

**MISH GORECKI GOES MISSING**

By Skye Loneragan

Excerpt only

## MISH GORECKI GOES MISSING

*A quick word about the capitals... these are representative of Mish Gorecki's priorities and her own perception of what counts in the world she experiences. She places value on CAPITALS. They are not merely there for emphasis - else italics would do. They are to give a better indication of what the character sees as jumping out at her, the way she sees the world, when things loom large, the way she might speak. The piece is divided into headings - these are not intended to be read aloud, but could be.*

MISH

*(overjoyed)*

I'm The Replacement! I got in! I GOT IN!!!

*(making sure)*

'The Bolshoi Ballet Excursion'.. There I am! On the list! The *first* name - 'MISH GORECKI' - the *first* name. And all in CAPITALS!

I am going to Russia! I GOT IN!!!

*School bell, corridor mayhem.*

JOHN AND JIM

*(bumping her)*

Miss Tutu Ballet Nuts!

MISH GORECKI

And it doesn't MATTER that John and Jim from S3

JOHN AND JIM

Dropped a stink bomb in your bag

MISH GORECKI

*SAY* they just dropped a stink bomb in my bag -

*(to John and Jim)*

Grow up!

*(to audience)*

- and I have to go to the toilet to check and someone's elbow almost gets me in the eye when I come out - because I AM GOING TO RUSSIA!!

It's about time really. I am almost 9.

*School bell sounds.*

*Mr Guther chases after MISH with a Super-Sized, tangible but flexible permission note.*

MR GUTHER

*(Russian accent, comic, Mish's  
perception of the way he speaks)*

Zoo! Mish Mash! My Little Swan of Lakes! Here.  
Do not loooooz dis.

*He wraps her in the Super-Sized Permission Note in such a way that she can still move about*

Diss is a Permission Note, my little Replacement,  
and I want you to show ziss to yer wonderful  
muzzzeerr and tell her zeee good noose ,without  
delay - you hear? - immediately - yes? - for it is an  
Emergency! Emergency! and bring it to me signed,  
yes? with signing on zee dotted line, you hear -  
*Dobray Ootra*, tomorrow - yes?

*He doesn't wait for her reply. He is off.*  
GO!

*Mish is on her way home. She introduces everyone.*

Mr Guther is the one who comes from a land really  
really far away where they dance ALL THE TIME,  
in another LANGUAGE, and he is the one who  
thinks I have dance steps in my DNA which means I  
must keep going. DNA is what we are all made up  
of, and it spins around too, like a ballerina, and  
because of it I have brown eyes and because of it I  
have bucked teeth and it came from mum and dad  
twisting up their lives together.  
I am going to Russia!

Mum sent me to ballet classes because I was getting  
in the way when I kept balancing on the rail in the  
bathroom. In Mr Guther's classes, balancing on tippy  
toes feels like flying up up up through the roof  
where the music makes you paper thin but SHINY  
like silk.

( MORE )

MR GUTHER (CONT'D)

I can't wait for the day when someone lifts me up REALLY REALLY HIGH and I have stretched so much that I can make my legs into ARROWS in the air pointing opposite directions, as if they are BOTH RIGHT, and EVERYONE is looking at me amazed and making sure I don't fall and my arms are stems that reach right out to where the sun goes down and my hands are little Lilies that can float on a lake where frogs are underneath.

I got in! I got in!

*Mish is doing a celebration dance*

Mr Guther always gets us to do a warm up, like this, like a horse trot, and it is very important to turn your head, and look at someone to the side but make sure your feet are still facing forward which I can't do in the house or I trip on Malachy. Which Dad does by accident. When he's around.

*Dad enters.*

Here he is now!

*Dad exits.*

Dad would have been FAMOUS for the buildings he makes but he got CRUSHED by the stock market. He's lost a LOT of weight. Which means we moved to a new house but it's smaller and now I share a room with tiny-tot 2-yr-old Malachy which means the blue light has to be on EVERY NIGHT and it may send him off but it keeps me WIDE AWAKE.

*Mum enters. She tries to stay upright. She is run off her feet.*

Which I why I put all the BALLET PICTURES on the ceiling, 'cause I can lie there in the blue light and copy the shape and point my toes a lot better than I can standing up. Mum is always having to lie down. This is my mum.

She is having a breakdown of nerves and that is why I let her sleep in, because in the morning Malachy wakes up way before his favourite cartoon on the tele and mum can stay lying down till I bring her a very dark coffee to give her the electric shock she needs.

(MORE)

MR GUTHER (CONT'D)

*(proudly)*

I am Mummy's Little Rock. I am the only one strong enough.

*(to mum)*

Up you get! Zzap!

Dad says it's not fun to joke about electric shocks when the Doctor has told Mum Jilly might need one. Mum says it's RICH coming from HIM but we haven't been rich for a while now. I can't even get coins for the canteen. And anyway, Jilly just stays in her room.

*Dad enters, followed by Jilly who has chased Dad back into the introductions.*

Except for now. This is Jilly. Jilly is NOT Mummy's Little Rock. She is more like a black-haired marshmallow.

She hasn't had to do the washing up since we moved which means she doesn't have to stick her hand in the sink and collect the SOGGY BITS (squishy, slimy, gunky muck) CLOGGING IT UP and shudder because WHO KNOWS what they are, all the way to the bin. I make sure mum doesn't have to do that part. She's Super Busy.

Jilly doesn't help. Jilly is 16 and thinks she is a VAMPIRE. Jilly used to be nice but she got all MEAN once she started painting her face white and now I can't even sit with her - even in the lounge room. Dad says not to argue with her because she is just going through lots of growing up and it HURTS. Dad says I'll get to the hurting one day too but I don't think it will take two people to hold me down because I am trying to jump out a window or have to puke in an ambulance to go to a stomach pumping.

*(to Jilly)*

Well, it's true.

Anyway, if I tried to jump out of a window, I would SAIL DOWN like Mary Poppins and land in a PLEAY because I can do that one now. Nearly. Almost.

*Mish goes back to her celebration dance*

I GOT IN!

## THE PERMISSION NOTE

**At home.**

*Mish dances to the door in her Super-Sized Permission Note. She is now wearing, and has become, the blank note to be signed off, she is now be seeking permission and approval, embodying the Permission Note.*

MUM

Mish, stop it. Mish...stop...

*Mish hugs her mum to make it better.*

MUM (CONT'D)

Sorry Mish, we'll turn the TV on. I have to lie down.

MISH GORECKI  
I AM GOING TO RUSSIA!

MUM  
Shhh...shhh, yes, it's nice to go places, even in your head.

MISH GORECKI  
No, no no! It's not in my HEAD! There's only four of us, only FOUR and we are going to see the famous ballerinas and this is a note, it's what Mr Guther needs to say we can-

MUM  
Shhhhhh! Mummy has a headache, Mish.

MISH  
But this is a NOTE to-

MUM  
Mish, Shhh, please, your Dad will look at it. When he gets home.

MISH  
But NO! But this is -

MUM  
Mish! Zip it!  
Oh...come here...

*Mum hugs Mish*

Did you make Malachy's dinner?

*MISH nods*

MUM (CONT'D)  
You are Mummy's Little Rock, do you know that?

*Mish hugs Mum back*

MISH  
*(to audience)*  
My note is still blank.  
All the dance has gone SQUASH right out of me.

Dad doesn't get home till so late that Malachy is already asleep and I get up and creep past the blue light so SLOW it takes me THREE YEARS but Mr Guthrie says ballerinas need PATIENCE. Dad is sneaking around the kitchen still in his puffa jacket which glows in the dark.

MISH (CONT'D)

*presents herself in a ballet pose*

Dad! I am going to Russia and-

DAD

*(whispered)*

Shhh! Mish! Back to bed!

MISH

*(whispered back)*

I - AM - GOING - TO - RUSSIA and -

DAD

That's great, Mish, now get-

MISH GORECKI

BUT BUT you MUST sign THIS,

DAD

Just leave it on the bench.

MISH

But Dad it has to be-

DAD

BACK TO BED, Mish. NOW!

*MISH runs back to bed.*

MISH

he hasn't even heard me about Russia....

*Alarm clock sounds.*

In the morning, my note is still BLANK and Dad is on the sofa.

*Kitchen chaos. Mum, Dad and Jilly are getting ready for work, school, crossing. Malachy is riding around on his toy truck, bumping into things (invisible unless actor playing Dad portrays him, alternating like Jilly and Mum).*

*Mish lies down on the kitchen floor, still wrapped in the permission note, dotted line across her, arms and legs in the air, stiff, like a dead cockroach. Playing dead. She holds her breath.*

This is how I will get the note signed because mum  
and dad will HAVE TO STOP and see if I am  
STILL ALIVE and I can point to the pen.

*There is a commotion around her, no one notices her odd shape. Mum and Jilly alternate entering and exiting, Dad has his mind on other things, Malachy is getting in the way, making truck noises, spilling things etc. He is reacted to, which is how we know where he is.*

Mum is making soggy sandwiches and not noticing  
that I am holding my breath BUT it takes TIME to  
notice. It makes your face blue, you just need to  
KEEP holding it.

*Jilly storms through, on.*

It's not easy to be BLUER in the face than Jilly is  
WHITE on the face, with her make-up, so I have to  
try really REALLY hard.

*Malachy bumps into her and she tries to hold her position*  
Malachy!

*Noise and commotion around her stiff little self gains strength, all action at a furious pace.*

JILLY

I told you! Just- leave me alone! I want to be left  
alone, at home -

*Jilly storms off.*

DAD

Please please please, Jill, not today.

MUM

*(off)*

Get in the car!

DAD

*(to Jilly, after her)*

Please, just get in the car, come on.

*Mum on, enters, steps over Mish.*

MISH GORECKI

I think my face is getting RED not BLUE.

MUM

*(taking Malachy to the car)*

Come on, Little Man, let's watch the houses go past.

*Mum, off with Malachy*

DAD  
Who moved my keys?

*Dad trips on Mish. Swears. She is steadfast, but he finds what he wants, hurries out.  
Where's my jacket?!*

*Jilly is shouting something back, a car engine starts, a door slams*

MISH  
They are GOING even though I am in here and  
NOT in the CAR!

*Suddenly all is quiet. They have left*

*Mish is shaking.  
My note is all shaky.*

*Mish gets up. Takes a few deep breaths. Surveys the damage.  
I don't think holding your breath makes your face  
BLUE ENOUGH. Or maybe it went all RED  
instead. Maybe I just looked happy like Santa Claus.  
In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* that girl gets to  
blow up BLUE like a blueberry and that's how they  
KNOW she is in trouble and if that was me I could  
just ROLL after the car and MAKE them sign my  
note. But THAT is just a MOVIE.*

*Car horn*  
I KNEW they'd be back!

*Mish grabs a marker of some sort. Finds the dotted line  
(nervous about forging but in a hurry)  
I have to do a copy of what I think mum's signature  
is,*

*Makes a super-sized squiggle of some sort on the super-sized permission note. Car horn  
again.*

- I just have to because it's an EMERGENCY and it  
has to be TODAY.

*(like Mr Guther)*

Vwoila!  
I'm going to RUSSIA!

### THE LIST OF MUST HAVES - SPECIAL SHOES

**At school, Mr Guther  
gives her the List.**

*Mr Guther enters, spins her out of the super-sized permission note.*

MR GUTHER

*(checking for the signature)*

vvvWOLAH! vvvWOLAH, Miss Gorecki! Good!

MISH

This is what Mr Guther calls a 'Flourish'

*A super-sized, unrelenting and stiff List of Must Haves descends.*

MR GUTHER

Now, My Little Mish Mash, here, you must take zissss home, zisssss is absolut essentielle, ziss is Important, it is Zeee List of Must Haves and you must, Must-

MISH GORECKI

NO, NO NO!

MR GUTHER

Zooo must -

MISH

It's not so EASY to use these at home!

MR GUTHER

It's just a MUST HAVE LIST, my Little Dancing Aubergine, your muzzzerrr must know what to put in dat suitcase, everyone has a suitcase on ziss Bolshoi excursion, no one comes without baggage, you hear?

MISH

But -

MR GUTHER

Focussss, Mish-Mash! You are amazing artiste! Zoo hear? Amazzzingg. No! Shhhhh! Silence! Zit is your Destiny! Do not hide from Destiny, Little Tutu! Take it! Here!

*He throws it at her, Super Sized Must Have List squashes her.*

*She is talking from underneath the Super-sized list*

MISH

So I HAVE to take it.

MR GUTHER

Now! Zoo need - zeese Special Shoes -

MISH

Special Shoes??

I don't think -

MR GUTHER

*(pointing to them)*

You need zzzzeesss, wizzzout zhem you cannot dance!

MR GUTHER (CONT'D)

I have left a voiced mail with your muzzerr to tell her zeese are ze kind-

MISH

*(to audience, trying to look at list that covers her)*

Special Shoes? The name of them are in funny letters which look like they are back the front. They are letters of Russian.

MR GUTHER

Here! Zisss store, she will know, it is only an hour or so in zee auto car, it is Saturday all open.

MISH

I can't reach the pedals even if I COULD steal the car key and I feel like asking Mr Guther to STOP STOP STOP and just DRIVE ME THERE.

MR GUTHER

*(leaving)*

Here.Good. Da. Good. Da!

*Bell goes.*

MISH

But Mr Guther- !

*He is gone. Mish is struggling with the Must Have List.*

Special Shoes. I need SPECIAL SHOES.

I am going to Russia!

**At home, in the  
kitchen,  
Mish tries to get the  
List looked at.**

*MISH is waving the Super Sized Must Have List about. She is hoping a visual cue will work perhaps better than just asking (as with the permission note) or holding your breath and being stepped over.*

*Mum walks in laden with shopping bags*

MISH (CONT'D)

*Mish is standing behind the super-sized list, propping it up, making it obvious*  
I have a list!

MUM

It's too late, Little Rock, I've got it all.

MISH

NO! NO! For Special Shoes!

MUM

Not this year

MISH

NO NO NO! I have a list of MUST HAVE's for  
RUSSIA!

MUM

(distractedly)

For Russia?

MISH

For the BOLSHOI excursion IN TWO DAYS  
which means I need these SPECIAL SHOES-  
and just then she is ABOUT to say that it is  
WONDERFUL I got in and OF COURSE she will  
take me to get special shoes but Jilly does this:

*MISH mimes her slamming door on entering, melodramatic -  
(mimicing Jilly, threatening MUM)*

“Yeh, well, if it happens, it will all be on your head!”

-

which means - I don't know what -

*Mum is crushed*

but it must be SERIOUS because mum is suddenly  
so weak she has to sit on the floor. She has gone  
very far away in the eyes.

I don't want to make her have to do ANYTHING  
but I have to get the Special Shoes

*Mish shakes her on the shoulder really softly and puts the list in front of her.*

MUM

*(softly)*

Just put it on my desk.

MISH

Putting a note on Mum's desk is the same as me  
throwing it into the big bin in the park because there  
are so many bits of paper on it.

*Mish is unsure what to do with the List, places it on her mum's lap both as a blanket and  
comfort for her and hopefully something she will look at as soon as she snaps out of it.*

Instead I try to work out what a Little Rock does  
when Mum is being the stone.

***In the garage, Mish  
packs her own suitcase.***