

Originally from Scotland, MARY MORRIS has lived in Australia since 1971 and is based in Sydney. She has written a number of award-winning plays. Her adaptations include *Two Weeks With the Queen* and *Blabbermouth* from the novels by Morris Gleitzma, *del-del* from a novel by Victor Kelleher, *Jimmy and Pat Meet the Queen* from a book by Pat Lowe, and *Boss of the Pool* from a Robin Klein novel. Her original plays include *Too Far to Walk* and *Voices*. Mary has written for mainstage theatre companies, physical theatre, community theatre and theatre for young people. She also writes film and television drama for adults and children. *Blabbermouth* has toured nationally, including two seasons for the Melbourne Theatre Company.

MORRIS GLEITZMAN began his career as a screenwriter on *The Norman Gunston Show*. He has written many screenplays including the AWGIE-winning *The Other Facts of Life* and *Second Childhood*, both produced by the Australian Children's Television Network and subsequently developed into his first two books. Morris has won many awards and wrote a regular column in the *Good Weekend Magazine* for many years. His other books include *Misery Guts*, *Worry Warts*, *Puppy Fat*, *Belly Flop*, *Water Wings*, *Two Weeks with the Queen*, *Wicked!* with Paul Jennings, *Sticky Beak*, *Blabbermouth* and *Toad Rage*.

# BLABBERMOUTH

## The Play

MARY MORRIS

Adapted from the novel by  
Morris Gleitzman



Currency Press,  
Sydney

## CURRENCY TEENAGE SERIES

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*Blabbermouth* was first produced by the Melbourne Theatre Company at The Fairfax, VAC, 10 September 1993 with the following cast:

DAD	Michael Bishop
ROWENA BATTS	Doris Younane
DARRYN/MR COSGROVE/MR FOWLER/ AUCTIONEER/OFFICER/ANDY	Patrick Moffatt
MS DUNNING/YOBBO/MRS GRANGER	Merridy Eastman
AMANDA/YOBBO	Sally Cooper
MRS COSGROVE/MEGAN/YOBBO	Jane Turner

Directed by David Carlin  
Designed by Trina Parker  
Lighting by Greg Diamantis

A return season at the Melbourne Theatre Company at the Fairfax, VAC, opened 6 January 1995 with the following cast:

DAD/ANDY PECK / VOICES	Michael Bishop
ROWENA BATTS	Frances O'Connor
AMANDA	Jane Bayly
MS DUNNING/MRS GRANGER/TAMMY	Sue Giles
MR COSGROVE/MR FOWLER/DARRYN PECK	Francis Greenslade
MEGAN/MRS COSGROVE/OFFICER	Carole Patullo
MUSICIAN	Tom Lycos

Directed by David Carlin  
Designed by Kim Carpenter  
Music directed by Tom Lycos  
Lighting by Jamie Revill-Henson

## CHARACTERS

ROWENA BATTS

KENNY BATTS (DAD), Rowena's dad

AMANDA, Rowena's friend

MS DUNNING, Rowena's new teacher

TAMMY & MEGAN, school friends of Rowena and Amanda

DARRYN PECK, the class bully

MR & MRS COSGROVE, Amanda's parents

MRS GRANGER, Social secretary of the Progress Association

MR FOWLER, head teacher at Rowena's school

ANDY PECK, Darryn's brother

## SETTING

The present day. Various locations at home and school.

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

*ROWENA BATTS is on stage writing a letter as the opening song, 'Blabbermouth', is sung.*

MUSICIAN

My baby is the sweetest little thing  
that I ever dreamed of  
She came to me with ties of love  
that wind around my heart  
And when I look into her eyes  
I know that's where my future lies  
I swear that I will never  
Ever ever let us part.  
She's happy as the morning  
that wakes up the little flowers  
She's gentle as the sunbeams  
that peek out between the rain  
Sure as the moon is in the sky  
I'll be with her until I die  
'Cos when I'm with my baby  
I don't ever feel no pain

*ROWENA has finished the letter. She addresses the audience.*

ROWENA

This is going to be the best day of my life! A brand new school, the chance to make lots of friends and this [*She holds up the letter.*] is going to help me do it.

MUSICIAN Except that...

She's the biggest ever blabbermouth

Her lips reach right from north to south

Her voice is like the thunder

That makes rain fall from the skies

She's my blabber blabbermouth

Her lips reach right from north to south

But I'm a gonna love that gal until the day I die.

## SCENE TWO

ROWENA *has entered the classroom of her new school.*

MS DUNNING OK. You can stop staring. I'd like to introduce you to our new class member. This is Rowena Batts. Well, say g'day.

ALL Good morning Rowena.

ROWENA *signs good morning. They stare even more. ROWENA hands MS DUNNING the letter and points to the class. MS DUNNING reads it aloud.*

MS DUNNING G'day. My name's Rowena Batts and I'm new to this school.

DARRYN Miss! Miss!

MS DUNNING Yes Darryn?

DARRYN Miss, we already noticed that.

MS DUNNING Mind your manners, Darryn Peck, or I'll kick you in the bum. [*She continues.*] The reason I'm writing this letter is I can't speak. The reason I can't speak is I was born with bits missing from my throat – It's OK but, I don't leak. [*MS DUNNING is the only one who laughs.*] Even



though I can't speak we can still be friends 'cause I can write, draw, point, nod, shake my head, screw up my nose and do sign language. Also I can hear. My hobbies are reading, watching tv and driving my dad's tractor. I hope we can be friends. Yours sincerely, Rowena Batts.

*The class stare at ROWENA like she's from outer space.*

MS DUNNING Well. I think that was the best idea since microwave pizza. How'd you like to sit beside Megan, Rowena? [*She does.*] Who's on frogs? Darryn Peck?

DARRYN *swaggers to the frog's residence and picks up a small bucket.*

Clean it out properly this time, or I'll feed you to them.

DARRYN *gives MS DUNNING the finger behind her back. Everyone is too busy staring at ROWENA to laugh at him.*

Start reading the passage on page twenty-nine while I pop down to the office. I'll only be a sec. [*She exits.*]

DARRYN I can speak sign language. [*He gives ROWENA the finger.*] What sort of a name is Batts? You fly around at night sucking people's blood?

ROWENA *does an imitation of a chook.*

She's a loony as well as a dummy.

MEGAN No! She's a chook! Peck-peck-peck Get it? Darryn Peck!

DARRYN *picks up a frog and advances on ROWENA.*

DARRYN How would you like to eat frog, dummy. Batts eat frogs, don't they?

ROWENA *mimes a chicken pulling something long and stretchy out of the ground.*

MEGAN Chickens eat worms!

DARRYN Her olds must really like having a kid like her around. Be as exciting as watching tv with the sound down. [*To ROWENA.*] Or are they freaks too and haven't noticed?

AMANDA Leave her alone.

DARRYN That's right, Cosgrove, you like freaks, don't you? Sorry, disabled persons. [*To ROWENA.*] What kind of freak's your dad? He a dummy too?

AMANDA I said, leave her alone Darryn Peck!

DARRYN And what about your mum. She a spazzo?

*ROWENA grabs the frog from DARRYN's hand and stuffs it in his mouth. She grabs the bucket out of his other hand and rams it down over his head so he can't spit the frog out. The classroom empties.*

MUSICIAN Oh yes she is the biggest ever blabbermouth  
Her lips reach right from north to south  
Her voice is like the thunder  
That makes rain fall from the skies  
She's my blabber blabbermouth  
Her lips reach right from north to south  
And I'm a gonna love that gal until the day I die.

### SCENE THREE

*MS DUNNING speaks on the telephone. A cupboard is on stage.*

MS DUNNING No, I wouldn't call it an emergency exactly. Perhaps if you could send a locksmith...

MR FOWLER [*from off*] I'll sort this nonsense out, Ms Dunning, don't you worry about that!

MS DUNNING [*to off*] It's alright, Mr Fowler, I'm getting a locksmith! [*to phone.*] No! Police Rescue won't be necessary...

MR FOWLER Are you ringing the father? I asked you to ring the father.

MS DUNNING I will.

MR FOWLER Where is that blasted crowbar?!

MS DUNNING [*to phone*] No, we don't need the fire brigade! It's just a kid locked herself in the stationery cupboard!

MR FOWLER Ms Dunning!

MS DUNNING [*yells*] What! [*To phone.*] Sorry.

*MS DUNNING exits. A lighting change allows the audience to see inside the cupboard. ROWENA, speaks to the audience.*

ROWENA This is the worst day of my life. If they send for my dad, it'll be the end for me. Why did I do it? Why? Poor frog will probably get warts. He shouldn't have mentioned my mum. She died. One smart remark about her and I turn into Freddie Kruger and terrorise whole townships. How to ruin your life in two hours by Rowena Batts.

*A state emergency OFFICER enters carrying a huge axe. MS DUNNING and MR FOWLER follow. MR FOWLER carries a crowbar.*

OFFICER She got any hostages in there?

MS DUNNING No!

MR FOWLER I thought you said a locksmith, Ms Dunning, not a lumberjack...

OFFICER Have her out in no time.

MS DUNNING I really don't think you ought to...

OFFICER Tried talking her out, have we?

MS DUNNING Yes, but...

OFFICER To no avail?

MR FOWLER Well obviously.

OFFICER If you'll just step aside. Er... she's not armed, is she?

MS DUNNING Of course not.



OFFICER Kids today, slice you soon as look at you.

MS DUNNING Look, I think we should try talking her out again.

MR FOWLER This has gone too far, get out of my way.

*MR FOWLER takes to the cupboard with the crowbar, trying to prise it open. The crowbar slips and MR FOWLER skins his knuckles then drops the crowbar on his foot.*

Damn! Blasted... bloody... blasted...

OFFICER [*to audience*] Very nice! You can see where the kiddies get it from.

MR FOWLER Rowena Batts! Come out of there at once!

*MS DUNNING picks up the crowbar.*

MS DUNNING [*to cupboard*] Don't worry Rowena love, everything's going to be fine.

*The roar of a truck engine is heard deep and throaty and full of hoon-power. Everyone freezes and listens as it gets louder and louder then subsides to a throbbing, growling idle, and stops.*

*Enter DAD wearing cowboy boots, black jeans, studded belt with fancy buckle, loud satin shirt and a cowboy hat.*

DAD G'day, Kenny Batts. [*Everyone is staring.*] This the cupboard?

*MS DUNNING nods.*

[*to cupboard*] You OK Tonto?

*The door opens a crack and ROWENA's hands appear. She signs that she is ok.*

Tough day, huh?

*Rowena's hands sign frantically, telling her story. DAD watches.*

You were a chook? I don't get it. [*More signs.*] Oh, I get it, good one. [*More signs, DAD gets serious.*] He didn't.

[*More signs, DAD perks up.*] You didn't! [*More signs, DAD laughs.*].

MR FOWLER We can't have a repeat of this sort of thing, Mr Batts.

*DAD is miming DARRYN PECK with his mouth full of frog.*

MS DUNNING [*trying not to laugh*] It was just first day nerves, I'm sure it won't happen again, will it Rowena?

MR FOWLER I fail to see the humour in the situation, Ms Dunning.

DAD Now don't get your jocks in a twist. There's something you need to understand about me little mate here. Let me explain.

*DAD clears his throat loudly. ROWENA slams the cupboard door shut. DAD sings 'Heart Like A Fairground'.*

When I saw my baby  
for the very first time  
I hoped I would hear her  
sweet voice say my name  
But I waited in vain  
  
'Cos her lips are a graveyard  
Her teeth are tombstones  
my eyes are the rain clouds  
that fall from the sky  
and I'm soaked to the bone  
  
But her heart is a fairground  
she fills me with pride  
and I know she loves me  
'cos I got free tickets  
for all of the rides.

*When he is finished there is stunned silence. The door of the cupboard swings open and a very embarrassed ROWENA is revealed.*