

# education education education

- It's May 1997. Tony Blair has won the election and Katrina and the Waves have won Eurovision. Channel 5 is a month old. No one knows who Harry Potter is. Britain is the coolest place in the world.
- At the local secondary school it's a different story. Miss Belltop-Doyle can't control her Year 10s. Mr Pashley has been put in charge of a confiscated Tarmagotchi, and Miss Turner is hoping that this muck-up day goes smoother than the last. Tobias, the German language assistant, watches on. Things can only get better.
- *Education, Education, Education* is The Wardrobe Ensemble's love letter to the schools of the 1990s and asks big questions about a country in special measures, exploring what we are taught and why, and where responsibility lies.
- Inventively theatrical and irreverently funny, *Education, Education, Education* was co-produced with Royal & Derngate, Northampton, and Shoreditch Town Hall. It premiered at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2017, where it won a Fringe First Award, before touring the UK.
- 'A great mix of energy, chaos and passion' *The Times*

PLAYS

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# education education education

## The Wardrobe Ensemble



### Characters

TOBIAS  
 LOUISE TURNER  
 PAUL MCINTYRE  
 DONNA  
 HUGH MILLS  
 TIMOTHY PASHLEY  
 SUE BELLTOP-DOYLE  
 EMILY GREENSLADE  
 GUINEVERE  
 LANCELOT  
 KING ARTHUR  
 GARETH

The ensemble all also play students. The students are named after the actors' real names and can be changed accordingly. For example, the character name Emily Greenslade should be changed to the name of the actor playing that role.

### Note for Performance

The play was originally staged with two moveable doors, two moveable school tables and two moveable chairs. These are by no means a prerequisite for future staging – however, the character, Tobias does occasionally reference the set, so this text can be adjusted accordingly.

The play was originally staged with projections of the cast members at secondary-school age used when they were playing their student characters. We have not indicated in this playtext when we used these projections – however, it is an optional additional layer that we felt enhanced the storytelling.

(–) means an interruption.

(...) at the end of a speech means it trails off or it indicates a pressure, expectation or desire to speak.

(/) means that the next character's text should start.

## 1.

1997. A run-down school. TOBIAS enters.

TOBIAS. Hi. Thanks for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

We in Germany, and Europe, the whole world actually, have been watching somewhat enviously as your country's been undergoing a resurrection, you might say. Years of incredible music across every genre – Oasis, The Spice Girls, Prodigy, Take That. Hey – (*insert operator's name*) could we play some Take That, would that be okay?

*'Back for Good' by Take That starts playing.*

So nice, thank you so much. I was so sad when they broke up.

Last year's sporting successes in the Euros... almost. Your newfound pride in your culture and your heritage. Your amazing love for your princess. It's so wonderful to see a country wearing its identity so proudly on its sleeve.

You're shouting 'Cool Britannia' from the rooftops and everyone else is happy to hear it. Casting off your shackles and dancing head-first into the future.

(*To audience member*) Excuse me – have you read Socrates? I have. I like Socrates. The notion of thinking about how you learn, how you should behave, how you build something, how you move forwards, or backwards, or whichever way you want to move is really an ancient pursuit. Socrates would walk the streets asking questions. What is that for? What is the point in that? Why are you doing that? Why are you here? Why *are* you here?

(*Insert operator's name*) Can we turn off Take That now?

Socrates' questions remind me of that Spice Girls' lyric, 'I said who do you think you are? Do you think you are?'

I just love British music. So how lucky for me, that I get to fly right into the middle of the party, here, at Wordsworth Comprehensive School.

(*To operator*) Lights, please.

## 2.

*Lights up on LOUISE telling a student off.*

LOUISE. How dare you disobey me like that? I want you to march to your tutor group right this second and if I hear another peep out of you at ANY point today then it will be detentions for a week.

PAUL and other TEACHERS enter.

PAUL. Tea, Louise?

LOUISE. Thanks, Paul.

*They chink mugs.*

I'm watching you.

PAUL. Tom! Shoelaces. There's a good boy. Have a Mars bar.

DONNA. Emily, headphones off, thank you!

HUGH. Nice essay, Tom.

TIM. Ben, no running in the corridors, please!

*Blows his whistle.*

Thank you.

SUE. Jesse, pick up your pace, you'll be late for registration.

TOBIAS. Excuse me, little boy, where is the staffroom? Thank you.

3.

*The staffroom. The TEACHERS strike a pose then walk forward.*

PAUL. Morning, Donna.

DONNA. You look awful. Did you fall asleep on a bench again?

PAUL. Oh. No. I stayed up watching the election, next thing

I know it's six o'clock and I haven't showered or slept.

DONNA. You smell like a Scotch egg.

PAUL. Thanks.

SUE *enters*.

SUE. Good morning, my little cherubs!

DONNA. Sue!

ALL. Sue!

SUE. And what a glorious morning it is.

PAUL. Spare us the rainbows, Sue.

SUE. It's lovely to see you too, Paul.

PAUL. Urgh. First a Eurovision win and now Tony's our new

Prime Minister. I can barely recognise this country, you know

I actually saw people smiling on the train this morning.

DONNA. Gross.

PAUL. Tell me about it.

*Everyone slurps their tea.*

LOUISE. Slap me with a handbag and call me Tinky Winky,

what I wouldn't give for a snow day. All in favour say 'aye'.

ALL. Aye.

PAUL. It's May, Louise.

LOUISE. Fuck yourself.

PAUL. Right, sure.

LOUISE. Whoever invented muck-up day is a sadistic prick.  
This year there's no more Miss Nice Turner, I'm gonna be  
fucking RoboCop.

LOUISE *fires an imaginary gun into the air*.

And which one of you ate my Kit Kats?

ALL. Errrr.

DONNA. Happy with the result then, Sue?

SUE. Which one? Oh, Donna, this has been the most  
marvellous week. It really feels like our country is turning  
a corner. Mike cooked me dinner last night he was so happy,  
he hasn't done that in years. We even...

ALL. Ooooooh.

PAUL. Don't get ahead of yourself, Sue. Blair's not the  
Messiah, he's a very liberal Tory.

HUGH. I've said it before and I shall say it again, 'Love Shine  
a Light' is one of the finest songs of our generation.

LOUISE. Eurovision's over, Hugh.

HUGH. Quality doesn't have an expiry date, Louise. Katrina  
and the Waves will be forever preserved in the formaldehyde  
of greatness. Tea, anyone?

ALL. Aye.

SUE. Three billion! Three billion, they're promising to the  
education system, just imagine the possibilities! With those  
sorts of resources it's only a matter of time before holistic  
teaching makes its way into the mainstream.

PAUL. Nobody's interested in your hippy-dippy bollocks, Sue.

SUE. Did somebody wake up on the wrong side of the bed this  
morning?

PAUL. Far from it.

LOUISE. Shut up and make the tea.

PAUL. Fine.

TIM *lowers his newspaper.*

TIM. Hey, guys.

ALL. Where did you come from? (*Etc.*)

TIM. Says here's we're going to get the euro by 2001. They're saying a European superstate by 2050.

*Everyone groans.*

SUE. It's a rag, Tim, put it down.

TIM. Fine, but whilst I've got your attention, I've got four words for you: Pub. Tonight. Happy. Hour. Who's with me?

ALL. Errr...

TIM. I'll get the New Labour lager-and-limes in!

*More murmurs, even less sure.*

I'll take that as a maybe.

PAUL. Hugh, can I have a word?

HUGH. Of course.

PAUL. It's about PSHE.

HUGH. Right.

PAUL. Our resources are a joke. How can I be expected to teach our kids about the importance of citizenship with two drawers of felt tips and some textbooks from '83?

HUGH. Come to my office on Monday and we can talk about it.

*The rest of the TEACHERS laugh.*

PAUL. Meadowfields are about to get internet access, four Acorn computers. The kids treat it as a piss-take and quite frankly I don't blame them.

HUGH. Paul, I appreciate your concern, I really do. But today is a big day for all of us, so let's put it to one side and pour all our energy into making this assembly the best that it can be.

*Mug clinks.*

PAUL. We're nearly in special measures, Hugh. Don't you think you've got bigger priorities than writing out one hundred and eighty-three personalised messages for Achievement Assembly?

HUGH. You can't put a price on the human touch, Paul. Did you have Peperami for breakfast?

PAUL. Fuck's sake.

TIM. Paul, do you fancy pub tonight, / happy hour?

PAUL. Absolutely not, Pashers.

LOUISE. Hugh, shouldn't we...?

HUGH. Ah yes, gather round everyone, gather round.

TOBIAS *enters.*

TOBIAS. Sorry I'm late.

HUGH. Good morning, Tobias!

DONNA. Who's this?

HUGH. This is Tobias. He's our new German placement. He'll be assisting with foreign languages. Let's give him a great big Wordsworth Comp *Guten Tag!* One, two, three...

ALL. *Guten Tag.*

TOBIAS. Thank you.

HUGH. Donna, this is a teacher's briefing.

DONNA. Yes.

HUGH. You're a receptionist.

DONNA. Yes.

HUGH. So shouldn't you be on reception?

DONNA. Yes.

DONNA *leaves.*

HUGH. Strange woman. Anyway, we're slightly behind so I'll be brief. It's Friday, 2nd May, 1997 – (*Checks watch*) 8.35 a.m. The observant amongst you will notice that we are now living under a New Labour Government.

*The TEACHERS cheer.*

But we must remember to remain completely politically impartial in all of our classes.

ALL. Awww...

HUGH. Having said that, we did win Eurovision.

*The TEACHERS cheer.*

So you can speak about that as much as you wish.

*The TEACHERS cheer even louder.*

Now, down to the nitty gritty. Point one, Claire is away P1. She's got a dental appointment for her abscess so we will be needing cover for her French lesson.

LOUISE. Tim?

TIM. *Bonjour.*

HUGH. Great. Point two. We have introduced some new produce to our lunchtime offering including turkey twizzlers and smiling potato faces. As such, we are expecting a very grand surge in the lunch hall and will be needing some extra teacher support for that.

*Everyone keeps their head down.*

Sue – how about you?

SUE. Oh, yes yes okay.

HUGH. Great. Point three. As you are all aware, it is the final day of school for our Year 11s before they head off into the mist of study leave. As such, we are expecting a little bit of horseplay and tomfoolery from them on account of their excitement.

LOUISE. Let's not dilute the situation, Mr Mills. It's muck-up day and things are going to get nasty unless we head out into

those corridors all guns blazing. At the first sign of bad behaviour: BAM!!

LOUISE *throws down an imaginary bomb.*

Shut them down. This is not the day to sit back and call the naughty kids secret saints. It's us versus them in a very real way and we need to be on the winning team.

PAUL. We don't need any more cars hoisted on top of the science block.

HUGH *laughs.*

HUGH. What a fantastic feat of engineering that was. And finally I would like to hand over to Sue as Head of Year 11 to talk us through this afternoon's proceedings.

SUE. Thank you, Hugh. That's right, everybody, the big day has arrived! That special time of year when we celebrate the myriad accomplishments of our Year 11s. Leavers' Assembly will be at 3 p.m., and we are expecting a number of parents and governors. Now as usual I'll be in charge of coordinating decor and there is plenty to do – check the noticeboards for your various jobs. I hope you all have your costumes ready. And remember, this year's theme is Cool Britannia, so have fun, be proud and go wild!

*The bell goes. 'Ride on Time' by Black Box plays.*

HUGH. Thank you, Sue. Today, your country has decided to invest in you, yes you, Timothy Pashley, you, Sue Belltop-Doyle, you, Louise Turner, you, Paul McIntyre, and you, Tobias. They have voted for Education Education Education. Now remember Mills' thought for the day: do not wait till it's too late, you are the DJ of your fate!

*The TEACHERS do a synchronised dance. It is as if it is part of their daily routine. Each of the TEACHERS has a different attitude towards the dance.*

Have a fantastic day, everyone!

4.

A classroom.

PAUL. Thank you, 10M! For those of you coming on the York trip on Monday, remember the coach will be leaving at eight fifteen sharp. That's eight fifteen, in the bus bay. You'll need sensible shoes and waterproofs, I'm looking at you, Susie. We're going to Yorkshire not Lanzarote.

EMILY lingers by PAUL's desk, he's marking.

EMILY. Sir?

PAUL holds up a finger and carries on marking.

PAUL. One minute, Emily.

EMILY. Sir: I just wanted to ask –

PAUL. One minute, Emily.

EMILY. Sir, I'm going to be late –

PAUL. Yes, what is it?

EMILY. I just wondered, have you decided if I can go on the York trip?

PAUL. Right. First of all I want to commend you on your behaviour this week, you've done really well and I've been impressed.

EMILY. Thanks, sir. I've actually been doing some research about York on Encarta, it's where Guy Fawkes was born – did you know that?

PAUL. Yes, Emily. I went to university there.

EMILY. Yeah, yeah, that's the other thing, I looked it up and it said that the university is really good and I've been thinking about that more recently –

PAUL. Yes, it is a good university, especially for history. But the trip is oversubscribed so I'm sorry, but you won't be able to come.

EMILY. What? But I got my slip in first and I got my money in on time. I've done everything you asked me to do. You said

that I had to be on time to tutor every morning this week and I have been, haven't I?

PAUL. You have.

EMILY. Which means I had to get the 76 not the 72 which gets in twenty-three minutes earlier plus it only stops on Cromwell Road which means that I had to do my paper round at seven, my alarm goes off at six, I miss all of *The Big Breakfast* and I arrive at school and I'm starving.

PAUL. Emily, get to the point.

EMILY. And you said I wasn't allowed to call out in class, so in English I knew it was a sonnet that Romeo and Juliet share when they first meet but I couldn't say anything cos Dan Ashworth had his hand up first, and he kept calling it a 'bonnet' and he kept saying it over again cos he's a total div, everyone knows he should be in bottom set but his mum's on the Governors' –

PAUL. Emily.

EMILY. Yeah but I didn't call out, like you told me. And you said that my coursework had to be perfect, so I wrote it out twice cos my fountain pen leaked all over my bag and I even did section D on vaccinations and Edward Jenner with a colour-coded key and you still won't let me go on this fucking history trip –

PAUL. Did you just swear?

EMILY. I don't care.

PAUL. Stop mumbling.

EMILY. I don't even care.

PAUL. You 'don't even care'? You could at least speak properly – EMILY. I am speaking properly. I did everything you asked me to do this week.

PAUL. Yes. You did *this week* but what about last week? In fact, what about the last four years I've had the unmitigated pleasure of being your tutor. What about skipping lessons –

EMILY. Only RS, I was on the blob.

PAUL. Thank you. Locking Mr Pashley in a cupboard –

EMILY. It was just a joke.

PAUL. Throwing things, flashing –

EMILY. Yeah alright.

PAUL. Never wearing the correct uniform, trainers, still, arson –

EMILY. It was just a bunsen burner.

PAUL. Sarah Kendall's eyebrows still haven't grown back.

EMILY. She deserved it. She's a munter anyway.

PAUL. Vulgar language, vandalism, covering the whiteboard in chewing gum –

EMILY. That wasn't just me.

PAUL. Listening to your Walkman in my class. The list goes on and on.

EMILY. Please, Mr McIntyre, I never get to go anywhere.

Everyone else is going and I really, really want to go.

PAUL. The decision's been made.

EMILY. Can't you just chuck someone else off?

PAUL. Would it be fair to deny another student a chance to go on this trip? Given your track record?

EMILY. This is bullshit. You've never liked me, you're such a dick.

PAUL. What was that?

You can collect your deposit from the bursar at the end of the day.

Don't slam the door.

*EMILY exits, slamming the door as she goes. The bell goes between tutor group and first lesson. A number of STUDENTS cross the stage.*

## 5.

*The corridor.*

HUGH. Take a breath with me, Tobias.

HUGH and TOBIAS *breathe in together.*

Take it in. This time of day. As the young adults make their way to their first lessons. Isn't it glorious? So much potential in these corridors. Watch out!

HUGH and TOBIAS *part as the BASKETBALL TEAM passes between them. 'The Bear Goes On' by The All Seeing I starts playing.*

Ah, Tobias, meet our basketball team. They will be competing in the county B League later this term.

*The BASKETBALL TEAM jump round.*

Ah, meet Ben Vardy, the finest basketball player in the school.

BEN. Thank you, sir.

HUGH. Shouldn't be playing in the corridors though, should you, Ben?

BEN. No, sorry, sir.

*The BASKETBALL TEAM exit.*

HUGH. Ah, the humanities block, a place where the human being takes centre stage in a glorious gazpacho of inquisitiveness. This is where the great thinkers of tomorrow are born, today.

HUGH *opens a door.*

Geography!

*'Around the World' by Daft Punk plays.*

Where sweet streams of knowledge become cascading waterfalls of experience.

HUGH *opens another door.*



Religion!

'Time to Say Goodbye' by Sarah Brighman and Andrea Bocelli plays.

I've been at this school a long time, Tobias, and I won't deny we've seen some good times and bad. Our latest Ofsted report leaves a lot to be desired, but our community remains as vibrant as ever. I've seen teachers, doctors, mechanics and everything in between pass through these corridors.

*The music stops.*

Kerry, what are those things on your arms?

KERRY. Shag bands, sir.

HUGH. Shag bands, eh? And what are they for?

KERRY. If a boy rips one off your arm it means you have to shag him.

HUGH. Hahaha, disgusting! Take them off!

HUGH and TOBIAS walk again. *The intro to 'Let Me Entertain You' by Robbie Williams plays.*

Walk with me. Behind every door lies a new adventure! And here we have the real beating heart of the school. The arts! Sweet singing! The tapping of feet! Colour! Emotion!

*The STUDENTS dance forward.*

TOBIAS. Why are they all in temporary cabins?

HUGH. These puppies are far from temporary, Tobias. They have been here for the last twenty years.

Now come on! Let me entertain you.

This is the place where personalities grow, character is formed and true colours show!

HUGH opens a door.

Maths!

'Pocket Calculator' by Kraftwerk plays. HUGH opens another door.

Chemistry!

'2 Become 1' by The Spice Girls plays. HUGH opens another door.

Design and Technology!

'Torn' by Natalie Imbruglia plays.

What a wonderful place to beeeee!!!

TOBIAS. Can we pause here a second?

*Music cuts. Everyone freezes.*

Thanks. I'm sorry to be the party pooper but I fear you may be getting a slightly skewed impression of the school here. I admire Mr Mills' passion but the reality of the situation just doesn't match up with his enthusiasm. (*To cast members onstage.*) Excuse me could you duck down a minute? Thank you. The facilities here leave a lot to be desired. Tiles are falling off the roof. Grass is creeping through the bricks. The textbooks are at least fifteen years old... (*To cast members onstage.*) Actually could you move back, I feel sorry for these people. Thank you.

The environment here is perhaps reflected in the chaotic nature of the people here. You can say a lot with buildings, I think. (*To audience member.*) Excuse me, have you been to Disneyland? Did you see the Magic Kingdom? I have. It makes you feel like a child again, trust me. In Germany, the chamber of our parliament, the Reichstag, is set out in a circular way. They're building a modern glass dome through the middle of the old building, so there's an awareness of history there whilst also looking to the future, I guess. The public will be able to walk in the dome so the Government will look up at the people that they serve.

I think your Government is hidden away in an old building with no windows and they're made to sit opposite each other. How does that make them feel?

Okay well I think that's all I have to say right now. Perhaps we should continue.

*Back to reality:*

PAUL. DON'T SLAM THE DOOR!

EMILY *slams the door and runs past* HUGH.

HUGH. Whoa there, Michael Schumacher, slow down! Tobias, allow me to introduce you to –

EMILY. NOT NOW.

EMILY *runs off*.

HUGH. That's Emily Greenslade, one of our more boisterous students. Now I hope you have enjoyed the tour, Tobias, but I must get on! Welcome to the team!

*An electronic beep.*

Okay what was that? Is someone here playing a computer game, because we all like computer games, don't we, but we're not allowed them / in school so if

*An electronic beep.*

Right you, what's your name?

TOM BRENNAN. Tom Brennan, sir.

TIM. Right well, Tom, hand it over. What is it?

TOM BRENNAN. Please don't kill it, sir.

TIM. I won't kill it, just tell me what it is.

TOM BRENNAN. It's a Tamagotchi, sir.

TIM. What is that?

TOM BRENNAN. A Tamagotchi, it's a virtual pet, sir.

TIM. Okay well, you're not allowed those in school. Hand it over. Hand it. over. Now, Tom!

TOM BRENNAN *hands the Tamagotchi to* TIM.

Right, thank you. You can get it back off me at the end of school. Right then everyone, page 156 of your textbooks, 5b, 5c, 5d. You all get on with your work, and I'll get on with mine.

*The Tamagotchi beeps. TIM gets the Tamagotchi out of his pocket, frowns, then smiles.*

Wow.

6.

*A classroom.*

TIM. Bonjour, Year 7. Je m'appelle Monsieur Pashley, and je suis going to be covering your French lesson today. As you may have noticed, I am not in fact Madame Hicks, as she is away getting her abscess sorted. However she has left plenty of work for you all to be getting on with, which is page 156 of your textbooks, exercises 5b, 5c and 5d.

However, please do not ask me any questions about la language de Français, as despite the fact that I have been on twelve ski trips to France, in that entire time, I have needed to use a grand total of zero words of la language Français, and that's because English is the international language of the world. Wherever you go you'll always find someone who speaks English –

*An electronic beep.*

I mean it's polite to learn the basics, the bonjours, the je m'appelles / but learning the whole

7.

*We are transported back to Medieval England.*

GUINEVERE. Oh Lancelot, what a wonderful evening.

LANCELOT. The summer light shines through the old oak trees.

GUINEVERE. Oh look at those birds nesting up there.

LANCELOT. Guinevere, I've never felt this way before.

GUINEVERE. I feel it too.

LANCELOT. Guinevere, look at me.

GUINEVERE. But what about Arthur?

LANCELOT. Do not say that name in here! Look at me!

GUINEVERE *turns to* LANCELOT.

GUINEVERE. Oh Lancelot.

LANCELOT. Kiss me.

GUINEVERE. I want to.

*In another part of the castle, ARTHUR and GARETH enter.*

ARTHUR. Gareth.

GARETH. Arthur.

ARTHUR. Lancelot and Guinevere are in the castle.

GARETH. Where?

ARTHUR. The turret.

GARETH. I am for you, my lord.

BOTH. Hah!

*They exit. GUINEVERE and LANCELOT are kissing.**ARTHUR and GARETH pound on the doors ferociously.*

GUINEVERE. We have been discovered!

LANCELOT. Who goes there?! Enter at your own peril.

GARETH and ARTHUR enter.

ARTHUR. Lancelot.

LANCELOT. Arthur.

ARTHUR. Guinevere.

GUINEVERE. Yes, Arthur?

ARTHUR. Lancelot, you were my best friend.

LANCELOT. And you mine.

ARTHUR. How could you betray me?

LANCELOT. She loves you not, she loves Sir Lancelot!

ARTHUR. Guinevere, I loved you!

GUINEVERE. My love for you has waned.

ARTHUR. BUT I AM ARTHUR! I pulled Excalibur out of the rock. I am the king of kings! I am the personification of Britain itself!

LANCELOT. I am conflicted. He was my best friend, but I must think of Guinevere and of our beautiful England!

ARTHUR. Gareth?

GARETH. Yes?

ARTHUR. Burn her at the stake!

GUINEVERE. Ahhhh!

LANCELOT. Nooooooo!

SUE enters.

SUE. And scene!

*Everyone drops their characters and become uninterested STUDENTS.*

That was wonderful. Year 10s, a real Smash Hit. Now we're going to stage the moment where Malory wrote of the legendary battle between King Arthur and Lancelot. Everybody on this side, you are on the side of King Arthur.

EMILY. Yes!

SUE. Yes, that's right, Emily! And everyone on this side, you are on the side of Lancelot.

STUDENTS. Yeeeah!

SUE. Let the battle commence.

*The sounds of battle fill the room. An epic slow-motion sword fight plays out. One of the STUDENTS accidentally hits another and we snap back to reality.*

TOM ENGLAND. Ah, why the fuck did you do that, you fucking prick?

TOM BRENNAN. I didn't mean to, did I?

*They start fighting. 'Kick in the Door' by The Notorious B.I.G. plays.*

STUDENTS. Fight fight fight!

*Everyone is fighting and running around. SUE is overwhelmed.*

SUE. Okay, everyone, that was a great lesson, sit yourselves back down – don't forget your homework for next week!

LOUISE enters.

LOUISE. Everybody out!

LOUISE opens the door for all the wild STUDENTS.

*They all run out. The music stops. The classroom is a mess. SUE starts clearing up.*

Sounded like an interesting lesson, Sue, through my wall.

SUE. It was good. A couple of problematic Year 10s, but that's to be expected.

LOUISE. What are you trying to do, Sue?

SUE. I just want to bring English to life – you know, make it exciting and memorable. Out with the textbooks! In with the interactive learning!

LOUISE. It's quite disruptive.

SUE. No –

LOUISE. It is. You're too nice, Sue.

SUE. No such thing as too nice.

LOUISE. You need to learn to tell people off.

SUE. It's good to be kind. You can never have too much kindness.

LOUISE. Mmm.

SUE. Year 10s are at that age, they've had too much fizzy drink, they're tired, they've been up late the night before, they're hormonal. They're just not focused.

LOUISE. That shouldn't come into it, Sue.

SUE. I only ever went to school because of one teacher. She taught English and she had long black hair that she wore in a plait and she just really loved the subject and then I went to university to study it and now here I am. I have only got a bob – but you know what I mean.

LOUISE. Right. See the thing is, Sue, your department is still at twenty-six per cent A to Cs at GCSE. It doesn't matter how much fun they have or how inspired they are if they can't sit an exam... And since when was King Arthur on the syllabus anyway? Look, if they don't get the grades, they're in trouble, we're in trouble, and you're in trouble.

SUE. Am I one of the bad teachers?

LOUISE. No... you just need to work on your discipline.

*A clatter from the corridor. BEN VARDY enters wearing a chicken head.*

BEN VARDY, TAKE THAT RIDICULOUS THING OFF YOUR HEAD AND GET OUT OF MY SIGHT. NOW!

LOUISE leaves. TOBIAS enters and watches as SUE kills herself with a toy sword. EMILY enters.

EMILY. Did I leave my bag in here, miss?

SUE. No, Emily, I haven't seen it.

EMILY goes to leave.

EMILY. Great lesson today, miss.

EMILY leaves. SUE gathers her things and leaves.

TOBIAS. I confiscated a Cheestring from a Year 7 student. Now I am going to eat it.

TOBIAS peels off a string.

I just love British cuisine.

TOBIAS eats the Cheestring.

Amazing. It really asks questions of the palate.

TOBIAS checks his watch.

Oh, eleven fifteen – break time!

## 8.

*The staffroom.*

HUGH. Tea, anyone?

LOUISE. Milk, one sugar.

PAUL. Leave my teabag in.

TIM. Tetley's, please!

SUE. Oooh I would love a peppermint, Hugh.

DONNA. Full-fat, five sugars.

TOBIAS. May I have a cappuccino?

*They all look at TOBIAS. Sip.*

TIM. Is everyone up for the pub tonight, yeah?

*Everyone mumbles 'probably not', etc.*

Hugh?

HUGH. Familial commitments.

TIM. Louise?

LOUISE. Step aerobics.

TIM. Paul?

PAUL. In your dreams, Pashers Nashers.

TIM. Donna?

DONNA. Who's going?

TIM. Sue's going.

SUE. I know I said I would, Tim, but I'm a bit busy.

*Everyone in their groups laugh. TIM feels alone. An electronic beep. TIM gets out his Tamagotchi and plays with it.*

PAUL. Louise, can I have a word?

LOUISE. Yeah.

PAUL. It's about last night.

LOUISE. What about last night?

*Flashback. Sound of TV report: 'Portillo Michael Denzel Xavier, Conservative Party: 19,137; Twig Stephen, Labour Party: 20,000' – the rest of the number is drowned out by cheers.*

PAUL/LOUISE. Yeeeee!

*PAUL and LOUISE lock eyes. Celine Dion's 'My Heart Will Go On' plays. They kiss and shag up against a door.*

PAUL. Louise, I've wanted this for so long!

*LOUISE drags her hand down some perspex à la Titanic car-sex scene and then they snap back to the present.*

DONNA. What happened last night?

LOUISE. Donna, reception.

PAUL. I thought maybe we could go for round two.

LOUISE. I don't know what you're talking about.

PAUL. You know? When I was inside your vagina...

LOUISE. SHUT UP.

PAUL. I thought it was pretty special.

LOUISE. No.

PAUL. I could make you a curry –

LOUISE. No.

PAUL. Near... Far –

LOUISE. Absolutely not.

PAUL. When two become one –

LOUISE. Never. It was the size of the majority, I got excited. It was a mistake.

LOUISE *shoots PAUL with an imaginary gun. She stands over him.*

Never talk to anyone about this ever again.

HUGH. Sue, I know I said I'd put out the chairs, put up the bunting and sort out the refreshments for this assembly but I'm a little bit preoccupied with my certificates. You'll have time to do that, won't you?

*Countdown music plays.*

DONNA. Sue, the people from Kamelot Kastles have arrived.

SUE. Oh! Could you tell them to set it up on the field?

DONNA. Sorry, Sue, I've got to be on reception.

LOUISE. Excuse me, what is 'Kamelot Kastles'?

SUE. It's not a real castle, Louise, it's an inflatable.

LOUISE. Why did you order an inflatable castle?

SUE. I thought it would be a treat for the Year 11s.

TIM. It can't go on the field, we've got the bleep test there later.

LOUISE. Who signed off on that?

SUE. Oh, sugar, Paul, did you pick up the cucumber sandwiches?

PAUL. Nooooo.

*Countdown music ends.*

SUE. Oh, double sugar. I forgot the cakes! I must have left them in the car!

SUE *runs out.*

LOUISE. You cannot have a bouncy castle! They're young adults, for goodness' sake!

TIM. You alright, mate?

PAUL. Go away, Pashers Nashers.

TIM. Cool, man, yeah.

TIM *plays with the Tamagotchi.*

PAUL. What's that?

TIM. A Tamagotchi.

PAUL. A what?

TIM. It's a Tamagotchi, it's a virtual pet, it's Japanese.

PAUL. Give it here.

PAUL *plays with the Tamagotchi.*

What's that?

TIM. You just fed it a hamburger.

PAUL. What's that?

TIM. Oh, that's an apple, good work, Paul.

PAUL. What's that?

TIM. It's done a poo, I'll clear it up for you.

PAUL. Technology today, eh?

PAUL *starts to walk off.*

TIM. Yeah, technology today, Paul, could I have that back please? Paul? Paul? Paul!

LOUISE *approaches* HUGH.

LOUISE. Hugh, I could do with a hand, they're getting feral out there.

HUGH. Ah, Louise, what's another word for boisterous?

LOUISE. Hugh, you're not listening to me.

HUGH. I'm trying to think of messages for Kerry Lovell, Jesse Meadows and Tom England here.

LOUISE. Do you want to know what those students are doing right now?

LOUISE *opens the door. 'Firestarter' by The Prodigy plays and the TEACHERS are pushed back by the energy of it. The music stops as LOUISE shuts the door.*

Kerry Lovell has taken all the plants out of the library and put them inside the toilet bowls. Jesse Meadows has frozen into a human statue in the canteen and is refusing to unfreeze. And Tom England is hosting a jousting competition on the school field.

*The sound and light effect of a surge of water. A few seagulls. LOUISE and HUGH spin, suspended, as if underwater.*

TOBIAS. Um. Okay. I'm sensing a little tension here. A certain pressure.

It seems to me that some of the teachers here are struggling to keep their heads above the water. Luckily for them, in the coming years an enormous amount of money will be poured into your education system. Teachers will ride the wave.

Look at their eyes. They're tired, but they're hopeful for the future. Hang on, they'll be round in a second... there, you see it? Tired but hopeful?

Could you guys come in here too, please?

SUE and TIM enter and start spinning. PAUL enters and stands in the corner.

In twenty years' time, perhaps a more appropriate metaphor would be that teachers will be swimming against the tide. Many will feel overwhelmed, their eyes will change somehow. How much is too much? Louise will become a headteacher, and along with three thousand other headteachers, will write a letter home to parents asking for donations: glue sticks, sellotape, soap, even toilet paper.

Hey, Paul, why aren't you spinning?

PAUL. I'm busy.

TOBIAS. Doing what?

PAUL. Writing reports.

EMILY *enters bouncing a tennis ball.*

TOBIAS. Oh. Don't let me keep you.

PAUL. Emily is a consistently disruptive student. She has violent tendencies, poor manners, and rarely does her homework. Must. Try. Harder.

*The bell rings and everyone leaves except for TOBIAS and EMILY. The wave passes.*

## 9.

*A corridor. EMILY is bouncing her ball up against the wall.*

TOBIAS. What are you doing?

EMILY. Leave me alone.

TOBIAS. Why aren't you in your lesson?

EMILY. Who are you?

TOBIAS. Tobias.

EMILY. Are you the new German teaching assistant?

TOBIAS. Yes.

EMILLY. Is your surname Hitler?

TOBIAS. What, no, of course it's not Hitler, that's stupid. Is your surname Churchill?

EMILLY. No.

TOBIAS. Is it Shakespeare?

EMILLY. No.

TOBIAS. Do you like red telephone boxes?

EMILLY. No.

TOBIAS. Do you like queueing?

EMILLY. No.

TOBIAS. Well then.

EMILLY. Do you like Lederhosen?

TOBIAS. No.

EMILLY. Do you like Volkswagens?

TOBIAS. No.

EMILLY. Do you like Frankfurters?

TOBIAS. Everybody likes Frankfurters.

*Pause.*

So how are you?

EMILLY. Crap.

TOBIAS. Why?

EMILLY. It's been a shit day.

TOBIAS. Why?

EMILLY. McIntyre kicked me off the York trip. I did everything he asked and he still kicked me off it.

TOBIAS. Why?

EMILLY. Oversubscribed. Behavioural issues.

TOBIAS. Sounds reasonable.

EMILLY. It wasn't reasonable! I actually tried this time. I've been looking forward to it for months.

TOBIAS. I'm sorry to hear that, but shouldn't you be in your lesson?

EMILLY. Turner sent me out again. If I don't engage I get told off, if I engage too much I get told off.

TOBIAS. May I make a suggestion?

EMILLY. No.

EMILLY *throws her tennis ball at TOBIAS. He catches it and puts it inside his mug.*

TOBIAS. Okay I'm going to anyway. It's clear that you're angry and maybe people have told you for a long time that that's a bad thing. Sometimes it is. I have heard of you.

Didn't you burn Sarah Kendall's eyebrows off?

EMILLY. She deserved it.

TOBIAS. Why?

EMILLY. She pinned me down, shoved a tenner in my mouth and told me to buy myself some new fucking trainers for once.

TOBIAS. Wow.

*Pause.*

Maybe there is a different way for you to express your anger. Something more dignified, but maybe more powerful. I don't know. When I'm angry, I try to stop moaning and just do something.

EMILLY *walks away. A wave. She spins, suspended. TOBIAS turns to audience.*

Perhaps Emily is also drowning somehow. What is it Paul said? She's violent, disruptive, must try harder. She is certainly rude. Immature. Perhaps somewhat of an A-hole. But must try harder? No. I don't think this.

EMILLY *leaves.*



What Paul doesn't know is that right now Emily is organising a petition. She already has fourteen signatures. Not bad.

Oooh, hey – (*Insert operator's name*) Can you play that song that I like? The one with the strings? And all the feelings?

'Bitter Sweet Symphony' by The Verve starts playing.

It's so wonderful, thank you so much.

In the prospectus for Wordsworth Comprehensive, the school is described as a 'happy, thriving environment for inquisitive minds', but right now Year 7s are being gassed out of their classroom by stink bombs, flanning bins are flying down the science corridor, and a live chicken is roosting underneath the Goosebump novels in the library. The belly of the school is rumbling.

## 10.

*Montage scene.*

HUGH'S classroom. He is teaching a lesson on Mount Vesuvius. 'Bitter Sweet Symphony' continues to play.

HUGH. The Earth's crust on which you stand is fragile. Molten hot magma emanating from the core of the planet is creeping through the cracks in the mantle. Tectonic plates are aching and shifting.

EMILY stands on top of a table in another part of the school.

EMILY. Mr McIntyre has always had it in for me, that's why he kicked me off the history trip. If you've had enough of the injustices that these teachers inflict upon us, then sign my petition. I need your names!

A group of STUDENTS behave wildly. LOUISE enters, shooting imaginary guns into the air.

SUE enters and is wrapped up in bunting by the wild STUDENTS.

HUGH'S classroom.

HUGH. Vesuvius, like a towering giant, expands and contracts. Fit to burst and, sure enough, later that day it does.

*The tables and chairs fly into the air.*

Volcanic ash, at first, falls like fiery snow. You are quite sure it is the end of the world. Above you ash, beneath you magma. On all sides, a suffocating heat.

EMILY on the table.

EMILY. We are standing up for our student rights. This school is trying to stop us, trying to pen us in – telling us to follow the rules but we will not. We will challenge and we will argue. No, we will not shut up and listen. We will be heard. We will not be silenced!

LOUISE. Emily Greenslade! You get down from that table right now.

EMILY runs away and LOUISE chases her out.

Some STUDENTS enter and start doing a mad, fast version of the Macarena as SUE puts up bunting in the corridor.

SUE. Put that down please! I can't answer that question, I'm a little busy right now. Get off that table!!

The STUDENTS continue to do the Macarena. LOUISE enters.

LOUISE. Hey! Where's your teacher?

The STUDENTS run away.

EMILY runs in. SUE is trying to maintain control. The STUDENTS are rotating around them in slow-motion madness. LOUISE has gone full Matrix around them.

EMILLY. Listen up, Wordsworth Comp!

SUE. Please don't pop the balloons, they're for the assembly –

EMILLY. I demand to be on that bus, at 8 a.m., on Monday morning!

SUE. We need fifty more fold-out chairs, stop throwing them –

EMILLY. Thank you for your names, your support, your action.

SUE. There won't be enough for the governors. And stop eating the biscuits!

EMILLY. We need to make our voices heard.

SUE. Stay still! Sit down! Be quiet! Please!

EMILLY. Justice!

SUE. Quiet now, listen to me!

LOUISE. That's enough!

*Everyone leaves except SUE and LOUISE. 'Bitter Sweet Symphony' stops playing.*

## 11.

*Split scene. SUE and LOUISE and EMILLY and PAUL in different parts of the school.*

LOUISE. Sue, can I have a quick word?

SUE. Of course.

LOUISE. Why are your Year 11s doing the Macarena instead of revising for their GCSEs?

SUE. It's their last day so –

EMILLY. Sir?

EMILLY hands PAUL her petition.

PAUL. What's this?

EMILLY. My petition.

PAUL. Your petition?

LOUISE. I'm at a loss, Sue, help me out here.

SUE. They're just having a bit of fun.

LOUISE. I have already spoken to you about discipline today and it is not good enough.

PAUL. 'We the undersigned agree that it was unfair for Mr McIntyre to remove Emily Greenslade from the history trip to York.' So you've basically got seventy-four people, seventy-four of your mates to agree that it's unfair. That's not really how petitions work.

EMILLY. Yeah. So does that mean I can come on the trip?

PAUL. No.

EMILLY. But that's not fair.

SUE. Be fair, Louise.

PAUL. Sometimes life is unfair.

LOUISE. I've got students here trying to revise whilst your bottom set get to do the Macarena, is that fair?

PAUL. Right, I'm trying to drink my coffee and eat my lunch, and you're stopping me, and that's also unfair.

EMILLY/SUE. But I –

PAUL/LOUISE. If you want to have a future here you need to buck your ideas up. Fast.

PAUL puts the petition back in EMILLY's hands and exits.

LOUISE. And now you're late for lunch duty.

12.

SUE *marches towards lunch duty*. STUDENTS *surround her*.

SUE. Tom Brennan.

TOM BRENNAN. Yes, miss?

SUE. School jumper!

TOM BRENNAN. Oh.

SUE. Ben Vardy.

BEN. Yes, miss?

SUE. Take that hat off!

BEN. Sorry, miss.

SUE. Thomas England.

TOM ENGLAND. Yes, miss?

SUE. Shoelaces!

TOM ENGLAND. Err, okay, miss.

SUE. James Newton –

JAMES. Yeah.

SUE. Do up your flies!

*The STUDENTS gather behind SUE.*

Emily Greenslade. Get off the floor.

EMILLY. No.

STUDENTS. Ooooooooooh.

SUE. Can you get off the floor now?

EMILLY. Miss, my petition was ignored so I'm staging a sit-in.

SUE. Okay, everyone, there's nothing to see here. Move along please! Emily, I'm asking you to get off the floor, so can you please just get up.

EMILLY. I will not move until Mr McIntyre is fired. He made a promise that he didn't keep and now he needs to go!

SUE. Don't be stupid! You're sat in the middle of the dinner queue. You're stopping people getting their lunch.

EMILLY. You can't make me do anything.

SUE. I'm your teacher, Emily. It's very busy in here and so I need you to move. Now. Someone could get hurt. Emily, don't be ridiculous. Come on, Emily, just get up, come on get up, get up now! (*Etc.*)

*SUE tries to move EMILLY physically. EMILLY protests throughout.*

EMILLY. No, stop it, miss, stop telling me what to do, stop telling me what to do. Get off me, get off me. No!

*At the height of intensity EMILLY elbows SUE in the face then pushes her down. SUE falls backwards and hits the back of her head on the floor. LOUISE enters and rushes over to SUE.*

LOUISE. Who is responsible for this?

*Everyone points at EMILLY. EMILLY runs away.*

13.

*A high-pitched ringing sound. Everyone melts away from around SUE. SUE starts moving towards a bright light.*

KING ARTHUR *enters*.

ARTHUR. This place is going to see great change, Sue.

SUE....

ARTHUR. You guys need to rethink stuff. You need to give up the ghosts and start paying attention to the living things.

SUE. What do you mean?

ARTHUR. Your community could do with a reshuffle. A rethink. I think. The nation too. Soon, we need to realise that we aren't

special. There aren't any swords to be pulling out of these rocks any more.

Britannia, this soggy little island, we think we're so clever. We think we've got so much to protect. But there isn't anything to protect. We were always soggy. Our white cliffs are crumbling and we are falling into the sea.

You people need to stop believing in me. I'm a myth. A legend. I don't exist. I've never existed.

ARTHUR *pours a line of sand across the stage from his mug. He then goes to leave.*

SUE. I don't understand.

ARTHUR. I'll meet you at the precipice. You are soon to join me as my honoured guest in the castle of Camelot.

ARTHUR *leaves. SUE touches the back of her head. Blood. She finds herself in the staffroom surrounded by TEACHERS.*

ALL. Sue? Sue? Are you okay?

HUGH. How many fingers am I holding up?

LOUISE. This is a joke, an absolute joke. She's out. By the end of the day I want Emily gone.

HUGH. Louise, we can't pick her up by the scruff of the neck and chuck her out the front gate like that.

TIM. Hugh, there's quite a lot of blood coming out of her head.

HUGH. Tim, that's not helpful. Look, Louise. It's very clear you started today with a bee in your bonnet, but that is no reason to take it out on Emily Greenslade.

PAUL. That's bullshit, Hugh.

LOUISE. She's a problem student, she's always been a problem student, now SUE is BLEEDING from her HEAD.

SUE. We need to reshuffle things.

DONNA *enters.*

DONNA. Louise, they've set the bouncy castle up in front of the main entrance.

LOUISE. Oh, for... Donna, can you just look after her please.

LOUISE *exits and DONNA tends to SUE with a handkerchief.*

TIM. Hugh, I think it might be some kind of head injury.

HUGH. Tim, please!

TIM. Sorry.

PAUL. So what's the plan, Hugh?

HUGH. Rest assured, Paul, everything's under control.

PAUL. Is it, Hugh? Is it really? Because last time I checked we were caught in the middle of the fucking Somme. Do you even know where Emily is?

HUGH. She's in my office, Paul. Donna's taking care of her... Donna... oh, for Pete's sake!

HUGH *sprints out.*

DONNA. Sue, how many fingers am I holding up?

SUE. Donna, we're too soggy.

DONNA. Oh yes, I know, Sue.

TIM. Paul, can I have a word please?

PAUL. Not now.

LOUISE *re-enters.*

LOUISE. I've had enough! This has gone too far. They've barricaded themselves in the canteen and they're smearing food all over the walls. We can't get in to clear up the blood.

PAUL. Louise, we have to do something. This shitstorm is entirely down to Hugh and you know it as well as I do.

LOUISE. We are not doing this right now.

HUGH *re-enters*.

HUGH. Donna, Emily is sat with a Year 7 student receptionist, I need you to head over there right now.

DONNA. Take this.

HUGH *holds the bloody handkerchief to SUE's head*.

SUE. Hugh, I'm so sorry.

HUGH. It's okay. Sue, it's not a bother.

PAUL. Not a bother! You're deluding / yourself!

SUE. I was just trying to be what I thought this school wanted me to be – and it was awful. And now I don't know what to believe.

PAUL. It's not your fault. Sue, what can you expect with a school run like this one?

HUGH. Paul. Why today? Why are you doing this today? This is a special day, Education Education Edu–

PAUL. Enough! I voted for Blair too, for fucksake, but don't whip everyone here into a storm of blind optimism.

TIM. Paul?

PAUL. The danger with filling people with hope is that in reality it will only ever be an unmitigated disappointment.

TIM. Paul, can I have a word please?

PAUL. What is it?!

TIM. Can I have my Tamagotchi back?

PAUL. No, Pashley, it's not even yours, it belongs to Tom Brennan in 7W.

TIM. Please, Paul.

PAUL. I think I'll give it back to Tom myself, thanks.

TIM. Paul, can you give it back?

PAUL. Can't you see we're in the middle of something!

HUGH. Paul, you're really testing my patience with your attitude today.

SUE *tries to get up*.

SUE. I need to get my costume on...

LOUISE. Sit down, Sue.

SUE. My costume. Cool Britannia. The assembly...

TIM. Please, Paul, just give me back my Tamagotchi.

PAUL *gets the Tamagotchi out*.

PAUL. Is this what you want?

TIM. Yes.

PAUL. This stupid pet.

TIM. It's not stupid.

PAUL. So you can feed it. A burger. An apple. A burger. An apple...

TIM. Stop, Paul, you're feeding it too much.

PAUL. A burger. An apple. (Etc.)

TIM. STOP IT, PAUL. IT CAN'T TAKE THAT MUCH FOOD.

*The Tamagotchi beeps its death toll.*

PAUL. Oh, whoops, sorry, Pashers, I guess you can have it back now.

PAUL *throws the dead Tamagotchi back to TIM. TIM looks at it and puts it in his pocket. TIM pushes PAUL.*

TIM. You're just a flipping bully, aren't you?

PAUL. Oh, we're pushing now, are we? Mr Pashley?

TIM. My name is Mr Pashley –

PAUL. Nobody cares.

TIM *lunges at PAUL. They fight on the floor. It is scrappy and juvenile. TOBIAS and HUGH try to pull them apart.*

SUE *gets up and wanders out.*

LOUISE *throws down an imaginary bomb. PAUL and TIM stop fighting but are still full of venom.*

LOUISE. Paul McIntyre. Timothy Pashley.

This muck-up day is not over yet. I need you ALL to march straight to your classes, teach your final lessons and then drag yourselves to this wretched Achievement Assembly with smiles on your faces, so help me God.

*They start to leave. TIM gives PAUL the two-fingered salute.*

PAUL. Did you just see that? I didn't even get to eat my fucking lunch.

TOBIAS, TIM and PAUL *leave.*

HUGH. Very mature, Paul.

14.

LOUISE *takes a breath.*

LOUISE. She has to go.

HUGH. I remember when you first arrived here, Lou. All fresh-faced and nervous. When you came out of your first lesson, you were sobbing, like a rabbit in the headlights you were. Well, look at you now. Cruisin' around the school. Screaming at students in the corridors. Me oh my, look how far you've come.

LOUISE. I'll get the paperwork sorted.

HUGH. Not today, Louise.

LOUISE. What?

HUGH. Not today. For now she stays.

LOUISE. Why on earth would we let her stay?

HUGH. Because she is a good student. She deserves another chance.

LOUISE. Hugh, did you see what she did to Sue?

*Pause.*

HUGH. Oh go on, Lou. Don't look at me like that. I phoned home. There was no response. I'll deal with it on Monday.

LOUISE. Sue is bleeding from her skull, blood is gushing out of her head because of Emily's violent behaviour, and we need to do something about it now.

HUGH. I'm very sorry about what happened to Sue, but I'm quite sure it was an accident, Lou.

LOUISE. And what about bullying other students into signing a petition? What about campaigning to get a competent member of staff fired?

HUGH. Her concerns are valid, Lou.

LOUISE. But she's expressing them in entirely the wrong way.

HUGH. And it's our job to teach her the right way. Not wash our hands of her.

LOUISE. I hear you. We do need to teach her. She needs to learn, and everyone who witnessed her actions today needs to learn that physical violence is unacceptable. What will the other students learn if we let her get away with this?

HUGH. And what will Emily learn if we let her go?

LOUISE. That actions have repercussions... That violence is not acceptable under any circumstance. Violence towards teachers. I've worked so hard to get this school back on track, to try to make it a safe place to learn and to teach.

HUGH. Firstly, although you are head of discipline –

LOUISE. I am head of discipline.

HUGH. Although you are head of discipline, a position I created for you, I do not appreciate you trying to out-power me on this.

LOUISE. 'Power'? This has got nothing to do with power.

There should be no debate on the matter: A line has been crossed, a teacher has been assaulted, and I expect you to back me up.

HUGH. Let's just stay calm and continue preparing for the assembly –

LOUISE. If we, a school, don't show our students the difference between right and wrong, then nobody / has any chance

HUGH. Emily is a good student, I know her, she was in my Year 7 geography class. She was a warm, intelligent, kind student. We should not be kicking students like that out into the gutter.

LOUISE. Yes, but what I'm –

HUGH. Let me finish, woman. It is us who have done this to her. Us as a school who have pushed her to the edge, and it is us who need to bring her back. I believe this child's life is too important to be ripped out like that. Surely you can understand that?

LOUISE. This isn't about one student, Hugh, this is about our whole school, and you clearly aren't prepared to make any difficult decisions. Don't play this like you're the good guy. You're taking the easy way out and dressing it up like you've got the moral high ground. Which you don't, at all. And I'm really... fucking disappointed.

HUGH... Okay, Louise, remember Mills' thought for the day: Do not wait till it's too late –

LOUISE. Grow up, Mr. Mills.

PAUL enters.

PAUL. She's not at reception. Emily's gone.

15.

*The corridor.*

TOBIAS. I have to admit this party is not what I was expecting. Things are a lot more complicated on the inside than they seem from the outside –

EMILY comes running by. TOBIAS grabs her arm.

Emily, slow down.

EMILY. Get off me.

TOBIAS. Where are you going?

EMILY. None of your business.

TOBIAS. I think you need to calm down.

EMILY. Don't tell me to calm down.

TOBIAS. You seem upset.

EMILY. Don't tell me how I feel.

TOBIAS. Why don't you sit down and we can talk about it?

EMILY. Stop telling me what to do.

TOBIAS. You're not thinking rationally.

EMILY loses control and starts violently pushing TOBIAS.

EMILY. Stop telling me what to do! I listened to you before and I fucked it up. I really fucked it up. Go back home, you fucking Nazi!

Fuck.

EMILY runs away. TOBIAS looks after her. He is visibly shaken. He looks to the audience.

TOBIAS. You want me to say something now?

TOBIAS looks up and notices something. TIM, PAUL, HUGH and LOUISE all enter, looking up to the same spot.

16.

EMILY opens the door onto the roof. She walks right to the edge created by the line of sand and looks down. She walks along and stops at the precipice. She puts her headphones on. We return to the TEACHERS.

ALL. Shit.

TIM. I've tried shouting but she can't hear me.

LOUISE. Emily Greenslade, I know you can hear me, get down from that roof right now!

HUGH. Relax, Louise.

LOUISE. The time has come and gone for relaxing, Hugh.

PAUL. Hugh, the parents are arriving and the car park is getting full.

HUGH. I understand that, Paul, but we're dealing with a bit of a situation here.

PAUL looks up.

PAUL. For fuck's sake – EMILY! GET DOWN FROM THERE! NOW!

*On the roof, EMILY puts up her middle finger. Back to the TEACHERS.*

TIM. She can't hear you, you murderer.

PAUL. Fuck off, Pashers.

TIM goes for him again. HUGH holds him back.

HUGH. Just calm down, there's a child on the roof.

*A parent approaches. The TEACHERS awkwardly try and hide the situation.*

Oh, hello, Mrs Matthews, what a lovely hat, if you could please make your way round the side of the bouncy castle someone will be with you shortly. Thank you.

*On the roof, EMILY balances on the edge. Back to the TEACHERS.*

LOUISE. I'm going up there.

HUGH. It's not safe, Lou.

PAUL. That roof's been needing repairs since before I started here!

LOUISE. How could you let it get that bad, Hugh?

HUGH. This is your fault, Louise, we wasted time faffing about discipline.

LOUISE. Are you trying to provoke me, Hugh, because it's WORKING.

*Another parent approaches.*

Mr Phillips, welcome! Yes there is a child on the roof but everything is under control. If you'd like to make your way round the side of the building we'll be with you shortly.

PAUL. What is wrong with this fucking day?

LOUISE. Shut up.

TIM. Always going on about yourself, aren't you, mate.

PAUL. RIGHT. THAT'S IT.

HUGH. Paul, I need you to mingle with the parents –

PAUL. I've been dealing with the parents all afternoon!

*The TEACHERS arguing builds into an inaudible shouting match.*



17.

TOBIAS *opens the door to the roof.*TOBIAS. Hi... (*Louder.*) Hi.*EMILLY takes her headphones off.*

EMILLY. Hi.

TOBIAS. What are you doing up here?

EMILLY. I don't know.

TOBIAS. Are you going to jump?

EMILLY. I don't know.

TOBIAS. Or are you just doing this for attention?

EMILLY. Why do you always have to be so rude?

TOBIAS. It was just a question.

*Pause.*

EMILLY. I'm in a lot of trouble, aren't I?

TOBIAS. Yes.

EMILLY. I'm going to be expelled, aren't I?

TOBIAS. Probably.

*Pause.*

The way you spoke to me earlier was very hurtful.

EMILLY. I know.

TOBIAS. I know you didn't mean it but your words really upset me.

EMILLY. I'm sorry.

TOBIAS. That's okay. I forgive you.

EMILLY. Really?

TOBIAS. Yes.

EMILLY. But I've been a complete bitch.

TOBIAS. Yes, a little.

EMILLY. I don't care. I'm going to be expelled, I won't get any qualifications, I'll end up stuck in this stupid place with these stupid people for the rest of my life.

TOBIAS. So jump.

EMILLY. What?

TOBIAS. If you really believe that then jump. If you're imagining the rest of your life from now and it doesn't seem worth it, jump.

EMILLY. You're not supposed to be saying that.

TOBIAS. Do it. You won't have to deal with the consequences of what you've done. You won't have to face Miss Belltop-Doyle, Mr Mills, your parents. You won't have to deal with the embarrassment when you move to another school.

EMILLY. Stop it.

TOBIAS. Or you can come down with me. And you can take responsibility for your actions. You can tell Miss Belltop-Doyle that you're sorry. You can face the music and you can fucking dance to it.

EMILLY. I'd rather forget it.

TOBIAS. That wouldn't be very sensible. You might do it all over again.

*Pause.*

EMILLY. I don't want to be an adult. It sounds horrible.

TOBIAS. Yes. It is sometimes. But it can also be pretty cool. You can drink beer with your friends. You can teach yourself to cry at things you couldn't allow yourself to before. You can learn to talk to your parents as equals. You can take all of this energy and work out how to actually do something. Maybe you'll move to China. Maybe you'll live by the sea. Maybe you'll be a train driver, maybe you'll work with computers, maybe you'll be a politician. Maybe one day

you'll pick up a mandolin and discover you really like playing the mandolin then just spend the rest of your life playing the mandolin. Who knows? It's quite exciting.

EMILY. I won't be a politician.

TOBIAS. Why?

EMILY. It's just never going to happen.

TOBIAS. Fine. I like you, Emily. I feel that when you're an adult maybe we could be friends.

EMILY. Could I come visit you in Germany?

TOBIAS. Sure.

EMILY. Cool.

*Pause.*

TOBIAS. Can I tell you something?

EMILY. What?

TOBIAS. I'm jealous of you.

EMILY. Don't lie.

TOBIAS. I mean it. You're young, you're intelligent, you're attractive. You have a strong sense of yourself, a very keen sense of right and wrong. Even if today goes as badly as it could possibly go, you'll wake up tomorrow and you'll still have all of that.

EMILY. You think I'm attractive?

TOBIAS. Yes.

EMILY. Are you flirting with me?

TOBIAS. No. It was just a statement.

EMILY. It sounds like you're flirting with me.

TOBIAS. No offence but you're fifteen and I like men.

*SUE bursts through the door dressed up in a bloodstained Geri Halliwell Union Jack dress.*

SUE. Emily? Emily! TOBIAS – not you too!

TOBIAS. Sue?

EMILY. Miss. I'm so sorry.

SUE. It's okay. It's just a scratch. What are you doing up here? I've been so worried.

EMILY. Why are you being nice to me, miss?

SUE. Because it's my job, Emily, whether you hurt me or not, it's my job.

EMILY. Why are you dressed like that?!

SUE. I'm Geri! For the assembly!

EMILY. I've ruined your assembly. Look...

SUE. Wow, look how small everybody looks from up here... like little Borrowers.

*SUE adjusts her blood-soaked wig and shouts down to the people below.*

HELLO, EVERYONE! Excuse me, can you listen to me please. Hello? Listen up, guys. Excuse me. SHUT UP EVERYONE AND LISTEN TO ME.

*SUE gets everyone's attention.*

Parents, governors, teachers, and of course our wonderful students whose achievements we have proudly come together to celebrate this afternoon. Welcome!

*SUE looks at her planned speech. A bell tolls. She decides it isn't relevant any more. She screws it up and throws it away.*

I was going to talk about how special you all are. But today I came face to face with legend, and I didn't understand at first because with every fibre of my being I think that each and every one of you is special. But we are no more special than anyone else. And we are just as special as everyone else. It doesn't matter whether you are any better academically, or faster at running, or have stronger muscles, or are more articulate, or wear a cleaner jumper. Specialness is pretend.

We need to realise that we make the myths. Us. We set the targets, the league tables, give out the certificates, we make the rules. And we can change them. You are not defined by your ability to come out on top. There are no swords to be pulling out of these rocks any more.

What makes us special is our ability to care for one another, to work together and support each other, because that is the only thing that is real. And that together, things can only get b—

*SUE slips from the roof and falls.*

*KING ARTHUR enters and picks SUE up. He carries her slowly away.*

TOBIAS. Sue!

EMILY. Miss!

18.

TOBIAS. Sue fell four floors from the old building. Past science, English, maths, history. The students and parents saw her fall and held their breath. The teachers saw her too. And as she fell, all the floors, all the subjects — they blurred into one.

What Sue didn't know as she fell was that below her was an inflatable bouncy castle. She smashed into the plastic at eighty-five miles an hour and was knocked immediately unconscious.

Sue lay still in Kamelot Kastle for three minutes. Which may not sound like a long time, but it really does feel like it when you are afraid. And the people were. It was really scary to see her lying there so limp and pathetic, all colour left her cheeks and for a moment I was convinced she was a dead person. I called her Zombie Spice to lighten the mood.

It didn't go down so well. Sue was taken to hospital, the parents were sent home. And the teachers...

*LOUISE enters the staffroom followed by TIM, followed by PAUL, followed by HUGH. They don't look at each other. They are weary and tired. After some time.*

LOUISE. Pub?

TIM. Yeah.

HUGH. First round's on me.

*The TEACHERS leave.*

TOBIAS. They forgot to take me to the pub. That did hurt a little.

And so ended my first day at Wordsworth Comp. I have to admit it is not what I was expecting. But I have learnt to roll with the punches.

In the coming years the school will receive an enormous amount of money and will be completely renovated. It will become a sports specialist, then a science specialist, then languages. In ten years' time, it will become an academy. Two years after that the funding will start to falter, and after years and years of struggling with fewer and fewer resources, the school will close.

*SUE enters wheeling a bloody chair, wig and boots in her hand, and sits centre stage. She is in the hospital.*

They'll try to rebuild here: office buildings, skate parks, clubs. But the funding will always fall through. And the grass will creep through the bricks once more.

19.

TIM *and* TOM BRENNAN *enter*.

TIM. Tom? Tom Brennan?

TOM BRENNAN. Oh, hello, sir.

TIM. Your Tamagotchi.

TOM BRENNAN. Oh yeah.

TIM. But I need to tell you something. I killed it.

TOM BRENNAN. Oh.

TIM. I know how hard this must be for you. It was one hundred and forty years old. One hundred and forty Tama years. That must have been a lot of effort. You must have worked very hard.

TOM BRENNAN. Yeah.

TIM. All that time feeding it and growing it. Caring for it. And I killed it just like that... I'm sorry.

TOM BRENNAN. It's okay. I shouldn't have brought it into school.

TIM. That's true. Well, here you go.

TIM *passes the Tamagotchi over to* TOM BRENNAN.

TOM BRENNAN. Thanks, sir...

*Pause.*

You know there's a button on the back. If you've got a compass or something you can just reset it. You can start again.

TIM. That's great.

TOM BRENNAN. Sir, are you okay?

TIM. Yeah. I'm fine. Thanks, Tom.

20.

EMILY *enters and approaches* SUE. SUE *starts to cry and* EMILY *comforts her*.

TOBIAS. That evening Emily will visit Sue in hospital. On Monday she will be expelled.

She will move to Meadowfields School seven miles down the road and sit her GCSEs there. She will continue to grow and change and struggle. She'll go to York University and pay a thousand pounds a year for the privilege. She'll come and visit me in Berlin. I'll take her to the Reichstag. She'll ask so many questions. What's that for? What's the point in that? What does that do? It'll be so annoying.

Okay, well, I think that's all I have to say now. Thank you so much for having me. I've had a really nice time. Auf Wiedersehen.

TOBIAS *leaves*. EMILY *takes her headphones off*. *Presses play*. 'Things Can Only Get Better' by D: Ream *plays*.

EMILY *places the headphones over SUE's ears*. *The music starts to fill the room as the rest of the cast enter in their school jumpers*. *They dance angrily, aggressively, hopefully, they keep dancing, they keep dancing until the music crescendos and, with a flash, we cut to black*.

*The End.*