

ACT II

Christmas time at Whitewall's.

The broom is stuck upside down in a upstage desk. Trimmings, a star and a piece of crêpe paper adorn the broom, which is now a Christmas tree. SALTY, GAIL and HOBBY take time putting up the tree.

GAIL Christmas at Whitewall and love was in the air. All over the school there were Christmas trees and cards and trimmings, and every break time we would queue up to snog Martin Roebuck under some mistletoe in the reference section of the library.

HOBBY Christmas also saw the culmination of Gail's interest in Mr Nixon.

GAIL I love him...

HOBBY You don't.

GAIL I do... I am infatuated...

HOBBY What's it feel like?

GAIL Brilliant... I was on his table for Christmas dinner...

HOBBY Yeh but does he love you?

GAIL Dunno but I'll find out at the Christmas dance...

HOBBY Why, what are you going to do?

GAIL Snog him...

HOBBY OOOOOHHHH, you're not...

GAIL I'll need some Dutch courage but I am...

HOBBY I don't believe it...

GAIL Listen, I've got it all worked out. We go to the off-licence, you go in and buy some cider.

HOBBY Why me?

GAIL Then I'll bring some spring onions from home. We'll drink the cider then eat the spring onions.

HOBBY Spring onions, why?

GAIL Because Doug and Mr Hatton will be on the door of the Christmas dance and Mrs Parry says if anyone is suspected of drinking alcohol they won't be allowed in... And I want to make sure I get in.

HOBBY Are you sure Mr Nixon is going to the dance?

GAIL Course he is, I've asked him a dozen times. I've sent him forty cards in the Christmas post.

HOBBY Must have cost you a fortune?

GAIL No my aunty works in a card shop, anyway it's the thought that counts.

HOBBY So I went into the off-licence, and bought two large bottles of cider.

GAIL Which we drank through a straw... And then we stuffed ourselves with spring onions.

MR HATTON Bloody hell. Have you been eating spring onions?

HOBBY That was Mr Hatton's reaction as we came into the disco...

GAIL Brilliant we're in, I told you it'd work, I'm slightly merry but not out of control.

HOBBY I feel sick. I hate onions.

GAIL Salty?

SALTY What?

GAIL Have you seen Mr Nixon?

SALTY No, is he coming? Brilliant.

GAIL Is he here yet?

SALTY Hey can you smell onions?

HOBBY Niko hadn't arrived, he was up in the pub with the rest of the staff, and he was sat very near to Miss Jackie Prime. Meanwhile down at the disco Mr Dean was doing DJ impersonations and playing records that were three years out of date...

DEANIE Yes indeedy this is the sound of the Human League, "Don't you want me baby..."

GAIL Oh shit, look out, Oggy Moxon.

SALTY *becomes* **OGGY**.

OGGY Got you...

GAIL Hey oh...great...

OGGY Giz a kiss then...

GAIL Haven't you got any mistletoe?

OGGY I don't need mistletoe. Why didn't you come to my party, you owe me one...

GAIL Later, eh, maybe later... I dashed away from Oggy leaving him wondering what perfume smells like onions...

HOBBY It is a fact of life that all teachers dance like retards. They dance like they're all out of a music documentary... It must be the weight of all that knowledge in their heads which makes them look like they're in the back seat of an old Ford Cortina... Mr Dean was a supreme example of bad dancing...

DEANIE Now then, now then what have we here? Uncle Ted, a bit of the old boogie woogie. (*He demonstrates extreme bad dancing*)

HOBBY Oggy?

SALTY *becomes OGGY and kicks someone in the face.*

HOBBY *reacts.*

HOBBY There'd been some trouble in the toilets, Ogy Moxon had hit Kev Jones for nothing...

GAIL Kev said that Ogy hit him because he fancied me... Ogy tried to get me to dance but both times I left him and went to the toilets... (*She moves to upstage*)

NIXON Simon Patterson, very smart... Merry Christmas.

HOBBY Merry Christmas, sir...

NIXON Where's Salty?

HOBBY I think he's dancing. Gail's in the loo... Have you been drinking, sir?

NIXON Only a few pints, I'm in my new car.

HOBBY Yeh you need a car when you're drinking and driving.

NIXON The Christmas dance had all the seriousness of a big disco, and the fifteen and sixteen years olds looked stunning done up to the nines, and only Mr Moorcroft, Head of RE seemed not to be moved by the gyrating bottoms and boobs... At ten-thirty when things seemed like they were bubbling Deanie played the last record, a smoocher and Gail Saunders appeared in my arms and suddenly my face was confronted by the strong smell of onion...

SALTY, *as NIXON and GAIL smooch.* HOBBY, *as OGGY MOXON, hangs around.*

GAIL It was fantastic...

NIXON It felt rather awkward, I didn't know how tight to hold Gail or where to put my hands...

PARRY Mrs Parry looked on, she felt a mixture of jealousy and condemnation. But it wasn't unknown for teachers to dance with students especially at Christmas. After all, as

she had said, students were treated like young adults here at Whitewall.

GAIL Doug the caretaker cleared the dance floor in a few minutes. And just as I was going to kiss Mr Nixon, he turned his head to wish Doug—

NIXON (*turning his head*)—a merry Christmas, Doug...

HOBBY Ogy Moxon had seen Gail and Niko dancing but he left the hall in silence...

GAIL Mr Nixon said that he would give me a lift down home, Salty and Hobby decided to walk it home and maybe get a kebab...

NIXON I got into my car, an A reg Escort, and Gail jumped in beside me, and before I knew it, into the back jumped Ogy Moxon...

HOBBY *becomes OGGY MOXON.*

OGGY Oh yeh, what's all this then? Bit of slap and tickle with the drama teacher, Gail. I thought all drama wallas were puffballs?

NIXON Will you get out, Ogy?

OGGY Will you get out, Ogy? No I will not.

NIXON Get out.

OGGY No, let's go a ride, eh...? Drop me down home, will you?

NIXON Get out.

OGGY Make me.

NIXON Get out...

OGGY Make me...

NIXON I shan't say it again...

OGGY I shan't say it again. Come on, sir, make me get out...

NIXON This is my car, I'm not in school hours, now get out...

GAIL Come on, OGGY... It's not fair.

OGGY What's not fair? You want me to go so that you can have Mr Nixon all to yourself?

NIXON I'm going to get Mrs Parry...

OGGY What the fuck is she going to do about it?

NIXON Will you get bloody out...

OGGY You make me...

NIXON Arrgh...

GAIL OGGY!!

NIXON *hits OGGY in the face. Screaming. OGGY pulls himself out of the car.*

OGGY You've broke my nose, you bastard...

GAIL Mr Nixon...

OGGY You bastard...

HOBBY There was blood everywhere...

GAIL I was screaming, Nixon was shaking.

NIXON A few members of staff came running from the school...

HOBBY OGGY staggered away from the car. (*As OGGY*) Our Nobby'll get you Nixon... Wait till next term our Nobby'll hammer you. (*Pause*) And he was off into the dark. It was like a film... Everyone was shouting and trying to calm things... And in the distance you could hear OGGY Moxon shouting... "I'm gonna do you, Nixon. I'm gonna do you..."

GAIL As we stood, a boy ran past us and jumped into his father's car... And a voice bellowed out...

NIXON Stop running, Simon Patterson!

Black-out. After a pause the lights come up again.

New Year. The Staff-room.

PARRY Morning, Jeff.

NIXON Morning, Mrs Parry.

WHITHAM Happy New Year.

PARRY Happy New Year.

WHITHAM Had a nice time?

NIXON Lovely thanks, we went away... (*He starts to dismantle the Christmas tree*)

PARRY So did we...

WHITHAM We stayed at home.

PARRY You'll never guess what?

WHITHAM Go on.

PARRY Jackie Prime got married, to Colin Short, Head of PE from Saint George's, did it over Christmas.

WHITHAM I didn't know...

PARRY Neither did I...

NIXON What was that?

PARRY For Prime read Short... He's a hunk of a fella all man...

NIXON Oh... Happy New Year...

PARRY You did what, Mr Nixon? Said Mrs Parry. Her yellow dress clashing with her pink blouse.

NIXON I...erm...erm...headbutted him in the face.

PARRY If he decides to report this to the police or to his parents I'm afraid you're for the high jump.

GAIL But OGGY Moxon didn't report the incident to either his dad or the police, but he told Nobby, and Nobby said that he would fix Nixon.

NIXON During every lesson I had one eye on the main entrance in case OGGY's brother appeared. And I wondered how many

staff had said to how many kids, "Bring your dad up" and then wondered all day if they would.

HOBBY Three or four days went by and nothing happened, Ogy's brother didn't appear and many teachers winked at Mr Nixon as much as to say "nice one".

Music.

NIXON's bedsit.

NIXON Most of my nights were spent indoors marking, going over the same mistakes and the same right answers. I was turning into a monk. I lived close to the school so I couldn't go to the local pub it was full of the sixth form, and I didn't know whether to be all mates or to tell the landlord that they were under age. So I stayed in and listened to Janis Ian and Dire Straits, and waited to see if I'd get an interview at Saint George's...

The Main Hall.

GAIL During January the shine seemed to go off Nixon.

SALTY And once we heard that he was applying somewhere else we sort of drifted away for a bit... But we had a laugh. One day he asked us in drama to do a play about corporal punishment in schools, so we, Hobby, me and Gail did this thing about school killers.

HOBBY Right, in the staff-room there's a red phone, like a batphone, and it glows really red when someone's on the other line.

GAIL And in each classroom under the desk there's a buzzer, so if a teacher gets into some trouble or has a kid who is getting stropy she can press the buzzer, and the phone rings.

SALTY Right, in the staff-room, just like sat about all day drinking coffee, and reading ancient books are these ninjas, Japanese martial arts experts, who are trained to kill kids,

with karate chops or sharp stars that they throw. And in the staff-room are a number of wires, so that these ninjas—

HOBBY —when they get the call—

SALTY —can jump out of the window of the staff-room and be at the root of the problem in a few seconds...

GAIL Right I'm the French assistant, and I'm teaching...

HOBBY I'm Rachael Steele—and I throw something at the board.

GAIL (*with a French accent*) Who was that... Who was that who was throwing missiles towards my head? This is very dangerous and could be if someone gets hurt... Was it you, Rachael?

HOBBY What, miss?

GAIL You know what?

HOBBY No I don't, you frog...

GAIL And then suddenly the French assistant presses the buzzer for insolence.

SALTY The phone rings...

HOBBY The ninjas are in action... Out of the staff-room window, coffee all over the place...

GAIL Five seconds later... They arrive, kick the door down, tear gas all over the place...

HOBBY The teacher had a mask secreted in her desk.

GAIL Merci, ninja...

SALTY Bonjour.

GAIL The French assistant is back at work...

HOBBY A call is made to Mr and Mrs Steele, would they like to come and collect the remains of their daughter Rachael from the school morgue. She was killed during a French lesson. Thank you...

NIXON It was stories like that, which kept I, Jeff Nixon, alive at Whitewall. And to my surprise the kids in drama got better and better, their imagination knew no bounds...

GAIL You can't teach imagination, can you, sir?

NIXON I don't know...

GAIL When was the battle of Hastings?

NIXON Ten sixty-six.

GAIL What can you do with a brick?

NIXON Eh?

GAIL What can you do with a brick? I saw this in a magazine...

NIXON Build a house...

GAIL Yeh and...?

NIXON Throw it.

GAIL That shows the violent side of you. You can do unlimited things with a brick. You can drill a hole in it and wear it around your neck... You could marry a brick...

HOBBY My cousin married a prick.

GAIL There's lots of different answers. It says in this magazine that you can exercise your imagination, that's what we do in drama.

HOBBY And art...

GAIL Yeh but we don't do it in much else, do we? We're like robots. Who invaded England in ten sixty-six? Arm up, Norman the Conqueror. Arm down, computer programme complete.

Music.

MRS PARRY's office.

NIXON On January the twenty-first Mrs Parry called me to her office. She said it was urgent. Oggy has pressed charges, I knew it.

PARRY Jeff. Thank God you're here.

NIXON What's the matter, is it Oggy Moxon?

PARRY Worse.

NIXON His brother... Nobby... He's come to fix me?

PARRY No. Can you do Koko? Mr Gill, who had the part slipped a disc last night building the set. Can you step into the breach, Jeff? I'd regard it as a great personal favour?

NIXON What about asking Mr Basford?

PARRY Derek Basford is never a Koko, Jeff.

NIXON But I'm in the chorus.

PARRY You can do that as well, do it for me, Jeff... You can't let me down, Jeff Nixon.

NIXON And so it was that Mrs Parry got me to play Koko.

PARRY Wonderful, wonderful, we rehearse Wednesdays and Sunday... See you Sunday.

GAIL When Mr Basford heard the news he went barmy with the cover rota.

NIXON And for the next three weeks, I was on cover all the time, French, German, physics, childcare, rural studies, needlework.

Music.

The Mikado rehearsals.

PARRY Pick your teeth up, Mr Dean... Just pick them up and carry on singing... Move left, dear, move left... Good... There's no need to slouch in the chorus, Mr Basford. Remember you are gentlemen of Japan not lepers. Dignity.

NIXON Three members of the chorus were smoking.

PARRY Carry on, carry on...

NIXON Mrs Parry's last production, *The Pirates*, lasted eight and a half hours... This looks like it could be longer...

DOUG Face the front... Sing out front...

PARRY Stay on stage, don't come out and watch, stay in the wings... It's no good saying "I was just coming to watch this bit", stay on stage...

NIXON The stage was a cattle market...

PARRY Carry on, carry on, just do it...

NIXON But for Mrs Parry it was close enough for jazz.

PARRY Amateurs, Mr Nixon, never work with animals, children and amateurs.

NIXON I'm sure it'll be...erm...great, Mrs Parry.

PARRY I do hope so, Mr Nixon. This is my fifth *Mikado*, I haven't quite got it right yet... But we're trying. Do you know your lines yet?

NIXON Yes.

PARRY Oh... Well, marvellous.

NIXON Would you like me to get up and do my bit?

PARRY Oh no, if you know your lines you needn't bother coming till the dress rehearsal, I know you'll be brilliant... OK everyone, let's press on, where's the Mikado, where's Poo-bah, where's Nanky Poo?

DOUG They're in the music room playing bridge.

PARRY Well tell them that I need them NOW!

DOUG Oi...you're bloody on...

NIXON During February the mock exams were held in the main hall.

DOUG Doug, the caretaker was as smug as a Cheshire cat. Haha you'll not be able to do any drama now, Niko... Basford's

scotched you this time. Seven weeks these desks have got to stay in here... He could have put these in the gym but Dave Fisher asked him not to...

NIXON It's OK, Doug, I'm going to do all my drama classes in the back room of the *George and Dragon*.

DOUG I hope you get that job at Saint George's... Let them have a basin full of you...

NIXON I reckon that I could teach drama anywhere and no-one would mind. In the cookery class.

The class scream. They are improvising around the Marat-Sade. GAIL tells the audience she is Jean-Paul Marat.

HOBBY In the coal bunker...

SALTY In the boiler house...

GAIL Canteen...

HOBBY Sports hall showers...

SALTY School gates...

GAIL Swimming baths...

HOBBY Woolworth's...

SALTY Simon Patterson's bedroom.

ALL Stop running, Simon Patterson.

NIXON What I couldn't fathom is why a school didn't have a space that was solely used for exams. You would have thought that somewhere along the way from the first paper ever sat at Oxford that some boffin would have seen that schools need purpose-built rooms to do exams in. But then what did I know?

PARRY You knew that you'd got an interview at Saint George's... Congratulations, said Mrs Parry.

NIXON She was one of my referees. So joining the G and S had its advantages. But rumour had it that Basford wrote all references and I knew he'd be happy to see me go. Drama didn't feature in his scheme of things.

HOBBY *becomes* **MR BASFORD**.

BASFORD Mr Nixon, can I ask you to keep the noise down? I've got a sixth form group in the lecture theatre, we can't hear ourselves think.

NIXON You what, Mr Basford?

BASFORD It's like an asylum in here.

NIXON Yeh great, isn't it? They've really taken to it. We're doing the *Marat-Sade*. It's set in a bath house.

BASFORD Quiet. Keep them quiet. I said keep the noise down.

NIXON Hang on, Mr Basford, I wouldn't do that to you.

BASFORD It's like a flaming riot.

NIXON They're enjoying themselves.

BASFORD Enjoying themselves? They sound like they're screaming to get out of your lesson, they can't stand it.

NIXON I'm sure that there's more sixth formers screaming to get out of yours...

BASFORD Watch your step, Nixon.

NIXON He was pissed off because I'd got an interview. Apparently, according to Mr Dean, he had applied for the Head at Saint George's job and had not had his references taken up... It had made him a bitter man...

Music.

Saint George's Private School.

MS COATES Well thank you very much, Mr Nixon, it's been a pleasure talking to you. Obviously we have other candidates

to see but we should be able to let you know either way before the end of spring term.

MRS CLIFTON His interview at Saint George's had gone very well. Mrs Clifton, one of the governors of Saint George's thought he would be outstanding. She also thought he would be a marvellous asset to Saint George's Amateur Players, a society run by Mrs Clifton.

NIXON Saint George's was a sanctuary compared with Whitewall, kids stood up when a teacher went into a class, no-one leaped for the door when the bell rang, and their drama studio was pure heaven, I was told that the caretaker at Saint George's often sat in and watched drama classes, and not a single person had walked through the drama studio ever.

HOBBY Chalk and cheese.

NIXON That's the difference. Unbelievable.

GAIL Colditz Jeff. The great escape.

A choir sings.

Tennis courts.

GAIL One Wednesday when not a lot was happening Mr Basford had organized a tennis competition. Some of the third year were allowed out on to the courts.

SALTY You mean *court*.

GAIL Whitewall only had one decent court. The rest were like dirt tracks.

SALTY Mr Nixon had been invited to take part at the last minute because Mick Edwards had a meeting with the Social Services.

HOBBY Forty love, game Basford. Hard luck, Mr Dean.

GAIL Mr Dean got thrashed and so he took his class back to the mobiles to study the unification of Germany, he was a bad loser.

HOBBY Forty love, game Basford. Bad luck, Mr Fisher, you've got bowlegs. Couldn't stop a pig in a ginnetl...

GAIL Mr Basford was an ace tennis player, Jackie Prime told me that he was a county player in his youth.

SALTY He had no kit, he looked like Barry Wobschall. Borrowed a pair of pumps from big Pete Saxon and Salty lent him some shorts... Somehow, mysteriously, got a bye into the final. And in the final played Mr Basford, who had annihilated Jackie Prime's husband. He was glad about that.

HOBBY Bad luck, Mr Short.

SALTY Hey Shorty, too much bed, not enough sleep. When Nixon came on to the court all the kids were laughing.

They laugh.

GAIL Niko looked like somebody from Doctor Barnardo's. Nothing fitted him.

HOBBY Are you sure you know what you're doing, Mr Nixon?

NIXON All the kids had their faces pushed against the wire of the courts.

They pull a face, to show this.

GAIL Go on, Mr Basford, smash the ball through his head. That was Ogy Moxon.

HOBBY Forty love.

GAIL Smash him, Basford.

HOBBY Game Basford.

GAIL Jackie Prime was smirking the sort of smirk that only PE staff can do.

HOBBY Game Basford...

They play tennis by tapping a chair and watching a ball.

GAIL Come on, Mr Basford, humiliate him... Shouted Ogy, like a wild animal...

SALTY And he tried to... It was like watching Christians in the Coliseum...

HOBBY Love all.

SALTY Fifteen love...

HOBBY Well done, Mr Nixon. You've won a point. I didn't know you could play.

NIXON Yeh, what he didn't know, what none of the staff knew was that I was an under-nineteen tennis international... And I thrashed Basford. One six, six love, six love.

GAIL Mr Basford left the courts in haste. All the kids looked gob-smacked.

NIXON I could have spared him, but why should I...? As I walked from the courts I bumped into Ogy Moxon...

GAIL becomes **OGGY MOXON.**

OGGY Our Nobby's gonna fix you.

NIXON Great.

OGGY Hey... I thought you were a fart... Didn't know you could play tennis.

NIXON Neither did Mr Basford. And you tell your Nobby if he comes up here, I'll shove this down his neck.

OGGY Right... I'll tell him...

Music.

HOBBY With the end of term only six weeks off Niko had this idea of me, Gail and Salty doing a play about school-life for the leavers.

SALTY It was great because Niko had arranged for us to get out of other lessons, 'cos we didn't have exams.

GAIL And most teachers were happy to let us go...

SALTY It was brilliant, like we had the freedom of the city... It's great... I'm missing maths to do drama, brilliant...

GAIL Salty was over the moon. He was running around school like a headless chicken. He had written in spray paint on the side of the gym —

SALTY —Mr Basford is a fat Basford.

HOBBY All the staff thought it was fairly amusing. Basford didn't, he put Salty on a long list of Easter leavers who had to see Mrs Parry...

PARRY You don't come to school to fool about, Ian, to waste your time. We treat you like young adults and we expect you to behave accordingly. I don't think that writing swear words on a wall is a mature thing to do. Do you?

SALTY No, Mrs Parry.

PARRY Well why did you do it, Ian?

SALTY Fed up, Mrs Parry.

PARRY Fed up of what? What are you fed up of, Ian?

SALTY Loads of things, Mrs Parry. Having to leave school.

PARRY Well we all have to leave school sometime, don't we?

SALTY Yeh but that's it, Mrs Parry, out there, there's nothing, it's just a load of lies. A load of promises that never happen. I'm sixteen, and I might have wasted my time in school and I've got to bugger off. Maybe I'm not ready for that... I've woken up too late, Mrs Parry. I don't want to be a piece of rhubarb... I want another chance... What's the word I am? I'm a late developer, Mrs Parry. I've got some interest, I've found something I'm interested in with Mr Nixon. Who is it that says we only have one chance, Mrs Parry? Is it God, 'cos if it is it's not the same God my mother talks about...

PARRY Everyone has to grow up, Ian. Leaving school is just a part of growing up.

SALTY Yeh but nobody out there cares. If people did care you'd be able to say to me, "All right, Salty, stop on, start again, have another crack"... I can't negotiate, Mrs Parry, you can't negotiate... Who is it who traps us both? Politicians...them men on the telly with funny haircuts, them men who talk about choice and equality and fairness... Why don't any of them live on our estate? Why don't I see any of them down the welfare hall or at the Bingo? ...They're not bothered about us... Do you believe what they say, Mrs Parry? It's all a load of lies. They don't care, and what's worse, you know, is that they're not bothered that they don't care. Then I turned and left her room.

PARRY Ian Salt, come here immediately...

Music.

The Staff-room.

WHITHAM Congratulations. You did it.

JONES Well done, Jeff.

WHITHAM When do you start?

NIXON September.

JONES Another success for the escape committee.

WHITHAM We'll have a drink after *The Mikado*, said Maureen Whitham, who was playing Sing Sing. I've got my job in local radio, make it a double celebration.

NIXON I was obviously very pleased. The kids said that I would change, going to a snob school. But it was an unbelievable feeling. And for some reason Jackie Short, née Prime kissed me... I felt like a great weight had been lifted from my shoulders, I could breathe once more, I was free... Thank God I was free...

JONES Hey, I've got another interview, it's my seventeenth this month.

WHITHAM Orrrrr...

NIXON The opening night of *The Mikado* was extra-ordinary. *Black-out. After a pause, the lights come up again.*

PARRY Thank you, thank you.

GAIL *presents her with a bouquet.*

Thank you, thank you all. I'd like if I may to thank everyone concerned. I'd like to thank Gerald my husband for being so patient, and also Daphne and Clarence my two wonderful children, and of course Doug the caretaker, without whom this production would not have been possible. And also all the backstage team...Come on, fellas, let's have you out here...

NIXON It was the shortest production of *The Mikado* in history, fifty-five minutes. Forty-six pages of the libretto had been skipped over. But it was still a success.

PARRY And I'd like to thank, Simon and Peter for numbering the chairs.

NIXON The thank yous went on for an hour.

PARRY And Joyce, Hilda and Francis who did the little buns and cakes, and how lovely they were as well.

NIXON The cast stood there wilting.

PARRY And Martin and Chris for cutting the squares of cinemoid which made all those lovely colours. And to Desmond and Sue who helped park the cars. Thanks to you all.

GAIL On the last night of *The Mikado* Mrs Parry threw a party in the sixth-form common room. Everyone chatted and drank Pomagne from paper cups. Basford was there. (*As BASFORD*) So, I suppose it's congratulations, Mr Nixon?

NIXON Sorry?

BASFORD Congratulations. You must feel very pleased with yourself?

NIXON Not really.

BASFORD You were a very good Koko, it was quite a swan-song.

NIXON Thanks very much, Derek.

BASFORD I'm sure you'll have a great time over at Saint George's. It's what you want, isn't it? They're quite into drama over there. The twins are thinking of drama as an option. This is not a school for drama, never has been, never will be.

NIXON I'll miss the kids.

BASFORD Not for long. You just have a thought for us, still stuck here. Mind you, every cloud has a silver lining as they say,

Mrs Parry has just asked me if I'd like to play Nathan Detroit in next term's *Guys and Dolls*.

NIXON And are you?

BASFORD My dear boy, the part was made for me.

HOBBY All the kids were really sad when Nixon left, and me and Salty and Gail all cried.

GAIL We never saw Niko again. Somebody told us that he was having a good time at Saint George's, and that all the posh kids loved him. When we left school I got a job typing, and I did some dance. I was also in the chorus of *Guys and Dolls*.

HOBBY And I'd got this job with my uncle. And Ogy Moxon... it was like on a farm, hard work, but good fun.

SALTY I didn't know what I did. I could think anything up. I wanted to write songs for Wham and be a millionaire, but Mr Harrison said it was too farfetched...But I'd like to...

A school bell rings. End of school. The lights change.

SALTY, GAIL and HOBBY *are lost. They move around the stage slowly, and pick up their bags. Silence.*

GAIL Oh well...that's it then.

HOBBY The end.

SALTY Mr Harrison, can I just say before we go, sir, don't leave, sir. The kids here need teachers like you. Don't go to that snob school, sir.

GAIL Sir, if you stay, we'll come back and bug you. We'll let you know how we're getting on. I'll come and cut your hair if you like... I'm doing a scheme at the hairdresser's, it's twenty-five quid but my mam says it's better than nothing. Just.

SALTY Sir, I'm doing a scheme, painting and decorating, should be a laugh, I'm crap at art. Might end up on an advert... Be a star then, sir...

GAIL Don't leave, sir...

HOBBY I'm doing french polishing, gonna hate it.

SALTY If you stay and do another drama play, we'll be in it...

HOBBY Best thing I've ever done at school this... It's the only thing I'll remember...

SALTY We could have a laugh, start a group up.

GAIL And rehearse at nights...

SALTY Hey we could do all sorts... *Marat-Sade*.

GAIL Comedies.

HOBBY Tragedies.

GAIL Westerns.

SALTY Kung fu...

GAIL Sir, romances...

HOBBY Sex plays...

SALTY Sir... I've got it... Why don't you do *The Mikado*...?

GAIL *Mikado*. Sir, you said that was shit.

HOBBY Anyway... See you, sir... See you, Mrs Hudson...

SALTY Yeh. Thanks, sir...

GAIL Yeh.

HOBBY Yeh thanks.

SALTY Yeh.

GAIL Thanks a lot.

SALTY See you...

HOBBY Tara...

GAIL Yeh.

*They walk away. They freeze. "Gentleman of Japan"
from The Mikado plays.*

Blackout.