



# HANDBAGGED

BY  
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DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



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*For Susan Buffini  
Bigger than both of them*

HANDBAGGED was first performed at the Tricycle Theatre (Indhu Rubasingham, Artistic Director), London, on September 26, 2013. It was directed by Indhu Rubasingham, the set and costume designs were by Richard Kent, the lighting design was by Oliver Fenwick, and the sound design was by Carolyn Downing. The cast was as follows:

T ..... Stella Gonet  
Q ..... Marion Bailey  
MAGS ..... Fenella Woolgar  
LIZ ..... Clare Holman  
ACTOR 1 ..... Neet Mohan  
ACTOR 2 ..... Jeff Rawle

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This play would not have been written without the help and encouragement of Indhu Rubasingham.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*Handbagged* is a fictional account which has been inspired by true events. Incidents, characters and timelines have been changed for dramatic purposes. Often, the words are those imagined by the author. The play should not be understood as biography or any other kind of factual account.

## CHARACTERS

T

An older Margaret Thatcher

Q

An older Queen Elizabeth II

MAGS

A younger Margaret Thatcher

LIZ

A younger Queen Elizabeth II

ACTOR 1

*playing*

A PALACE FOOTMAN

KENNETH KAUNDA

NANCY REAGAN

ENOCH POWELL

NEIL KINNOCK

MICHAEL SHEA

KENNETH CLARKE

A PROTESTOR

ACTOR 2

*playing*

DENIS THATCHER

PETER CARRINGTON

GERRY ADAMS

RONALD REAGAN

MICHAEL HESELTINE

ARTHUR SCARGILL

GEOFFREY HOWE

RUPERT MURDOCH

PRINCE PHILIP

# HANDBAGGED

## 1. Those Are Pearls That Were Her Eyes

*Mrs. Thatcher, elderly. She prepares to address us.*

T. Freedom  
Freedom and democracy  
They are things worth dying for.  
We must never  
Never stop resisting those who would take them from us  
And when they have been taken  
We will fight until we get them back.  
The act of resistance is our defining act as human beings.  
To say “No, I will not stand for that,  
I will not collude, collaborate, negotiate  
I will not compromise”  
To say to the enemies of freedom “You are wrong”  
To resist, whatever the cost  
To say No  
This is courage  
This is integrity.  
I would be proud if this word defined me:  
NO  
I’d like a chair  
I don’t need one but I’d like one  
I will not ask for one  
If I wait, they will notice  
They will bring me one  
One of the men  
Dancing around me in their suits



Ties flapping in the wind.  
Holding their documents like babies  
The men  
I could pin them wriggling with my gaze  
And then release them with a smile  
I liked to do it  
Girlish  
I was girlish

*Queen Elizabeth II enters dragging a chair. She is elderly.*

Q. You look as if you need a chair

T. I'm quite capable of standing, thank you

Q. I'm bringing you a chair

T. There really isn't any need

*The Queen places it.*

Q. Here

T. No thank you

Q. I've gone and brought it now, sit down

T. Thank you, no

*Pause.*

Q. We conceive parliamentary institutions, with their free speech and respect for the rights of minorities, to be a precious part of our way of life and outlook. They inspire a broad tolerance in thought and expression.

During recent centuries, this message has been sustained and invigorated by the immense contribution, in language, literature, and action, of the nations of our Commonwealth overseas. Our Commonwealth gives expression, as I pray it always will, to living principles as sacred to the Crown and Monarchy as to its many Parliaments and Peoples. I ask you now to cherish them—and practise them too; then we can go forward together in peace, seeking justice and freedom for all men

T. Why don't you sit down?

Q. No thank you

*Pause.*

What can one say here?

How far can one go?

T. Oh, don't hold back  
It's all beyond our control

Q. Indeed

T. All artifice and sham

Q. I've never been fond of the theatre

T. No

Q. We saw *War Horse* recently  
We liked the horses

T. One would like to speak frankly

Q. One doesn't want to blab

T. Oh no, there's nothing worse than a blabber  
We have never blabbed

Q. Whatever we say must stay between these three walls

T. Nothing uncontrolled  
No outpouring

Q. Then we'd better have some tea.  
When one needs to control the pouring  
Tea can be most reassuring

## 2. May the Fourth Be with You

*A younger Queen (Liz) and a younger Thatcher (Mags) enter.*

MAGS. We knew we had won by the early hours of May the fourth.  
Finchley roared with jubilation

Maggie

Maggie

Hours later it was still thundering in my ears

LIZ. Philip and I had put money on the result

Q. No we had not

LIZ. He was sure the lady would carry the day. I thought the nation  
might balk at a female PM

# HANDBAGGED

by Moira Buffini

2 men, 4 women

HANDBAGGED imagines what really happened in the private meetings between two of the world's most powerful women: the Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, and Queen Elizabeth II. Born just six months apart, each leader has the capacity to change the world, but *how* the world should be changed is another story altogether. Will Mags and Liz find common ground in tumultuous times, or will the gloves come off at Buckingham Palace?

*"[HANDBAGGED] is an evening of twinkling meta-theatre larkiness. ...In lesser hands this might prove irritating, but Buffini [handles] it with such delicate wit that this titanic struggle between two women of different backgrounds but of similar ages—both shaped by fathers they adored—becomes fascinating and affecting. ...It's a show that cleverly explores the nature of history [and] reminds us that, while we remember the great events of our time, they tell us nothing about the everyday lives affected by the decisions of those in power."*

—The Guardian (UK)

*"The title refers to being smacked with a purse, a misogynist way of describing Thatcher's knockdown style. That's Buffini's real subject, and of course Thatcher's strongman theory of law-and-order patriotism, individual responsibility and a scantily regulated business sector has its echoes now... but [Buffini] gets how [Thatcher's] muscular magnetism attracted followers hungry for a newly great Britain."*

—The Washington Post

*"[Queen Elizabeth II and Thatcher's] frosty relations have been rumored for years... Like that delightful bit of royal fan-fic [The Audience], Moira Buffini's HANDBAGGED speculates on what was said behind closed doors during the queen's weekly audience with the prime minister. ...[But] Buffini succeeded in convincing me that the least interesting aspect of Thatcher's tenure was whether or not she got along with the queen. In a culture obsessed with catfights between famous women, that's a real accomplishment."*

—TheaterMania.com

Also by Moira Buffini  
GABRIEL

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