

boy racers

a short

by Maz Hughes

Copyright©2012MarriotHughes
All Rights reserved. This
work may not be used or
reproduced without the express
written permission of the
author.

marriot.hughes@gmail.com

this draft: 22/08/2012

EXT. TOWN - ROADSIDE - DAY

An English town on a late summer's afternoon, the air has that gloom of impending storm.

The road leads between a recreational park on one side and a large residential estate on the other.

Down the path by the side of the road a small black boy runs - all legs and arms, but fast.

Intro MJ JACOBS(11) in ill-fitting clothes and an over-sized pair of tatty CONVERSE ALL-STAR BOOTS, their over-long LACES flap behind.

A shopping bag swings from one hand.

MJ stops at the PARK GATES - looks up the road, then through the park.

INSERT - PARK - PLAY AREA: Three BOYS race up and down, watched by two GIRLS on the climbing frame.

MJ runs into the park.

EXT. PARK - DAY

FAVOURING MJ:

The two girls wear nearly matching pink trousers and t-shirts - JENNIFER(11) blonde, plump, pretty, and SARAH(12) thin, with long dark hair. They cheer as the tallest boy wins -

Intro DEVEREAUX(12) - with smartly cropped brown hair, wearing a clean white tracksuit.

He strikes a pose to show off his footwear - brand new NIKE TRAINERS in BRIGHT COLOURS.

SLIPS(11), small with messy orange hair, and KENNY(12), freckled and stocky, clap Devereaux on the shoulder.

The girls APPLAUD - lose their balance - clutch each other.

Jennifer spots MJ, points him out to Sarah - who whispers something in her ear. They GIGGLE.

Jennifer grabs Sarah's hand, waves it at MJ. He grits his teeth and grins, puts his hand in the air.

The girls LAUGHTER is not unkind.

The three boys turn, see MJ - his arm still held in the air - and scowl, mutter to each other. Walk towards him.

MJ's smile fades. He looks back the way he came.

INSERT - The park gates he came through, in the distance.

INSERT - The path through the park leads near the play area, and the three boys.

MJ frowns. He starts to run up the path leading past the play area.

Devereaux mouths something. The boys run towards MJ.

Jennifer and Sarah watch wide-eyed.

EXT. PARK - DAY

MJ runs up the path.

Kenny is ahead of Slips, grabs at MJ. MJ twists his body and Kenny's fingers catch the SHOPPING BAG instead - tears a HOLE in the side. Some POTATOES fall out.

Jennifer and Sarah GASP.

Kenny YELPS and stops down. MJ clutches the tear closed in his fist and runs on.

Behind him, Slips steps on a POTATO, stumbles and hits Kenny. They CRASH together and fall over.

The two girls SHREIK!

Nothing distracts Devereaux, who is almost level with MJ.

A few yards apart they race side-by-side towards the park EXIT.

They look across at each other - Devereaux scowls, MJ grins.

MJ begins to run faster - pulls ahead. Devereaux also increases his speed, keeps close.

INSERT - Near the play area. Slips and Kenny watch the race. Sarah SOBS into Jennifer's shoulder, who looks puzzled as she holds her friend.

EXT. COUNCIL ESTATE - STREET

Drab council houses line the street, half with windows boarded up.

MJ races down the path - followed by Devereaux.

EXT. MJ'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

A square house with a low red-brick wall around the garden - a patch of dried earth. Weeds grow from the cracked concrete drive. The gate is closed.

MJ leaps the wall- a foot catches - he loses his balance. The momentum slams him into the front door - BANG!

Devereaux pants at the gate, hands on knees. He scowls at MJ's footwear.

DEVEREAUX

Boots?

MJ

(grins)

They beat you di'nt they?

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

The front room is basic. Bare plaster, no carpet, MOVING BOXES stacked in the corners.

MJ's mother MIRIAM(30), tall with braided hair, her jeans and t-shirt spattered with BLUE PAINT, opens the front door to reveal MJ on the steps, Devereaux stood upright now.

Devereaux looks at the house and back at MJ. Sneers. MJ lifts his hand like before. Devereaux glares, then turns and jogs away.

Miriam's eyes narrow. She examines MJ's face. He shrugs, smiles, stands up.

She notices the tear in the plastic bag, raises an eyebrow.

MIRIAM

Everything ok MJ?

MJ

Don't sweat it mum.

He carries on into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

As bare as the front room. Two chairs set at a table, camp-fridge and two-hob electric cooker by the sink. A cardboard box and a plastic bag full of cutlery on the side-surface.

MJ puts the bag on the table, takes the few potatos to the sink. Rummages through the cutlery for a knife, returns to the sink. Peels.

Miriam stands at the doorway and watches, shakes her head. She takes a pan from the cardboard box, leans over MJ and puts it under the tap. MJ turns on the water.

INT. FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

There are fewer boxes and a TELEVISION stands in one corner, turned to a SATURDAY NIGHT TALENT SHOW.

A new pine shelf on one wall with a PICTURE FRAME: A PHOTO OF A MAN IN SPORTS KIT, shattered at the end of a race - he has the same GRIN as MJ.

MJ and Miriam and eat their tea from their laps.

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is painted BLUE.

MJ lies in bed. On his bedside table - a small LAMP, a CLOCK and a photo of the same man - formal, in military uniform.

Miriam turns off the main light and shuts the door.

MJ considers the photo, expression neutral. He turns off the lamp and rolls over.

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - DAY

The ALARM clock goes off.

There is a cupboard in the corner and a chest-of-drawers at the end of the bed. Two shelves of TOYS and GAMES.

The clock reads: "07:00am"

MJ switches the clock off, throws back his covers, runs to the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen has a gas cooker and a fridge-freezer, on top of which is a small TV turned to NOISY CARTOONS.

MJ in school uniform 2 sizes too large eats cereal at the table, while Miriam prepares his lunch.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Miriam and MJ stand at the open front door, MJ with a large school-bag slung over his shoulders.

MIRIAM

Be ok?

MJ tuts.

MJ

Course.

She kisses the top of his head, then he runs off.

EXT. SCHOOL - ROAD - DAY

Hundreds of uniformed children in groups large and small, from ages 11 to 16 - walk, skip, play, chat, or just mill around.

SNATCHES OF CHAT: "Disneyland was amazing" / "We went camping and it rained all week" / "My brother broke his arm so we had to stay at home"

MJ runs through the crowds towards the gate. One or two OLDER KIDS watch and smile.

Ahead, by the SCHOOL GATES -

A large SUV pulls up. Devereaux steps out of the side door with a smart satchel.

MJ stops. Frowns.

Devereaux says something to the driver, who leans over with a sports kit-bag -

Intro MR.DEVEREAUX(40s) portly and serious, in a crisp white shirt and smart tie. He grips his son's arm, speaks into his face.

Devereaux tries to pull away but his father keeps hold, says something else. Devereaux nods.

His father shuts the door - the SUV pulls away up the road, HONKS at some children.

Devereaux turns to see MJ. Scowls. Walks through the gates.

MJ waits. Then shrugs and - walks - towards the gates.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The CLASS files into the room as the teacher MR MACLUSKY(40s), complete with tweed jacket and elbow patches, speaks in a loud voice.

MACLUSKY

I know we're all excited to be back, but if you could turn your enthusiasm for talking into an enthusiasm for learning that would be very much appreciated -

Devereaux and Kenny barge MJ into the door-frame from behind. The teacher pauses in his automatic monotone, addresses Kenny directly -

MACLUSKY

It's good to see you so eager for Maths Kenneth Carmichael, but look where you're going!

Kenny and Devereaux smirk. Maclusky turns back to the class.

MACLUSKY

- come on now settle down, there's a lot we need to do. There's some new things to go through and some old things to remind you of -

MJ goes to the opposite side of the room as Devereaux, careful not to make eye-contact.

MACLUSKY (CONT'D)

- and you should all have got the letter about games, there won't be any excuses, Shaun that means you, anyone without appropriate kit will be doing it in their underwear ok?

MJ sits down and gets his books out. He looks up to the other boys, but Devereaux's glare has become an open scowl and MJ looks straight back down.

The girl next to MJ unpacks an assortment of coloured pens and pencils. The last thing is a pink-haired TROLL ERASER.

MJ glances sideways, sees Sarah. She speaks to Jennifer on her other side.

MACLUSKY

Right then! Let's start shall we?

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

A list of maths questions on the board. The children work in silence. Maclusky reads a sports magazine.

MJ makes a mistake, crosses it out, tries to put in the correct answer - but not enough space. It looks messy.

He frowns.

Without looking up Sarah pushes the troll eraser across.

He considers it, then carefully uses the just-worn edge. Pushes it back. Sarah replaces it, no acknowledgement.

EXT. SPORTS FIELD - DAY

An oval track is painted on the uneven grass, spotted with patches of bare earth.

The children in groups with different equipment.

Sarah and Jennifer SKIP with a GROUP OF GIRLS.

Other CHILDREN play ROUNDERS with a plastic bat.

The only group that shows an interest in their activity are the boys with Macluskey, near the start line of the track.

MJ stands a little apart from the group. He has t-shirt, shorts and his Converse on - laces trailing.

Devereaux's kit is clean, ironed. He has one Nike on, holds Kenny as Slips adjusts the INNER-SOLE of the other.

Another BOY looks at Devereaux's trainers. Devereaux pumps the heel of his standing foot.

DEVEREAUX
Air cushioned suspension.

BOY
Won't make you go faster.

DEVEREAUX
Says you, plimsoles.

The boy has flimsy PLIMSOLES on. He bites his lip.

The teacher wears a large plastic WHISTLE around his neck.

MACLUSKY (CONT'D)
- and with a bit of practise you
never know. Anything could happen.

Slips puts Devereaux's other Nike on for him, peels over the velcro fasteners. Devereaux shifts his foot, nods.

MACLUSKY (CONT'D)
Right then let's see what we've got
to work with this year yes? Four
humdred yards, once around the
field. The classic.

MJ tucks the laces in - Maclusky sees the Converse.

MACLUSKY
Hardly appropriate.

MJ
All I've got sir.

Devereaux sniggers.

MACLUSKY
Right. Well. It's up to you.

The boys move to the start line.

EXT. SPORTS FIELD - RUNNING TRACK - DAY

The START-LINE.

Devereaux, Kenny, Slips, Plimsoles and MJ - take their places.

Devereaux pushes Plimsoles out the way, stands next to MJ, smirks at him. MJ smiles back - unfazed.

They get into different, awkward starting positions.

Jennifer and Sarah walk towards the track.

MACLUSKY
Ready? Go!

MJ and Devereaux run ahead of the rest.

At the bend, the boys change lanes to all run the inside.

INSERT: Maclusky narrows his eyes as he watches MJ and Devereaux.

MACLUSKY

Some needle.

END INSERT.

Sarah and Jennifer CHEER at the side of the track.

As they run the final bend, MJ is ahead by inches.

Devereaux clips MJ's ankles. He falls, CRASH! Devereaux runs past.

Slips runs by. MJ gets up, then Kenny barges past.

All MJ's speed is gone. Plimsoles beats him on the line. MJ is last.

Kenny points.

KENNY

Even Plimsoles beat him. Loser.

MJ's laces have come loose, they straggle on the ground.

MACLUSKY

What did you expect with those stupid things?

MJ bites his lip, looks across at Devereaux, who laughs with Slips and Kenny.

MJ limps over. Looks Devereaux in the eyes.

MJ

What was that for?

Devereaux goes red, looks down. Slips and Kenny walk to the changing rooms.

MJ waits. Devereaux won't meet his gaze and MJ's expression falters. He shakes his head, walks away.

He speaks to himself, but loud enough for Devereaux to hear.

MJ

No need. No need man.

EXT. SCHOOL - ROAD - DAY

Mr Devereaux's SUV is the other side of the road.

Miriam waits to the side and watches as MJ walks out the gates, head down. Behind him Slips, Kenny and Devereaux.

KENNY

You beat him every day of the week.
Loser!

MJ looks behind at them and shakes his head.

Devereaux scowls and hits Kenny's arm.

Miriam frowns at the three boys, recognises Devereaux.

MJ grabs her hand and pulls her away.

MJ

Come on mum. I want to go home.

As they walk up the road, Devereaux waves bye to Slips and Kenny and opens the door of the SUV.

MR DEVEREAUX (O.S.)

I hope you won boy.

Devereaux nods, gets in the car. It drives away.

Miriam stares but MJ pulls her onwards.

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door is closed, the lamp is on.

In bed, MJ stares at the photograph - his expression neutral as before.

CUT TO:

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - DAY

The ALARM goes off.

The shelves have rows of SCHOOL BOOKS next to the toys.

A pin-up board hangs on the wall - a TIMETABLE, reminders, pictures, letters, pinned to it.

Clothes and school uniform are scattered around.

The clock reads "07:00am"

MJ switches the clock off, throws back his covers and runs to the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen is painted bright yellow. A wooden shelf on one wall holds rows of glass jars - rice, pasta, dried herbs and spices. A fruit bowl is filled with colourful fruit.

Pictures and certificates stuck to the fridge. On top, biscuit tins next to the TV which plays LOUD CARTOONS.

MJ eats cereal, school- bag next to him on the table, matching sports kit folded beneath his Converse boots - clean.

Miriam comes in, wearing a nurse's uniform. She ties her hair back and pulls on her shoes, opens the fridge for the bread and butter then looks around the kitchen.

MJ pats his bag.

MJ
Done it mum.

MIRIAM
Oh MJ.

He looks up and winks.

MJ
Chocolate spread!

Miriam tuts at him with a smile.

MIRIAM
I'm so sorry MJ - they haven't got anyone else and -

MJ
No worries mum, it'll be ok.

MIRIAM
He'll be watching you.

MJ
(corrects her)
Waiting for me at the line mum.

Her smile turns fragile.

MIRIAM
That's right. Waiting for you at the line.

EXT. SPORTS FIELD - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT - SPORTS DAY: Crowds of CHILDREN in sports kit, TEACHERS, PARENTS and other PEOPLE fill the field.

SERIES OF SHOTS - ORGANISED CHAOS/TYPICAL BRITISH SPORTS DAY

A) RUNNING TRACK START LINE: A TEACHER reads names from a clip-board. 6 GIRLS take the line. The teacher fires a small pistol in the air - POP! The girls set off.

B) RUNNING TRACK START LINE: The NON-SPORTY CHILDREN sit on plastic chairs at the side. They talk to each other or stare about with bored looks.

Sarah and Jennifer stand to the side and - WAVE at everyone near-by, SHOUT at anyone they recognise and SCREAM as the GIRLS RACE begins. They wander away arm-in-arm.

C) RUNNING TRACK FAR SIDE: TEACHING ASSISTANTS herd CHILDREN between events - THROWING THE TENNIS BALL and TUG OF WAR - held inside and outside of the oval track.

They wait as the GIRLS RACE goes by, then cross the track.

D) RUNNING TRACK HOME STRAIGHT: The PARENTS gather here. They chat and laugh. Some turn and applaud at the GIRLS RACE, then return to their conversations.

E) RUNNING TRACK FINISH LINE: The HEADMASTER organises events and records results at a large DINING TABLE set a few yards from the FINISH LINE. Random objects weigh down piles of EVENT LISTS.

A few yards away, CHILDREN queue for JUICE - served in PLASTIC CUPS by a DINNER-LADY from a TRESSLE table.

END OF SERIES OF SHOTS

Behind the Headmaster's table is a ready-area. MJ, in his sports kit and Converse, does stretches.

Near-by Mr Devereaux crouches with his son, wags his finger in the boy's face, mutters inaudibly to him. Devereaux stares down, nods.

Kenny and Slips speak to each other.

Sarah and Jennifer walk past and SHOUT at the boys.

SARAH

Hi

JENNIFER

Good luck!

Slips and Kenny wave.

MJ grins at the girls and Sarah gives him a small wave with her hand by her side. MJ turns away wide-eyed, smiles at himself.

Devereaux glances up but his father turns the boy's head back round to face him with one hand.

The Headmaster stands.

HEADMASTER

(shouts)

Year eight boys! One lap race!

Some of the boys walk towards the one lap start positions - behind the finish line.

MJ tuck his laces in. Slips crouches down - ties the laces round MJ's ankles in a complex but secure knot.

MJ

Thanks man.

Slips nods and walks off.

MJ follows him, passes Devereaux and his father.

MR DEVEREAUX

Posture boy. In the blocks, and across the line. Get it right.

He points a finger in Devereaux's face then stands and pushes him toward the start, hard. Devereaux stumbles.

MR DEVEREAUX

For god's sake. What was I just saying?

Devereaux walks, head down.

Mr Devereaux stands in place as MJ passes, fixes him with a hard stare. MJ looks down, walks on fast.

Devereaux sees MJ, tries to smile. MJ tries to smile back.

Mr Devereaux looks about, over the heads of the boys, a curl on his lip. Claps his hands slow, loud. Raises his voice.

MR DEVEREAUX

Come on then Francis! County trials next month!

Devereaux blinks, looks down.

MJ grits his teeth, his frown deep.

Devereaux looks behind - his father paces away, claps his hands again.

EXT. SPORTS FIELD - RUNNING TRACK - START PLACES - DAY

The one lap start line is curved so the outside lanes are ahead of the inside lanes.

Mr Maclusky wears the same clothes as before.

He reads from a clipboard, his voice flat.

MACLUSKY

Year eight boys. One lap. Take your places.

MJ follows Devereaux, who moves to an outside lane.

From behind them Mr Devereaux shouts -

MR DEVEREAUX

Inside boy!

Devereaux pushes his way two lanes inside. MJ follows, apologises to the other boys in a whisper, takes the lane next to him.

MJ

Soz. Scuse mate. Soz.

Devereaux sees MJ by his side. Blinks. Bites his lip.

MJ nods at him. Devereaux nods back.

MACLUSKY

Marks!

Devereaux drops into the classic sprinter's crouch. The other boys take variations of standing starts.

MACLUSKY

Set!

MR DEVEREAUX

Concentrate now Francis!

The background NOISE FADES.

TIME SLOWS.

Devereaux leaps forward.

MACLUSKY

Go! No!

MJ doesn't move. The other boys run forward and stop. Devereaux turns, wide-eyed.

MACLUSKY

(matter-of-fact)

You know the rules. Off you go.

Devereaux stumbles to the side.

MACLUSKY

Right then the rest of you, that's a good lesson for all of you. Take your marks.

The boys line up.

Mr Devereaux pushes through them to Mr Maclusky.

DEVEREAUX

Come on Maclusky, that's not on.

He's still good for a place in the team.

MACLUSKY

You know the rules Frank, or should do. You requested a copy of them special, remember?

MR DEVEREAUX

Now look here -

MACLUSKY

Quite clear, no exceptions. Ready boys?

MR DEVEREAUX

- you know how much work I've put in!

MACLUSKY

(quiet)

If you want to take it up with the board Frank you're welcome. But right now you're making a fool of yourself.

(raises voice)

Third time lucky boys. So - take your marks!

Mr Devereaux marches away, his son a pace behind. He doesn't look round.

MR DEVEREAUX

No point in me wasting any more of my time.

MACLUSKY

Get set!

MR DEVEREAUX

You've got a couple of hours left then you can walk home hmm?

Devereaux stops. His father walks on.

Devereaux sees MJ - whose eyes flick to Mr Devereaux's back, then to Devereaux. MJ nods. Devereaux nods back.

MACLUSKY

Go!

The other boys leap forward.

Devereaux and MJ turn and run at Mr Devereaux - barge him into the DRINKS TABLE - race on.

Mr Devereaux stumbles to the ground - CUPS and JUGS of JUICE spill over his legs.

He scrambles to his feet, waves a fist.

MR DEVEREAUX
Francis! You boy! Get back here!

MJ and Devereaux run on - dodge between people - laugh.

Mr Devereaux runs after them - CRASHES into people - shouts!

MR DEVEREAUX
Oi!

EXT. SCHOOL - ROAD - DAY

MJ and Devereaux run through the gates, down the road.

Mr Devereaux stops at the gates, pants.

He scowls, mutters to himself, turns and walks back.

EXT. PARK - DAY

MJ and Devereaux run past the PLAY AREA, laugh and shout, wave their arms.

EXT. COUNCIL ESTATE - STREET

MJ and Devereaux run down the street.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

MJ and Devereaux BURST through the door.

They catch their breath, laugh.

MJ
Want some pop?

DEVEREAUX
Yeah!

EXT. SCHOOL - CAR PARK - DAY

Mr Devereaux opens the door of his SUV. Mr Maclusky walks up, holds the door, blocks him off.

Mr Devereaux scowls but Maclusky's expression doesn't change.

MACLUSKY
Of course, I'll have to tell Anne.

Mr Devereaux goes red. His scowl gets deeper.

Then he sniffs, takes a breath. Nods at Maclusky.

Maclusky lets go of the door, walks away.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

The TV plays LOUD CARTOONS.

MJ and Devereaux sit on the couch - CRISPS, BISCUITS and SWEETS strewn about. They have glasses of NEON POP.

Miriam comes in, takes in the mess. She glares at MJ, then sees Devereaux and looks puzzled.

MJ smiles at her. Winks.

Miriam shakes her head, smiles back, goes to the kitchen.

MIRIAM (O.S.)
Your friend like Jamaican curry?

DEVEREAUX
What's Jamaican curry?

MJ
Like normal curry, but with bananas.

Devereaux considers this. Nods with a huge smile. MJ grins.

MJ
I reckon so mum!

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Door closed, main light out, lamp on.

In bed, MJ stares at the photo - his expression neutral as before.

INT. MJ'S BEDROOM - DAY

The clock shows "06.29am"

Next to it - Sarah's pink-haired TROLL.

One shelf is cleared apart from - the Converse on display with a MEDAL and framed CERTIFICATE.

The clock flicks to "06:30am". The ALARM goes off.

MJ switches it off, throws back his covers, runs out the room.

EXT/INT. DEVEREAUX'S HOUSE - DAY

A medium sized, suburban semi-detached. The drive runs between two squares of manicured lawn to the garage.

MJ stands at the open door, in baggy sports kit and Devereaux's old NIKES.

Mr Devereaux faces him in tie and shirt.

MR DEVEREAUX
Francis! Your little friend's here!

Devereaux runs down the stairs in a new pair of NIKES.

MR DEVEREAUX

Five laps of the field boys. I
don't want you back before eight.

DEVEREAUX

Yes sir.

MJ

No worries MR Dee.

"Mr Dee" curls his lip.

MR DEVEREAUX

Do it right. Off you go.

The two boys run down the drive at a steady pace.

EXT. TOWN - ROADSIDE - DAY

MJ and Devereaux run down the road next to the field and through the park gates.

EXT. PARK - DAY

MJ and Devereaux run past the PLAY AREA.

They reach the far gates, and run through - out of the park.

EXT. COUNCIL ESTATE - STREET

MJ and Devereaux sprint down the road - a race!

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

Miriam holds the door open.

INSERT: Through the door to the kitchen - the table has two bowls laid out, a bottle of milk, sugar, and boxes of chocolate cereal. The kitchen TV plays LOUD CARTOONS.

MJ and Devereaux run into the yard. Devereaux just manages to touch the door-frame first before both boys clutch at each other, fall inside, laugh.