

(not so) dearly departed
by Gill Yue

First streamed 14.06.21 with the cast:

MAISIE - Chloe Baines

MARK - Harry Wade

ANDY - Luke McDonald

MELISSA - Jasmine Clarke

JENNY - Izzy Rye

BEN - Charlie Lewis

ACT ONE: THE GANG'S BACK TOGETHER AGAIN

Open on MAISIE's laptop. SHE hovers over the 'send' button, a Zoom link in the message bar of a group chat. SHE sends and returns to the zoom screen. Opening the Spotify app, a playlist called 'listen when you miss me :)' by TANYA_COLE_ is open. SHE hovers on the play button but exits the browser and returns once more to the Zoom screen instead. No one is there yet. SHE checks the message; three people have seen it. A private message pops up from MARK.

MARK (MESSAGE) You need to press admit I'm waiting to get on the call.

MAISIE looks under the participant tab and sure enough, MARK is waiting to enter. SHE admits him and his face comes onto the screen.

MAISIE (FORCED) Hey! Great to see you.

MARK'S video is frozen, and no audio can be heard.

MAISIE (CONT.) Mark? You there?

MARK'S video disconnects. MAISIE sits back slightly relieved, and nervously drums her fingers. In the admit tab MARK pops up again. MAISIE presses admit.

MARK Hey! Sorry my wifi is so bad.

MAISIE No worries!

There is an awkward silence. MAISIE keeps one eye on the chat.

MARK So, how you been?

MAISIE Good! Well... But... yeah

MARK Yeah.

MAISIE And you?

MARK Hm?

MAISIE How are you doing?

MARK Surviving.

MAISIE I get that. (PAUSE) Has anyone else said what time they'll be on?

MARK Can't be long. It's two here.

MAISIE Six here.

MARK Wow, early.

MAISIE Yeah but, only time everyone seemed to be free. And I didn't want to miss... this.

ANDY pops up in the admit tab.

MAISIE (UNDER BREATH) Thank you, Jesus. (NORMAL) Andy's joining.

MARK Aw, cool.

ANDY joins the chat.

ANDY Ay up guys.

MARK Hey Andy.

MAISIE Hi Andy.

ANDY Shit, Maisie, you actually joined.

MAISIE (AWKWARD FORCED CHUCKLE) I mean, I said I would, and I started the call.

ANDY Yeah but, y'know.

MELISSA joins the admit chat.

MAISIE Melissa's joining guys.

ANDY How you doing, Mark?

MARK Honestly, kind of bored.

ANDY I feel you, it's pretty lonely out here.

MARK I can imagine.

MELISSA joins the call. A torso appears on the screen, in a kitchen.

ANDY Hey Mel.

MELISSA places a glass tumbler on the side as she crouches into frame and gives a mock wave to the group. SHE moves off to the side.

MELISSA Hey Andy. Hey Mark. Good to see you Maisie.

MAISIE (TOO ENTHUSIASTIC) Likewise!

MARK Where'd you go Mel?

MELISSA comes back onto the screen and places a whiskey bottle on the side. SHE pushes ice cubes into the glass.

MELISSA Relax, just getting ice.

MAISIE Are you drinking, Mel?

MELISSA Time's an illusion, right?

ANDY Don't start on that crap.

MAISIE Isn't that maybe... a bit- how come you're drinking?

MELISSA We're celebrating a life, right? Plus, she's the one who gave me this whiskey.

THE GROUP are silent. MARK looks off to the side and MAISIE struggles with what to say.

MELISSA (CONT) Cheers. Who else are we waiting on then?

MAISIE Jenny, Kyle and Ben, I think.

ANDY is eating a 'quavers burger' which peaks MARK'S interest.

MARK Is that... is that one of Haziz's burgers?

ANDY Hm? Oh, yeah. They're doing takeaway with all this (WAVES) bullshit going on

MAISIE You're still at uni?

ANDY Yeah, can't really go home. Rather be here

MAISIE On your own?

MELISSA (JUMPING IN) Those things are disgusting. I can't believe you're actually eating that.

MARK Wasn't your first kiss with Andy after he had one of those?

MELISSA flips off MARK who is laughing. ANDY also laughs. MAISIE feels lost.

MAISIE I don't remember any of this.

MELISSA We started going after you moved out of ours.

MAISIE Oh. Well... you and Andy kissed? When did that happen?

ANDY We did date for three months.

MAISIE Wait, what? When!

MELISSA You'd moved.

MAISIE Right.

A hostile silence. MELISSA drinks her whiskey.

MARK Uh, Maisie, Jenny and Ben just texted saying they can't get on.

MAISIE I'll admit them.

SHE lets them both in.

JENNY Hi.

BEN Hey guys.

BEN'S face is somewhat tear stained.

ANDY You okay, Ben?

BEN Yeah, just ignore me it's okay, I'll be okay.

MARK It's going to be okay, Ben.

MELISSA Hang in there.

ANDY We're all here for each other, that's why we're doing this right?

MELISSA How was it yesterday, Jen?

JEN It was weird. It was just our Mum, and Dad. And me. Not even Nan could be there.
And it was all so far away.

MAISIE I'm sorry.

JENNY looks a bit confused to see MAISIE, HER eyes flicker to MARK.

MAISIE (CONT.) I'm Maisie - me and Tanya were together before... well...

ANDY (MUTTERED, UNDER BREATH) Well technically you broke up before...

MARK I don't think that kind of thing is relevant right now, Andy?

ANDY Okay, chief

JEN Thanks Maisie. It's nice to meet you properly

MELISSA How come you don't know Jenny? You never visited Tanya's (AMERICAN,
MOCKING) folks?

MAISIE She was always funny about introducing me. Said there was a difference between
coming out to her parents and *actually* bringing a girl back

BEN Yeah, she mentioned that to me too.

MELISSA Fair enough

MELISSA chuckles as she swigs her whiskey.

ANDY Might as well drink that from the bottle, Mel.

JEN Oh, you're drinking?

MELISSA Yeah, why not?

MAISIE It's meant to be a celebration of her life to be fair-

MELISSA (ANNOYED) And I'm celebrating! My way. Also, good idea Andy.

MARK Where the fuck is Kyle?

BEN Hold on he's messaged me. (READS OUT LOUD) 'Not coming on. Too much to deal with right now. Plus, can't stand to see that bit- ' (THEY CUT THEMSELVES OFF, AWKWARD SILENCE)

MELISSA Well.

MARK Guess we should start?

ACT TWO: SHARING SWIGS

As MELISSA sits, some pull out pieces of paper and start to get nervous. BEN leaves the screen and comes back with a box of tissues.

ANDY Alright Ben, that may be something you wanna do in private.

Laughter that feels bottled up and has been waiting to be released. BEN also laughs along, in spite of THEMSELF, but also turns pink.

BEN (RUSHED) It's not// for that.

ANDY (WARM) Hey, I know mate. Just trying to lighten up.

JEN Are we all ready?

Nods and yes'.

JEN Who wants to go first?

Silence.

MELISSA Fuck it, I'll go. (BREATH) Tanya. What can I say about her? (SUCKS TEETH, SHE'S THINKING) We met... on the first day of freshers. She had these... ridiculous long, dumb nails on and were trying to open a can of tinned tomatoes in the kitchen. And I just remembered thinking "Did this dumb bitch really think she could afford to keep having her nails done at uni?" Back then I was... an asshole-

ANDY Still are.

The group laughs a bit and MELISSA flips off the camera with a smile on her face.

MELISSA ... a proper pick me girl. Thought I was so much better than girly girls. Tanya... you showed me... taught me to be better. You explained it all to me. Internalised misogyny and (LOOKS AT WHISKEY TUMBLER) all that crap. You were unapologetically yourself. You didn't care what anyone said. What anyone thought. I wanted to be like that. But I spent my whole life before you sucking up to film nerds who thought Tarantino was quintessential cinema and would last two minutes inside of me before rolling over and calling it a day.

MARK Hey no need to lay into Andy

Laughter again.

MELISSA ... No comment. You taught me a lot, Tanya. And while I still love Fight Club and prefer beer to gin – I'm not scared of the colour pink anymore. Thank you, Tanya.

MELISSA swigs the last of the whiskey.

MAISIE That was... so sweet, Melissa.

MELISSA (MIMICKING HER ACCENT SLIGHTLY) Gee, thanks Maisie

MARK Never seen you show that much emotion

ANDY Nah, don't think you even cried that much during our break up – are your eyes working overtime?

MELISSA At least be clever and say tear ducts, stupid

ANDY Chilling insult

MARK Ignore him, it was nice to hear

BEN Was that day the same day Tanya sliced her finger open making spag bol?

ANDY I think it was

MELISSA No, that was like the third night?

BEN Oh, yeah. That one tin was on the side for ages. Remember she said- she saw it as a challenge?

ANDY A 'pissing challenge.' Remember how she would describe everything as 'pissing'

MELISSA (IMITATING TANYA) "Fucking is just so harsh"

MELISSA, ANDY and BEN laugh at the memory. The rest feel somewhat excluded.

ANDY You know, after three years at uni... I still think the only thing she ever had beef with was that fucking tomato tin

MELISSA Tanya wasn't capable of hating anyone, that's why

ANDY I think Ben was more upset with Mark after the breakup then Tanya -

BEN No I wasn't!

MARK You did avoid me for two days

BEN I didn't know if we were meant to have loyalties. Tanya *did* call me out on it

MARK Ben, you don't have to panic so much. We're kidding

MELISSA Hm, yeah... who's next then?

MAISIE Does it have to be so structured?

MELISSA I just thought to move it along

BEN I'll go.

MELISSA Take it away, Ben.

BEN Okay... so... Tanya was actually the first person I came out to. She told me everyone would be fine with it, and I should come out to you guys too. But I didn't want to. Gay jokes still got flung around the room and I was just... scared of it all. That Mark and Andy wouldn't want to be friends with me – be scared I wanted to sleep with them or something.

ANDY Mate don't worry, you're too much of a bottom

MARK Andy, don't be an asshole.

ANDY You know it's physically paining me to not make the obvious joke here

MELISSA Andy shut up. Stop hogging

BEN (QUICKLY BEFORE ANYONE ELSE JUMPS IN) She did everything to try and make me more comfortable - would pretend to be you guys so I could practice saying the words

ANDY (JOKING) Like roleplay

MELISSA (NONCHALANT) Andy likes a bit of roleplay

General groans/exclamations of disgust

ANDY Mel, the fuck!

MELISSA Not so fun when it's aimed at you

ANDY You just took away from Ben's time

MELISSA I was teaching you a lesson

MAISIE So we know that Andy and Melissa's roleplay included teaching someone a lesson...

Disgusted laughter. MAISIE is just happy to be involved.

MARK I think I'm gonna be sick

ANDY Fuck off Mark

The group continue to laugh, possible improvised jokes. ANDY scrambles to make it right.

MARK I know you were together but I still don't want to imagine what was going on-

ANDY Oh fuck off, you'd be lucky to see mine and Melissa's sex tape-

MAISIE There's a sex tape?!

ANDY No that was a hypothetical! (STRUGGLING TO BE HEARD OVER THE JEERS AND LAUGHTER) A hypothetical! 'Cause he said about imagining-

MARK I said nothing about a sex tape- that was all you

MELISSA I hate you.

ANDY You started this!

Improvised jeers and jokes, MELISSA and ANDY not being too offended. BEN throughout all of this, however is uncomfortable and annoyed. HE grabs his phone and texts. MARK gets a notification on his phone.

MARK Uh, let's stop interrupting Ben - he hasn't even finished yet

ANDY Yeah Melissa

MELISSA Shut up Andy!

MARK Ben?

BEN (STRUGGLE) The thing I learnt most from Tanya... She taught me, like, a, three point view? (BREATH) What was the best possible situation, what was the worst possible situation. And in between was what was, like- likely to happen. I still use that. To this day.

JENNY She learnt that at CAMHS

BEN Yeah. Did you guys... ever see her as perfect? 'Cause I did. It seemed like no matter how much I came to her room with some kind of issue she always had time for me. For anyone. But she still was doing so well at... everything else

MAISIE goes to speak but stops herself. MELISSA notices.

BEN (CONT.) She still found time to balance. That was just it - she was like a human balancer.

JENNY Balancer?

MARK Do you mean scales?

BEN (TURNING PINK, EMBARRASSED) Yeah, yeah I did sorry

ANDY Don't have to apologise

BEN (STARTING TO BREAK DOWN) Yeah... right, I- I think I want to be done now

MARK That's okay

BEN (CRYING BUT ATTEMPTING TO HIDE IT) I might say more later, I just... I want-

MARK Ben, do you want a moment?

BEN Please

BEN mutes himself and leaves the room, HIS screen staying on. THE OTHERS are affected by this and show this in THEIR own way.

ANDY (SEARCHING) Have you guys, ever seen... Monsters' University?

MELISSA What does that have to do with anything..?

ANDY It was Tanya's favourite movie. I'd never seen it, but she was always on about it. It actually became a bit of a meme in the house. Her telling me to watch it. Me refusing to - making fun of her for being so passionate about a dumb kids movie.

MELISSA Sounds riveting

MARK Didn't we get her a Mike Wazowski teddy?

MELISSA (REALISATION) Yes! And we had to pay extra for express shipping because *someone* didn't get me the money in time

ANDY You could've just bought it with the trust that I would've got the money to you

MELISSA See it's the 'you' and 'trust' in the same sentence I have issues with

ANDY winks/blows MELISSA a kiss and MELISSA flips HIM off. BEN rejoins. A silent but sincere moment between HIM and MARK where MARK checks THEY'RE okay and BEN confirms they are.

JENNY The teddy was from you guys?

MARK (WARMLY) Yeah, it was. I know it seems a bit dumb to get a uni student a teddy-

JENNY No, she... she loved it. It's actually on the mantelpiece... next to, the... the urn...

MAISIE Really?

JENNY Yeah, she really, really loved it. I used to make fun of her - like “who’s actually the little sister here” she used to randomly just have it around her so much. I actually thought it was a hot water bottle for a long time and that’s why she was always holding it. You guys did good there. She was obsessed with that movie. She watched it for the first time during sixth form. It was actually during a time she was really, struggling. There was this girl in her year who used to get everything. Better grades, invited to everything - and when she got Head Girl over Tanya, she was livid. We didn’t hear the end of how much she wanted Meg Badger to get hit by a bus. But, one family film night-

ANDY That just screams functional family

MAISIE Andy, come on-

ANDY (SINCERE) It’s all in jest, this is just what I’m like, Jenny. Please, keep going

JENNY It’s okay! Yeah, so, we sat down and watched Monsters University and it’s like something just... clicked in her. She said that even when someone seems perfect, they’re going through something. Their own... personal battles. Like Sully. And she was happy being a Mike.

MAISIE The first time we spoke properly was freshers - she was really drunk and saw my Last Airbender t-shirt and was like “you like anime? I just learned the word kin - I kin Mike Wazowski!”

THE OTHERS break into laughter, MARK almost looks proud at MAISIE for opening up.

MELISSA (SLURRING) I’d say Mark is a Mike and Maisie is the Sully. Always being in her shadow. Not recognised how good you were [for Tanya]

There’s silence. It’s uncomfortable. Even ANDY knows this is a step too far. MAISIE is not surprised by the outburst, but is bitterly disappointed and hurt all the same.

MARK (WARNING) Mel...

ANDY I think me and Mel should have a private chat

MELISSA We're on zoom, how you're gonna do that?

BEN I think you can do breakout rooms...

JENNY Yeah, the host would have to do it

MELISSA Well, *Maisie's* the host, so *Maisie* will have to do it

MARK Do you know how to do that, Maisie?

MAISIE Of course.

MAISIE goes to place ANDY & MELISSA in a breakout room, hovering over the "kick out" option.

MARK Have you managed it, Maisie?

MELISSA is giggling heavily now, ANDY looks concerned. MAISIE confirms the breakout room and
MELISSA and ANDY disappear from the screen.

MAISIE Yeah, I managed

BEN Should we... wait?

MARK I think we should keep going. Let's not lose any momentum.

JENNY (QUICKLY) Yeah, I would like to do mine now

MARK You sure?

JENNY Yeah. Don't get me wrong Melissa and Andy seem... nice. But they have so many memories of her from all the years at uni. You all do, really. It's just... it's a bit different for me. You all got to see her grow into a different person. People change so much at uni - I've been there half a year and can already tell that. I guess I should feel lucky? That I have so many memories to pick from but it's more overwhelming really. It's like my brain is soup and the memories of her are little bits of veg. I can see a corner of it, and it looks like a carrot, but I can't quite grasp it and now I look at it more, is that a sweet potato? (DRY CHUCKLE) I don't know. (PAUSE) And it feels so dumb because the clearest - the least foggiest - memory I have of her is when she helped me finish my UCAS at 4am the day she had her own essay due. We shared an entire jumbo pack of bounties and I was sick by 6am. (PAUSE) It's meant to be the longer you don't see someone, the more the memories fade. But my memory of her is already so little. They dance at the edge of my brain – and I can't catch up. They taunt me. They want me to wade through this... sea of lost memories. She's getting further and further away and the more and more I think the more I sink.

EVERYONE is taken aback by this - the emotions showing in different ways. A message pops up on
MAISIE'S SCREEN.

MARK To be fair, I probably would be sick after having one bounty

JENNY laughs despite her tears.

MELISSA (MESSAGE) Let us back in the call.

MELISSA (MESSAGE) Please.

MAISIES admits them both and ANDY and MELISSA re-join the call. BOTH are tearstained -
MELISSA attempting to hide it more than ANDY.

ANDY (SNIFFLING) Hey, did we miss, anything?

BEN Jenny. Said some... really nice things.

ANDY (ATTEMPTING TO REROOT THEMSELVES) Well, sorry Jenny I'm sure it was beautiful.

ACT THREE: CONDOLENCES, ASSHOLE

JENNY (SNIFFLING) Who's left?

MARK Maisie and Andy, I think

ANDY (GESTURES) Maisie?

MAISIE I kind of want to wait

MELISSA Still?

MARK (JUMPS IN) That's okay, we all take our own time with these things

MAISIE Thank you, Mark

MELISSA rolls her eyes.

ANDY Melissa come on

MELISSA What?

ANDY We all miss Tanya in our own ways and you can't deny Maisie and Tanya-

MELISSA goes as if she's about to argue, but thinks better

MELISSA Yeah, alright. Take your time, Maisie. Means it's you, Andy

ANDY Okay. (THINKING. DEBATING BEING SERIOUS) You know, I always thought me and Tanya would shag one day. We had tension there, y'know- Mel stop rolling your eyes you can't deny it. We used to share glances over the salt shaker, touch tips passing the tomato- finger tips! Get your mind out the gutters! We got really close one day. Ben's birthday. It was us two left in the kitchen, somehow we got so drunk - well she was drunk, I was high - both of us were lying on the kitchen floor. I remember I was spaced out as fuck and all I could concentrate on was this really defined chin dimple she had - 'cause you don't usually see them do you? (BEAT) I went to lean in, and then she started crying - said every time she shagged someone they either broke up with her or left the country. (CHUCKLES) Imagine. Guess you did both Maisie.

MAISIE (BEAT) What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

ANDY (GENUINE CONFUSION, SLOWLY) I... I don't get it. Why are you offended? I'm not making anything up- pandemic hit, you went home, dumped Tanya-

MAISIE It's the way you say it, like I caused this!

ANDY No one is saying that, Maisie. You've gotta stop. Stop acting like you're the only one affected. You loved Tanya, yes. But so did we. We all loved her in our own ways. We all had our own moments; stupid little memories of opening tomatoes and dancing in doorways. Tanya helped us-

MAISIE Yeah, helped you stop being a bigoted// little shit

ANDY Oh, too bad she couldn't stop you being a self-destructive bitch.

MAISIE (LAUGHING) Classic Andrew - deflecting. You know, Tanya told me that story and said her biggest regret was letting you get that close to sleeping with her. Said she couldn't believe she let someone who openly used the word tranny and fag// anywhere near her and Ben-

ANDY That was before I knew any better and you know it!

MAISIE You were 18 - you knew better

ANDY I learnt at uni- through Tanya-

MAISIE You had self-autonomy. Take some Goddamn responsibility. It's not up to others to teach you how to not bully// and belittle people

MELISSA Oh, Maisie I have been waiting-

MAISIE (OVERLAPPING) And your girlfriend's to the fucking rescue. I don't care, Melissa. I know you hate me and always have and I really don't need to hear it over and over again. You're a bitch, that's one thing Tanya could never deny-

MELISSA goes to say something back, but much to everyone's surprise BEN gets there first.

BEN Shut up, Maisie. I'm sorry - you're hurting. We know, you're hurting. You lost someone you loved - feelings don't just go away you must've loved her even with the breakup. But you have to stop acting innocent. You broke up with her. Own it. Don't pretend something didn't happen when it did. You broke up, that's fine - what's not fine was how you abandoned her. Abandoned us. And now you're playing the victim. We all lost more than a friend. I lost the only person in my life who knew how scary it is to come out. Mark lost his ex-girlfriend too. Did you forget that? That they were together too? No. You didn't remember. 'Cause it's always about you, Maisie. What you've been through. I'm sick of it.

There's a silence. MELISSA can't find a cutting remark. ANDY can't find a joke. JENNY can't find any optimism.

MAISIE I... I don't have to listen to this. I don't have to prove how I felt about Tanya. You're all... I don't know why I tried.

JENNY Maisie, wait-

MAISIE ends the call for everyone.

ACT FOUR: NOW WE'RE ALONE

We see a reflection of MAISIE on the screen. SHE takes the time to attempt to gather herself, a single tear attempting to escape.

MARK (MESSAGE) Maisie we can sort this

MARK sends a zoom link.

MARK (MESSAGE) I really think u need to talk about this

MAISIE takes a while to think. Then she clicks the link, her heart in her ears. SHE joins a call with MARK who looks concerned on screen. There is a bit of a pause, neither know really what to say.

MAISIE I'm sorry

MARK Don't apologise. It's okay.

Pause.

MAISIE Tanya... never said that about Andy

MARK I figured (PAUSE) Did you... did you write a speech?

MAISIE (SHARP) Of course I did

MARK (EXASPERATED) Please, don't get short with me, Maisie, I'm just trying to help

MAISIE (STEAMINGROLLING) But the whole time it felt like my thoughts- my own feelings were being policed. I know you guys don't like me but... you couldn't even let me have this? Have one last chance to say goodbye? Believe me, if I could've been at the funeral, just minding my own business on my own I could. But no. From the get go// I felt uncomfortable...

MARK Maisie, I tried so hard to make you feel included, don't even pretend right now

MAISIE I didn't say you but if you feel-

MARK What is that even meant to mean, Maisie? No one has been trying to... antagonise you-

MAISIE That's a lie and you know it

MARK Okay, Melissa and Andy were dicks- I'll give you that. But they're grieving-

MAISIE And I'm not?

MARK (EXASPERATED) I don't want to attack you, Maisie

MAISIE You say that and then you'll bring up something designed to hurt me

MARK Like how she loved you more than she ever loved me? (UNSETTLING PAUSE) It's okay. I don't mind. I didn't treat her half as good as you treated her. I hated you for a while - felt

homophobic to do so, made me feel fucking gross. I hated that you and I were both outsiders to their original group. I hated that you and I were from the same flat, literally opposite each other. I hated we both could make her laugh and smile in the same way. I hated how similar we were. 'Cause it just proved I lost something capable of keeping. You proved I was an asshole and... I was my own issue.

Pause.

MAISIE Mark... I... we...

MARK You know what, you're right. There's no point to this anymore. Tanya was the only thing holding everything together.

MAISIE Mark?

MARK (ALMOST OVERLAPPING) Goodbye, Maisie.

MARK ends the call and the screen is black once again. MAISIE looks at the group chat, she can't see any messages. SHE checks the Facebook profiles; everyone has blocked her. She finally returns to Spotify, the playlist from before still there. SHE pulls out a piece of paper (her prepared funeral speech) before crying and crumpling it. SHE is not sobbing, but the tears *are* flowing freely. SHE hugs her knee and presses play on the playlist. 'PIANO MAN by BILLY JOEL' plays as MAISIE closes her laptop and the screen goes black.