**Capital Theatres in association with Traverse Theatre presents**

**WHEN THE SUN MEETS THE SKY**

**By Robbie Gordon and Jack Nurse**

**AUDIO TRANSCRIPT**

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**EPISODE ONE**

I’m going to tell you a story. A story that remained a mystery for 70 years. Maybe you could even say it’s a bit of a ghost story.

See me? I'm a wee bit of a storyteller. I can spin the yarn for hours non-stop. So you’ll have to forgive me for all the detail but I think this one deserves it. It’s my favourite.

I promise you this a good story - so it’s worth a wee listen - it’s a special story, even. Special to me, anyway. I like it cause it’s all about hope, about family, loss – with a large side order of secrets by the way – you intae that? Knew you would be. Got you listening now.

70 years a mystery. Maybe you can solve this one faster than I did? But this isnae about me. This is about Maggie.

Maggie’s fae Edinburgh – Causewayside to be precise, do yous know it? Maggie’s story is one I’d like to share with you. If that’s alright?

Maggie is the proud age of 10 and 3 quarters. She is a wee pint-sized radge with curly ginger hair braided into pigtails. She’s got a massive smile on her face which is endearingly crooked and piercing blue eyes like puddles. And it’s June, so her cheeks are freckling with the summer sun.

She was born at the start of the war but times are different now the world is rebuilding. It’s the summer of 1949. And Maggie has got bags of curiosity and a wee bit of trouble in her eyes like all 10- and three-quarter year-olds-do. She’s noticing a change in the world but she can’t quite put her finger on it. Just last week she had to wear her woolly tights and her blazer to go out to play. Not anymore – she’s in a summery yellow polka dot dress and white socks now. And it’s still boiling.

We are in the Meadows. The grass is freshly cut – there’s a smell of ripe greenness that seems to hang in the air. There are newly blooming flowers taking up space were there were buds not too long ago and she is sitting amongst the flowers cross-legged putting the final pieces together of her daisy chain.

She’s been meticulously crafting it for maybe half an hour now. She carefully places it on her head like a crown – coronating herself with a final magnificent flourish:

Maggie I am Maggie – Queen of the Meadows!

Maggie loves a nickname. Her Mum calls her Margaret the Miracle because she was only ever able to have one bairn. It makes Maggie feel different – unique even. Margaret the Miracle.

Maggie I hate being called Margaret.

So we’ll call her Maggie the Miracle.

She picks up a stick and pretends it’s a rifle - like the one her dad had in the war. He travelled the world just like Maggie wants to one day. But her dad never made it back so it’s only her and her mum now. She doesn’t remember him really because she was a baby when he went.

Daisy chain complete and stick in hand, she fancies a new conquest. She spies something at the edge of the green. A vertical challenge, which might seem insurmountable to other wee lassies of her stature. But for her. It isnae.

She is climbing a lamp post.

One hand.

One foot.

Another hand.

Another foot.

Gripping tight onto the metal.

Lifting herself to new heights to survey her Kingdom. Her Queendom. She notices something out of the corner of her eye. A wee boy climbing the neighbouring lamppost. The boy’s about her age, maybe a year or two older.

He has blonde hair, an open mouth stare and eyes dark like a shark.

He stares at her.

If you were to take a photo of them up on their lampposts it’d be like a mirror image, or a reflection, or something like that.

Maggie smiles at the boy and he smiles back. She waves and he waves back. She climbs up the lamppost a little higher. The boy echoes this. Then again, Maggie goes up and the boy follows. Higher and higher they climb, like a race to the top of a mountain.

At the summit, they cheer, one arm outstretched as if they’ve conquered Arthurs Seat or even... Everest.  Maggie looks down at the street below and sees her Mum flying towards her like a Peregrin Falcon- she's mad about something.

Maggie Mah’s always mad about something

Maggie’s Mum is tall, gaunt and always immaculately dressed. And there is a sharpness to her face that makes you a wee bit scared to look her in the eyes even at the best of times.

And Maggie can tell from the look on her Mum’s face that this is not going to be the best of times. She scoots down the lamppost as if it was a fireman’s pole, one million times faster than when she went up.

She stands twiddling her wee ginger pigtails like butter wouldn’t melt.

Trying to pretend she wasn’t just up a lamppost.

Mum What have I told you Margaret? Not doing what you’re telt. Again! You could have died if you’d fallen down from up there.

She grabs Maggie by the shoulders and the crown falls off her head on to the cobbles.

Mum No mother should lose a child and you’re going the right way to making that happen. You’re also going the right way for a skelp. Up the road before I drag you up.

Maggie But… But…

Mum But what?

Maggie But the boy?

Mum What boy?

He’s vanished.

It’s the first magic trick that Maggie has ever seen. A vanishing act without explanation. She’s up all night thinking about who that boy was and where he went.

But she doesn’t have long to wait until the boy reveals himself again.

It’s a new day and she knows that a new adventure lies ahead.

Maggie’s stuck playing out the back green, which is dingey and shady, under her mum’s orders after the lamppost incident. She notices her silhouette in the tenement window casting a shadow over the glass, like a buzzard watching over her.

Maggie stands to attention like a tiny wee soldier, as she listens to her mum heading out, her steps accompanied by a cacophony of glass bottles clinking together. Maggie can’t believe she’s finished all of those bottles already. The more empties that appear the more Maggie sees her mum change. But Maggie doesn’t say anything about it as her mum takes her empties back to the shops.

Mum I’m away for the rations. You stay here or there’ll be trouble.

As soon as her mum’s gone, Maggie takes her opportunity to slip out for a wander with her pals. The sun is beaming down on the kids below running everywhere, playing and screaming. We’re back in the Meadows.

Maggie gets a wee rag tag gang together and starts to play hide and seek. Hurtling around like nobody’s business. Laughing and singing and experiencing life through the uniquely pure lens that is childhood. Oh to be a bairn again, eh?

It’s Maggie’s turn to be seeker and search for her pals. She likes being the seeker because of the thrill of the chase and the mystery of the unknown.

Maggie

3

2

1

Ready or not. Here I come.

Then she sees him.

It’s the boy again.

The same boy. The same blonde hair, open mouth stare and eyes dark like a shark. Staring at her. Again.

Maggie Hoi! You! Come play with us?

She moves towards him but as she gets closer, he turns on a sixpence and makes a dash for it.

He runs past a lady with her newborns in a pram. Maggie follows. He runs past an ice cream van making their best business of the year. And Maggie follows. He runs past a brother and sister flying a kite up high in the clear blue sky. Still Maggie follows.

She is running, harder now, chasing him and chasing him, through the grass and up onto Middle Meadow Walk.

The trees act like a big tunnel that they’re both shooting up.

He takes a sharp turn and the boy jumps a fence with an amazing athletic grace.

And Maggie jumps to follow. Less gracefully but she does it all the same.

They twist and turn and run and follow.

They are blood cells pumping around the veins of the city.

The boy turns down an alleyway and still Maggie’s close behind. He turns round and Maggie sees his face. She sees fear in it like he’s seen a ghost or something. They’ve reached a dead end, and just when Maggie thinks the race is run, and she has won, the boy scales the wall using a conveniently placed drainpipe that acts as a foothold. Maggie stares upwards. The boy’s gone. Vanished. Again. 

Maggie Wow.

There’s no option but to try and follow. He’s like a magnet drawing her in - for some reason following him feels wrong, forbidden even, but Maggie’s sense of adventure takes over. Propelling her towards him.

She climbs up, stretching out her hands. She’s just about to reach the top of the wall. It’s at her fingertips. She grits her teeth. She pushes her foot down onto the drainpipe but at the pivotal moment she slips and falls backwards. The world beneath her rushes upwards, as she slams and hits the ground with a cold hard “crack”.

Maggie’s vision is blurry.

She can just about see a landscape, mountains…a big lake…yellowy green trees. She can hear birdsong. She closes her eyes and opens them again, tries to sharpen her gaze by squinting. She focuses on the scenery and then she realises that she isn’t in the beautiful countryside or amongst the rolling hills, she is staring at a giant poster. THE CAIRNGORM MOUNTAINS: SEE SCOTLAND BY RAIL.

Maggie Where am I?

It smells clean. Maybe too clean. Sterile, even.

Maggie/Donald Wait.

She knows exactly where she is. She’s landed herself in the Sick Kids Hospital. Again! She’s always landing herself in Sick Kids.

Her head is pounding, her body aches and everything is a wee bit spinny. She looks down and sees a white cast wrapped around her left arm. Broken.

Maggie Again!

She has to lie there for ages. She is fed up. Like all bairns that age who are made to lie in their beds. Minutes feel like hours and hours feel like days. She can hear wails and groans from other lumps and bumps across the ward. The sunshine is beaming through the window, it has barely poked its head out for ages and she’s already ended up stuck in hospital. Pure torture.

But Maggie has an idea. Another wee mini adventure or something like that. She uses her one good arm to drag the chair next to the bed closer to her. She hears steps from the corridor and she freezes still until they fade off into the distance. She clambers down on the chair and dashes to the window to gasp in the fresh air and look outside at the lovely view.

But for her that isn’t enough, she pushes the window upwards so it is wide open and she sits on the ledge, legs dangling, face up at the sun, pretending she’s one of those sunbathers she’s seen on postcards from Bournemouth or Brighton.

This is a different level to what she’s used to what with her tenement being on the ground floor. It feels like she could be sitting up on Edinburgh Castle – Maggie Queen of the Meadows on her throne. Looking down on her Queendom once again. She is in line with the tops of the trees and she can hear the kids playing in the meadows below more than she can see them.

But she can see the street and what she can see on that street shocks her.

Maggie The boy.

The same boy again. Blonde hair, open mouth stare and eyes dark like a shark. How did he know she was here? The boy is staring back up at her.

Then Maggie’s keen senses pick up a familiar set of footsteps echoing down the corridor forebodingly.

Her mother.

And at the same speed she sneaked out onto the windowsill, she wheeks herself back through the window and into bed with no answers about who the boy is, just more questions.

She closes her eyes as tight as she can, lies as stiff as a board, and pretends she’s never moved a muscle.

Her mum circles the bed like a hawk. Maggie doesn’t know what’s worse: the pain, the dizziness or the fact her mum definitely knows she snuck out to play.

Mum Margaret?

Maggie Mum?

Mum Oh my darling thank god your alive! I didn’t mean to wake you.

Maggie Best sleep of my life. I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to sneak out to play.

Mum You don’t need to be sorry I’m just glad you’re ok.

Maggie I’m ok mum but my arm is really, *really* sore.

Mum You’ve broken it, Margaret. Again. God bless this National Health Service. If it wasnae for them we’d be bankrupt. Lie still.

Maggie’s mum strokes her daughter’s curly hair off her sweaty forehead. She’s not furious or mad or seething. She just cares. Cares about her. And that’s where all the scariness and strictness comes from. But Maggie doesn’t know that yet.

Mum What happened?

Maggie I was chasing the boy.

Mum What boy? I’ve never seen you hanging about with a boy.

Maggie The boy from yesterday. The lamppost boy. He kept looking at me. Staring at me. Like he knew me. When I was playing hide and seek. So I tried to catch him and he -

Mum What does he look like?

Something has shaken Maggie’s mum. And Maggie can’t quite put her finger on it. And she’s not sure why what he looks like is important.

Mum What does he look like?

Same question.

Mum What did he look like?

Maggie Blonde hair. Brown eyes. Dark like a shark. Always gawping. He’s like a ghost Mum.

And it’s as if Maggie’s Mum has seen a ghost.

Mum Where did you see this boy?

Maggie The Meadows.

Mum Just the once?

Maggie Three times, mah.

Mum Three times?

Maggie Up the lamppost, in the meadows and I think I saw him out the window today.

Maggie's mum makes a dash for curtains and surveys the street outside but sees nothing. Maggie’s got a creeping sensation caused by the change in tone of her Mum’s questioning. It’s on the periphery of her consciousness, like all children’s maternal radars, but it’s there all the same.

Mum Blonde hair, brown eyes?

Maggie Aye.

Mum Are you sure?

Maggie Aye.

Mum Right. I’ll sort it, Margaret. I’ll find the boy and I’ll tell him not to come near you again.

Maggie No, mah, I like playing with him –

Mum I’m telling you he’ll not come near you again. Ok?

Maggie That’s not fair.

Mum He’s dangerous, do you hear me?

Maggie Dangerous?

Mum Yes. Dangerous. Now, don’t you dare move from this bed. Stay indoors. Keep quiet. I’ll be back soon.

And she’s packed up and gone before Maggie can ask the all-important question:

Maggie Who is he?

And Maggie’s mum never tells Maggie the answer to that question. That is Maggie’s mystery. A mystery that will follow her for most of her life.

There’s nothing worse, eh? A question being left unanswered for decades or longer. A feeling like there’s something being hidden from you. Like there’s something missing. You ever felt that? I have. It must be why I liked this story so much when it was first told to me. And now I get to tell it to you.

Now, go get yourself a cuppa or a dram and then settle down for the rest of it.

[MUSIC FADES]