

# POOR BOY

MATT CAMERON AND TIM FINN



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## **CHARACTERS**

The Glass family:

BOY, the son

VIV, the mother

SOL, the father

SADIE, the sister

The Prior family:

DANNY, the dead son

RUTH, the mother

MILES, the brother

CLARE, the wife

## **SETTING**

A timeless, placeless family home—a gothic shell; floorboards peter out, cross-sections of abbreviated and crumbling walls, empty door frame, staircase, table and chairs, upright piano, a pile of old books, mantelpiece with model boat, antique radio, old trumpet and drum, armchair and lamp. Stretched across a wall are three ascending ornamental white gulls suspended in flight. They can be luminous so that in darkness they appear to fly. There is a backdrop for brooding clouds, dying suns and starry skies.

## **PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE**

The world of this play involves a theatrical convention: a boy is played by both a child actor and an adult incarnation.

All characters sing except BOY.

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## ACT ONE

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### PROLOGUE

*The Glass house. Furniture covered in dust sheets, wind whistling through, swirling dead leaves inside. A weather-beaten tricycle squeaks in a circle of its own accord. A strange figure appears, wearing a zebra mask and playing the piano. He is DANNY. A ghostly piano refrain haunts.*

*Music: 'Poor Boy'.*

*BOY appears, engulfed by a universe pulsing with stars, wearing striped pyjamas and dwarfed inside an overcoat. He forms a telescope with his hands, looking through it in wonder and awe. DANNY slowly removes his mask.*

BOY: How many stars in the sky?

DANNY: Could be a hundred billion in our galaxy alone. You can sail by them, boy. Celestial navigation. Stars are your signposts on the sea. For all the lost souls to find their way home.

*Silence.*

BOY: Do I have a soul...?

*Music & lyrics: 'Poor Boy'.*

DANNY: [*sung*] 'My love is alien  
I picked her up by chance  
She speaks to me  
With ultra high frequency  
A radio band of gold  
Gonna listen till I grow old  
Ooh ooh ooh'

ALL: 'What more can a poor boy do  
What more can a poor boy do  
Ah, ah, ah, ah...'

DANNY *removes the sheets, clouds of dust filling the air, to reveal: SOL tying knots with a rope, SADIE reading a book and VIV applying lipstick.*

DANNY: ‘The crackle of the radio  
A message in the evening sky  
You’re looking at an interplanetary Romeo  
I’ll never see her face  
Between us there’s too much space  
Ooh ooh ooh’

ALL: ‘What more can a poor boy do  
What more can a poor boy do  
Ah, ah, ah, ah...’

BOY *slips out of the overcoat.*

DANNY: ‘What more can a poor boy do  
What more can a poor boy do, yeah’

ALL: ‘What more, what more’

*The family push on a single bed and tuck BOY in. DANNY puts on the coat and the mask.*

‘What more can a poor boy do’

DANNY *disappears into the darkness of the doorway. The sound of screeching tyres.*

*Blackout.*

## SCENE ONE

*The Glass house. Bedroom.*

BOY *lays motionless in bed with a face washer on his brow. VIV and SOL keep vigil.*

VIV: Straight through a zebra crossing...

SOL: But he wasn’t hit...?

VIV: I reached out for his hand but he just stepped off the kerb...

SOL: Tell me the car didn’t hit...

VIV: He fainted—like the times before.

SOL: What possessed him?

VIV: I took him to The Mercy. They said let him sleep.

SOL: Nobody saw the driver?

VIV: [*shaking her head*] I should've been holding his hand, Sol.

*Silence.*

SOL: I'll go take down those decorations.

*He doesn't move.*

VIV: You promised you'd put them up.

SOL: The fog swallowed me up out there. Sea turned to glass. Not a breath, Viv, not a soul. Engine gave out, radio on the blink—I swear that old bathtub's barely seaworthy.

VIV: What sort of driver goes straight through a zebra crossing...?

SOL: Is that what you were going to wear? To a little boy's birthday party?

VIV: Doesn't matter now.

*He leaves. VIV watches over BOY.*

*Music & lyrics: 'Into the Water'.*

VIV: [*sung, softly*] 'Into the water  
Into the water  
We are born  
With a smile on our face...'

BOY: I can hear you.

VIV: There he is!

BOY: The bed's spinning, Mum. The whole room, like a top, like a whirlpool.

VIV: Slow down, I've got you.

BOY: Elephants are stomping up and down the stairs.

VIV: [*feeling his brow*] You have a fever.

BOY: They keep blowing Sadie's trumpet.

VIV: I'll tell the elephants to pipe down.

BOY: The toys are whispering. They're telling secrets on me.

VIV: They're worried about you.