



# A SLOW AIR

BY DAVID HARROWER



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A SLOW AIR  
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A SLOW AIR premiered at the Tron Theatre, Glasgow on May 11, 2011  
and transferred to the Traverse Theatre  
as part of the 2011 Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

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A SLOW AIR was presented by Tron Theatre, Glasgow at 59E59 Theaters in New York City, opening on April 12, 2012. It was directed by David Harrower; the set and costume designs were by Jessica Brettle; the lighting design was by Dave Shea; the sound design was by Daniel Padden; and the production managers were Jim Sparnon and Jo Masson. The cast was as follows:

ATHOL ..... Lewis Howden  
MORNA ..... Susan Vidler

# **CHARACTERS**

ATHOL

MORNA

# A SLOW AIR

ATHOL. It was stuck through our letterbox, this note we got, the note that started it. Folded, half sticking out, like it had been left by one of the neighbours, y'know? We do things like that, looked out for each other; families, couples, take post in, keep an eye out.

Change from when we moved here. God, how. Thought they were a load of stuck-up unfriendly b's, y'know? What's it take to walk across the road and say hello or invite the new folk in for a glass of wine? I didn't even want to move to bloody Houston.

It was the sound of the planes overhead. Taking off, landing. I didn't sleep well for the first few weeks. So with that and the neighbours it was: What the hell have we done?

Remember saying to Evelyn maybe they've smelt Edinburgh on me. Told her to expect flaming crosses on the lawn next, y'know? But what brought us all together. 2007. Just a couple of miles from us. The attack on Glasgow airport.

I was out walking with Clay that Saturday afternoon — Clay's our dog — and a front door opens and out comes Kenny and Kenny's wife, Mo. Of course they weren't Kenny and Mo to us then, just two afraid people. Had I heard the news? A car had been driven into the front doors, no one had been killed, they didn't think, but there was flames and chaos and other neighbours came out their houses and wandered over. All of a sudden I'm at the centre of this crowd, y'know, people are introducing themselves, patting the dog, bringing out cups of tea. I was surrounded.

Then that night we found out the bombers had lived in the village. The police cordoned off their house and there were the floodlights and TV cameras. The whole street, we just, we just seemed to fuse, y'know? As Evelyn said, out of the ashes.

*I was here today.* Neat, kind of spidery handwriting. *Been a long time. I wanted to talk to you but I guess not this time. See you.*

No name on the note. It was so —

Whoever left it, they'd got the wrong house. I was here today? I mean I was laughing, I was —

I went through to my office — doubles as our lounge. I sit at the dining table there most nights, running my company into the ground. Suppliers to order from, payments to chase and chase, VAT returns, the neverending search for new contracts.

*I wanted to talk to you but I guess not this time.*

Evelyn was moving around in the kitchen next door and —

Came from nowhere. Mum and dad's house years and years ago and my sister calling through to me about something. Morna.

*What should we do about this?*, Evelyn shouts through to me.

*Leave it, Evelyn, for God's sake.*

We'd had a good day, been shopping, buying our food for the week. She walks ahead of me, picking stuff off the shelves. She knows what I like. We have this thing where every time we're shopping we put something in the trolley we've never tried before. So we'd gone from that, from being together and a jar of capers to this, the note and I called the dog to come to me. I wanted to be outside, a long walk to the brae where the bench is.

We hadn't spoken one word to each other in fourteen years, me and Morna. Not a word.

MORNA. I was on the bus. This was the Wednesday morning. Was it? Aye. Still get the bus everywhere. Still stay in the same flat in Dalry. Still the same face, still the same arse. Aye, fasten your seatbelts, it's aw still still still wi' me.

So the bus turns at the North British, sorry, the Balmoral, showin' my age here, eh?, an' down below, I see my son, Joshua, right?, scalin' the north side o' the Waverley Steps wearin' that long coat he wears, blowin' up around him wi' the wind. So I starts bangin' on the window tae get him tae look up.

Doesnae hear me. Humphs left, along past the Waverley Centre. Was I deterred? I was not. I thump away again. Woman in front o' me turns, tells me tae gie it a rest.

*No, I will no*, I goes, *that's my son down there. Keep your neb out o' it, you.* Bangin' again. Louder. Right by her big fat heid.

*Then get off the bloody bus*, she turns an' says.

I was almost thumpin' her. But I wasnae goin' tae get off 'cause I knew it wouldnae be arms open slow-motion wi' a soft piano soundtrack, ken?

We'd argued a fair bit of late. Never used tae. Slammin' an' swearin'

an' screamin'. Christ, you'd think we were married. So we've left Joshua way behind an' I'm busy givin' this woman daggers. An' then the bus stops, right?, in the traffic an' Joshua goes an' catches up wi' us again, walks right alongside. An' I see him an' this woman sees him. Aw fuckit, I'm back on the glass again, bangin' an' she's up on her feet, *Driver, driver!*, aw that, face like fizz, then flies off downstairs. An' we dae this aw the way along past the Mound. The bus'd pass him, he'd pass the bus. He walked wi' his head down. Never noticed that before. I mean, he was about tae turn twenty-one, key tae the door. Head should've been up. You have tae do somethin' for your twenty-first, don't you? Well, you dinnae have tae but it's sad if you don't, eh? A waste. *I'm no doin' anythin'*, he kept sayin'. *No way. End of story.* *But it's no just about you*, Joshua, I said tae him. I should get tae celebrate, ken? A big thank you tae *me*. I watched him walk right along towards Haymarket. Remember thinkin', good on you son, walkin' home, getting the exercise. Because he, ken, an' I've said this tae him, he could do wi' a wee bit. He stops at the crossing, waits for the green man. Sees it's a number 3, my bus an' his head lifts an' he's back intae the upright *homo sapien* position, ken? Clocks me finally. No wave. No smile. He shook his head. Just shook his head. Didnae ken what the hell that meant. I got up tae get off, walk the last bit home wi' him. Couldnae find the bugger. ATHOL. Evelyn was waiting for me when I got back. *Could it be Morna?* she said. *Could be*, I said as I walked past her. But I wouldn't phone her, simple as that. Put my foot down. Might well have been stupid and childish. *Hated* her saying childish. I went off to play golf that afternoon already wound up. Golf's not an escape for me like other men. I hate golf. This was business. This was Archie Swan. He's building the new estate out near Airdrie. Over a hundred houses means over a hundred tiled kitchens, bathrooms and ensuites and that's five to six months steady work for my guys. Known Archie since year dot. We served our apprenticeships together at Dodd's in Livingston. And somehow he's become what he is. House builder extraordinaire. Thousands of houses across central Scotland, whole estates, employing teams of men, sponsoring local f-ing fun runs, you name it.

# A SLOW AIR

by David Harrower

1M, 1W

Morna works as a cleaner for well-off families in Edinburgh. She spends her time drinking, attempting affairs and trying to understand her twenty-year-old son with whom she shares her Dalry flat. Athol, her elder brother by two years, lives near Glasgow airport with his wife, Evelyn. The owner of a floor-tiling company, with two grown-up children, Athol is proud of his hard-won achievements. Like any brother and sister they have fond and not-so-fond memories of their upbringing, differing views on their parents and definite opinions about each other. Especially so in their case, since Morna and Athol haven't spoken to each other in fourteen years ... When Morna's son Joshua travels west to make contact with Athol he sets off, for all of them, a remarkable and life-changing series of events in this play from Olivier Award-winning playwright David Harrower.

*"Irresistible ... A first-rate story."*

—**The New York Times**

*"A taut showdown ... Harrower deftly juggles the dual storytelling."*

—**The New York Post**

*"Hopeful as it is heart-stirring."*

—**The New York Daily News**

*"A gifted playwright ... A sad, funny and lovely two-hander."*

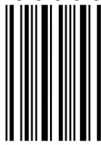
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