

MY FATHER'S BOMB

A Drama Serial

Episode One:

Sitting in a Tin Can

By Greig Coetzee

Agent: Georgina Ruffhead
David Higham Associates
Ph. 020 7434 5900

MY FATHER'S BOMB

EPISODE ONE: SITTING IN A TIN CAN

TEASER

1

INT. VAN REAR - DAY

1

A white-suited astronaut lies unconscious, rocked by the motion of a moving vehicle. Are we in space?

Jesus! The astronaut is a ten year old boy! The suit is homemade - a mother's loving effort.

A six foot model space rocket rolls against the boy. It's also homemade, the letters M A U D painted down its length.

A sunbeam shines through a roof vent. Ah, this is the back of a van - sounds of urban traffic now. And grunting.

A Scruffy Man, 40, struggles against the cable-ties binding his limbs. He cries out in pain as the ties draw blood. He stops, panting, eyes searching for something helpful.

BAM! They are thrown forward as tyres screech.

SCRUFFY MAN

Fuck!

He twists desperately to find the boy in a crumpled heap.

SCRUFFY MAN (CONT'D)

Tom? Can you hear me?

No response. Blood trickles from a gash on Tom's forehead.

SCRUFFY MAN (CONT'D)

Tom!

Frantic, Scruffy Man resumes his useless struggle. The van's hooter sounds - repeating, insistent.

2

INT/EXT. VAN FRONT/CAR/URBAN ROADS - CONTINUOUS

2

The hooting driver is ice calm, manicured, his sharp suit out of place amidst the mess of old newspapers, CD covers and takeaway boxes. He's second in line at a busy T-junction.

Ice Man checks his left side-mirror and sees a car coming up behind him with two men visible in the front seats. He hoots again. The driver ahead of him shows a middle finger.

In the mirror, Ice Man sees a Bearded Hipster emerge from the passenger seat of the car behind. His right hand concealed beneath his jacket, the Hipster approaches the van.

Ice Man suddenly drives up onto the pavement, around the gesticulating driver in front and swerves into the traffic. Other vehicles hoot and brake to avoid collision.

The Hipster runs back to the car which tries to pursue the van, but is blocked by traffic.

The Hipster stares at the weapon he was hiding - a hand grenade, circa WW2. He sticks the pin back into it and tosses it into the glove box.

3 EXT. LONELY ROAD - MINUTES LATER 3

A road through unkempt urban green space. Serene, still... Until the van rattles into view lurching through potholes.

4 INT. VAN FRONT - CONTINUOUS 4

Ice Man skids, skilfully, through a dusty corner.

5 INT. VAN REAR - CONTINUOUS 5

Scruffy Man is hurled against a side wall. A Zippo lighter falls from a pocket. He clocks it. A desperate idea forms.

Grabbing the Zippo with his bound hands he manages to get a flame going. He tries to melt through the cable-ties binding his wrists, wincing as he burns himself.

6 INT/EXT. VAN FRONT/LONELY ROAD - MOMENTS LATER 6

Ice Man slows to a halt at a gate. He gets out to open it, engine running. The side of the van is marked:

BLAKE FLETCHER BESPOKE SCULPTURE
Corporate, Public & Private Commissions

7 INT. VAN REAR - CONTINUOUS 7

Wincing, Scruffy Man finally burns through the ties and moves on to those around his ankles, eyes on Tom all the while.

Free, he goes to the boy and cradles his head, feels for a pulse, checks he's breathing. He is - thank God!

SCRUFFY MAN
(Soothing whispers)
Dad's here. Right here with you.
Major Tom, this is Ground Control.
Can you hear me, my boy? Can you
hear me?

No response. Footsteps on tar interrupt his loving ministrations. The footsteps stop. Scruffy Man freezes, seized by fear. He grabs a wheel spanner and holds it ready to strike, his other arm still cradling the boy.

INTERCUT:

8 INT/EXT. VAN FRONT/LONELY ROAD - CONTINUOUS 8

Ice Man listens at the rear door.

Inside, Scruffy Man's courage wanes. Attack or submit?

Ice Man checks the door is locked. Satisfied, he gets back behind the wheel. The van pulls off.

Scruffy Man dares to breath again. Still holding Tom, he strokes the boy's head, fighting tears as he lays him down.

Pulling himself together, he considers other weapons. He finds a car-jack, feels its weight. Hmm, he's not so sure...

He looks at the plastic 'rocket'. Really? That?

Yes! Galvanized, he takes a large water bottle and foot-pump from a box. He knows his way around this rocket. He removes a screw cap and pours water into it.

9 INT/EXT. VAN FRONT/ALLOTMENTS - MINUTES LATER 9

Mostly deserted allotments, a few gardeners visible.

A crow picks at the body of a rat. It flaps off as the van appears, now crawling, and comes to a stop.

Ice Man takes in the scene. The few gardeners are far off, heads down. He dons sunglasses and takes out a silenced gun.

10 INT. VAN REAR - CONTINUOUS 10

Scruffy Man quietly pressurizes the rocket with the foot-pump. He freezes as he hears the driver's door open.

11 INT/EXT. VAN FRONT/ALLOTMENTS - CONTINUOUS 11

Ice Man gets out, taking the bunch of keys from the ignition. A plastic key fob has a smiling photo of little Tom. Calm but vigilant, he heads to the back of the van.

12 INT. VAN REAR - CONTINUOUS 12

Scruffy Man hastily covers evidence of his activity, fearful as he hears Ice Man's footsteps.

13 EXT. VAN REAR - CONTINUOUS 13

At the rear doors, Ice Man singles out a key from the bunch. He checks he isn't being watched.

14 INT. VAN REAR - CONTINUOUS 14

Scruffy Man finishes covering his tracks and quickly lies down as if tied up. He grabs a thin nylon rope attached to the rocket, which is now pointed up at the doors. At the sound of the key in the lock, his shaking hand takes up the slack in the rope.

The doors open, Ice Man silhouetted against sunlight.

Scruffy Man closes his eyes and yanks the rope. With a sharp pneumatic HISSSSS, the screen goes white...

>>>> OPENING CREDITS <<<<<

MY FATHER'S BOMB

Episode Title: SITTING IN A TIN CAN

15 INT/EXT. ASSISTED LIVING BLOCK - ENTRANCE - DAY 1 15

Frederick Melville, mid seventies, trundles his wheeled walking frame through the main entrance. He sucks at a mask connected to a portable oxygen canister.

Caption: A DAY EARLIER

A male Cleaner emerges after him, eyes glued to Melville despite the other old folk chatting or smoking.

Melville's eyes are on a bus-stop twenty metres away. He pauses though, alongside a bench, and clocks the Cleaner out of the corner of his eye. He sits, as casually as his frailty will allow.

Melville makes eye contact with the Cleaner, who pastes a smile over his vigilance. Melville responds with a nod as he pulls down the oxygen mask to stick a cigarette in his mouth.

The Cleaner starts sweeping, but keeps Melville in view.

Melville looks away as he sees a harassed Matron emerge.

MATRON

We have a toilet disaster.

CLEANER

So? Call a plumber.

MATRON

There's shit on the floor and old ladies panicking.

The Cleaner glances at Melville who is now seemingly lost in the pleasure of his first drags.

MATRON (CONT'D)

Listen, new boy, this is your job.
Do it!

The Cleaner gives in reluctantly and heads back inside.

Melville steals a glance to make sure the Cleaner is gone. With sudden urgency he drops the cigarette, dons the oxygen mask, struggles to his feet and totters towards the bus stop.

16 INT. DISABLED TOILET - MOMENTS LATER 16

The Cleaner enters, armed to face the shitty mess. A toilet overflows. He has a go with a plunger. No luck.

He gingerly reaches in with his hand. He unplugs a neatly rolled hand towel from the bowl. Fuck! He's been had!

17 INT/EXT. ASSISTED LIVING BLOCK - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS 17

The Cleaner rushes out, sees the empty bench, clocks the burning cigarette. Eyes desperately scanning, he spots a bus disappearing down the road. Fuck!

18 INT. MOVING BUS - CONTINUOUS 18

In a priority seat, Melville sucks oxygen, recovering.

19 EXT. ASSISTED LIVING BLOCK - ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER 19

The Cleaner is on his mobile.

CLEANER

The old bastard gave me the slip.

20 INT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS 20

He's talking to Ice Man, who sits alone.

CLEANER

We'll just have to hope he comes back.

Ice Man hangs up and calmly sips his macchiato.

21 EXT. BLAKE'S STREET - DAY 1 21

Melville trundles his walking frame along a suburban street; no urgency now, but still sucking oxygen. Despite his frailty, he has the residue of military steel in his bearing and fire in his eyes. You don't pity this old man.

He stops at steps down to the front door of a basement flat. He eyes a potted flowering cactus in the basket of his walking frame. With difficulty, he heads down the steps.

22 INT/EXT. BLAKE'S FLAT - SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 22

Snoring. An old lady's sitting room, complete with charity shop porcelain and embroidered cushions. But hang on... it's also a chaotic, makeshift sculpture studio: Clay maquettes at various stages, sketches, art equipment, takeaway boxes, cheap bourbon, a messy ashtray...

We recognise the Zippo and the bunch of keys with the boy's photo. And the bottle rocket, complete but unpainted, alongside a glue gun, a carpet knife and soft-drink bottle off-cuts. A battered laptop is open at a web-page headed "Make your own water rocket."

The snoring comes from Scruffy Man, passed out on the couch. He's Blake Fletcher - divorced and clearly struggling to keep his remaining shit together.

The doorbell rings. Blake doesn't stir, but it's followed up with loud knocking. Blake is elbowed awake by the tattooed arm of a naked woman beside him.

She burrows back under the blanket as Blake covers his nakedness. He stumbles to the...

FRONT DOOR

...and opens.

BLAKE

Yes?

Melville sucks hard at his oxygen.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

Melville removes his breathing mask.

MELVILLE

Maud.

BLAKE

Sorry?

MELVILLE
 (raising the cactus)
 For her.

BLAKE
 Maud... died.

Blake winces at the memory. Melville stares at him.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
 Over a year ago.

Melville didn't expect this. He replaces the mask and sucks.
 Blake sees the time on the old man's watch and panics.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
 Shit!

He scrambles for his mobile and confirms: 10.13am.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
 Fuck!

23 INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER 23

A mobile rings on a table, the screen identifying the caller as "USELESS ARSEHOLE".

A mid-thirties woman enters, heading for the phone. Alison Fletcher divorced Blake a year ago. She can be soft, but tough times have made her a hard pragmatist. She has a new partner, a busy life and little patience for her ex.

She checks the mobile screen, sighs and answers.

ALISON
 Where the hell are you?

INTERCUT:

24 INT. VAN FRONT - CONTINUOUS 24

In the van seen in the teaser, Blake is driving too fast.

BLAKE
 Five minutes away. Had to deal with
 this old mate of my mother's
 arriving out of the blue and...

ALISON
 Blake, you're lying! Again.

BLAKE
 It's true. Poor old bastard didn't
 even know she was dead and...

ALISON
Just get here.

BLAKE
I was up all night building this
rocket, okay, and... Alison?
(realizing she's hung up)
Bitch!

He tosses the phone aside and has to slam on brakes as he almost goes through a red light.

25

EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE/STREET - MINUTES LATER

25

Ten year old Tom sits on the doorstep, pensive. Alison emerges. Tom's hair is unusually short and a long, recently healed operation scar is visible up the back of his head. Tom checks the time.

TOM
It's only been sixteen minutes. He
said twenty, right?

ALISON
About twenty. He may be longer. You
know what your Dad's like.
(off Tom's wince)
I'm not criticizing him, I just...

Tom jumps to his feet and runs to greet Blake's van as it trundles into view.

Alison watches from the steps, sighing at how bloody hard this shit is.

AT THE VAN

Tom opens the driver's door.

BLAKE
Happy Birthday, old man!

TOM
(grinning)
Thanks.

BLAKE
Got you a present. You'll get it
tomorrow, at your party.

TOM
You don't have to get me anything.

BLAKE
Really, I've bought it.

TOM
 (whispered)
 You're in shit with Mum.

BLAKE
 No swearing.

TOM
 Shit-shit-shit-shit-shit.

Blake has no parental authority and they both know it.

BLAKE
 If she hears you, she'll kill you.

TOM
 She'll kill you first if you
 haven't made the rocket.

BLAKE
 I have.

TOM
 So it's finished? Really?

BLAKE
 Yes.
 (off Tom's raised eyebrow)
 Just a few tweaks left to do.

Alison appears behind Tom. She's a caged lioness as she faces her ex.

ALISON
 (to Tom)
 Go get your cap.

TOM
 It makes my head itchy.

ALISON
 Get... your... cap. And the lunch I
 made you.

Tom huffs off back to the house.

BLAKE
 Can we not do this now?

ALISON
 Don't be fooled by that little
 boy's brave face. He's worried sick
 that you'll fuck up his birthday
 party in front of his friends.

BLAKE
 We're rehearsing now, like you
 wanted. I'm not going to fuck up.

ALISON
It's what you do, Blake. Our
marriage, your career, that
waitress... all fucked by you.

BLAKE
She's not a waitress.

This weak attempt at defiance withers under her gaze.

ALISON
This is no joke. Get it right. Last
chance.

26 INT. VAN FRONT - MINUTES LATER

26

Tom is preoccupied. Blake clocks this as he drives.

BLAKE
(boyish voice)
Gee Dad, cheer up - it's your
birthday.

TOM
(manly voice)
Well, son. I'm trying to
concentrate on my driving.

This role reversal is clearly a regular schtick of theirs,
used here to make light of difficult issues.

BLAKE
Bit of trouble with your Boss, Dad?

TOM
My job is complicated, Son. You
wouldn't understand.

BLAKE
Come on, old man. Try me.

Tom drops the schtick.

TOM
It's nothing big.
(he's busking)
Gran's vegetable garden - you still
have it, right?

BLAKE
Her allotment? Yes. ^

TOM
Can me and Spider use the shed? As
like... a den. For boys only.

BLAKE
Are you smoking? Already.

TOM
No! A den for... building things...
chilling... and stuff... without
Mum freaking that I'm gonna get
sunburn on my scar or whatever.

BLAKE
You're worried about something
else. Not this den. Spit it out.

Tom dreads Blake's response...

TOM
They're getting married.

This is a punch in the gut for Blake. He covers.

BLAKE
And that worries you?

TOM
Only if it worries you.

This is a bigger punch for Blake.

BLAKE
Forget about me. Okay? I'm the Dad.
Not you.

Tom looks out the window, hiding his face.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
So they're getting married. Good
for them. You get on with Harry,
right?
(off his silence)
Right?

Tom nods, still unable to look at Blake.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
That's all that matters.
(beat)
I tell you what - this rocket is
going to blow you away. Just air
and water. But you'll see...
amazing.

Blake winces as he sees the scar on the back of Tom's head.

27 EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY 1

27

Melville's walking frame is not coping well with the terrain as he totters over the grass between headstones. He pauses to suck oxygen. Someone whistles for his attention.

Some way off, a groundsman with a rake points and nods indicating Melville is at his destination.

Melville scans the headstones. He deflates as he sees:

MAUD FLETCHER, 11 MARCH 1952 - 1 MARCH 2015, MUCH LOVED MOTHER & GRANNY.

He hurls the potted cactus which shatters on the gravestone.

28 EXT. PARK - DAY 1

28

The rocket stands, pointing skywards.

BLAKE (O.S.)

So this guy, Hunter S Thompson, he wanted his ashes put into a sky rocket and shot off. And that's how he went. When he died. Up in a streak of fire.

Tom frowns at the rocket as Blake sets up the launch rope.

TOM

It looks like a pile of rubbish.

BLAKE

I'm painting it tonight.

TOM

Just take me and my friends to the zoo or something. It'll be easier.

BLAKE

The Zoo? Rather than a rocket?
Vweep, vweep, nerd alert! VWEEEEEP!

Tom can't overcome his mood and join the banter.

Blake soldiers on, turning to a foot pump connected to the rocket. Tom looks sceptical as Blake's pumping makes the whole Heath Robinson shebang wobble.

Blake grows short of breath, his efforts deliberately comical. Tom can't help smiling despite himself.

TOM

You need that air more than the rocket.

BLAKE

Okay, smarty-pants, you show me how it's done.

Tom is finally infected by his father's energy and grins as he attacks the pump. It's heavy going, but he's determined.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Not so easy, is it, Dad?

TOM

Well, Son, I'm not as young as I used to be.

BLAKE

(checking the pressure gauge)

That's enough, old man. Don't want to lose your false teeth.

Blake disconnects the pump and unrolls the nylon rope connected to the rocket as they retreat a few metres.

BLAKE (CONT'D)

Okay, count down.

TOM

For a bunch of old bottles?

BLAKE

I spent all night making this. I want a count down.

TOM

(sighing)

5... 4... 3... 2... 1...

Blake yanks the rope, pulling a pin from the rocket.

WHOOOOSH! The rocket blasts off with unexpected speed and an impressive trail of water vapour.

Open-mouthed, amazed, Tom follows its arc through the sky until it lands about 100m away.

Blake's own surprise becomes smug satisfaction as he sees his son's reaction.

BLAKE

Gee Dad, that was a lot better than I expected. Sorry I doubted you.

TOM

(excited)

Can we do it again? Take a video?

He takes out a nifty little camera.

BLAKE
That from your Mum?

TOM
No, from Harry. Can we?

BLAKE
(jealousy peeping through)
Looks expensive.

TOM
Launch it again! Please! So Mum can
see how good it is.

Blake would like that. Very much. Show the bitch.

BLAKE
Okay. Let's do it.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY 1

Ice Man stops eating as his phone vibrates. He opens a text:

"THE OLD FUCKER IS BACK."

29 INT/EXT. HIPSTER CAR/HIGH ST - CONTINUOUS

29

We recognize the Bearded Hipster from the teaser as he puffs an electronic pipe. He and his Driver now sit in their parked car on a bustling high street. A tasseled Islamic ornament hangs from the interior mirror.

The Driver, also bearded but older, notices something outside and nudges the Hipster. They look at the restaurant doorway as Ice Man emerges, chewing a toothpick. He crosses the street and, as he passes in front of the parked car, the other two feign disinterest.

Ice Man stops, his back now to them, apparently using a shop window as a mirror as he digs at his teeth with the toothpick. But he's really sussing out the other two and he sees in the reflection that they are now looking at him.

They watch as Ice Man flicks the toothpick and saunters off.

The Hipster exits the car and heads off after Ice Man.

A way down the road, still walking, Ice Man allows himself a bitter smile.

30 INT. ASSISTED LIVING BLOCK - BEDSIT - DAY 1

30

The Matron looks concerned.

MATRON

This is your room. Remember?

Melville stares out a window. No response.

MATRON (CONT'D)

You were released from jail last week. You were there a long time but you're out now. Medical parole.

She holds up a glass of water and meds in a little cup.

MATRON (CONT'D)

These will help you remember.

Melville gives a bitter snort.

MELVILLE

I have Alzheimers.

MATRON

Well... yes.

MELVILLE

My brain is working. For now.

Determined, she still offers him the meds. Irritated, he takes them. She leaves. He spits the tablets.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ASSISTED LIVING BLOCK - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The Matron walks past the Cleaner. As she disappears, he stops his feigned cleaning and heads for Melville's door.

Inside the room, Melville takes a pouch from under his mattress. In it he finds a disposable syringe and a vial. He measures out a dose and injects himself through his clothes into his belly. He's an old hand at this.

There's a knock at the door. He quickly hides his meds again.

Outside, the cleaner listens intently, ear to the door.

Inside, Melville reaches for his oxygen canister, holding it like a weapon.

(This is an excerpt from a completed 60 minute pilot script. For any further queries, please email greigcoetzee@gmail.com)