

Plays intended for audiences aged 12-16 years

# Moth to the Flame

by Annie McCourt  
(UK)

A writer and theatre maker from County Durham, Annie has been writing plays for children and young people for the past 15 years.

'I think a lot of plays created for young people are about issues that are supposed to be relevant to their lives; I prefer to write plays that are about their relationships and how young people attempt to make sense of an increasingly complicated world. *Moth to the Flame* was inspired by the way I've seen teenagers become ever more reliant on their ability to be in constant contact with their family and friends. I just wondered what might happen if someone who is quite fragile became disconnected from their regular support networks.'

## Characters

**Dickie:** A boy living with his father in the countryside.

**Phoebe:** A townie girl forced to stay with her  
uncle and aunt in the countryside.

## Scene 1: How it All Began – Meeting Dickie

*Phoebe is out by the barn standing on a stile looking for signal on her phone. Dickie is watching her.*

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* Not looking at Phoebe was just about impossible. She draws your eyes, you see, the way she sets the world alight, like wildfire. *[He trips over something on the ground.]* Ow! I'm more of a bumble-through type.

**Phoebe:** What the...?

**Dickie:** Hi.

**Phoebe:** Hi yourself.

**Dickie:** It's rubbish for signal round here, who you with?

**Phoebe:** Vodafone.

**Dickie:** No chance.

**Phoebe:** Crap... *[Puts her phone in her pocket.]* Who are you when you're all at home?

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* When she did that thing with her hair, that little flicky thing with her hair, I could have died.

I couldn't believe I was talking to her; I'm not that good with girls. Anyway, I thought, in for a penny in for a pound. *[to Phoebe]* I'm Dickie, at your service. *[to the audience]* God, why did I say that?

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* Dickie did seem a bit of a, well, a dick to be fair; all country bumpkin, ruddy face, barber jacket and flat cap, and those shoes, do not get me started about those shoes. My mates are more your indy type, bit on the thin side, longer hair, skinny jeans, but there was no one else to talk to. *[to Dickie]* What's the craic then?

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* eh? 1<sup>st</sup> question and I was confused. *[to Phoebe]* What craic?

**Phoebe:** The gen, the goss, what's occurin'?

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* I didn't know if she was just working us – people usually do *[to Phoebe]* you want to know what's going on?

**Phoebe:** Dur!

**Dickie:** Nowt. It's Bardon; there's never nowt going on, hadn't you noticed? We're about 7 miles from the nearest village, 20 miles from civilisation and in about 50 years time we might just realise we're in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. You're in the woolly-backs, here.

**Phoebe:** You don't say. So what do we do for fun?

**Dickie:** Apart from... [*to the audience*] I nearly said 'apart from bumping into goddesses in the middle of no-where'! [*to Phoebe*] Erm, there's not that much to do to be honest.

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie*] Great. [*to the audience*] Well that seemed to about meet my expectations. I was getting in a right moody, I mean, what was my dad doing leaving me in the middle of pigging nowhere with his Uncle Ted and Aunt Sarah, for crying out loud.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] I could sense her mood was turning sour, and I really didn't want to run the risk of her going back in the house. [*to Phoebe*] You could climb on Dobby's Mound if you want to.

**Phoebe:** Oh, yeah? I bet you say that to all the girls, Dobby.

**Dickie:** Yeah? No, I mean – if we climb up on top of the...it's that hill over there – you might get a better signal from up on that hill over there, I just thought...

**Phoebe:** Chill your bean, Dickie; I know what you mean. [*to the audience*] Right from the start working Dickie, well, it was like shooting fish in a barrel, just not fair, really, what fun I was going to have. [*to Dickie*] How steep is it?

**Dickie:** I don't know; I don't carry a clinometer everywhere I go.

**Phoebe:** A what?

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] It's a thing for measuring the gradient of hills. [*to the audience*] Oh, God, now I'm talking about clinometers, way to go, Mr Cool, that's the direct route to any woman's heart – a knowledge of topographical equipment.

**Phoebe:** Right... Come on then, wide boy, let's make tracks. If I'm going to have any decent conversation today I'd better – how would my uncle Ted put it? [*imitates Ted*] 'Put my best leg forward.' I think I prefer 'get my backside in gear', but, hey, each to their own.

**Dickie:** [*Laughs. To Phoebe*] Right on. [*to the audience*] Right on – what? Who actually says, 'right on'? Am I from the 60s or something?

**Phoebe:** Yeah, right, as you say, on – well, 'lead on, Macduff'.

**Dickie:** What?

**Phoebe:** Show me the way, genius, I'm new to these parts, is there a path or summat?

**Dickie:** It's across that field, you just go across the field and then up a bit, you can see it...

**Phoebe:** So there's no path?

**Dickie:** No.

**Phoebe:** No road?

**Dickie:** No – it's a hill. That hill, there, across that field.

**Phoebe:** Right, let's crack on then, *[imitates Ted]* 'No time like the present' as my dad's lovely old Uncle Ted says.

## Scene 2: Aint No Mountain High Enough

*Phoebe checks her phone. There's still no signal. She holds it high and then gives up*

**Dickie:** Nothing?

**Phoebe:** Nope, got any more good ideas, Professor?

**Dickie:** Sorry, I'm all out.

**Phoebe:** Great, I've trekked over hill and dale, climbed a bleeding mountain, ruined my pumps in that godforsaken bog and I'm still no nearer catching up with my mates.

**Dickie:** Sorry.

**Phoebe:** I never thought... You wouldn't lend me your mobile would you? Just want to send a few texts, tell my mates that I've fallen off the edge of the world for a bit.

**Dickie:** Yeah, I would, but I lost it, yesterday actually *[to the audience]* what do I need a mobile for – no friends to speak of, no friends to talk to, well, I tell a lie, there is Maxie, but he's a Border Collie and he hasn't learned how to text yet.

**Phoebe:** That's a total bummer, I don't know how to cope without my mobile – I'm nearly going spare.

**Dickie:** Why don't you ring them from Ted and Sarah's?

**Phoebe:** What, and have them earwigging on every word I say, telling me *[imitates Ted]* 'that phone costs money, you know. It doesn't grow on trees.'

**Dickie:** What are you doing here?

**Phoebe:** My dad's gone to Turkey, and he couldn't afford for me to go, so I've been dropped off with Ted and Sarah for my sins.

**Dickie:** Turkey? Sounds nice, he gone with his girlfriend or summat?

**Phoebe:** Nah, my stupid eejit of a brother has had an accident and he's gone to sort him out, bring him home.

*Phoebe looks in her bag.*

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* What are you supposed to say to that? *[to Phoebe]* Oh. *[silence]* Sorry. *[silence]* Is he all right? Your brother?

**Phoebe:** Yeah, probably. *[to the audience]* There was no way I was getting into explaining all that to Dickie, couldn't run the risk of ending up sobbing in the middle of a field with a total stranger, could I? *[to Dickie]* Anyhoo, what do you do round here?

**Dickie:** My dad's got the next farm, so, I do whatever he tells me to, really, which means mostly trying to stay out of his way as much as possible. *[to the audience]* I'd like to say the conversation got a bit easier after that, but these stupid thoughts kept jumping into my head. Like me imagining that I was going to kiss her, just lean over and kiss her. I couldn't stop thinking about it.

*He leans towards her; she's looking away. When she looks back, he jumps back.*

Then, all of these stupid ideas kept springing up – things that I wanted to say to her like, 'You are the salt to my pepper'. I could feel myself almost blurting them out. 'You are the fish to my chips', 'Marry me'. That's when I got scared that I was going to make a complete nugget of myself – Dickie the Dick, Dickhead, Dick, Dickhead. I sometimes get like that; just feel like I'm really gonna just up and say something really stupid. Best thing to do is just to get off and be on my own, calm myself down a bit, try to get rid of this horrible feeling, the pins and needles in my arms. *[to Phoebe, panicked]* Right, I'm off.

**Phoebe:** What? You can't.

**Dickie:** Yeah, I'm late, just remembered, my dad will be looking for me, wants me to do something for him, see ya.

**Phoebe:** Yeah, right, see ya...wouldn't wanna be ya.

### Scene 3: Fish and Chips

**Dickie:** She mustn't have minded my hasty retreat too much 'cos when I saw her again she was fine.

**Phoebe:** Dickie was the only person within about a 100 mile radius that was anywhere near my age. It was a bit of a relief to see him actually. *[to Dickie]* Hello, stranger.

**Dickie:** What you doing still hanging about here? Thought you'd be back off to civilisation before now. You're not turning native are you, beginning to enjoy the place?

**Phoebe:** Hardly. Dad's just not able to come back right now, my brother's not very well still.

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**Dickie:** I'm sorry.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] That's when I blurted it out. I don't know why, but I was just so pleased to get it off my chest. I mean have you ever ached for something to be different to how it is? When Dad dropped me off at Ted and Sarah's, I just wanted to be anywhere else but there. What I really wanted was to go with him.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] They're ancient. Ted and Sarah, I've known them all my life. Ted is this big bloke, with huge fingers and a bulbous nose and a big red head. Sarah looks pinched in, like she's never cracked a smile in her life.

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie*] And the house smells funny.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] Cabbage.

**Phoebe:** Old people – yeah, old people, you know that smell, is it mothballs or pee or mothballs and pee or I don't know, but you know it, don't you?

**Dickie:** Aye, I do.

**Phoebe:** When Dad left I just freaked out. I completely freaked out.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] She told me that for ten minutes she was just sitting frozen to the spot.

**Phoebe:** I was just frozen to the spot, head bubbling, this horrible feeling.

**Dickie:** This horrible feeling.

**Phoebe:** Pins and needles, lightning shooting down my arms

**Dickie:** and she couldn't breathe properly.

**Phoebe:** Whirlwind of thoughts swirling round my mind

**Dickie:** swimming feeling in her head.

**Phoebe:** I don't know where the toilet is.

**Dickie:** Sarah might make crap food.

**Phoebe:** I don't know how to speak to them.

**Dickie:** They might have stupid rules.

**Phoebe:** What if they get angry?

**Dickie:** They might have funny habits

**Phoebe:** or hate the way I eat

**Dickie:** or want her to get up in the middle of the night.

**Phoebe:** I'll have to do what they say.

**Dickie:** What if her dad doesn't come back for ages?

**Phoebe:** What if he doesn't come back at all?

**Dickie:** Or what if her brother Damon dies?

**Phoebe:** Dad said he's had a fall.

**Dickie:** What if her dad can't find him?

**Phoebe:** What if Dad gets lost?

**Dickie:** Or the plane gets hijacked by terrorists?

**Phoebe:** Or he can't afford the cost.

**Dickie:** What if she ends up living here?

**Phoebe:** Alone in this stinky hell; without my dad and Damon.

**Dickie:** That's when the room started spinning

**Phoebe:** the floor began to swell

**Dickie:** the walls started moving inwards.

**Phoebe:** I wasn't feeling very well.

**Dickie:** Ted could be a mass murderer.

**Phoebe:** Dad's plane might crash and burn.

**Dickie:** The world might just stop spinning.

**Phoebe:** I don't know what makes it turn.

**Dickie:** The stars might all switch off tonight.

**Phoebe:** The moon fall from the sky.

**Dickie:** The sun might supanova.

**Phoebe:** Oh, God, I'm going to die.

**Dickie:** That's when I knew just exactly how much I loved her.

[*quietly, to Phoebe*] You are the fish to my chips.

**Phoebe:** What?

**Dickie:** Nothing.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] From then on we were a bit inseparable.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] Soul mates.

**Phoebe:** Mates. We shared stuff. Head stuff.

**Dickie:** Stuff that I'd never told anyone.

#### **Scene 4: Mixed Martial Arts**

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] See, my dad fancies himself as a bit of a cage fighter. Don't get me wrong, he's no Alex Reid.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] Hardly, more what you might call a big fat...

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] You're not wrong. [*to the audience*] So, he wants me to be a cage fighter too, says;

**Phoebe:** [*as Terry*] Kids aren't taking taekwondo or karate anymore – they're taking mixed martial arts.

**Dickie:** That's what he calls it.



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**Phoebe:** Mixed martial arts is what he calls it, but Dickie told me there's no artistry.

**Dickie:** There's no artistry with him, it's just him and his fat mates going in a cage and knocking seven shades of the proverbial out of each other, Dad likes to make out its more than it is.

**Phoebe:** [*as Terry*] It's a chess match, son. Everything is a countermove to a countermove to a countermove, you just think you're setting him up for something, but then you find out he's been setting you up. It's a buzz.

**Dickie:** That's what he says. All I see is a freak-show, two semi-naked fat blokes either whacking hell out of each other or locked in an embrace still trying to whack the hell out of each other. There's a lot of slapping sounds, heavy breathing and twisting bodies.

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie*] That sounds so wrong.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] Tell us about it. [*to the audience*] So, this day, he says he wants to train me up.

**Phoebe:** [*as Terry*] I want you to get some self esteem, lad, mixed martial arts helps you be active, healthy, I don't want you to get picked on, do I?

**Dickie:** I don't think I want to.

**Phoebe:** [*as Terry*] It's my job as a dad to make sure you can look after yourself, Son, come on, fast hands, fast feet.

*Phoebe starts slapping Dickie. Dickie knocks her hands away.*

**Dickie:** Dad, don't.

**Phoebe:** [*as Terry*] Good check; strong hands, strong body.

**Dickie:** Dad, don't.

**Phoebe:** [*as Terry*] Attack the neck, drag him down.

*Phoebe gets him in a hold.*

Lock it down. You've got to show your opponent what it is, fight smart. Everyone's fed up with boxing, bunch of pussies dancing round each other.

**Dickie:** Dad, I can't breathe.

**Phoebe:** [*as Terry*] That's what it's all about, Son, joint locks and choke holds.

*Dickie wriggles out of Phoebe's grasp.*

Bring it!

**Dickie:** That's when I lost it. The red mist descended and I put everything I had into one huge haymaker of a punch. [*Dickie*

*punches Phoebe and she drops to the floor.] And then he was on the floor, my dad was on the floor, I had decked my dad. I felt the blood drain from my face 'cos I knew, right then, right there he was going to kill me.*

**Phoebe:** But then, the strangest thing happened.

**Dickie:** He just started to laugh.

*Phoebe [as Terry] laughs.*

He just started to laugh like he was fit to bust.

**Phoebe:** Blood streaming down his face

**Dickie:** from his nose

**Phoebe:** *[checks her nose]* from his nose.

**Dickie:** Blood streaming from his nose

**Phoebe:** and he was laughing like a drain.

**Dickie:** Then he looked at me.

**Phoebe:** *[as Terry]* I'll give you that one, Son. But the next time I will take you apart. I will destroy you, you little turd, I will take you down – 'cos I am here to break your will. There's only one way into the octagon and only one way out for you – and that is feet first.

**Dickie:** And I knew that he meant it.

**Phoebe:** So much for building your self-esteem.

## Scene 5: Mental

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* Dad still didn't ring. Day after day was the same; I would check my phone.

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* Stand by the phone in Ted and Sarah's hall.

**Phoebe:** Out by the shed, check my phone.

**Dickie:** Stand by the phone in Ted and Sarah's hall.

**Phoebe:** Talk to Dickie.

**Dickie:** Stand by the phone in Ted and Sarah's hall.

**Phoebe:** Anyhoo, this day, Sarah was in a lather.

**Dickie:** Stand by the phone in Ted and Sarah's hall.

**Phoebe:** Dickie...

**Dickie:** *[to Phoebe]* Sorry, Sarah was in a lather?

**Phoebe:** Right.

**Dickie:** *[as Sarah]* Phoebe, will you stop hanging around the house like a wet Wednesday; you're making the place look untidy. Go and do something useful. It's a lovely day, go for a walk or something.

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**Phoebe:** A walk? Like that is actually doing something. So I started.

**Dickie:** Walking.

**Phoebe:** Walking up and down the hall.

**Dickie:** Up and down the hall. [*as Sarah*] Phoebe, what are you doing?

**Phoebe:** I'm walking, like you told me to.

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] You are just like your mother; cheeky, crazy, good-for-nothing, mental.

**Phoebe:** What?

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] Sarah knew she sort of shouldn't have said that. [*as Sarah, to Phoebe*] It's just, she was always –

**Phoebe:** My mam might be mental, but I'd rather be with her than you any day, I can tell you.

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] Scrubbing everything, everyone in the room included, before you'd even sat down, you felt dirty.

**Phoebe:** I wish I was with her.

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] Then why are you here and not there then?

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] That's when I lost it.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] Big style, I was outside listening.

**Phoebe:** Maybe I said a couple of things I shouldn't have.

**Dickie:** She really shouldn't have.

**Phoebe:** It was like...I was so cross with Dad that he hadn't phoned, but I couldn't be cross with Dad 'cos he was so far away and he was trying to help, and I was so angry with Damo for diving in a stupid swimming pool without checking how deep it was, how stupid is that?

**Dickie:** But boys are stupid.

**Phoebe:** Boys are stupid... And I was worried that Damo would never get well and I thought that if he ever did get well that I'd probably break his neck again just for being so stupid. And then I was worried that Dad would be stuck in Turkey for months. And I couldn't even talk to him. And I couldn't even talk to Amy or Charlotte and catch up on stupid little things we talk about – like *4 Weddings or America's Next Top Model* – so all I had in the world was waiting by this stupid phone to keep me sane.

**Dickie:** What she's saying is she was a bit wound up.

**Phoebe:** And everything that I couldn't say to anyone else was stuck in behind my teeth and I felt locked up so tight.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] Didn't stay locked up that day.

**Phoebe:** *[to Dickie]* Well, Sarah shouldn't have mentioned my mam. Because, well, just then I didn't feel like sucking it up any more, taking any more bull and just living with it.

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* So she didn't – Sarah got the full brunt, a blizzard of insults.

**Phoebe:** *[to Dickie who is acting as Sarah]* You miserable old crow, you think I want to be here? I want nothing more than to go home. Or to go and be with my cheeky, crazy, good-for-nothing, mental Mam than be within a hundred miles of you, you stinky wizened up witch, you haggard, humourless old crone, you dried up old bag.

**Dickie:** It went on for a bit.

**Phoebe:** You ugly, wrinkly, dusty, ancient leper, you desiccated prune-faced hag.

**Dickie:** It really went on for a bit. Lovely Aunt Sarah wasn't best pleased, was she? *[as Sarah, to Phoebe]* You ungrateful little horror. You're a disgrace, we make a home for you and this is the way you talk to me. *[as Dickie, to the audience]* Then Sarah ran off.

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* Well, scuttled off in her crabby old woman way, slippers sliding along the floor, dust cloud trailing after her as bits of her dried-out old snakeskin were left hanging in the air after her, I mean, has she never heard of exfoliating?

## Scene 6: Waterfall

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* And that's when my beautiful Phoebe turned to me.

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* I turned and ran.

**Dickie:** She came flying out of the door.

**Phoebe:** In a total rage.

**Dickie:** Into my arms.

*Phoebe and Dickie bump into each other.*

**Phoebe:** *[to Dickie]* Get me away from here, now!

**Dickie:** *[to Phoebe]* I know somewhere.

**Phoebe:** Let's go.

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* So, I led.

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* I followed.

**Dickie:** Pathfinder general.

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**Phoebe:** And we walked.

**Dickie:** Up hill.

**Phoebe:** Down dale.

**Dickie:** Along tiny windy tracks.

**Phoebe:** Up rock faces.

**Dickie:** Past derelict barns.

**Phoebe:** And sheep.

**Dickie:** A disused quarry.

**Phoebe:** More sheep.

**Dickie:** Along a ridge.

**Phoebe:** Over a ford.

**Dickie:** Up a gully.

**Phoebe:** To arrive

**Dickie:** hot and sweaty

**Phoebe:** chest burning

**Dickie:** muscles protesting

**Phoebe:** hair plastered

**Dickie:** legs aching

**Phoebe:** knackered

**Dickie:** at the waterfall.

**Phoebe:** At the waterfall. [*to Dickie*] It's a waterfall.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] I know.

**Phoebe:** A pigging waterfall!

**Dickie:** With a pool.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] It was lovely. [*to Dickie*] It's just a pigging waterfall.

**Dickie:** What were you expecting, the Hanging Gardens of bleeding Babylon?

**Phoebe:** Oh, hark at her, well, I was expecting something more than a piddly trickle off a cliff with a muddy puddle at the bottom. I'm not a middle aged salad-munching, walking-boot wearing, jolly hockey-sticks freak, am I? And this is hardly Top Shop is it?

**Dickie:** You were expecting Top Shop up a hill in the High-hills? Look, Phoebe, don't pick on me 'cos you're in a mood with the world.

**Phoebe:** I'm not. [*to the audience*] I was, but how did he know that?

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] I didn't know that. [*to Phoebe*] Look, I'm not your whipping boy, Phoebe; I get enough crap from everyone else, don't you start. [*to the audience*] How did I dare say that to Phoebe? I'd never said anything like that to anyone, not ever.

**Phoebe:** *[to Dickie]* That's not fair.

**Dickie:** *[to Phoebe]* No, it's not fair for you to pick on me and shout at me. In fact I think you just might need to go in that pool to cool off a bit.

*Dickie picks up Phoebe as if to throw her in. Phoebe laughs.*

**Phoebe:** What? Noooo; Dickie, don't you dare! Put me down! Now!

**Dickie:** No. I think it's time to cool your temper, young lady.

**Phoebe:** *[firmly]* Dickie, put me down.

**Dickie:** What's the magic word?

**Phoebe:** Abracadabra.

**Dickie:** Right!

*Dickie goes to throw her in.*

**Phoebe:** Nooo, please, pretty please, with a cherry on top?

*She squirms and they collapse on the ground, laughing.*

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* And then, as fast as they came, the storm had broken and the storm-clouds were gone.

**Phoebe:** You mentalist.

**Dickie:** *[to Phoebe]* You're the mentalist – you...you desiccated prune-faced hag.

*Phoebe laughs.*

Phoebe.

**Phoebe:** Dickie.

**Dickie:** Do you really not like it here?

**Phoebe:** It's like the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, only better.

**Dickie:** Thanks. It's always been special to me. I think it's the most beautiful place in the world. Whenever I'm feeling like I need to get away from everything...

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* Bearing in mind that his 'everything' is his dad and an absolutely mental sheepdog called Maxie.

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* True. *[to Phoebe]* When I want to get away from everything I come here. We could go in for a swim; no one else ever comes here.

**Phoebe:** *[to Dickie]* I haven't got a cossie.

**Dickie:** There's no one to see.

**Phoebe:** There's you.

**Dickie:** It's only me, I won't look; promise.

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* I wanted to.

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Dickie: I dare you.

Phoebe: [*to Dickie*] Never dare a fool.

Dickie: I double duff dare you – I won't look; promise.

Phoebe: Turn around then.

Dickie: [*to the audience*] So I did.

Phoebe: [*to the audience*] And so, I stripped off and scrabbled down the bank into the water, just in my bra and pants. [*to Dickie*] Are you coming in? I won't look; promise.

Dickie: [*to the audience*] But she did.

Phoebe: [*to the audience*] I did.

Dickie: I knew she would, and I didn't care.

Phoebe: The water was pigging freezing. [*to Dickie*] It's cold, it's cold!

Dickie: [*to Phoebe*] I know, but I also know two good ways of getting warm.

Phoebe: Really? ...One?

Dickie: Swimming.

Phoebe: And two?

Dickie: Body heat. [*to the audience*] Did I really say that?

Phoebe: [*to the audience*] Did he really say that? Then I realised I just wanted someone,

Dickie: Then she got this look on her face.

Phoebe: I just wanted someone .

Dickie: A smile, like she really liked me.

Phoebe: Anyone.

Dickie: She looked like she really, really liked me.

Phoebe: Anyone at all, to hug me.

Dickie: She moved closer.

Phoebe: I moved closer.

Dickie: I moved closer.

Phoebe: And closer.

Dickie: I wrapped my arms around her waist.

Phoebe: My arms around his shoulders.

Dickie: I pulled her closer, wrapped her tight in me.

Phoebe: Rested my head on his shoulder.

Dickie: She was so small, so soft.

Phoebe: Then

Dickie: Then

Phoebe: I kissed him.

Dickie: She kissed me.

**Phoebe:** Gently.

**Dickie:** She kissed me.

**Phoebe:** And he kissed me.

**Dickie:** Tentatively.

**Phoebe:** Like he'd never kissed anyone before.

**Dickie:** It was beyond bliss.

**Phoebe:** It was OK.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] Are you OK?

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] No, I'm still pigging freezing and I'm getting out.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] And then it was over. The most magical moment of my life was over. And she was gone.

### Scene 7: Dereliction

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] We couldn't really be close after that 'cos getting back from Ruddle Waterfall, you need to use both hands or else you're liable to slip down the hillside into the river.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] I was hot and knackered again.

**Dickie:** We went past the quarry.

**Phoebe:** Couldn't talk.

**Dickie:** Got to the derelict barn.

**Phoebe:** Needed to sit down. [*to Dickie*] Let's stop in here for a rest.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe, anxiously*] No, let's go on.

**Phoebe:** You go on if you want, I'm going in here for a rest.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] I didn't want to, see, I don't like broken things, ever since I was a kid, they make me feel knotted up inside. I can't even look at them. [*to Phoebe*]  
We could stop a little bit further on.

**Phoebe:** You go on, I'm stopping here.

**Dickie:** But you don't know the way back.

**Phoebe:** Then you'll have to stop with me, won't you?

**Dickie:** Not here, please. [*to the audience*] Then she disappeared inside one of the barns. I don't even like looking at them. Let alone think about going inside. [*to Phoebe, panicking*] Phoebe, come out. Come out right now.

**Phoebe:** Oh, look at this, it's awesome.

*Sounds of falling rubble.*



## MOTH TO THE FLAME

Owwwwwww!

**Dickie:** What? What's happened? [*silence*] Phoebe, what's happened? [*silence*] Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God. Phoebe! Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God. Phoebe! ...Right, I'll go in after ten, oh God – one... two...three...four...five...six... oh, I feel sick...seven...Phoebe!

**Phoebe:** What?

**Dickie:** Oh God, oh, thank God, you're all right!

*He hugs her.*

**Phoebe:** Get off. Some hero you are, I could have been collapsed in a heap in there with a beam pinning me down, struggling for breath, each moment my lifeblood dripping away, seeping into the mud.

**Dickie:** I know.

**Phoebe:** I might have been dead.

**Dickie:** You could have been dead.

**Phoebe:** Some friend you are.

**Dickie:** Phoebe, don't.

**Phoebe:** Don't what?

**Dickie:** I feel sick. [*to the audience*] It happened again – pins and needles down my arms, whooshing feeling right through me and up over my head, guts knotted, can't breathe. [*to Phoebe*] I can't breathe.

**Phoebe:** Dickie, don't be a dick.

**Dickie:** Don't call me that.

**Phoebe:** It was just a joke.

**Dickie:** Not funny.

*Dickie lies down, gasping.*

Oh, God!

**Phoebe:** [*panicking*] What do I do? Dickie, what do I do? [*crying*] Dickie, I don't know what to do.

*Dickie throws up. Phoebe gags.*

**Dickie:** Sorry, I'm sorry.

**Phoebe:** Oh, God!

**Dickie:** It's all right, I'm all right, I'm all right.

**Phoebe:** You idiot, Dickie, I thought you were going to die!

**Dickie:** I thought you were dead.

**Phoebe:** Oh, God. It was just a joke.

**Dickie:** I know, really funny.

### Scene 8: Missing Mam

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] That's when Dickie told me why he didn't like broken things.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] And Phoebe told me why Sarah thought her Mam was a cheeky, crazy, mentalist. I loved spending time with my Mam.

**Phoebe:** I never understood my Mam.

**Dickie:** She would take me for walks.

**Phoebe:** Why she always worried about germs.

**Dickie:** Tell me all about the different flowers.

**Phoebe:** She hated the countryside.

**Dickie:** She'd been brought up a townie.

**Phoebe:** Hated towns too.

**Dickie:** Then she met my dad.

**Phoebe:** In the end she hated my dad

**Dickie:** Moved out here to be with him.

**Phoebe:** and me

**Dickie:** There was this big church wedding;

**Phoebe:** and Damo.

**Dickie:** loads of family and friends.

**Phoebe:** Mam hated visitors.

**Dickie:** The photos were great.

**Phoebe:** They brought in germs.

**Dickie:** She was radiant.

**Phoebe:** Touched things with their dirty hands.

**Dickie:** Even though she lived out here

**Phoebe:** Leaned against them with their dirty clothes.

**Dickie:** went back every few months

**Phoebe:** They thought she was cheeky saying that.

**Dickie:** to stay with her sister for a weekend.

**Phoebe:** Then she'd wipe everything down

**Dickie:** Her and dad decided to convert one of the derelict barns.

**Phoebe:** while they were still there.

**Dickie:** Make it into their dream home.

**Phoebe:** Then things turned into a nightmare

**Dickie:** Mam designed it.

**Phoebe:** when Damo started school.

## MOTH TO THE FLAME

**Dickie:** Dad set about building it for her.

**Phoebe:** She freaked out, completely built a new set of rules.

**Dickie:** It was going to be beautiful.

**Phoebe:** Said I would be more beautiful if I didn't go out.

**Dickie:** She took me inside

**Phoebe:** He came home and we played inside

**Dickie:** told me where my bedroom would be.

**Phoebe:** played in the bedroom

**Dickie:** Here's the kitchen

**Phoebe:** while she cleaned the kitchen.

**Dickie:** and the bathroom.

**Phoebe:** Then me and Damo went in the bath.

**Dickie:** Dad worked every hour that there was

**Phoebe:** She worked really hard to keep us clean

**Dickie:** to make it just how she wanted it.

**Phoebe:** to make us just how she wanted us.

**Dickie:** Mam and me played.

**Phoebe:** Mam never played.

**Dickie:** Then she started to go to her sister's more often.

**Phoebe:** Her sister started to notice.

**Dickie:** Every month...

**Phoebe:** She came round more often.

**Dickie:** every fortnight...

**Phoebe:** every week...

**Dickie:** every weekend.

**Phoebe:** Said we were beginning to suffer.

**Dickie:** Dad didn't mind.

**Phoebe:** Dad didn't realise.

**Dickie:** He knew that she was a townie at heart.

**Phoebe:** Knew that she liked us to be perfect.

**Dickie:** Needed people around her.

**Phoebe:** Needed the people around her to be perfect.

**Dickie:** We were all right for the weekend.

**Phoebe:** The weekends were a nightmare

**Dickie:** And when she came home

**Phoebe:** trapped at home

**Dickie:** Dad had always picked some flowers.

**Phoebe:** staring out of the window

**Dickie:** Wildflowers.

**Phoebe:** at the flowers

**Dickie:** He knew the ones she liked best.

**Phoebe:** and the kids who liked outdoors best.

**Dickie:** And I'd put them in a little vase

**Phoebe:** We were scrubbed and contained

**Dickie:** on the table.

**Phoebe:** round the table.

**Dickie:** Then one Monday she didn't come home.

**Phoebe:** Each Monday we were set free.

**Dickie:** I heard Dad talking on the phone.

**Phoebe:** Then my skin broke out.

**Dickie:** He sounded funny.

**Phoebe:** Doctor thought it was funny.

**Dickie:** Then he went outside

**Phoebe:** I had to stay in a hospital.

**Dickie:** to the new house

**Phoebe:** She blamed my toy house.

**Dickie:** and started smashing it with a sledgehammer.

**Phoebe:** She smashed it with a hammer.

**Dickie:** Then he got in the JCB and drove it into the house.

**Phoebe:** Threw the pieces out of the house.

**Dickie:** Smashed it again and again.

**Phoebe:** Smashed it again and again.

**Dickie:** The walls fell down

**Phoebe:** in tiny little pieces.

**Dickie:** Everything was broken.

**Phoebe:** Everything was broken.

**Dickie:** She never came back.

**Phoebe:** Dad took us away, and we've never been back.

### **Scene 9: Silence is Golden**

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* When I got back there was a note on the phone 'Your dad rang'. Nothing else, no message, just, 'Your dad rang'.

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* She asked Sarah what he'd said.

**Phoebe:** But she wasn't speaking to me.

## MOTH TO THE FLAME

**Dickie:** Silence.

**Phoebe:** I thought she'd tell me that night.

**Dickie:** But nothing.

**Phoebe:** I asked Ted if he knew what Dad had said.

**Dickie:** He didn't.

**Phoebe:** I asked Ted if he'd ask Sarah.

**Dickie:** [*as Ted, to Phoebe*] It's no good asking me, and when Sarah gets it into her head to go in one of her moods then she can be like that for weeks.

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie, who is acting as Ted*] Weeks? I can't wait weeks. I've been waiting weeks already. Sarah, when will my Dad be back? I have a right to know!

*Dickie walks away as Sarah.*

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] That's when the vigil started.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] I couldn't run the risk that he would ring again and I would be somewhere else. So I got a chair from the kitchen and put it beside the phone in the hall. And I sat.

**Dickie:** And she sat.

**Phoebe:** And I sat.

**Dickie:** Waiting

**Phoebe:** waiting for the phone to ring.

**Dickie:** For her dad

**Phoebe:** to come and rescue me from this stinky hole and take me home.

**Dickie:** She was still there at tea time.

**Phoebe:** Supper time.

**Dickie:** Plates of food came and left, uneaten.

**Phoebe:** The phone rang.

**Dickie:** It wasn't her dad.

*Phoebe answers the phone.*

**Phoebe:** [*on the phone*] No, you can't speak to Sarah, I'm afraid, I'm expecting an important call and have to keep the line free, goodbye.

*She hangs up.*

**Dickie:** Bedtime.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] I pulled my quilt off the bed and wrapped it round me to keep warm.

**Dickie:** The phone rang.

*Phoebe answers the phone.*

**Phoebe:** *[on the phone]* No, you can't speak to Ted, I'm afraid, I'm expecting an important call and have to keep the line free, goodbye.

*She hangs up.*

**Dickie:** Breakfast time.

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* I watched the phone.

**Dickie:** Dinner time.

**Phoebe:** I checked for a dial tone.

**Dickie:** Tea time.

**Phoebe:** I cleaned the handset.

**Dickie:** Supper time.

**Phoebe:** I cleaned the chair.

**Dickie:** Breakfast time.

**Phoebe:** I cleaned the cord.

**Dickie:** Dinner time.

**Phoebe:** I cleaned the wall.

**Dickie:** Tea time.

**Phoebe:** Scrubbed the hall.

**Dickie:** Supper time.

**Phoebe:** I fell asleep.

**Dickie:** Wrapped in her quilt.

**Phoebe:** I couldn't help it.

**Dickie:** And Ted carried her up to her bed.

**Phoebe:** And I dreamed. I had hold of a load of papers. I was carrying out a survey. I knew I had to get the answers to my questions or else I'd be in real trouble. But every time I went to ask someone a question they would turn away without answering.

And then everyone was my dad. 'Dad'. They didn't look like my dad, but I knew it was him. But he kept turning away 'Dad, it's me, Phoebe'. But he couldn't hear me, or he wouldn't listen. 'Dad, DAD!' he just kept turning away. And then I couldn't keep hold of the papers, they started to fall out of my hand, more and more of them until they turned into a waterfall, and then a sea and I was drowning. I couldn't breathe.

When I got downstairs the next morning the phone was gone, unplugged.

**Dickie:** I went round.

**Phoebe:** I couldn't speak.

**Dickie:** I'd never seen her like this, she just sat there staring at where the phone had been. [*to Phoebe*] Want to go back to the waterfall? [*silence*] We could take cossies and towels this time and a picnic. [*silence*] We could go a bit higher, maybe get signal.

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie*] What's the use?

**Dickie:** eh?

**Phoebe:** I just have to face it. I'm stuck here for the duration.  
I just have to grit my teeth and bear it.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] And she went back to bed.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] For a week.

**Dickie:** I called every day but she refused to get up. Took her drinks, food, sweets, magazines.

**Phoebe:** Sarah still didn't say a word. She knew how upset I was. And she never uttered a word about my Dad.

**Dickie:** Wizenened old cow.

**Phoebe:** In the end Ted made me get up.

**Dickie:** [*as Ted, to Phoebe*] This is no good. Get out of bed, get a shower and get dressed, we're going into Olderby to the shops.

**Phoebe:** So I did. I ached everywhere.

## Scene 10: Olderby

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] While she was in the shower Ted rang. [*as Ted*] Dickie, we're going to Olderby – I'll pick you up on the way.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] I looked terrible, eyes all sunk in, hair all flat, unhealthy looking skin. I couldn't even be bothered to put any make-up on.

**Dickie:** She still looked gorgeous to me, though. I sat close to her in the car, willing her to look at me. We got stuck behind a tractor so it took ages to get to Olderby, she never said a single word.

**Phoebe:** I thought I might get signal there.

**Dickie:** She didn't.

**Phoebe:** I cried.

**Dickie:** I bought her an ice cream.

**Phoebe:** It dripped.

**Dickie:** I didn't know what to do. [*to Phoebe*] Hey, Phoebes, what do you call a woman with one leg?

*Phoebe shrugs.*

Eileen! What do you call a man with no arms and no legs sitting by the front door? Matt! What do you call a man with no arms and no legs in a pool?

**Phoebe:** *[to Dickie]* Bob.

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* Not even a flicker of a smile. Nada, nothing, nowt.

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* Then I saw the post office I remembered – Dad set me up a savings account when I was 10. Said it was for Uni if I wanted to go, or a car if I didn't. There must have been a fair bit in there by now. Money! If I had money then I could go home or, even better, I could go home, get my passport and then set off for Turkey to find Dad and Damo.

*Phoebe gets up.*

**Dickie:** *[to Phoebe]* Where you going?

**Phoebe:** *[to Dickie, smiling]* Post office. *[to the audience]* It was just a small one, but I got a good feeling, it was the happiest I'd been for days, there's nothing like a bit of hope to perk you up, is there?

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* When she smiled it's like the sun came out. It felt like spring.

**Phoebe:** *[to Dickie]* You coming?

**Dickie:** *[to Phoebe]* I'm there, little miss sunshine.

**Phoebe:** Hello, I'd like to take some money out of my account, please, but I haven't got my card.

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* Doreen in the post office is related to my Dad somehow. *[as Doreen the postmistress, to Phoebe]* OK, do you have a paying in book?

**Phoebe:** No.

**Dickie:** *[as Doreen]* Do you know your account number?

**Phoebe:** No.

**Dickie:** *[as Doreen]* What's your name and address?

**Phoebe:** Phoebe Atkinson, 5, The Grange, Allington.

**Dickie:** *[as Doreen]* OK, do you have any form of ID?

**Phoebe:** No.

**Dickie:** *[as Doreen]* Oh, then I'm afraid I can't help you today.

**Phoebe:** What?

**Dickie:** *[as Doreen]* There's nothing I can do to help if you don't have your account details or any form of ID.



## MOTH TO THE FLAME

**Phoebe:** But it's my money, in my account and I need it.

**Dickie:** [*as Doreen*] I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do.

**Phoebe:** Why not? It must be on the system.

**Dickie:** [*as Doreen*] Well, you could be anybody.

**Phoebe:** But I'm not, I'm me, and it's mine.

**Dickie:** [*as Doreen*] It may well be, but you can't prove who you are and I can't just give money out to people from accounts that may not be theirs.

**Phoebe:** But it is! Dickie why doesn't she understand?

**Dickie:** Phoebe, she can't help.

**Phoebe:** She has to be able to, it's mine, Dickie, tell her who I am.

**Dickie:** Phoebe, calm down. [*to Doreen*] I'm sorry she's a bit upset about things.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] That's when the cheeky cow said

**Dickie:** [*as Doreen*] Dickie, can you take your friend out now?

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie, who is acting as Doreen*] Stop talking about me like I'm some sort of imbecile, I'm not crazy, I just want my money, its mine.

**Dickie:** [*as Doreen*] I'd like you to stop shouting and leave; this is a post office not a fish quay and you bellowing like a fish wife is upsetting my other customers. Now can you get out?

**Phoebe:** That's rich, I come in asking for help, all I want is my own money out of my own account and you won't let me have it, and because I get a little bit upset you talk to me like I'm a piece of dirt.

**Dickie:** Come on Phoebe. [*to Doreen*] I'm sorry.

**Phoebe:** Don't you dare apologise to that evil witch.

**Dickie:** Phoebe let's go.

**Phoebe:** You bitch, I hope you drop dead.

**Dickie:** Phoebe, stop it. I have to live here.

**Phoebe:** And I hope you do too, Dickhead.

Dickie walks away, he turns, Phoebe sinks to the floor. Dickie walks back and hugs her.

I just want my Dad; I just want to go home.

*She cries.*

**Dickie:** I know, I know, I know. I know, I know, I know.

## Scene 11 - Howling for the moon

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] When we got back, Sarah had started talking again.

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] It's sausage and mash for tea.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] I hate sausages, but she was speaking, I thought if I tried to keep on the good side of her she might eventually tell me what Dad said. [*to Dickie, who is acting as Sarah*] Lovely. Delicious, shall I wash up after?

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] It's about time you started pulling your weight.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] Grin and bear it, grin and bear it, grin and bear it, grin and bear it. [*to Dickie, who is acting as Sarah*] I'll try to remember that.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] But Sarah still wasn't telling.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] No matter how I approached it. [*to Dickie, who is acting as Sarah*] Sarah, I just wondered what it was my dad said. Did he say when he'd be coming home?

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] Phoebe, your father and I had a private conversation. I don't ask you what you've spoken about with Dickie, do I?

**Phoebe:** Sarah, I suppose Damo is getting better then, if Dad could leave him to phone home?

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] Damien is in the right place to be looked after.

**Phoebe:** Damon

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] What?

**Phoebe:** His name is Damon. Every year since he was born we've sent you a Christmas card with Damon written on it. And every year you've sent one back to Damien. His name is Damon.

**Dickie:** Damon, Damien, it's all one.

**Phoebe:** Really? Right. It's all one. Should I go and pack my bags then – if Dad and Damien are going to be back soon.

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] There's plenty of time for packing; you didn't bring that much stuff.

**Phoebe:** School will be starting back soon. Should I ring them and tell them I won't be in for a while?

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] School doesn't start back for a fortnight, there'll be no one there to tell anything to. Phoebe, I'd appreciate if you'd stop pumping me for information, you're putting me in a difficult situation – I don't pry into your business, do I?

**Phoebe:** Sarah, this is my business, I have a right to know.

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] This conversation is over, young lady, do not ask again.

**Phoebe:** I want to know what's going on, I need to know what's going on.

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] I want the moon. Can you get it for me?

**Phoebe:** What?

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] You might as well ask me for the moon. I am not going to tell you what he said. Trust me; it's for your own good.

**Phoebe:** What does that mean? And since when do you get to decide what's for my good?

**Dickie:** [*as Sarah*] Since your father left you in my care.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] And then she was gone, again.

## Scene 12: A Hunting We Will Go

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] When we went out Phoebe was still quiet but better than before. [*to Phoebe*] I'm going out with my dad, tomorrow, we're going rabbiting.

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie*] You rabbit on all the time.

**Dickie:** Ha-ha, very funny.

**Phoebe:** Very funny, I know, I'm freaking hilarious. You don't like your dad. Why would you want to spend the day with him?

**Dickie:** It's all right actually – when we're out on the fell. It's one of the times my dad seems more like he used to be; shotgun in hand, terrier round his ankles. He seems more, normal.

**Phoebe:** Normal! A bloke wielding a shotgun! You have a weird idea of what's normal, Dickie.

**Dickie:** It's just... He doesn't seem so angry when we're up on the fell.

**Phoebe:** Where you going?

**Dickie:** Over towards Olderby.

**Phoebe:** Olderby is that way?

**Dickie:** Yeah, there's a route over to Olderby, you just go over that rise there, over to Sawgill and eventually you come to Bearflat lane, that takes you straight in to the village.

**Phoebe:** So it's not really that far to Olderby?

**Dickie:** No, it's just over the tops. Did you really not know?

**Phoebe:** No.

**Dickie:** Can you not tell where places are?

**Phoebe:** I haven't got a clue – I don't really do geography. Give me a map of the land and I'm all at sea. Don't even know how to work

out which way is north. Listen, Dickie,  
I live in a town, with real streets and houses and shops and one  
road that leads onto another road and there are buses that  
get you to where you want to be and there are places that you  
actually want to go to and things to do. There are road signs and  
street names and if you do get lost then there's a mobile phone  
signal and you can phone your dad and he can come and get you.

**Dickie:** Well, it's just the same here.

**Phoebe:** In no way at all could this ever, ever be considered to be the  
same as a town.

**Dickie:** Yeah, there's loads of distinguishing features that help you to  
work out where you are.

**Phoebe:** What, one hill, looks like another hill, looks like another hill  
and you're surrounded by hills.

**Dickie:** You really are a townie.

**Phoebe:** And you, my love, are a country bumpkin of the worst kind.

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* Did she just call me 'my love'? She called  
me 'my love'.

**Phoebe:** I've never seen a shotgun. I'd love to learn to shoot.

**Dickie:** *[to Phoebe]* Never seen one?

**Phoebe:** Nope.

**Dickie:** Well then...my love, it's time for your first shooting lesson.

**Phoebe:** Will your dad not mind?

**Dickie:** Why would he?

**Phoebe:** Dickie, it's a shotgun.

**Dickie:** Phoebe, everyone round here's got one. I've been shooting  
air rifles since I was a kid – and the shotgun for years. No,  
Phoebe, he won't mind, at all.

*Dickie brings a shotgun.*

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* Oh, look at her, all Mrs Hunter.

**Dickie:** Get hold of it, then, it's not loaded. When you want to fire it you  
bring it up to your shoulder and aim. Look down the barrel and see  
those grooves running down it, and the bead at the front end, you've  
got to line those up with what you're shooting and then make sure  
the bead is at the very bottom of the target that you're shooting at.

**Phoebe:** *[to Dickie]* Why?

**Dickie:** Because it's a slow-discharging gun and it'll kick when you  
fire it. And when it kicks it lifts the end of the barrel up, so you're  
more likely to hit if you aim low, the shot will spray upwards.

## MOTH TO THE FLAME

**Phoebe:** Ok, professor, so what am I shooting at?

**Dickie:** [to the audience] Just then my dad appeared.

**Phoebe:** [as Terry, looking full of hell] Dickie, what are you up to?

**Dickie:** Just showing Phoebe how to shoot.

**Phoebe:** [as Terry] Not round here you don't, you simpleton.

**Dickie:** What?

**Phoebe:** Since when has the yard been the place to fire a gun? Come on, Dickie, use your head, you loser.

*Phoebe hits Dickie on the head.*

**Phoebe:** [as Terry] There must be something in there other than crap-for-brains.

**Dickie:** Dad, stop it.

**Phoebe:** [as Terry] Or what? You gonna follow up that lucky punch of yours? See if you can knock me on my backside again? Bring it!

**Dickie:** Come on, Phoebe.

**Phoebe:** [to the audience] But Dickie's dad wasn't quite finished. [as Terry] You're going nowhere, don't ever try showing off to your little girlfriend again, Dickie, it doesn't suit you. Anyway, she is way out of your league. [to the audience] And then he looked at me. [as Terry] You, if you really want to learn to shoot, you should ask your uncle Ted, not this bag of puss. [to Dickie] You, indoors, now.

**Dickie:** No.

**Phoebe:** [as Terry] What?

**Dickie:** Snot off, Dad.

**Phoebe:** [to the audience] And then we were gone.

## Scene 13: Epiphany

**Dickie:** [to the audience] It was the day that I'd prepared for, that my life had been leading up to since I first saw Phoebe out by Ted's barn. I was going to ask her out. I was finally going to take the bull by the horns and ask her to be my girlfriend.

**Phoebe:** [to the audience] That's when he said it, the thing that made the most sense. The thing that I'd been waiting to hear ever since I arrived.

**Dickie:** My heart was in my mouth, pulse racing, I wanted to do it right. [to Phoebe] Phoebe, I think that if you want something, if you really want something, then you have to go for it. Because if you really want it then there has to be a way for you to have

it, and you shouldn't be scared to go after it, and you should be prepared to do anything, to risk everything, to make your dreams come true. *[to the audience]* That's when she ran off. *[to Phoebe]* Phoebe! *[to the audience]* I hadn't even had chance to ask her out.

**Phoebe:** It was so freaking obvious – of course I should be prepared to risk everything. In Olderby I'd realised that the only thing stopping me was money.

I needed to risk everything to get the money to go and find Dad and Damon in Turkey. That's when it came to me; it was a flash of inspiration. The post office! That horrible woman deserved to get a bit of what she didn't mind giving out. Brilliant!

Two birds, one stone. I couldn't tell anyone, not Dickie, he'd been on her side. So I had to plan and do this on my own. Take control. Robbing the post office:

1. It's only small, so not many people use it, not too much money, just enough.
2. No police station in the village, so, little chance of getting caught.
3. Monday, they'll have the most money start of the week, when people go for their benefits.
4. There's a route to Olderby, over the tops, so no one to see me going into, or out of, the village.
5. Ted has a shotgun.

I found one of Ted's old balaclavas, adapted it a bit. Got myself ready. It's all perfect. All so perfect. I just need to risk everything to get what I want. And I really, really just want to go home. I didn't want to take ages before I did it, knew I'd chicken out if I thought about it too much. I knew I had to strike while the iron was hot.

## Scene 14 – The Righter of Wrongs

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* When I got to the post office it was bursting at the seams; two old women, an old man and a young woman with twins in a pushchair. But I couldn't back down could I? It was the only way out.

*[shouting]* Get down; you get down on the floor. All of you, right now. You, fill that bag full of money, all of it. You, don't even think about calling the police or setting an alarm off. Don't make me use this. You really don't want to make me use this. Fill the bag! Now!

## MOTH TO THE FLAME

[*to the audience*] I can't say that I enjoyed it nearly as much as I thought I would. It was all so different in my mind. Well it is in the films isn't it? You watch films, don't you, and it seems OK to be on the edge; to live a life of crime. There are degrees of evil and you never think that you yourself might be considered to be the truly evil one.

[*shouting*] Where do you think you're going? Don't move. I said do not move. Put down that mobile phone. Drop it. Now kick it over here.

[*to the audience*] I had to remind myself that I do have a good heart; I was doing this because I had to, not because I wanted to. But I couldn't tell them that, could I? They wouldn't understand anyway. 'Other people have problems, and they don't resort to armed robbery.' Well they're not me are they? I wanted to tell them – other people don't have the same problems I've got. I have to do this, I've really truly thought about every option and there's just no other way.

[*shouting*] Shut that kid up, now.

[*To the audience*] It seemed a bit mad now, the meticulous care I'd taken to get right just exactly how I was going to look. I'd thought I couldn't come in here wearing any old thing could I? Joggers and a hoody would have been way too predictable. No, I planned exactly how great I was going to look. I wanted to look good, so I wore my jeggings – I've always thought my legs might be my best feature, and a nice little strappy top showing just a little bit of cleavage, and I wanted to be able to run away quickly, so I'd thought my new flat boots would be a sensible idea. And I wanted to look professional – so I topped it off with a nifty little leather jacket, cut off at the waist. Just the job. Champion.

[*Shouting*] Have you filled that bag yet? Get on with it. I haven't got all day.

[*to the audience*] I'd taken ages over my make-up as well. Well, the devil is in the details – I knew nobody would be able to see my face, but I couldn't come in like a skank –

I have standards, anyway focusing on the detail stopped me from talking myself out of doing it.

No one else would know how I looked, but I would! And I convinced myself that if I was going to be an international woman of mystery that I'd have to look the part all the way down. So I washed, dried and straightened my hair.

Then it was a careful; cleansing and scrubbing, then a rub all over with an ice cube and then my new Lush moisturiser – I wanted my skin in tip-top condition. Then full face make-up, took me ages, foundation, then attention to my lips, cheeks eyes – I wanted to look just right. I was just hoping my hair wouldn't be plastered down when I took off the mask.

[*shouting*] Get down on the floor, I don't care if you've just had a hip replacement – I don't want to see any faces.

[*to audience*] And that really is the truth of it. I kept thinking when this is over I don't want to remember how scared or appalled or upset any of them are. Looking at me with terror and hate in their eyes. I just wanted to get it over with and go home. I really, really just want to go home.

*There is the sound of sirens.*

No! Please, no!

## Scene 15 - The Great Escape

Dickie: [*to the audience*] As luck would have it, I was in Olderby that day. Heard the sirens, wondered what was up.

Phoebe: [*to the audience*] I ran out of the post office, taking my balaclava off as I went. I ran.

Dickie: Straight into me.

Phoebe: Straight into Dickie.

Dickie: I didn't see the shotgun. Just smelled the unmistakable smell of Phoebe. [*to Phoebe*] Phoebe, what the...

Phoebe: I ran full pelt into him and...

Dickie: [*to the audience*] I reached out for her and...

Phoebe: I heard this bang.

Dickie: Then the world exploded.

Phoebe: The sound of breaking glass.

Dickie: I was showered in sharp shards, fragments stripping my face.

Phoebe: A blizzard of glass

Dickie: I didn't feel any pain.

Phoebe: tinkling as it hit the ground.

Dickie: Phoebe's shoulder shot back.

Phoebe: I heard a pop in my head and my shoulder exploded in agony.

Dickie: I lost my grip on her.



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Phoebe: And I spun around.

Dickie: She ended up on the ground.

Phoebe: Landed on my arm.

Dickie: Among the falling glass.

Phoebe: Pricking my eyes.

Dickie: I saw something skitter along the floor.

Phoebe: The gun flew out of my hand and skidded along the floor.

Dickie: [*to Phoebe*] Phoebe!

Phoebe: I screamed.

Dickie: [*to the audience*] She screamed.

Phoebe: I screamed.

Dickie: [*to Phoebe*] Phoebe!

Phoebe: I couldn't breathe.

Dickie: [*to the audience*] She looked bad.

Phoebe: I opened my eyes.

Dickie: One eye didn't work very well.

Phoebe: I tried to reach out for Dickie.

Dickie: Her eyelid was ripped.

Phoebe: His face was in bits.

Dickie: I saw blood trickle down her face.

Phoebe: I saw blood trickle down his face.

Dickie: Then I heard shouting

Phoebe: from inside the post office.

Dickie: People shouting

Phoebe: inside the post office.

Dickie: Then Phoebe got up and ran

Phoebe: drunkenly

Dickie: up the back street.

Phoebe: I ran

Dickie: rolling from side to side.

Phoebe: I ran.

Dickie: I followed.

Phoebe: Not thinking, just moving.

Dickie: Not thinking, just moving.

Phoebe: My shoulder screamed every time I took a step.

Dickie: [*to Phoebe*] Phoebe...Phoebe.

Phoebe: I knew I had to keep moving

Dickie: Phoebe...Phoebe.

**Phoebe:** had to get away.

**Dickie:** Phoebe, stop! You need help.

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie*] Dickie, you have to help me.

**Dickie:** Why... I don't... you need proper help, your face.

**Phoebe:** Take me to the waterfall, I'll tell you everything there.

**Dickie:** Phoebe.

**Phoebe:** Just take me to the waterfall.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] I looked around.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] Everything was chaos.

**Dickie:** Shouting.

**Phoebe:** Crying.

**Dickie:** Sirens.

**Phoebe:** Running.

**Dickie:** I didn't know what had happened but I

**Phoebe:** I knew it was trouble.

**Dickie:** knew it was big trouble.

**Phoebe:** So we set off.

**Dickie:** So we set off for the waterfall.

**Phoebe:** Staggering and limping.

**Dickie:** Bleeding and blinking.

**Phoebe:** Moaning and groaning.

**Dickie:** Up hill.

**Phoebe:** And down dale.

**Dickie:** Along tiny windy tracks.

**Phoebe:** Up rock faces.

**Dickie:** Past derelict barns

**Phoebe:** and sheep.

**Dickie:** A disused quarry.

**Phoebe:** More sheep.

**Dickie:** Along a ridge.

**Phoebe:** Over a ford.

**Dickie:** Up a gully.

**Phoebe:** To arrive

**Dickie:** clammy and feverish

**Phoebe:** eyes burning

**Dickie:** body protesting

**Phoebe:** scabby faced

**Dickie:** heart aching

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**Phoebe:** shoulder screaming

**Dickie:** blood dripping

**Phoebe:** broken and battered

**Dickie:** at the waterfall.

**Phoebe:** At the waterfall. [*to Dickie*] It's the waterfall.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] I know.

**Phoebe:** The pigging waterfall.

**Dickie:** What were you expecting, the Hanging Garden of Babylo...

[*to the audience*] Then she passed out. I didn't know what to do.

I started to get the pins and needles feeling in my hands, and

I couldn't breathe, I wanted to run away, go and get someone.

But I had to stay here with Phoebe, so I decided to stop thinking

and start doing. I got some water and gently splashed her face. I

didn't know if I should, but I had to do something. I knew it wasn't

sterile. She moaned a bit. Her face looked so bad; it was starting

to swell up. I just wanted to see if it really was Phoebe under all

that blood and horror. I didn't rub; I could still see bits of glass in

the skin. Then I didn't know what else to do so I just sat with her.

After a bit I tried to pick the glass out.

**Phoebe:** Aaaaahhhh!!!

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

**Phoebe:** I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, [*Dickie holds her.*

*She winces.*] Dickie, what am I going to do?

**Dickie:** I don't know. Phoebe, what happened, why are we here? Why

are we not at the doctors?

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] So I told him. About the plan, about taking

Ted's gun. [*to Dickie*] I swear to god I didn't know it was loaded – I

couldn't load it, I don't know how. [*to the audience*] About how I

just did what he said I should do. About how I risked everything to

get the money to go home.

**Dickie:** What?

**Phoebe:** And then he looked at me with

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] I looked at her with

**Phoebe:** cold eyes.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe, in disbelief*] Oh, my God! Phoebe!

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie*] I just want to go home.

**Dickie:** Phoebe, you have to go back, give yourself up.

**Phoebe:** But they'll lock me up and I'll never see my dad again.

Please, Dickie, you have to help me.

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* She looked so desperate, what could I say?

**Phoebe:** *[to the audience]* So we decided

**Dickie:** So she decided

**Phoebe:** that he would get cleaned up

**Dickie:** and she would get cleaned up

**Phoebe:** and we would go to the barn

**Dickie:** and, once she was comfortable

**Phoebe:** as comfortable as I could get

**Dickie:** I would go and find out what had happened in Olderby after we left.

**Phoebe:** And I would rest.

**Dickie:** And I would bring her some supplies

**Phoebe:** some clothes

**Dickie:** some food

**Phoebe:** some painkillers

**Dickie:** some bandages

**Phoebe:** some money

**Dickie:** and we'd get her to the next town

**Phoebe:** and on a bus

**Dickie:** and to the hospital.

**Phoebe:** When I struggled out of my jacket

**Dickie:** a big purple bruise

**Phoebe:** was starting to flower on my shoulder.

**Dickie:** And it was all out of shape – I found some soggy old rope and I tied it to her wrist and her elbow and round her neck

**Phoebe:** I nearly passed out again. *[to Dickie]* There's some tissue in my jacket pocket.

**Dickie:** *[to Phoebe]* Come here, then.

*Dickie goes to bathe Phoebe's face.*

**Phoebe:** You first.

*She takes the tissue from him.*

**Dickie:** *[to the audience]* She was so gentle, took her time. Even with her face ripped open she was the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen.

**Phoebe:** Now me.

**Dickie:** I could've wept every time she winced. She tried to do that flicky thing with her hair, and she bellowed.

**Phoebe:** Oooooooooowwwwwwww!

## MOTH TO THE FLAME

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] I can't do it Phoebe, you need to go to hospital, now. Your face, I think your eye needs stitches.

**Phoebe:** Dickie, I will, I promise, once I've got away from here.

**Dickie:** [*to audience*] I was scared I was making it worse. She'd started to bleed again.

### Scene 16: Barn storming

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] By the time we'd finished cleaning up it was getting dark so we set off for the barn

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] shed

**Phoebe:** hut

**Dickie:** shack

**Phoebe:** shelter.

**Dickie:** When we got there Phoebe lay down

**Phoebe:** I lay down

**Dickie:** on the floor

**Phoebe:** on the mud

**Dickie:** in the dirt

**Phoebe:** under half a roof

**Dickie:** and a starry sky.

**Phoebe:** Not a cloud

**Dickie:** moon like a balloon

**Phoebe:** the dew dropped

**Dickie:** and she started to shake.

**Phoebe:** Dickie held me.

**Dickie:** She closed her eyes.

**Phoebe:** Tried to forget

**Dickie:** Her face drawn

**Phoebe:** those people.

**Dickie:** pinched in with pain.

**Phoebe:** I felt like I was living life in extreme close up. [*to Dickie*]  
What have I done?

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] Shhhhh. [*to the audience*] I covered her with my coat.

**Phoebe:** I can't believe it.

**Dickie:** I touched her face.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] The realisation of what I'd done surged through me.

**Dickie:** Her beautiful face.

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie*] I can't believe it.

**Dickie:** Gently

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] Those poor, frightened people.

**Dickie:** I kissed her head.

**Phoebe:** The babies with the big scared eyes.

**Dickie:** I looked into her big scared eyes.

**Phoebe:** The old woman with the stick.

**Dickie:** She looked so sick.

**Phoebe:** I began to cry.

**Dickie:** I began to cry.

**Phoebe:** I pulled away.

**Dickie:** Her profile framed in the moonlight.

**Phoebe:** Shame burned inside.

**Dickie:** She looked

**Phoebe:** Terrified of what I'd done.

**Dickie:** so small

**Phoebe:** Terrified of seeing anyone.

**Dickie:** so lost.

**Phoebe:** Terrified to be on my own.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe*] Bye, Phoebe.

**Phoebe:** [*to Dickie*] Come back soon.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] I stroked her hair

**Phoebe:** Really soon.

**Dickie:** for one last time.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] And then he left.

**Dickie:** And then I left.

**Phoebe:** He had his instructions.

**Dickie:** I knew what I had to do.

*Phoebe sits alone, hunched over. She slumps to the ground.  
Sounds of a helicopter and dogs barking.*

**Phoebe:** [*cries*] Daddy?

*Dickie enters.*

**Dickie:** There she is.

## Scene 17: Justice

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] It was months later when I saw Phoebe in court. I couldn't believe how beautiful she still looked. The scars on her face didn't take away anything from her, she shone. [*as the prosecution*] Your honour, it has been pointed out by the defence that this is a most unfortunate young woman who was driven to despair by extremely challenging circumstances. We do not doubt that this is the case, however, we have seen from the evidence put before the court that detailed planning and preparation was undertaken and that she fully intended to acquire a substantial amount of money through committing the offence of armed robbery of the sub-post office in Olderby.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] I hadn't seen Dickie for ages, he looked a bit haggard, he'd lost loads of weight. The little scars were shiny on the side of his face.

**Dickie:** [*as the prosecution*] Miss Atkinson undertook a careful reconnaissance of the sub-post office on the Tuesday prior to the offence taking place, and, I put it to you that on the day of the offence the defendant took her uncle's loaded firearm and proceeded over Highgill Fell to Olderby, at which time Miss Atkinson entered the sub-post office. When the defendant heard the police sirens she exited the sub-post office whereupon the firearm, a Zoli Columbus 12-bore shotgun, was discharged, shattering the window of the newsagents shop next door; the fact that Miss Atkinson was the one who suffered mostly from this discharge is not a mitigating factor in determining her guilt. She must be considered to constitute a serious danger to the public and therefore a custodial sentence is the most appropriate in this instance.

**Phoebe:** I couldn't believe I was here. How things had turned out. It seemed such a long time ago and besides the girl who did that wasn't me. She couldn't be me. I don't do those sorts of things. [*as the prosecution*] M'lord, Richard Simms is also charged with attempting to commit armed robbery of the Oldbury sub-post office. A callous young man, he coerced Miss Atkinson into committing this vile act. He manipulated a vulnerable young woman into acting against her better nature. His suggestion to the co-defendant, and I quote, 'that you should be prepared to do whatever it takes to get what you want', was clearly designed to get her to do what he wanted. He knew that his co-defendant was suffering severe

emotional duress, due to the prolonged absence of her father and the severity of the accident that her brother had suffered, and was, therefore, in a fragile frame of mind. I put it to you that he must have been aware of the effect that such an assertion would have on her, and that, in suggesting this to her, his intentions were to manipulate her into carrying out this offence on his behalf.

**Dickie:** [*to the audience*] I could hear the words that were being spoken, but I knew they weren't the truth. Phoebe knew they weren't the truth.

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] I hadn't realised just how manoeuvred I'd been by Dickie. When my barrister told me what Dickie must have done; that, seeing how sad and lonely I was, he'd befriended me and coerced me to do what he wanted to do, it all made sense. I wasn't myself and he wasn't the country bumpkin that I'd taken him for.

I looked across at him.

**Dickie:** I smiled. It didn't matter what anyone else thought, I knew that Phoebe knew the truth.

**Phoebe:** I looked away. [*as the prosecution*] Mr Simms I put it to you that you accompanied Miss Atkinson to Olderby to reconnoitre the post office premises on the Tuesday before the offence took place.

**Dickie:** [*to Phoebe, who is acting as prosecution*] We went to Olderby to cheer her up, she was upset...

**Phoebe:** [*as the prosecution*] On this visit that you contrived a situation in which an altercation took place between Miss Atkinson and the sub-postmistress Doreen Bailey, and that this was to further convince Miss Atkinson that this course of action was in her best interest and would teach Mrs Bailey a lesson.

**Dickie:** Doreen's a really lovely lady. I've known her all my life. I'd never do anything to...

**Phoebe:** [*as the prosecution*] Later, you taught Miss Atkinson how to hold and shoot a shotgun.

**Dickie:** She asked!

**Phoebe:** [*as the prosecution*] You claim that all of these actions were mere coincidences, that you didn't know that Miss Atkinson was likely to take your 'innocent' remark as an exhortation to commit a crime.

**Dickie:** Why would I?



**Phoebe:** [*as the prosecution*] Desirous to get away from a bullying father, you concocted this escape route and like a spider drew Miss Atkinson increasingly into the centre of your web.

**Dickie:** Dad?

**Phoebe:** [*as the prosecution*] Once you realised that the game was up and that Miss Atkinson needed urgent medical attention, you concocted this defence to save your own skin.

**Dickie:** Phoebe needed help, her face, her skin...

**Phoebe:** [*as the prosecution*] Claiming that Miss Atkinson, a young woman who has never had any access to firearms, or any inclination to pick one up before she met you, was solely responsible for planning, preparing and executing this vile offence by herself.

**Dickie:** Ask Phoebe, she knows. Phoebe, please.

**Phoebe:** [*as the prosecution*] I put it to the jury that this highly manipulative young man is a risk to young women and a severe threat to public safety and that he should be found guilty.

*SFX gavel.*

**Dickie:** Guilty?

*SFX gavel.*

**Phoebe:** Guilty!

**Dickie:** Guilty! Dad! I didn't. Phoebe, tell them, Phoebe, please!

**Phoebe:** [*to the audience*] Guilty... I couldn't look at him, because of what he'd done to me.

**Dickie:** Not looking at Phoebe as she was taken away was just about impossible. She draws your eyes, you see, the way she sets the world alight, just like wildfire.