



NOTE: In All Honesty is a theatrical podcast produced for the ear and designed to be heard, it features both spoken word and music. The following transcript has been made available for the hard of hearing and to increase accessibility to our podcast. If you are able we strongly encourage you to listen to the audio, which includes emotion and emphasis that's not on the page. Episodes are transcribed by the creatives behind the podcast, and may contain errors. Please check the corresponding audio before quoting in print.

INTRODUCTION

[GILLIAN SPEAKS] This project has been produced and recorded on the lands of the Woi Wurrung, Boon Wurrung, and Wathaurong peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and welcome all First Nations people listening today. We acknowledge the rich history of story-telling and music within this culture.

[IN ALL HONESTY THEME MUSIC BEGINS]

Hi there, and welcome to In All Honesty. This is Episode 1 of Season 1 of a brand new podcast in which we allow people to share experiences which society doesn't always find easy to discuss.

There's no interviewer, there's no questions, there's no prompts. Basically, we send our storyteller away with a recorder to tell their story on their own terms. And, then a composer takes those stories and adds music and song to them.

I'm Gillian Cosgriff, and I have written and performed the music for Season 1. Now because this is the first season of a new podcast, which is little bit different to what you might be used to, I thought we'd have a quick chat to get a bit of background with our first storyteller the wonderful Bert LaBonté.

Bert is one of Australia's leading stage and screen actors. He's worked all over the country, all over the world and the story that he has to share with you this season is pretty incredible as well.

Before we get into it, a bit of a content warning we will be discussing still birth, pregnancy loss, fertility, and dealing with losing a child in this season. You might also hear the occasional swear word. To speak those swear words to you – Bert LaBonté – Hi Bert!



[BERT SPEAKS] Aw, Hi Gill, you make me sound... like I've done some stuff it's good.

both chuckle

[GILLIAN SPEAKS] ...You've done some... you've done at least three things

[BERT SPEAKS] ...three things *chuckles*

[GILLIAN SPEAKS] Um.. So Um.. we've had kind of an amazing journey on this podcast, we started in very first lockdown, way back in march, when you had just come back from Perth, right?

[BERT SPEAKS] We really d' – yeah... it's been quite - quite ridiculous how this has all come about. Um, we got together as a group of 12 people on zoom, um, with the wonderful Liza McLean, who's an Australian theatre producer uh and a creator and she wanted to work with a bunch of people writers, directors, actors, musos and create some stuff. While we were just sitting on our butts doing nothing, because we were forced to go into closure 'cause of our industry, uh 'cause of COVID, and um, and this is where this podcast was born from. So, it's pretty amazing.

[GILLIAN SPEAKS] Yeah.. so we had the twelve of us uh, some of whom have never met... still in person, I've never met some of those *chuckles* people from other cities, uh we met for twelve weeks every Wednesday night for a couple of hours, which was I think really nice too, it was just nice to have something to go to when you know time stopped really existing in that first lockdown

[BERT SPEAKS] Ohh and great for our mental health

[GILLIAN SPEAKS] *chuckles* Yeah really/very helpful um.. just to talk to someone who doesn't live in your house,

both chuckle

And um... you had written this very beautiful Facebook post in that first lock down that I think a lot of people responded to.

[BERT SPEAKS] Yeah, I wrote a post about uh... my daughter and the post, it was just it was like a um, it was a bit of a story there's a, there's a story to it. And the episode 1 will reveal all when you listen to it, I don't, I don't want to give too much



away, but there's a little bit of magic within the story of the Facebook post that I speak of and um, I thought the magic had disappeared but it actually it hadn't and that- the Facebook post was put out online, and I didn't expect you know, anything to come of, the response was a bit ridiculous to be honest but um, I think it was, it was, uh a real sign of the times and people needed some sort of hope and some sort of magic and something to make them smile at the time. And, and then from there this entire podcast was kinda born.

[GILLIAN SPEAKS] Yeah absolutely – so, so you wrote this post and I think a lot of us had seen it being Facebook friends of yours, an exclusive club and uh one, one of the guys suggested that we uh, we try and work that post into some kind of idea, some kind of story. And so, I, uh, have been toying with this idea of kind of using verbatim speech to create music to use actual speech patterns, and pitches and so I got Bert to record me uh this post, him speaking, this post him telling this story and I extrapolated bits of his speaking into that, and that's how I kinda created the music for this. And once we had done that uh, the response was so kind of overwhelming from the group that we wanted to hear the rest of this story from Bert and, um the rest of your beautiful family. And, so you went away and recorded a whole bunch of other stories about this experience which is what makes up Season 1

[BERT SPEAKS] ...Yeah

[GILLIAN SPEAKS] You recorded most of them in your car

[BERT SPEAKS] I did... most of them were in my car on my lunch break at my uh, in my new job which was in a tea factory um, because there was no acting work around so a friend of mine got me a coupla days a week at a tea factory, which I'm *chuckles* actually no longer doing at the moment um, but, uh... it was one of those things where I could go out on my lunch break sit in my car and record. So some of the sounds you'll hear is, is um occasionally a bit scratchy and sounds a bit weird and you might hear machinery in the background but, um that's, that's when I had the chance to have a clear mind to be able to record these stories and, and sort of pour out the rest of the, the episodes. And it was, um, uh strangely easy to do, and it was uh, uh a real gift and the gift sort of came from your music in the first episode that you put up you... extrapolated some tunes and it was so beautiful and It kind of made my heart sort of burst. And it made me realise that there was more to tell and there was more to do with this, this thing, which is now a podcast and um, and here we are so I've got you to thank really Gill, 'cause you kind of made this thing come to life and really sing, literally, so, it's beautiful, so thank you.



[GILLIAN SPEAKS] Aw mate, thank you, thank you for sharing this story it's been a joy to work and I'm really excited for people to hear it. I know you want to say a few quick thank yous before we get into it.

[BERT SPEAKS] Yeah... I really want to thank Liza McLean and Harry Prouse from Tinderbox Productions for allowing us to do this thing, and I want to thank uh Mike McLeish who is part of The Twelve who planted this seed in my head when this Facebook post first came out, so thanks Mikey, we got it up and running. Um, I want to thank The Twelve you're a bunch of incredible artists and your support and your artistry and love and care throughout this process has been amazing the producers, and I want to thank my wife, Amanda LaBonté. And my boys Felix and Oliver who have allowed be to tell our story and it's been a lot to drag up but they've been really wonderful and supportive through this process as well – and it's their story too, so. And to you the listener I really hope you enjoy this, I hope you get something out of it and here is the first season of In All Honesty it's called Meg's Story and the first episode is Megs and the Mowing of the Lawn.

[GILLIAN SPEAKS] As we have said this episode deals with issue of still birth so if this type of content is triggering for you, you can always content Lifeline on 13 11 14 or head to lifeline.org.au. Additionally, we have included some more specific resources around this issue in our show notes, so if you want to talk to anyone about anything you hear in this episode you can contact one of those.

Thanks again for listening. This is In All Honesty.

- EPISODE 1 – MEGS & THE MOWING OF THE LAWN -

[UPBEAT BUT CALM MUSIC BEGINS]

[BERT SPEAKS] Um... so this is a long one, but I think you'll - you'll like the ending. To be fair it starts a little sad, but I um *chuckles* - but it's worth it, I think. I think it's worth it.

Uh... It's about, almost fourteen years ago - for those of you who don't know - um,

[BERT SPEAKS & GIRL SINGS] Amanda and I had a little girl, named Meg. Uh, she was still born. Um, it was a pretty full-on time in our lives, that - y'know - it's an understatement. Um,

[GIRL SINGS] Um... Um... It's a pretty full-on time in our lives, (REPEATS), It's an under understatement, (REPEATS), Um...



[BERT SPEAKS] After pulling ourselves out of... out of that initial sort of funk - after about six weeks - uh, I decided to venture out and do my garden, 'cos it'd just gotten out of control in the time that we'd been in this sort of coma of grief, um, y'know, it was... it was a mess.

[BERT SPEAKS & GIRL SINGS] But after a - a whole day of uh, weeding and mowing it , y'know, it looked pretty great.

[BERT SPEAKS] It felt pretty good to... have achieved something um, in that... in that time y'know, albeit... fairly trivial.

It was about four hours later and it just started to rain, like good solid rain, and - and there was none forecast, but that's kind of - it's not unusual - for Victoria.

And again, three weeks later I - I found myself in the yard again. I - I found that the - the mowing and the weeding was pretty therapeutic in that time.

So later that night again, rain. And in my head I'm like, *chuckling*, 'How good - how good is this, that every time... I mow, the rain gives it a - a nice soak... afterwards?'

Y'know, I tell Amanda this and aah... and I said to her...

[BERT SPEAKS & GIRL SINGS] 'Maybe it's Meg. Y'know just a little - just a little G'day.'

And then Amanda bursts into tears and I'm thinking, 'Oh shit, just shut - your mouth Bert.' Um... But she responded with, y'know, 'Maybe it is.'

[GIRL SINGS] 'Maybe it is...' (REPEATS)(REPEATS)(REPEATS) Maybe...

[MUSIC SLOWS AND BECOMES SOMBER]

[BERT SPEAKS] Look, long story - short: for the next thirteen-and-a-half years, every time I mow the lawns, it rained. Within twenty-four hours. It rained. Every time. And I - I have many, many folk you can vouch for the fact that this is not a myth.

It's a fact.



I had-I had neighbours who would actually - once - ask me not to mow on a certain day 'cos they'd organised a barbecue; they wanted nice weather, so I wasn't allowed to mow –

[BERT SPEAKS & GIRL SINGS] not a joke.

[BERT SPEAKS] So I returned home on a Sunday, aah from Perth. This is about - ah, after five-and-a-half weeks - this is about... five weeks ago. Um, and I've come home into these sort of uncertain times, these - this craziness that we're in right now; and the garden was out of control. So yesterday arvo I - I mowed. I finished at around - ohh - five thirty?

[BERT SPEAKS & GIRL SINGS] We had a lovely dinner, and we tried to forget the world for an hour and it was great.

[GIRL SINGS] We tried to forget the world (REPEATS) for an hour... (REPEATS)

[BERT SPEAKS] And the day - today - the day went on. Um, and rain looked likely all day but it never came. We went for a kick of the footy with the boys, it was - y'know it was certain that rain would come; still there was absolutely nothing, and I - I really thought that COVID... *nineteen*... *chuckles softly* - that shit name... had stolen my magic; had stopped... my Meg's run.

But it was about five twenty-seven p.m., and down she came.

[UPBEAT MUSIC RETURNS]

Like, right on cue.

And Olly looked at me and he said, 'What time did you finish mowing last night?' (Olly's my eldest), and I said um, 'Five thirty.'

And he looked at his phone and he said, 'Five twenty-seven p.m.'

And he said to me,

[BERT SPEAKS & GIRL SINGS] 'Everything's gonna be ok.'

[GIRL SINGS] Everything's gonna be ok.

[BERT SPEAKS] Y'know I know it sounds ridiculous, but it's - it's absolutely true.



Meg's - she's our bit of magic, and I wanted to share... just - y'know - a little bit of magic.

I thought that... the magic was gone, but it's not.

And I hope this finds... a place in your heart; and it makes you believe too, that things will be better.

[UP BEAT MUSIC CONTINUES AND THEN FADES]

[GILLIAN SPEAKS] Thanks for listening. If you've enjoyed this episode make sure to hit subscribe to hear the rest of this season of In All Honesty, you could also give us a review or even tell a friend to their face. As always if you need to contact anyone about anything you've heard today you can contact Life Line on 13 11 14 or check our show notes for additional resources.

[END]