

**LESSONS**

**A Musical**

**By Joseph Henshaw**

**1103463**

**Laura Ward** – A sixteen year old girl  
**Jamie Mills** – A sixteen year old boy  
**Adam** – A dark figure painted by Laura, a paranoid internal voice  
**Arthur Ward** – Mid to late fifties, Laura's Father  
**Natalie Mills** – Early 30's, Jamie's Mother  
**Roger** – Mid thirties. Laura's tutor  
**Jennifer Ward** – Mid forties. Laura's Mother  
**Dr Stevens** – Late fifties. A psychologist  
**Mrs Angela Sinclair** – Mid fifties, Laura's disinterested teacher  
**Mr Timothy Moore** – Late sixties, Laura's naïve headmaster  
**Sid** – Early to mid twenties, a thuggish young man  
**Derek** – Early to mid twenties, another thuggish young man  
**Emily** – Mid forties. A sad figure, painted by Laura  
**A Nurse** – A minor role, searches Dr Stevens

## **ACT ONE**

### **#1 - Overture & Prologue**

#### **Prologue**

*A small room. Medical, clean, white. A small table with two chairs either side is in the centre, upon which there is a file of notes. A man, DOCTOR STEVENS enters in a suit. He is followed by a woman, dressed in a white medical coat, clearly a medical professional. As the music continues, the suited man raises his arms as one would when being searched at an airport, and the woman slowly pats him down, clearly searching him. She pulls an expensive looking ballpoint pen out of his inside suit pocket. He acknowledges, and she puts it away in a transparent plastic bag. She continues searching him. As she reaches the side pockets of his trousers, she pulls out a set of keys. Although he at first appears reluctant, arguing that they are perfectly safe, she similarly seals them away in a bag. She continues searching and removing items in this way, confiscating both sets of shoelaces, his tie, and the metal case for his smartphone. Once she is finally satisfied that he is clear, the woman exits, taking the items with her.*

### **Segue into #1a - Laura's Cell**

*A frightened looking girl, LAURA, aged sixteen, steps with trepidation into the room with the suited man. She is in a hospital gown. They sit opposite each other. She avoids his eye contact. After a long pause, DR STEVENS speaks. His voice is soft, gentle, soothing.*

**STEVENS:** Hello, Laura.

**LAURA:** Hello.

**STEVENS:** How did you sleep?

**LAURA:** Alright. It was a bit cold.

**STEVENS:** I'm sorry to hear that. I'll ask them to turn the heating up tonight.

**LAURA:** Thank you.

**STEVENS:** Did you have another dream last night?

**LAURA:** No.

**STEVENS:** That's good. That's progress.

*Pause. LAURA says nothing.*

**STEVENS:** Laura, do you think you're ready to start talking about Adam yet?

*A very long pause as LAURA thinks.*

**LAURA:** No. Not today.

**STEVENS:** Why not today?

**LAURA:** It's too soon.

**STEVENS:** We're going to need to talk about what happened at some point, Laura. Perhaps you could just tell me some little things?

**LAURA:** I don't want to.

**STEVENS:** When did Adam first...-

**LAURA:** Can't we talk about him tomorrow?

**STEVENS:** You've been putting it off for several weeks now, Laura.

*He waits for her to respond. She doesn't.*

**STEVENS:** Alright then. Maybe we can start by talking about something else. Tell me about your school.

*Girl remains silent. DR STEVENS opens and glances at a series of files on the desk.*

**STEVENS:** It says here you are a remarkably bright young woman... Straight 'A's in pretty much every subject, premature places at a number of top universities at the age of just sixteen... You were nothing short of a prodigy. Your parents must have been very proud.

**LAURA:** They were.

**STEVENS:** Tell me about your parents.

**LAURA:** What about them?

**STEVENS:** Well, what did they do?

**LAURA:** In general? Or for a living?

**STEVENS:** Whatever you want to talk about.

*LAURA nods, and thinks to herself.*

**LAURA:** My father was an investment banker or city trader or something financial. I never really understood exactly what it was he did, he always seemed to have people do everything for him. He didn't speak about his work until...

*She stops mid sentence.*

**STEVENS:** Until...?

*LAURA changes the subject, swiftly.*

**LAURA:** My mother was a charity worker. Volunteering in underprivileged third world countries. Organising expeditions, fundraising, that sort of thing. She seemed to spend more time in Africa than in London.

**STEVENS:** What happened to your father's work?

**LAURA:** I don't know. Something bad. Can we talk about something else?

**STEVENS:** Tell me about Adam.

**LAURA:** Something else.

**STEVENS:** Jamie.

**LAURA:** (*Getting increasingly upset and agitated*) Anything else.

**STEVENS:** Let's talk more about school. Tell me about your friends.

**LAURA:** I didn't have any.

**STEVENS:** No friends?

**LAURA:** No.

**STEVENS:** Why was that?

**LAURA:** I spent very little time socialising. I had to work a lot.

**STEVENS:** Out of choice?

**LAURA:** No, I don't think so. I was tutored, at home.

**STEVENS:** As well as school?

**LAURA:** Yes.

**STEVENS:** Surely not all the time?

**LAURA:** Most of the time. Every day. Sometimes several times a day at weekends.

**STEVENS:** Tell me about your tutor?

**LAURA:** I don't know much about him. Which is odd, thinking about it... I suppose I spent more time with him than with anyone else really...

**STEVENS:** What was his name?

**LAURA:** Roger.

STEVENS: How old was he?

LAURA: Oh God... I don't know... maybe 30? 40? Hard to say. He appeared older than he really was. He was a vegan. He drank peppermint tea. He cycled. He had a son. He was at Cambridge. That's all I know.

STEVENS: Tell me about Jamie.

LAURA: He was...-

*She freezes. Unable to speak. Suddenly tearful as she remembers.*

STEVENS: We need to talk about these things one day Laura. You can't just keep these feelings bottled up.

*LAURA nods.*

## #2 - *You're Never Alone*

STEVENS: This is a safe place for you, Laura. I'm here to help. We all are.

LAURA: I don't like it here.

STEVENS: Why?

LAURA: THIS PLACE IS A PRISON  
A CAGE NOT A CELL  
I'LL BE TRAPPED HERE FOREVER  
A LIFETIME OF HELL

MY MOTHER AND FATHER  
BOTH GAVE UP ON ME  
I NEVER WAS GOOD ENOUGH  
NOW I CAN SEE

I SHOULD HAVE A FUTURE  
I COULD HAVE BEEN GREAT  
I JUST WANT TO GO BACK  
AND WIPE CLEAN THE SLATE

IF ONLY I HAD LISTENED

IF ONLY I STAYED HOME  
IF ADAM HADN'T DONE THIS TO ME  
THEN I WOULDN'T BE STUCK HERE ALONE.

*A boy, ADAM, around her age, enters through the door.*

**LAURA:** No...

**STEVENS:** Laura? Laura what's wrong...?

**ADAM:** YOU'RE NEVER ALONE...

**LAURA:** Go away... Get away from me...

**STEVENS:** Laura...? Who are you talking to..?

**ADAM:** YOU'RE NEVER ALONE  
I'LL ALWAYS BE HERE  
YOU'RE NEVER ALONE

**LAURA:** JUST LEAVE ME ALONE  
PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE

*(Shouted) JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!*

*The music stops for a moment, and ADAM exits.*

**STEVENS:** He's gone, hasn't he Laura.

*LAURA nods. She is tearful and speechless.*

**STEVENS:** It's ok.

**LAURA:** I don't want to be here.

**STEVENS:** You're safe here.

**LAURA:** I want to go back...

**STEVENS:** Back where?

**LAURA:** Back to before all this. Before any of this happened...



IF ONLY I COULD GO BACK...  
AND STOP MYSELF...  
IF ONLY I COULD GO BACK...  
IF ONLY I COULD GO BACK...  
IF ONLY I COULD GO (*shouted*) BACK!!!!

*The music surges, and the lights rise to a blinding level whereby we can no longer see the room. As the music bursts, we are transported back in time to one month beforehand.*

## **Act One**

### **Scene One**

*LAURA's bedroom, one month previously. The back wall is plastered in paintings, stunningly realistic portraits that could easily be mistaken for photographs. They are a variety of different shapes and sizes, with different subjects offering different facial expressions as though each painting has its own story to tell. They take over the wall, however there are a number of unpainted patches including one large blank space in the middle. At a desk, downstage centre, we see LAURA sitting and working with her tutor, ROGER, a fairly young man dressed as though he is far older - thick glasses, tweed suit in sickly colours. Think eccentric but kindly.*

**ROGER:** Top work, Laura. One hundred per cent. Spot on. Good show! I think that's about enough work for today. I'll leave you these spare practice papers for you to be getting on with, but for the moment I think you're bang on track. Well done.

**LAURA:** Thanks, Roger. It means a lot!

*ROGER gets up, and packs up his things, as if to leave, before noticing one of the paintings on the wall, a young female face looking sadly out into the middle distance.*

**ROGER:** She's new, isn't she?

**LAURA:** Yeah. Yeah she is. I couldn't get to sleep last night, so I stayed up drawing her.

**ROGER:** More creative than counting sheep I suppose!

**LAURA:** I think her name is... Clara. Either that or Claire... I'm not sure yet. She's sad because she's been locked up, but I don't know why yet...

**ROGER:** It's very good. Really – very, very good. You've got a tremendous talent, Laura, and a huge amount of potential. Do you think this is perhaps the sort of thing you want to do as a career one day?

*ARTHUR, LAURA's father enters.*

**ARTHUR:** Absolutely not! With a future as bright as Laura's, she's capable of really making something of herself out there in the world of business. People with your brains are few and far between, and I shall most certainly not see that potential wasted! How are we doing today, Roger? Almost done? Time for another green tea?

**ROGER:** No, no, thank you though, Mr Ward, we're just finishing up now.

**ARTHUR:** Oh please, call me Arthur for god's sake! Mr Ward was my father. How did she do today?

**ROGER:** Well. Very, very well. Her maths is astonishing - if she continues like this I see absolutely no reason why she shouldn't be getting straight A's through and through. I think you've got every chance of getting that coveted early University space!

**ARTHUR:** Marvellous! Simply marvellous! Your mother and I couldn't be prouder!

**LAURA:** Thanks...

**ARTHUR:** And to think that in just a few years time you could be treading those same floorboards in Cambridge that I lived the best years of my life upon all those years ago...

**LAURA:** I'm still not one hundred per cent certain Cambridge is for me...

**ARTHUR:** Oh now don't you dare start telling me you're considering Oxford...

**LAURA:** Well no actually I...

**ARTHUR:** Because I will not see any child of mine break the great Ward family chain... My father was a

Cambridge boy... And his father... And his father's father... And his father's father's father... And...

**LAURA:** I get the idea.

**ARTHUR:** Magdalene College the lot of them. Which college were you at, Roger? If you don't mind me asking?

**ROGER:** King's.

**ARTHUR:** Ahhh splendid. Splendid college, Kings. I seem to remember one very drunken afternoon, me and the boys ended up in there dressed as nuns...

**LAURA:** Dad...

**ARTHUR:** Now why we were dressed as nuns I have honestly no recollection...

**LAURA:** Dad...

### **#3 - Cambridge Days**

**ARTHUR** I remember just feeling such freedom. Such adventure...

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN, NO MORE THAN  
EIGHTEEN  
THE WORLD WAS MY OYSTER, AND LIVING  
WAS A DREAM  
BY FAR THE BEST DAYS THAT MY LIFE HAS  
EVER SEEN  
ARE IN THOSE HALLS OF MAGDALENE  
CAMBRIDGE

I ARRIVED ON A SUNDAY, THE SUN SHONE  
BRIGHT  
MY PARENTS TOOK ME IN, MY MOTHER HELD  
ME TIGHT  
THEY LEFT AT ONCE SO THAT I MIGHT  
GET TO KNOW MY MAGDALENE CAMBRIDGE.

AND FOR THREE SHORT YEARS I WAS HAPPY

FOR THREE SHORT YEARS I WAS FREE  
IT WENT IN A FLASH  
FASTER THAN MY FATHER'S CASH  
BUT MY LIFE WAS HAPPIEST IN THOSE THREE.

THE MORNINGS WOULD START WITH PRAYERS  
EVERY DAY  
THEN OFF TO A LECTURE VIA A PUB ALONG  
THE WAY  
OR TWO OR THREE - THE LECTURE COULD JUST  
WAIT LIKE MY ESSAY  
AND I'D STILL PASS MAGDALENE CAMBRIDGE

A TWO-ONE WAS THE AIM, OF COURSE, AS NO-  
ONE GOT A FIRST  
TOO BUSY PLAYING LACROSSE OR CHECKING  
DRAMA WAS REHEARSED  
WITH FINGERS CROSSED AND BATED BREATH  
AND LIPS SO TIGHTLY PURSED  
WE SAT EXAMS AT MAGDALENE CAMBRIDGE

AND FOR THREE SHORT YEARS I WAS HAPPY  
FOR THREE SHORT YEARS I WAS FREE  
IT WENT IN A FLASH  
FASTER THAN MY FATHER'S CASH  
BUT MY LIFE WAS HAPPIEST IN THOSE THREE.

WE PUNTED DOWN THE RIVER, MUNCHING  
STRAWBERRIES SIPPING WINE  
AT TIMES WERE WE SO SLOSHED WE'D FALL  
RIGHT IN BUT WE WERE FINE  
AS LONG AS WE COULD DRY OUR GOWNS IN  
TIME THAT WE MAY DINE  
IN THE HALLS OF MAGDALENE CAMBRIDGE

THEN RESULTS WOULD COME, AND BY GUM I'D  
JUST SCRAPED THROUGH!  
WE CELEBRATED FOR A WEEK, OUR LIVERS  
HOW THEY GREW  
THE HANGOVER IT LASTED TIL WE ALL  
TURNED THIRTY TWO!  
BUT WE'D FINISHED MAGDALENE CAMBRIDGE

AND FOR THREE SHORT YEARS I WAS HAPPY  
FOR THREE SHORT YEARS I WAS FREE  
IT WENT IN A FLASH  
FASTER THAN MY FATHER'S CASH  
BUT MY LIFE WAS HAPPIEST IN THOSE THREE.

*(A sudden change of mood as he realises what he just said)*

YES FOR THREE SHORT YEARS I WAS HAPPY...  
FOR THREE SHORT YEARS I WAS FREE...  
IT WENT IN A FLASH  
FASTER THAN MY FATHER'S CASH...  
*(Half whispered)*  
BUT MY LIFE WAS HAPPIEST IN THOSE THREE.

**ARTHUR:** The best years of my life over by the time I was  
twenty-one...

**ROGER:** It was certainly a wonderful place to be. Anyway... I  
must be dashing off I'm afraid. If I could just collect  
my...

**ARTHUR:** What? Oh yes... How much do we owe you, Roger?

**ROGER:** A hundred and twenty for this afternoon would be  
great.

*ARTHUR ruffles around in his pockets and pays the cash, leafing  
obviously through a large wad of notes.*

**ROGER:** Ta very much.

**ARTHUR:** Not a problem. See you bright and early tomorrow.

**ROGER:** See you, Laura. Remember what I told you about the  
paintings - I mean it - keep it up!

**LAURA:** Thanks, Roger. Means a lot.

*ROGER picks up a cycling helmet and bright fluorescent yellow jacket,  
and exits.*

**ARTHUR:** What did he mean "remember what I told you"?

**LAURA:** Oh it's nothing really. He just said he liked my new character.

**ARTHUR:** Hmm. Very well. As long as all this artistic nonsense doesn't interrupt your education...

**LAURA:** It won't.

*ARTHUR nods, then turns to exit.*

**LAURA:** Dad?

**ARTHUR:** Yes?

**LAURA:** I was just wondering... Erm... Some of the girls from school were going tonight to the cinema to see...

**ARTHUR:** Laura...

**LAURA:** No, dad I know, but it's just that...

**ARTHUR:** Absolutely not. You have school on Monday.

**LAURA:** But it's Friday night...

**ARTHUR:** And you have three more hours of tuition tomorrow morning. The answer is no.

**LAURA:** But the other girls...

**ARTHUR:** The other girls aren't all gifted like you. The other girls don't have University-standard minds at the age of sixteen, do they?

**LAURA:** But...

**ARTHUR:** I don't want to hear it. The answer's no. Now I want you to finish these maths papers and then come down for dinner in half an hour. No arguments.

*ARTHUR exits. Music begins.*

#### #4 - Paint Hits the Paper

*LAURA looks despairingly at the many pages of maths homework in front of her.*

**LAURA:** Right. Let's give this a go...

IF X = Y WELL THEN Y= X =  
WHY DO I BOTHER REPEATING THIS  
EXTRAORDINARILY BORING REPETITIVE  
NONSENSE THAT NEVER WILL HELP ME AND  
NEVER WILL ADD TO MY LUCK IN THE REAL  
WORLD AND GIVES ME NO PLEASURE AND  
MAKES ME CONSIDER JUST WHAT I AM DOING  
JUST  
WHAT AM I DOING!!?

*She reaches behind her, and begins examining the paintings on the wall.  
But then...*

PAINT HITS THE PAPER...  
AND TAKES MY MIND FAR AWAY  
PAINT HITS THE PAPER  
AND THE MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY...

*As though her body has taken over automatically, she reaches under her desk and retrieves a pallet of paints and a brush. Reaching out in front of her as though there is an invisible canvas in the fourth wall, she begins to paint. Throughout the rest of the song, the image of a figure - a sad woman in her 40s sitting on a swing - begins to emerge on the wall behind her.*

AND SLOWLY, BEAUTIFULLY, EMERGING IS A  
FACE  
SHE SEEPS INTO MY MIND AND THROUGH MY  
BRUSH SHE FALLS IN PLACE  
IT'S LIKE I CAN'T CONTROL MY ARM  
IT'S DRAGGED... I'M IN A DAZE...  
AND ALWAYS THERE WITHIN MY MIND  
THE MUSIC PLAYS AND PLAYS



THE PAINT CEASES TO BE PAINT, BUT A LIVING  
BREATHING BEING  
AND THE COLOURS MERGE UPON MY CANVAS  
- EVERYTHING I'M SEEING  
SO FOR HOURS, MINUTES SECONDS  
I'M WHOEVER I CAN BE  
BUT THE MUSIC HAS TO STOP SOMETIME  
AND I'M DRAGGED BACK INTO REALITY...

*ROGER re-enters in a different jacket. It is apparent that it is the next day.*

**ROGER:** Rightio – let's pick up where we left off yesterday, shall we?  
IF  $X = Y$  THEN YOU NEED TO FIND A BECAUSE  
MATHS = FUTURE YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT?  
DON'T YOU? YOUR DAD'S NOT TOO HAPPY  
ABOUT ALL THIS PAINTING BUT I THINK IT'S  
WONDERFUL - ANYWAY THAT'LL BE ALL,  
UNTIL NEXT TIME!

*He exits; LAURA pulls out the paint again...*

**LAURA:** AND I CAN ESCAPE ONCE AGAIN THE  
MUNDANE AND THE BORING  
FOR ONCE I'M IN FULL CONTROL OF  
SOMETHING TAKING OFF, SOARING...

*She paints the air again, as though making finishing touches to the drawing of a girl.*

PAINT HITS THE PAPER...  
AND TAKES MY MIND FAR AWAY  
PAINT HITS THE PAPER  
AND THE MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY  
  
I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW I'M DOING IT  
I CANNOT EXPLAIN HOW IT FEELS

IT'S LIKE AN UNCONCIOUS REACTION  
IT'S DRAGGING ME HEAD-OVER HEELS

MY MIND OVERFLOWS WITH EMOTIONS  
EACH FRAME HAS A STORY TO TELL  
A HUMAN LIFE CAPTURED IN ONE SINGLE  
MOMENT  
A SIGHT OR A SOUND OR A SMELL

*A bright white light slowly rises on the painting. As though a ghost, the woman pictured emerges into the room, a real human being, wearing the exact same clothes as in the painting. The music continues instrumentally in the background, as the painted woman, EMILY, begins to talk to LAURA.*

**EMILY:** Hello.

**LAURA:** Hello. You're called... Emily. Emily Braithwaite.

**EMILY:** *(Nodding, understanding)* Emily Braithwaite.

**LAURA:** You're sad.

**EMILY:** I'm sad... Why am I sad?

**LAURA:** You're sad because you've lost someone you love.

**EMILY:** My husband?

**LAURA:** No. You don't love your husband. And that makes you sadder.

**EMILY:** My lover then?

**LAURA:** No. You don't have a lover. You were always faithful.

**EMILY:** Who then?

*Laura thinks long and hard.*

**LAURA:** Your father. You loved your father more than anyone else in the world. He was a wonderful compassionate

man who raised you to fly free. Your success as a...  
(*she thinks of a backstory*) as an award-winning  
novelist relied purely on his belief in your talents and  
you as an individual. (*As LAURA continues, her  
enthusiasm is suddenly bursting through, she is wholly  
immersed in this world in her head, the tragedy and yet  
the enlightening positivity that has sprung from a single  
painting*) He never stifled you. He let you be whoever  
you wanted to be. And his death is the saddest point  
in your life.

*Emily walks over to the painting on the wall, and looks at it closely.*

**EMILY:** The saddest moment in my life.

**LAURA:** Because you'll always remember that swing as the  
place where you sat for hours on end remembering.  
Like the painting itself. It's not what it is but it's what  
it signifies – the swing is for you a place where  
you're thrust back to that day, and the painting itself  
is a manifestation of that remembrance. (*Throughout  
the following, EMILY starts to slowly step backwards,  
retreating back as the light on the painting slowly starts to  
die down, LAURA's enthusiasm continues to build to  
breaking point. Her energy and concentration is  
extraordinary.*) It's as though everything in your life  
stopped that day. Ground to a standstill. Everything  
apart from the gentle rocking of that swing, forwards  
and backwards, forwards and backwards, that's all  
you remember, everything apart from that tiny  
wooden platform beneath you was frozen and you  
were moving alone. For hours upon end you were  
swinging above the whole wide world, and that...  
that was the day you knew who you were... who you  
really were... you were no longer just your father's  
daughter but you were your own person. (*As the  
music surges, EMILY is gone.*) You were your own  
person!

PAINT HITS THE PAPER...  
AND TAKES MY MIND FAR AWAY  
PAINT HITS THE PAPER

AND THE MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY

PAINT HITS THE PAPER...

AND TAKES MY MIND FAR AWAY

PAINT HITS THE PAPER

AND THE MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY...

*She is interrupted by a school bell. The lights go down and we are transported to the front of a classroom. The music continues throughout the set change.*

## Act One

### Scene Two

*Segue into*

#### #5 – A Teacher's Life for Me

*A classroom. White board at the front, covered in all sorts of mathematical equations, algebra, etc. MRS SINCLAIR, a maths teacher who is uninterested in work and going through a midlife crisis, is taking the lesson. She has a strong Northern accent, a deep gravelly voice indicating years of chain-smoking, and is overweight. Although having no husband, she insists on being referred to as a "Mrs".*

**MISS SINCLAIR:** IF X=Y WELL THEN Y DO I BOTHER  
RECITING THE SAME CRAP TO ALL OF YOU  
FAILURES  
I HATE BEING A TEACHER I HATE BEING A  
TEACHER

*She steps forward, and enters a reflective, dream-like state.*

I HAD IT ALL PLANNED OUT  
A FUTURE IN MEDICAL SCIENCE  
BUT I FAILED BIOLOGY  
BUT NO APOLOGY  
I STILL MAINTAINED MY DEFIANCE

I THEN REALISED I WAS AT THAT AGE  
I COULD THROW IT FOR LIFE ON THE STAGE  
AND I COULD FIND CHEER  
IN AN ACTING CAREER  
AND LIVE LIFE ON A COMFORTABLE WAGE

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT FELL  
THROUGH  
WITH DRAMA SCHOOL BEING "NOT FOR YOU"  
SO I USED MY BRAIN  
AND I HAD TO RE-TRAIN  
TURNS OUT TEACHING WAS ALL I COULD DO.

I INSIST ON BEING "MRS SINCLAIR"

DESPITE THERE BEING NO HUSBAND THERE  
BECAUSE CALLING ME MISS  
WOULD BE TAKING THE PISS  
AT THIS STAGE WHEN I'M LOSING MY HAIR

*MR MOORE enters, the headteacher. A naïve inexperienced middle-aged man who has too much faith in unconventional methods of education.*

**MR MOORE:** Miss Sinclair – may I have a word?

*She comes out of her daydream and walks over to him.*

**MRS SINCLAIR:** Continue you with your work. In silence please. (*shouting*) IN SILENCE, PLEASE.

*She steps aside with the headmaster, and they stand separated from the main room. The headmaster pulls out two sealed envelopes.*

**MRS SINCLAIR:** What's this?

**MR MOORE:** The future of dealing with problem students.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** Problem students?

**MR MOORE:** Those who are unwilling to learn. Those who fail their exams, and never show up to classes. You know exactly who I'm talking about.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** A certain person who's name begins with J and rhymes with "Amy Mills"?

**MR MOORE:** Precisely.

*Right on cue, enter JAMIE. He looks out of breath, as though he's been running. He is wearing a hooded top with the hood pulled over his head. MRS SINCLAIR steps out of her conversation to confront him.*

**MRS SINCLAIR:** And what time do you call this then, young man?

**JAMIE:** I.. I had a doctor's appointment...

**MRS SINCLAIR:** You've had a doctor's appointment every day this week. It's not good enough, Jamie.

**JAMIE:** (*Arrogantly*) Yeah whatever, miss.

*He struts in, his gait confident and cocky, and sits down. Rather than pulling out books, he pulls out his phone and appears to browse the internet. Mrs Sinclair goes back to MR MOORE who is watching disapprovingly.*

**MR MOORE:** (*Handing MRS SINCLAIR one of the envelopes*) This is for him to take home to his parents.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** What is it?

**MR MOORE:** I'll explain everything tomorrow. This (*handing over the other envelope*) is for Laura.

*MRS SINCLAIR seems taken aback.*

**MRS SINCLAIR:** Laura...? As in Laura Ward...?

**MR MOORE:** Precisely.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** But the girl's a bloody genius... her test scores are unbeatable, and she hardly says a word...

**MR MOORE:** I know.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** I don't understand.

**MR MOORE:** (*In a purposefully overly dramatic way*) Oh you will, Angela. You will.

*MR MOORE exits.*

MY BOSS IS A WANKER NO DOUBT  
WHOS HEAD I JUST WANT TO CLOUT  
HIS SMART IDEAS ALWAYS ARE  
NOTHING SHORT OF BIZARRE  
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S ABOUT

**MRS SINCLAIR:** Right. Your homework – pages fifty one to fifty four, no cheating by looking at the answers in the back, I'm looking at you Jordan Tamworth. Go on then – bugger off the lotta yas. Oi not you Jamie Mills. And Laura Ward – you stay behind too. The rest of you, moosh. Move it.

*JAMIE walks sulkily forward. LAURA looks confused and bemused as she too walks forward.*

**MRS SINCLAIR:** *(Handing over the envelopes)* These are for your parents' eyes only. Take them home. Give it to them. Do not read it yourself. Get it? Got it? Good. Go.

*JAMIE and LAURA step out of the classroom. Both immediately tear open the envelopes. They look each other in the eye, once, confused, then walk off in different directions without saying a word. MRS SINCLAIR steps back out.*

**MRS SINCLAIR:** *(Thoughtfully, to herself)* What the hell have you come up with this time, Timothy...

*She exits.*



## **Act One**

### **Scene Three**

*A split stage – the Ward family’s dining room is on the left hand side, a nicely laid large table with the two family members sitting around it, ARTHUR, LAURA and a third empty seat. The table is laid with silverware and wine glasses in the places of the parents. On the right hand side of the stage, on the other side of a thick wall divide, we see a flat, filthy and a mess in comparison. There is one worn leather sofa, and there are beer cans and bags of what we assume to be cannabis scattered all over the room. The floor is littered with crisp packets, crumbs, and general filth. We get the impression that this is a flat that hasn’t been cleaned or tidied for years. In an ashtray by the sofa, smoke is rising from what appears to be a still-lit cigarette. The following scene takes place simultaneously, with the focus being thrown between the two separate locations. ARTHUR, on the left, opens the letter that Laura has handed him.*

**ARTHUR:** *(Reading)* “Dear Mr and Mrs Ward... In light of your daughter’s recent academic achievements, we would like to invite her and you as her parents for an informal meeting with me tomorrow afternoon, to recognise her accomplishments in person, and discuss her future...” Oh Laura, this is wonderful news!

**LAURA:** It is... but...

**ARTHUR:** But?

**LAURA:** I wasn’t the only person to get one of these letters...

**ARTHUR:** But you’re the best-

**LAURA:** The other person was this boy. A guy called Jamie. He’s a bit of a... troublemaker.

**ARTHUR:** Troublemaker...?

**LAURA:** Well... not exactly a model student. He’s barely ever in lessons and... well to be honest he’s never really

about at school at all. I think he lives on one of the estates up the road...

*Lights down on LAURA's dining room, and up on JAMIE's. Enter Jamie. Taking no notice of the mess, he dumps his bag on the floor by the entrance, and wanders towards the sofa. On his way, he grabs a seemingly empty can of beer, swirls it to check if there is liquid inside, and downs the remaining leftover beer. Reaching over to the smoking ashtray, he pulls out what appears to be a lit joint of cannabis. As though this is an everyday occurrence, he picks it up, and sits down on the sofa taking a hefty drag on the spliff. After a couple of seconds, a man, SID, enters through a door behind him, pulling up his trousers and doing up his belt. SID appears startled when he sees Jamie.*

**SID:** Who the fuck are you?

**JAMIE:** Jamie. Natalie's son.

*Sid relaxes, and continues buckling up his belt.*

**SID:** Oh. She didn't tell me she had a son. Here give us some of that...

*Without waiting for a response from JAMIE, he walks over and helps himself to the joint, which he takes a long hard drag from. He doesn't return it to JAMIE as the conversation continues.*

**SID:** How old are you then?

**JAMIE:** Sixteen.

**SID:** Fucking hell.

**JAMIE:** What?

**SID:** Nah. No matter.

*SID takes another drag. JAMIE looks uncomfortable.*

**JAMIE:** Are you Darren?

*SID looks offended and confused. It is apparent that the weed has started taking effect already as his words are becoming slightly slurred.*

**SID:** Darren? Who the fuck is Darren?

**JAMIE:** Nah no one I dunno why I said Darren...

**SID:** Do I look like a fucking Darren?

**JAMIE:** Nah. Nah you're alright. Dunno why I said it.

*SID searches through the empty beer cans. He downs the remaining beer from one, and then uses it as an ashtray to extinguish his dying joint. He then continues searching until he finds one with about half the beer remaining, which he picks up and sips from.*

**JAMIE:** Where's my mum?

**SID:** Sleeping. I think. She was pretty fucked if you asked me.

**JAMIE:** Oh. Is she alright?

**SID:** What do I look like? A fucking doctor? She was breathing at least – that's what matters innit.

*SID gulps the last of his beer, wipes his mouth with his sleeve, and picks up a carrier bag. He fills it with a number of sachets that he finds stashed around the room, small plastic bags that appear to be full of cannabis.*

**JAMIE:** You paid for that?

**SID:** None of your fucking business.

*Jamie stands up.*

**JAMIE:** Nah, come on man, we can't afford...

**SID:** You can't afford to get a fucking fist in your face is what you can't afford. Now sit the fuck down.

*Sheepishly, JAMIE sits back down. SID collects the rest of the weed, and exits swiftly without looking back. Lights go down on the room, and we return to LAURA's dining room. Enter JENNIFER, LAURA's mother, a charity worker who spends very little time at home. She is carrying a Le*

*Creuset casserole dish which she places on the table, and ladles out portions for all sitting down.*

**JENNIFER:** I wonder what's got more fibre in it. Quinoa or couscous?

**ARTHUR:** To be perfectly honest, darling, I can't tell the bloody difference.

**JENNIFER:** Quinoa's red. Couscous is yellow.

**ARTHUR:** I thought quinoa was just a type of couscous?

**JENNIFER:** No, no fairly sure they're just different grains completely.

**ARTHUR:** Ah, how interesting.

*A stilted pause. The parents simultaneously sip their wine. LAURA finally forcibly breaks the silence by turning to ARTHUR.*

**LAURA:** How was the journey this morning?

**ARTHUR:** A nightmare. As per. The tube was packed. The British public still seem unable to grasp the concept of wearing deodorant. Ended up getting off at Embankment and taking a boat down to Canary Wharf. Pity about the weather. Would've been a rather lovely trip had it not been bucketing it down.

*Another awkward silence. Once again, LAURA breaks it.*

**LAURA:** How was work today, mum?

**JENNIFER:** Same old, same old.

**LAURA:** Depressing?

**JENNIFER:** Well yes but people don't tend to volunteer for charities for personal gain.

*Silence.*

**ARTHUR:** On the subject of volunteering – fascinating story in the papers, today... Apparently, they're looking for three volunteer astronauts for a mission to Mars...-

**JENNIFER:** Who's "they"?

**ARTHUR:** This company, "Mars One"... anyway – here's the astonishing thing – these volunteers will be committing their entire lives to this mission. After the years of travel to Mars, they'll not return. They'll stay there for the rest of their lives and begin establishing a human colony on the planet. It's like something out of a science-fiction film.

**JENNIFER:** It must get dreadfully lonely.

**ARTHUR:** The thing I wonder is how they manage to pack enough food to last them the rest of their lives. And how do they keep it fresh?

**JENNIFER:** Well I imagine it must be all processed and tinned.

**ARTHUR:** Can't be that healthy then, can it?

**JENNIFER:** That's true... I wonder how they maintain a balanced diet while they're up there?

**ARTHUR:** Well I don't imagine that they'd be able to... it would all be dreadfully repetitive.

## #6 – *The Same Routine*

*ARTHUR and JENNIFER continue their conversation silently as all focus is on LAURA as the music starts.*

**LAURA:** IT'S THE SAME THING.  
EVERY NIGHT.  
HOW WAS YOUR DAY?  
T WAS ALRIGHT  
  
AND YOURS?  
NOT TOO BAD  
MAKING SMALL TALK

MUM AND DAD

SAME OLD STORY  
SO AND SO  
DID YOU SEE THIS  
YES AND NO

TRAFFIC NIGHTMARE  
LONG COMMUTE  
CROWDED CARRIAGE  
SWEATY SUIT

A DAY OF STRESS AND A DAY OF WOE  
A DAY OF WORK BEING SO AND SO  
AND NOTHING CHANGES AND I KNOW  
THAT NOTHING WILL...  
BECAUSE EVERYDAY...  
IT'S THE SAME ROUTINE

*The lighting changes to show JAMIE in his bed.*

**JAMIE:** GET HOME TO FIND  
IN HER BED  
MY MOTHER'S LYING THERE  
OFF HER HEAD

SOME RANDOM BLOKE  
SMELLING BAD  
AND NEVER ONE  
I CAN CALL MY DAD

FAGS AND WEED  
SPLIFFS AND BEER  
WHY CAN'T IT ALL JUST  
DISAPPEAR

A MILLION MEN  
STILL NOT A WIFE  
WHAT MUST'VE HAPPENED  
IN HER LIFE?

AND IF MY MUM WOULD SURFACE SOON  
SHE'S BEEN FUCKED ALL AFTERNOON

IF ONLY SHE COULD CHANGE HER TUNE  
BUT NOTHING WILL CHANGE...  
BECAUSE EVERYDAY...  
IT'S THE SAME ROUTINE

*Lights back up on LAURA, and down on JAMIE.*

**LAURA:** FOOD AND CARS  
LIFE ON MARS  
NOTHING CHANGES  
YEAR BY YEAR

THEY NEVER ASK  
HOW I AM  
DO THEY NOTICE  
I'M STILL HERE?

*Lights up on JAMIE and down on LAURA*

**JAMIE:** ON AND ON  
DOES SHE LEARN  
JUST LOOK AROUND  
HASN'T SHE SEEN

NOT A HOME  
BUT A STY  
EVERYDAY  
THE SAME ROUTINE...

*Lights up on both side of the stage.*

**JAMIE:**  
GET HOME TO FIND  
IN HER BED  
MY MOTHER'S LYING THERE  
OFF HER HEAD

SOME RANDOM BLOKE  
SMELLING BAD  
AND NEVER ONE  
I CAN CALL MY DAD

FAGS AND WEED

**LAURA:**

FOOD AND CARS  
LIFE ON MARS

NOTHING CHANGES  
YEAR BY YEAR

SPLIFFS AND BEER  
WHY CAN'T IT ALL JUST  
DISAPPEAR

THEY NEVER ASK  
HOW I AM

A MILLION MEN  
STILL NOT A WIFE  
WHAT MUST'VE HAPPENED  
IN HER LIFE?

DO THEY NOTICE  
I'M STILL HERE?

ON AND ON  
DOES SHE LEARN

IT'S THE SAME THING.  
EVERY NIGHT.  
HOW WAS YOUR DAY?  
T'WAS ALRIGHT

JUST LOOK AROUND  
HASN'T SHE SEEN

AND YOURS?  
NOT TOO BAD  
MAKING SMALL TALK  
MUM AND DAD

NOT A HOME  
BUT A STY

SAME OLD STORY  
SO AND SO  
DID YOU SEE THIS  
YES AND NO

EVERYDAY  
THE SAME ROUTINE...

TRAFFIC NIGHTMARE  
LONG COMMUTE  
CROWDED CARRIAGE  
SWEATY SUIT

**BOTH:** GETTING HOME TO THE SAME EVERYDAY  
I WANT IT TO STOP AND TO GO AWAY  
BUT NOTHING CHANGES ANYWAY  
AND NOTHING WILL...  
BECAUSE EVERYDAY...  
IT'S THE SAME ROUTINE  
THE SAME ROUTINE  
THE SAME ROUTINE



## Act One

### Scene Four

*Another split stage – the head teacher, MR MOORE’s office on the left and MRS SINCLAIR’s office on the right. Both are arranged identically but symmetrically for the parent-teacher meetings, with two/three seats behind the desks respectively. As the lights come up, MR MOORE and MRS SINCLAIR are talking in MR MOORE’s office.*

**MRS SINCLAIR:** “Education through partnership”?

**MR MOORE:** Precisely. Take our worst performing student and our best performing student, and let the problem solve itself. It is the perfect solution.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** Sounds like a load of bollocks to me...

**MR MOORE:** Angela, please... language in the workplace...

**MRS SINCLAIR:** Sorry, headmaster.

**MR MOORE:** Now, I’ve invited Jamie and Laura both in today along with their parents. I shall be discussing matters with Laura, and you with Jamie.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** How fair and balanced.

**MR MOORE:** *(Missing the sarcasm)* Now I’d like you to emphasise his potential. He’s like a locked box. No matter how hard we try to prize him open, he’s not going to budge. What we need to find is a key that fits. Right. We shall discuss afterwards. See you on the other side...

### #7 - The School Report

*MRS SINCLAIR crosses into her office, and the families enter. In unison, the teachers greet the families.*

**MR MOORE:**

**MRS SINCLAIR:**

Hello there, Mr and Mrs Ward.      Hello there, Miss Mills. Please  
Please do have a seat.                      do have a seat.

*LAURA sits in-between her parents. JAMIE slumps himself down sulkily. His mother, dressed in a dirty tracksuit, follows suit. She appears drunk. MR MOORE rummages clumsily through his desk, as the music vamps repetitively, before finally beginning.*

**MR MOORE:** I'D FIRST LIKE TO GIVE YOU MY  
CONGRATULATIONS,  
YOU'RE TRULY A TALENT, AND MAKE OUR  
SCHOOL PROUD!  
I'VE LITTLE TO SAY, BEYOND FELICITATIONS,  
BY SINGING YOUR PRAISES, AND SINGING  
THEM LOUD.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** WE'RE RATHER CONCERNED BY YOUR  
POOR REPORT'S GRADING,  
ATTENDANCE A SHAMBLES, AND DISCIPLINE A  
MESS,  
YOUR HOPE OF A FUTURE IS GRADUALLY  
FADING  
AND UNLESS THINGS START CHANGING...  
WELL; GIVE IT A GUESS.

**MR MOORE:** I'VE NO DOUBT YOUR PARENTS ARE  
FULLY SUPPORTIVE  
I'VE NO DOUBT YOUR TUTORING HELPED YOU  
ALONG  
BUT YOUR UNIQUE TALENTS CAN BENEFIT ALL  
OF US  
AND YOU'LL CORRECT ME IF YOU THINK I'M  
WRONG

**MRS SINCLAIR:** YOU SKIVE EVERY WEEK WHILE WE TAKE  
EVERY MEASURE,  
YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND THIS IS SIMPLY NOT  
ON.  
YOUR TEACHERS FIND TEACHING NO LONGER  
A PLEASURE,  
WE'VE GIVEN YOU WARNINGS BUT SOON  
THEY'LL BE GONE.

**MR MOORE:** TO RECOGNISE ALL YOUR REMARKABLE  
HARDSHIPS,  
I'M OFFERING YOU A SUBTANTIAL REWARD  
WE'LL WRITE YOU A REFERENCE TO GET YOU  
TO CAMBRIDGE  
A WHOLE TWO YEARS EARLY – NOW THAT I'D  
APPLAUD

**MRS SINCLAIR:** CONSISTENTLY LAZY, CONSISTENTLY  
LOUD,  
ARE COMMENTS I'M HEARING A LOT OF THE  
TIME,  
YET YOU JUST SIT SMILING – DON'T TELL ME  
YOU'RE PROUD?!  
*(Pause, as she holds the high note)*  
WE'LL NEVER STOP 'TIL YOU CONFESS TO THE  
CRIME.

**MR MOORE:** NOW GIVEN THAT WE'RE DOING YOU  
QUITE A FAVOUR,  
THERES ONE THING WE ASK THAT YOU DO IN  
RETURN  
SOME STUDENTS DON'T DO QUITE AS WELL AS  
I'M CERTAIN  
YOU'VE SEEN... AND WE SIMPLY CANNOT  
MAKE THEM LEARN.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** WE'RE RUNNING QUITE LOW NOW ON  
OPTIONS TO TAME YOU,  
BUT HERE'S A SOLUTION WE THINK IS THE  
BEST  
NO TEACHER GETS THROUGH TO YOU THAT IS  
QUITE CLEAR  
WITH A STUDENT, PERHAPS, YOU MIGHT BE  
MORE IMPRESSED

**MR MOORE:**  
WE'RE PAIRING YOU UP  
WITH A STUDENT TO HELP  
YOU  
LEARNING AS PARTNERS  
YOU'RE BRIGHT

**MRS SINCLAIR:**  
WE'RE PAIRING YOU UP  
WITH A STUDENT TO HELP  
YOU  
LEARNING AS PARTNERS  
YOU NEED SUPPORT

YOU'LL LEARN MORE BY  
TEACHING

YOUR FULL POTENTIAL  
BY YOUR NEXT  
SCHOOL REPORT!

YOU'LL SURELY BE  
REACHING

YOUR FULL POTENTIAL  
BY YOUR NEXT  
SCHOOL REPORT!

*The song ends, and the families leave. MRS SINCLAIR and MR MOORE reconvene.*

**MRS SINCLAIR:** Can I be brutally honest?

**MR MOORE:** Well you can be honest... I'm not sure about brutal though...

**MRS SINCLAIR:** I'm not convinced this will work.

**MR MOORE:** Why's that?

**MRS SINCLAIR:** They just... I don't know... they just don't seem to fit as a pair. They're not compatible to learn with each other.

**MR MOORE:** They're polar opposites. Completely different sides of the academic and social spectrum. They'll learn an awful lot from each other.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** There's one more thing, headmaster...

**MR MOORE:** Yes?

**MRS SINCLAIR:** I'm concerned about Jamie's welfare. His mother... she didn't exactly seem too grounded. Too "with it".

**MR MOORE:** Not my problem, Angela.

**MRS SINCLAIR:** But surely as the boy's teaching staff it is our responsibility to ensure everything is alright at home? It would certainly go some way to explaining why he is absent so often?

**MR MOORE:** Unless the student actively approaches us and asks for help, then it is absolutely none of our concern. I don't want you probing him or anyone else for that matter about their personal lives at home. We simply cannot be making assumptions like that. Understood?

**MRS SINCLAIR:** Yes headmaster.

**MR MOORE:** Good. Now... what's on the lunch menu today?

## Act One

### Scene Five

#### #8 – First Impressions

*The school canteen. JAMIE sits next to LAURA at the table. He is carrying a tray of greasy-looking school dinner. There is a long awkward pause as they acknowledge each other without making eye contact. Throughout the conversation, the stilted repetitive staccato music vamps.*

**LAURA:** Hi.

**JAMIE:** Hi.

*LAURA pulls out her packed lunch. JAMIE looks nosily into her neatly assembled Tupperware box.*

**JAMIE:** What you got?

*LAURA looks confused at first.*

**LAURA:** Hmm? Oh... Moroccan butternut squash parcels.  
You?

**JAMIE:** Turkey twizzlers.

**LAURA:** Oh.

*They each take a bite awkwardly. They sing to themselves, hiding their immediate reactions from each other.*

**LAURA:** (Aside) Turkey twizzlers...!?  
DO THEY EVEN STILL EXIST?

*She notices him watching her, smiles in an obvious false way, and then looks in the opposite direction.*

**JAMIE:** WHAT'S SHE THINKING...?  
WAS THERE SOMETHING I MISSED...?

*Another awkward moment of eye contact, before both turn away.*

**LAURA:** TABLE MANNERS NOT TOP OF HIS LIST...

**BOTH:** GOT TO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION...

*The music continues vamping throughout the following.*

**LAURA:** So... we've been in the same class for five years now...

**JAMIE:** Yeah. And?

**LAURA:** It's just weird that we've never really actually talked before...

**JAMIE:** You don't really talk to anyone though...

**LAURA:** True...

*Long awkward pause. Both eat.*

**LAURA:** Not that you're really ever here though...

**JAMIE:** True...

**LAURA:** Why do you... why do you bunk so often?

**JAMIE:** I don't "bunk".

**LAURA:** So where are you half the time?

**JAMIE:** Stuff comes up.

**LAURA:** What kind of stuff?

**JAMIE:** None of your business kinda stuff.

**LAURA:** Ok ok...

*The music picks up again.*

**JAMIE:** SHE ASKS TOO MANY QUESTIONS

**LAURA:** THERE'S SOMETHING THAT HE'S HIDING

**JAMIE:** I WONDER WHAT SHE THINKS OF ME

**LAURA:** I THINK I'M STILL DECIDING

**BOTH:** GOT TO MAKE A BETTER FIRST IMPRESSION

*Music vamps again.*

**JAMIE:** So how come you're so clever?

*LAURA looks confused...*

**LAURA:** I work hard.

**JAMIE:** Why?

**LAURA:** Because my parents make me. Don't your parents make you?

**JAMIE:** Nah not really. Don't think my mum cares much to be honest.

**LAURA:** And your dad?

**JAMIE:** I don't have a dad.

**LAURA:** Oh. I'm sorry.

**JAMIE:** Meh – what for? It's not your fault.

**LAURA:** Did he die...?

**JAMIE:** I don't know who 'he' is...

**LAURA:** Oh...

**JAMIE:** WHY DID I TELL HER THAT?

**LAURA:** IN ME HE'S CONFIDING?

**JAMIE:** WHAT IS SHE? A THERAPIST?



**LAURA:** STILL SOMETHING THAT HE'S HIDING

**BOTH:** GOT TO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

**LAURA:** Sorry I didn't mean to...

**JAMIE:** Nah don't worry about it.

**LAURA:** I mean it, if there's something that...

**JAMIE:** I said don't worry about it. I'll see you after school.

## **Act One**

### **Scene Six**

*ARTHUR enters on the phone. He is suited up for work, walking hastily up and down the stage, as though in a rush to get somewhere.*

**ARTHUR:** *(Down the phone)* Are you sure? I mean, are you absolutely positive? I need you to be absolutely one hundred per cent sure here... my balls are on the line, John, and if you get this wrong we're all screwed.

*He paces up and down nervously as he listens to an explanation.*

**ARTHUR:** Ok, ok, ok. Right. How long do we have? ... Shit. Ok. And this is our only window of opportunity? How much is at stake? ... Christ. Right. I'm on my way to the office. Keep hold as long as you possibly can.

*ARTHUR exits.*

## **Act One**

### **Scene Seven**

**LAURA:** Ok.

*JAMIE says nothing.*

**LAURA:** What do you want to do first?

**JAMIE:** I don't.

**LAURA:** Can't say I'm overly enthusiastic about it either, but tough. We need to start with something... Get out your maths book.

*JAMIE gives her a look of sarcastic approval, before pulling it out and slamming down it on the desk.*

**LAURA:** Page fifty five then.

*He flicks through to the correct page.*

**LAURA:** Here. Let's start with something easy. Angles. Here's an angle, find "x".

**JAMIE:** It's right there.

*He points mockingly at the symbol on the page. Laura doesn't look impressed.*

**LAURA:** Can't you at least try?

**JAMIE:** Eugh. Fuck's sake.

**LAURA:** And do you mind watching your language please?

**JAMIE:** Why?

**LAURA:** Because I find it offensive.

*JAMIE seems determined to argue.*

**JAMIE:** No, but actually, why?

**LAURA:** Because... because it just is offensive, ok?

**JAMIE:** But why is it offensive? It's just a word... fuck fuckety fuck fuck fuck...

**LAURA:** Stop it. Please.

**JAMIE:** What is it that bothers you about it? It's just a word. A series of letters. That's all anything is, really... Think about it – every book you've ever read is just twenty six letters arranged in a different order each time. It's just sounds.

**LAURA:** I never thought of it like that...

**JAMIE:** So why should some words mean anything more offensive than others?

**LAURA:** But it's not the words themselves... it's the meaning behind the words. Anyway if you're in the mood for words rather than numbers, let's look at some poetry.

**JAMIE:** Do we have to?

**LAURA:** Yes.

**JAMIE:** It's all just so bloody depressing.

### **#8a – Lessons Montage**

**JAMIE:** I mean, I've tried reading it. I'm reading it, and I'm just like... there are four types of poems in the world. 1) I'm in love ain't life amazing. 2) Wow the world is really fucking pretty. 3) Someone's died, boo fucking hoo. 4) Life is pointless. Love doesn't exist. We just spend every day being forced to do something we don't enjoy in order to gain a qualification that doesn't help us to work in a place where we'll not be happy and live out our lives until we die.

*There is a beat as LAURA comprehends what JAMIE just said.*

**LAURA:** What you just said... is poetic.

**JAMIE:** Fuck off.

*The music builds up, and JAMIE exits. ROGER takes his place at the desk next to LAURA.*

**LAURA:** How do you deal with problem students?

**ROGER:** Well... I can't say I have any "problem" students, per say, but if someone is struggling I always try to home in on what they're actually interested in. Everyone's interested in something. Even if they don't know it. For you it's obviously the painting, but what you need to do is try to tap into what this Jamie fellow's really about... What is it that he talks about most passionately...

**LAURA:** Well I know that he doesn't like poetry.

**ROGER:** Ok...

**LAURA:** But the way he speaks... when he suddenly sets off on a rant, he's so articulate, so... well... poetic.

**ROGER:** Then tap into that. Use his creativity as a catalyst. Let him play to his strengths, and try to get him to achieve something. Get him to perform. To put pen to paper.

*Music rises again, and JAMIE takes ROGER's place next to LAURA.*

**LAURA:** I want you to write something.

**JAMIE:** What?

**LAURA:** Something creative. I want you to write a poem.

**JAMIE:** No.

**LAURA:** Ok. Not a poem. Write about your feelings. See what happens.

**JAMIE:** What feelings?

**LAURA:** Any feelings. Anything that's troubling you. Anything that's making you happy. Anything that's making you sad. Just put pen to paper. You've got a beautifully poetic voice within you.

*At the word "poetic", JAMIE gives LAURA a warning look.*

**LAURA:** Ok, ok... not poetic... creative. Use this creativity. Forget maths and science and everything else, just focus on words for the moment. Bring something tomorrow.

*Once again, as the music rises, ROGER and JAMIE rotate places.*

**ROGER:** You've not painted for a while...

**LAURA:** No... I suppose not... I've been fairly busy what with the ETP sessions.

**ROGER:** "ETP"?

**LAURA:** Education through partnership.

**ROGER:** That's what they call it? How dreadfully patronising.

**LAURA:** I asked Jamie to write something. Not a poem. Just his feelings.

**ROGER:** And? Did he?

**LAURA:** I don't know. I'm seeing him tomorrow.

**ROGER:** Don't let it distract you too much from your own work. Your father was telling me earlier that he's a little concerned this is taking up too much time. If it wasn't your school's idea he'd be very much against it.

**LAURA:** I know, I know.

*Music rises. JAMIE and ROGER rotate once more. JAMIE notices paint on Laura's cuffs.*

**JAMIE:** What's that on your shirt?

**LAURA:** Oh. It's paint.

**JAMIE:** You paint?

**LAURA:** Yeah.

**JAMIE:** What do you paint?

**LAURA:** People.

**JAMIE:** Who?

**LAURA:** Made up people.

**JAMIE:** What do you mean?

**LAURA:** The people I paint... It's hard to explain. Sometimes i just hear music. Out of nowhere. It's like it's being played in my mind - but I'm not just imagining hearing it... I am actually hearing it... And I don't know where it comes from or what it is but... It's beautiful. And when it starts it suddenly takes me into a world of creativity where I can paint at my best. Faces appear in front of me as though I'm painting automatically.

**JAMIE:** So what... you just think up the faces?

**LAURA:** Yes and no. I mean... I don't think of them... as in, I'm not actively thinking of them. It's like dreams. You're mind is creating them, but you're not controlling it. It's inventing what you see and hear all by itself.

**JAMIE:** I was reading about dreams.

**LAURA:** Freud?

**JAMIE:** Wikipedia. I find dreams just... really cool... Our minds are so weird and complex and creative and yet we don't even realise the things our subconscious is making. Like... memory itself is impossible to understand. Every little thing, every detail that we take in about the world around us is stored in there. Not always immediately reachable, not on like a conscious level, but it's in there. Somewhere. Like the people in our dreams - every face that you see in your dream is a real person that you've seen sometime before in your life. Our mind isn't capable of filling in the blank details of a human face from scratch, so it remembers real faces we've seen in the past. Random people. While we normally dream about those people who we know well, the man standing in front of you in your dream last night could have been the real life man sitting opposite you on the bus months before, that facial image deeply embedded for some reason or another in your subconscious.

*JAMIE looks embarrassed at his uncharacteristic articulateness.*

Or some shit like that...

*LAURA seems stunned that JAMIE could speak so articulately.*

**LAURA:** Wow. I never knew that.

**JAMIE:** I wonder if it's the same with your paintings? All those people could be real people that you've seen out there somewhere in the world? Imagine just bumping into one of them on the street one day? And just being like "oh my god I've got a picture of you on my bedroom wall!" How weird would that be?!

**LAURA:** Imagine...

*There is a beat.*

**JAMIE:** I wrote something the other day...

LAURA: A poem?

JAMIE: No. Feelings. Like you said.

LAURA: Show me.

JAMIE: You didn't say I had to share it with you...

LAURA: Well what did you expect?

*JAMIE is reluctant.*

JAMIE: Ok, ok. Fine. How do I feel?

*He sings.*

### #9 – Alone

EACH DAY WHEN I GET HOME  
I KNOW WHAT THERE WILL BE  
WILL THERE BE A LOVING MOTHER  
WHO'LL SMILE AND COOK ME TEA?

WHO'LL ASK ME HOW MY DAY WAS  
WHO'LL LISTEN TO MY WOES  
WHO'LL HELP ME WITH MY HOMEWORK  
WITH EVERYTHING SHE KNOWS

AND WILL THERE BE A FATHER  
A DAD WITH WHOM I CAN  
KICK ABOUT A FOOTBALL  
TALK ABOUT BEING A MAN

WE'D SIT DOWN AS A FAMILY  
AND PLAY GAMES ALL WEEKEND  
I'D GROW UP HAPPY AS CAN BE  
AND LET IT NEVER END...

BUT NONE OF IT IS TRUE FOR ME  
MY MOTHER'S A CATASTROPHE  
MY FATHER IS AN ABSENTEE  
AND SO IN SHORT... I FEEL UTTERLY ALONE.



*LAURA says nothing. She simply reaches over, and hugs JAMIE. He seems surprised at first, as though he hasn't been hugged in a long time. He responds, awkwardly patting her on the back as though he's not too sure what to do as the music comes to a close.*

## **Act One**

### **Scene Eight**

*JAMIE's house. This time, it takes up the whole stage. As JAMIE enters, another strange man, DEREK leaves.*

**JAMIE:** Mum?

*No response. He shouts louder.*

**JAMIE:** MUM?

*NATALIE enters.*

**NATALIE:** What have you been telling them at school?

**JAMIE:** What?

**NATALIE:** What have you been saying about me?

**JAMIE:** Nothing...

**NATALIE:** Nothing? Yeah? Well then why did I get a phonecall from one of your teachers asking if everything was ok at home?

**JAMIE:** I dunno... I haven't said anything.

**NATALIE:** I told em everything's fine. Cos it is fine.

*Jamie says nothing.*

**NATALIE:** Maybe if you started actually getting some good grades and I didn't have to be dragged into your school to be lectured about how to raise my son.

**JAMIE:** Maybe if I started working harder? If I started working harder? Look at you! Who the hell was that coming out the house?

**NATALIE:** That was Derek.

**JAMIE:** I thought his name was Darren.

**NATALIE:** Darren was here last week.

**JAMIE:** For fuck's sake, mum. Look at you! They're not even boyfriends – they just come here and pay you for the weed, and... you're practically a fucking whore.

*NATALIE loses and slaps him hard across the face.*

**NATALIE:** Get out of my house. Go. GO. GET OUT.

**JAMIE:** You know what? I will. You're a failure, mum. And an embarrassment. There's a big wide world out there, and I'm not gonna let you drag me down to your level. Wake the fuck up for once.

*JAMIE storms out. As he does, a piece of paper falls from his pocket. It is the poem that he had written for LAURA. There is a long stunned silence as Natalie pants, slowly starting to calm down. Lazily, she walks over to the poem and picks it up. She starts to read it.*

## **#10 – Who's to Blame?**

*As she does, she suddenly is taken over by a flood of emotions, for the first time realising just how deeply unhappy her son truly is, feeling the weight of her responsibility over him suddenly collapsing over her shoulders, crippling her.*

AM I A BAD PERSON?  
HAVE I REALLY BEEN BLIND ALL THESE YEARS?  
MY OWN SON, BEFORE MY EYES  
LIVING HIS LIFE THROUGH HIS TEARS

HE CALLS ME A FAILURE  
HE WASN'T WRONG  
I'VE JUST BEEN SO WEAK  
WHEN I SHOULD HAVE BEEN STRONG

BUT WHO'S TO BLAME...  
FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO MY LIFE...

I DREAMED I'D HAVE EVERYTHING  
THAT MY LIFE WOULD JUST FALL INTO PLACE  
BUT LIFE DOESN'T WORK LIKE THAT  
IT MOVES AT TOO FAST A PACE

*The music evolves into a slower, more contemplative pace.*

I REMEMBER BEING A LITTLE GIRL  
MY ENTIRE LIFE AHEAD  
NOT WANTING TO BE A LITTLE GIRL  
BUT A BIG GIRL INSTEAD

THEN BEFORE YOU KNOW IT  
YOUR WISH HAD BEEN GRANTED  
BUT STILL YOU'RE NOT HAPPY  
A SEED HAD BEEN PLANTED...

A BIG GIRL WAS NOW NOT SO BIG AFTER ALL  
YOU WANTED TO GROW, TO MATURE TO BE  
TALL  
AND YOU DREAMED OF A FUTURE WHERE  
YOU'D HAVE IT ALL  
AND EVERYTHING WOULD BE PERFECT

A FAMILY WHO LOVED YOU  
A HUSBAND WHO CARED  
A HOUSE FULL OF CHILDREN  
THE TOYS WOULD BE SHARED  
AND I'D TELL THEM STORIES  
THEY'D LAUGH THEY'D BE SCARED  
AND EVERYTHING WOULD BE PERFECT

WE'D GOT TO THE BEACH  
WHERE WE'D SWIM AND SUNBATHE  
THE CHILDREN WOULD PLAY, BUT I'D MAKE  
THEM BEHAVE  
AS LONG AS THEY WEREN'T SWEEP AWAY BY A  
WAVE  
AND EVERYTHING WOULD BE PERFECT

BUT LIFE...  
LIFE HAS A WAY OF FALLING APART  
HAS A WAY OF BREAKING YOUR HEART

BEFORE YOU HAVE A CHANCE...

WHO'S TO BLAME?

IS IT ME?

HAVE THE CHOICES I'VE MADE BEEN ALL OF  
MY OWN?

WHO'S TO BLAME?

WHO HAS RESPONSIBILITY?

WHEN WILL I LEARN THAT I  
HAVE TO FACE LIFE ALONE

## Act One

### Scene Nine

*LAURA's house. LAURA is in her room, working at her desk. We hear a knock at the door. In the background, we hear the following.*

**ARTHUR:** *(Answering the door)* Yes? Hello?

**JAMIE:** Does Laura live here?

**ARTHUR:** Who are you?

**JAMIE:** I go to her school. Is she in?

**ARTHUR:** You're Jamie, aren't you? I remember Laura telling me about you...

**JAMIE:** Please, Mr Ward, I need to see her. It's important. It's about... It's about our exams.

**ARTHUR:** Oh gosh, right, very well then... up the stairs and on the left hand side...

**JAMIE:** Cheers, Mr Ward.

*The sound of running footsteps.*

**ARTHUR:** *(Shouting after him)* Call me Arthur, please! Mr Ward was my father!

*JAMIE enters LAURA's bedroom.*

**LAURA:** What are you doing here?

**JAMIE:** It's my mum. She's gone mental. She kicked me out.

**LAURA:** Why did you come here...? How did you find me?

**JAMIE:** *(Embarrassed)* I... I followed you back here once. After one of our lessons. *(Seeing LAURA's reaction)* It wasn't for anything creepy or nothing... I just... I just

didn't want to go back to my house. *(He notices the paintings on the wall)*. Shit... You weren't lying then... bloody hell you really are talented.

**LAURA:** Thanks...

**JAMIE:** *(Noticing all the papers on her desk)* You weren't lying about the ton of work either...

**LAURA:** No. I wasn't.

*JAMIE sits on her bed. She looks uncomfortable.*

**LAURA:** I've never had a boy in here before...

**JAMIE:** Well there's a first time for everything, eh?

*Beat. JAMIE examines the paintings more closely.*

**JAMIE:** Could you paint me?

**LAURA:** No. I've told you – I can't paint actual people. They're all just made up.

**JAMIE:** Oh yeah.

*Beat.*

**JAMIE:** I wrote another thing.

**LAURA:** Oh?

**JAMIE:** Yeah. I wrote it for you.

**LAURA:** I... I'm not really sure what to say...

**JAMIE:** Can I read it to you?

**LAURA:** Yes. Yes please do.

## #11 – Lessons in Love

**JAMIE:** LOOK AT YOU

LOOK AT ME  
DIFFERENT BY INFINITY  
DIFFERENT AS TWO PEOPLE CAN BE  
BUT WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THAT MAKE?

EVENINGS SAT  
PAGES TURNED  
WRITING TALKING  
LESSONS LEARNED  
LEARNING ABOUT EVERYTHING  
Well... almost...

I NEVER IMAGINED  
WHEN I WAS WITH YOU  
HOW ALL OF THESE FEELINGS  
DEEP WITHIN ME GREW

AND IT'S ONLY NOW THAT I CAN STOP  
AND LOOK DOWN FROM ABOVE  
AND SEE THE ONLY THING WE MISSED WERE  
LESSONS IN LOVE

**LAURA:** I NEVER IMAGINED I'D SEE YOU  
SITTING HERE IN MY ROOM  
EVERYTHING SEEMS TO HAVE PICKED UP  
SO QUICKLY, SO SOON...

AND IT'S ONLY NOW THAT I FEEL IT  
RISING WITHIN, DEEP AND TRUE  
AS THOUGH I'M PAINTING A PICTURE  
BUT IT'S NOT... IT'S JUST ME AND YOU

**BOTH:** AND IT'S ONLY NOW THAT I CAN STOP  
AND LOOK DOWN FROM ABOVE  
AND SEE THE ONLY THING WE MISSED WERE  
LESSONS IN LOVE

**JAMIE:** Laura...

**LAURA:** Jamie...

*The music ends as they stare deeply into each others eyes. The lights fade down.*



## **Act One**

### **Scene Ten**

*We are back downstairs. ARTHUR is pacing up and down the dining room, nervously. His phone is on the dining table. It rings. He jumps to answer it. He fiddles with it, struggling to answer it.*

**ARTHUR:** Yes?

*His facial expression slowly disintegrates. He is told that his financial risk has fallen through. His family has been bankrupted.*

**ARTHUR:** What? Oh Jesus Christ... Oh Jesus Christ... CHRIST!

*He throws the phone at the floor, breaking it. He sits down at the table, his head in hands.*

**ARTHUR:** (Stifling tears) Christ...

#### **#11a – The Collapse**

*Slowly, mechanically, he stands. His face shows utter devastation. He walks over to a cabinet in the corner of the room, and pulls out a bottle of whiskey and a crystal whisky glass. Slowly, methodically, he places them upon the tabletop, fills the glass with whiskey to the brim, and downs the lot. Blackout as he pours another glass almost immediately.*

## Act One

### Scene Eleven

#### *Segue into #11b – “First time for Everything”*

*We are back in LAURA’s bedroom. JAMIE and LAURA are in the same position as at the end of the song. They say nothing. They simply stare into each others eyes. Deeply. They see their own humanity. That it is shared. They see everything that they have learnt about each other, and for a moment their eyes are the only things in the world. Slowly, in perfect synchronisation, they lean in together and kiss. Gently at first, but slowly growing more passionately. The moment is shattered brutally in an instant by the sudden entrance of ARTHUR.*

#### *Segue into #11c – “You Are Never to See That Boy Again”*

*ARTHUR staggers in. He screams in anger at JAMIE.*

**ARTHUR:** No!

*He runs over, and physically pulls JAMIE out of the room.*

**ARTHUR:** Get out of my house. GET OUT.

**LAURA:** Dad!

*Amid the cacophony of the music, JAMIE looks back one last time at LAURA. He reaches out a hand, beckoning her to follow. She tries, but is stopped by ARTHUR, as he blocks the doorway like a human wall.*

**ARTHUR:** I am pulling you out of that school. We’ll home school you. You have got a shot at having one hell of a bright academic future, and you are not going to blow it now.

**LAURA:** It’s not my future. It’s your future. This is what you want for me it’s not what I want.

**ARTHUR:** It is what is best for you.

**LAURA:** Best in what way? Best so that I can go into an unhappy job and make a fortune while feeling miserable like you?

**ARTHUR:** Don't say that.

**LAURA:** Look at you. You're so driven and obsessed with "success" – do you even know what "success" is? Is all you care about making money?

**ARTHUR:** Laura, stop. My work... My work is... you have absolutely no idea. No clue at all about what I have done to support this family.

**LAURA:** What family, dad? Look around you. What family?

**ARTHUR:** I have to go.

**LAURA:** WHAT FAMILY?

**ARTHUR:** Look Laura. Listen to me, and listen very carefully. Something has happened at work. Something bad. Something very, very bad. I have to go. You are not to leave this room.

**LAURA:** I was right. It's always work, work, work.

**ARTHUR:** (*Shouting*) Stop it! You do not understand anything, Laura!

*ARTHUR storms out, slamming the door behind him. LAURA spins round and collapses in tears onto her bed, face down. Music begins to slowly rise, the familiar theme that appears when she begins painting, the music in her head that she had described to JAMIE.*

## **#12– Painting Adam**

*As the music builds, LAURA's silent tears rise into anger, as she grabs her paint and begins violently painting a new figure. The largest figure of all, ADAM. We see him start to take shape, a boy around the same age as her, with dark eyes and long dark hair. He is in black. As the instrumental draws to a climax and the fully-formed figure is visible on the wall, the image is lit up intensely as we have seen before, and as the*

*figure of ADAM steps forward, we are re-united with the boy for the first time since the prologue.*

**LAURA:** You are Adam.

*Blackout.*

**CURTAIN.**

## **ACT TWO**

### **SYNOPSIS:**

- (#13 – Entr’acte)
- Distraught at her father’s outburst, Laura runs after Jamie.
- He takes her back to his house, where they find Jamie’s mother passed out. It is apparent that she has taken stronger recreational drugs.
- Jamie suggests that they run away (“#14 - Take My Hand”). He knows about a youth hostel where they can stay the night.
- Despite their plan appearing at first to be a success, Laura keeps seeing Adam appearing on every corner (#15 - You’re Never Alone Reprise). Jamie is oblivious to this.
- Adam starts talking to Laura, paranoid musings, suggesting that Jamie is not to be trusted.
- Laura ignores Adam’s manipulative words, however Adam makes a dramatic appearance and attacks Jamie (“#15a - The Attack”), severely injuring him, while Laura watches helplessly.
- Laura is arrested, and taken into the mental hospital where the story began. We are now back within the same timeframe as the Act One prologue (#15b – Laura’s Cell Reprise).
- It emerges that she has been suffering from auditory and visual hallucinations, and is showing signs of paranoid schizophrenia likely induced by a traumatic experience.
- Laura’s mother visits her. It turns out that her father has been arrested for fraud, and that she has moved out. (#16 – Cambridge Days Reprise)
- Laura is then told by Dr Stevens that Jamie died while in hospital shortly after the attack, and that Laura was caught on CCTV stabbing him.
- We then move to the mortuary where there is a scene of stunned shock and unimaginable guilt as Natalie is forced to identify Jamie’s body and blames herself for losing him (#17 - “My Son / Who’s to Blame Reprise”)
- While Laura is alone, Adam enters her cell, armed with the same knife as earlier. He offers his hand to Laura, encouraging her to follow him (#18 - “Take My Hand Reprise”). He leads her off upstage into a blinding light as the curtain falls.