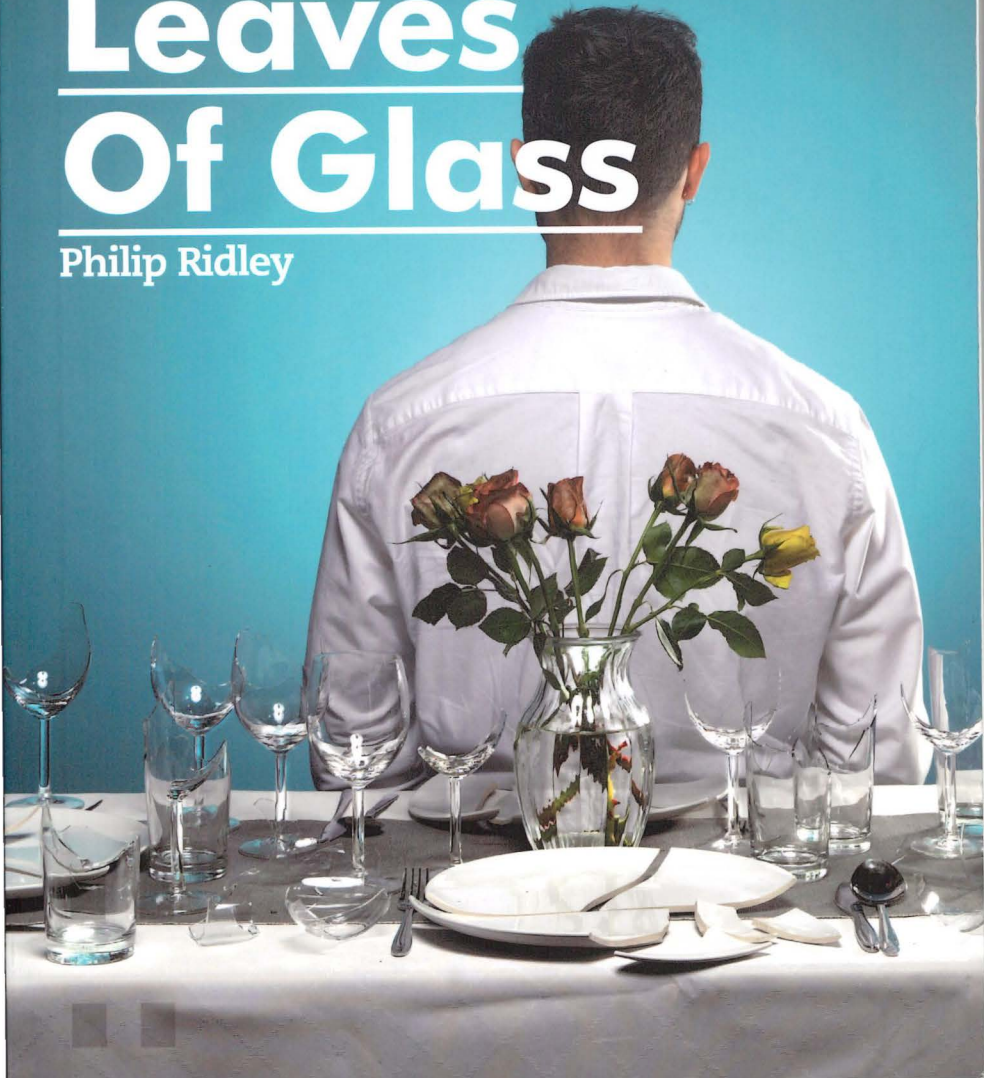


methuen | drama

Leaves Of Glass

Philip Ridley



Characters

Steven

Barry

Debbie

Liz

1

Steven, *twenty-seven*.

Steven I remember . . . one Sunday morning Dad said, 'Get in the car, boys.' Barry asked, 'Where we going, Dad?' 'A surprise.' I sit in the front because I'm the oldest. Fifteen. Barry's in the back getting all excited and jabbering away. He acts a bit young for his age sometimes. He's ten.

Beat.

Dad parks the car and says, 'Everybody out!' Seagulls! Barry asks if we're near the seaside. Dad laughs and takes Barry's hand. He goes to take mine but I pull it away. I'm not a kid. We walk down a street. Barry is doing that half-skipping thing and tugging Dad's arm. I tell Barry to calm down. It's one thing to be happy but you don't have to broadcast it to the whole bloody world, do you . . . Well, *do* you?

Beat.

Barry says, 'Look! The Thames!' And there it is. We're right by the river. And then I see – Silver! Big silver things across the water. I know what it is. Dad was talking about it last week. The Thames Barrier. Dad explained how if the river gets too high the Barrier would lift up these . . . these – like big doors or something. And it would hold all the water back. Barry said, 'I'd like to see the Thames Barrier, Dad.' And – hey presto! – here we are. Dad usually gives Barry what he wants. Barry's his favourite. I don't mind. I'm Mum's favourite so it sort of balances out. Well, *don't* it?

Beat.

Barry says the Barrier looks like a row of silver pyramids. I tell him not really because a pyramid has to be pyramid shaped. And those silver things are shaped like . . . well, not pyramids. Barry says he's gonna do a drawing of it for Dad when he gets home. Dad says he'd love a drawing of silver pyramids. Barry's good at drawing.

Beat.

And then . . . then this gust of wind comes along – real strong – and . . . and Dad – he grabs hold of my hand. So sudden. So tight. His nails dig in. I try to pull away but Dad just holds tighter and tighter. I look at him. The scar by his left eye is sort of twitching. Like it does when Mum's shouting at him and he don't say a single word back. I say, 'Dad . . . you're hurting me!' But still he won't let go. I can see he's holding Barry's hand just as hard. Barry's face is all screwed up. Again I say, 'Dad! You're *still* hurting me.' Again his grip gets tighter. It's as if . . . as if Dad's afraid the gust of wind is going to blow me and Barry away . . . and he'll lose us forever.

2

Barry's flat.

Barry, *twenty-two, is on floor.*

Steven *is standing.*

Barry Not going there.

Steven Barry?

Barry Don't make me . . . don't . . .

Steven's phone rings.

Answers it.

Steven Hi, Jan . . . At Barry's . . . Yeah, yeah, he's here but – Eh? . . . Well, it's what we expected. Had to break the door open again. Well, the people downstairs did.

Barry I don't want to!

Steven Hear him? – Eh? . . . I *have* tried – Barry? . . . Barry?! – Jesus! There's a bucket full of vomit . . . Eh? . . . Oh, it's not just the *drink* doing it . . . Don't know. Don't *want* to know.

Barry He'll hurt me!

Steven No one's going to hurt you! (*Into phone.*) Eh? . . . No, no, I'll stay till he surfaces. Cancel everything for the rest of the day . . . He's my brother, Jan, what else can I do?

Barry *cries out.*

Steven Oh, and Jan. Not a word in the office. If anyone asks tell them . . . tell them me and Barry are doing something for our mum –

Barry *wakes with a gasp.*

Steven It's all right, brov.

Barry Steve!

Steven (*into phone*) Well, at least he knows me.

Barry Who're you talking to?

Grabs Steven's phone and –

Barry (*into phone*) Leave me alone!

Steven Stop it, Barry.

Grabs phone back and –

(*Into phone.*) Janis? I'll phone you back.

Hangs up.

Pull yourself together!

Barry If we stick together we'll be all right.

Steven I'll make some coffee.

Barry We can get weapons! Baseball bats with . . . with nails sticking out like . . . like medieval things.

Steven Jesus, Barry, where *is* everything? No coffee. No tea.

Barry Bash! His brains will spill out.

Liz He needs a holiday.

Steven I do *not* need / a bloody holiday.

Debbie He *hates* holidays.

Liz He can't relax.

Steven I *can*.

Debbie You're not *now*.

Liz He works too hard.

Debbie You're stressed.

Liz Your dad used to get stressed.

Steven Jesus!

Liz Frank was too sensitive. He was the first man I ever saw cry. It'll be twelve years since he died in October. You know that, Steve?

Steven Yes, I know that, Mum.

Liz He would've *loved* a grandchild, wouldn't he?

Steven *doesn't respond*.

Liz *Steven!?*

Dog barks next door.

Oh, no, not again.

Steven I'll go next door and complain if you like.

Liz It gets *worse* if you complain.

Debbie You need double glazing.

Steven That's what *I* said.

Liz *You* promised to get me some.

Steven *You* said you didn't want all the mess.

Liz I *don't* want all the mess – (*At Debbie.*) Who wants mess?

Debbie It'll be worth it to keep the noise out, Liz.

Steven (*at Liz*) Exactly!

Liz It's coming through the walls, not the windows.

Steven *Now* it is, but not *all* the time.

Liz *Most* of the time.

Steven *Some* of the time.

Liz I'm not destroying my home for –

Steven 'Destroying'?!

Liz Oh, listen to it! Shut up! *Shut up!*

Steven I'll write to the landlords.

Liz It's the landlords who're behind it.

Steven No.

Liz It's a plot.

Steven 'A plot'?!

Liz Conspiracy! They want to drive me out.

Debbie They want to turn your house into flats, Liz.

Liz They do.

Debbie More money.

Liz Greed.

Debbie Money.

Liz Pure greed.

Debbie *sips tea*.

Debbie Ugh! Liz.

Liz Oh, no. Not sugar in *all* of them? It's that bloody dog! Confusing me. Bark, bark, bark!

Steven Here, give me the tray.

Liz I'm all right.

Steven But you're going to drop it –

Liz DON'T TOUCH ME! *DON'T!*

5

Steve's office.

Steve and Barry.

Barry I owe you an explanation.

Steven Forget it, Barry.

Barry I can't. We're brothers. You trusted me and I let you down.

Steven No.

Barry Please, Steve. I can't rest until I . . . *Please.*

Beat.

It was really shitty weather this morning. Early. You see it?

Steven Yeah.

Barry Grey sky. Grey people. All colour sucked out. You know those old photos from the First World War?

Steven What?

Barry The trenches.

Steven Those.

Barry That's what it felt like. Shot at dawn weather. That's what they should call a mornings like that. On weather forecasts. You know? 'It's gonna be shot at dawn weather.' Then we'd all know what they mean. Well, *I* would. Wouldn't you, Steve?

Steven Well, I will now.

Barry They shot boys. Shell-shocked boys.

Steven Terrible.

Barry The boys were crying but the men still – Ready! Aim! . . . What was I saying?

Steven Miserable morning.

Barry Bloody miserable. And I was standing on that corner where I always stand. Waiting for Jacko and Marky-boy. And they were a bit late and –

Steven So *that's* it!

Barry What?

Steven Why didn't you *tell* me they were late?

Barry It was nothing. A few minutes.

Steven *I* would've been in a bad mood / too if I'd been kept –

Barry Jacko and Marky-boy being late had nothing to do with . . . what happened later. Okay?

Beat.

I see the truck coming down the road and Jacko gives his usual three beeps and I squeeze in next to Marky-boy and we drive off and I look at Jacko and Marky-boy and . . . and . . .

Beat.

Steven *What*, brov?

Barry You'll think I'd been drinking.

Steven I won't.

Barry I've stopped. *All* of it.

Steven I know.

Barry No drink. Nothing.

Steven I know.

Barry You know that, don't you.

Steven . . . Yes . . . I know.

Beat.

Barry Guess what they looked like.

Steven Who?

Barry Jacko and Marky-boy.

Steven I . . . I'm not / sure what you –

Barry You know those photos from Auschwitz?

Steven Auschwitz?

Barry People in concentration camps. Those skull-like faces. All teeth and eye sockets.

Phone rings.

Steven *picks it up.*

Steven Yes? . . . (*At Barry.*) Janis wants to know if you'd like some tea?

Barry No, no, I'm fine.

Steven He's fine . . . We're *both* fine . . . Eh? . . . Well, tell him Graffiti Busters is the best fucking cleaning firm in East London and in this business you get what you pay for. He wants to pay peanuts, he'll get monkeys.

Hangs up.

Barry She's a good one – Janis.

Steven Yes.

Barry Best secretary you've ever had, I reckon. Next to . . . what was her name? Paulette?

Steven Yes. Paulette was good.

Barry So was Kelly.

Steven Yes.

Barry So was Maxine.

Steven . . . Yes.

Barry Your Debbie was the best, though.

Steven Debbie was very good, yes.

Barry No she wasn't.

Steven No.

Barry She makes a better wife than a secretary, eh?

Steven . . . Yes.

Barry She wasn't as bad in the office as me, though. I'm hopeless.

Steven You're not / hopeless at all.

Barry I look at a computer – it crashes! I've been born in the wrong time, I reckon. Wrong era. Few hundred years ago – that would have suited me. Sort of Renaissance times. That's more like *five* hundred years ago, isn't it?

Steven I'm . . . not / sure when . . .

Barry Wine out of goblets and candlelight and – Dad liked candlelight, didn't he. Remember the candles in the shed? The silver candelabrum!

Steven Yes, yes.

Barry I've got Dad's romantic DNA, I reckon. I should've been mates with Byron and Shelley and all that lot. White frilly shirts. Reading poetry all day. And making love all night.

Steven *And catching syphilis.*

Barry They can cure that.