

Doppelgänger

by

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1. EXT.

It's a clear day. YOUNG JOSIE (10) writes on some paper 'if you find this and want to be friends, message Josie Johns 07700900182'. She secures it with a safety pin to the knot of a red balloon, which she then releases. She watches it float up into the sky and skitter away.

DARYL (V/O)

Hi Josie, it's Daryl from St Oswald's. Would you be able to give me a call back, please.

LOCAL NEWS PRESENTER (V/O)

And finally on the programme, when 10 year old Josie Johns from Gateshead wrote her name and details on a balloon, and released it off into the sky, she hoped someone somewhere would find it and get in touch. What she didn't expect was it to land in the garden of another ten year-old girl also called Josie Johns.

DARYL (V/O)

Hi Josie. It's Daryl again. I think we're coming to the final stages with your Mam now, so please ring me back -

LOCAL NEWS PRESENTER (V/O)

Not only that, but the girls have their birthdays just three weeks apart. They both have long-haired guinea pigs as pets, both love Taylor Swift, and they look remarkably similar. Our Lisa is in Dunston in Gateshead, and is with them both now. Hi Lisa -

Close on YOUNG JOSIE when the obnoxious blare of a car horn cuts in, and her face is replaced with ADULT JOSIE'S face.

2. EXT. HIGH STREET OF A NEWCASTLE SUBURB - AFTERNOON

Here in present-day, ADULT JOSIE (20) is standing on a zebra crossing, gawping up at a red balloon in the sky. Everything about her is frayed - her hair in a rough ponytail, smudged mascara, her skew-whiff jacket collar.

The driver blasts his horn again, bringing ADULT JOSIE back down to earth.

ADULT JOSIE

Yeah, yeah.

She moves towards the pavement, and the car speeds by when she's barely out of the way.

ADULT JOSIE

Oi!

Safely out of the road, ADULT JOSIE remembers that she was doing something before the balloon distracted her. She swipes at her phone, revealing an Instagram grid. She taps on the most recent post - a photo of a latte topped with 'foam art' in a bright cup sitting on top of a coffee shop menu. She widens the photo to check the name on the menu, and looks up at the coffee shop a little way down the street. They're one and the same. Bingo. But in checking that, she accidentally 'hearts' the post - a traitorous ping ringing out.

ADULT JOSIE

Shit.

She quickly unlikes it, and then heads towards the coffee shop door.

3. INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

The coffee shop is a small, independent place. Mismatched decor. Local art on the walls. The place isn't busy.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE (20) sits in a booth (but we don't know it's OTHER ADULT JOSIE yet, because doppelgänger). She has the mostly-drunk latte in front of her, and her laptop out.

She's typing on her phone, her face reflected in the screen. When she takes the phone down, her reflection is sitting opposite her.

ADULT JOSIE

(BRIGHT) Hiya.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE huffs - put-out but not surprised by her exact double appearing opposite her.

We see that OTHER ADULT JOSIE is a tidier, more put-together version of ADULT JOSIE. She has neat hair that she wears loose and pushed back from her face with a pair of sunglasses, stylish clothes, and nicely applied makeup.

ADULT JOSIE

Hashtag assignmentdue, hashtag studentlife, hashtag coffeefix.

OTHER ADULT JOSE

You tell me. I saw that like.
Thanks for the engagement.

ADULT JOSIE

You shouldn't share so much, it makes you very easy to find.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
 Ten years in, I feel like you'd
 find me in a cave on a desert
 island.

ADULT JOSIE
 I could say the same.

They hold each other's gaze. Until ADULT JOSIE's eyes flit
 up to the sunglasses on OTHER ADULT JOSIE's head

ADULT JOSIE
 It's not even sunny.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
 It was.

Nevertheless, OTHER ADULT JOSE takes the sunglasses off her
 head, puts them on the table.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
 I'm not going to apologise, if
 that's what you're here for.

ADULT JOSIE
 Apologise?

4. INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

ADULT JOSIE arriving for her shift through the supermarket's
 sliding door entrance.

She is stopped in her tracks by the sight of OTHER ADULT
 JOSIE shouting and jabbing her finger at a male co-worker
 who has a 'Manager' badge pinned to his uniform. Other
 shoppers hover nearby, gaping at the show.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE is cos-playing as ADULT JOSIE, with her
 hair messily tied back and wearing a supermarket logo-ed
 fleece.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE spots ADULT JOSIE - she gives her a wink
 and ramps up her 'performance' to culminate it with:

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
 AND he wipes his cock on the fruit
 and veg!

5. INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON (CONT'D)

ADULT JOSIE
 Oh that. It doesn't matter. Turned
 out he WAS wiping his cock on the
 fruit and veg. They had him on
 CCTV.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
 They didn't sack you, then?

ADULT JOSIE
Oh yeah, they sacked me.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Right. Cos you know you deserved
it.

ADULT JOSIE
You made it so easy, though.

6. INT. HIGH STREET CLOTHES SHOP - DAY

ADULT JOSIE swipes OTHER ADULT JOSIE'S phone out of her bag while OTHER ADULT JOSIE is engrossed rifling through a rack of clothes. It's quick, and OTHER ADULT JOSIE is oblivious.

ADULT JOSIE is at the till with a pile of clothes on the counter to pay for. The 'payment due' display reads £96.99.

ADULT JOSIE holds the stolen phone up to her face but the Face ID declines. She neatens her hair, straightens her spine and brightens her expression - tries again. It unlocks. Her lip curls at being trolled by a smartphone. She swipes to the wallet and pays. A ping of the contactless payment being accepted.

7. INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON (CONT'D)

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
My phone's pin-locked now, so don't
get any ideas.

ADULT JOSIE
If it's your birthday, I know it.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
I'm not that stupid.

But there's something in her eyes. Is she that stupid?

ADULT JOSIE
It was payback for the speeding
fine, you know that.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Yeah well that was payback for the
Open Day.

ADULT JOSIE
Yeah well that was payback for the
dating profile.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Yeah well that was payback for the
Leaver's Ball.

ADULT JOSIE
Yeah well

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

Yeah well

ADULT JOSIE

Yeah well

A SERVER appears, interrupting their bickering with -

SERVER

Can I get you a drink?

ADULT JOSIE

A latte

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

Another latte

They glare at each other.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

A flat white, thank you.

ADULT JOSIE'S phone starts to ring.

SERVER

And would you like to order?

The phone display flashes 'Mam hospice'. She rejects the call.

SERVER/LISA

And would you like to come through?
The Studio will be coming to us
shortly.

The SERVER is now the REPORTER (Lisa, 30s) and she is ushering the WOMEN out of the booth and into -

8. EXT. YOUNG JOSIE'S BACK GARDEN - EARLY EVE

The WOMEN are their ten-year-old counterparts. Their younger selves echo them as adults - YOUNG JOSIE shabbier, with her hair messily tied back in a ponytail, OTHER YOUNG JOSIE a neater version with her hair loose and nicely presented.

The GIRLS are corralled to standing side by side. There's a CAMERAMAN there as well.

REPORTER

Dad, Mam, if we can get you to step
in too.

OTHER YOUNG JOSIE'S DAD (30s) and YOUNG JOSIE'S MAM (30s) come into frame.

DAD and OTHER YOUNG JOSIE's relationship is clearly warm - he gives her a smile and a little squeeze on her shoulder. MAM and YOUNG JOSIE's relationship is not that.

REPORTER

Okay, and give you these -

REPORTER hands each girl a red balloon.

DAD
(GOOD NATURED) Very Pennywise.

REPORTER
Just a bit of fun.
So, Josie, if you -

DAD
(GOOD NATURED) Which one?

REPORTER
Yes, no, you're right. This one
(INDICATING YOUNG JOSIE)
If you could take your hair down?
Be nice to have you looking as
similar as possible. And Josie -

DAD
(GOOD NATURED, WORRA JOKER) Which
one?

REPORTER
Yes, no -

CAMERAMAN
Christ on a bike. Here.

He produces a marker pen and hurriedly scribbles on each
girl's balloon -

CAMERAMAN
(ON OTHER YOUNG JOSIE'S
BALLOON)

#1.
(ON YOUNG JOSIE'S
BALLOON)

#2.
Now Josie 2, can you step in a bit
further for me please. More. Mam
too.

They do. MAM gets right into YOUNG JOSIE'S ear:

MAM
(HISSES) Of course you're Josie 2.
Number 2. The shit one.

9. INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON (CONT'D)

MAM is sitting next to ADULT JOSIE in the booth, shoved up
beside her, right in her ear:

MAM
And you still are.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE is speaking, but sounds muffled/distant.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Josie? Josie?

She taps a fingernail on the table in front of ADULT JOSIE. It's too loud. ADULT JOSIE winces. MAM is gone. OTHER ADULT JOSIE's voice is as clear and loud as it should be.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Josie? Do you want anything?

ADULT JOSIE
Oh, erm. Same as her. Thanks.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE tuts. SERVER leaves.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
So? What do you want?

ADULT JOSIE
We're on a listicle.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Eh?

ADULT JOSIE is scrolling on her phone -

ADULT JOSIE
The Top Fifty-Four Weirdest
Coincidences.

She holds her phone up for OTHER ADULT JOSIE to look -

ADULT JOSIE
See. Number 42 - The Josie Johns
Balloon Coincidence.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
We're on lots of listicles.

ADULT JOSIE
This one's got a link, though. To
us on Look North.

She taps through to a video on YouTube titled 'Josie John's interview, Look North, 14 July 2015'.

ADULT JOSIE
I'd not seen it since it went out.
Have you?

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
No.

The video plays - we see the GIRLS, DAD and MAM lined up in the back garden as in SC8. The REPORTER stands alongside them:

REPORTER (ON THE SCREEN)

That's right, Carol. What an incredible story. And I'm here with Josie and Josie.

The video is interrupted by ADULT JOSIE's phone ringing again - the display flashing 'Mam hospice'. She lets out a noise of frustration, snatches her phone away and bolts up out of the booth

ADULT JOSIE

Back in a minute. Don't leave.

10. INT. COFFEE SHOP TOILET STALL - AFTERNOON

DARYL (V ON SPEAKER PHONE)

You really do need to get here, Josie. This is it now. I'm sorry.

ADULT JOSIE

And I'm on my way, Daryl. I just need to sort something out here. It's for Mam, something she needs to hear before ...

DARYL (V ON SPEAKER PHONE)

Josie, pet -

ADULT JOSIE

I'll be there.

ADULT JOSIE ends the call. She looks up from her phone to MAM and YOUNG JOSIE squeezed in the stall with her. MAM roughly fusses with YOUNG JOSIE's hair and clothes.

MAM

It's like seeing what you could have won.

YOUNG JOSIE

What?

MAM

Her out there. I feel like I'm in that Gwyneth Paltrow film but I got the crap timeline. It hurts me, you know, in here (HER HEART). You have hurt me doing this.

YOUNG JOSIE

I'm sorry.

MAM

Everyone fawning - 'eeh, they're exactly the same'. But of course you're not. You were never going to be. Because one has to be the shit one. And I knew it would be you.

YOUNG JOSIE

Why?

MAM

It's just obvious, isn't it.

11. INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON (CONT'D)

OTHER ADULT JOSIE is watching the YouTube video on her phone. ADULT JOSIE slides back into the booth opposite her.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

I found it. What do we look like?

ADULT JOSIE

You saw it, yeah?

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

My fringe? Yep.

ADULT JOSIE

No.

ADULT JOSIE grabs the phone and scrolls back:

REPORTER (ON THE SCREEN)

That's right, Carol. What an incredible story. And I'm here with Josie and Josie. Josie 1 here who let off the balloon, and Josie 2 who found it.

DAD (ON THE SCREEN)

It's the other way around

REPORTER (ON THE SCREEN)

Sorry?

DAD (ON THE SCREEN)

She let it off - Josie 2, and my Josie - Josie 1 - found it.

REPORTER (ON THE SCREEN)

Oh. Yes. Sorry. Well -

ADULT JOSIE

Yeah?

OTHER ADULT JOSIE frowns, not sure what she's meant to have seen. ADULT JOSIE huffs, scrolls back, hits play:

REPORTER (ON THE SCREEN)

And I'm here with Josie and Josie. Josie 1 here who let off the balloon, and Josie 2 who found it.

ADULT JOSIE pauses the video, looks at OTHER ADULT JOSIE expectantly.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
(INDIFFERENT) So? She got us mixed up.

ADULT JOSIE
(TRIUMPHANT) Exactly.
Come on. Leave that. We're going to the hospice.

ADULT JOSIE starts bundling out of the booth.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Hang on. What?

ADULT JOSIE
To tell my Mam that I'm Josie #1.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Your Mam's in a hospice?

ADULT JOSIE
Yep.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Why?

ADULT JOSIE
She loves the catering.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
No, but. What?

ADULT JOSIE
Why are you still sitting there? We haven't got time. Come on.

She pulls at OTHER ADULT JOSIE, something desperate and unmoored creeping in.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Stop it.

SERVER
Okay girls, nice big smiles -

ADULT JOSIE
Eh?

12. EXT. YOUNG JOSIE'S BACK GARDEN - EARLY EVE (CONT'D)

The SERVER is the REPORTER again.

REPORTER

Nice big smiles for when we're
talking to Carol.
That's lovely, Josie 1.

MAM pinches YOUNG JOSIE'S arm - the girl's smile widens,
painful stretched across her face.

REPORTER

(LIGHTHEARTED) A little bit less
from you, Josie 2.

CAMERAMAN

We don't want to crack the screen.

MAM

(MUTTER) Fuck's sake.

YOUNG JOSIE'S chin wobbles, tears well.

13. INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON (CONT'D)

ADULT JOSIE

(WIPING HER FACE, TAKING A BREATH)
We're fine. Everything's fine.
Thank you.

SERVER hesitantly leaves them.

ADULT JOSIE

It's very simple, okay. You're
going to come with me to tell my
Mam, who is in a hospice receiving
end of life care, that I'm Josie
#1. That I always was. You just saw
it yourself in the video.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

Show your Mam the video.

ADULT JOSIE

I did, but she wasn't ... I don't
think she was taking it in. She
needs to hear it from you. From
your mouth. From your stupid
perfect mouth.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

Okay, right. I'm sorry for your
Mam, I am. But this is ... I don't
want any part of this.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE pushes her sunglasses back on to her head,
is bundling her belongings together and is leaving. She
knows she needs to get away from ADULT JOSIE, that something
has shifted.

ADULT JOSIE
No wait, please. Please.

14. EXT. THE HIGH STREET OUTSIDE THE COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

OTHER ADULT JOSIE is hurrying away from the coffee shop.
ADULT JOSIE stumbles out of the door after her, pleading for her to please wait.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE quickens her pace, but ADULT JOSIE is hot on her heels, insistent and imploring. Finally she grabs at OTHER ADULT JOSIE and whips her around -

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Stop. This is ridiculous.

ADULT JOSIE
I know. That's what I'm saying. All these years. That stupid Reporter getting us mixed up.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
What does it matter?

ADULT JOSIE blinks at her. Oh to think it doesn't matter.

ADULT JOSIE
Because one of us is the shit one.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
Eh?

ADULT JOSIE
And I can't have Mam dying thinking it's me.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE stares at her. Something in her face - are words of kindness forthcoming?

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
(NOT CRUEL, MATTER-OF-FACT) But you are the shit one.

ADULT JOSIE
What?

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
You were then. You are now.

ADULT JOSIE
Why?

OTHER ADULT JOSIE
(SHRUGGING) It's just obvious, isn't it.

15. EXT. YOUNG JOSIE'S BACK GARDEN - EARLY EVE (CONT'D)

CAMERAMAN

They say it's bad luck, you know.

REPORTER

What is?

CAMERAMAN

Meeting your doppelgänger. That if you meet your double, you die.

REPORTER

(CHASTISING, EYES
FLITTING TO THE GIRLS)

Ron. Bloody hell.

OTHER YOUNG JOSIE

(LEANING IN, WHISPER) You'd die.

YOUNG JOSIE

Why me?

OTHER YOUNG JOSIE

It's just obvious, isn't it.

She shrugs, dismissive, like her adult counterpart has just done a decade later.

CAMERAMAN

And Studio coming live to us in 5,
4, 3 -

16. EXT. HIGH STREET - AFTERNOON (CONT'D)

ADULT JOSIE deflates, shoulders slumped, defeated. Her phone starts to ring - 'Mam hospice'. She answers:

DARYL (V ON SPEAKERPHONE)

Josie? It's Daryl. I'm so sorry,
pet, but your Mam has died.

Josie?

Josie, are you there?

ADULT JOSIE ends the call, cutting DARYL off.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

I'm sorry. Really.

ADULT JOSIE nods, not capable of words yet. She pulls OTHER ADULT JOSIE into a hug. OTHER ADULT JOSIE is awkward, but what do you do - the woman's Mam just died.

ADULT JOSIE

All these years being compared to
you. Always coming up short.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

We're stopping this. The endless
back and forth. It's clearly not
healthy.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE tries to pull away from the hug but ADULT JOSIE won't let go. OTHER ADULT JOSIE gives it a moment then tries again, but ADULT JOSIE clings tighter. It turns into a struggle. The struggle turns into a tussle. Eventually OTHER ADULT JOSIE is able to wrench herself away.

OTHER ADULT JOSIE

You're a fucking psycho.

Something catches ADULT JOSIE'S eye - her '#2' red balloon floating in the sky. Suddenly it bursts. ADULT JOSIE starts, and sees YOUNG JOSIE on the other side of the road blowing smoke from her 'gun fingers'. The balloon carcass drops, depositing into ADULT JOSIE's hand the pinned note from its knot - 'if you find this and want to be friends, message Josie Johns ...'

ADULT JOSIE turns back to OTHER ADULT JOSIE who is straightening herself out after their altercation.

ADULT JOSIE

Yeah. Let's stop. This is my time
now.

ADULT JOSIE reaches out with the safety pin and 'pops' OTHER ADULT JOSIE, who bursts like a balloon. Gone. Apart from her sunglasses which clatter to the ground. ADULT JOSIE takes in the now empty space in front of her. She inhales a deep breath, relishing the sense of freedom and space. She picks up the sunglasses, puts them on and walks away off down the High Street.

END.