



# BITESIZE PLAYWRITING

10 five-minute plays for two actors  
by young playwrights aged 12-17  
(and one drama teacher!)

**TAMASHA**

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## A special Thank You to our Tamasha Playwrights presenters and mentors:

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### Introduction by Fin Kennedy, Artistic Director of Tamasha Theatre Company

Tamasha is proud to present this eBook, a volume made up entirely of new short plays by young people still at secondary school. It is the result of one of our company's most popular Covid lockdown projects, Bitesize Playwrighting.

This initiative was a response to the closure of schools during the first wave of the pandemic, in Spring 2020. Tamasha is in touch with a lot of Drama teachers. Monitoring social media, it was clear that Drama was one of the worst affected subjects by the transition to home-working and online learning, which swept the world at this time. Theatre is a collaborative, live, and in-person art form which is almost impossible to conduct under such conditions, never mind teach. The rehearsal room or Drama studio is our creative space, and with this removed, both theatre artists and Drama teachers were left floundering.

Promoting, supporting and, at times, defending Drama teaching in schools has been a preoccupation of our company since its founding 30 years ago. Tamasha has a large and thriving Developing Artists network, with whom we regularly create young people's projects as a way of both supporting our teacher peers in education, and providing experience - and an income - for the culturally diverse theatre artists our company supports.

When the pandemic hit, our core Tamasha Playwrights group was 4 months into their year-long attachment with us. As a playwright myself, I immediately felt the weight of responsibility to these writers at the start of their careers, as the theatre industry they were training for apparently collapsed around them.

Fortunately, there is more than one way to make a living as a dramatist. I have personally written more plays for young people while working as writer-in-residence in secondary schools than any other kind of play. I have a whole hard drive full of creative playwrighting exercises for teenagers, developed over a 15-year career spent largely in inner city schools.

Tamasha Playwrights has always been a holistic course, designed to leave its graduates with the skills to make a living between commissions, and outside the theatre industry if necessary, as much as it teaches the craft of playwriting itself. Lockdown seemed like the perfect time to share the benefits of our experience, and take this beyond theory and into the real world.

Bitesize Playwriting was conceived as a series of five-minute videos presented by me and members of the 2018 and 2019 cohorts of Tamasha Playwrights. Taken together, and in order, they sought to break playwriting down into its constituent parts, with videos on Inciting Incident, Character, Action, Location, and Uses of Time, each backed up with downloadable handouts, and including analysis of some professional texts produced by Tamasha. The idea was to support young people to write their own five-minute play for two actors while under lockdown.

As a scheme of work, the 30 short videos were intended to support Drama teachers to continue to teach probably the only aspect of play-making which suits being alone, until such time as groups could once again gather to rehearse. As an added incentive, we included a competition for participants to send us their plays. This eBook with our 10 favourites, generously supported by Methuen Drama, is the result.

We were touched by the enthusiastic response to this initiative, with schools taking part across the UK and from as far afield as South Africa, Brazil and Saudi Arabia. Young people's imaginations never cease to amaze and impress me, and the standard of entries was high.

Before deciding on the 10 short plays in this book, a longlist of entrants was offered some one-to-one mentoring to polish up their drafts, each with a Tamasha Playwright offering written notes and meeting with students and their teachers. We're grateful to our funders the Andrew Lloyd Webber and Garfield Weston Foundations for their generous support, which allowed us to offer fees to our writers for their dramaturgical services, and a valuable education credit on their CVs. I have personally learned as much about playwriting from breaking it down for young people as I have writing my own plays, and I know that all our participating mentors found the same.

The plays themselves were all unique visions from young creative minds, and we received many more submissions than we can include here, with several extending into much longer plays, and for many more than two characters. We were delighted to have inspired so many. Our main criteria for choosing the finalists was how well they showcased the advice in the original videos, and met the brief of a five-minute two-hander - the simplest form playwriting can take, and in which all you need to know can be learned.

So this eBook is very much intended to accompany the original videos, which remain online and free to access for all schools, even though the competition itself has now closed.

We hope they will inspire young people and their teachers to create their own short dramas for many years to come.

**Fin Kennedy, Artistic Director**

**Tamasha Theatre Company**

# BREAKING THE NEWS

by Eliza Hogermeer  
Dame Alice Owen School, Year 11

We really enjoyed this short play in which two sisters are surprised by their father with the news that they are leaving India to move to England. The opening scene of single word lines is a great use and extension of the Six Word Plays exercise contained in one of the first Bitesize videos, and it works a treat here. The moment in the family's life is well chosen and, even though there are three characters and the play goes a little over five minutes, every moment seems necessary and earned, showing a young playwright of real promise.

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## CHARACTER LIST

**WINIFRED** 17, young and naive

**DAPHNE** 19, caring and obedient

**FATHER** 51, affectionate, hardworking

*The Vinton home, living room, evening. There is a sofa, a plush chair, a small table, a chest of drawers and a gramophone.*

**DAPHNE** is sitting on the sofa, waiting for her sister to return home, as requested by her mother. She is wearing a floral tea length blue dress and clutching two Indian passports; she stares at them, deep in worry. She hears the click of a key turning in the lock, and hides the passports under a cushion, quickly smoothing down her hair and erasing the worry from her face. Enter **WINIFRED**, covering her chiffon pink dress with her grey coat, trying to creep past quietly. **DAPHNE** clears her throat, accusingly.

**WINNIE** Sorry...

**DAPHNE** Late.

**WINNIE** Daph

**DAPHNE** Where?

*Pause.*

**WINNIE** Calcutta.

**DAPHNE** Dancing?

**WINNIE** Yes...

**DAPHNE** Who..

**WINNIE** Nobody!

*Both grow mock serious, and **DAPHNE** pretends to take notes down on her hand.*

**DAPHNE** Rich?

**WINNIE** Extremely.

**DAPHNE** Job?

**WINNIE** Railway.

**DAPHNE** *[rolling her eyes]* Naturally.

**WINNIE** Engineer.

**DAPHNE** Really!

**WINNIE** *[mocking her sister]* Naturally.

**DAPHNE** *[ignoring her sister]* Looks?

**WINNIE** Gorgeous!

*They squeal excitedly together, dancing around the room. WINNIE finds two glasses in the chest of drawers. She hands DAPHNE a glass and raises her own.*

**DAPHNE** *[growing serious]* I have to tell you something..

**WINNIE** After the toast! To love.

**DAPHNE** To love ...and new beginnings.

**WINNIE** Yes.

**DAPHNE** Cheers!

*They clink their glasses, dancing to the record playing, and dissolve into giggles.*

*FATHER enters, wearing his red dressing gown and pinstriped trousers. The girls immediately fall silent and stand up, DAPHNE quickly tidies the two glasses, turning red.*

*Her father sits down into his chair, looking serious.*

**WINNIE** Father?

**FATHER** Sit.

*WINNIE sits down. DAPHNE pauses, tensely glancing over at FATHER.*

**FATHER** I'll take care of it.

**WINNIE** Daph?

*DAPHNE looks at her, upset and worried. She glances back to FATHER, biting her lip.*

**FATHER** *[softly]* Go.

*With a final desperate glance at WINNIE, DAPHNE exits the room. WINNIE watches the door close quietly behind her.*

**WINNIE** What's going on?

*Her FATHER, taking a breath and ignoring WINNIE, walks towards the chest of drawers.*

**WINNIE** What is it, Father?

*He hands her a suitcase from the drawer.*

*Pause, "It's Been A Long Long Time" by Kitty Kallen plays quietly in the background.*

**FATHER** We're moving.

**WINNIE** Alright.

**FATHER** We leave on the 7th.

**WINNIE** Well, that will give me plenty of time to get presents for all the cousins! It will be marvellous to see them again!

*She smiles happily at her **FATHER**.*

**FATHER** No Winnie, not Madras. England.

*The record playing gets louder and the music becomes dissonant.*

**WINNIE** *[her smile falters, disbelieving]* What?

**FATHER** *[repeating himself slowly]* To England.

*Pause.*

**WINNIE** No..

**FATHER** Yes. The war is getting worse here. We *have* to leave.

**WINNIE** You can't

**FATHER** It's for the best.

**WINNIE** Surely not!

**FATHER** I've made my decision.

**WINNIE** How do you know that *England* is the right one?

*He falters, unsure how to answer her.*

*Pause.*

*He picks the passports up off the sofa, staring at them for a while in his hands.*

**FATHER** *[quietly]* Look, Winnie, I've made up my mind.

**WINNIE** There must be another way.

**FATHER** I know this isn't easy for you.

**WINNIE** What about.. my friends...my life, what about

*Dissonant music changes to beautiful strings. A silhouette of her and her lover dancing that evening appears on stage right, the man goes down on one knee. The silhouette disappears, the music stops.*

*She pauses, unable to finish.*

**WINNIE** I can't do it, I can't, I

*She starts to well up, biting her lip to stop the tears.*

**FATHER** *[goes to comfort her]* Winnie..

**WINNIE** *[shrugging off his touch]* Leave.

*He faces her and places a passport into her hand.*

**FATHER** Three days.

**WINNIE**, trembling with emotion, holds his eye contact until he turns to leave the room, barely holding her composure.

*The door closes with a click, and **WINNIE** holds her hand to her mouth in an attempt to stifle her sobs. She rushes to the record player and turns up the volume on the record to drown out the sound of her crying and flings herself onto her sofa.*

*Pause.*

**WINNIE** hears a knock at the door and attempts to clean herself up. **DAPHNE** enters the room. They make eye contact.

Silence, in which they hug, **WINNIE** cries into her sister, **DAPHNE** tries to keep composed while comforting her.

**DAPHNE** It's

**WINNIE** Fine?

**DAPHNE** Well.. it's

**WINNIE** Another country!

**DAPHNE** It's Britain.

**WINNIE** ...And?

**DAPHNE** We are British.

**WINNIE** But *India* is home.

**WINNIE** sinks into the sofa, the gravity of the situation hitting her.

**WINNIE** Our whole lives...

**DAPHNE** goes to the chest of drawers and pulls out a pair of shoes. She places them into **WINNIE's** hands.

**DAPHNE** Shoes.

**WINNIE** For..?

**DAPHNE** *[smiling]* Dancing, mehn!

**WINNIE** stands up with the pair of shoes in her hands, staring at them, unsure. The silhouette of her lover dancing with her, appears on stage right, the beautiful music returns.

Pause.

**DAPHNE** It's the same everywhere, you know.

*The silhouette disappears. The music stops.*

**WINNIE** *[snapping back into focus]* What?

**DAPHNE** Dancing! It's the same. In England... here...

**WINNIE** ...It's putting one foot in front of another.

**DAPHNE** smiles at her and **WINNIE** goes to place the shoes into the suitcase on the bed. She takes a final look at the shoes.

**DAPHNE** You don't have to pack them now! We've got three days.

**WINNIE** shakes her head, making eye contact with her sister. She gives **DAPHNE** a shoe. They both hold the shoes, hovering above the suitcase.

**WINNIE** To new beginnings.

**DAPHNE** nods and they both put the shoes in the suitcase.

Sitting on the sofa, **WINNIE** rests her head in **DAPHNE's** lap, **DAPHNE** begins to sing a lullaby, stroking **WINNIE's** hair. **WINNIE** joins in but quickly falls asleep.

**DAPHNE** stops singing, looking into the distance, letting out a worried sigh. Blackout.

# ISOLATED

by Mia Dacosta  
Dame Alice Owen School, Year 11

This tense two-hander about a stressed doctor husband returning home to his neglected wife during the pandemic, is an extraordinarily mature piece of writing. The subtext of this dysfunctional relationship is heartbreakingly clear, and the way in which tiny things are seized on by both parties in an unhappy relationship is very well-observed. This writer worked hard between drafts to resist going over the top with the couple's argument, the result instead is a masterclass in 'less is more' passive aggression, and skilled playwrighting.

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## CHARACTER LIST:

**WIFE** female, mid-20s

**HUSBAND** male, older than Wife

*LIGHTS UP on a large kitchen with an upper-class, modern style. The room emanates a clean blue glow, and every surface is almost medically polished. There are no paintings, decorations or pictures on display. A pot of water is on a hob and a radio by a window plays 'Baby Mine'.*

**WIFE** - feminine and precise - enters from stage right, humming along to the tune. She nurtures Plant; a potted succulent, which she places by the window.

**WIFE** Some more sunlight will be good for 'ya.

*She looks over to Plant in an intimate moment. Sound of a car pulling in. **WIFE** quickly pushes Plant back, turns the radio down and turns up the temperature on the hob. **HUSBAND** - smartly dressed - enters stage left, slamming the door as he rushes in. He pulls off a surgical mask with relief.*

**HUSBAND** Sorry I'm late. Traffic seems to be back to normal.

***HUSBAND** drops his bag by the door and strides into the kitchen. He grins when he sees **WIFE**, creeping behind her and laying a kiss on her neck.*

**WIFE** Did you wash your hands?

**HUSBAND** I will. Look what I got you.

***HUSBAND** pulls away and retrieves a small boxed cupcake from his coat pocket. **WIFE** stares at it.*

**WIFE** A cupcake?

**HUSBAND** Yeah, one of those fancy bakeries came round to the hospital - 'as a great thanks to the heroes of the NHS'. I snagged you the last one.

**WIFE** I shouldn't really have gluten.

*Pause. **HUSBAND** frowns at her.*

**HUSBAND** You don't like it?

**WIFE** [immediately] No, of course not. Thank you, it's very thoughtful.

*She kisses his cheek, but **HUSBAND** holds her and turns it into a longer mouth kiss. Eventually, she pulls away.*

**WIFE** We'll share it after dinner.

**HUSBAND** *grins and goes to cup her face, but she holds him back.*

**WIFE** Wash your hands first.

**HUSBAND** *groans like a child*

**WIFE** I mean it.

**HUSBAND** *rolls his eyes, begrudgingly walking to the sink and rinsing his hands.*

**HUSBAND** Happy?

**WIFE** *hums in agreement, then turns back to the hob. HUSBAND sits at an island counter at center stage, kicks off his shoes and pulls out a phone.*

**HUSBAND** Bit of drama at work today.

**WIFE** Oh really?

**HUSBAND** A teenager came in with a head injury. Nearly comatose; had to go straight to surgery.

**WIFE** *[tuts]* Oh poor thing, what happened to them?

**HUSBAND** Went to one of those riots against the police. Decided to throw a rock at them for pity sake. Don't know what they expected.

**WIFE** *turns her head and stares at him. HUSBAND notes her silence and looks up.*

**HUSBAND** Well, if you're going to piss the police off, they're going to bounce back aren't they.

**WIFE** Yes, of course.

**HUSBAND** If you go looking for trouble, you're gonna get trouble.

**WIFE** Yes, of course.

**HUSBAND** I know you don't understand, but things like that easily get out of hand. They shouldn't have even been out in the first place.

**WIFE** *just smiles at him. HUSBAND huffs, then takes his coat off and places it by the table, which she immediately collects alongside the shoes.*

**HUSBAND** How was your day then?

**WIFE** Busy.

**HUSBAND** Must be exhausting sitting on your bum all day. Turn that music off, will you, it's doing my head in.

**WIFE** *spares him a look, but obeys.*

**WIFE** I got a new plant.

**HUSBAND** *glances up from his phone and eyes Plant.*

**HUSBAND** I can see that. Don't you get tired of those things?

**WIFE** Do you?

**HUSBAND** *fixes WIFE a look. She smiles at him, saccharine, and hangs up his coat.*

**WIFE** Did you get the shopping?

**HUSBAND** Sorry?

**WIFE** I said did you get the shopping.

**HUSBAND** No. I told you, there was traffic.

**WIFE** You'll have to get it tomorrow then.

**HUSBAND** Yeah I get that. Look I've had a tough day so lay off a bit, yeah?

**WIFE** Of course.

***WIFE** places his shoes by the door, then returns to the window and waters Plant with a watering can - a dismissal.*

**HUSBAND** Goodness, you're in a mood.

**WIFE** *[blankly]* No idea what you mean.

***HUSBAND** gives her a look over, then spots her phone at the edge of the table. Instantly, he grabs it and begins to scroll. **WIFE** stops watering and notices him, opening her mouth - as if she'd like to say something - then catching herself. Awkward pause.*

**HUSBAND** Your sister messaged today.

**WIFE** I know

**HUSBAND** You don't want to message her back?

***WIFE** doesn't respond. **HUSBAND** does it for her.*

**HUSBAND** 'Doing okay. Hope we can see you soon. X'...sent. It's important to keep in contact with family these days.

***WIFE's** grip tightens.*

**HUSBAND** Did the obstetrician call?

*Pause. **WIFE** clutches the watering can closer towards her.*

**WIFE** No.

**HUSBAND** Well, tell me if he does.

***WIFE** holds out her hand for the phone back. He withholds it.*

**HUSBAND** Promise me.

**WIFE** I promise.

***HUSBAND** gives the phone back. He clears out his throat and stares at **WIFE** expectantly.*

**HUSBAND** I'm thirsty.

***WIFE** studies him in disbelief. He gestures in annoyance.*

**HUSBAND** I'm tired alright, could you do this one thing?

***WIFE** smiles tightly.*

**WIFE** Of course.

***WIFE** sets down the watering can and retrieves a jug of water and a glass. Suddenly, she slams it onto the island table making **HUSBAND** jump. She pours slowly.*

**HUSBAND** You're not making this easier on anyone, you know.

**WIFE** Do you think you could take the bin out?

**HUSBAND** I worry about you. You're always in a mood. Maybe if you actually talked to someone, you would start actually feeling better.

**WIFE** 'Not supposed to meet anyone. Could you take the bin out?

**HUSBAND** Then talk to ME. I'm here whether you like it or not. I love you and I hate that you're doing this to me.

**WIFE** Could you take the bin

***HUSBAND** stands up suddenly, cutting her off. **WIFE** looks up at him unflinchingly.*

**HUSBAND** Do you know how hard my job is?

**WIFE** *[with empty smile]* 'Course.

**HUSBAND** And you know I'm the only reason we can stay in this house?

**WIFE** 'Course.

**HUSBAND** I'm a hero, do you know that too? Everyday I save another life, and another life, and another. And sometimes I think to myself 'wow, this might be the day I catch it'. And that could easily make me stop, for my safety, for your safety, but I don't. Because I'm brave, and I don't give up and I work hard. I'm out there saving lives so you can sit here pretty.

**WIFE** I just wanted you to take out the bin.

**HUSBAND** And why can't you do it? Why can't you ever give me a break? Why am I the one doing everything?

*He knocks into the table, making his glass topple over and water run down the table. They stare at it, then at each other.*

**WIFE** You want me to clean that too?

***HUSBAND** takes a threatening step forward. She stands her ground. Silence except for the sound of the bubbling pot.*

**HUSBAND** You're right. You don't have to clear up my messes..

***HUSBAND** inches towards the window where Plant is, **WIFE** nervously hovering behind. Staring her down, he swipes his hand and makes Plant fall to the ground, shattering.*

**HUSBAND** There. Something of your own to clean.

***WIFE's** resolution breaks, and she inhales sharply. She kneels to the floor and pauses, then robotically begins to clean the broken pieces. **HUSBAND** shifts guiltily.*

**HUSBAND** I didn't want to do it. You pushed me.

***WIFE** stays silent, continuing to clean.*

**HUSBAND** Look, I'm sorry

*No response. He crouches to her level and places a hand on her shoulder. She flinches.*

**Husband** Look, it was a tough day, I didn't mean it. It's just a plant, don't get upset. I'll make it up to you. *[Pause]* Look, I'll go upstairs and shower, let you carry on making dinner and let you cool off. Is that okay? *[Pause]* Can you forgive me?

**WIFE** *[flat]* You're forgiven.

**HUSBAND** retreats, backing away to the fridge and grabbing a beer. He exits awkwardly at a doorway stage left.

**WIFE** collects herself. By rote, **WIFE** stands up, turns off the hob [which has bubbled over] and cleans up the various messes. She opens a cabinet below, which reveals to have dozens and dozens of succulents in a pot - all variations of Plant. She grabs one and places it by the window, turning the radio back on.

**WIFE**            Some sunlight will be good for 'ya.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT

# IMPRESS ME

By Sasha Ramtohum-Akbur  
Dame Alice Owen School, Year 11

This wittily written scene between a school careers advisor and her infuriating student is brilliantly well-observed. The way in which the insolent Jude steadily undermines Amanda's authority, to eventually bring her down to her own adolescent level, is well-paced and clever. The way in which all pretence at professionalism has been lost by the end makes for a satisfying arc, and shows yet another young playwright of real promise.

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## CHARACTER LIST

**AMANDA** mid-30s

**JUDE** 16

*Inside a small classroom acting as an office, **AMANDA** is alone. She wears a blue suit, a string of pearls that seem too old for her, and press-on french nails. She looks at the clock, tutting and drums her fingers on the desk. One of her nails flicks off*

**AMANDA** Shit! *[searches for the nail, messing up her desk, then glances at the clock]* What's taking her so long,

***JUDE**, wearing a school uniform, bangs the door open, cutting her off. She saunters in leisurely before flopping onto the chair.*

**AMANDA** *[pasting a smile on her face]* Hello, Judith Howard, yes?

**JUDE** *[inspecting the room]* Sure, 'Judith', yeah.

**AMANDA** Well, are you Judith, or not?

**JUDE** *[starts rummaging in her bag]* Whatever floats your boat really.

**AMANDA** Right, we'd normally have more time, but as you can see, we've only 5 minutes until your next lesson.

**JUDE** *[pops a piece of gum in her mouth]* Shame.

***AMANDA** sighs. **JUDE** chews loudly*

**AMANDA** So, what are you thinking of choosing for A-levels next year?

**JUDE** *[Puts on a posh accent]* Well, of course I was considering Oxford or Cambridge, yah, so maybe.... sociology, philosophy, and, ooooh maybe I'll throw in some P.E. for shits and giggles.

**AMANDA** I'd rather you didn't swear in here, it's really not appropriate and if you could please try and take this somewhat seriously. But, your subjects, they do seem like quite... a range. Is there one you'd consider pursuing in higher education?

**JUDE** *[Leans in and reads **AMANDA's** lanyard]* Amanda... 'Mandy' is it? Well Mandy don't worry, I'm not gonna take any of those subjects: I do actually hope to be employed someday. *[pause]* You look employed. What did you take?

**AMANDA** Just Amanda. *[Surveys **JUDE**]* I'd prefer it if you took out your gum please, Judith. And, this session really isn't about me.

**JUDE** *[Ignores her and continues to chew loudly]* Oh inspire me Mandy, it's sort of what you're here for isn't it?

**AMANDA** *[Losing patience]* No. I'm here to help you. And please, the gum, Judith. We have limited time as is...so, your A-levels?

**JUDE** *[Jumps out of her seat and starts inspecting the room]* I mean did you even need A-levels to do your job? Not to be rude, but it'd be absolutely hilarious if this *[gestures around the room]* required qualifications. Oh, really no offense intended at all Mandy, you seem delightful, it's just, you are a careers 'counsellor', and, actually even that's a stretch.

**AMANDA** *[Through gritted teeth]* Why are you avoiding my questions, Judith?

**JUDE** *[speaks mock tearfully]* I guess you're just hitting too close to home, I mean ever since my parents' divorce, I just can't face the idea of the future alone. *[sits back down and reaches out dramatically to AMANDA, making AMANDA recoil].* 'Hold my hand, Mandy!'

**AMANDA** *[with a strained smile]* Just Amanda. I'm sorry about your parents.

**JUDE** Oh, it's just their life. But nothing gets past you, does it? Anyways, how did you get into this job? Bet you don't get many people in here asking how to be as successful as you when they grow up, eh? *[JUDE looks pleased with herself, and seems to expect at least a small laugh from AMANDA]*

*Pause*

**AMANDA** If you're not going to take this seriously, get out. Now Judith.

*JUDE looks victorious, spits her gum loudly into the bin, and smiles overly sweetly at AMANDA. She makes for the door, then pauses and turns slowly to face AMANDA, a wry smile on her face*

**JUDE** If you don't mind, I'd prefer to be called Jude.

*They maintain eye contact, then AMANDA lets out a snort, and starts hysterically laughing. JUDE is frozen - confused. AMANDA regains her composure*

**AMANDA** You're a funny girl Judith.

**JUDE** *[shocked]* You're a...funny woman.

**AMANDA** *[suddenly controlled]* I am, you know. Very funny. Hilarious. It's surprising I know, I mean, who would think I could make anyone smile, let alone laugh? *[She gets a vape pen out of her jacket and puffs on it]* But, unfortunately Judith, it didn't get me very far. *[She exhales into JUDE's face].*

**JUDE** *[trying to wave it out of her face]* Look, I don't think you're meant to - *[starts coughing]*

**AMANDA** *[slowly]* Shhh. *[JUDE tries to stop coughing]* A sense of humour is wonderful and all, don't get me wrong, but it gets old. From me to you, here's a little advice: It's nice to be liked, I was too, but as you're asking, it doesn't get you employed, you stay a class clown, and then everyone moves on, and you just.... *[dismissively waves her hand]* stay stuck.

**JUDE** You...you can't say that -

**AMANDA** You seem alright Jude, but in my professional opinion, I've spent about 4 minutes with you and I just feel very intensely...sort of...I don't know the word...

*JUDE looks blankly at Amanda*

**AMANDA** Bored. B-O-R-E-D. *[she leans in and whispers]* BORED. *[She takes another drag]*

*Pause. JUDE studies AMANDA, then slowly approaches the desk*

**JUDE** *[carefully]* Tell me what's so special about you then.

**AMANDA** As I said, we're not talking about me, Judith -

**JUDE** Well, what's stopping us? What's your story then? Teenagers walk in and out of this office, and you ask about their ambitions and hopes and goals for when they leave, but you're still stuck here. Was this your dream come true? It can't be, can it? Not with your tidy desk, your suit, your *[a bit lost for words]* french nails?

**AMANDA** You know absolutely nothing about me, you entitled little -

**JUDE** I mean the vape pen? I hate to break it to you, but if you feel the need to prove yourself to a...to a teenager, then I'm not sure you're much more of an adult than I am.

*Silence. JUDE smirks, and AMANDA is slumped in her chair. She inspects her vape pen*

**AMANDA** You're either going to grow up fabulous or forgettable, love, but I've just realised...I don't care. And don't be fooled into thinking anyone else will either.

*JUDE's smile is wiped from her face. AMANDA is still slumped. Whilst maintaining tense eye contact, there is the sound of a school bell. Both startle. There is a pause and suddenly, they laugh at each other for a long moment. As they begin to recover, each looks to the audience: Jude looks happier and lighter, AMANDA holds her gaze, looking troubled and distant. JUDE goes to leave.*

**AMANDA** *[stopping her]* What have you got next Jude?

**JUDE** History. Bye Amanda.

*JUDE exits. AMANDA stares after her*

# PERCEPTIONS OF INFORMATION

by Rufus Jones  
Dolphin School – Year 8

This hilarious political conversation between three teenagers over a game of chess displays a wisdom and articulacy beyond the years of its young writer. The chess game is a smart and subtle visual representation of the twists and turns of their one-upmanship, while the attempts of these young characters to grapple with their generation's exposure to an avalanche of information, both true and false, is brilliantly well-observed.

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## CHARACTERS

**BRIAN** female or male, 12 – 15 years old

**MARK** female or male, 12 – 15 years old

**ROBIN** female or male, 12 – 15 years old

*We open on a large area [perhaps outside], containing a table and three chairs, situated upstage, yet not too far from the audience. On the table, is a chess board, with pieces arranged as they would be mid-game.*

*In the three chairs, are sitting three children, aged around 12–15: **BRIAN**, **MARK** and **ROBIN**.*

***BRIAN** is slouching in the right most seat, looking at his phone, while **MARK**, who is sitting in the central seat, is arguing with **ROBIN**, who is sitting in the left-hand seat.*

**MARK** No Robin, look we have to get this virus under control, even if it means we have to close down for a short time-.

**ROBIN** Yes, we do need to get this virus under control, however shutting down the country is not a viable economic option; it would cause huge unemployment and chaos.

**MARK** But if the government introduces another support scheme-

**BRIAN** *[interrupting]* Oh, really you two, you just can't stop bickering can you. I thought you were playing chess not discussing irrelevant politics.

**ROBIN** Ah, you've come out of your social media den I see Brian. And yes, we were playing chess, but we've stopped to have a formal discussion about, err, matters of interest.

**BRIAN** *[Looking at the chess board]* It looks to me like you stopped because you were about to lose.

**ROBIN** Of course not.

**BRIAN** Anyhow, I do have a life outside of Instagram.

**MARK** Yes, probably on another fake news hub, eh.

**BRIAN** *[annoyed]* You know, I really think you overestimate how much fake news or propaganda is on the internet. I mean how would you know anyway; you don't even have social media.

**MARK** I'd consider that a blessing really; unlike you I get information and news from proper sources.

**ROBIN** So, do I-

**MARK** *[interrupting]* Rubbish-You just blindly follow whatever your parents tell you.

**ROBIN** *[annoyed]* What do you mean?

**MARK** Well-

**ROBIN** I don't follow anyone thank you.

***ROBIN** moves a piece and knocks over one of **MARK's** pieces.*

**BRIAN** *[sarcastically]* I don't doubt that.

***ROBIN** looks at **MARK**, annoyed.*

**MARK** Anyhow [**MARK** moves a chess piece, knocking over one of **ROBIN's**], I'd like to talk about the upcoming election - it's in two weeks.

**ROBIN** *[slightly annoyed]* Ah, yes, well a perfect example of how fake news occurs on social media, as Mark just said, and in this case how it is put out by our leaders.

**BRIAN** Well, I'd like to say, I find very little fake news on Instagram, Facebook et cetera, I think you and other people make far too much of a deal out of it.

**ROBIN** But how do you know that whatever news you read isn't fake news.

**BRIAN** Well, er...I mean it's true news, like news on the television.

**ROBIN** But how do you know, without any comparison; I mean you don't watch live TV often do you, you usually watch Netflix.

**BRIAN** Well, I suppose, but I, well I don't know-

**ROBIN** Exactly, you don't know.

**MARK** Interesting you bring that up Robin *[grabs one of **ROBIN's** pieces while he's not looking and stuffs it into his pocket]*, you see I have been thinking of a theory recently, concerning that topic exactly, you know, just something I've been thinking about when I'm lying in bed at night.

**ROBIN** Oh, this isn't another one of your philosophy talks is it Mark, I hate this sort of thing, my parents have a name for philosophy: 'Unscientific Superstitious delusions.'

**MARK** Yes, I've always liked your parents.

**ROBIN** Really?

**MARK** No.

**ROBIN** Right, well - would you just say what you were going to say Mark?

**MARK** Yes, right. You see it's all a matter of perception. People can only cope with a certain level of information, and when, as it is now, the evolution of digital technology has surpassed the rate of evolution in humans, people's views become warped and their perception changes. With so many sources of information and the constant availability of it from the internet, humans have little idea of what is true and what isn't, because their brains haven't adapted to take in and understand the level of information, we are exposed to. And because of this, fake news, conspiracy theories and other such things spread like wildfire, and change our perception of the world, so we end up not knowing what is true.

**BRIAN** I suppose...but is that because of social media? I don't get warped information.

**ROBIN** Sure Brian. But I would have to reluctantly agree with Mark. I think information is definitely distorted. I mean if we all went back to traditional television and played less drivel on the internet, then the problem would be significantly less.

**BRIAN** It would also be excruciatingly dull. I think people are capable of telling what's true and what's not.

**ROBIN** Can they though? I wouldn't be so sure.

**MARK** It depends how the information is portrayed, I guess. Interesting isn't it. How do we know what's really true?

*They all look down, thinking.*

*Offstage, we hear a bell sound [signalling the end of break time], followed by the noise of many children heading indoors.*

**BRIAN** and **ROBIN** look at each other. **MARK** moves a piece on the chess board.

**MARK** Check Mate.

# THE DESERTER

by Eva Cullum  
Dolphin School - Year 8

This tense and mysterious encounter between a deserting soldier and a strange little girl takes a decidedly unexpected direction, displaying a rich imagination with a penchant for science fiction. The interaction between them is a well-chosen moment in which both end up affecting each other's lives forever. The dystopian offstage world is richly-drawn and convincing, and feels like an arena in which a longer story could very well play out.

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## CHARACTERS

**PRIVATE JACKSON** 20, soldier, nervous but kind hearted, he can become brave when needed

**ISABELLE** 7, little girl, scared and very small, fragile and gentle

*PRIVATE JACKSON runs onstage panting heavily and warily looking around. Holding a single bag tightly behind him. Staging is dirty and narrow walls on either side. Large white building in the background*

**GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL 1** *[shouting from backstage]* Someone has escaped the facility! I repeat someone has escaped the facility! Sound the alarms! We must get him back at all costs!

**GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL 2** *[also from backstage]* Send **her** out! **She** will stop him! We can't let him cross the border!

**GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL 1** He's escaping to the plains!

*PRIVATE JACKSON looks confused and worried*

**PRIVATE JACKSON** *[quietly and confused]* What do they mean her? Who are they sending out?

*Continues running until he reaches an open space. Still dirtied but building is further away and stage is wider. Cracked earth and few to no trees or vegetation. He sits down to catch his breath*

**PRIVATE JACKSON** I've got this far. I can't afford to waste any more time. I need to get across the border and escape this hell.

*PRIVATE JACKSON stands back up and picks up his bag. He starts walking again but stops when he hears faint crying noises.*

**PRIVATE JACKSON** *[quietly and cautious]* What was that? Don't tell me they've found me already?

*He continues walking more warily now. Jumping and slight sounds and rustles. Crying is still heard in the background and gets louder and louder. Silhouette of a small girl appears on stage and as **PRIVATE JACKSON** walks closer the girl comes into view. Girl is short and thin holding some kind of stuffed animal. **PRIVATE JACKSON** is surprised but goes to help.*

**PRIVATE JACKSON** *[gently]* What's a small girl like you doing out here? Shouldn't you be at home in the village?

**ISABELLE** *[very quietly, almost inaudible]* Lost

**PRIVATE JACKSON** You're lost? How could you get lost so far out here? The facility is a long way from the village.

**GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL 2** He's gone this way!

**PRIVATE JACKSON** They're catching up to me. Listen I need to go, ok? If you come with me, I can help you find your parents.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** *grabs the girl's wrist but before he can move, he hears a click. He turns to look at the girl.*

**PRIVATE JACKSON** H-hey... are you ok?

*Tears fall from ISABELLE's eyes but they quickly stop.*

**ISABELLE** Thank you.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** *[very confused]* Er... sure? But what did I do?

**ISABELLE** You were escaping right? Where to?

**PRIVATE JACKSON** I was planning on heading across the border but they've most likely shut it down by now. The place will be teeming with soldiers and officials.

**ISABELLE** I can get us through.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** Hold on. Who are you?

**ISABELLE** I was created in the facility a long time ago and the government use me to capture any who try to oppose them. Which includes you.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** Then... why haven't you tried to stop me?

**ISABELLE** When I capture others, I'm not conscious. I can see what I am doing but I can't control my own body. When you grabbed my wrist, you must have broken a wire or pressed a button or something because I can now control my body. That is why I thanked you.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** Right... how long have you been in the facility for?

**ISABELLE** 75 years, 4 months, 13 days, 2 hours, 25 minutes, 47 seconds. 48... 49... 50... 51...

**PRIVATE JACKSON** Ok, ok, I get it

**ISABELLE** With my improved strength and agility I might be able to get us past the border and to the other side.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** We will have to hurry though. They're catching up to us.

*ISABELLE grabs PRIVATE JACKSON's wrist and they continue running. The white building is no longer in view and more plants and nature comes into view. They come to a barbed wire fence. Across the fence is much more wildlife and nature. Background shouts and chatter becomes louder.*

**ISABELLE** We're too late. They've completely locked it up. There's no way to get through.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** What? No! I've come so far! I can't go back there!

**ISABELLE** You won't have to.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** Huh? What do you mean? I thought you said there was no way through.

**ISABELLE** Not for the both of us but you can get through

**PRIVATE JACKSON** I'm not leaving without you. You're the only reason I could get this far.

**ISABELLE** And I'll be the reason you get just that little bit further.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** But-

**ISABELLE** I've made up my mind. You go on ahead to freedom. I'll stop anyone who comes near.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** *[nods]* Ok. I'll go.

**ISABELLE** Good. Now run as quick as you can and don't look back. I'll hold them off for as long as possible.  
As soon as you're over that fence you should be safe.

**PRIVATE JACKSON** *nods and starts to run away from ISABELLE and the other shouts.*

**ISABELLE** *[quietly to no one in particular]* Thank you for giving me freedom.

*~End~*

# THE PROPOSITION

Niamh Bennett  
Highworth Grammar School for Girls - Year 9

This smart and confident short play about a business proposal between two former colleagues in an office after hours is full of intrigue and power play - with a dash of subtextual gender politics. The way Chris and Lou size each other up, and grapple to get the upper hand with dialogue alone is hugely accomplished, and leaps off the page. It's the kind of writing actors will relish, and shows a young writer with a sophistication beyond her years.

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*A modern high rise office block overlooking a city, far below. A clear moonlit evening. **CHRIS** and **LOU** [gender blind] sit facing opposite each other down stage left, a desk in between them... an elevator upstage centre.*

**CHRIS**     *[Laughs]* I was mad -

**LOU**        I know! *[Laughs]* You should have seen the look on your face -

**CHRIS**     Well...someone in my position...it's not often that -

**LOU**        You don't have to say, I know.

**CHRIS**     Well - that's history! Now is what's important.

**LOU**        It's been ages, Chris

**CHRIS**     It has, how's the other place treating you?

**LOU**        Can you not even say the name?

**CHRIS**     Sure I can say the name, but uh- what's with the re brand?

**LOU**        Haden-Noir *[shows business card]* just as it's always been.

**CHRIS**     What's with the logo?

**LOU**        What do you mean what's with the logo?

**CHRIS**     Well, the fist, little aggressive, isn't it?

**LOU**        You can talk. What's with yours - that lame little dove?

**CHRIS**     It's always been a dove, it's my signature. This is a family business -

**LOU**        Ha - family! Since when?

**CHRIS**     What's that supposed to mean?

**LOU**        Well let's just say it might feel that way to you but-?

**CHRIS**     This is a family business.

**LOU**        Alright - sheesh *[pause]* All I'm saying is that's how it might feel on the inside, but from the outside?

**CHRIS**     Let's cut to the chase, Lou. Why are you here? Why did you decide to come crawling back?

**LOU**        Nobody's crawling *[beat]* I actually came back here with a proposal, you know a - proposition

*[leaning back in chair]* You scratch my back, I scratch yours.

**CHRIS** What could you possibly offer me?

**LOU** You know me Chris, don't you? Don't you? When I get behind a project, I go with it. Give it everything - heart and soul.

**CHRIS** I know. You never gave me half-measures. You were always - committed.

**LOU** What was your little name for it?

**TOGETHER** Devotus!

**CHRIS** Devotus *[smiling]* Just like old times.

**LOU** Yeah...old times...

*Silence*

**CHRIS** So...tell me about this big idea, *your* devotus.

**LOU** Well Chris, it's this. You and me. You and me just like old times. You've done well here. You've done great, but well you're not getting any younger are you? -

**CHRIS** Ha! Tell me about it!

**LOU** Why not let me take the strain off your back, the weight off your shoulders? You still do the big stuff - the visions...miracles...forgiveness - and I, I handle the little details - the clients, the face-to-face, the pay cheques?

**CHRIS** It's a tempting offer... but, I don't know, Lou -

**LOU** Don't you see? This way you can *be* more? *Be* everywhere - omnipresent, omnipotent. Hell, all the omnis! You got it! Come on...what do you say?

**CHRIS** *[thinking]* A merger?

**LOU** If you like?

**CHRIS** *[intake of breath]* Oh - I like...

**LOU** And in time, you can ease up, become a consultant, retire even... and I'll take the reins...

**CHRIS** Retire-?

**LOU** In time -

**CHRIS** In this job...

**LOU** I'm talking years down the line -

**CHRIS** ...one doesn't *retire*.

**LOU** Forget I said that...

**CHRIS** I know what you're doing, Lou.

**LOU** *[suddenly challenging]* And what is that?

**CHRIS** *[shakes head]* Won't work.

**LOU** This was always your problem! You're too *cautious*, Chris!

**CHRIS** Impetuousness! *That* was always yours!

**LOU** Over-thinking, hanging back, not getting involved.

**CHRIS** That's Old Testament. *Not my role, not these days [pause]* Did you really think I was going to take you back after what you did?

**LOU** I ...*thought...* you'd changed.

**CHRIS** You thought wrong! You underestimate me, Lou. You thought you were indispensable then, that I wouldn't cut you loose. Don't make that mistake again [*speaks into desk intercom*]. Peter, if my 7.30 is in reception, please send them up.

**LOU** [*bitterly*] So - that's it. Nothing more to say.

**CHRIS** If you wanna come back, talk about working for me again...

**LOU** *For you?*

**CHRIS** *For me.*

*LOU turns away and starts to walk up stage angrily.*

*Presses the button to summon the lift.*

**LOU** Well, you got my number.

**CHRIS** And my door's always open.

**LOU** [*steps into the lift*] Yeah, yeah I know - you're in The Book.

*Lift door closes.*

**AUTOMATED LIFT VOICE** Going down!

# TIGHTROPE

by Saffiyah Bazzan and Nishita Sujan  
Sarah Bonnell School - Year 10

The scene included here is the final scene from a longer piece, but which actually contains everything you need to know about its two characters. Quite often, early scenes turn out to be unnecessary once a writer has got into their flow. The cleverest choice of this piece is its unusual location of a circus big top, paving the way for a competitive - and subtly flirtatious - scene between a Clown and an injured Trapeze Artist.

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## CHARACTERS

**JOSH** Clown/Comedian

**REVERE** Trapeze Artist

**REVERE** has fallen from the trapeze ropes and is seated by **JOSH** on the edge of the stage, they both feel bad about how things went sideways after they started joking too much and crossed the line. Five minutes of awkward silence have passed between them.

**JOSH** *[puffs, making his cheeks blow out a little as he swings his legs a little against the wall of the stage. He looks sideways at REVERE.]* So... are we going to continue sittin' in this icy silence, **or**, have you got other ideas?

**REVERE** *[expressionless face, looking ahead, fists balled up on lap]* Doesn't matter, they definitely don't involve you.

**JOSH** Ouch. Since it was me who distracted you while you were up in the ropes... sorry?

**REVERE** You don't say sorry to your competition. Also, if you apologise, say it like you mean it - or don't say anything at all. *[Moves to get up, but falls back down with a yelp due to her leg]*

**JOSH** *[he winces]* Is it bad?

**REVERE** *No, it's fine. [ She closes her eyes for a moment then opens them]* Besides, it has nothing to do with you.

**JOSH** Of course it has something to do with me! I literally caused you to drop out of the sky! -Again, sorry.

**REVERE** I- *Why*, do you have to be so...*endearing* at times? *[huffs]*

**JOSH** *[shakes his head as if he's disapproving, and looks down as he does so with a slight smile and chuckles]*

**REVERE** It's not like the world has treated you in the best way possible. *[speaks quietly]* I wish I could do that. How do you keep up?

**JOSH** It is difficult, but when you're as amazing as me you learn to manage. *[gives REVERE a big grin]*

**REVERE** I admire your efforts.

**JOSH** *That* is a very prestigious compliment coming from you, your reverence.

**REVERE** *[rolls eyes, but can't keep the smirk off her face and pretends to pause and think, lifting a hand to her chin]* It does quite suit me. Don't get too cocky though, Josh! *[grins]*

**JOSH** That's how you *are!* So sure of yourself... Different to an outsider, like me...

**REVERE** *[takes a deep breath]* Josh- sorry...about what I said before...about home and not belonging. You belong here, now, with us.

**JOSH** Revere, you do know that the stand-up scheme wasn't about *you*, it was about my... my parents.

**REVERE** Josh- *[pauses]* Sometimes...I jump to conclusions, without thinking about it, just because I don't want to deal with it later- but I end up making it worse- clearly.

**REVERE** How about you, leprechaun?

**JOSH** *[takes a deep breath]* I deliberately seek infinite distraction from real life issues; at least you embrace the problems. *[he grins widely]*

**REVERE** Embrace is a good one. *[nudging him with her shoulder]* Maybe... we can help each other. *[Pauses]* After all, that's what friends are for, right?

**JOSH** Okay.

**REVERE** Well then, help me up Joshy! I need to see the medic.

**JOSH** Ha, alright. But I have to ask one question... *[he says this as he helps REVERE to her feet]* Which of us do you think will *actually* become famous?

**REVERE** *[thinks he is being serious for a moment, and looks at him sharply but then sees his teasing face and slaps him upside the head, grinning]*

# UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Susie Weidmann  
Beaumont School - Year 12

This confidently written encounter between a lawyer and her client, a convicted dangerous driver, takes a surprising turn. The writing shows an impressive attention to detail in its back story, while always keeping the action in the present moment. The emotional reality of Jim's predicament is poignantly portrayed, and his lawyer's exasperation well observed. This is another piece which feels as if it could be from a longer play, announcing another young writer with mastery of the twists and turns of two-hander dialogue.

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**JIM CARTWRIGHT, 31**  
**GENEVIEVE MILLER, 26**

*Blackout. Warm light comes up on a man dressed in black joggers, oversized dark blue t-shirt sticking out underneath a black jumper. He is wearing black trainers, and has on a silver-band wedding ring. Small coffee machine upstage left. GENEVIEVE enters from a door upstage right, carrying a black briefcase and sheaf of papers. JIM sits up accordingly.*

**JIM** Morning.

**GENEVIEVE** Good afternoon, Mr Cartwright.

**JIM** Sorry. I tend to lose track of time. *[He makes a move to stand]*. Black coffee, right?

**GENEVIEVE** My system would crash if I had any more caffeine. But I appreciate the sentiment. How are you holding up?

**JIM** Well, I'm bored. But no worse than you'd expect. I am enjoying the reading. Have you ever read *The Bookthief*? Marcus Zusak? It's really quite a wonderful read.

**GENEVIEVE** I read it in class when I was at school. Anyway, Mr Cartwright-

**JIM** Come on, now. Call me Jim. *[she holds his gaze a moment]*.

**GENEVIEVE** Mr Cartwright. You called me in to request an appeal for your case.

**JIM** I did.

**GENEVIEVE** I must say, I'm a little confused as to why. I reviewed your case record. You were convicted on a charge of death by careless driving under the influence of drugs. You and I both know that was the lightest sentence you could have received, given the circumstances.

**JIM** That's exactly why I need to go for an appeal.

**GENEVIEVE** I'm afraid I don't understand you, Mr Cartwright.

**JIM** It was too light.

**GENEVIEVE** I'm afraid I don't-

**JIM** It took two hours. They read some statements, played some CCTV *[His voice chokes slightly. He looks down]*.

**GENEVIEVE** Mr Cartwright, if you believe the court didn't truly review your case with the proper thoroughness-

**JIM** A family is dead! I killed a family. I got fourteen years, but I'll be done in seven. I'll be free, because the world is full of people like me.

**GENEVIEVE** You want a longer sentence.

*JIM is silent. GENEVIEVE sits forward.*

**GENEVIEVE** What kind of sentence are you looking for exactly, Mr Cartwright?

**JIM** Life.

*GENEVIEVE is silent for a moment. She and JIM maintain eye contact. He won't back down. Nor will she.*

**GENEVIEVE** Only one crime offers that kind of sentence. And no defence lawyer is going to take you to trial if you're asking for murder.

**JIM** It was murder.

**GENEVIEVE** It wasn't murder-

**JIM** Yes, it was-

**GENEVIEVE** No! It was not, Jim! How could it have possibly been murder? You made a mistake! Murder demands a pre-meditated motive, which in this case, simply doesn't exist!

*She pauses, and breathes. JIM stares at her, his face hard.*

**JIM** All you need is a dead body. There's a mother and her child lying in St Peter's cemetery. I'd say that's pretty solid evidence.

*GENEVIEVE meets his eyes. They hold eye contact for a tense moment. She breaks it, standing abruptly. She pours herself a coffee. JIM, staring at the table, raises his eyebrows and a smile twitches his mouth. GENEVIEVE sits again and takes a long sip.*

**GENEVIEVE** At best, I could argue a case for manslaughter, Jim. But if your lawyer doesn't even believe your case, you've got no chance. *[Pause]* I'll do my best for you. But if you want to argue this, I need to hear the night from your perspective, not just what's written in here.

*She gestures to her briefcase. He meets her eyes, and nods.*

**GENEVIEVE** The night in question. The 22nd of June?

**JIM** I remember it very well. My daughter had just turned four the day before. I needed to get away from all those pink balloons.

**GENEVIEVE** How long had you been clean?

**JIM** 4 years. *[She opens her mouth: he holds up a hand].* You're asking why I relapsed. To be honest, I can't give you a straight answer. I don't think addiction ever really leaves you.

*GENEVIEVE nods almost imperceptibly. He notices, and frowns, but continues as if he hadn't.*

**JIM** I'd had a stressful couple of months at work. I almost got fired. My daughter was starting school, my wife was going back to her job. I just needed a break. Even just a night. I suppose the idea had been welling up inside me for a while, and I just broke.

**GENEVIEVE** You went to a colleague's party, correct?

**JIM** *[he nods].* My friend was turning 25. She was having some work drinks at a nice restaurant. I told her I wouldn't be coming. I was meant to go up north with my wife to see her parents, but I had to work late that night. I was at home, on my own. I needed to get out, and I heard that they'd ended up at some club.

**GENEVIEVE** So you went?

**JIM** *[He nods again, more slowly].* I drove down to the area and found the place. They were all hammered. I could see some of them had been doing more than drinking, too. They were all really excited to see me, bought me some drinks. Offered me some coke. It was right there. Just in my face. I just couldn't stop myself. *[He starts.]* That's a lie. I could've stopped myself. I could have stayed at home and not gone to the club in the first place-

**GENEVIEVE** Jim.

*He breathes heavily. She starts to reach out a hand, then stops herself and rifles briefly through her papers.*

**GENEVIEVE** And you left shortly after?

**JIM** Right after. I felt sick as soon as I did it. I remember thinking, "You're a husband... you're a father".

*He chokes up slightly on the last line. GENEVIEVE is tearing up. He meets her eyes.*

**GENEVIEVE** That's all I needed to clarify, Jim. We don't have to talk about it anymore-

**JIM** I was speeding. I remember that. The roads were empty. It was around midnight, and I was almost home. I needed to get home. I thought that when I got home I could just forget anything had happened. Just, you know. Go to bed and start again. I remember thinking all the lights on the streets looked so bright. I remember seeing two lights ahead of me. I closed my eyes. I wanted them to switch off. I had a headache. *[In a broken voice].* I remember how knackered the other car was. A beat-up Tauran. Even worse shape now.

*He lets out a bitter laugh and wipes his eye quickly.*

I remember thinking, the number plate looked familiar. The whole car, even in the dark, it looked familiar. It was the same shitty, mustard-yellow pile of crap I'd bought five years ago. A week after I got married. The day I found out I was going to be a father.

**GENEVIEVE** *lets out a small breath. The sound is almost a sob. She reaches for JIM's hand as he steels himself. Beat.*

**JIM** I remember seeing my wife dead in the frontseat. And my daughter strapped in behind her.

# NIGHT OF DREAD

by Jasper Houghton-Hood  
Framingham Earl High School - Year 7

This imaginative horror-influenced piece about school friends trying to cure a werewolf curse, is by one of our youngest entrants. The writing is joyful and witty, and displays a clear grasp of structure with a beginning, middle and end. The inclusion of imaginative detail like 'transmorphication' and anti-werewolf gas had us impressed and amused in equal measure.

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## Scene 1 - The Chase

*A High School football pitch*

**HENRY** Nice goal.

**JAMES** Thanks

**HENRY** Yeah, you're my best friend for a reason.

**JAMES** Do you smell that?

**HENRY** Yeah, it smells like rotting flesh.

*They go to the door and open it and **JAMES** hears a howling noise*

**JAMES** What the heck?!

***JAMES** starts holding his head and starts convulsing standing up*

**HENRY** James, why are you howling?

***JAMES** pounces on **HENRY***

**JAMES** [Howls] OOOOOwwwwwwwwww

**HENRY** [Shouts] Noooooooooooo!

***HENRY** runs away*

**HENRY** It's like the whole worlds howling.

*He sees **JAMES** pursuing him.*

**HENRY** This looks like a great place to hide

***HENRY** runs into the changing rooms to side of football pitch and cowers behind a pile of towels. He notices another person hiding nearby*

**HENRY** Who are you?

**MATTHEW** I'm Matthew, who are you?

**HENRY** Oh [sigh] It's me from school, you remember?

**MATTHEW** Shut up, they're coming!

*They hear the werewolf's sniffing.*

**HENRY** Let's go this way to that classroom.

**MATTHEW** Ok.

**JAMES** I'm going to cannibalise you and smother your guts all over your face.

*Snarling at **JAMES** and **MATTHEW***

**MATTHEW** Please don't, what do you want anyway?

*Fearful look on the faces of **HENRY** and **MATTHEW***

**HENRY** Run this way!

***HENRY** and **MATTHEW** run towards a nearby classroom*

**MATTHEW** Not that way, that's the Maths classroom. What are we going to fight them with? Protractors?

**HENRY** Have you got any better ideas?

**MATTHEW** Let's go to the science lab, I'm sure there must be something there we can use.

***HENRY** and **MATTHEW** run off set*

## Scene 2 - The Plan

*The School Science Lab*

**MATTHEW** I know what we should do, we should get Werewolf DNA and reverse the transformative structure of the Werewolf molecules.

**HENRY** Where the hell did you come from? Are you some kind of science nerd?

**MATTHEW** No, I'm Matthew and the youngest in the UK to win a triple scholarship for Molecular biology.

**HENRY** Ok Albert Einstein, let's do this then. Wait, how do we get the DNA?

**MATTHEW** That's easy, we just need a needle, some helium, cellotape, a rubber glove and some weapons.

**HENRY** Wow Rambo, I'm not sure about this.

***MATTHEW** starts putting the items in his backpack from the classroom*

**MATTHEW** Let's search the school, I'm sure there will be some kind of history project or something, maybe with a crossbow or two.

***HENRY** and **MATTHEW** walk to the history classroom in the next room*

**JAMES** Look over here at the Roman project. They have left real replica axes we could use.

**MATTHEW** Hmm might take some effort to hack through the skin and bone, but they should do the job.

*They run out onto the street with the axes*

## Scene 3 -The Cure

*Howling noises from all around. **HENRY** and **MATTHEW** are standing on the street with an axe each*

**HENRY** Sounds like everyone in the village has turned into a Werewolf, this is getting a bit hairy!

*They see the Werewolf version of **JAMES** stumbling around the street*

**HENRY** Look there's James, can't believe my best friend is now a man-eating beast, it's not fair.

**MATTHEW** Let's get the blood sample from him that we can use to help him.

**HENRY** I don't know, something bad might happen.

**MATTHEW** I'll distract him and you knock him out, then I'll extract the blood.

**HENRY** Who do you think I am? Bruce Lee?

***MATTHEW** approaches from the front waving his arms and blowing a raspberry, whilst **HENRY** sneaks behind*

**HENRY** Hiiyaaaaa

***HENRY** swings his axe whilst closing his eyes looking away. The axe's blunt side hits **JAMES** the Werewolf on the back of the head and knocks him to the floor unconscious*

**MATTHEW** [Jokingly] You are more like Bruce Lee than you thought.

***MATTHEW** extracts blood from **JAMES** the Werewolf using the needle*

**MATTHEW** Let's go over here so we can set up the reverse molecular transmorphication.

**HENRY** Is that even a thing?

***HENRY** and **MATTHEW** hide behind some bins on the street and **MATTHEW** starts building a creation with his rubber glove, fan, cellotape and vial of liquid from the blood extract*

**MATTHEW** It's all done.

**HENRY** How do we launch it?

**MATTHEW** I fill this rubber glove with the Reverse Molecular Transmorphication liquid or RMTM for short and then some helium and then when the glove hits an altitude of one hundred metres it will pop releasing the gas over the whole village.

**HENRY** Do it then.

**MATTHEW** Why don't we make a deal first.

**JAMES** What do you want?

**MATTHEW** For you and James to stop bullying me at school.

**JAMES** But you're a nerd!

***MATTHEW** goes to pour the antidote down the drain*

**HENRY** NOOOOOOO STOP.

**HENRY** I promise not to be mean to you at school.

**MATTHEW** Ok then, let's do this.

*They launch the gas and wait looking pleased with themselves. After a short period of time **JAMES** who is on the street nearby starts morphing back to human form.*

***HENRY** and **MATTHEW** approach **JAMES** seeing that he is back to human form*

**JAMES** Guys what happened and who's this?

**HENRY** This is the nerd who saved the world.

*Blackout*

# MATCH GIRL

by Judy Seall  
Dolphin School - Drama Teacher

After an enquiry on social media, we decided to allow a category for Drama teachers themselves to enter our competition, and we're so glad we did. Not only were they just in need of creative stimulation as their students, it resulted in this wonderfully cryptic piece of writing with echoes of Samuel Beckett. While the true reasons for Boy and Girl to meet on this allotment remain artfully withheld, this piece displays a great use of objects to convey meaning, and is a confidently written puzzle piece with potential to develop further.

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A young teenage **GIRL** is sitting onstage when the lights come up. She has a matchbox and a row of burnt matches lined up next to her; she's lighting unused matches and watching them burn down. In her mouth is an old well used pipe but it is not lit. She is sitting in what looks like an abandoned makeshift building in an allotment. It was possibly once a lean-to type shed but has fallen into disrepair. The allotment garden is overgrown and doesn't appear to be being looked after, with the exception of one small area.

*It is dusk and cold. Probably early winter. It is quiet and no-one else appears to be around.*

*The atmosphere feels tense. If you look more closely at the **GIRL** you might notice that her cheeks are tear-stained but lighting the matches is calming her down. She puts the pipe down next to her.*

*Suddenly an older **BOY** runs onstage. He is carrying something close to his chest but it's impossible to see what it is. He doesn't notice the **GIRL** to begin with as he is so intent on checking on something - he pats the soil down.*

**BOY**            *[American accent - talking to the soil]* Daddy's home - did you miss me?

*He looks down at the ground and then slowly and ceremoniously holds up a packet of seeds - this is what he has been holding close to his chest*

**BOY**            *[Very excited]* New brothers and sisters

*He notices the **GIRL** and stops what he's doing.*

*They are both startled at seeing each other. The **GIRL** jumps up, spilling the unused matches from the box onto the used matches and the **BOY** gets up slowly.*

**BOY**            *[shouts, maybe embarrassed at her seeing him talking to the ground]* Hey!

**GIRL** *tries to gather up her matches quickly but this is impossible as the matches are all mixed up now.*

**BOY** *approaches her - a bit too close*

**BOY**            *[whispers]* Hey!

**GIRL** *scoots backwards still on the floor as a reflex reaction away from **BOY**; she looks at him in short bursts.*

**GIRL**            Tall. Thin. Red jumper with two holes. *[Pauses to think.]* Probably moths

**BOY**            What...

**GIRL**            Blue eyes. Colour of my Dad's washing powder

**GIRL** *looks at the matches quickly and then back at **BOY** - he follows her gaze and spots the matches.*

**BOY** takes a step towards the matches and **GIRL**.

**BOY** Why are you he...

**GIRL** *[interrupts]* Back! Stay back. *[looks at BOY quickly]* Hunched *[GIRL seems surprised by her latest observation]*

The **BOY** is slightly annoyed yet intrigued by her language. He moves very slowly towards the pile of matches; once **GIRL** realises what he's doing she moves quickly but in her haste kicks the matches all over the floor. She lets out a strangled cry sounding like a wounded animal and **BOY** immediately moves away from her and the matches. **GIRL** rushes over to them and starts sorting them methodically into used and unused matches

**BOY** spots the abandoned pipe on the ground and picks it up. He slips it into his pocket without her seeing. They both look at each other carefully.

**BOY** *[unsure what to say]* Err, I like your matches

**GIRL** *[holds the matches closer to her chest]* Mine

**BOY** *[thinking on the spot, quickly]* We could light a fire - it's quite nippy

**GIRL** Forbidden

**BOY** Says who?

**GIRL** Reading Town Council

*Silence*

It's against the bylaws

**BOY** The what?

**GIRL** Bylaws: local laws to deal with local issues

**BOY** *[suddenly remembers the pipe in his pocket]* Can I smoke my pipe then?

**GIRL** Only old men smoke pipes. And film stars

**BOY** *[The mention of film stars is BOY's cue to start performing again. American accent]* Holy jumping catfish!

*She looks up at him suddenly*

You drive a guy crazy! *[short pause]* Cary Grant

**GIRL** *[under her breath, slightly annoyed]* Clarke Gable

**BOY** pauses to wonder if **GIRL** is correct

**BOY** *[American accent]* So, do I get a match or not?

**GIRL** It's illegal

**BOY** Illegal?!

**GIRL** *[speaking as if she's a Government official announcement]* On 1st October 2007, the legal age for the purchase of tobacco was raised from 16 to 18. This measure was designed...

**BOY** pulls out the pipe. **GIRL** sees the pipe and stops speaking immediately, then looks around the space for 'her' pipe. She realises that **BOY** is holding 'her' pipe and she begins to get anxious

**BOY**            *[Strutting around holding pipe as if he's a film star]* Next time you drop in, bring your folks!

**GIRL**            8 million people die from...tobacco... each year.

*Pause*

Stormy eyes. Big hands. Count

**GIRL** starts counting under her breath quietly, trying to calm herself down. All the time she keeps her eyes on the pipe

**BOY**            *[American accent]* What's a little lady like you doing in a joint like this?

**GIRL**            My...Gramp's... allotment

**GIRL** is visibly upset; she takes out her matches and starts lighting them again. **BOY** immediately takes the pipe out of his mouth and stops performing.

**BOY**            Oh. What's he growing?

**GIRL**            Nothing

*Silence*

**BOY**            When you see him next, tell him I planted a row of potatoes

**GIRL**            *[working herself up]* Nothing, nothing, nothing

**BOY** walks over to a patch of soil

**BOY**            Over here.

**GIRL**            *[bursts out]* The pipe!

**BOY** suddenly realises that she wants the pipe he's still holding. He glances down at the pipe, then back at her and eventually places it back down on the floor exactly where he found it. He then picks up the packet of seeds from the ground and places them down next to the pipe. Silence. **GIRL** looks carefully at **BOY**, not moving and perhaps no longer feeling threatened.

**BOY**            *[tentatively holds out his hand to GIRL]* Jack

**GIRL**            *[in an American accent]* I don't like your name

**BOY**            *[as Clark Gable]* Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn!

*They both smile at each other tentatively*

*Lights down slowly*

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