

Start upstage centre and slowly make way to downstage centre during the monologue. Fifty something woman on stage alone. Starts off with a slow pace until realisation hits.

The house's quiet, silent. Why is it so quiet? There's no warmth next to me, Barry must have woken up already. What's the time? The clock says nine-oh-seven. Fuck! The kids. They're late for school. I haven't made them lunch. No, they aren't kids anymore. They're at work, they're in university. So much smarter than their useless, selfish, greedy mum. No wonder my children hate me. I'm nothing. I'm no one. Stop thinking about it Meryl, no one cares.

Beat.

Everyone's gone. Amy's in Africa. Ben's teaching. Claire's at university. Barry's with his friends. I've no friends. I should've friends. A person needs friends. I'm a bad person. No one wants to be friends with me. My family wants to be away from me. No one wants to be with me. There's yoga at the community centre today. Maybe I should go. I can make friends. Gwyneth Paltrow still does yoga. My life will begin to resemble Gwyneth Paltrow. I can try. I *should* try.

Pause.

At the community centre, so many people here. Why is everyone looking at me? They're talking about me. Of course they are, I'm the prime example of a nobody. Everyone knows about Barry dumping me for the receptionist with the ankle bracelet. Everyone knows my children hate me. Everyone knows how I am a useless, selfish, greedy mum. Who's that walking towards me? Do I know her? Is she going to talk about Barry? I don't want people talking about our relationship. I don't want to talk to people. 'Hello, you must be new here, we're starting in a minute. Do you want to go get a mat at the side and join into the circle? By the way, what's your name?' Did she just speak to me? Did she just ask for my name? 'Um, it's M-Meryl, Meryl Louise Davenport. Y-yes, yes, it's nice to m-meet you too. I'll g-go get a mat'. Mat, mat, which colour, red, blue, purple, just get one. Where do I go, oh my god, so many people, what do I do?

Run to down stage right, speak in the voice of a devil.

DEVIL. Told ya Meryl, don't go out. You should've just stayed home and rot. You're a useless, selfish, greedy bitch. Your kids hate you. Why bother doing yoga. To have pride? To make friends? No one likes ya, stop trying.

Run to down stage left, speak in the voice of an angel.

ANGEL. It is a first step, leaving the house. See, you are not useless, God still has hope in you. People are not evil, they want to talk to you. You just have to step out of your comfort zone and try speaking to others.

Run to down stage right, speak in the voice of a devil.

DEVIL. That's what they all say they want, to be friends with you. They just wanna gain your trust and then make fun of ya. They know you're useless, they know your kids hate you, they know Barry left you because you can't hold yourself together, you can't run the family, *and* you *cannot* look after the kids.

Run to down stage left, speak in the voice of an angel.

ANGEL. Speak to them, be friends with them, they will respect you. Having friends is the first step to proving you are not useless. You raised the three children by yourself, which is an achievement. You can make friends Meryl, we believe in you.

Run back to down centre stage, actress becomes Meryl again.

MERYL. Shut up. Shut up! SHUT UP!

She screams internally, no audible sound.

Beat.

'C-coffee? Yes, yes. N-now? Ok, where're we g-going? Oh, that's pretty close, sh-shall we go?' OH MY FUCKING GOD! That woman's speaking to me again. She wants to be friends with me! No she doesn't, she's making fun of me. Yes, just give it try. What should I drink? Cappuccino, latte, espresso, long black, flat white. Caffeine is bad for you. No. Yes, I won't be able to sleep. No, it's only one cup. Slice? Lamington with cream, blueberry cheesecake, jelly slice, chocolate brownie, lemon tarte, mixed berry tarte, carrot cake... OH MY GOD! I don't know, I can't choose.

'You're a w-widow? He died last year of cancer? I'm so s-sorry, it must be so difficult. Me? What's my relationship?' What should I say? Should I tell the truth? No, she'll make fun of me. Yes, she told me her background, it's easier to say mine. 'My husband Barry left me for the receptionist (sigh). Amy's in Africa teaching kids to read, Ben's teaching at a remote school, Claire's in university. Everyone's left me, I am a useless, selfish, greedy mum. My kids hates me. I'm a nobody.'

Sob.

It's alright? What do you mean it's alright? I'm a failure. My kids still love me? No woman, I don't think you understand. They don't care, they don't give a fuck about me. Yes they speak to me, but that doesn't mean they care. I can't make them lunches, I don't read to them, I can't wash their clothes, I can't drop them off and pick them up from school on time, I don't return the videos, I don't pay the gas bill, I don't have pride. Why would they acknowledge their mum, why would they care about me? 'Yes, they talk to me, they call me, but I don't think they truly love me.' You think my children doesn't hate me? You think my children cares about me? You think they love me? THEY LOVE ME?

Silence.

They do come back to visit me, they call me every evening to ask how I'm going. I've only been *denying* their love for me! I have been pushing my own children away from me! I don't even recognise their love for me, my children loves me! My children don't hate me, they LOVE me!

Sobs, breaks down.

Beat.

That woman was right, stop thinking of the negatives and look to the positives. I've children that love me, they care for me. She's wrong about one thing though, I'm still a useless person, leaving the lights on in the house when I go out.

Get keys out, pretend to open a door. Surprised look.

'Amy? Ben? Claire? What are you doing here?' My beautiful children came back for my birthday!

Hug them and cry happy tears.

FIN

Writer's statement

The purpose of this piece was to explore Meryl Louise Davenport's life 20 years after when the monologue was set in the play *Bombshells*, this is indicated by mentioning the current situation of her children. The similarities then and now in her life are addressed as well as new obstacles that come with personal changes and self-development. Although she has difficulties adapting to her new life and blames herself for the state her family is in, she develops throughout the monologue and with the aid of a new friend, learns to appreciate her children and acknowledge people's kindness and love. The original audience of *Bombshells* will learn that a person still has the capability to change and grow for the better despite the many years of inability.

The start of the monologue uses staccato phrases and incomplete sentences such as 'I've no friends. I should've friends. A person needs friends. I'm a bad person' to show her fear of losing her family forever and being neglected by society. Her voice of anxiousness and stress over proving herself, having pride and self-blame is captured from the original monologue by her incoherent stream of consciousness. The choice of mentioning Gwyneth Paltrow portrays Meryl as being out of touch with the news of celebrities and popular culture, informing the audience of Meryl's inability to contact with the outside world due to her own personal crisis. This also serves as a hint to the development Meryl will make throughout the monologue and her ability to once again connect with other people. The monologue also mentions Meryl's daughter Amy working in Africa and her son Ben teaching at a school, this demonstrates the irony that sometimes a child's curiosity or even dislikes becomes their future.

When Meryl speaks to the friend she makes at yoga, her struggle to converse with others is reflected by her stuttering and constant questioning of her situation. The difference in vocabulary choice, tone and sentence structure reflects the characters of the original Meryl, the devil and the angel. Incorporating a devil and an angel into the monologue represents the two sides of Meryl; one that continually blames herself for all misfortunes and cannot escape this mentality 'no one likes ya, stop trying', and another which wishes for change and development but is often over-powered by the 'devil' side. Her 'angel' side succeeded in convincing herself to join yoga at the community centre 'you just have to step out of your comfort zone and try speaking to others', but the 'devil' side caused herself to begin self-doubt and made her rethink her decision. Meryl falls back onto this again when she goes for a coffee with her new friend, this is portrayed with her anxiousness over which drink and slice to get. The language features of listing and contradictions captures the same voice of Meryl when she was stressed over the little issues in the original monologue.

Meryl's new friend is the stimulator to her realisation of her mistake. The silence serves as an indicator of her realisation, this can be compared with other pauses and beats throughout the rest of the monologue, which serves a different purpose breaking the train of thought and signifying a change of thought or event. Apart from stage directions, other indicators include staccato phrases being replaced by longer sentences and her thoughts being more coherent and understandable. The colloquial language is somewhat exchanged with more formal and proper use of language. Meryl questions the love of her children before her realisation, but it also symbolises the questioning of her past and the condition of her mentality. The monologue ends with the cliché of all her children being back, this acts as a reinforcement that appreciation of love and kindness goes a long way.