

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

*(We are in an untidy school staffroom somewhere in the modern urban wastes. It's around 8.30am, midsummer. A neglected coffee table is littered with dirty mugs, unopened mail, exercise books etc. A hamster cage containing shredded newspaper, exercise wheel etc sits on the table by a waste bin. Around the table is a worn-out sofa and chairs. To the side is an opening window behind a sink with cupboards. Suddenly, one side of a tired notice board succumbs to gravity...)*

*(The curtain opens to MAXINE the moaning caretaker, grudgingly wiping the sink. She notices something through the window, angrily opens it and shouts out...)*

**MAXINE:** Oi! Pick that litter up ya cheeky sod! I'm sick o' you lot droppin' crisp packets in that playground. Get to ya classroom! It's nearly registration. *(To herself as she shuts the window and turns)* ...bloody teachers. *(She trudges to the sofa and starts reluctantly cleaning out the hamster cage)*

*(MRS JUBB the nervy school secretary ENTERS carrying the office diary to the sink)*

**MRS JUBB:** Morning Maxine.

*(She leaves the diary on the sink as she inspects inside the cupboards looking frustrated)*

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

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

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

**MAXINE:** Nope. Down to muggins as usual.

**MRS JUBB:** You haven't a spare tea bag, have you? I'll be in the you-know-what if I don't get the head his morning cuppa.

**MAXINE:** *(Frivolously)* Try this bin.

*(MRS JUBB rummages in the waste bin)*

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

**MAXINE:** Yeah. 'n all I get is J-Cloths and u-bends.

*(MRS JUBB fishes out a tea bag on a string, dangling it)*

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

**MAXINE:** Tell him it's herbal tea.

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

**MAXINE:** Say it's *organic* then. He'll never know.

*(MRS JUBB tutts and walks back to the sink gingerly dangling the tea bag (As they talk, MRS JUBB drops the tea bag in a mug, pours water from the kettle and adds congealed milk from an open carton...))*

**MRS JUBB:** When I was a little girl, I used to love cleaning the school pets.

**MAXINE:** Same here. If they wanted someone to clean an animals arse, I'd be first to stick me hand up.

*(MRS JUBB starts to search the sink top)*

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

**MAXINE:** What dirty old stirrer?

**MRS JUBB:** You know - the crooked one with stains on the bottom.

**MAXINE:** The headmaster?

**MRS JUBB:** No, the *spoon!*

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

*(MRS JUBB takes the mug over to the bin and rummages inside)*

**MRS JUBB:** *(Shocked)* What's this? Poor Hammy!

*(She pulls out a 'dead' toy hamster, dangling it by its tail)*

*(Anal head teacher CLIVE ENTERS, kowtowing to a prospective parent on his portable phone)*

**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:** Nearly ready, Mr Beasley.

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

*(To phone)* Sorry? Your son's what? Bi-polar? My word, he sounds like Scott of the Antarctic!

*(As CLIVE continues creeping to the prospective parent, MRS JUBB frantically hops around searching for the diary still dipping the hamster up and down by its tail. MAXINE tutts and reluctantly gets up, grabs the waste bin and discretely offers it to MRS JUBB to dispose of the hamster. MAXINE sees the diary on the sink, grabs it and thrusts it at MRS JUBB)*

**CLIVE:** *(To phone)* No, no. You can't miss us. Look for the mobile phone mast, and you're virtually in the playground. *(Beat)* No problem. Use the Deputy

Head's parking space next to mine - she's had a breakdown. *(Beat)* 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 Smedley-Al...len? Oh.

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

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

*(MRS JUBB reluctantly offers him the tea as he pushes the phone and diary back at her. She looks worried as CLIVE accepts the tea and gets a red pen from his top pocket to stir it with)*

**CLIVE:** Ahh! Lovely. *(Smugly stirring)* D' you know? I think it's going to be a veeery 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 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 it 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 sprogllets in here. *(Snidely)* Oh, yes. *Anything*.

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

*(About to sip his tea, CLIVE stops with a look of horror)*

**CLIVE:** Private school? *(Aghast)* *Private school?* 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)* Ex-actly. In any case, the nearest private school's *The Kings 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 is magically replaced by a new school with a clean slate. Standard procedure these days.

**MRS JUBB:** But what will you do with all the naughty children? You can't just 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 my new ICT Suite. And everyone knows computers keep little brats quiet. They're the hi-tec 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've enrolled on a *National Diploma in Information Technology* course. Not many heads will have *N. D. I. T.* after their name!

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

*(MRS JUBB EXITS in her usual rush as CLIVE poses holding his tea)*

**CLIVE:** Oh, yes. I can just see the sign... *(Proudly signing)* "The Lloyd George Junior Academy of Computer Science". "Headmaster – Clive Beasley B. A., N. D. I. T."

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

## ACT I Scene 2 – CORRIDOR

*(Teachers KATE and JENNY ENTER DSR arriving for work, wearing coats and carrying bags. KATE looks professional, whilst JENNY is sporting her bicycle helmet, carrying a guitar case.*

*Infant teacher PAT glumly shadows them, but carries on to EXIT DSL as they stop to talk)*

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

**JENNY:** I'm a bit confused about protractors and all that.

**KATE:** All it is, is 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.

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

*(MAXINE ENTERS DSR carrying the waste bin)*

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

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

**JENNY:** Aww, thanks Maxine.

*(MAXINE EXITS DSL shaking her head)*

**JENNY:** *(To KATE)* I blame my *own* 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 EXITS DSL with JENNY looking more upbeat)*

### **ACT I Scene 3 - STAFFROOM**

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

*(MAXINE ENTERS with the waste bin, trailed by DAN - supply teacher and all-round good egg)*

**MAXINE:** Bloke to see ya, boss.

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

**CLIVE:** *(Shaking hands)* Ahh, excellent stuff. Do take a pew. Maxine? Could you get Mrs Jubb to fetch Mr Thomson one of her famous cups of tea?

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

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

**MAXINE:** Thank crap for that.

*(MAXINE picks up a dirty mug from the coffee table and EXITS as CLIVE settles beside DAN)*

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

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

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

**DAN:** A *wee* problem?

**CLIVE:** Prefer keeping it under wraps, in case it starts to 'trickle down'. *(Covertly)* One doesn't want to risk 'embarrassing leaks'.

**DAN:** Of course.

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

**DAN:** *(Confused)* Ok.

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

**DAN:** *(Confused)* Sorry?

**CLIVE:** *(Cutting in)* So what are *you*? 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.

*[\*Opt. substitute local team]*

**CLIVE:** Splendid. Seems to qualify you then.

**DAN:** Qualify me for what?

**CLIVE:** As my P.E. co-ordinator. *(Dismissively)* ...after-school clubs, sports day that kind of thing.

**DAN:** Sports day?

**CLIVE:** We all get involved. You and I could couple-up for the wheelbarrow race if you like. What d'you prefer? Front or back?

*(DAN has a look of concern as MAXINE ENTERS trudging to the sink to get a cloth)*

**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. Bought them with that government *Child Obesity* funding. Alas, they didn't get much use.

**MAXINE:** *(Sarcastically as she passes)* Yeah. Ya should have got the bigger size.

**DAN:** Obesity's a big problem. I take it you have a *Healthy Eating Policy*?

**CLIVE:** Of course. The tuck shop crisps are *all* reduced.

**DAN:** Low-fat crisps - good move.

**MAXINE:** *(Sarcastically as she passes)* Reduced in *price*. They're out-of-date.

*(MAXINE EXITS carrying the cloth)*

**CLIVE:** Anyway, listen. I've just arranged a tour for some VIP parents. How about putting on a gym display for them?

**DAN:** A gym display? When for?

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

**DAN:** *(Concerned)* Today?

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

**DAN:** But I didn't bring any shorts.

**CLIVE:** Have a root in lost property – I'm sure you'll find something.

**DAN:** In my *size*?

**CLIVE:** Certainly. We've six-year-olds chubbier than you.

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

**MRS JUBB:** One coffee – white, with no milk.

**DAN:** Oh, thanks.

**MRS JUBB:** You *did* say defecated?

**DAN:** *(Realising)* Oh, yes.

**MRS JUBB:** I had to send out special.

**DAN:** And no sugar?

**MRS JUBB:** Bad for you is sugar. My husband used to have three spoonful's!

**DAN:** Has he cut down?

**MRS JUBB:** No, he's dead.

*(DAN looks embarrassed)*

**CLIVE:** Mrs Jubb's my secretary and P.A. - 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 holding the cloth to put back on the sink)*

**DAN:** Do I owe you anything - for the coffee?

**MRS JUBB:** No, no. I got it from petty cash. Which reminds me, Mr Beasley - the petty cash tin's low again. I don't know where it all goes. My husband used to say, the safest place...

**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, Mr Thomson...



**DAN:** Dan, please.

**CLIVE:** Daniel. Bring your coffee 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:** If you ask me, we suffer *permanent* bleedin' disorder.

*(CLIVE gives DAN an embarrassed smile, clears his throat and leads him to EXIT)*

*(MAXINE is alone, rummaging under the sink for some paper towels)*

*(KATE and JENNY ENTER in conversation, hanging up their coats. PAT ENTERS behind them, but sits silently at the back looking vague. KATE and JENNY chat as they settle on the sofa)*

**KATE:** ...anyway, I thought Monday was *your* day for the swimming baths?

**JENNY:** It is. But the head said my classroom assistants can go without me. Mrs Chowdhury's really good at doggie-paddle.

**KATE:** So the whole morning free?

**JENNY:** To be honest, I could do with some non-contact time to learn my new song for assembly.

**KATE:** I was wondering when we were going to have a change from Little Donkey. It's been on that dusty road since Christmas.

**JENNY:** *(Musing)* I can't decide whether to play the guitar and sing, or play the recorder and sing.

**KATE:** Play the *recorder* and sing? Is there no end to your talents?

**MAXINE:** No bloody *start* you mean!

**JENNY:** I'm learning the tambourine now as well.

**KATE:** The tambourine? Wow. Are you having lessons?

**JENNY:** Mum's knows someone in the Salvation Army. *(Joyously)* Praise the Lord!

**MAXINE:** Halle-friggin'-lujah!

*(MAXINE EXITS carrying a pack of paper towels)*

**KATE:** So how come *you're* not going to the swimming baths, Jenny?

**JENNY:** Well, last week got a bit embarrassing. The attendant made a complaint.

**KATE:** Why? What happened?

**JENNY:** I was showing a little girl how to use a float, when she was hit on the head by a brick.

**KATE:** *(Concerned)* A brick?

**JENNY:** A boy in pyjamas threw it. She nearly drowned.

**KATE:** Did you have to jump in?

**JENNY:** Me? I can't swim - well not without arm bands. Mrs Chowdhury saved her.

**KATE:** Blimey. *(Turning to PAT)* Bet you're glad the infants don't go swimming, eh Pat?

**PAT:** No.

*(Teacher LIZ ENTERS carrying her shopper, hanging up her coat looking apathetic)*

**LIZ:** Morning fellow sufferers.

*(LIZ flops between KATE and JENNY on the sofa, forcing them apart)*

**LIZ:** God, I'm buggered already. Roll-on half-term!

*(JENNY picks up three exercise books from the coffee table)*

**JENNY:** Oh, Liz? You forgot your marking on Friday.

**LIZ:** Me? Marking? Weekends? You must be joking!

**JENNY:** I'll mark them if you like?

**LIZ:** Now you *are* joking! Go on - pass 'em here.

*(LIZ sighs as JENNY passes her the exercise books. As they talk, LIZ reluctantly gets a red pen from her bag, flicks through each book, flippantly scribbling a comment and tossing it back on the table)*

**KATE:** I wish Clive'd get a move on with briefing – I've a million and one things to do.

**LIZ:** Me too. I need to set 'em some work so I can read this week's *Hello!*

**JENNY:** You read a magazine in class? That's not very professional. What if a parent walks in?

**LIZ:** Liz's hot tips for new teachers - 'Always have scissors handy when you're reading a glossy'. If someone comes in, you can pretend you're cutting out pictures for a collage.

**JENNY:** That's terrible. I always give my class my *full* attention. There'd be a riot if I didn't.

**KATE:** Ah, but the trick is to let them *think* you're watching 'em, even when you're not.

**JENNY:** But mine are so naughty – especially the boys.

**LIZ:** Nah, boys are easy, love. Just scare the pants off 'em on day one. After that - not a peep!

**JENNY:** Well I *am* pretty strict. I say, "Please pay attention, boys? Please? I'll be your friend!". But they just ignore me. I don't know how you can be so patient.

**KATE:** You have to learn to count to ten, Jenny.

**JENNY:** Kate! I'm not *that* bad at maths. I did get a C in my GCSE you know!

**LIZ:** Listen buggerlugs. Liz's hot tips for dealing with naughty boys - 'The first one to make a sound, click the scissors and point at his willie' - scares 'em to death!

*(JENNY is open-mouthed with shock. ACTORS FREEZE)*

[LIGHTS DIM]