd.

HARRIET. Sounds like a birthday.

TIMMY. It is kind of, isn't it?

HARRIET. I like that, a birthday.

TIMMY. Only your mates are much less likely to take you to All Bar One to celebrate.

HARRIET. Thank fuck.

*He beams at her swearing, he didn't expect that.*

DR KATHY. Tim? We're ready for you now.

## **Ivan & Zara**

IVAN. Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

I want to tell you a story. You are the first generation to hear this story – because we didn't know it before.

If I were to go back to the 1800s and tell a child that one day man would walk on the Moon – they would think I was a madman.

If I were to tell an old woman in the 1920s that one day we would clone a sheep – she would think I was a madman.

We couldn't imagine the Moon Landing until those first small steps. We couldn't imagine Dolly until we heard her baa.

Now, Barbra Streisand has cloned her dog Samantha four times.

If I were to tell you that we are about to decouple time and age, you would think I am a madman.

I am not a madman.

We think of time and age as being inextricably linked – but what if they weren't? What if they didn't have to be?

When I stand here today, I stand on the shoulders of the giants of epigenetics who came before me. Yamanaka turned the stem cells of adult mice into pluripotent cells with his reprogramming factors. We moved quickly from returning cells to embryonic states to reversing cellular age more specifically in a matter of years. And from cells, with some of

the brightest minds working alongside us here at Krolik Lapin, my teams were able to begin experimenting on whole organism transformation.

Sorry, that's a lot of science.

You will have all seen the puppies. Yes, yes. I know. It was pretty cynical to use Labradors as our showpiece! Like an Andrex commercial. But transforming an eight-month-old mouse into a two-month-old mouse is much less impressive than a twelve-year-old dog into a one-year-old puppy.

And significantly less cute.

You've seen it. A dog to a puppy. An entire transformation. It seems ridiculous. It seems like a fairytale. Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

That's how we got Krolik Lapin on everyone's lips. Puppies. But now we're going to blow their minds.

We are ready for Phase One in human trials of the Krolik Lapin Process.

We're going to turn back time. And in doing so, we might figure out an end to chronic diseases, to MS, to Huntington's, to dementia, to death.

We're going to take fully grown humans. Like you and me. And we're going to regenerate them. An adult human to a human child.

I sounds like a madman now, don't I?

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

Let the show begin.

ZARA. Um.

IVAN. Yes.

ZARA. It's good.

IVAN. Hm.

ZARA. It's very good.

IVAN. Hm.

ZARA. You're very good.

IVAN. I must be else I wouldn't be stood here in this very expensive clinic, in these very expensive trainers paying your very expensive consultation fee.

ZARA. Uh – yes.

IVAN. A fee I didn't pay for you to tell me how good I am, Zoe.

ZARA. Right...

IVAN. I know what I just said is good because it got me millions of pounds' worth of investment. But it's not getting 'normal people' to sign on the dotted line. So if you're just going to tell me how good I am then –

ZARA. It's not signing on the dotted line.

IVAN. It's not?



ZARA. No.

You're not getting them to change their phone provider. You don't just want them to sign on the dotted line. If you think that, this is never going to work and you should give up this fancy clinic and sell your fancy trainers whilst you're at it. You're asking them to risk – everything.

But you're also offering them something that's – that's beyond most people's wildest dreams. It's the stuff of fairytales and holy grails and that's the story you've got to tell. We don't need another Ivan Alagić TED Talk, we've seen them. You're asking them to join a quest. To be the story.

IVAN (*impressed*). Okay.

ANNA. And it's Zara, by the way.

IVAN. Zara?

ZARA. My name. It's not Zoe. It's Zara. Go again.

IVAN. Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

I want to tell you a story. You are the first generation to hear this story – because we didn't know it before.

ZARA. Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

I want to tell you a story. You are the first generation to hear this story – because we didn't know it before.

It's time to start believing in magic. You're about to make it.

## **Louise & Annie**

*They are both looking up things on their phones.*

ANNIE. Ostriches holding umbrellas –

LOUISE. Brain damage.

ANNIE. – On a skater dress! Were kids' clothes this cool when we were, you know –

LOUISE. Brain DEATH.

ANNIE. I don't remember them being this perfect or – ostrich-y. I love them. The amount of –

LOUISE. Thalidomide babies.

ANNIE. – times I've walked around the kids' section / in a clothes shop just wishing they made adult sizes and *now* –

LOUISE. You must have done that in school. With the pregnant woman and the babies with deformed – that might not be the right word but you know what I mean – deformed / little limbs.

ANNIE. Dungarees. They have pockets. Pockets!

LOUISE. PTSD. That's a big one. Common.

ANNIE. There is a conspiracy against adult women having pockets. I read once it's to make us buy bags. But kids won't buy Marc Jacobs so kids get pockets.

LOUISE. Organ failure.

ANNIE. Actually, is this one too pink? You know, I don't mind a bit of pink, I don't have like internalised whatever but how much pink is too much pink?

LOUISE. Lesbians don't wear pink.

ANNIE. Well, that's ridiculous. AND femmephobic. And –

LOUISE. So you are listening.

*ANNIE is caught out.*

ANNIE. Look at this dress, it's. It's exactly like this dress I had when I was five. So exactly. My mum would...

LOUISE. Neurological toxicity. Blindness, Annie. There was one in 2006 where the men lost fingers and toes.

ANNIE. You know if you START with brain death, you can't end up with a few fingers and toes. Ramping down ruins the effect, you need to ramp up to the big ones.

LOUISE. Death.

ANNIE. Yep. Like that. Very big one. You're ruining this for me, do you know that?

LOUISE. That is exactly what I am trying to do.

ANNIE. Will you look at these with me. Please? Please, Lou. It's important to me.

LOUISE. I will look at two things if you let me read you two of these.

ANNIE. That's not fun. It's not fun for me.

LOUISE. Do you think any of this is fun for me?

*This lands.*

ANNIE. Okay. Okay. You go first.

LOUISE. Really? Okay. Um. Let me just pick one. I wouldn't want to ramp down.

Last year, there was a trial, at the University of Minnesota, they were doing a trial on a memory enhancer drug.

Twenty-four volunteers. Half complained of headaches on the first day but the trial continued because what's a headache when you're trying to push the limits of scientific capabilities, of human capabilities.

The headaches got worse. Until, one of the nurses testified later, one of the volunteers begged her to cut off his head.

Eleven of the twelve who were on the drug got full-blown retrograde amnesia. That's when you can't remember your old memories. Any of them. Gone. The twelfth got retrograde and anterograde amnesia. She couldn't remember anything from before or make any new memories.

They went in thinking they were going to get these super-memories and instead, they couldn't remember their mothers' names.

*They look at each other. LOUISE is waiting, hoping.*

ANNIE. These shorts have gorillas making daisy-chains on them.

LOUISE. Nope. I can't.

ANNIE. You said, you got to do your thing / and I got to –

LOUISE. My 'thing'? 'My thing'? This isn't my thing. This is not something I want to be doing, it's not some fun project, it's –

ANNIE. So I guess tonight isn't the night to ask you to be on my list?

LOUISE. What list?

ANNIE. My visitation list. For after. The list of people who can visit me / when I'm –

LOUISE. There was a woman in France, they were trialling a new anti-psychotic, she was a healthy volunteer. A control. She went psychotic and pulled out her own eyes.

## **A Nick Hern Book**

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