

Blood Brothers was first performed at the Liverpool Playhouse on 8 January, 1983, with the following cast:

Mrs Johnstone (<i>Mother</i>)	Barbara Dickson
Mickey	George Costigan
Eddie	Andrew C. Wadsworth
Sammy	Peter Christian
Linda	Amanda York
Mrs Lyons	Wendy Murray
Mr Lyons	Alan Leith
Narrator	Andrew Schofield
Chorus	Hazel Ellerby
	Eithne Brown
	David Edge

Directed by Chris Bond

Designed by Andy Greenfield

Musical Director Peter Filleul

(Presented by arrangement with Bob Swash)

Blood Brothers was subsequently presented by Bob Swash, by arrangement with Liverpool Playhouse at the Lyric Theatre London, on 11 April, 1983, with the following cast:

Mrs Johnstone (<i>Mother</i>)	Barbara Dickson
Mickey	George Costigan
Eddie	Andrew C. Wadsworth
Sammy	Peter Christian
Linda	Kate Fitzgerald
Mrs Lyons	Wendy Murray
Mr Lyons	Alan Leith
Narrator	Andrew Schofield
Chorus	Hazel Ellerby
	David Edge
	Ian Burns
	Oliver Beamish

Directed by Chris Bond and Danny Hiller

Designed by Andy Greenfield

Musical Director Richard Spanswick

Act One

The Overture comes to a close.

Mrs Johnstone (*singing*) Tell me it's not true. Say it's just a story.

The Narrator steps forward.

Narrator (*speaking*) So did y' hear the story of the Johnstone twins?

As like each other as two new pins,
Of one womb born, on the self same day,
How one was kept and one given away?
An' did you never hear how the Johnstones died,
Never knowing that they shared one name,
Till the day they died, when a mother cried
My own dear sons lie slain.

The lights come up to show a re-enactment of the final moments of the play – the deaths of Mickey and Edward. The scene fades.

Mrs Johnstone *enters with her back to the audience.*

An' did y' never hear of the mother, so cruel,
There's a stone in place of her heart?
Then bring her on and come judge for yourselves
How she came to play this part.

The Narrator exits.

Music is heard as Mrs Johnstone turns and walks towards us. She is aged thirty but looks more like fifty.

Mrs Johnstone (*singing*) Once I had a husband,
You know the sort of chap,
I met him at a dance and how he came on with the chat.
He said my eyes were deep blue pools,
My skin as soft as snow,
He told me I was sexier than Marilyn Monroe.
And we went dancing,

We went dancing.

Then, of course, I found
That I was six weeks overdue.

We all had curly salmon sandwiches,
An' how the ale did flow,

They said the bride was lovelier than Marilyn Monroe.

And we went dancing,
Yes, we went dancing.

Then the baby came along,
We called him Darren Wayne,
Then three months on I found that I was in the club
again.

An' though I still fancied dancing,
My husband wouldn't go,
With a wife he said was twice the size of Marilyn
Monroe.

No more dancing
No more dancing.

By the time I was twenty-five,
I looked like forty-two,
With seven hungry mouths to feed and one more nearly
due.

Me husband, he'd walked out on me,
A month or two ago,
For a girl they say who looks a bit like Marilyn Monroe.

And they go dancing
They go dancing

Yes they go dancing
They go . . .

An male Milkman (the Narrator) rushes in to rudely interrupt the song.

Milkman Listen love, I'm up to here with hard luck stories;
you own me three pounds, seventeen and fourpence an' either

you pay up today, like now, or I'll be forced to cut off your deliveries.

Mrs Johnstone I said, I said, look, next week I'll pay y' . . .

Milkman Next week, next week! Next week never arrives around here. I'd be a rich man if next week ever came.

Mrs Johnstone But look, look, I start a job next week. I'll have money comin' in an' I'll be able to pay y'. Y' can't stop the milk. I need the milk. I'm pregnant.

Milkman Well, don't look at me, love. I might be a milkman but it's got nothin' to do with me. Now you've been told, no money, no milk.

The Milkman exits.

Mrs Johnstone stands alone and we hear some other kids, off

Kid One (off) Mam, Mam the baby's cryin'. He wants his bottle. Where's the milk?

Kid Two (off) 'Ey Mam, how come I'm on free dinners? All the other kids laugh at me.

Kid Three (off) 'Ey Mother, I'm starvin' an' there's nothin' in. There never bloody well is.

Mrs Johnstone (perfunctorily) Don't swear, I've told y'.

Kid Four (off) Mumm, I can't sleep, I'm hungry, I'm starvin' . . .

Kids (off) An' me, Mam. An' me. An' me.

Mrs Johnstone (singing) I know it's hard on all you kids,
But try and get some sleep.
Next week I'll be earnin',

We'll have loads of things to eat,
We'll have ham, an' jam, an' span an'

(*Speaking*) Roast Beef, Yorkshire Pudding, Battenberg
Cake,

Chicken an' Chips, Corned Beef, Sausages, Treacle Tart,
Mince an' Spuds, Milk Shake for the Baby:

There is a chorus of groaning ecstasy from the Kids.

Mrs Johnstone *picks up the tune again.*

When I bring home the dough,
We'll live like kings, like bright young things,
Like Marilyn Monroe.
And we'll go dancing . . .

Mrs Johnstone *hums a few bars of the song, and dances a few steps, as she makes her way to her place of work — Mrs Lyons' house. During the dance she acquires a brush, dusters and a mop bucket.*

Mrs Lyons' house where Mrs Johnstone is working.

Mrs Lyons *enters carrying a parcel.*

Mrs Lyons Hello, Mrs Johnstone, how are you? Is the job working out all right for you?

Mrs Johnstone It's, er, great. Thank you. It's such a lovely house it's a pleasure to clean it.

Mrs Lyons It's a pretty house isn't it? It's a pity it's so big. I'm finding it rather large at present.

Mrs Johnstone Oh. Yeh. With Mr Lyons being away and that? When does he come back, Mrs Lyons?

Mrs Lyons Oh, it seems such a long time. The Company sent him out there for nine months, so, what's that, he'll be back in about five months' time.

Mrs Johnstone Ah, you'll be glad when he's back won't you? The house won't feel so empty then, will it?

Mrs Lyons *begins to unwrap her parcel.*

Mrs Lyons Actually, Mrs J, we bought such a large house for the — for the children — we thought children would come along.

Mrs Johnstone Well y' might still be able to . . .

Mrs Lyons No, I'm afraid . . . We've been trying for such

a long time now . . . I wanted to adopt but . . . Mr Lyons is . . . well he says he wanted his own son, not someone else's. Myself, I believe that an adopted child can become one's own.

Mrs Johnstone Ah yeh . . . yeh. Ey, it's weird though, isn't it. Here's you can't have kids, an' me, I can't stop havin' them. Me husband used to say that all we had to do was shake hands and I'd be in the club. He must have shook hands with me before he left. I'm havin' another one y' know.

Mrs Lyons Oh, I see . . .

Mrs Johnstone Oh but look, look it's all right, Mrs Lyons, I'll still be able to do me work. Havin' babies, it's like clockwork to me. I'm back on me feet an' workin' the next day y' know. If I have this one at the weekend I won't even need to take one day off. I love this job, y' know. We can just manage to get by now —

She is stopped by Mrs Lyons putting the contents of the package, a pair of new shoes, on to the table.

Jesus Christ, Mrs Lyons, what are y' trying to do?

Mrs Lyons My God, what's wrong?

Mrs Johnstone The shoes . . . the shoes . . .

Mrs Lyons Pardon?

Mrs Johnstone New shoes on the table, take them off . . .

Mrs Lyons *does so.*

(Relieved) Oh God, Mrs Lyons, never put new shoes on a table . . . You never know what'll happen.

Mrs Lyons *(tugging its lacing)* Oh . . . you mean you're superstitious?

Mrs Johnstone No, but you never put new shoes on the table.

Mrs Lyons Oh go on with you. Look, if it will make you any happier I'll put them away.

Mrs Lyons exits with the shoes.

Music is heard as Mrs Johnstone wearily approaches the table and the Narrator enters.

Narrator There's shoes upon the table an' a joker in the pack, The salt's been spilled and a looking glass cracked, There's one lone magic overhead.

Mrs Johnstone I'm not superstitious.

Narrator The Mother said

Mrs Johnstone I'm not superstitious.

Narrator The Mother said.

The Narrator exits to re-enter as a Gynaecologist.

Mrs Johnstone What are you doin' here? The milk bill's not due 'till Thursday.

Gynaecologist *(producing a listening funnel)* Actually I've given up the milk round and gone into medicine. I'm your gynaecologist. *(He begins to examine her.)* OK, Mummy, let's have a little listen to the baby's ticker, shall we?

Mrs Johnstone I was dead worried about havin' another baby, you know, Doctor. I didn't see how we were gonna manage with another mouth to feed. But now I've got me a little job we'll be OK. IF I'm careful we can just scrape by, even with another mouth to feed.

The Gynaecologist completes his examination.

Gynaecologist Mouths, Mummy.

Mrs Johnstone What?

Gynaecologist Plural, Mrs Johnstone. Mouths to feed. You're expecting twins. Congratulations. And the next one please, Nurse.

The Gynaecologist exits.

Mrs Johnstone, *numbed by the news, moves back to her work, dusting the table upon which the shoes had been placed.*

Mrs Lyons enters.

Mrs Lyons Hello, Mrs J. How are you?

There is no reply.

(Registering the silence) Mrs J? Anything wrong?

Mrs Johnstone I had it all worked out.

Mrs Lyons What's the matter?

Mrs Johnstone We were just getting straight.

Mrs Lyons Why don't you sit down.

Mrs Johnstone With one more baby we could have managed. But not with two. The Welfare have already been on to me. They say I'm incapable of controllin' the kids I've already got. They say I should put some of them into care. But I won't. I love the bones of every one of them. I'll even love these two when they come along. But like they say at the Welfare, kids can't live on love alone.

Mrs Lyons Twins? You're expecting twins?

The Narrator enters.

Narrator How quickly an idea, planted, can Take root and grow into a plan.

The thought conceived in this very room Grew as surely as a seed, in a mother's womb.

The Narrator exits.

Mrs Lyons *(almost inaudibly)* Give one to me.

Mrs Johnstone What?

Mrs Lyons *(containing her excitement)* Give one of them to me.

Mrs Johnstone Give one to you?

Mrs Lyons Yes . . . yes.

Mrs Johnstone *(taking it almost as a joke)* But y' can't just . . .

Mrs Lyons When are you due?

Mrs Johnstone Errn, well about . . . Oh, but Mrs . . .

Mrs Lyons Quickly, quickly tell me . . . when are you due?

Mrs Johnstone July he said, the beginning of . . .

Mrs Lyons July . . . and my husband doesn't get back until the middle of July. He need never guess . . .

Mrs Johnstone (*amused*) Oh, it's mad . . .

Mrs Lyons I know, it is. It's mad . . . but it's wonderful, it's perfect. Look, look, you're what, four months pregnant, but you're only just beginning to show . . . so, so I'm four months pregnant and I'm only just beginning to show. (*She grabs a cushion and arranges it beneath her dress*) Look, look. I could have got pregnant just before he went away. But I didn't tell him in case I miscarried, I didn't want to worry him whilst he was away. But when he arrives home I tell him we were wrong, the doctors were wrong. I have a baby, our baby. Mrs Johnstone, it will work, it will if only you'll . . .

Mrs Johnstone Oh, Mrs Lyons, you can't be serious.

Mrs Lyons You said yourself, you said you had too many children already.

Mrs Johnstone Yeh, but I don't know if I wanna give one away.

Mrs Lyons Already you're being threatened by the Welfare people. Mrs Johnstone, with two more children how can you possibly avoid some of them being put into care? Surely, it's better to give one child to me. Look, at least if the child was with me you'd be able to see him every day, as you came to work.

Mrs Lyons *stares at Mrs Johnstone, willing her to agree.*

Please, Mrs Johnstone. Please.

Mrs Johnstone Are y' . . . are y' that desperate to have a baby?

Mrs Lyons (*singing*) Each day I look out from this window,

I see him with his friends, I hear him call,
I rush down but as I fold my arms around him,
He's gone. Was he ever there at all?
I've dreamed of all the places I would take him,
The games we'd play the stories I would tell,
The jokes we'd share, the clothing I would make him,
I reach out. But as I do. He fades away.

The melody shifts into that of Mrs Johnstone who is looking at Mrs Lyons, feeling for her. Mrs Lyons, gives her a half smile and a stung, perhaps slightly embarrassed at what she has revealed. Mrs Johnstone turns and looks at the room she is in. Looking up in awe at the comparative opulence and ease of the place. Tentatively and wondering she sings

Mrs Johnstone If my child was raised
In a palace like this one,

(He) wouldn't have to worry where
His next meal was comin' from.

His clothing would be (supplied by)
George Henry Lee.

Mrs Lyons *sees that Mrs Johnstone might be persuaded.*

Mrs Lyons (*singing*) He'd have all his own toys
And a garden to play in.

Mrs Johnstone He could make too much noise
Without the neighbours complainin'?

Mrs Lyons Silver trays to take meals on

Mrs Johnstone A bike with both wheels on?

Mrs Lyons *nods enthusiastically.*

Mrs Lyons And he'd sleep every night
In a bed of his own.

Mrs Johnstone He wouldn't get into fights
He'd leave matches alone.
And you'd never find him
Effin' and blindin'.

And when he grew up
He could never be told
To stand and queue up
For hours on end at the dole
He'd grow up to be

Mrs Lyons }
Mrs Johnstone } (*together*) A credit to me.

Mrs Johnstone To you.

Mrs Johnstone I would still be able to see him every day, wouldn't I?

Mrs Lyons Of course.

Mrs Johnstone An' . . . an' you would look after him, wouldn't y'?

Mrs Lyons (*singing*) I'd keep him warm in the winter

And cool when it shines.

I'd pull out his splinters

Without making him cry.

I'd always be there

If his dream was a nightmare.

My child.

My child.

There is a pause before Mrs Johnstone nods. Mrs Lyons goes across and kisses her, hugs her. Mrs Johnstone is slightly embarrassed.

Oh. Now you must help me. There's so much . . . I'll have to . . . (*She takes out the cushion*). We'll do this properly so that it's thoroughly convincing, and I'll need to see you walk, and baby clothes, I'll have to knit and buy bottles and suffer from piles.

Mrs Johnstone What?

Mrs Lyons Doesn't one get piles when one's pregnant? And buy a cot and . . . Oh help me with this, Mrs J. Is it in the right place? (*She puts the cushion back again.*) I want it to look right before I go shopping.

Mrs Johnstone (*helping her with the false pregnancy*) What you goin' the shops for? I do the shopping.

Mrs Lyons Oh no, from now on I do the shopping. I want everyone to know about my baby. (*She suddenly reaches for the Bible.*)

Music.

Mrs J, we must make this a, erm, a binding agreement.

Mrs Lyons shows the Bible to Mrs Johnstone, who is at first reluctant and then lays her hand on it.

The Narrator enters. A bass note, repeated as a heartbeat.

Narrator In the name of Jesus, the thing was done, Now there's no going back, for anyone.

It's too late now, for feeling torn

There's a pact been sealed, there's a deal been born.

Mrs Lyons puts the Bible away. Mrs Johnstone stands and stares as Mrs Lyons grabs shopping bags and takes a last satisfied glance at herself in the mirror.

Mrs Johnstone Why . . . why did we have to do that?

Mrs Lyons Mrs J, nobody must ever know. Therefore we have to have an agreement.

Mrs Johnstone nods but is still uncomfortable.

Right, I shan't be long. Bye.

Mrs Lyons exits.

Mrs Johnstone stands alone, afraid.

The heartbeat grows in intensity.

Narrator How swiftly those who've made a pact, Can come to overlook the fact.

Or wish the reckoning to be delayed

But a debt is a debt, and must be paid.

The Narrator exits.

As the heartbeat reaches maximum volume it suddenly stops and is replaced by the sound of crying babies.

Two nurses appear, each carrying a bundle. A pram is wheeled on.

The nurses hand the bundles to Mrs Johnstone who, smiling, places them into the pram. Making faces and noises at the babies she stops the crying. The babies settled, she sets off, wheeling the pram towards home. Various debt collectors emerge from her house to confront Mrs Johnstone.

Catalogue Man I'm sorry love . . . the kids said you were at the hospital. *(He looks into the pram.)* Ah . . . they're lovely, aren't they? I'm sorry love, especially at a time like this, but, you are twelve weeks behind in your payments. I've got to do this, girl . . .

Finance Man Y^r shouldn't sign for the bloody stuff, missis. If y^r know y^r can't pay, y^r shouldn't bloody well sign.

Catalogue Man Look, if y^r could give me a couple of weeks' money on this I could leave it.

Mrs Johnstone shakes her head.

Finance Man Y^r shouldn't have signed for all this stuff, should y^r? Y^r knew y^r wouldn't be able to pay, didn't y^r?

Mrs Johnstone *(almost to herself)* When I got me job, I thought I would be able to pay. When I went in the showroom I only meant to come out with a couple of things. But when you're standing there, it all looks so nice. When y^r look in the catalogue an' there's six months to pay, it seems years away, an' y^r need a few things so y^r sign.

Finance Man Yeh, well y^r bloody well shouldn't.

Mrs Johnstone *(coming out of her trance, angrily)* I know I shouldn't, you soft get. I've spent all me bleedin' life knowin' I shouldn't. But I do. Now, take y^r soddin' wireless and get off.

Catalogue Man Ah well as long as y^r can laugh about it, eh, that's the main thing isn't it?

The Catalogue Man exits.

Mrs Johnstone *(not laughing)* Yeh.

Other creditors continue to enter the house and leave with goods.

Mrs Johnstone *watches the creditors. The babies begin to cry and she moves to the pram, rocking it gently as she sings, as if to the babies in the pram. (Singing).*

Only mine until
The time comes round
To pay the bill.

Then, I'm afraid,
What can't be paid
Must be returned.

You never, ever learn,
That nothing's yours,
On easy terms.

Only for a time,
I must not learn,
To call you mine.
Familiarize

That face, those eyes
Make future plans
That cannot be confirmed.
On borrowed time,
On easy terms.

Living on the never never,
Constant as the changing weather,
Never sure
Who's at the door

Or the price I'll have to pay.
Should we meet again

I will not recognize your name.
You can be sure
What's gone before

Will be concealed.
Your friends will never learn
That once we were

On easy terms,
Living on the never never,
Constant as the changing weather,
Never sure
Who's at the door
Or the price I'll have to pay . . .

Mrs Lyons enters, still with the pregnancy padding.

Mrs Lyons They're born, you didn't notify me.

Mrs Johnstone Well I . . . I just . . . it's . . . couldn't I keep them for a few more days, please, please, they're a pair, they go together.

Mrs Lyons My husband is due back tomorrow, Mrs Johnstone. I must have my baby. We made an agreement, a bargain. You swore on the Bible.

Mrs Johnstone You'd better . . . you'd better see which one you want.

Mrs Lyons I'll take . . .

Mrs Johnstone No. Don't tell me which one. Just take him, take him. *(Singing)*

Living on the never never,
Constant as the changing weather,
Never sure
Who's at the door
Or the price I'll have to pay,
Should we meet again . . .

Mrs Lyons rapidly pulls out the padding from beneath her dress. Amongst it is a shawl which she uses to wrap around the baby before picking it up from the pram.

Mrs Lyons Thank you Mrs Johnstone, thank you. I'll see you next week.

Mrs Johnstone I'm due back tomorrow.

Mrs Lyons I know but why don't . . . why don't you take the week off, on full pay of course.

Mrs Lyon exits.

Mrs Johnstone turns and enters her house with the remaining twin in the pram.

Kid One (off) What happened to the other twin, Mother?

Kid Two (off) Where's the other twinny, Mam?

Mrs Johnstone He's gone. He's gone up to heaven, love. He's living with Jesus and the angels.

Kid Three (off) What's it like there Mam, in heaven?

Mrs Johnstone It's lovely son, he'll be well looked after there. He'll have anything he wants.

Kid One (off) Will he have his own bike?

Mrs Johnstone Yeh. With both wheels on.

Kid One (off) Why can't I have a bike? Eh?

Mrs Johnstone I'll . . . I'll have a look in the catalogue next week. We'll see what the bikes are like in there.

Kids (together, off) Mam, I want a Meccano set.
You said I could have a new dress, Mother.
Why can't I have an air pistol?
Let's look in the catalogue now, Mam.
It's great when we look in the catalogue, Mam.
Go on, let's all look in the catalogue.

Mrs Johnstone I've told y', when I get home, I've got to go to work.

Mr and Mrs Lyons enter their house and we see them looking at the child in its cot.

Mrs Johnstone enters and immediately goes about her work.

Mrs Johnstone stops work for a moment and glances into the cot, beaming and cooing. Mr Lyons is next to her with Mrs Lyons in the background, obviously agitated at Mrs Johnstone's fawning.

Aw, he's really comin' on now, isn't he, Mr Lyons? I'll bet y'^s dead proud of him, aren't y', aren't y', eh?

Mr Lyons (*good naturally*) Yes . . . yes I am, aren't I, Edward? I'm proud of Jennifer, too.

Mr Lyons *beams at his wife who can hardly raise a smile.*

Mrs Johnstone Ah . . . he's lovely. (*She coos into the cot.*) Ah look, he wants to be picked up, I'll just . . .

Mrs Lyons No, no, Mrs Johnstone. He's fine. He doesn't want to be picked up.

Mrs Johnstone Ah, but look he's gonna cry . . .

Mrs Lyons If he needs picking up, I shall pick him up. All right?

Mrs Johnstone Well, I just thought, I'm sorry I . . .

Mrs Lyons Yes. Ern, has the bathroom been done? Time is getting on.

Mrs Johnstone Oh. Yeh, yeh . . .

Mrs Johnstone *exits.*

Mr Lyons Darling, don't be hard on the woman. She only wanted to hold the baby. All women like to hold babies, don't they?

Mrs Lyons I don't want her to hold the baby, Richard. She's . . . I don't want the baby to catch anything. Babies catch things very easily, Richard.

Mrs Lyons All right, all right, you know best.

Mrs Lyons You don't see her as much as I do. She's always fussing over him; any opportunity and she's cooing and cuddling as if she were his mother. She's always bothering him, Richard, always. Since the baby arrived she ignores most of her work. (*She is about to cry.*)

Mr Lyons Come on, come on . . . It's all right, Jennifer. You're just a little . . . it's this depression thing that happens after a woman's had a . . .

Mrs Lyons I'm not depressed Richard; it's just that she makes me feel . . . Richard, I think she should go.

Mr Lyons And what will you do for help in the house?

Mrs Lyons I'll find somebody else. I'll find somebody who doesn't spend all day fussing over the baby.

Mr Lyons (*glancing at his watch*) Oh well, I suppose you know best. The house is your domain. Look, Jen, I've got a board meeting. I really must dash.

Mrs Lyons Richard, can you let me have some cash?

Mr Lyons Of course.

Mrs Lyons I need about fifty pounds.

Mr Lyons My God, what for?

Mrs Lyons I've got lots of things to buy for the baby, I've got the nursery to sort out . . .

Mr Lyons All right, all right, here. (*He hands her the money.*)

Mr Lyons *exits.*

Mrs Lyons *considers what she is about to do and then calls.*

Mrs Lyons Mrs Johnstone. Mrs Johnstone, would you come out here for a moment, please.

Mrs Johnstone *enters.*

Mrs Johnstone Yes?

Mrs Lyons Sit down. Richard and I have been talking it over and, well the thing is, we both think it would be better if you left.

Mrs Johnstone Left where?

Mrs Lyons It's your work. Your work has deteriorated.

Mrs Johnstone But, I work the way I've always worked.

Mrs Lyons Well, I'm sorry, we're not satisfied.

Mrs Johnstone What will I do? How are we gonna live without my job?

Mrs Lyons Yes, well we've thought of that. Here, here's . . . *(She pushes the money into Mrs Johnstone's hands.)* It's a lot of money . . . but, well . . .

Mrs Johnstone *(thinking, desperate. Trying to get it together.)* OK. All right. All right, Mrs Lyons, right. If I'm goin', I'm takin' my son with me, I'm takin' . . .

As Mrs Johnstone moves towards the cot Mrs Lyons roughly drags her out of the way.

Mrs Lyons Oh no, you're not. Edward is my son. Mine.

Mrs Johnstone I'll tell someone . . . I'll tell the police . . . I'll bring the police in an' . . .

Mrs Lyons No . . . no you won't. You gave your baby away. Don't you realize what a crime that is. You'll be locked up. You sold your baby.

Mrs Johnstone, *horrified, sees the bundle of notes in her hand, and throws it across the room.*

Mrs Johnstone I didn't . . . you told me, you said I could see him every day. Well, I'll tell someone, I'm gonna tell . . .

Mrs Johnstone starts to leave but Mrs Lyons stops her.

Mrs Lyons No. You'll tell nobody.

Music.

Because . . . because if you tell anyone . . . and these children learn of the truth, then you know what will happen, don't you? You do know what they say about twins, secretly parted, don't you?

Mrs Johnstone *(terrified)* What? What?

Mrs Lyons They . . . they say that if either twin learns that he once was a pair, they shall both immediately die. It means, Mrs Johnstone, that these brothers shall grow up, unaware of the other's existence. They shall be raised apart and never, ever told what was once the truth. You won't tell anyone

about this, Mrs Johnstone, because if you do, you will kill them.

Mrs Lyons picks up the money and thrusts it into Mrs Johnstone's hands. Mrs Lyons turns and walks away. The Narrator enters.

Narrator *(singing)* Shoes upon the table

An' a spider's been killed.

Someone broke the lookin' glass

A full moon shinin'.

An' the salt's been spilled.

You're walkin' on the pavement cracks

Don't know what's gonna come to pass.

Now y' know the devil's got your number,

y' know he's gonna find y',

y' know he's right behind y',

He's starin' through your windows

He's creepin' down the hall.

Ain't no point in clutching

At your rosary

You're always gonna know what was done

Even when you shut your eyes you still see

That you sold a son

And you can't tell anyone.

But y' know the devil's got your number,

y' know he's gonna find y',

y' know he's right behind y',

He's starin' through your windows

He's creeping down the hall.

Yes, y' know the devil's got your number

He's gonna find y'

y' know he's right behind y',

He's standin' on your step

And he's knocking at your door.

He's knocking at your door,

He's knocking at your door.

The Narrator exits.

During the song Mrs Johnstone has gone to her house and locked herself in.

Mickey *aged seven is knocking incessantly at the door. He is carrying a toy gun.*

Mrs Johnstone *(screaming; off)* Go away!

Mickey Mother . . . will y' open the bleedin' door or what?

Mrs Johnstone *(realising; with relief; off)* Mickey?

Mrs Johnstone *comes to open the door.*

Mickey Mann, Mann.

She grabs him and hugs him. He extricates himself.

Why was the door bolted? Did you think it was the rent man?

She laughs and looks at him.

Mann, our Sammy's robbed me other gun an' that was me best one. Why does he rob all me things off me?

Mrs Johnstone Because you're the youngest, Mickey. It used to happen to our Sammy when he was the youngest.

Mickey Mann, we're playin' mounted police an' Indians. I'm a mountie. Mann, Mann, y' know this mornin', we've wiped out three thousand Indians.

Mrs Johnstone Good.

Mickey *(aiming the gun at her and firing)* Mann, Mann, you're dead.

Mrs Johnstone *(staring at him)* Hmm.

Mickey What's up, Mann?

Mrs Johnstone Nothin' son. Go on, you go out an' play, there's a good lad. But, ey, don't you go playin' with those hooligans down at the rough end.

Mickey *(on his way out)* We're down at the other end, near the big houses in the park.

Mrs Johnstone Mickey! Come here.

Mickey What?

Mrs Johnstone What did you say, where have you been playin'?

Mickey Mann, I'm sorry, I forgot.

Mrs Johnstone What have I told you about playin' up near there. Come here. *(She grabs him.)*

Mickey It wasn't my fault. Honest.

Mrs Johnstone So whose fault was it then?

Mickey The Indians. They rode up that way, they were tryin' to escape.

Mrs Johnstone Don't you ever go up there. Do you hear me?

Mickey Yeh. You let our Sammy go up there.

Mrs Johnstone Our Sammy's older than you.

Mickey But why . . .

Mrs Johnstone Just shut up. Never mind why. You don't go up near there. Now go on, get out an' play. But you stay outside the front door where I can see y'.

Mickey Ah but, Mann, the . . .

Mrs Johnstone Go on!

Mrs Johnstone *exits.*

Mickey *makes his way outside. He is fed up. Desultory. Shoots down a few imaginary Indians but somehow the magic has gone out of genocide.*

Mickey *sits, bored, looking at the ants on the pavement.*

Mickey *(reclining)* I wish I was our Sammy

Our Sammy's nearly ten.

He's got two worms and a catapult

An' he's built a underground den.

But I'm not allowed to go in there,
I have to stay near the gate,
'Cos me Mam says I'm only seven,
But I'm not, I'm nearly eight!

I sometimes hate our Sammy,
He robbed me toy car y' know,
Now the wheels are missin' an' the top's broke off,
An' the bleedin' thing won't go.
An' he said when he took it, it was just like that,
But it wasn't, it went dead straight,
But y' can't say nothin when they think y' seven
An' y' not, y' nearly eight.

I wish I was our Sammy,
Y' wanna see him spit,
Straight in y' eye from twenty yards
An' every time a hit.
He's allowed to play with matches,
And he goes to bed dead late,
And I have to go at seven,
Even though I'm nearly eight.

Y' know our Sammy,
He draws nudey women,
Without arms, or legs, or even heads
In the baths, when he goes swimmin'.
But I'm not allowed to go to the baths,
Me Mam says I have to wait,
'Cos I might get drowned, 'cos I'm only seven,
But I'm not, I'm nearly eight.
Y' know our Sammy,
Y' know what he sometimes does?
He wees straight through the letter box
Of the house next door to us.
I tried to do it one night,
But I had to stand on a crate,
'Cos I couldn't reach the letter box
But I will by the time I'm eight.

Bored and petulant, Mickey sits and shoots an imaginary Sammy.

Edward *also aged seven appears. He is bright and forthcoming.*

Edward Hello.

Mickey *(suspiciously)* Hello.

Edward I've seen you before.

Mickey Where?

Edward You were playing with some other boys near my house.

Mickey Do you live up in the park?

Edward Yes. Are you going to come and play up there again?

Mickey No. I would do but I'm not allowed.

Edward Why?

Mickey 'Cos me mann says.

Edward Well, my mummy doesn't allow me to play down here actually.

Mickey 'Gis a sweet.

Edward All right. *(He offers a bag from his pocket.)*

Mickey *(shocked)* What?

Edward Here.

Mickey *(trying to work out the catch. Suspiciously taking one)* Can I have another one. For our Sammy?

Edward Yes, of course. Take as many as you want.

Mickey *(taking a handful)* Are you soft?

Edward I don't think so.

Mickey Round here if y' ask for a sweet, y' have to ask about, about twenty million times. An' y' know what?

Edward (*sitting beside Mickey*) What?

Mickey They still don't bleedin' give y' one. Sometimes our Sammy does but y' have to be dead careful if our Sammy gives y' a sweet.

Edward Why?

Mickey 'Cos, if our Sammy gives y' a sweet he's usually weed on it first.

Edward (*exploding in giggles*) Oh, that sounds like super fun.

Mickey It is. If y' our Sammy.

Edward Do you want to come and play?

Mickey I might do. But I'm not playin' now 'cos I'm pissed off.

Edward (*awed*) Pissed off. You say smashing things don't you? Do you know any more words like that?

Mickey Yeh. Yeh, I know loads of words like that. Y' know, like the 'F' word.

Edward (*chuckles*) Pardon?

Mickey The 'F' word.

Edward *is still pulled. Mickey looks round to check that he cannot be overheard, then whispers the word to Edward. The two of them immediately wriggle and giggle with glee.*

Edward What does it mean?

Mickey I don't know. It sounds good though, doesn't it?

Edward Fantastic. When I get home I'll look it up in the dictionary.

Mickey In the what?

Edward The dictionary. Don't you know what a dictionary is?

Mickey 'Course I do . . . It's a, it's a thingy innit?

Edward A book which explains the meaning of words.

Mickey The meaning of words, yeh. Our Sammy'll be here soon. I hope he's in a good mood. He's dead mean sometimes.

Edward Why?

Mickey It's 'cos he's got a plate in his head.

Edward A plate. In his head?

Mickey Yeh. When he was little, me Mam was at work an' our Donna Marie was supposed to be lookin' after him but he fell out the window an' broke his head. So they took him to the hospital an' put a plate in his head.

Edward A plate. A dinner plate?

Mickey I don't think so, 'cos our Sammy's head's not really that big. I think it must have been one of them little plates that you have bread off.

Edward A side plate?

Mickey No, it's on the top.

Edward And . . . and can you see the shape of it, in his head?

Mickey I suppose, I suppose if y' looked under his hair.

Edward (*after a reflective pause*) You know the most smashing things. Will you be my best friend?

Mickey Yeh. If y' want.

Edward What's your name?

Mickey Michael Johnstone. But everyone calls me Mickey. What's yours?

Edward Edward Lyons.

Mickey D' they call y' Eddie?

Edward No.

Mickey Well, I will.

Edward Will you?

Mickey Yeh. How old are y' Eddie?

Edward Seven.

Mickey I'm older than you. I'm nearly eight.

Edward Well, I'm nearly eight, really.

Mickey What's your birthday?

Edward July the eighteenth.

Mickey So is mine.

Edward Is it really?

Mickey Ey, we were born on the same day . . . that means we can be blood brothers. Do you wanna be my blood brother, Eddie?

Edward Yes, please.

Mickey (*producing a penknife*) It hurts y' know. (*He puts a nick in his hand.*) Now, give us yours.

Mickey nicks **Edward's hand**, then they clamp hands together.

See, this means that we're blood brothers, an' that we always have to stand by each other. Now you say after me: 'I will always defend my brother.'

Edward I will always defend my brother . . .

Mickey And stand by him.

Edward And stand by him.

Mickey An' share all my sweets with him.

Edward And share . . .

Sammy *leaps in front of them, gun in hand, pointed at them.*

Mickey Hi ya, Sammy.

Sammy Give us a sweet.

Mickey Haven't got any.

Edward Yes, you have . . .

Mickey *frantically shakes his head, trying to shut Edward up.*

Yea, I gave you one for Sammy, remember?

Sammy laughs at **Edward's** voice and **Mickey's** misfortune.

Sammy Y' little robbin' get.

Mickey No, I'm not. (*He hands over a sweet.*) An' anyway, you pinched my best gun.

Mickey *tries to snatch the gun from Sammy but Sammy is too fast.*

Sammy It's last anyway. It only fires caps. I'm gonna get a real gun soon, I'm gonna get an air gun.

Sammy *goes into a fantasy shoot out. He doesn't notice Edward who has approached him and is craning to get a close look at his head.*

(*Eventually noticing*) What are you lookin' at?

Edward Pardon.

Mickey That's Eddie. He lives up by the park.

Sammy He's a friggin' poshy.

Mickey No, he's not. He's my best friend.

Sammy (*snorting, deciding it's not worth the bother*) You're soft. Y' just soft little kids. (*In quiet disdain he moves away.*)

Mickey Where y' goin'?

Sammy (*looking at Mickey*) I'm gonna do another burial. Me worms have died again.

Mickey (*excitedly; to Edward*) Oh, y' comin' the funeral?

Our Sammy is having a funeral. Can we come, Sammy?

Sammy *puts his hand into his pocket and brings forth a handful of soil.*

Sammy Look, they was alive an wrigglin' this mornin'. But by dinner time they was dead.

Mickey and **Edward** inspect the deceased worms in **Sammy's** hand.