

MUSIC USE NOTE

Licenses are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for all music clearances and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, Samuel French, against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees. Please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

If you have obtained performance rights to this title, please refer to your licensing agreement for important billing and credit requirements.

TEACHERS

First performed by the Hull Truck Theatre Company at the Edinburgh Festival, 1987, with the following cast of characters:

SALTY (playing TEACHER B, NIXON,

PETE SAXON, OGGY MOXON, MR FISHER,

MR HATTON, DEANIE)

Martin Barass

GAIL (playing TEACHER A, MS WHITHAM,

OGGY MOXON, MR BASFORD, MISS PRIME,

BARRY WOBSCHELL, DENNIS, DOUGH,

MRS COATES)

Gill Tompkins

HOBBY (playing MRS PARRY, MS JONES,

MR BASFORD, RON, PIGGY PATTERSON,

OGGY MOXON, MRS CLIFTON)

Shirley Anne Selby

Directed by John Godber

The action takes place in a comprehensive school hall.

Time—the present

CHARACTERS

- SALTY—A school-leaver, bright and fresh-faced, rather dirty in appearance
- GAIL—Loud-mouthed and bossy, attractive and full of enthusiasm
- HOBBY—Shy. Should be very large, must be bigger than the other two. She is doing the play despite herself
- NIXON—New drama teacher, young and casual
- MRS PARRY—The Head Mistress, large and loud, a real eccentric
- MR BASFORD—The Deputy Head, a typical child hater, a nasty piece of work
- MISS PRIME—Dolly bird of a PE mistress
- MS WHITHAM—A fussy and hopeless teacher, deperate to leave
- MS JONES—A moaner, rather fat, someone who wants to leave but no-one will employ her
- DEANIE—A teacher who thinks all the kids love him, a bad dancer
- DOUG—The caretaker, a miserable old man, he hates kids and drama
- OGGY—The cock of the school, looks much older than he actually is, the school bully in a modern age
- PETE SAXON—A large, frightening youth with tattoos, appears foolish
- MR FISHER—Head of PE
- BARRY WOBSCHELL—A small boy who never brings his PE kit
- PIGGY PATTERSON—A boy who is always telling on others, he always runs to his lessons
- RON—A boy who never does PE
- MR HATTON—Helps with the youth club dance
- DENNIS—Oggy's side-kick
- MRS COATES—Head Mistress at Saint George's
- MRS CLIFTON—Head of Governors at Saint George's

ACT I

A comprehensive school hall.

A wooden stage. There are two double desks upstage. Upstage right is an old locker with a school broom leaning against it; downstage centre is a chair; left and right two single desks and chairs angled ds, and three bags. A satchel, plastic bags and sports bags are near the chairs and desks. They belong to SALTY, GAIL and HOBBY respectively.

Some music plays and SALTY, GAIL and HOBBY enter, recline on the chairs and desks and look at the audience for a moment before speaking.

SALTY No more school for us so you can knackers!

GAIL Salty, you nutter?

SALTY What?

GAIL Swearing.

HOBBY Shurrup.

SALTY So what?

HOBBY You daft gett.

SALTY It's true.

GAIL Just get on with it.

SALTY Nobody can do us.

HOBBY We've not left yet.

SALTY Knackers.

GAIL Oh God he's cracked.

HOBBY Shurrup.

SALTY I've always wanted to be on this stage. I've always wanted to come up here and say, "knackers". I bet you all have. Whenever I see Mrs Hudson come up on this stage to talk about litter or being a good samaritan or corn dollies or sit down first year stand up second year I think about that word. 'Cos really Mrs Hudson would like to come up here and say, "knackers school". She would.

GAIL Are we doing this play or what?

SALTY It's like when she gets you in her office, all neat and smelling of perfume and she says, "You don't come to school to fool around, Ian, to waste your time. We treat you like young adults and we expect you to behave accordingly. I don't think that writing on a wall is a mature thing to do."

HOBBY That's good that, Salty, just like her.

SALTY Yeh, but really she wants to say, "Hey, Salty, pack all this graffiti in, it's getting on my knackers."

GAIL Are we starting?

SALTY Anyway why am I bothered. No more school, no more stick, no more teachers thinking that you're thick...

GAIL No more of Miss Jubb shouting like you're deaf as a post, "Gail Saunders how dare you belch in front of me." Sorry, miss, didn't know it was your turn...

HOBBY Brilliant...

SALTY Hey, no more full school assemblies sat on the cold floor of the sports hall freezing your knackers off...

HOBBY No more cross-country running, and cold showers and towels that don't dry you.

GAIL Oh and no more scenes in changing rooms where you daren't get changed because you wear a vest and everyone has got a bra...

HOBBY No more Mr Thorn sending letters home about how I missed games and was seen eating a kebab in the *Golden Spoon*.

GAIL No more sweaty geog teachers with Brylcream hush puppies.

SALTY No more trendy art teachers, who say "Hiya" and "Call me Gordon" ...

HOBBY We haven't had an art teacher called Gordon.

SALTY I know.

GAIL No more having to run the fifteen hundred metres with a heart condition.

SALTY No more.

HOBBY 'Cos today we're off. Twagging it for ever.

GAIL Let's start Salty.

SALTY Hang on, before we do start, we all want to thank Mr Harrison, our new drama teacher. Before he came to this school, last September, us three didn't do sod all, not a thing. He got us into this, he's a good bloke. You are, sir. I know that he's been offered a job at a better school... Well good luck to him... Before Mr Harrison came here, the teachers had given us up for dead... We were average.

HOBBY Lillian is average, she opens her book well, and likes a warm room.

GAIL Gail is stagnant to inert, and fights when cornered. Average.

SALTY I don't feel average today, I feel top of the class...thanks to sir.

HOBBY I never thought I'd be doing this, I hated drama, only took it for a doss about...

SALTY Right, don't forget to keep in character, and Hobby, always face the front.

HOBBY I will do.

GAIL And speak up.

HOBBY I will do.

SALTY A lot of the stuff in the play was told to us by Mr Harrison...

GAIL And even though you might not believe it, everything what happens in the play is based on truth.

HOBBY But the names and the faces have been changed.

SALTY To protect the innocent.

GAIL We're going to take you to Whitewall High School. It's a comprehensive school somewhere in England.... And they're expecting a new teacher to arrive.

HOBBY There's fifteen hundred kids at Whitewall and it's a Special Priority Area which means that it's got its fair share of problems...

SALTY All we want you to do is use your imagination because there's only three of us, and we all have to play different characters...

HOBBY And narrators...

SALTY And narrators.

HOBBY So you'll have to concentrate...

SALTY Oh yeh, you'll have to concentrate...

GAIL Title...

SALTY Oh shit, yeh.... And it's called *Teachers*.

A sudden burst of music. They become teachers, with briefcases and files, walking about a number of corridors. The lights become brighter.

SALTY Morning.

GAIL Morning.

HOBBY Morning.

SALTY Morning.

HOBBY Morning.

GAIL Morning.

PARRY Stop running Simon Patterson.

TEACHER A Morning, Ted.

PARRY Morning, Roy.

TEACHER B Morning, Mr Basford.

ALL Morning, Mrs Parry...

PARRY Good-morning...

WHITHAM You are chewing, girl, spit it out. Not into her hair, into a bin...

TEACHER B I don't call that a straight line, do you, Claire Dickinson? No? Neither do I.

PARRY I know that was the bell, Simon Patterson. The bell is a signal for me to move and not for anyone else.

Music.

NIXON I'm Jeff Nixon the new drama teacher. I'm looking for Mrs Parry's office.

HOBBY Up the steps in the nice part of the school, first left.

SALTY *exits.*

GAIL }
HOBBY } *(together)* Mmmmmmmmmmm.

GAIL He doesn't look much like a teacher, he looks like somebody who's come to mend the drains.

SALTY *enters as* NIXON.

NIXON I knew at my interview that Whitewall had a bad reputation and no drama facilities. But like a sheriff with my brand-new degree pinned to my chest I bounded up to Mrs Parry's office... She was busy... With Mr Basford the Deputy Head.

GAIL *dons a facial mask, nose and glasses, which all the cast wear as MR BASFORD.*

BASFORD I don't believe you're doing this.

PARRY I run it and I shall do what I like.

BASFORD After all the work I've put in, now you turn around and tell me that I'm not Koko... Great. It's a bloody liberty.

PARRY Mr Basford, I'm sorry... But there is nothing else to say... I need a younger person. I'm sure you'll have a great deal of fun in the chorus.

BASFORD In the chorus. I wouldn't be seen dead in the chorus.

PARRY It's that or nothing, good-day, I have another appointment. Mrs Parry, or should I say Cordelia Parry, BA M.Ed. was a huge attractive woman. She carried herself very well but had awful dress sense, and would often mix pink with yellow. She was of large frame with a voice to match. Mr Nixon? Jeff Nixon?

NIXON That's right.

PARRY Hello, nice to see you again. Coffee?

NIXON Please. Mrs Parry's office was a cavern of theatre posters... She certainly had more than a passing interest.

PARRY Drama! Bare boards and a passion. Wonderful. This is my all-male production of *The Trojan Women*, and this is me as Ophelia.

NIXON Behind her head was a photo of a much lither Mrs Parry in an amateur production of *Hamlet*.

PARRY I'm doing *The Mikado* in the spring term, Mr Nixon.

NIXON I knew exactly what she meant.

PARRY I'm looking for a Koko...

NIXON It must be difficult.

PARRY Mr Basford usually takes the leads in our local G and S productions but I'm afraid he was rather tiresome last year in *The Pirates*... We're looking for new blood... Well that's given you something to think about, hasn't it?

NIXON It certainly has.

PARRY And so to business, Mr Nixon.

NIXON The meeting went on for another twenty minutes, but I got the message. Keep any eye out for the teacher-eating girls and the thuggish boys...they'll have you for breakfast.

GAIL But one thing struck him about Mrs Parry. She really did care about the kids at Whitewall.

PARRY As we walked from my office, that is Mrs Parry's... I wished Jeff all the luck with his probationary year, and took him towards Mr Basford's room, home of the timetable. Here we are.

NIXON The gigantic timetable was screwed to the wall. It was so colourful, so meticulous, it was a work of art, like something from the Vatican. A life's work had gone into making it.

PARRY The nomenclature is fairly straightforward. You will be N.I., Mr Nixon, and drama will be D.R. As you'll be having your lessons in the Main Hall, drama with you in the Main Hall, would read N.I.D.R.M.H. If you have a first-year class it could read, N.I.D.R. M.H.I.Y.X. Period one. Fairly simple.

NIXON Elementary, Mrs Parry.

PARRY If you have any problems at all, Jeff, don't hesitate, come up and see me straight away, I'm always available. And don't forget about *The Mikado*. I know how much the theatre must be in your blood... It could be your big break...

NIXON So I tentatively said "yes", to a small part in the chorus, and although Mrs Parry was disappointed that I didn't want Koko, she said that I would certainly enjoy my time in Titipu.

A corridor.

GAIL Excuse me, sir?

NIXON Eh?

GAIL Sir, I'm lost.

NIXON Well where should you be?

GAIL Sir, I don't know, I can't work it out on my timetable. I'm in tutor group I.D. But I'm in teaching group I.Y.Five and I should be in block Four.Three.B doing biology. But Three.Y.Six are in there with Mr Dean doing history, he says that I should be in Three.One.D. but I've been there and the class is empty. Sir, I've been looking for my class for forty minutes.

NIXON What have you got next?

GAIL PE in the gym.

NIXON Do you know where that is?

GAIL Yes, sir.

NIXON Well I suggest that you go and wait there, then at least your class'll find you.

GAIL Right, thanks sir...

NIXON Oh, before you go. Have you any idea where Nine.I.B. is?

A pause. We are now in the Form Room.

HOBBY When you're a hardnut and fifteen you always have to give teachers a bad time. It's part of the rules of the game... And when there's a new teacher you can be even tougher. In our class we had seen off three tutors in as many weeks.

GAIL Miss Bell had a breakdown, but said she was pregnant.

HOBBY Then we had a supply teacher who was always crying...

GAIL And then they sent old Mr Willcox who was deaf so that was a laugh, we used to say anything to him.

HOBBY And now they've sent us a new teacher. A brand-new, sparkling clean, not even out of the box teacher...

TEACHER A They're only going to be in school for two more terms... Send them the new bloke Nixon... He can cut his teeth on Seven.Y.Y. down in Nine.I.B... It's out of the way—if they eat him or burn him alive we can forget about him.

SALTY In Seven.Y.Y. there was me, Salty, Gail and Hobby who you know, Kevin Mears—who spoke funny... All right, Kevin?

GAIL Not bad, Salty, all right... I've been down to our Malcolm's, he's got a brilliant BMX. We had a great game of rally cross.

SALTY Kev was fifteen going on three. There was John Froggett who never wore any decent shoes.

GAIL Sally Wrenshaw...

HOBBY Vicky Marshall.

SALTY Walter Jones.

GAIL Fancy calling a kid Walter...

SALTY And Trisha Foreshore who had been through nearly all the kids in the school...except me.

GAIL Salty, that's not true...

SALTY It is.

GAIL It is not.

SALTY Right you ask Benny Good.

GAIL I wouldn't ask Benny Good what the time was... He's a big mouth and a liar...

HOBBY Oh come on get on with it...

SALTY And Trisha Foreshore who was known, but it might not be true, as being a bit of a goer.

GAIL That's better...

HOBBY When they sent you a new teacher, it was like getting some foster parents... When Nixon arrived we were bored and disinterested.

NIXON Hi... Is this Nine.I.B...? I'm Mr Nixon... It's a bit chilly in here isn't it? Can you two lads come down from the bookshelves, I don't think that they were meant for sitting on, were they? If you don't mind—just come down. And if you could stop playing table tennis that would also help. Can everybody sit on a seat and not on a desk? That's better... Right... My name is Mr Nixon.

GAIL and HOBBY *laugh.*

The entire class burst into laughter. I didn't see that I'd said anything funny. My name is fairly straightforward and I've only got one head. I turned to the blackboard and saw that some joker had drawn some enormous genitals on the board. I looked at the class, they were still laughing. "Bollocks" is not spelt with an "x"...

HOBBY I don't like him.

GAIL You've got to give him a chance.

HOBBY Why, do you like him?

GAIL No but... We even gave Miss Bell a chance.

HOBBY He's trying to be too smart... I hate teachers who call you by your nickname.

GAIL Yeh, but you hate being called Lillian. Everybody calls you Hobby.

HOBBY So what, that's no reason why he should, he's new.

A school bell rings. Each actor goes to a desk, as kids. They address the audience as staff.

A number of classrooms.

WHITHAM Right quieten down, quieten down, said Maureen Whitham, scale two humanities, as she pathetically tried to control a class of thirty. Please be quiet. If you don't keep quiet I'll have to get Mr Basford... Be quiet... Shut up... Hush... Shhh!

NIXON As I walked through the maze of a school I heard and saw many different types of teaching.

WHITHAM Please, don't throw the books about, it's one between three, now everyone be quiet... **BE QUIET.**

NIXON It was like a menagerie.

HOBBY *becomes MR BASFORD.*

BASFORD Nobody speaks in Mr Basford's lessons. That's why I have the best maths results in the school. Nobody talks, you can't work and talk, nobody can not even me, and I'm a genius...

NIXON Most classes had some sort of noise coming from them...

WHITHAM Right, said Maureen Whitham, as she hopelessly tried to settle her class... I'm going to get Mr Basford... Oh... Silence, that's better...

NIXON Mr Basford's class, worked in absolute silence, with absolute commitment. He also had the best kids.

BASFORD Don't let the bastards grind you down, hit 'em low and hard...low and hard, kids respect discipline... If they don't get it at home, they get it in my lessons... Hush down... I can hear someone breathing...

The Main Hall.

NIXON I arrived at my first lesson five minutes late, I'd taken a wrong turn at block one and found myself in the physics block... A fifth year non-exam drama group lounged about some stacked chairs in the main hall... Sixteen of them had managed to turn up. Twenty-five names were on the register. The school hall looked like a youth club; I walked purposefully to the stage.

GAIL Oh God it's him, Dixon.

HOBBY Got him for tutor and for drama.

GAIL What's happened to Mrs Huggill?

HOBBY Left. I hate drama. Only did it for a skive.

GAIL Yeh and me, it was this or music. Got any cigs?

HOBBY They wouldn't let me do music, said I was too clumsy. I've got two Woodbines, my granny's.

GAIL Buy a tab off you at break?

NIXON Get a chair, I said in a friendly, sort of youth worker type of tone.

HOBBY What's he say?

NIXON Grab a chair everyone...

GAIL We're not doing any work, are we, sir?

NIXON Can you grab a chair...

GAIL I'll give you some crisps if I can tab you...

NIXON Can you all please get a chair and come and sit around the stage in a half-circle...

HOBBY How long have you been smoking?

GAIL About four months...

HOBBY Why don't you buy some bastard cigs then...

GAIL I am going to do.

HOBBY When?

GAIL Tomorrow...

NIXON Can you get a chair and stop waving them around? I know I just said get a chair but I didn't expect you to swing it around your head...

HOBBY If I tab you and you don't bring any cigs I'll drop you...

GAIL I will, honest... Honest, I will...

NIXON Get a chair and sit on the BASTARD...

GAIL What's he say?

HOBBY Dunno.

NIXON Will everyone please sit on a chair?

GAIL Who's he think he is?

HOBBY Are you going to bio or are you twagging it?

GAIL Is she here?

HOBBY Her car's here. It's that red 'un.

GAIL I'm off downtown then, get a milk shake.

NIXON When everyone is ready... Good... I think it would be a good thing for us to start with a very important person in the world of drama. Mr William Shakespeare. And in particular a play that you've probably seen but don't realize it. *Romeo and Juliet*.

GAIL and HOBBY groan.

Which is a tragedy.

GAIL And it's the basis for *West Side Story*, and it's about neighbours arguing.

HOBBY We've done it...

NIXON Oh...

HOBBY We did it with Mrs Huggill.

GAIL And we did about two tramps who're waiting for somebody and he never turns up.

HOBBY And that was boring.

GAIL And we've done *Hamlet*. About a prince who kills his uncle. Haven't we?

HOBBY Yeh. And two killers who are after somebody and one of 'em's a deaf and dumb waiter.

GAIL And we've done *Beverly Hills Cop. Beverly Hills Cop Two*...

HOBBY *Neighbours*...

GAIL *Eastenders*... "Hello, Arfur... All right, my love."

HOBBY Good that...

GAIL What else have we done?

HOBBY *Indiana Jones.*

GAIL *Yeh. Jewel of the Nile...* We've done all there is in drama...

NIXON At that moment, a giant of a lad, Peter Saxon stood up. He must have been six feet seven, with tatoos on his arms and a line across his neck which read, "Cut here." "I wanna say something", he said, "I've got some drama to tell you..." "Go on then, Peter", I said, not knowing what to expect... (*He becomes PETE SAXON*) Right I'm Peter Saxon now... One day, sir, last year, it was great. Me and Daz Horne decided to run away, to seek our fortune. We was going to go to London. It was a Tuesday, I think. But it could have been a Thursday. No, no, it was a Tuesday, 'cos we had Mr Cooper for technical drawing. Mr Cooper's soft, sir, you can swear at him and all sorts, we used to call him "gibbon head", 'cos he had a bald head and looked like a gibbon. Anyway, me and Daz are in his class and I throws a chair at him, so he goes and hides himself in a storeroom, so me and Horney lock him in the storeroom, and then we get a chair and stand on it and look at him through the window in the top of the storeroom, and I keeps shouting "gibbon head" to him... Anyway, then we twags it and gets a bus to the station. I couldn't stop laughing, sir, honest, just the picture of gibbon head sat in that storeroom killed me off. Anyway, Horney says that we've got drama with Mrs Huggill before dinner, so we comes back to do our drama lesson. In drama we did "different visions of hell". I was a cyclops and Horney was my mam. Anyway, me and Horney got into stacks of trouble. But I liked doing plays when Mrs Huggill was here... Sir, as far as I know sir, Mr Cooper is still locked in the storeroom...

GAIL He's a liar...

NIXON That was good, Peter. The kids had raw potential, but I had to get them into plays. They were a funny bunch, but

I think they liked me, and I liked them. Whitewall wasn't so bad.

GAIL Sir? Can we do *E.T.*?

HOBBY } (*together*) *E.T.*, phone home...
GAIL }

Music.

The Staff-room.

NIXON After the first month I was beginning to feel fairly confident. And I also had my eye on Jackie Prime, PE mistress.

PRIME Jackie Prime was tall, sun-tanned, bouncy and an expert at netball and tennis... She was developing dance in the gym and took an interest in all games.

NIXON Morning.

PRIME Morning.

NIXON How did the first eleven get on?

PRIME Lost sixty-seven nil. Saint George's team are in a dilferent class...and Ogggy Moxon, our captain, was sent off for spitting.

NIXON Who's Ogggy Moxon?

PRIME He's the best player we've got. But he's a handful.

NIXON I see.

PRIME Have you tasted the coffee? It's like something brought back from a field trip.

NIXON It was eight pence and was forced down you by Madge the tea-lady.

PRIME We have our own kettle in the gym. For PE staff only.

PARRY Morning.

TEACHER A } (*together*) Morning, Mrs Parry.
TEACHER B }

PARRY Morning, Mr Nixon. I hope you're still thinking about *The Mikado*. I wouldn't want your mind to wander on to other things.

NIXON Don't worry, Mrs Parry, I'll be at rehearsals.

PARRY Good, Mr Nixon. Good. Did you know Whitewall has a farm?

PRIME Well it's not actually a farm Mrs Parry, we do have a pig.

PARRY My dear Miss Prime, we have a number of pigs.

PRIME One's an old sow.

NIXON And geese?

PARRY Two geese.

NIXON I was doing duty around the back of the canteen, I was attacked by the geese... But I have discovered how to avoid the smokers, simply look the other way...

PRIME Look I must go, I've got baths. It's fairly obvious where the kids are going to smoke, and if you want to catch the smokers you can, but if I was you, I wouldn't go behind the Sports Hall...

NIXON Why?

PRIME That's Oggie Moxon's patch. All the staff leave Oggie well alone.

NIXON And then she left. She was a breath of fresh air... A bubble in an otherwise flat brew... Oh God... I was becoming infatuated with Jackie Prime.

GAIL But Jackie Prime didn't see Nixon as anything at all. When she looked, he wasn't there, he was just another teacher and she was being sociable.

JONES You can't sit there, that's Marcus' seat.

NIXON What about over here?

JONES That's someone's seat. Frank Collier's.

NIXON Oh, right. Is this anyone's paper?

WHITHAM Yes. It's Deany's, he's on the loo...

NIXON I can't share a cheek on the edge of that, can I, Mavis?

JONES Sorry, Jeff...

NIXON Even after seven weeks finding a regular seat in the staff-room was a nightmare. I was told by Mr Dean that a lot of new staff preferred to stand outside in the rain. Mr Sawyer had been at Whitewall's for two years and not ever got a seat in the staff-room.

WHITHAM I do not believe he is doing this. Look at the timetable, Basford's gone bananas.

NIXON I longed to be down in the gym and have a cup of tea with Jackie Prime. But—it was a forlorn fantasy.

WHITHAM The man does not care, he just doesn't care.

JONES What's the matter, Maureen?

WHITHAM I'm on cover for Mick Edward's remedial English group. I hate them. I do. I hate that group...

JONES I know what you mean... I've just had Trisha Foreshore, if that girl says "I'm bored, miss" once again I'll ring her soddin' neck.

WHITHAM But they hate me, he knows they do. It's not fair...

JONES Do you know what she says... We're looking at the digestive system, and she says "Miss, the oesophagus is one long tube running from mouth to anus". I said "Very good, Trisha, how did you find that out?" She says "Miss, I went to the dentist and he looked in my mouth and he could tell that I'd got diarrhoea". I said "It's pyorrhoea, girl, pyorrhoea, bleeding gums..." I give up on some of 'em, I really do...

WHITHAM Remedial English. He knows I've got a doctorate and he puts me on remedial English.

NIXON There was another big fight at break-time. Silly sods.

Music.

Back of the Sports Hall.

GAIL The cock of Whitewall High was Bobby Moxon, known to all and sundry as—

SALTY —Oggy Moxon.

GAIL There was no doubt at all that Oggy was dangerous, all the teachers gave him a wide berth. He was sixteen going on twenty-five, rumour had it that he had lost his virginity when he was ten and that Miss Prime fancied the pants off him.

HOBBY When Oggy Moxon said “shit”, you did, when he said it was Wednesday, it was Wednesday.

GAIL One Wednesday, I was stood outside one of the mobile classrooms, Mr Dean had sent me out of the class. I’d told him that I thought Peter the Great was a bossy gett!! And he sent me out... I’m stood there with a mood on when Oggy comes past.

SALTY *becomes* **OGGY MOXON.**

OGGY All right, Gail?

GAIL Yeh. I knew that he fancied me.

OGGY What you doing?

GAIL Waiting for Christmas, what’s it look like?

OGGY I’m having a party in my dad’s pub, wanna come? Most of the third year is coming... Should be a good night...

GAIL Might come then.

OGGY Might see you there.

GAIL Might.

OGGY Wear something that’s easy to get off. Your luck might be in.

GAIL I hate him.

HOBBY I do.

GAIL Somebody ought to drop him.

HOBBY Who? All the staff shit themselves when they have to teach him.

GAIL Oggy Moxon’s speech about being hard: I’m Oggy Moxon... We said you’d have to use your imaginations... I’m Oggy, I’m as hard as nails, as toe-capped boots I’m hard, as marble in a church, as concrete on your head I’m hard. As calculus I’m hard. As learning Hebrew is hard, then so am I. Even Basford knows I’m rock, his cane wilts like an old sock... And if any teachers in the shitpot school with their degrees and bad breath lay a finger on me, God be my judge, I’ll have their hides... And if not me, our Nobby will be up to this knowledge college in a flash... All the female flesh fancy me in my “five-o-ones”, no uniform for me never. From big Mrs Grimes to pert Miss Prime I see their eyes flick to my button-holed flies. And they know like I that no male on this staff could satisfy them like me, ‘cos I’m hard all the time. Last Christmas dance me and Miss Prime pranced to some bullshit track and my hand slipped down her back, and she told me she thought that I was great, I felt that arse, that schoolboy wank, a tight-buttocked, Reebok-footed, leggy-arse... I touched that and heard her sigh...for me. And as I walk my last two terms through these corridors of sickly books and boredom... I see grown men flinch and fear... In cookery one day my hands were all covered with sticky paste, and in haste I asked pretty Miss Bell if she could get for me a hanky from my pockets, of course she would, a student on teaching practice—wanting to help, not knowing my pockets had holes and my underpants were in the wash... “Oh no”, she yelped, but in truth got herself a thrill, and has talked of nothing else these last two years... Be warned, when Oggy Moxon is around get out your cigs... And lock up your daughters...

Music plays. GAIL and HOBBY pick up a chair each; they are about to put the chairs on the desks at the end

of a lesson. NIXON puts on his coat. They buttonhole him, they want to talk to him. He hangs around, really wanting to be elsewhere.

GAIL Sir, are teachers rich?

NIXON *(as if in anguish)* Noooo!

GAIL What about Mrs Parry, she's got a massive car?

NIXON She might be, but I'm not.

HOBBY Are you married, sir?

NIXON *(another difficult response)* No. Next question.

HOBBY and GAIL *try and think of another question which will have the effect of keeping NIXON talking to them. Meanwhile he picks up his briefcase.*

GAIL Sir, is this a school for thickies?

NIXON Why?

GAIL 'Cos when we're going home, all the kids from the posh school, Saint George's...ask us if we can add up, and they ask us if we've got any table tennis homework?

HOBBY Sir, all the kids who go to that school are snobs... Their dads drive big cars...

GAIL And they call us "divvies"...

HOBBY Sir, because they go there they think they're better than us.

GAIL And, they say our teachers are shit. Oh sorry, didn't mean to say that.

HOBBY Mr Basford's sons go there, don't they?

GAIL Yeh, two twins. "Twinnies" they're called. They're right brainy... Sir, have you got a girlfriend?

NIXON Not at the moment.

GAIL Brilliant.

HOBBY Do you like it at this school, sir?

NIXON Yeh, it's OK, you lot are awkward, but OK.

HOBBY Sir, what do you think it's most important for a teacher to do?

NIXON Well, I think a teacher should have a good relationship, if he hasn't got a relationship he can only ever be a teacher, never a person.

GAIL What about Mr Basford, he hasn't got a good relationship with the kids...

NIXON Well I can't speak for Mr Basford, can I?

HOBBY Sir, the bell's gone...

NIXON You'd better go and get it then—and go quietly. *(A pause)* It was a trip to see *The Rocky Horror Show* that got me really close to those three, although I had to watch my step with Gail, she kept putting her hand on my leg during the sexy bits...

HOBBY Science fiction... Whooooo. Double Feature.

GAIL Doctor X has built a creature.

HOBBY *becomes* MR BASFORD.

NIXON Mr Basford you wanted to see me?

BASFORD Mr Nixon, I understand you took a group of fifteen-year olds to see a play featuring transvestites from Transylvania? I can't imagine what educational value that has.

NIXON A black mark from Basford. Mrs Parry had omitted to tell me about the joys of doing cover... Usually a student would appear like the ghost of Caesar and present you with a pink slip, this would tell you where to go and who to cover for. Mr Basford was in charge of the cover rota.

BASFORD Nixon N.I. to cover for Fisher F.I. third year games... And the best of luck.

The Gymnasium.

PRIME All right, all third year deadlegs from Mr Fisher's group shut up, said Miss Jackie Prime. If you want to watch the nineteen seventy-four World Cup Final on video go to the lecture theatre with Mr Clark's group. Those who want to play pirates in the gym get changed, you without kit better see Mr Nixon.

HOBBY A whole line of kids wearing anoraks came forward... Mr Nixon looked staggered, he'd been left to deal with PE's cast offs.

GAIL And amongst the throng was the legendary Barry Wobschall. Barry never did sport. He hated games.

HOBBY Barry was fifteen but had the manner of an old man, he lived with his granddad and spoke with all the wisdom of someone four times his age. Every day for the past two years he had worked on a milk round.

NIXON Where's your kit?

RON Sir, my shorts don't fit me.

NIXON What about you?

PIGGY Sir, my mother put my shorts in the wash and they got chewed up because the washer has gone all wrong...

NIXON Oh yeh.

PIGGY It's true, sir, honest.

NIXON What about you, Barry Wobschall, have you got any kit?

BARRY No, sir.

PIGGY He never brings any kit, sir.

NIXON I wasn't asking you, was I, Simon Patterson.

PIGGY No, sir.

NIXON What about a note, Barry? Have you brought a note?

BARRY Sir.

NIXON Oh let's have it then.

GAIL Barry handed him the note. It was small and crumpled. Barry looked in innocence as Nixon opened the piece of paper.

GAIL hands NIXON a piece of paper.

NIXON (*reading*) "Please leave four pints and a yoghurt this Saturday".

BARRY It's the only note I could get, sir.

NIXON I tried to talk Barry Wobschall into changing his options. His sort of humour in a drama class would have been dynamite. But he wouldn't change, he said he preferred doing geog, because it was peaceful and he liked copying maps.

GAIL On the thirteenth of October Jackie Prime was at the GCSE meeting held at Saint George's... She was walking around the quadrant. A choir was singing.

A choir sings.

NIXON It's beautiful.

PRIME There's been...

NIXON It's just a different world. I hear they're opting out.

PRIME It's very likely. They've got a fantastic drama studio, dance facilities.

NIXON If they opt out they'll charge fees... It'll be like a private school.

PRIME They say that they won't, but maybe they will. Only time will tell.

NIXON Mr Basford's kids come here.

PRIME You sound surprised... And Jackie Prime was off, into Saint George's gymnasium.

NIXON It was fantastic. There was something reassuring about Saint George's that made you want to teach there. Something soothing and academic, the same, I was beginning to think, could not be said of Whitewall.

The choir stops.

Back of the Sports Hall. GAIL, as DENNIS, and HOBBY, as OGGY MOXON, are flicking through a magazine.

DENNIS Where did you get it?

OGGY My dad gets 'em delivered in brown paper parcels...

DENNIS 'S have a look.

OGGY It's disgusting...

DENNIS What is, what is?

HOBBY Oggy had stolen one of his father's dirty magazines, for fifty pence third year's could have a quick look. For a quid first year's could have a glance.

GAIL It was break and Oggy and Dennis are sharing a few cigs and a finger through Oggy's dad's magazine.

NIXON What're you doing, lads?

OGGY Nothing... I'm Oggy.

NIXON Well, you're obviously doing something.

OGGY No we're not.

NIXON You're not smoking, are you?

DENNIS No.

OGGY What if we are?

NIXON It'll stunt your growth, you know?

OGGY So what?

NIXON What have you got there?

OGGY A book.

NIXON I know it's a book.

OGGY It's my dad's so if I was you I'd leave it with us.

NIXON Well I think that I'm going to have to report you.

OGGY Good. You do that.

NIXON You know what that means, don't you?

OGGY Yeh, I'll get kicked out of school with any luck. Great. I don't want to be here, anyway.

GAIL By this time a massive crowd had gathered. Various voices shouted, "Smack him, Oggy. He's only a drama teacher."

NIXON I think you'd better come with me to see Mr Basford.

OGGY Big deal, he's not going to do anything.

NIXON Oh, really?

OGGY Yeh, really.

NIXON Well we'll see about that. I might have to deal with you myself.

OGGY What you gonna do, sir? Pretend I'm a tree?

NIXON I'm going to have to report you.

OGGY That's tough of you, why don't you have a go with me now, just me and you?

NIXON I'm going to have to report you.

OGGY You do that, sir...

NIXON And I turned and walked away, with kids jeering and shouting in the background. And very faintly I heard Oggy Moxon say...

OGGY You wanker...

NIXON It was my first horrific confrontation. I'd played it all wrong... I couldn't deal with Oggy. And if I couldn't, who I thought was fairly streetwise, what about Mrs Grimes, or

Julie Sharpe or those nice quiet supply teachers who never have a wrong word for anyone?

HOBBY As Nixon walked back to report Oggy, he started to think about getting out of teaching. He started to wish his probationary year away...

NIXON I wasn't talking to you. I was talking to Paul Drewitt, now will everyone hush down? I shan't say it again. All right, we'll wait till everyone's quiet before we go home.

PIGGY Sir, the bell's gone.

NIXON I know the bell's gone, Simon Patterson, and I'm not bothered, I can stay here, all night!

GAIL *exits. Music.*

The Drama Club.

During September I held "drama club" in the school hall after four o'clock. Salty, Gail and Hobby were regulars, we did all sorts of work. But it didn't really meet with the approval of Doug, the caretaker.

NIXON and HOBBY *play some scenes from "The Witches" in Macbeth.*

GAIL, as DOUG the caretaker, enters.

DOUG Come on let's have you, Niko, time to go home. I thought you lot were withdrawing good will? Come on it's half-five let's have you. Time to go find a space somewhere else.

NIXON Just five more minutes, Doug?

DOUG No come on... I've got this floor to buffer. Mrs Parry's got a *Mikado* rehearsal tonight for principals. And I've got the mobiles to do for night class, and then the sports hall, 'cos five-a-side's on tonight. And somebody's gone crackers in the sixth form bogs...

NIXON Just give us a few more minutes, Doug...

DOUG A few more minutes? Bloody hell, where would I be if I gave all the staff a few more minutes?

NIXON Come on, Doug, don't be such an ogre.

DOUG I'm asking you to leave, that's all.

NIXON But it's the manner of it...

DOUG I've got to get this buffered that's all I'm bothered about...

NIXON It's taken me ages to get these interested in doing a play—do us a favour, give me another twenty minutes...

DOUG I can't, Mr Nixon... We're short-staffed... I've got three cleaners off and Jim's back's playing him up... I'm only doing my job.

NIXON I'm only trying to do mine.

DOUG Look, you don't get paid for this, get yourself off home...

NIXON I bet you wouldn't get Basford out of his office...

DOUG You should have a proper room for this drama thing. I mean doing it in the hall it's a disgrace... Sometimes I can't get a shine on the floor, I have to polish it... And that's a bloody job.

NIXON If you can tell me, Doug, where there is any morsel of space for me to do drama I'd be happy to move. Is there... Eh?

DOUG Well, it's not worth bloody doing.

NIXON There isn't anywhere... I've got the Main Hall and that's it.

DOUG If you ask me they should take it off, the bloody timetable, I mean, they don't do any writing make as much noise as they bloody like, waste of Education Authority's bloody money if you ask me.

NIXON You, silly old sod, you don't know what you're talking about.

DOUG That's swearing, nobody swears at me, I don't get paid to be bloody sworn at. Wait till I tell Mr Basford.

DOUG *moves to us. Music.*

The Staff-room.

NIXON Thursday, November the ninth. Staff-room. One of my biggest fears was that I was teaching the wrong book at O level. I had been doing *Twelfth Night* for ten weeks when I heard a rumour on the grapevine that the actual set book was *The Winter's Tale*. Mr Basford put me right on that, he also put me right on some other things.

HOBBY *becomes MR BASFORD.*

BASFORD I hear that you've had a bit of a run-in with Doug. Don't upset the caretakers, Jeff, they do a great job.

NIXON I suppose we're all trapped in the same system. Kids. Staff. Caretakers. How are your lads doing at Saint George's?

BASFORD Fine.

NIXON You live out that way?

BASFORD Me? No. I live down Greenacre Parade.

NIXON That's this school's catchment area.

BASFORD That's right...

NIXON Why didn't they come to this school?

BASFORD *(after a pause)* St George's gets people into Oxford. Thirty per cent get five or more O levels that's why. Fifteen per cent get four here at Whitewall. Parents have the right to choose schools, and I'm choosing.

NIXON But St George's is ten miles away... It must cost a fortune...

BASFORD I'm making sure my kids have the best possible education.

NIXON And you can afford it. What about kids like Gail Saunders, can their parents pay for them to travel to St-George's? No. They can't even afford to pay out for a school trip...

BASFORD So what am I supposed to do, make my lads disadvantaged because others are? Waken up, Jeff. Parents have a right to send kids to the school of their choice.

NIXON And kids have a right to a good education regardless of whether their parents have the ability or willingness to choose for them... You know as well as I do that a lot of parents don't attach a great deal of importance to education, that doesn't mean that we ditch their kids...

BASFORD Listen Mr Nixon... When you have any family, what will you want for your kids? Will you want them to do drama, let's say, in an old hall with no facilities and books that are sellotaped together or would you prefer they worked in an atmosphere where everything was new, and you could have what you wanted? You think about what you'd really want.

NIXON But that's not the point. Surely all schools should be the same, have the same facilities, have the same cash, cash made readily available. Shouldn't we want the best for all kids, not just those whose parents can pay to send them to a good school whether it be fees or bus fare? All kids deserve the right to be educated to their potential.

BASFORD And that's the sort of system we have now. A grade six kid is grade six potential.

NIXON That's bullshit and you know it. Examinations are a framework that we fit kids into.

BASFORD Do not talk to me like that, Mr Nixon.

NIXON And don't talk to me like that, you bloody fascist...

BASFORD I knew what you were as soon as I saw you.

NIXON What are you talking about?

BASFORD You know what I'm talking about, I'm talking about *The Mikado*.

NIXON What about it...?

BASFORD Eight years I've been in that society...

NIXON And then he stormed off...

WHITHAM "You've had it now," said Maureen Whitham, scale two Humanities, as she sat listening and thumbing through the *Times Ed*. Old Basford will make your life a misery, he'll have you on cover from now till eternity. Nobody calls Basford a fascist and gets away with it. The man's dangerous, I'd be careful tackling him. He's done a lot for the school. And after all they're his kids, he can do what he likes...

NIXON I felt that I was wrong, that we shouldn't have a fair system, that we should let bright kids get bright and treat the less able kids like rhubarb, keep them in the dark and shit on 'em. And everywhere I looked I could see the difference between dog piss in Hobby's grandma's garden and garden parties and degrees at Saint George's. And the truth was that the garden party was what I wanted... Whitewall was killing me, sapping me, frustrating me - wearing me down... As Christmas approached I fell into a deep depression, I had two hundred first year reports to do, O level marking and the Christmas carol concerts meant that I couldn't get in the hall to teach.

WHITHAM Hey, Jeff, have you seen the *Times Ed*? Scale two going at Saint George's. Starts summer. A level theatre studies, drama studio... Video equipment...

NIXON No I'm not into that.

WHITHAM Oh you're not planning to stop here, are you? Everybody's trying to get out. They call this place "Colditz" at the County Hall. Don't be a mug, Jeff, when you see a hole in the fence go for it. I've got an interview coming up, in local radio... Here, I'll leave it with you.

HOBBY Mr Nixon?

GAIL Sir?

HOBBY Can I go to matron?

NIXON Look, come away from the gas taps.

HOBBY Sir?

NIXON Just find a space.

GAIL Sir, she's hit me.

HOBBY Sir, I haven't.

NIXON Find a space.

GAIL Sir, she has.

HOBBY When will we be back in the hall?

NIXON Find a space!

GAIL Are we doing the *Marat Sade*?

HOBBY Can I go to matron?

GAIL Are we doing *Billy Liar*?

HOBBY Sir, she's taken my pen.

GAIL Sir, I haven't.

HOBBY Sir, she has, sir.

GAIL Sir, I haven't.

HOBBY Sir, she's taken my book.

GAIL Sir, I haven't.

HOBBY Sir, she's taken my partner.

GAIL Sir, I haven't.

HOBBY Sir, she's taken my glasses.

GAIL Sir?

HOBBY Mr Nixon.

GAIL Sir?

HOBBY Niko?

GAIL Jeff?

HOBBY Hey.

GAIL You.

HOBBY Sir.

NIXON (*shouting*) Right! Everybody, hands on heads, and
fingers on lips.

Music. Black-out.