

methuen | drama

**The Static**

*We all have sick thoughts. It doesn't matter what you think, it's what you do that counts. Trouble is, my thoughts do things. Don't believe me? Just watch.*

Sparky is a bright but volatile 15-year-old boy on the brink of permanent exclusion from school. Then one day he falls under the spell of a seemingly psychic girl called Siouxsie and develops his own kinetic superpower. But will it save him or push him over the edge?

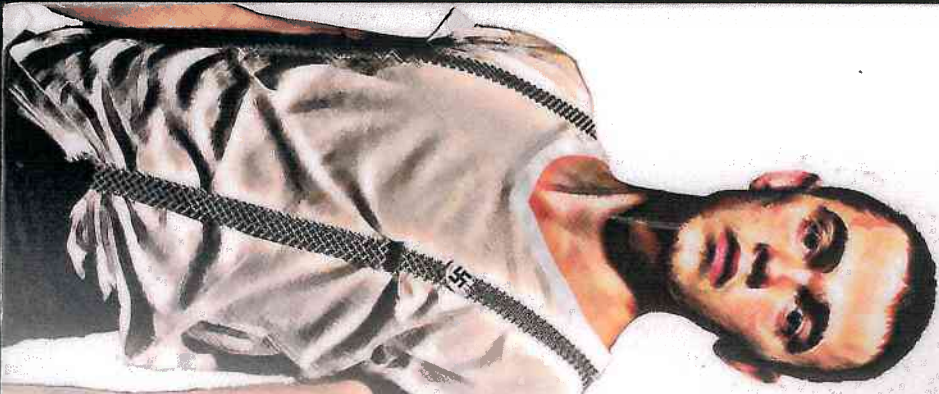
*The Static* is a coming-of-age love story about what happens when our darkest dreams come true.

**Blackout**

*A small room, bright lights, white walls, a metal door. Oh my God! Imagine you wake up in a jail cell and you don't know how you got there.*

*Blackout* is the true story of a 15-year-old boy charged with attempted murder who tries to piece together the events in his life that have brought him into a secure care unit and threaten to keep him there. This short play packs a big emotional punch with its stylistic economy and razor-sharp storytelling.

*The Static* was originally produced by ThickSkin for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and UK tour 2012. *Blackout* was commissioned for NT Connections and produced by ThickSkin at the Edinburgh Fringe 2010, winning the Arches Brick Award and subsequently touring the UK.



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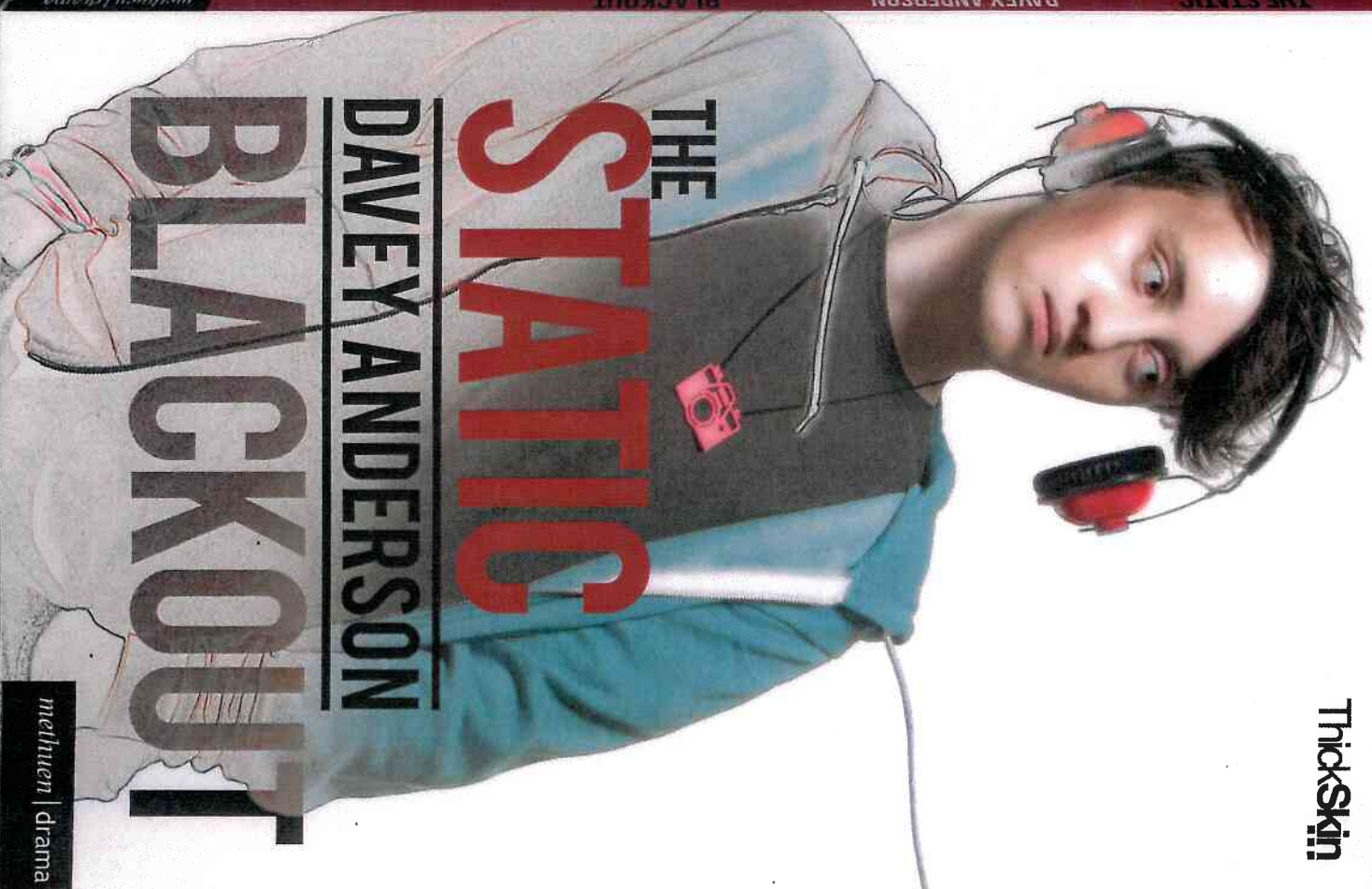


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ThickSkin



THE  
**STATIC**  
DAVEY ANDERSON  
**BLACKOUT**

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1

Imagine  
You wake up  
You open your eyes  
And you're like that  
Where am I?  
A small room  
Bright lights  
White walls  
A metal door  
Oh my God!  
Imagine you wake up and you're in a jail cell.  
You go up to the door.  
You bang your fists.  
Screaming  
Shouting  
What am I doing in here?  
bang bang bang  
And imagine the polis guy comes up to the door.  
And he's like that  
Keep it doon.  
And you're like  
Whit did I dae?  
Aw, do you not know?  
You shake your head.  
Whit?  
And the polis guy just looks at you like you're a pure thug or  
something.  
Imagine he just looks at you and he goes  
You're getting charged with attempted murder, wee man.  
You'd be like that  
Aw naw  
What did I do?  
And you'd start remembering  
Everything  
Right from the beginning  
You would try to remember  
How did I get here?

2

So you'd start remembering your dad.

He was a woman beater.

He beat up your mum every day

From the day they got married right up to the day they got divorced.

He used to beat her to a pulp.

So she stopped working.

She wouldn't go out the house.

Cos she was embarrassed.

She didn't want to walk down the street with her face all black and blue.

And you'd remember that your ma didnae want you to grow up to be like him.

She wanted you to be a famous lawyer

Or a famous doctor

Or a famous whatever.

And you'd remember that you were poor.

But you weren't poor poor.

Cos your mum still made sure there was a dinner on the table every night.

She'd give you her last penny.

She didn't care about herself.

But you'd remember that you never really spoke to her.

Cos you'd come home from school and go straight up the stairs.

James?

Aye.

Your dinner's out.

You'd come down.

Grab the plate.

Thanks, Ma.

Back up the stairs.

So you never really spoke to her.

3

But you'd remember your granddad.

He was the closest thing you had to a proper father.

He put you under his wing.

He did everything a dad would do.

He'd hold your hand

He'd walk you down to the shops

He'd play daft wee games with you

But best of all, he'd take you to the Rangers game every Saturday.

Saturday.

He'd take you to see the Orange Walks.

You'd remember how he taught you to play the flute.

But you'd not to play 'The Sash'

Or hang the Ulster flag out the window.

He taught you to keep that kind of thing to yourself.

But then he got his cancer.

You'd remember that.

So every night you'd go and sit with him.

Play a game of cards

Help him do a jigsaw

Have a cup of tea and look out the back window.

You'd remember that that was where the boys fae your scheme used to fight with the boys fae the scheme doon the road.

They'd run at each other with bottles and bricks.

Then it would be poles and baseball bats.

And then it would be knives.

You'd be looking out the window going

Is that a wee boy with a sword?

Am I really seeing this?

And you and your granddad

You would just sit there and go

What are they fighting for?

Cos your grandda never went out and started hitting people.

He got his point across with his mouth, not with his hands.

He would just have to talk to you and people would listen to him.

And you'd remember you always wanted to grow up to be just like him.

4  
But when you were growing up, you didnae have that many  
pals.

Cos you were too quiet.

You were shy.

You were the wee, shy, nerdy boy.

You didnae fit in with anybody.

And the pals you did have, they just used you, if you know  
what I mean.

Cos, know if it was a pure brilliant sunny day, they would all  
go away and leave you in the house.

But know if it was raining outside, they would come roon tae  
your bit and go

Hi James

I've no seen you in ages.

How have you been?

Can we come in and sit for a while?

They didnae care about you

They just wanted somewhere tae sit.

5

And say it was at school

You would get beaten up for being a goth

Just cos you had long hair and wore black combats.

They used to call you

The gimp.

Haw, look at him

The gimp!

Ya dirty goth!

Dae you shag deid people?

Whic'?

You go up the graveyards and hing about there, din't ye?

Naw.

Aye ye dae. I've seen ye.

Pure digging up the coffins and raping the corpses.

Ya dirty beast!

And you'd remember the beatings.

One of the bullies would take off his belt

He'd wrap it round his knuckles  
And whack you with it.

Ah!!!

Then they'd throw you down the stairs

Don't!

Kick you in the ribs

Stop it!

Death to the gimp!

And they would swagger off

And leave you there, lying on the ground

Curled up into a wee ball.

You'd remember that.

You'd remember every punch.

6

And you'd remember you had nobody to turn to.

Cos your grandda was in the hospital.

So you'd just sit in your room and watch horror films

Night after night.

Or read books about serial killers.

Or just look at all the pictures.

You had a bloodlust for it.

It gave you a thrill

Reading about killers.

Cos they're normal people.

But they're mysterious.

What makes them tick?

What makes them go insane?

What can make somebody dae it tae somebody?

It fascinated you.

7

Imagine

You're in a jail cell

And you start remembering all this.

But you cannae remember what you've done.

And then they take you to a Secure Care Unit.

And they take away your belt

And they take away your laces  
 And they take away anything you could use to try and kill  
 yourself.  
 Then this key worker guy comes in to speak to you.  
 And you ask him  
 What did I do?  
 Son, I can't tell you.  
 How can you no tell me?  
 You need to ask for a file.  
 So you ask for the file.  
 And he goes away to get it.  
 Imagine waiting for him to come back.  
 Your mind would be racing.  
 Remembering . . .

## 8

Wan night  
 You got beaten up, just for having long hair.  
 These boys chased you home with meat cleavers and  
 machetes  
 Shouting  
 Death to the gimp!  
 Trying to chop you up  
 All the way to your front door.  
 Hi James.  
 How was school?  
 Straight up the stairs.  
 Into your bedroom  
 Slam!  
 You look in the mirror.  
 I'm not a gimp.  
 You get a pair of scissors.  
 You cut your hair pure short.  
 Shave it right to the skin.  
 James?  
 Then you look at yourself.  
 Your dinner's out.  
 I'm coming.

I'll show them no tae mess about wae me.  
 Grab the plate.  
 Thanks, Ma.  
 Wait a wee minute.  
 What?  
 What happened to your hair?  
 You shrug.  
 I got rid of it.  
 She looks at you funny.  
 You look like a skinhead.

## 9

That's when you started watching films like *Romper*  
*Stomper*  
 And *American History X*  
 And you thought to yourself  
 That's whit I'll dae.  
 So you started wearing the big Doc Martens boots  
 The bomber jacket  
 The braces  
 Everything.

## 10

And then you went into school.  
 And you'd dae the Nazi salute in the corridors.  
 And people would walk past you.  
 And they'd just look at you like  
 Ooff  
 He's a pure psycho.  
 But it felt good.  
 Cos you were getting tae them.  
 And the teachers were like  
 Stand outside this room.  
 What have you got this on for?  
 Cos I like it.  
 Go home and change into your uniform.  
 You're not allowed back into the school until you change  
 your clothes.

So you went  
 Fine. It's my life. I'll wear what I want. I'll say what I want.  
 I'll dae what I want.  
 And you sparked up a fag  
 And started walking about the school  
 Smoking  
 Acting like a hard man.  
 Haw, look  
 Check the state of him.  
 And when the bullies saw you, instead of running away, you  
 went  
 Right, who's first?  
 Whit you gonnae dae, ya daffie?  
 Two seconds.  
 Whit?  
 And you went  
 fssssssssss  
 And put the fag out on your bare skin.  
 Who's first then?  
 Are you awright?  
 C'mon, who's gieing me the first punch?  
 James...!  
 Go. I'll put my hands behind my back.  
 You needtae get your heid sorted oot, mate. You're no right.  
 Then you pick up a chair  
 And throw it at the fucker.  
 So he starts punching you  
 Fists flying  
 They all start battering you.  
 James!  
 What are you doing?  
 That's not like you.  
 But you're standing there  
 With your face red raw.  
 Aw, it feels great but, din't it?

11  
 And you'd remember that that's when you started loving the  
 pain.  
 The punches didnae hurt any more.  
 You just got used to having that energy flow  
 That feeling of blood pumping through your veins.  
 And you'd sit there in your room  
 With the big Nazi posters up on the wall  
 And you'd listen to music  
 With that guitar  
 And that beat that gets you intae it  
 And you'd wonder what it was like to burst somebody's lip  
 Or to slice them open  
 To butcher them  
 It made you feel high and mighty just thinking about it.

12  
 And you'd remember the night that it finally happened...  
 It was raining.  
 James?  
 That's your mum.  
 Shouting up the stairs.  
 You turn off the music.  
 I'm just away up the hospital to see your granddad.  
 You don't respond.  
 D'you want to come with me?  
 No the night, Ma.  
 Are ye sure?  
 Nah, I want to stay in and watch this film.  
 Well, d'you want to go up and see him the morra night?  
 Aye, Ma. Fine.  
 Right.  
 I'll tell him you were asking after him.  
 See you later.  
 She goes out into the rain.  
 You put on a slasher film.  
 slash  
 chop

rip  
stab  
Blood and guts.  
You look at it blankly.  
It's not enough for you any more.  
Then there's a knock at the door  
You press pause.  
Open the door.  
Awright, James.  
Awright.  
Whit ye daeing?  
Nothing. Just sitting in my room.  
Is yer maw in?  
Naw.  
Are you on your own?  
Aye.  
Yas, man, big Jim's got an empty!  
Yasi!  
They all crowd in.  
C'mon.  
D'ye want a joint?  
emmm  
Whit ye watching?  
Nothing.  
What's that?  
That's a swastika.  
Whit ye daeing wae a swastika up on the wall?  
Are you a Nazi or something?  
snigger  
Aye.  
They all look at you.  
Whit ye intae all that for?  
Cos. I'm an Aryan. I need tae protect my white blood.  
Oh aye. And how are ye gonnae dae that?  
Wait till you see this.  
You slip your hand under the bed  
And you pull out a sword.  
Fuck's sake.

What is that?  
A Black Mamba.  
Wher'd ye get it?  
I found it.  
Did ye fuck?  
How much did that set ye back?  
You shrug.  
I'll buy it aff ye for a fiver.  
Nut.  
A tenner then.  
Fuck off.  
Twenty quid.  
Check the damage ye could dae wae that.  
Have ye chopped somebody yet?  
You smile.  
So proud.  
Look at him  
The psycho.  
Then . . .  
Keys in the door.  
Quick  
Hide the blade.  
Footsteps on the stairs.  
What's going on here?  
Nothing. Mum.  
Suspicious.  
You only call her 'Mum' when you've done something  
wrong.  
We're just watching a film.  
I think it's time your pals went home.  
See ye after.  
Bye James.  
Carch ye.  
They disappear.  
And your mum just looks at you.  
James, sit down, I've got something to tell you.  
Don't, Ma.  
I'm sorry, James.  
Ma, don't!

James, calm down.  
Don't.  
I'm sorry. It happened.

13

That's what you'd remember.  
You'd remember the night that your grandda died.  
That's when you died inside.  
You'd remember how you wanted to hold somebody down  
to the ground  
And stab their eyes out.  
Or get a baseball bat  
And skelp it aff somebody's heid.  
Just to get the anger out of you.  
Cos it was building up  
All this anger.  
And you didnae have a way to let it out.

14

Imagine that all this is going through your head as you're  
waiting in a wee room with no belt and no laces.  
And then the key worker guy comes back with your file.  
He hands it to you and you start to read.  
But you can't concentrate on the words  
So you ask him to read it for you.  
What does it say?  
Gonnae just tell me!  
Do you really not remember?  
You shake your head.  
Assault.  
Arson.  
Attempted murder.  
This is what he tells you.  
Do you remember now?  
Some of it.  
Why don't you tell me what happened?  
I'll try.  
So you start to tell the story . . .

15

Where were you?  
You were in the town.  
Who were you with?  
You were with your pals.  
Your pals' pals.  
People they knew.  
But you didn't know them?  
Naw.  
Where were your friends?  
They all went away and left you with these guys you didnae  
know.  
Why?  
You don't know.  
But it starts coming back to you.  
One of them hands you a bottle of vodka.  
Here, d'you want a drink?  
And you're like  
Aye.  
Drink it straight.  
How?  
Just drink it straight.  
So you went  
You took a wee bit of it.  
It tasted weird.  
Naw, here  
Something's wrang wae this.  
And they went  
Just down it.  
And you went  
Fine.  
Cos you didnae want tae look like the wee nerdy boy.  
And you took a big gulp of it.  
And there was Ecstasy  
And there was Valium  
And you didnae know what was in it.  
And by the time your pals came back, you were in some  
state.



James?

You were like Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

Awright, mate?

Cos wan minute you'd be fine.

Where have ye been? I've been pure missing ye.

And then the next minute

Aye, where have ye been, aye, where have ye been, aye,  
where have ye been?

Like that.

Leaving me here, aye? D'ye want me to come over there and  
smash ye about?

Calm doon.

And you were looking at people.

But you werena'e just looking at them.

You were looking at them like you were picking a victim.

James, come on

We need to get you hame.

And you remember them taking you hame.

But then . . .

## 16

All you can remember is

Screaming

You could hear screaming.

It was like being in a dream

But still being awake at the same time.

And all you can hear is

James?

Are you alright?

And you can feel your blood boiling over.

What's happened to you?

What have you took?

James?

And you start punching

James, don't!

And kicking

James, stop it!

And you feel your hands around somebody's throat.

What are you doing?

Squeezing.

Don't!

Stop it!

Please!

James!

Don't!

And then screaming.

And then

Everything went black.

## 17

Imagine you did that to somebody.

And you don't know why you did it.

You just

You wanted payback.

You were hurting so much

You wanted to hurt somebody else.

But the payback you done, you didna'e mean.

You just needed a friend.

You just needed someone to talk to.

But instead you nearly killed somebody that night.

Aye

You remember

You remember it all.

## 18

Now imagine this

They take you to a court room

And they put you in front of a judge

And the judge says

Son, I see thousands of boys like you

Every year

Getting charged with these exact same crimes.

And most of them end up in jail for anything up to ten years.

And you're standing there

Shaking like a leaf

Thinking

God.

Ten years.

Please don't.

That's me finished.

Then she says

But some of them

I look at some of them standing there

And I know they don't belong in jail.

I know they just made a stupid mistake

And what they really need is somebody to give them a chance.

And she looks you right in the eye.

You're one of the lucky ones.

I'm going to give you a probation sentence.

Three years.

And you're like

Thank you.

But if you mess up during that time, you'll do ten years in jail.

Do you understand?

Yes.

You may leave my courtroom.

That's you free to go.

## 19

You step outside

Into the sunshine

You take a deep breath

And there's your mum

Waiting.

She looks at you.

You look at her.

How is she ever gonnae trust you again?

But she walks towards you

Mum, I'm sorry.

And she bursts out greeting.

Then she goes

What are you going to do with yourself?

## 20

Imagine.

Imagine if all that happened to you.

What would you do?

You would go home.

You would take down all your Nazi posters.

You'd get rid of all your knives.

You would look in the mirror and try to imagine

What comes next?

And then you'd get into bed.

You'd pull up the covers.

And you'd turn off the light.

Blackout.