**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.

**EPISODE TWO**

You got your cuppa? Good. Sit yourself doon.

Now, Maggie’s life has chapters.

Like in a book.

Different parts, different places, different times.

And this chapter happens 15 or so years after we last saw Maggie in bed at sick kids, with that question she still has no answer to about the boy with the blonde hair, open mouth stare and eyes dark like a shark:

Maggie Who is he?

Any ideas? I was as stumped as a chopped doon tree at this point when I first heard the story. I bet you’re cleverer than me though.

Maggie/Donald Who is he?

And that question has echoed on the edge of Maggie’s mind until now...

October 1964.

Now, let me ask you a question. Have you ever woken up on the pavement on Lothian road to the half seven sun?

Maggie has.

She’s waking up right now, actually.

It’s chilly. Green turning to brown. Pavements glistening. Fingers in desperate need of gloves.

She’s here because she needs to be.

She missed them last time and there’s no way on earth she’s missing them again.

So, she’s camped out under a tartan rug the night before, to make sure there’s not even the slightest possibility.

She hasn’t exactly been honest with her mum about where she is. They’ve been arguing a lot recently, her Mum’s drinking has been getting worse, but it’s always particularly bad this time of the year. A casual observer like you or me would think it’s the colder nights that make her Mum cling to the bottle, but Maggie knows it was October when her Dad died in the war and that that’s the real reason.

Maggie’s 25 but has never moved out:

Mum And as long you’re under my roof, it’s my rules!

That’s why Maggie’s told her mum that she was going to stay with her friend Nancy but here they are out in the cold on Lothian Road.

Today is about being here, experiencing it, it’s about telling people 50 years later. I was there. I saw them… in Edinburgh. Edinburgh! The best city in the world. Especially if you have a ticket for the Beatles.

Thousands of screaming wee lassies just like them will line the streets over the next day. Many of them will just be there to catch a glimpse but Maggie and Nancy are going inside. Because they have tickets.

Maggie’s wide awake but Nancy’s still conked out.

Maggie C’mon you’re going to miss it.

Nancy Paul! I love you don’t leave me.

Nancy jolts awake.

Maggie Whit?

Nancy Nothing, eh… What have I missed?

Maggie I’m just kidding. You’ve not missed anything, it’s only the crack of dawn!

Maggie and Nancy shoogle against the railings thermos flasks in hand.

Dawn becomes morning becomes afternoon becomes evening.

There’s an atmosphere of jubilation – its akin to Victory in Europe Day, or when Hearts won the double in 59 or even Hibs lifting the Scottish cup, if your imagination can stretch to such a thing?

But this isn’t war or football – this is something bigger. Beatlemania has arrived in Edinburgh.

And Maggie’s got a plan.

She smiles to herself thinking about this and undoes the top button on her jacket. It might be getting into the colder months but tonight:

Maggie I’m going to shake it up baby

Nancy twist and shout!

The queue is coiled around the ABC cinema like a snake, wrapped right round from Morrison to Semple Street. As more and more people join the queue, Maggie tells Nancy she has a plan:

Maggie Nancy. I have a plan.

Nancy A plan?

Maggie A plan, Nancy.

Nancy Not another one.

Maggie What?

Nancy Australia again? You’re always dreaming about us moving to Australia.

Maggie This plan is real. And it's going to make tonight the best night of our lives.

Nancy The best night of our lives?

Maggie Aye. You see them?

Maggie points to the couple in front, dressed in matching drainpipe jeans like a Marchmont Hepburn and Jagger.

Maggie See how close we are? Almost touching, right?

Maggie has a wee bit of trouble in her eye as she gently but purposefully strokes Jagger’s denim jacket - firm enough to make Nancy giggle mischievously and lightly enough so Jagger doesn’t notice. She’s playing with fire.

Maggie Tonight, we’re going to touch Ringo and Paul.

Nancy Paul? Me? Touch? Maggie!

Maggie Not like that ye dafty. I know the bouncer, Ian. We’re like the fourth row from the front, right? Well... see if we can get to the front by the end of the concert? Ian’s gonna lift us forwards and…

Onto the stage…

Nancy What!?

Maggie Yep. You. Me. George. John. Ringo.

Nancy You love Ringo!

Maggie And Paul.

Nancy I love Paul!

Maggie winks at Nancy.

Out of the corner of her eye, somebody passes her and without consciously thinking about it her body pulls in that direction so she can see who it is. Maggie sees a man, around her age, walking past her. She can’t quite see if she knows him, she can just see a blonde smudge in the distance join the back of the queue. The wind picks up – as it usually does in Edinburgh in October as the seasons fully transition – and Maggie pulls her jacket closer to her body. She turns back to the front with that strange sense of trying to remember something but not knowing what it is you are trying to recall. Like a fragmented déjà vu.

Then… the spiralling crowds start slithering into the building like a wound up toy that’s just been released. The screaming starts to intensify, the noise comes shooting along the line like a wave, a message to those at the back that it’s time to go in.

Maggie squeezes Nancy’s arm:

Nancy *(Squeal)* It’s happening!

Maggie Oh, it’s happening!

As the queue edges closer to the entrance, there’s an ever-increasing sense of euphoria. Inside, it feels like a carnival - there’s even an American burger van at the back selling hamburgers and hot dogs, and there’s people from all walks of life, all generations making their way through the art deco auditorium like this is the best day of their life. It probably is.

Maggie and Nancy don’t buy a burger. They don’t bother buying a programme. They head straight to their seats and squidge themselves into the fourth row and wait in anticipation. Maggie can almost see every detail of the silver microphones, almost feel the leather of the drum stool, almost taste the metallic symbols.

A man struts onto the stage and the crowd go wild but he isnae George, John, Paul or Ringo. It’s Bob Bain. The compere.

Bob Bain Now, lets kick tonight off with the one, the only, the next act that you’ve all been waiting for…The Rustiks.

Nancy Are we at the wrong place?

Maggie They’re just the support act ya dafty. They’ll be on next.

Bob Bain The next act is…

Maggie Here we go!

Bob Bain Sounds Incorporated.

Nancy Who?

Bob Bain Put your hands together for… Michael Haslam.

Nancy Wish I had as much support as the Beatles.

Bob Bain Give a warm applause for… The Remo Four.

Maggie The Remo Four? We want the Fab Four!

Bob Bain Now, are you ready for this? Tommy Quickly.

Nancy For falling out windaes.

Bob Bain I’m honoured, truly honoured, to be introducing you to the one… the only…. it’s Mary Wells.

Maggie You’ve got to be kidding me.

They watch Bob Bain come on and off seven times. But the crowds so wound up they don’t know what they’re going tonto at. Every time he comes on they think it’s going to be the Beatles. But it isnae. They should have bought a bloody programme.

Bob Bain Are you ready? For the band you all bought your ticket to see… the electrifying.... the indescribable...

Nancy I’m away to the toilet

Bob Bain All the way from Liverpool...

Nancy I can hold it.

Bob Bain The Beatles!

Screams erupt like wee mini volcanoes filling the cinema. So loud it’s deafening, John and George saunter on first waving to the crowd guitars in hand. Followed by Paul who strides through the curtain clutching his bass. And then Ringo takes a seat at the kit with his drumsticks in hand.

Nancy You love Ringo.

Maggie I love Ringo.

Nancy Aye that’s what I said.

Maggie What?

Nancy Nothing!

Maggie What?

The Liverpudlian lads are on stage in Edinburgh in their sharp grey suits. – looking like they’ve stepped out of a Time Magazine cover shoot. But this isn’t seeing the Beatles on paper or through a TV screen or something. This is real life. As a few thousand people collectively scream and shout louder than they’ve ever done before.

It’s pure ecstasy in the auditorium. It's fever pitch – the noise has a weight to it – the pressure seems to grasp Maggie’s temples, push down and not let go. It’s what she imagines flying must be like – a visceral, extraordinary sensation, an out of body experience.

Maggie puts her arm round Nancy, bouncing up and down on their seats, and when she looks at her friend – she sees wild delight in her eyes. She’s never seen Nancy like this!

John Lennon says something through the microphone and although no one can hear a word above the noise, the din gets even louder just at the mere separation of his lips.

Then the music starts. The band plunge into Twist and Shout. Or at least, Maggie sees them start to sing and play their instruments but all she can hear are screams. The audience drowns out any lyrics or rhythm or tune – but that doesn’t matter to those watching. They came to see the Beatles, not hear them. As their first song finishes, a shower of Jelly Babies pelt the stage. Paul laughs his head off – he’s probably experienced this a hundred times by now but he looks like a man living every second like it’s new to him. Ringo picks a Jelly Baby up from the top of his kick drum holds it aloft to the crowd, chucks it high in the air, and catches it in his mouth. The audience roars as if he’s a hero and Ringo grins as he chews it.

Maggie Oh Ringo!

Maggie can see him right in front of her. And it is a dream come true. The band speed through their set hitting every song the crowd want and more:

‘Money (That’s All I Want)’

‘Can’t Buy Me Love’

‘Things We Said Today’

‘I’m Just Happy To Dance With You’

‘I Should Have Known Better’

‘If I Fell’

‘I Wanna Be Your Man’

And right near the end…

‘A Hard Day’s Night’

Nancy Maggie it’s your favourite!

Maggie turns to Nancy to tell her that it’s time for the plan, but she realises she’s lost her voice from the singing and screaming.  So Maggie just elbows Nancy.

Nancy The plan?

Maggie nods. The plan. She points towards the stage where Ian the bouncer gives them a quick and decisive thumbs up. It’s happening. It’s now or never.

Maggie and Nancy shoogle their way along the row past some very angry fans, who are in utter disbelief that their view has been blocked for even a second. But they've got it in their heads that they’re getting on that stage and nothing can stop them.

And as Maggie elbows people out the way to get to the other side her eyes meet the eyes of a man not turned towards the front like the rest of the audience but facing directly towards her. Staring at her.

And she stops dead in her tracks.

The man from outside.

Blonde hair, open mouth stare and eyes dark like a shark.

Features that make him instantly recognisable.

Even after all these years.

Time moves backwards and through a kaleidoscope, Maggie sees images of a boy and girl playing in the meadows, climbing lampposts and chasing each other through the streets of Edinburgh.

Maggie Are these… memories…?

Through the prism of flashing images she sees the boy, older now, moving towards her. She’s back in the ABC. And this man, this stranger is coming towards her.

And the space between them becomes super important.

Her mind tells her that it is sink or swim.

She remembers what her mum said all those years ago about the little boy.

Mum You stay away from him. He’s dangerous. That boy is dangerous. Do you hear me?

And he is a man now.

Maggie’s instincts kick in and she does what anyone would do if they were face to face with a shark.

She swims.

Wading back along the row crashing into Nancy and onto the laps of the people who she has already squeezed past and they are becoming increasingly annoyed that their once in a lifetime experience is being ruined by two women obstructing their view - again! But that doesn’t matter to Maggie. Because the boy… the man… is moving towards her.

Something about the urgency with which he is trying to get to her scares her. She panics.

She clutches Nancy’s hand and they scamper backwards down the row as the man continues to propel himself towards them.

Kicking drinks over, standing on bags and placing hands on laps for balance as they bound towards the exit.

It’s a total rammy.

Even John, Paul, George and Ringo’s eyes are drawn towards the commotion.

And when Maggie and Nancy reach the end of the row they tumble into the aisle.

But they’re still in open water.

Maggie looks behind her and to her horror sees that the man has caught up and is directly behind her, and just as he reaches out, Nancy grabs Maggie’s hand and they run towards the stage. They’re given a swift foot up by Ian the bouncer and they are hoisted out of the crowd.

There’s a jarring perspective shift for Maggie and her sight is momentarily blocked by bright white lights. As her eyes adjust, she sees she is above the crowd and appreciates for the first time the vastness of the hall and the sheer volume of people crammed inside. She looks for her pursuer but can’t see him, he’s disappeared amongst the sea of faces.

Her heart is racing. Not because she is two feet from John Lennon. Her heart is racing because she was two seconds away from this unknown man reaching her. Nancy has collapsed in a heap in front of Paul looking up adoringly, arms outstretched towards him, like he’s a God in a Renaissance painting.

And tonight will stay with Maggie for the rest of her life. The atmosphere will stay with her. The grey suits and the jelly babies. The next morning will definitely stay with her, when her Mum blows a gasket after seeing Maggie’s face on the front page of the Evening News, a picture of her onstage with the Beatles.

But the thing that’ll stay with her most is how just like the first time she saw the boy who is now a man, he vanished as suddenly as he appeared once again. And every time she thinks about that night the same question returns:

Maggie Who is that man?

**EPISODE THREE**

This next chapter is a good one. It’s the winter of ‘89. It’s baltic, so I hope you’ve got another cuppa or maybe even something stronger, if you’re that way inclined.

I don’t want to say too much but it’s this chapter of Maggie’s story, where the mystery that has haunted her life deepens, twists and turns like never before.

Maggie Who is that man?

Oh... we’re so close to the answer I can almost feel it...can you?

The man with the blonde hair, open mouth stare and eyes dark like a shark. But you know that by now, you might even recognise him if you saw him. Let me know if you see him, eh?

But… just as Maggie the Miracle reaches out to touch the truth, it veers away from her suddenly and the mystery deepens. Right, I won’t rabbit on too much more. This isn’t about me. Here we go.

Maggie’s driving through the Grassmarket clutching the steering wheel of her ford Escort, the cobbled streets and the cold make her teeth chitter chatter as she drives over them, she’s like a cartoon or... something.

Maggie’s late but she’s not a speeder, she’s not much of an adventurer these days, not anymore, not like when she chased the boy around the park or when she slept on the street to see her favourite band.

That was years ago now.

She wonders where she got the sense of adventure from? It certainly wasn’t her mum. Maybe it was her dad who fought and died in the war and travelled to countries Maggie would never dream of going to these days.

She drives down Kings Stable Road as the radio plays.

“It was Christmas Eve babe…in the drunk tank…”

Maggie switches the radio off. She hated that song last year when it first came out, and she hates it even more this time around. It’s not even a Christmas song. She clicks the cassette player on instead. Her daughter Rosie’s Bros album plays…

“When will I, will I be famous…”

Well you’re famous now boys but it willnae last for long.

Maggie smiles. Rosie’s an only child just like she was. And that’s not where the similarities end. Rosie went to see Bros at the Playhouse last June. She was holed up in that stuffy theatre all afternoon with 3000 other sweaty teenage girls. It makes Maggie think of when she went to see the Beatles just round the corner from where she’s parked right now. Rosie doesn’t believe her when she tells the story, that her mum had even managed to get up on the stage, and ended up in the Evening News. Maggie always leaves out the bit where Rosie’s granny tossed the paper in the fire.

Maggie chuckles. She never quite understood her Mum’s reaction at the time. And so she had a shock last year when Rosie slammed the Bros tickets on the kitchen table the morning of the concert to announce she was going whether her mum liked it or not. Without thinking, Maggie had felt resistant to the plan before she clocked where that feeling was coming from. Genetics. Her initial frown turned into a smile and she stroked Rosie’s blonde locks and said:

Maggie Have a bloody great time.

That’s what it’s all about, Maggie thinks as she parks up behind the Usher Hall. Tiny changes.

She sits in the car, heat blasting, with the speakers turned up to full. It makes her feel like she’s somewhere else entirely, drowning the city out, like she’s in the Australian Outback. She’s never been but her and her pal Nancy always used to talk about going some day. No people, no traffic, no buildings. Nothing. Just a wee bit of peace and quiet. She imagines herself there because she can’t find the motivation to leave the car. She’d never say she doesn’t enjoy going to see her Mum, but sometimes it can be a bit of a chore.

Her Mum’s in a wee home now, but every December they take a trip to Princes Street to see the Christmas tree on the mound.

Town is not as busy as it used to be this time of year. It’s no the same. But work is hard to come by these days, there’s less money to spend, and most folk are struggling to keep a roof over their head. This is another hard winter. A tough one. But she’s got her mum and she’s got her Rosie. And that’s something. Something… important.

She turns the engine off and braces herself.

Maggie Can’t hide in the car forever.

The way of the world is making her feel not too Christmassy this year but... when she reaches Princes’ Street... It's like magic... the lights, the excited wee ones and the happy faces. It makes her forget about everything else.

Maggie feels like a wee lassie again and there is a spring in her step, she feels just like that girl who climbed lampposts and roamed the streets care free.

She looks up at Binn’s Clock and sees all the singles watching the clock hand move round waiting for their dates, just like she used to stand in the cold waiting on Rosie’s lout of a dah.

She walks down Princes Street passing all the busy shops and parents in a panic trying to find the ideal gift that they should have bought weeks ago like wee squirrels desperately trying to gather nuts for hibernation.

It looks like a winter wonderland like that Bing Crosby number. Shoppers and families are bustling around eating sweets, catching up with friendly faces, and huddling around the Sally Army and their brass instruments whose rendition of Away In A Manger rings through the crisp December air. Edinburgh Castle towers over the scene, with a sheet of snow covering the battlements like icing on a buttercream cake or something.

The bright lights outside Jenners shine in the distance and Maggie sees a little boy and his sister pointing out to their parents which presents they’d like this Christmas through the window. Just like how she used to take Rosie there when she was wee to meet Santa and pick a toy. Every year Maggie told Rosie she couldn’t afford the present she wanted but to her delight Santa always delivered it in the end. Some boy that Santa.

Maggie arrives at the big glistening tree on the mound with all the beautiful multi-coloured lights. It's come all the way from Norway. Every year. Because apparently in WWII the Scots helped the Norwegians... or something. Maggie always likes to think her Dad played his part in that story. And who knows?

Maggie spots her mum almost instantly, shining in the lights of the tree. Even though she’s sitting in a sea of people, sleeping in her chair with a tartan blanket over her lap, Maggie would recognise her anywhere. She’s her mum after all and she’s the only person Maggie knows who has the ability to sleep with a face like thunder surrounded by half of Edinburgh.

She was never one for making a fuss over this kind of thing, even when Maggie was wee.

Maggie sees Clarke, who looks after her Mum in the care home. Clarke’s from Elephant and Castle in London. That’s a place name by the way not a Zoo or a theme park. Maggie likes spending time with Clarke which makes meetings like this just that wee bit easier.

Clarke Maggie.

Maggie Hi Clark, how’s she getting on? Crabbit as always?

Clarke Quite the opposite actually, she’s knackered herself out, because of all the fun she had yesterday.

Maggie Fun?

Clarke Oh loads of fun. She’s been up and about all day. Dancing and singing and all sorts.

Maggie Dancing and singing? Are you sure you're talking about my mum?

Clark Yeah. And she was asking everyone where their troo-sers were? And everyone kept having me on and wouldn’t tell me what they were.

Maggie laughs – “Troosers” sounding so ill-fitting in Clarke’s accent. She senses an opportunity.

Maggie It’s actually just a wee funny Scottish word for a hat.

Clarke Well I can confidently say that I don’t really wear troosers, they don’t look good on my head, and I definitely wouldn’t wear troosers when I’m working.

Maggie I wouldn’t go broadcasting that. Oh hi Mum, how you getting on?

Mum:

*I've just come down from the Isle of Skye*

*I'm no very big and I'm awful shy*

*And the lassies shout when I go by*

*Donald, where's your troosers?*

Clarke That’s the very one. She was singing it loud and shoogling away to it.

Maggie You used to hate that song back in the 60s, mum.

Clarke Guess it’s having a bit of come back.

Mum I was singing and dancing.

Maggie Were you aye?

Mum And drunk.

Maggie Drunk?

Clarke I think the drink helped the singing and the dancing if I’m honest.

Maggie What? She’s been drinking? She’s not supposed to be taking a drink.

Clarke Well, she never and that’s the genius of it. We dipped a little tea bag in some warm water and told her it’s her favourite whisky.

Maggie That’s brilliant!

Clarke Just another day in the office.

Mum It wasnae you.

Maggie Well who was it then?

Mum My visitor.

Maggie Visitor?

That sounds harsher than Maggie means it. No offence but who else would visit her mum? She was never much of a social butterfly apart from going to the church and Maggie hasn’t heard of any other visitors before.

Clarke Eh...no, he wasn’t a visitor as such. He was an... entertainer we have visit the ward sometimes.

Maggie Right...that wasn’t on this week’s timetable?

Clarke It was a... A late booking. Sorry, I should’ve mentioned it.

Mum I thought he just came to see me.

Clarke Ah. If only we could afford all the residents to have their own personal entertainer. We’ve talked about this. She’s obviously forgotten.

Mum I haven’t.

The more Maggie thinks about it, Clarke seems to be acting stranger and stranger. Like he’s holding something back. He’s grasping on to the back of the wheelchair, eyes looking at everything but Maggie.

Mum I always thought he was dangerous Maggie.

Maggie Dangerous?

Mum But he’s just a wee boy climbing up a lamppost in the meadows.

The hair on the back of Maggie’s neck stands up. In her mind’s eye she sees fragments of a face. A ghost.

Maggie What did he look like?

Clarke Eh...small guy.

Mum Tall guy.

Maggie You’ll need to give me more than that.

Clarke Older?

Maggie Than what?

Clarke You? It was just a guy.

Mum Blonde hair, I think. Dark –

Maggie Dark brown eyes.

The penny drops instantly.

Maggie Dark like a shark.

The man.

Clarke I can’t remember alright?

Maggie What was his name?

Mum:

*Let the wind blow high, let the wind blow low*

*Through the streets in my kilt, I'll go*

*All the lassies say hello*

*Donald, where's your troosers?*

Maggie Donald? Is that right, Mum? Donald? Mum? Who’s Donald?

Mum *Donald, where's your troosers?*

She doesn’t know. Not anymore. And as snow starts to fall, Maggie takes the back of her Mum’s wheelchair away from Clarke. And she holds on tight. Not wanting to let go. She remembers when her mum used to guard her like a hawk but she’s the hawk now.

Maggie Do not let that man near my Mum again.

Maggie’s mum warned her about the boy with the blonde hair, open mouth stare and eyes dark like a shark. But, Maggie thinks, now it’s her responsibility to protect her family from the man.

The man who has appeared at three points throughout her life – first as a wee boy, then as a young man and now 25 years later. Who is he? Who. Is. He? This question pulses through Maggie. She finally has a part of the answer. A name, Donald. Another piece of the puzzle. Small bits of the jigsaw in her hand but they are melting like the snow. A boy at the meadows. A man stalking her that night at the Beatles concert. And now, visiting her Mum? What is going on? What does he want?

Maggie Who is Donald?

**EPISODE FOUR**

Now, the final chapter.

You’ll probably be listening to this thinking… Right… here’s where I’m going to get the answers to all my questions. But the likelihood is you willnae. Real life doesnae have those neat little bows that tie up at the end. At least, that’s what Maggie thinks.

Maggie the Miracle’s life has been punctuated by this mystery. Swerving in and out of focus at random junctures. A question that has sat on her periphery for generations. Three quarters of a century. A lifetime.

Maggie Who is he?

Ever since she found out his name twenty years ago she hasn’t been able to let it go. And every time she saw her Mum before she sadly passed away, Maggie would ask the question but never receive any answers:

Maggie Who is Donald?

At first her mum’s response was to sing Donald Where’s Your Troosers, then she took to changing the subject to the weather or Rosie and by the end she just didn’t answer at all, looking off into the distance as if she hadn’t heard the question.

Clarke said Donald was an entertainer but after some digging Maggie found out the home didn’t have any record of his visit which unnerved her further. Clarke left his job at the home soon afterwards to go back down south and she’s never heard from him since. She always liked Clarke but she can’t help thinking he knew more than he let on. Another dead end. Maggie even asked her mum’s various other carers over the years to keep an eye out for the mysterious man, like a private detective’s ears on the ground or something, but Donald had just…vanished. Again.

Every time Maggie walks along the meadows, even if she is half distracted by her grandkids, wee Keir and Iona, she always has one eye looking out for the man with the blonde hair, open mouth stare and eyes dark like a shark. It’s a joy to have the wee ones in her life. Long since retired, without her Mum or Rosie to look after, Maggie has a blissful focus on watching them grow up.

It’s Spring 2012 by the way, the daffodils are out, the clocks have changed - backwards, forwards, who knows - and the country is gripped by Olympic Fever. Or so the papers say. Maggie couldn’t care less if she tried. She might be more interested in the billion-pound London games if Edinburgh council would pick her bloody bins up on time. Rosie used to make fun of Maggie and say that she was slowly turning into her Mum but now that Maggie has fully morphed into a loving, but slightly crabbit old womun, Rosie has stopped. It might also be to do with the fact that Rosie herself has the habit of the odd bitter comment – much to Keir and Iona’s amusement - life and genetics taking their toll.

Maggie’s inherited more than just her mother’s dour nature. She’s prone to getting a wee bit confused in her old age. She remembers the past like it was yesterday, but things like what she’s had for dinner or where she’s put her slippers are becoming harder to hold onto.

Last year, Rosie bought Maggie a laptop because she was a wee bit worried about her mum forgetting things and being on her own all the time. She bought it when Maggie talked about always looking forward to the postman coming round for the wee chat she gets. But with her laptop, she can now keep in contact with her best friend Nancy who has moved all the way to Australia. She’s finally taken the plunge after talking about it for all those years. Technology is quite amazing really. Words going all the way around the world in the click of a finger. You can even send pictures now.

And with her new laptop she’s joined The Facebook, as a way to connect the dots from all her different jobs and pastimes through the years. It’s hard to meet new people at her age. Trust me, I know myself.

She has 43 friends on the Facebook but they don’t count as real friends. She would love to be friends with 43 people. But she rarely gets to see Nancy since she moved away. She does get sent loads of photos now though and that’s nice but it’s not the same as her being there.

She scrolls and clicks through countless holiday pictures, people ranting about the busses, folk talking about how Britain has lost its values, how political correctness has gone mad, a lovely wee picture of a cat on a washing line that says “hang in there pal”, people moaning about the bloody trams, and a new friend request taking her total up to 44. Like, click, scroll, add friend, join group.

Maggie loves all the different groups and pages you get on the Facebook. Thousands of mini communities all connecting about things. There’s a page for everything whether you like history, or a place, or a person, and there’s even one that just tells you if it’s raining in Edinburgh or not. Yes or no. That’s all they post. Magic. It’s different to the type of community she grew up with but it does make her feel less... lonely.

She finds a page called Lost Edinburgh and it’s got all sorts of pictures on it. The Portobello pool, an auld black and white photo of a horse and carriage outside the Kings, folk ice skating next to Arthur’s seat, a bike race from the 1970 commonwealth games, the auld maroon busses, Waverly Station, Clint Eastwood at the Cameo, George McNeill racing at Meadowbank, Bob Dylan on Princes Street.

Then she sees something much more familiar.

Wednesday 6:30 and 8:50. In person. The Beatles. At the ABC Cinema.

She instantly shares it on Nancy’s page, a skill that Iona taught her that took hours to master, as a reminder of one of the best nights of their lives. Maggie's eyes light up in the glow of the screen.

Maggie I was there.

She reads the comments.

* “I was working that one it was a nightmare”

* “Two friends and myself skipped school and got thrown out.”

* “Think I am in this pic. lol.”

And one more comment: “What a smashing night!”

Maggie takes a sharp deep breath.

And it isn’t the words that alarm her. It’s the name.

Donald Stuart.

Maggie’s slender frame freezes. She clicks on the profile picture and she almost chokes on her tea. It’s him.

Tall guy. Dark eyes. White hair, which after a quick flick through his pictures Maggie discovers used to be blonde. It’s him. The man. The boy. Who has always plagued her thoughts.

Donald is 50 years older, blonde hair turned to white but those shark eyes pierce through the screen. And now she has another clue. It’s the longest game of Cluedo she’s ever played but it isn’t Colonel Mustard in the ballroom it is Donald Stuart in the meadows, at the ABC and in the care home.

She clicks through his profile pictures. There’s Donald Smith in a variety of places but with the same expression every time. Smiling. This ghost, this person she knows but doesn’t. He’s looking at her and he’s smiling. There’s multiple pictures in the same location. A pub.

“Nothing better than a pint in the local.”

And “tagged” is the Port O’ Leith.

She's passed it a million times before but never gone in. Until now.

She gets up, grabs her bag and bus pas. She jumps on the number 14 to Muirhouse and heads to Leith.

The whole way there she is breathing heavily.

Panicked but full of energy that drives her towards her destination.

She thinks about what she’ll say, what she’ll do and how he’ll act.

It’s a public place she tells herself.

It’s safe.

And after today, she will have answers.

She gets off at the Kirkgate Centre and heads towards Constitution Street with a determination in her walk. She feels massive. Like an adventurer, like how she used to feel when she was wee, hot on the scent of a mystery that today she will solve.

She passes the Foot of the Walk, the Kirkgate flats and the parish church with a frog in her throat and fifty years worth of questions.

But the main one is:

Maggie Who is he?

She charges forward.

She passes Leith police station.

There’s no going backwards now, only forwards.

This is it.

She can see the pub in the near distance.

The Port O Leith.

She looks up and sees the sun in the sky. First time she’s seen it in months. It’s warm enough to be out without a jacket and there’s a nice Spring breeze too, which carries her into the pub.

She gets inside expecting to see him straight away but there’s only a couple of lonely men drinking in the corner who look as if they are part of the furniture in this pub.

Then a tall barman approaches:

Barman You lost, or something?

Maggie No I’m not bloody lost. I’m waiting on someone.

Barman Right, what you having hen?

Maggie I was just looking for someone that’s all.

Barman Aye, ok... So do you want a drink?

Maggie Yes, please. A lime and soda.

Maggie doesn’t drink you see. Not after watching what it did to her Mum. That would be enough to put anyone off. Clinging to the bottle and drowning in it every time October came round. Maggie sits and nurses her lime and soda but Donald never comes.

She sits there as the crowds get busy and dies down around her.

She goes home. And comes back.

The same bus the 14 to Muirhouse. Again.

Barman Same again?

Maggie Lime and...what was it again, the last time?

Barman Soda?

Maggie Yes that’s it. Lime and soda.

Crowds fill the space and dissipate like she’s the only still thing in there, the only constant.

She goes home. And goes back.

14 to Muirhouse. Constitution Street.

Lime and Soda.

She goes home. And goes back.

Crowds swell. People come and people go.

She goes home. And goes back.

She becomes like a rock.

Lime and soda.

She is stone.

Lime and soda.

Part of the walls here, part of the brick.

Lime and soda.

Waiting, watching, days go by.

Every day she arrives at lunchtime, sits in the corner with her drink and doesn’t take her eyes off the door. And every time someone comes in her heart skips a beat, her body reacts involuntarily with a force she feels but doesn’t fully understand. Then one day just when her hope is fading, the wooden door opens slowly and in steps a man, 70-odd, maybe a couple of years older than Maggie, with white hair, an open mouth stare and eyes dark like a shark.

Maggie Donald.

Donald’s eyes meet Maggie’s eyes and his knees buckle. He knows instantly who she is.

Maggie Donald.

She’s waited so long that there's calm in her. It’s her space now. She is the space. She’s the regular. It’s her local. Not his. He’s the one on the back foot.

She is Maggie Queen of the Port O’ Leith now, formerly the Queen of the Meadows. Sat in front of a man that she has a million questions for and she’s waiting for the answer to the most important one.

Maggie Who are you?

And so Donald tells Maggie a story. It’s a story much like the one I’ve been telling you. It’s a special story.

It’s a story about a young boy from Causewayside. It’s a story about a boy separated from his mother. It’s a story about a boy separated from his sister.

It’s a story about a man without a family.

It’s my story.

Donald I’m yer big brother Maggie.

And I sit in the Port O Leith, and I tell my wee sister Maggie everything.

I tell her, for the first time in her life, that dad left and took me because I was a laddie. And I was half. Half of me and Maggie. Nothing more, nothing less.

Maggie My dad died in the war.

Donald He didnae even go to fight. He claimed to be a pacifist but he was a lazy begger.

Maggie No, he was a good man. A hero.

Donald He wasn’t a good man, Maggie. And he definitely wasn’t a hero. He met someone else and left. October 1940.

Maggie Why should I believe you?

Donald Because if you’re anything like me. You’ve probably always known that something was missing.

Maggie When I fell off that wall by the park and cracked my head you left me lying there.

Donald I took you straight to Sick Kids. Then Dad skelped me and told me to never go near you again.

Maggie What about at the Beatles concert? You chased me.

Donald To speak to you. To tell you the truth after all those years.

Maggie You scared me.

Donald I wanted to put that right. I looked about outside all night to trying to find you. I thought about you all the time. I’d sit there in work, or at the pub, or something, thinking about where my sister is and if she even knows I exist. It was like I had my eyes closed and my hand stretched out hoping you’d grab it. And when I saw you that night after all those years. I had the chance to put things right.

Maggie This doesn’t make any sense.

Donald I hate what they did to us. Tore us apart. A brother shouldnae be without a sister. You were too young to remember but I was too old to forget.

Maggie I did always feel like there was something missing.

Donald I decided to track mum down years ago.

Maggie I know. I waited. Waited for a Donald to appear again but nothing.

Why did you only visit her once?

Donald It was after dad passed that I went to find her. Went to the old house. Neighbours told me about the care home. That’s where I went. It was like I was looking for a bit of closure or something like that... I realised it was futile. It wasn’t that she’d decided not to have me in her life, it was that she couldn’t. She’d forgotten me. I told her my name and she sang this daft song. The whole idea of trying to make contact, of reuniting, it was a fantasy. So, in the end, I felt empty and lost and even more alone than before I arrived I spoke to the young lad working in the care home and made him promise me that he wouldn’t tell you anything. I begged. I didn’t want to ruin your life like she’d ruined mine. The young man obviously knew the pain it would cause you if you found out. Clearly he stuck to his word. Didn’t feel good about that chapter of my life. Lying like that. But it hurt. Realising I didn’t have any family anymore. I was too late.

Maggie You’re not too late.

Maggie the Miracle takes my hand and says:

Maggie You do have a family, Donald. You have me.

Donald I was scared too. That’s why I stayed away. I was feart you’d be the same as my mah. But you’re not. You’re like me, Maggie. 

Maggie We’ve only just met. We know nothing about each other.

Donald Well I know we can both belt out a tune.

Maggie How do you know that?

Donald I’ve always remembered you singing in the meadows.

Maggie I don’t sing anymore. Lost the bottle for it.

Donald Have a wee drink then.

Maggie I dinnae drink.

So I go to the bar and I ask the tall barman for a teabag and whiskey glass with some water in it and a bit of ice. I take it back to my sister, dip the tea bag in the water, wait a wee second until the water browns, and with a wink I say:

Donald Have a wee drink. It’ll make it easier.

Maggie takes the drink. And we sing together.

We sing for the days together we lost, that are behind us now. And we sing for all the days still to come.

Maggie solved her mystery and the best part about it is that there’s so many more stories to tell each other than this one. A whole lifetime’s worth, and new ones too.

Here? It turns out a miracle can happen twice.

And that’s the end of the story. It’s Maggie’s story. It’s my story. And it’s yours now, too. I hope you enjoyed it. It ends with me and my family – Maggie, Rosie, wee Keir and Iona, out on the meadows.

Maggie’s standing where she first met the boy - me - all those years ago on a warm summer’s day just like this one. There’s no longer something missing. And everything feels right.

I breathe the air in.

Maggie And I breath it in too.

And despite all the years apart, I feel connected to my family. They care about me. I care about them. And that’s all that matters.