

ACT I Scene 1 – STAFFROOM (*Before School*)

(We are in an untidy junior school staffroom somewhere in the modern urban wastes. It's around 8.30am, midsummer. A coffee table is littered with dirty mugs, unopened junk mail, exercise books, a Scrabble box etc plus a hamster cage containing shredded newspaper, exercise wheel etc. Surrounding the table is a worn-out sofa and chairs. To the side is a window fronted by a sink, cupboards, fridge etc. Suddenly one side of a tired notice board succumbs to gravity...)

(MAXINE the caretaker is grudgingly wiping the sink. She notices something through the window and opens it angrily)

MAXINE: *(Shouting)* Oi! Pick that litter up ya cheeky sod. I'm sick o' you lot droppin' crisp packets in that playground. Go on - get to ya classroom! You're gonna miss registration.

(To herself as she shuts the window) ...bloody teachers.

(MAXINE trudges to the sofa and starts cleaning out the hamster cage)

(MRS JUBB the school secretary ENTERS carrying the office diary, briskly walking to the sink)

MRS JUBB: *(Brightly)* Morning.

MAXINE: *(Grimly)* Is it?

(MRS JUBB leaves the diary on the sink. She tutts as she inspects inside the cupboards)

MRS JUBB: I don't know. The *youngsters* are more organised than the teachers in this school.

MAXINE: The *hamsters* are more organised than the teachers in *this* school!

MRS JUBB: You haven't a spare tea bag, have you Maxine?

I'll be in the you-know-what if I don't get the head his morning cuppa.

MAXINE: *(Dismissively)* Try this bin.

(MRS JUBB talks as she rummages in the waste bin)

MRS JUBB: Did no one look after Hammy over the weekend? Poor thing.

MAXINE: No. I'm left to sort it as per soddin' usual.

MRS JUBB: Children aren't interested in hamsters these days. It's all i-boxes and x-pads.

MAXINE: Yeah, 'n all I get is an effin' U-bend!

(MRS JUBB pulls out a used tea bag on a string, cringing as she dangles it)

MRS JUBB: I can't give *this* to a headmaster! It's full of little rodent's doo-dahs!

MAXINE: Tell him it's herbal tea.

MRS JUBB: Herbal? It's more *gerbil* than herbal.

MAXINE: Well say it's organic then. He'll never know.

MRS JUBB: I'm not sure. He can tell his Early Grey from his Typhoo can Mr Beasley.

(As they talk, MRS JUBB reluctantly takes the tea bag to the sink, gingerly dropping it in a mug. Pouring water from the kettle, she crimps her nose as she adds congealed milk from the fridge)

MRS JUBB: When I was a little girl, I used to love looking after the school pet.

It didn't bother me about cleaning it's bottom.

MAXINE: Same here.

If they wanted a kid to sort out an animal's arse, I'd be first to put me hand up.

MRS JUBB: *(Looking around)* Any sugar?

MAXINE: *(Dismissively)* Sugar on the sink.

Ask this lot and all they do is stick two fingers up.

MRS JUBB: *(Scanning the sink)* I can't see any sugar?

MAXINE: *(Irritated)* On the drainer.

MRS JUBB: Where on the drainer?

(MAXINE stomps to the sink, grabs the mug, holds it under the edge of the drainer, sweeps sugar grains off it with her hand and thrusts the mug back at MRS JUBB)

MAXINE: There!

(MRS JUBB starts nervously hopping around miming stirring with an imaginary spoon)

MAXINE: What's up now?

MRS JUBB: You haven't seen the dirty old stirrer have you?

MAXINE: What dirty old stirrer?

MRS JUBB: You know - the bent one with horrible stains on the bottom.

MAXINE: The headmaster?

MRS JUBB: No, the *spoon!*

MAXINE: *(Glibly)* Oh, that? I chucked it in the bin.

*(MRS JUBB takes the mug and rummages in the waste bin. She gingerly pulls out a dead *hamster)*

MRS JUBB: *(Dangling it by its tail)* What's this? Poor Hammy!

*[*toy one, obviously!]*

(Head Teacher CLIVE ENTERS, talking on a portable phone, kowtowing to a prospective parent)

CLIVE: *(To phone)* ...yes, I'm sure I can squeeze you in.

(MRS JUBB panics and drops the hamster in the mug, dipping it up and down like a tea bag)

MRS JUBB: *(Nervously)* Nearly ready, Mr Beasley.

CLIVE: *(To MRS JUBB, phone to his chest)* Diary woman! Diary!

(As CLIVE continues creeping to the caller, MRS JUBB frantically hops around searching for the diary still dipping the hamster up and down by its tail)

CLIVE: *(To phone)* No, you can't miss us.

Look for the mobile phone mast and you're virtually in the playground.

(As CLIVE talks, MAXINE reluctantly gets up, grabs the waste bin and discretely offers it to MRS JUBB to drop the hamster in. Seeing the diary on the sink, she grabs it and thrusts it at MRS JUBB)

CLIVE: *(To phone)* What's that?

No problem. You can use the Deputy Head's parking space next to mine. She's had a breakdown.

(Pause) No, no. Not her car - a nervous breakdown.

(MAXINE EXITS carrying the waste bin)

(CLIVE snatches the diary from MRS JUBB, filling in details with a red pen from his top pocket)

CLIVE: *(To phone)* This afternoon it is - oh, and I'd leave the Jag at home and come in an old banger you're not too bothered about. Ok, Mr erm... oh?

(CLIVE looks down at the mouthpiece realising the caller has hung up)

CLIVE: *(Snidely to mouthpiece)* And don't forget your cheque book!

(CLIVE presses a button on the phone to end the call)

CLIVE: Talking of old bangers, is that my tea Mrs Jubb?

MRS JUBB: Oh. Oh, yes Mr Beasley.

(MRS JUBB gingerly offers him the tea as he pushes the phone and diary back at her)

CLIVE: Ahh! Lovely.

(MRS JUBB looks worried as CLIVE smugly stirs the tea with his red pen)

CLIVE: D'you know? I think it's going to be a veery lucrative day school-fund-wise.

MRS JUBB: Not *more* parents from that posh new estate?

CLIVE: Practically pleading for a placement they were.

MRS JUBB: Why do people like that they want to send their children here?

Most of our pupils have nits and impetigo.

(CLIVE looks down at the tea with curiosity)

CLIVE: What tea's this?

MRS JUBB: *(Cautiously)* It's... it's orgasmic.

(CLIVE has a look of concern, but carries on stirring with his red pen)

CLIVE: Well they've no choice, Mrs Jubb. We're the only school in the catchment.

And these rich upwardly-mobiles will do *anything* to get their wee sproglets in here.

(Snidely) Oh, yes. *Anything*.

MRS JUBB: If they're so affluent, why don't they send them to a private school?

CLIVE: *(About to sip his tea)* Private school? Did I hear you utter the words 'private school', Mrs Jubb? Wash-your-mouth-out woman! What can the independent sector offer that *we* can't?

MRS JUBB: *(Counting on her fingers)* Well...

CLIVE: *(Cutting in)* Exactly. In any case, the nearest private school's *The Deans Prep*.

And that's full-to-bursting. I should know - my own daughters go there.

MRS JUBB: What about the inspection report? Won't that put them off?

CLIVE: *(About to sip his tea)* Inspection report? Pff!

All we do is change our name and voilà! Lloyd George Juniors magically disappears, replaced by a new school with a clean slate. Standard procedure nowadays.

MRS JUBB: But what will you do with all the naughty ones?

You can't click your fingers and say 'viola' to them!

CLIVE: Never-you-mind. If these parents splash the cash, I'll have enough in the kitty for an ICT Suite. That'll keep little brats quiet. Computers are the hi-tech equivalent of colouring-in.

MRS JUBB: Computers? Ooh, I'll stick with my typewriter thank you.

My husband used to say, "Computers are all right - until they go wrong"

CLIVE: *(Stops as he's about to sip his tea, looking bemused)* What?

MRS JUBB: Besides, how with the staff go on? They struggle enough with the photocopier.

CLIVE: Don't you worry. I'll be a computer boffin myself soon.

I'm doing a National Diploma in I.T.

MRS JUBB: *(Checking her watch)* Oops! I'd better sort the registers.

(MRS JUBB EXITS in her usual rush as CLIVE poses proudly)

CLIVE: *(Smugly)* Oh, yes. I can see the sign:

(Signing slowly) "The Lloyd George Junior Academy of Computer Science".

"Headmaster: Clifford Beasley B.A.,... N.D... I.T."

(He winks, sips his tea then rushes to the sink, spits it out and FREEZES behind the sofa)

ACT I Scene 2 – CORRIDOR

(Teachers KATE and JENNY ENTER SR in conversation. They are wearing their coats and carrying bags, arriving for work. Optionally, JENNY is wearing a cycle helmet, wheeling her bike.

PAT shadows them, but carries on to EXIT SL without talking as KATE and JENNY stop to chat)

KATE: ...so what is it this time, Jenny? Angles?

JENNY: It's protractors. I'm a bit confused.

KATE: All it is, is simple junior school trigonometry.

JENNY: I know, but you're so good at these things.

KATE: How did you go on with those worksheets on fractions I gave you?

JENNY: They were great, thanks. I gave them out like you said...

KATE: And?

JENNY: *(Proudly)* ...and they all got full marks!

KATE: Well-done-you! Did *you* mark them?

JENNY: No, I gave them the answer sheet.

KATE: You can't do that! What if they're wrong?

JENNY: It's ok. I gave out calculators so they could check.

(MAXINE ENTERS SL carrying the waste bin)

KATE: Jennifer! Children should use their *heads*, not calculators!

JENNY: *(Sullenly)* Oh, dear. You must think I'm a complete dimwit.

KATE: *(Encouragingly)* Come on. You're *not* a complete dimwit.

MAXINE: *(Sarcastically)* No. You're at least a half-wit!

JENNY: *(Naively flattered)* Aww, thanks Maxine.

(MAXINE EXITS SR carrying the waste bin, shaking her head)

JENNY: I blame my own maths teacher – he was ab-so-lutely hopeless.

Shows how one bad teacher can ruin your entire education, doesn't it Kate?

KATE: *(Wryly)* Mmm. It does.

Come on - let's see what I've got on angles.

JENNY: Aww, thanks Kate.

(KATE and JENNY EXIT down SL)

ACT I Scene 3 - STAFFROOM

(CLIVE UNFREEZES rising from behind the sofa, wiping tea off his suit and mouth)

(MAXINE ENTERS carrying the empty waste bin, followed by supply teacher DAN)

MAXINE: Bloke to see ya, boss.

DAN: (Offering his hand) Mr Beasley? Dan Thomson.

CLIVE: (Shaking hands) Ah, Mr Thomson.

DAN: Dan, please.

CLIVE: Excellent stuff. Do take a pew.

(DAN inspects his wet hand and sinks into the sofa as MAXINE puts the waste bin back)

CLIVE: Maxine? Could you get Mrs Jubb to fetch Mr Thomson one of her famous cups of tea?

DAN: (To MAXINE) Prefer coffee if that's ok? Decaf, black, no sugar.

(MAXINE picks up a dirty mug from the coffee table)

MAXINE: Thank crap for that.

(MAXINE EXITS carrying the mug)

(CLIVE settles beside DAN)

CLIVE: So, 'Daniel'.

Be nice having another *chap* on-board, even if you *are* only a *temporary* one, so-to-speak.

DAN: Temporary? Oh, you mean *supply*?

CLIVE: You see, between you and me - 'man-to-man' as-it-were - I've a wee problem.

DAN: A *wee* problem?

CLIVE: Prefer keeping it under wraps in case it starts to 'trickle down'.

DAN: Sounds awful.

CLIVE: One doesn't want to risk embarrassing leaks.

DAN: Obviously.

CLIVE: Thing is, all my female staff are what you might call, 'women'.

DAN: (Confused) Rrrright?

CLIVE: And ladies don't like getting down and dirty like *we* do.

DAN: Sorry?

CLIVE: So what are *you* then? A rigger man? Tennis? Squash?

DAN: Sports? I'm more a watcher than a do-er, I'm afraid. I cheer *County on now and again.

CLIVE: Splendid. Seems to qualify you then.

[*Opt. substitute local team]

DAN: Qualify me for what?

CLIVE: As my new P.E. co-ordinator... after-school clubs, sports day that kind o' thing.

DAN: Sports day?

CLIVE: We all get involved. You and I could couple-up for the wheelbarrow race if you like?

What do you prefer? Front or back?

(DAN looks concerned)

DAN: What about resources - games equipment and stuff?

CLIVE: You might find the odd bean bag knocking about.

And there should be some hula-hoops. Got them via that government *Childhood Obesity* initiative.

DAN: Obesity's a big problem. I take it you have a healthy eating policy?

CLIVE: Of course. Five packets of crisps from the tuck shop and that's it!

(DAN looks puzzled)

CLIVE: Anyway, listen.

I've organised a tour for some rather important parents. How about putting on a gym display?

DAN: What sort of gym display?

CLIVE: *(Dismissively)* You know - a bit of hoopla; skipping - that sort o' thing.

DAN: When for?

CLIVE: If you can get us up to inspection standards by what? *(checks watch)* Say two-ish?

DAN: *(Surprised)* Today?

CLIVE: Be nice if you *look* the part - flash those *lithesome* thighs of yours.

DAN: But I didn't bring any kit.

CLIVE: Have a root in the dressing-up box - I'm sure you'll find something.

DAN: In *my* size?

CLIVE: Certainly. We've seven-year-olds chubbier than you!

(DAN looks concerned)

(MRS JUBB ENTERS rattling an interview cup and saucer offering it to DAN)

MRS JUBB: One coffee – white with no milk.

DAN: *(Accepting it)* Cheers.

MRS JUBB: You did say defecated?

(DAN looks concerned)

MRS JUBB: And no sugar. Bad for you is sugar. My husband used to have three spoonfuls!

DAN: Has he cut down?

MRS JUBB: No, he's dead.

(DAN looks embarrassed)

CLIVE: Mrs Jubb's my P.A. and secretary - aren't you Mrs Jubb?

She's been ringing the school bell here for many-a-year - haven't you Mrs Jubb?

MRS JUBB: I've rung it that many times, it's given me tittiness. *(Rubs ear)*

(MAXINE ENTERS trudging to the sink)

DAN: Do I owe you anything? For the coffee?

MRS JUBB: No, no. I bought it from petty cash.

Which reminds me, Mr Beasley - the petty cash tin's running low again. I don't know where it goes. My husband used to say, "The safest place for money..."

CLIVE: *(Cutting in)* ...yes, well I'm sure Mr Thomson isn't interested in your late, lamented husband, Mrs Jubb. Off you scoot now. Chop-chop!

(MRS JUBB EXITS sheepishly)

CLIVE: So, Daniel? Grab your drink and I'll show you the sports hall before the dinner ladies start erecting their tables and boiling their cabbage.

MAXINE: Mind where you step if you're going there, boss. Another kid's had a nose bleed. I'll stick some paper towels on it.

CLIVE: Yes, we do seem to suffer the occasional *bleeding* disorder.

MAXINE: What? If you ask me, we suffer *permanent* bleedin' disorder.

(CLIVE gives DAN an embarrassed laugh and leads him to EXIT)