

DEATH OF A NIGHTINGALE

Programme Note

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

TS Eliot, Four Quartets, Little Gidding 1942

Inclusion – when did it all begin?² On Monday, 7 October 1976, in a debate in the House of Lords on an Education Bill. That day a new clause, although criticised and withdrawn earlier in the year, was reintroduced in a slightly different form. It required Local Education Authorities to educate most children with special educational needs in mainstream schools instead of special schools.

At that time the policy had not been researched nor costed, and was opposed by many disability organisations and by the National Union of Teachers, but it nevertheless passed into law.

Since then the myth has been propagated that the Warnock Report issued two years later in 1978 shaped the policy of Inclusion. In fact a small unrepresentative pressure group, in a debate lasting no more than 41 minutes in the Upper House, had succeeded in pre-empting that report, and changed the face of special education for over thirty years.*

In 1994 the policy of Inclusion was reinforced by the Salamanca Conference³ organised by the Government of Spain and UNESCO which said amongst other things that “those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools.” The educational establishment, supported by the Treasury, along with Academia then put its full weight behind it.

In 1988 Alan Share was invited to be a governor of Barbara Priestman, a school in Sunderland for physically disabled children. Shortly after that he was invited to serve as its chair of governors by the head teacher, and he remained on the governing body until 2004.

During this time he witnessed the efforts that were made by a local authority to close down what was widely acknowledged to be an excellent school in pursuit of the policy of Inclusion. By this time it had been endorsed by all three political parties and no-one in power then was questioning it.

These efforts, however, met with a campaign mounted by parents, staff and pupils, by the medical profession and by the wider community to keep the school open, a campaign that ultimately persuaded Charles Clarke, then Education Secretary, to veto the proposal to close it. The school is still open today.

However 100 special schools were closed during these years. To highlight the tragedy that he believes this to be, and to draw on his own experience of the benefits such schools can provide for their pupils, he brings *Death of a Nightingale* to the New End Theatre. The play, as it tells the fictional story of the efforts of Westborough's local authority to close Brighthouse School, supports the argument that parents of children with special needs should be able to choose between mainstream and special schools for their children and that the scales should not be weighted against them.

We are delighted that Oak Lodge School,¹ a special school in East Finchley, has helped to provide from its pupils the cast for a music lesson. Alan Share believes that music should be a part of every child's education. It had an important place at Barbara Priestman School and he accords it an important place at Brighthouse School. He also uses it to explore the relationship between music and faith that have been bedfellows since the dawn of civilisation.

In writing the music lesson, he draws on the Alexandria Declaration of 2002, which was issued by religious leaders from the Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities. This asserted: "We seek to live together as neighbours respecting the integrity of each other's historical and religious inheritance." He also draws on Lord Sacks' recently published book *The Dignity of Difference* where he asserts that "God is God of all humanity, but between Babel and the end of days no single faith is the faith of all humanity." He hopes the music that the music teacher Emma Kirk plays for her class will echo these sentiments. He also gives atheism and humanism their voice.

What he writes is fiction from first to last.

Alan Share sums it up in these words: "The play is born of the experiences and of the paranoia of things that I have seen. I write it as a tragedy, which I believe it is. I hope that I do not give too much away if I say that there are no individual heroes or heroines in the play, and no individual villains either. All the characters are in one way or another victims or casualties of a system that has somehow lost its way. They are all human, and at the heart of the tragedy, is human frailty which always seems to bedevil the best of notions. If there is a hero, it is Brighthouse School itself, and Tracy who tells its story. I have given her the last word, and it is right that she should have it."

*The British Journal of Development Disabilities Vol.52 Part 1 January 2006 No.102 pp 65-71.

DEATH OF A NIGHTINGALE

By Alan Share

CAST (in alphabetical order)

Shammi Aulakh	David Harding
	Ranjit Singh
Feyi Babalola	Emma Kirk
Cecila Delatori	Judy Fotheringham
	Eileen Winterton
	Judith Singh
	Wendy Robinson
Samantha Dorrance	Tracy
Jordan Loughran	Philippa
Peter Mair	James Harrington
Melanie Ramsay	Margaret Williamson
Ian Targett	John Errington
	Gerry Thompson

Also with the participation of pupils from the Oak Lodge School, East Finchley.

Romina Bemani-Naeini	Jean
James Le Dain	Henry
Max Lewis	Terry

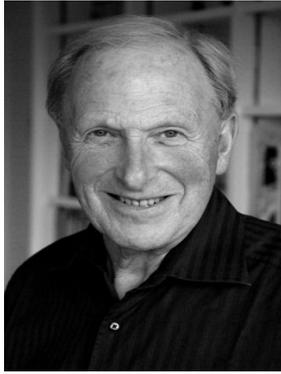
CREW

Rachael Vaughan	Set & Costume
Aaron J Dootson	Lighting
Katy Munroe Farlie	Stage manager

SCRIPT

FEBRUARY 2011

ALAN SHARE, THE AUTHOR



For over 17 years a governor of a special school in NE England, and chairman of governors for most of that time. He assisted its parents in their campaign to keep the school open.

Educated at Bede Grammar School, Sunderland and at Merton College, Oxford, after which he qualified as a barrister. Then a full, varied and interesting career before he retired, journeying from law to politics, and then to running a successful retailing company. He describes himself as a hybrid.

Taking a view that life was always most interesting on the margins, he was active in his trade association, notably chairing an industry wide action group that introduced Qualitas Conciliation Service in the furniture and carpet industry.

He has been for many years chairman of a residential care home in Newcastle, chairman of the Newcastle branch of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies, and a member of his local Rotary Club.

Travels widely, enjoys music, reading and the arts, and is never, ever bored.

His wife Ros also had an interest in helping the disabled. She assisted some of the pupils at the same special school with their reading. She also studied law at the then Newcastle Polytechnic, and used it to become a tribunal worker for a local CAB. Besides that she adjudicated at Social Security and Disability Appeal Tribunals in nearby towns.

You can visit www.deathofanightingale.com and read his Blog for other thoughts from the outside, looking in.

TOM SCOTT, DIRECTOR

Tom has directed over 100 productions including *The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd* and *The Lady From The Sea* at the New End Theatre. Other London credits include *A Night in November* (Etcetera Theatre and UK Tour). He was Artistic Director of Eye Theatre, Suffolk where his favorite productions included *Oleanna*, *Speed the Plow*, *Shrivings*, *An Inspector Calls*, *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Norman Conquests*, *Miss Julie*, *Love Child*, *Pygmalion* and *Hedda Gabler*. He has now established Eye Theatre Company to present London-based productions and national tours.

SHAMMI AULAKH



Shammi was born in West London. He studied Acting at the London Academy of Performing Arts for two years. Theatre credits include *Bina's Choice* (Dominion Centre) *Survivors* (Orange Tree Theatre) *Papa Was a Bus Conductor* (Edinburgh Fringe) *Deranged Marriage* (Rifco Arts) *Across the Black Waters* (Man Mela Theatre) *Marriage of Figaro* (Tara Arts) *Balti King*, *Ghost Dancing*, *Fourteen Songs Two Weddings and a Funeral*, *Sweet Cider & Wuthering Heights* (Tamasha Theatre Company). He has done numerous corporate training videos. TV & Commercial Credits: *MFI*, *Kodak*, *FT*, *Aerial*, *BT*, *Operation X*, *Days That Shook The World*. Film Credits: *Hypnotic* (Kismet Films) *Friday* (Academy Films) *Goal II* (Goal Prods Ltd)

Saxon (Sillwood Films).

Shammi is also a Filmmaker. His first film *The Fourteenth* was set during World War II. His second film *Frozen Bamboo* is currently in post production and will be shown at the Midnight Sun Film festival in Finland. He is currently working on a script called *Liberty*.

FEYI BABALOLA



Feyi Babalola trained at the Identity Drama School. TV credits include *Shoot The Messenger* (BBC), *Dick and Dom's in Da Bungalow* (BBC), *The Friday Night Project* (C4) and feature film *Love And Other Disasters* (Skyline Films).

Feyi also wrote and starred in the critically acclaimed, award winning play *Southern Blues*.

CECILIA DELATORI



Cecilia is an award winning writer/performer. Her credits include Fringe First winning one-woman show *Tonight I'm Entertaining Richard Gere* which was also nominated for a London Fringe award. Her current *Sparkling one-woman comedy* (WhatsOnStage.com) *Beyonce, Stop Punching Robbie!* premiered with great success at The Gilded Balloon and then at Leicester Square Theatre. *Spectacles*, *Bibles*, *Inflatable Bras* also a one-woman show premiered at The Pleasance, Edinburgh and subsequent sell out success on

tour.

Theatre credits include Madam Arcati in *Blithe Spirit*, the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* and Mrs Pearce in *Pygmalion* at The Eye Theatre. Also, *Lady Macbeth Firmed my Buttocks* and comedy sketches for the TBA Comedy Sketch Club at The Gate, Notting Hill. Radio credits: *Teresa* for the *Inner Voices* series on BBC Radio 4 and a Radio commercial for Coca Cola. She has also played in *Without Motive* (ITV).

Cecilia is also a stand up musical comedian and will be performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe this year.

SAMANTHA DORRANCE



Actress, Singer, Dancer and TV Presenter Samantha Dorrance has been working in theatre and television since the age of 2. Since then she has gone onto working in many TV and Theatre Productions including such TV programs as *Midsomer Murders*, *Hollyoaks* and many projects with Disney Channel UK and USA - working with such well known actors as Zac Efron. Samantha has also had extensive experience within Theatre and Pantomime. She has recently played Margot in *And this was Odd* and appeared in a number of productions at the Theatre Severn in Shrewsbury, playing such roles as Wendy in *Peter Pan* and the title Role in *Cinderella*. Off the screen and stage, Samantha enjoys being creative. She is currently studying music at college, plays a variety of instruments and enjoys writing and recording her own music in her spare time.

JORDAN LOUGHRAN



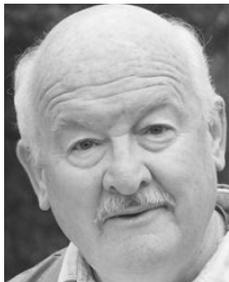
Jordan is a very young and talented actress.

She recently played in *Spur of the Moment* at the Royal Court, but she also appeared in TV productions such as *UGetMe* and *Saving Nellie* and presented *Richmond English 24*.

Jordan's work also includes a radio participation in *The Lamplighter*.

She is currently studying Languages at University.

PETER MAIR



Graduating from RADA in 1964, Peter worked in rep, on TV and with the RSC until 1967. Peter then switched to theatre administration, working *inter alia* for eighteen years as Drama officer for the Arts council of Great Britain, until 1988. Peter returned to professional acting in 1989, since when theatre has included, *The Taming of the shrew* (Cambridge Theatre Co), *Sir Courtly Nice* (Magnificent Theatre Company), *The Sound of Music* (two national tours), *The Applecart* (Ipswich Wolsey), *Statues of Liberty* (Very Fine Productions at New End Theatre), *The school for Scandal* (English Touring Theatre), *All My Sons* (Basingstoke Haymarket), *Othello* (Talawa Theatre Co), *Carousel* (National Tour), *Jack & the Beanstalk* (Salisbury Playhouse), *Krapp's Last Tape* (Bright Blue Productions), *Oliver!* (Aberystwyth Arts Centre), *City of Angels* (English Theatre Frankfurt), *Darling Buds of May - Perfick* (Groundlings Theatre Co), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Antic Disposition), *Tosca* (Royal opera House), *The Beautiful Couple and The Big A* (SWWJ), *Visiting Frank* (Lost Theatre Short Play Festival at New End Theatre), *Tristan and Isolde* (Royal Opera House).

Television has included *London's Burning*, *The Bill*, *Eastenders*, *Brookside*, *The Courtroom*, *Into the Fire*, *Ruth Rendell Mysteries*, *Chucklevision*. Radio has included *Mothers of Invention*, *The Great Smog*, *The Fast Girl*, all Pier Productions for BBC R4.

Films have included *Being Human* (Enigma Films), *Ernest* (John McKenzie Productions), *David* (Lube srl for Turner Television). Peter has appeared in TV commercials for the UK, the USA, Denmark, Ireland, Spain and Switzerland. Peter is an experienced voice over and role player.

MELANIE RAMSAY



Melanie trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Theatre credits include: *Red Black and Ignorant* (Cock Tavern Theatre), *Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen* (Cockpit Theatre), *So Long Life* (Theatre Royal Bath), *Mr Kolpert* (Royal Court), *Martha, Josie and the Chinese Elvis* (Bolton, Octagon), *An Ideal Husband* (Theatre Royal Haymarket), *Saved* (Bolton, Octagon), *Communicating Doors* (Manchester, Library), *As you like it* (Colchester, Mercury), *Northanger Abbey* (Colchester, Mercury), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Royal Exchange), *Time of My Life* (Manchester, Library), *Bare* (Oldham, Coliseum), *A Patriot for Me* (Royal Shakespeare Company).

Film credits include: *On Your Own* (DDFilms), *Stoned* (Wild and Wicked Ltd), *Come Together* (Working Titale TV), *Hamlet* (Fishmonger Films), *Midnight Movie* (Whistling Gypsy Productions), *The Crane* (BFI Films), *Upstairs* (Film Short).

Melanie has also appeared in several BBC TV productions: *Holby City*, *Doctors*, *Casualty*, *House of Eliott*. TV credits also include: *Talk to Me* (Company Prods), *Bad Girls* (Shed Prods), *No Child of Mine* (Meridian), *A Touch of Frost* (YTV), *The Rector's Wife* (Talisman), *The Bill* (Thames).

Commercials include: Oatibix , Chelsea BS, Autoglass, Fox's Biscuits , Aral, Tesco.

IAN TARGETT



Ian trained at RADA. Theatre credits include *Bows and Arrows* (Royal Court), *Why Me* (Strand), *The Kiss of Life* and *A View of Kabul* (Bush Theatre), *Romeo and Juliet* (Lyric, Hammersmith), *Beached* (Warehouse and Old Red Lion), *Eurydice* (Battersea Arts Centre), *Burning Point* (Tricycle), *The Woman In Black* (PW Productions), *Absent Friends* (Watford), *Waiting for Godot* (Oxford Playhouse), *Loot*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, *Absurd Person Singular*, and *Season's Greetings* (Birmingham Rep), *A Small Family Business* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Stars and Strive* (Crucible, Sheffield), *Tartuffe* (Theatr Clwyd), *Time and Time Again*, *See How They Run*, *Donkey's Years*, and *A Touch of the Sun* (Salisbury Playhouse), *Turn of the Screw* a two hander (Coliseum, Oldham) *Candida* (Bolton), *And a Nightingale Sang* (Southampton) *Moving Susan*, *Corpse* and *A Christmas Carol* (Basingstoke). *Just Between Ourselves* (Exeter) *Out of Order*, *One for the Road*, and *Confusions* (Sonning) National tours include *An Inspector Calls*, *The Winslow Boy* and *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

Television credits include Leslie in *Marks* by Alan Bennett, Geoff in *A Taste of Honey*, Spence in *Over the Rainbow*, DS Ball in *Mind Games* by Linda La Plante, Lind in *The Last Detective*, Captain Lyle in *Ghostboat*, Steve Dove in *Midsomer Murders*, *Trust Me*, *Casualty*, *Forever Green*, *Doctors*, *Bad Boys*, *Law and Disorder*, *The Fugitive*, *Bust* and *Grange Hill*.

On film Ian has appeared in *The Fool*, *A Dangerous Man*, *The Lover* and *The Spell*.

His many radio plays and series' include *Henry V*, *Rat in the Skull*, *The Aquarium of Coincidences*, *Monkshood* and *Second Thoughts*.

AARON J DOOTSON, LIGHTING DESIGNER

Aaron graduated from Wimbledon College of Art in 2009 where he studied Lighting Design and Practice qualifying with a distinction. Aaron is a freelancing lighting designer specialising in theatre and based mainly in London. Theatre credits include: *Tipping Point* – Bristol Hamilton House/ New Wimbledon Studio, *Bluebird* – Cockpit Theatre, *This Is How It Goes* – Kings Head Theatre, *Siren* – Etcetera Theatre, *Leo You Nutter* – Wimbledon College of Art, *Tape* – North Outlet Theatre Company Dance credits include: *Mitosis Cloning* – Peacock Theatre, *Radical* – Sadlers Wells Theatre, *Extract* – Sadlers Wells Theatre, *Smash* – Sadlers Wells Theatre, and *Strangers* – Stratford Circus. All for Impact Dance. As an assistant lighting designer: *Never Forget* (Uk Tour 2009 - LD James Whiteside). Current relights: *Private Peaceful* (Uk Tour 2011 – LD Wayne Dowdeswell). His website is aaronjdootson.co.uk.

RACHAEL VAUGHAN, SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

Rachael Vaughan is a Central School of Speech and Drama graduate in Design for Performance 2010. Trained in all aspects of Set, Media and Costume Design, she has enjoyed working with a variety of directors and theatrical companies across London and the Southern U.K. These include James Purefoy, Fanshen Theatre, Grainne Byrne of Scarlett Theatre and Jon Wright of Tressel Theatre company.

Her recent and upcoming credits include, *74 Georgia Avenue* and *Death of a Nightingale* at The New End Theatre, Hampstead. *Fragments 2* at The Riverside Studios, Hammersmith. *Lyric Lounge Artist* in Residence for the Youth Theatre program, Studio One. *The Captive* by Ben Ellis, at The Stage's Top Fringe 100 venue 2010, The Finborough Theatre. *Lesbian BathHouse* at Edinburgh Fringe Festival's Assembly Rooms, George Street and she has a continued association with Equal Measure Production Company.

Rachael, originally from Bristol, also has significant training in Modern Dance, Classical music and Production photography which has enabled her to work at The Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Opera and produce work as an artist in her own right.

*Music in the background – Ladysmith Black Mambazo – “Music knows no Boundaries”.
Tracy is in a wheel chair.*

Act One

PREAMBLE

TRACY Hi, my name is Tracy. My friends call me Katy, Katy. You see I had a dream. I wanted to become an actress. I love the theatre. Kate Winslett, yes Titanic. I dreamt this dream at Brighthouse School. I started there when I was four. It helped to make me who I am. It was my “hero”. What happened to my school is what the play’s about.

We had lots of fun. I bet other schools don’t have wheelchair races. We even had a swimming pool, I call it our duck pond. Most of my pals had health problems, cerebral palsy like Pete, or spina bifida like Jesse, or cystic fibrosis like me. – you need a medical dictionary here. All sorts of things - speech problems, Crohn’s, brittle bones. My friend Tommy Dixon died. He was only thirteen. All the school went into mourning when he died. It was so sad.

Some people didn’t like an all age school, but it worked. Let me tell you about the people I loved. Our school nurse, Babs, she was always kept pretty busy. Our physio, Bunty. She massaged my legs between lessons. It was lovely. Some of my friends got help with speech and language. John Errington. He taught me English. He gave me my love of drama. Took me to the RSC. That’s what gave me my dream of going on the stage. And I love singing. I sang *Annie*. You know “Tomorrow, Tomorrow, I love you Tomorrow.” That’s why I liked our music lessons. We had a wonderful teacher, Emma, Caribbean sunshine. I nearly forgot, our head teacher, Margaret Williamson. In my diary I call her Mummy Margaret. You see we were one great big family. Our motto was “All for One”. She really cared about each one of us. I loved our ethos ... when John explained to me what the word meant.

All sorts of people gave their time to the school, especially our mums and dads. They campaigned to keep the school open.

I was in Wesborough’s Amateur Dramatics. John Errington encouraged me to join. I thought they wouldn’t want me. And I must mention our band, our fantastic steel drum band. I played in it. We seemed to be performing somewhere every other week.

Despite all this, some people wanted to close us down. They thought we should all go to mainstream schools. I wanted to stay at Brighthouse. Our mums and dads asked me to help their campaign to keep the school open. I even went on the telly. I did. Those people thought they were helping us, putting us in mainstream schools. I often used to wonder

whether they really understood what it was like to have serious health problems and not find learning easy on top of that? And did they begin to understand what it's like to be bullied on top of everything else?

Did they? Most kids like us are for ever being bullied in mainstream schools. Did they know? And did they know what it was like for their mums too, when they came back home? I know what it's like. I saw "fluff" my pussy cat after a little boy tossed a bucket of water over her for a bit of fun. Did they know about all the other quite different special needs?

I'll tell you something. Lawyers and politicians just love to give us our rights. Rights. I call them buttercups and daises. And we are those little white dandelion heads, you know, they blow away in the wind.

Scene 1

Head teacher's living room

The room is dimly lit. Margaret Williamson is stretched out on couch, her arm touching the floor. She is semi-comatose. A glass and an empty bottle are beside her. John Errington lets himself in, but leaves the door ajar. He switches on the light. He suddenly sees Margaret. He thinks she is dead. He immediately thinks that Margaret has taken overdose. He thinks that he may have himself have contributed to this by walking out. He may even have been a bit selfish in arguing with her.

JOHN (*Crying and shaking Margaret*) Oh my God, pussy cat, what have you done. (*picks up 'phone*) Ambulance quicklyJohn Errington ... I'm at 12 Oakley Way, Westborough, ... I think it's W13 5 NX...(*dashes back to Margaret*) Sweetie, wake up. Wake up. (*Back to the phone*) Sorry 07524 39102 ... A lady here ... Margaret Williamson ... seems to have taken an overdose ... please come as quickly as you can. I must try and wake her. (*Back to Margaret*) Oh my God, don't go (*back to the 'phone*) Yes ... she's still breathing but I can't wake her. ... Oh No. Oh. I think she's gone. Oh No. Margie without you. Wake up. The School. Our lovely kids. Us. Pussy cat, wake up. Oh God, Please, please not goodbye. Do wake up. A ship without a rudder. That's what we'll Yes. Oh God she left me a note (*Sees last line. Crumples it into his pocket*). Oh.No. Oh God. (*sobbing*) Ah. What about us? Didn't you care about us? Didn't you? (*Ambulance men enter – John leaves his house key on the table*) Oh, you silly little pussy cat.

Scene 2

TRACY Mummy Margaret didn't deserve it. She really didn't. Where do I start? I'd love you to see what some of our lessons were like.

Music room

Spring 2002. The Music Room of Brighthouse School is set out with guitars and other instruments around the wall. There is also a TV, CD/DVD and speakers. Looking through the window, it is summer.

Five pupils are practicing on steel drums for a local gig. Emma Kirk is sitting at an upright piano, shows them calypso rhythm.

EMMA Jean, to end this lesson lead us in with a calypso. You know whenever I hear a calypso I hear the sweet voice of Harry Belafonte singing it on his imaginary island in my homeland, in the Caribbean.

JEAN Isn't this your homeland now?

EMMA This is my homeland too. You can have two passports. You can have two homelands. I am twice blessed. Actually I'm three times blessed. God is also my homeland. I am just so sorry for those poor folk who don't have any at all.

TRACY Do you still think about the country where your family came from?

EMMA Sure I do. And I know what my folk must have felt when they came here.

JEAN What?

EMMA Wow, this country's wet and grey. Jamaica, oh fo' Jamaica, where the sun shines all day... and folk drink rum and sing and dance all night long. That's where our rhythm comes from. Our rum. Come on let's have some rhythm in our music this morning. Imagine you're Trinidadians beating it out on their oil drums.

They start playing "Island in the Sun".

Scene 3

In the head teacher's room. Margaret Williamson has been joined by Ranjit and Judith Singh. Emma Kirk and Tracy knock and enter.

MARGARET Harry'll be fine while we talk. Wendy's wonderful with kids. She'll show her around the place. Emma, so pleased you can join us. Come on in. Tracy, thank you for coming too. This is Mr. & Mrs. Singh. I'm hoping that their son Harry will be joining us next term. Emma and the school band are our best ambassadors. Thought you should meet them.

EMMA You know, music's for our kids like God's gift of leaven is to bread.

MARGARET Mr. Singh knows us. His taxi ferries kids here. EMMA I thought I recognised you.

MARGARET Harry's had real bad luck. You have only to look at his bones and they break.

JUDITH He'd just mended his leg - broke it when a bully tripped his up on the stairs -and now he's broken her arm, slipped on some chewing gum.

RANJIT I'm afraid he's an accident waiting to happen. Kids tease him like mad. Say he's always "plastered."

EMMA He won't get teased here. Not so long as she lets us all autograph his plaster.

JUDITH Will Harry be able to join the band?

EMMA Not if he's got that plaster on. You know our Band won a Cup in the National Schools Band Competition. With a bit of luck he'll be able to join us when we defend our title next year.

MARGARET Tracy, you know more about the school than I do. Tell the Singh's what it's like for you. You were only four when you joined us weren't you?

TRACY Yes I was, and I can still remember feeling very lost when I came. I love it now.

MARGARET We've got a highly skilled team here. They put in the groundwork in the early years. A lot of nurturing goes on then. It bears fruit later on. Look at Tracy's progress, and you'll see what I mean. She is doing really well.

EMMA That's very true. Kids start believin' in themselves. Then it's safe for them to go in the big wide world. That's where Inclusion really matters, isn't it?

MARGARET You see the young kids are helped all along the way, seeing what the older ones can do, being encouraged by them. The older ones say things we can't.

EMMA You see it happening in the playground all the time, or when they help wheel each other around. Very little bullying goes on here.

RANJIT You're dead right. I've seen how they all get on together on the school run.

MARGARET My philosophy is that there's nothing our kids can't do that mainstream kids can. We had some out abseiling just last week. Do you think Harry would like to try?

RANJIT He'd be frightened to.

JUDITH He'd be frightened. I'd be terrified.

MARGARET Don't worry, we won't force our kids to do anything they don't want to do.

EMMA Wasn't it Helen Keller,¹⁷ blind and deaf from a baby, who said "Security is an illusion. Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing at all."

MARGARET True. We don't mollycoddle our kids, Emma, but we won't push our luck either... It's amazing though what some of our kids do. There's little John Turnbull. He controls his wheelchair and his computer with a wand attached to his forehead.

EMMA He is just so bright.

MARGARET His mum was really chuffed to see his progress when she came in yesterday. He's such a happy little boy.

EMMA Such a lovely smile.

MARGARET We've had to give him a lot of time. I must tell you about Tracy's great claim to fame. (*Tracy holds her head in her hands with shame at the memory*) At one of our Presentation evenings - you know we have lots of fun and entertainment as well as prize giving on these great occasions - well, she caught my predecessor full in the face with a custard pie... she was supposed to miss.

TRACY He was supposed to duck. I paid the price the following year. I was asked to be Jack in the Box. I was inside that box for ages. He said he forgot I was there. Do you believe that?

MARGARET Do you believe anything in this world Tracy? That's one of the lessons we teach you. Another is that everyone can achieve something in life with a helping hand. They don't always find it in mainstream schools.

TRACY Jean was locked in a cupboard once in her old school. Some classmates they were. The cleaners let her out.

MARGARET Jean had a hard time. Her pals kept ribbing her, calling her "spacker". Her mum took her away from school. It was so bad. Finally came here. You wouldn't believe it. She wants to be a journalist. She runs the school newspaper, and the local paper has had her in the newsroom. In this school we believe that kids are capable of anything.

RANJIT I can believe that. Do you know about Fred Raffle? He's blind. You know he played cricket with dried peas inside the ball so you could hear it. A suitcase was the wicket.

TRACY Wow

RANJIT Yes, it's true. He was mad keen on cricket. He worked out how he could play the game with his pals at a school for the blind. And my goodness, he now commentates on international cricket. You know, I heard him commentate when India played England. There's guts for you.

MARGARET Fantastic. That's exactly what we find here, and what we encourage. I hope mainstream schools find the time to do the same. The trouble is I don't think they always do, and certainly teaching assistants are not always trained to stretch kids. You need years of training and experience for that. But that's by the way. Tracy, tell the Singh's about our Paralympians.

TRACY Philippa and Gordon Davis competed in the Athens Paralympics. Philippa won a Silver in the wheelchair 800 metres and Gordon won a Gold in the 4 x 400 relay.

MARGARET We had a team of three out there. Gordon Davis did fantastically well.

RANJIT Do they still want to close this School down?

EMMA Look guys, do you still need us?

MARGARET Yes, you two can leave us now. Don't let me keep you, Tracy.

RANJIT I've so enjoyed meeting you, and (*turning to Tracy*) you, too.

(*Emma and Tracy leave the room*)

RANJIT What is going to happen to this school? I don't want Harry to come here if they are going to close it.

JUDITH The LEA said it could happen.

MARGARET They certainly did want to, until our parents persuaded them not to. It was some campaign. They didn't know what hit them.

JUDITH I read all about it in the local papers.

MARGARET Well, they had been warned. They held a meeting at the school and tried to sell mainstream schools to our parents. The parents asked for a vote at the end of the meeting, and all the parents, every single one of them, put up their hands saying that they didn't agree. But, of course, they just went ahead.

RANJIT I thought they were supposed to listen to parents.

MARGARET Well you read what happened in the press. The Minister stopped the closure plan.

RANJIT So how does it stand now?

MARGARET As I said, the Minister threw out the closure plan. You know, if ever they close this school it will break my heart. If they close us down, it will be over my dead body.

Scene 4

Left Stage

TRACY Unfortunately there were people who wanted to do just that. At about the same time we were having our music lesson, four of them were meeting up at the regional office of the Department for Education and Skills. I call them the execution squad. They thought that they were right. A lot of people did, and probably still do.

Regional office, DfES – managing Inclusion

There is a desk and a round table and 4 chairs. On the desk there is a photograph of Rebecca, Judy Fotheringham's daughter. Regional officer Judy Fotheringham is first joined by a civil servant from London, James Harrington, and then by the Director of Education, David Harding, and head of Special Needs, Gerry Thompson from Westborough City Council. After introductions and pleasantries, they discuss the closure of Brighouse School. It has been thwarted by a strong campaign by parents to keep it open. Over 15,000 reasoned objections persuaded the Minister to reject plan to close the school.

JUDY (*on the telephone*) Yes, I did listen to the repeat of "Yes Minister". I do admire Sir Humphrey.

James Harrington knocks and enters

JAMES Are you talking about me?

JUDY (*still on the 'phone*) God has just walked in. I'll ring you back later. Bye (*To James*) Hello, good to see you again.

JAMES Nobody's ever said I had a divine presence before. Mind you they thought my father had when he was a District Commissioner in the Punjab. But people do turn to me for the occasional miracle.

David Harding and Gerry Thompson knock and enter.

DAVID I hope we're not interrupting.

JAMES Come in

DAVID Sorry we're a bit late. Can I introduce Gerry Thompson? He heads up our Inclusion team. You've met already haven't you, Judy?

JUDY Yes, last autumn.

JAMES We haven't had the pleasure. I'm so glad you've come. Do you mind if we get down to business straightaway? Yes?

(They all settle round James).

JAMES Thank you, Judy, for setting up this meeting. The Minister suggested that I see you. He does think that this situation needs to be actively managed. He didn't like having to reject your proposals, David, but he really had no alternative. DAVID I agree. I don't hold it against him.

JAMES And we don't hold it against you. But we certainly don't want other parents copying them. Fifteen and half thousand objections giving reasons why the school should not be closed, and two TV celebrities and a former international footballer.

GERRY We can do without that again.

JAMES Yes, We don't mind petition signatures. There can be millions of them so far as we are concerned. Ultimately we just shred them and recycle the paper. It's a great safety valve for the disgruntled. Objections with reasons - that's another matter. Each one of them is shred resistant.

DAVID You're dead right, but our political masters say that we have to consult.

GERRY They just don't realise how much time it wastes when parents take the offer seriously.

JAMES That's one of the things that the Department is worried about. We just don't want it to catch on. This is the second time it's happened. It's getting to be a habit - one we can do without. We've now taken the Minister out of the firing line here and set up School Organisation Committees¹⁵ to deal with school closures. They can take the flak.

GERRY A really clever move, a gesture to local democracy. Makes it much easier for us to deal with.

JAMES But we still don't want the idea to catch on.

JUDY I did have a word with David about that.

DAVID Yes and I had a word with the Head. She understood.

JAMES Good. That's one of the things the Minister was very worried about. The other, of course, is how you get the show back on the road. We need that. Some people in the disability organisations have been pushing for this for over thirty years.

DAVID I thought Warnock started it in '78.

JAMES No, she put the icing on the cake. What provoked it was bad experiences some people had of special schools, parents as well as kids well before that.

JUDY Real dead end places, out of sight out of mind.

DAVID People like Lord Rix and David Blunkett hated young kids being segregated.

JAMES I've met them both. They'd both had bitter experiences. Did you know? I was at the UNESCO conference at Salamanca in ninety four. Nearly a hundred countries all saying that children with special needs had a right to mainstream education.

GERRY I wish I'd been there.

JAMES Well that certainly galvanised us into action. I've never seen Parliament move so fast, and so decisively. Don't think that the Minister doesn't realise that change can be a bit painful. He knows that in every good parent there is a Luddite¹⁶ trying to get out.

GERRY We've got a few of them at Brighthouse.

JAMES It's your job Gerry to illuminate them, to show them the way to truth and light. You just have to. You see the Treasury has made up its mind that there are savings to be made here if they invest in it. You know the figures. Three per cent of children have special needs but they gobble up eight per cent of the total spend on education. That really isn't equitable.

DAVID Between these four walls I don't think Inclusion is going to be a cheap option.

JAMES Well, leading accountants advised us that we could make some real savings simply by reducing the number of Statements LEAs have to write for children with special needs.

DAVID We'll see.

GERRY And writing Statements is a real headache.

JAMES We'll have to keep some schools for kids with profound difficulties or very complex behavioural problems, but most can go.

JUDY I'm sure you're right.

JAMES And that brings us back to Brighthouse School and its wingeing parents. What are you going to do?

JUDY I thought we could suggest to the Local Council that they bring in a consultant, you know one who would say the right thing, get his recommendations and put them to the School Organisation Committee. Of course, he'd consult first.

JAMES I am not sure that that is the best answer. You have got to win over the parents. They have a bird in their hands, and they like it. We are offering them, as they see it, two in the bush. Where are they going to get their next dinner from? Not from the bush unless we make their bird look a bit less appetising.

DAVID Well what are you actually proposing, James?

JAMES I am not proposing anything.

DAVID Suggesting, then.

JAMES I'm not suggesting anything either. This is a journey of exploration.

DAVID Or a safari where the wild beasts roam.

GERRY And vultures fly overhead ready to scavenge their next meal.

DAVID I've seen them. They're the parents of Brighthouse School.

JAMES Look, it's up to you how you manage this. It'll be unpleasant, but really run the school down. When you finally deliver the message that the School has to close there'll be no great argument.

DAVID I hope you're right. There's a lot of support for the school in Westborough. Have you seen the local press? The Gazette's really anti. They've certainly had a good war.

GERRY I'm sure we can turn that around.

JAMES Exactly. Pharaoh wasn't put off his grand design for the Pyramids by carping criticism in the Alexandria Times.

DAVID One difference. I'm not Pharaoh. The Leader of the Council is, and he's afraid of losing his seat. Look, it'll actually run itself down in time, as we admit fewer kids to it. Some redundancies will be unavoidable and they won't be able to deliver the national curriculum.

GERRY The bird's already beginning to look a bit sick. Their roll came down last year by nine pupils.

JAMES The key is to get the Head teacher on side. You really must try to do that.

GERRY To get the egg to accept the frying pan. You're right there.

DAVID Easier said than done. I know Margaret Williamson. You don't.

JAMES She must know that virtue has its own reward, but there'll be nothing for her if she's awkward. She will need another school when the School is closed. You do write her references, after all.

DAVID Yes, we do. But that's a trade secret. Governors might do it more knowledgeably, maybe more honestly. We do it more... er purposefully. Okay. I guess you're both right. I'll go along with it.

JAMES Look, I don't want to be involved in the fine details of all this. But do keep me informed and we'll watch your backs for you. OFSTED won't cause you any trouble.

JUDY Can we all meet again to progress this?

JAMES I don't think we need a minute of this meeting.

DAVID Could you drop me a note just confirming that it has taken place? It will help with the Leader, too. He's not a happy Pharaoh at the moment.

JAMES I'll send you something suitable, a comfort letter if that is what you'd like. It won't be very explicit. Don't worry about the ten plagues. They don't apply to us. Purges very, very occasionally. Plagues, never.

DAVID That's okay.

JAMES You are a cautious bastard.

DAVID Bastard today, war wounded tomorrow unless I am careful.

JAMES Oh, by the way, the Treasury has agreed to cough up some more grant aid for those authorities able to progress Inclusion.

DAVID I had already heard that.

JAMES We do everything we can to help. I must be off. There's a train at noon. Can you get me to the Station?

JUDY Ask Susan next door. She'll book a taxi for you.

JAMES Will do. A very good use of time today. Thanks again for everything ... and good luck.

(James Harrington leaves the room)

DAVID *(with a smile)* You know, James Harrington is a total wanker. I bet he'll get home tonight to game pie washed down with a fine bottle of vintage wine.

JUDY He deserves it.

GERRY Well, for me it'll be pork pie washed down with Chateau plonk. That'll do me just nicely.

DAVID Tell me; is that a photo of your daughter?

JUDY Yes, Rebecca. I'm putting her through university.

DAVID What's she studying?

JUDY Bio-engineering. A chip off the other old block. Her father was a lecturer in chemistry. He passed away, last year. Prostate cancer. Took him early. He didn't have a PSA test until too late.

DAVID I'm sorry. I didn't know. It must have been difficult.

JUDY It was, but the job helped, and it's so much more important to me now. Of course I've got Rebecca. She's been wonderful, but she's left the nest.

DAVID Bio engineering must be better than social engineering.

JUDY A bit more ambitious. Helping the Planet and all that.

GERRY Good on her.

JUDY Anyway, we've still got to deal with our little patch of it.

DAVID You're right. We've got a little engineering of our own to do, haven't we? I don't think that there's anything more to discuss at this time.

JUDY No, it's over to you now.

DAVID Gerry?

GERRY No, I think that's everything.

(David Harding and Gerry Thompson leave to go.)

JUDY And let's keep it that way. Keep in touch. By the way, there's a speed trap on North Road just past the Golden Lion. You need to watch for it.

DAVID Thanks for that. I do try to be a law-abiding citizen. Bye

GERRY Bye.

(Exit David and Gerry)

Scene 5

Left Stage

TRACY Let's get back to Brighthouse School, shall we? You'll remember that Mummy Margaret said she liked to stretch us. She said that some of us even went abseiling. Well, I was one of them. I was so scared at the time. I had butterflies in my tummy the size of pomegranates. Jean told me to sing on the way down. Tomorrow, Tomorrow, Tomorrow. And all my pals cried out Katy, Katy, Katy. Well, I'll tell you something. Next summer I'm going paragliding in Wales. Anyway, they stretched us, but we stretched them. I haven't mentioned our carer Wendy. We called her Poo Bah. You see she took some of us to the loo. We were sometimes closer to her than to our teachers. So, come into the staff room and meet her and some of the others.

Staff Room – a mood of unease

There are comfortable chairs around the room. A coffee machine is in one corner. It is shortly after 4pm. John Errington, Emma Kirk and Wendy Robinson are relaxing.

Margaret storms in.

MARGARET God, that Terry James is impossible. How can you teach a class with him in it?

EMMA What's he been up to now?

MARGARET I asked him to describe an earthquake. Do you know what he said? "When my dad came home drunk." I then made a big mistake. I asked him what a volcano was then. And he said "My Mam, when my dad came home drunk".

WENDY It's not a joke. Have you seen his dad? He must be all of 20 stone.

MARGARET Mostly beer

WENDY If there's an earthquake in that family it'll be all of seven on the Richter scale. He's great when he is sober. Life and soul of the party. When he's had too many, he is the party.

MARGARET And you've seen his mum. When she blows her top, talk of molten lava. But he's still a terrible handful in class.

WENDY Isn't he just a naughty kid? I know more about him than you do. When you toilet kids they talk to you, and Terry talks to me more than he talks to you. I mean really talks. You know his home must be bedlam. I don't think his mother can cope.

MARGARET Neither can I. He's a bundle of mischief whatever the cause.

EMMA Same in my book, I'm afraid.. I've got everyone singing DO RE ME and he goes ME RE DO.

MARGARET And he shouts. And never sits still for a moment.

WENDY Well, I do have to toilet him more than any other kid in the school. I don't know where he gets it all from.

MARGARET He's probably a secret beer drinker - he'll take after his father mark my words - beer's a diuretic you know. Anyway I had a word with nurse about him. She thinks he's a candidate for Ritalin.¹⁴

EMMA There's far too many kids on that these days. It's getting like chewing gum.

MARGARET Sorry to interrupt you. We're supposed to be having a staff meeting tomorrow. I thought we could make it a little training session instead. Yes?

(Everyone nods in agreement.)

MARGARET Okay. Can we focus on getting our kids going, really going? We know they have a lot of anger, a lot of aggression. And not just kids. What do we do with it? Do we harness it, or do we suppress it? Would that be a good topic?

EMMA Yes, it would. Can I give you a story to tell them? It will make a good starting point. It comes from a book I've been reading. The story comes out of Africa. "Every morning a gazelle wakes up. It knows that it must run faster than the fastest lion, or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows that it must run faster than the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle. When the sun comes up, you better start runnin'."

MARGARET I'm afraid Emma, that begs the question - just where do you run to? EMMA Margaret, talk sport. Kids follow that. Where do those William sisters run?

MARGARET To the winning post.

EMMA I agree boss. If you're afraid of failure you'll win nothing in life. You've got to zap those gremlins. You know what I think. There's just too many people out there that aspire to be mediocre. That's no way to be.

MARGARET Got no horizon? I'd put it another way. For our kids all their mountains are just a little bit higher, and someone has to keep reminding them about the view from the top.

Scene 6

TRACY Let's go back to our music lesson. Emma, Caribbean sunshine, was a wonderful teacher. She'd have been a great gospel singer in the Caribbean.

Music Room - a music lesson

Autumn 2002. Looking through the window it is now autumn.

Emma Kirk is sitting in front of Terry, Jean, Philippa and Tracy. Lesson illustrated by CD and DVD recordings

EMMA Our last lesson was all about mood and atmosphere created by music or captured in music. Can you remember any of it?

TERRY I remember *Mars God of War* from the *Planets*.

PHILIPPA Trust you to remember that one. I remember *Sinfonia Antarctica*.

It gave me the shivers.

EMMA Who was it by?

PHILIPPA Vaughan Williams.

EMMA Good, both of you. I'm really going to open up your ear drums this fine morning. The music I am going to play for you to today will reach parts of you that that well known beer won't reach.

TERRY Worth a try Miss. Give me one any day. PHILIPPA Oh shut up, Terry

EMMA I'm talking about the thing that separates the human race from the animal kingdom, music

TERRY Birds sing, don't they?

EMMA They're the exception that proves the rule. Wouldn't the world be awful if they didn't?

PHILIPPA Awful.

EMMA Anyway I'm talking today about the spiritual side of music. The spirit of God is in this music, or it's the human spirit. Call it either. In my book they are the same thing. It's the music of joy and the music of sadness. Discord as well as harmony. Carries the beat of life itself. We are going to start with harmony.

You see the great thing about music is that it has no boundaries. It is universal. Listen to **Music has no boundaries** sung by **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**.

(The music plays in the background during the rest of this scene.)

Those guys won two Grammys, and performed at two Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies.

That piece of music comes out of South Africa, but If you want to find your God, if there is a God, listen to good music from anywhere in the big wide world.

(Music ends)

Scene 7

Office of the Director of Education

There is a desk and chair in one corner, and also a round table with 4 chairs. David Harding is joined first by SEN Officer, Gerry Thompson.

MARGARET Not too late I hope?

DAVID Not at all. Take a seat. Can I come straight to the point of our meeting?

MARGARET Sure.

DAVID It's a bit – how should I put it? - delicate. Can I rely on your discretion?

MARGARET I suppose - how delicate?

DAVID Well, really very delicate.

MARGARET Oh dear. You had better break it to me then.

DAVID You know we need to close your school.

MARGARET I was hoping that the parents might have persuaded you to change your mind.

DAVID Their campaign wasn't a waste of time. It forced us to address the closure much more seriously. We do realise that we have got to work very hard to make sure that your kids don't lose out.

GERRY We can't afford to have a hundred angry parents on our back.

DAVID You think that more than half of your roll could do really well in mainstream schools?

MARGARET Yes, if you prepared properly for them... trained the staff to take them... put an end to bullying ... and give them the attention and the time they need.

DAVID We are going to do all of that, aren't we Gerry?

GERRY Yes, that's in hand. We're getting some great success stories.

MARGARET Yes, you parade them like Lotto winners.

GERRY That's unfair.

MARGARET But it's true. Are you stopping bullying? Have you read how much there is of it today? Nearly every kid with special needs is bullied in mainstream schools at one time or another? It's always the most vulnerable on the receiving end of it.

GERRY It is in hand.

MARGARET Do you realise that every time you fail, bullying may blight the entire life of one of our youngsters. Do you realise that?

GERRY It's in hand, Margaret.

MARGARET Gerry, get real, For our kids it's not just a learning experience that they all have to go through, you know. It can be a life sentence. And when you know the number of attempted suicides in youngsters every year, it can be a short life too. GERRY We are tackling it, Margaret. We know we have to.

DAVID We certainly do, for the kids' sake, and to persuade parents to go along with us. We have to have parents on our side, not on our backs. Believe me.

GERRY That's what we are talking about today. We have a sort of plan.

DAVID I'll come straight to the point. We want you to sell the closure of the School to parents and staff.

MARGARET Last time you asked me to back you up. Now you're asking me to do the whole job for you. The answer is no, definitely no. Why won't you take no for an answer?

DAVID Things have moved on since last time.

MARGARET What things?

GERRY We're better prepared. We've listened to your parents.

MARGARET Come on Gerry, you've written a few more concept papers. GERRY That's not fair. Training for special needs has started in mainstream schools. And with teaching assistants we are giving one to one help to a lot of kids.

MARGARET One to point one, more like. Who's training who, Gerry?

GERRY Physio's are training teaching assistants and some mums too.

MARGARET Wonderful, and they'll have no time for their clients. It won't be hands on for them, it will be hands off. You can't mass produce professional skills, you know. Or do you think you can? Do you think you're a miracle man? Stop fooling yourself, Gerry.

GERRY Please don't be so negative. Head teachers say they are prepared.

MARGARET Negative, negative, they say what you want them to say. Look, I gave a lot of thought to this last year. I don't want to take sides in this. It's not my job. It's yours, not mine. It's yours. I'm just not prepared to do it for you. I can't betray my own school like that, not after the parents' campaign to keep it open. I can't and you shouldn't be asking me to.

DAVID Margaret, we are asking you to face the reality of the situation, and get parents to do the same.

GERRY How many did your roll drop by last year? MARGARET Nine.

GERRY I hear its going to drop by another fourteen this year. MARGARET It certainly will if you keep kids from being admitted.

GERRY We don't stop them. We help them go to mainstream schools. And it will get worse for you. With fewer pupils and our new banding scheme you are going to have to face some big budget cuts. There'll have to be redundancies. Or you'll simply lose staff as they look around for greater job security and advancement. And you won't be able to replace them. I don't know whether you've heard but your Music Teacher, Emma Kirk's her name, yes?

MARGARET Yes

DAVID She'll shortly be leaving you, a regional appointment. It's a big step up for her.

MARGARET Something tells me you're way ahead of me here.

DAVID If we are, you'll soon catch up.

MARGARET The school is to wither on the vine?

GERRY Your words not ours. But it's got to happen anyway. You must see that.

MARGARET I do, all too clearly.

DAVID Will you help us? if you do, you'll end up with a much better chance of a headship elsewhere. There's one coming up in the next couple of years in Grovewood Comprehensive School. And there may be a job for your English teacher too. We do have a little influence in these things, you know.

MARGARET I really don't know whether I'm hearing you right. Are you seriously saying that you want me to betray my kids?

DAVID Not betray them. Look to their best long term interests.

GERRY We don't want another public confrontation between the school and the LEA. That's no good for anyone, is it? And it can't be good for you or your colleagues. It just sours everything when we are trying to pull together and get things right for your kids.

DAVID Sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind.

MARGARET You admit that you're being cruel.

DAVID But I am trying to be kind. That's the way that things get done.

MARGARET And people get done, David.

GERRY Margaret, just look two years ahead. Fewer kids. Less money. Fewer staff. Do you think you personally, never mind the school, can face an OFSTED inspection.

MARGARET Give me the weekend to think it over. Please.

DAVID No. (*emphatically*) No, I'm not going to do that. For your sake. You'll only prolong the agony of making the decision you know you have to make. I'm sure we've said nothing you haven't already thought about, thought about a lot.

MARGARET (*under her breath*) Damn your eyes.

GERRY Don't you see it. We don't just want your voice. We want your expertise too. You know the way its going. I've got a little working party to progress it. Join us. There couldn't be a better way to help your kids than that.

MARGARET Come on Gerry, if you really wanted me you'd have asked me before now. You only really like people on your committees who agree with you.

DAVID Please, Margaret.

MARGARET I register a protest on behalf of the Governors and the parents. DAVID That will be for them, Margaret. But you'll go along with us?

MARGARET I will not give you the satisfaction of thinking you've persuaded me. I will not... (*pause*) But, I'll go along with you. Okay.

Scene 8

TRACY I suppose that's the real world. When you're at school it isn't there.

In the music room

TERRY Do you really believe in God, Miss?

EMMA Well if she does exist, she wears many different costumes.

PHILIPPA I thought God was a "him".

TRACY "Hymns is what you sing to God."

PHILIPPA A "He" then.

EMMA God is whatever you want God to be: He, She or It.

TERRY My dad doesn't believe that God exists.

HARRY My dad does. Speak for yourself Terry.

EMMA She doesn't if you don't believe in her. She does if you do. My folk believed in God and saw God as the Father. For me though, God is a mother. After all, mothers know all about the pain of creation, don't they? The Bible's a great book. But there's far too many men in it. Anyway I'm not sure that 'believe' is the right word. I know she's there. The spirit of God is in every living thing. You just have to listen out for her. But you can turn your back on her too. It's your choice.

TERRY I've chosen. (*He gives the thumbs down sign*)

EMMA When you listen to more music you may change your mind. I believe that the hand of God has actually touched the great composers and musicians, and made them great, and for certain not the hand of Charlie Darwin. I heard that great opera singer Placido Domingo say he believed his voice came from God. Music comes up from the earth itself - just listen to this – monks singing in Tibet (**Giving and taking by Tibetan monks of Garden Shartse & Corciolli.**) And it can come up from the sands of the desert. (**Sufi music.**)

(The music continues softly for a while as the lesson continues)

Those voices come right out of God's good earth, don't they? They remind us that we don't just take from the earth, we have to give back to it.

Ha I've heard that music at home. I've chosen Miss.

EMMA Sure you have. That music comes from deep down in the earth, but it reaches right up to those angels in Heaven –Can you tell me a piece of heavenly music?

TERRY 'Ave... a Bloody Mary

EMMA Now I'll have no blaspheming in my class. Say "Ave Maria" Terry.

TERRY Ave Maria Terry.

EMMA That's a little better. Another one?

PHILIPPA I heard "Agnus Dei" on Classic FM. I think by Faure. It was so lovely.

EMMA Very good. That's part of the Faure Requiem. You see, you guys, there's the joy of the human spirit and there's tragedy. You know the Holocaust, where millions of Jews, gypsies, and kids just like you were murdered because they didn't belong to the master race. Listen to (**John William's) Schindler's List.**

(The music continues softly until "I'm beginning to...)

TRACY That's really sad.

PHILIPPA I don't think it's spiritual though.

TERRY And where was God Miss when all that murdering was going on? If he was a good God he would have put a stop to it.

EMMA The Bible gives answer, Terry. Folk remember Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They forget the serpent. God couldn't stop Adam and Eve listenin' to that serpent and then eatin' the forbidden apple. You see God had given them the choice of eatin' or not eatin'.

TERRY Why didn't he put a worm in it then?

EMMA Oh Terry. It wasn't God who had the choice. It was man. But God was there. Yes, right there in those terrible concentration camps, keeping the hope alive of the tiny few who survived. That sure wasn't easy, keeping hope alive in that hell-hole amongst the huge piles of bones and carcasses and the stench of it all.

TERRY Bloody funny God.

EMMA Terry, listen, God was with the Quakers when they rescued thousands of Jewish children from Hitler's Germany before the war, and saved them from the gas chambers. I

read about one Jewish boy. His family was gassed. He survived and he became a cantor in a synagogue in Glasgow. He kept his faith alive in Auschwitz, making a candle with the oil of an empty sardine tin. That's the power of faith. God was there Terry, He was with that man as I am here. And that's why God feels our sadness now. When I listen to that music I feel that sadness. Don't you feel it, Philippa?

PHILIPPA I'm beginning to.

EMMA Close your eyes. Terry, close your eyes. You too, Come on you heathen. Imagine you're on my island in the Caribbean. Think of the ebb and flow of the tides lappin' the shore, the rippling streams that flow into the turbulent oceans. Harry imagine the world your dad comes from, the rocks and boulders that shape its mountains, all of nature – its unbelievable beauty, its incredible power, just its infinite variety –nature's awesome wonders.

PHILIPPA I love David Attenborough's programmes on the telly.

EMMA Yes, Philippa, these are for ever God's gifts to you and to me, to all mankind. Without distinction between believer and unbeliever, between rich and poor. And you guys, they are for ever, for ever. (*Very softly then absolute silence*)

TERRY (*Drops drum stick*) Sorry. Miss.

EMMA Never mind. God's just left the room!

TRACY I am not sure that God ever came back. (*Pause*) Come back in fifteen minutes. I'll tell you the rest of the story.

Act two

Scene 1

Head teacher's living room

There is a small couch and two easy chairs, CD player and a bookcase. A bottle of wine is on the table with a glass. Margaret Williamson is on her own to begin with. She is joined by John Errington who lets himself in.

MARGARET Help yourself to a glass of wine. JOHN Yes, I will

MARGARET It's been a hell of a bad week, one of my worst downers for a long time. Tommy Dixon.

JOHN Only thirteen, a great kid.

MARGARET Then Jean Rutherford's mum wanted more speech and language therapy for her child, but just not available.

JOHN You can't produce it out of the hat, can you?

MARGARET Exactly. I wish I could. I lost my cool, and she lost hers. She said she'd report me to the Governors. I can really do without that. Then another parent, Terry

James's father, said he wanted to report Emma to the Governors, and we can all do without that too.

JOHN Emma? I thought everyone loved our music teacher?

MARGARET Not this time. She's been propagating her Pentecostal ideas in her music lessons. That's what Mr. James alleges. He says he's an atheist and he objects. Then for good measure he said that if he was a Christian he'd also object. Emma believes God is a woman and he said that's heresy.

JOHN Poor Emma. She can't win either way. Did you discuss it with her? MARGARET Yes, of course I did. She insisted that she was not propagating her faith, she was just describing it, and was entitled to her opinions. She said the Singhs were very interested in her religion and dad's a Sikh. I think they both follow the Sikh faith. Well I had to tell her she lived in an age of political correctness, and she had to keep her opinions to herself.

JOHN I'll bet Emma didn't go along with that.

MARGARET She did not, and it got quite heated. We're supposed to be educating these kids, she shouted. They have to learn how to agree and how to disagree. How can I teach them if you gag me? And she went out slamming the door. Then the 'phone rang. I had a really distraught mum complaining about the LEA. She's wanted her son admitted to this school for ages. The LEA will admit him to almost any other one.

JOHN Another one?

MARGARET Yes. You wouldn't believe what her son's been doing - smearing his crap all over the walls of the house.

JOHN Poor woman.

MARGARET Sheer frustration if you ask me. I am sure we could do something for that boy. And mum is having to deal with this all on her own.

JOHN Well that's the sort of thing that happens when the LEA decides to starve a school of pupils.

MARGARET It is. The real problem is the LEA. And they actually want me to work with them to close the school... to try and prove to the parents that the school just isn't viable.

JOHN Oh, not again. Don't they understand basic economics. The more kids in this school the less each one costs?

MARGARET They do not. I wouldn't trust them with my household budget. I'd be in the knackers' yard in a week. It's just that in their simple little minds they think that all our kids would be better off in mainstream schools.

JOHN Oh dear. That's terrible. Some yes, maybe, not all, not all.

MARGARET I don't like letting the school down, but you can't fight them, can you? They are bound to win in the end whatever our parents say.

JOHN What do they want you to do?

MARGARET Just argue their case for them, the case for Inclusion. They think it will be more persuasive if I say it than if they do.

JOHN They're certainly not wrong about that.

MARGARET And they're going to make it easier for me. Easier! We are going to run short of money with falling rolls and budget cuts. There'll have to be redundancies. Everything I've worked for. My God. And I've got to applaud it. You know they even suggested I took down our Merit Board. They said you can't live in the past. Give me a hug.

(They snuggle up together on the couch)

MARGARET I think I know the answer.

JOHN What?

MARGARET I'll resign.

JOHN That's a silly thing to do.

MARGARET No, it's not. It's the only thing to do.

JOHN Just put that idea right out of your head.

MARGARET Don't you understand. I'm pig sick of this job. And I'm pig sick of the world we're living in. Every damn thing is a cynical charade, and I'm now given a lead role.

JOHN If everyone who didn't like their job resigned, there'd be a hell of a lot of vacancies.

MARGARET Don't you understand, I just can't do it any longer. I can't look my kids in the face. I can't look my staff in the face, or the governors. And, what's more, I can't look myself in the face either.

JOHN You must.

MARGARET I can't.

JOHN What about us?

MARGARET What about us? It won't make any difference if I'm not here. JOHN Of course it will make a difference. But anyway it's a waste. You're a wonderful teacher and a wonderful head. You can't give all that up.

What about your pension? What are you going to live on? What will you do with yourself?

MARGARET I'll find something. I won't be the first teacher to throw in the towel. Now will I?

JOHN Look, whoever takes your place will do what you've said you'd do, and probably without any conscience at all. What on earth are you going to gain?

MARGARET My conscience. My sanity!

JOHN Oh, come on. That's self indulgence.

MARGARET Self Indulgence. Self indulgence. Oh my god. How can you say that to me? You of all people. What a horrid thing to say. I don't think you understand me at all. I want out. I want out altogether. Out, out, out.

JOHN You're just trying to make a martyr of yourself.

MARGARET If that's the best thing you can say you'd better go.

JOHN Oh, be sensible.

MARGARET Go... Please go. Just get out of my life.

JOHN I just hope and pray you'll come to your senses. In a year's time all this will be a bad dream.

MARGARET Just leave me alone. Leave me alone. Get out of my life.

(John exits with her head down)

Scene 2

TRACY The next evening Mummy Margaret tried to kill herself. I'll never forget the next day... not ever. The School was in mourning. I've never seen everyone look so sad. It was awful. Awful. It must have been terrible for her. We still didn't know for sure whether our head teacher was OK or not. There was a rumour that it had something to do with closing our school. Emma gave us all a hug. She said she was praying every minute of the day for our head teacher. Terry went home. He was sick all over the place. Wendy had to clear up the mess. And me? I was all weepy, and I didn't feel like learning anything at all that day That day someone trod on my dreams.

In the Director's office

David Harding picks up the telephone.

DAVID Morning, Don. How are you?... Any spare time on your hands? We need your help?... Good... I am pleased to say she is. They've brought her round.... It's a bit complicated. I'll try to explain. You know we've been trying to close Brighouse for some time... Yes, more than a little, and the governors too... You know us too well. ... Take over the school for six months, maybe a year.....We want you to sell the closure to the governors and the parents. You may find the Governors a bit difficult... Yes, they must know their place... weren't you a canny spin bowler too if I remember it, take seven wickets for thirty once? ... No-one said it wasn't cricket (*Gentle laughter*) ... many thanks. Gerry Thompson will be in touch with you to take it forward. Bye. And, just watch that bicycle of yours. We certainly can't afford another of our head teachers risking life and limb. Okay mate.

(David puts down the phone and immediately picks it up again.)

DAVID James. Glad I've caught you. I thought you should know. The head of Brighouse has tried to kill herself ... No, mercifully not ... silly old what?... I am not sure who is the silly old thing ... No, I haven't lost control Yes, I am upset ... and so should you be. It could have been a disaster. ... I agree it isn't... It's actually opportunistic. We are putting one of our own people into the school to head it up, Don Smithson. Yes, I am sure the governors will go along with it. No I won't lose any sleep. ... Just thought you should know. Bye. (*Puts phone down*) And so he damn well should.

Scene 3

TRACY Well, Mr. Smithson took over as head, we were told until Mummy Margaret was well enough to come back. I called him Daddy-long-legs in my diary. It was amazing how quickly our lessons got back to normal.

Music Room - a music lesson continued – Spring 2003

TERRY But God's gifts kill.

EMMA They also heal. You can't have a world just made out of sugar candy. TERRY It's more like my mam's suet pudding.

PHILIPPA Do you pray to God?

EMMA Do I pray to her? Well I know that lots of folk don't, and they can tell me I am a nutter, but I talk to Her every day.

TERRY My Dad thinks that people who hear voices are bonkers. EMMA He thinks what he thinks. I think what I know.

TRACY My Nana used to say that God was as near to her as a new born babe and as far away as the furthest star?

EMMA I like your Nana. She was a wise one, that lady. She knew, like I do. PHILIPPA Do you pray for this school?

EMMA Sure I do. Every single day I pray for this school, and I pray for you. TERRY My mam said you're leaving us.

TRACY No!

EMMA Gossip. I'll have no gossiping in my class. Some people have nothing better to do than wag their tongues. Today I'm going to play you some spiritual music from my part of the world by my childhood hero, Paul Robeson. People used to call it a slave song. **Deep River** Now I'm goin' to tell you a little story about Paul Robeson. I remember my Daddy recounting how he heard the great Black American singer in Peekskill, a little town in New York State, at a big open air concert. You know, not everyone likes being told that they are all God's children. There's always some that don't. And on that day those folk came out in force with their clubs, their rocks and their stones, and they rained them down on those peaceful concert goers. On little children too, as they made their way home.

TRACY No. Why did they do a terrible thing like that?

EMMA Well, some people just don't believe in a universal creator. They believe in their own tribal God. That's always making for trouble and suffering. Anyway, that's all half a century ago. I'm sure times have changed in Westchester County. But what Paul Robeson said about folk music fifty years ago is just as true today. Let's get back to it. You see, one of the earliest gifts God gave to mankind was music.

TERRY Was it a Christmas present Miss?

EMMA Oh for heaven's sake, Terry, it was a gift to Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and to non-believer from that day to this - no-one any different. It was a gift then and it's a gift today, to every new born child.

Now let's round this lesson off with one more piece of fine spiritual music to help you understand all this a bit better. The voices you'll hear carry the spirit of God in them or, if you want, simply the human spirit. Take your pick. Either way enjoy, enjoy. Just listen to this: **Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah.**

(Hallelujah Chorus until the end of the scene)

TRACY Wow

PHILIPPA I really don't know whether I believe or I don't... but I know that I'd really like to.

EMMA You guys will never be alone in life when you have found music. And one other thing. If you listen to spiritual music, really listen, you won't worship a tribal God, you'll worship God, the creator of everythin' and everyone. A God that will heal the wounds of mankind.

TERRY That would be a fuckin' miracle.

EMMA Terry, don't use that word in my classroom. Don't use it ever again.... But, for once, I am agreein' with you. People shouldn't just pray together when they mourn their dead in war.

Scene 4

TRACY I'm afraid the good times didn't last. There turned out to be truth in the rumour that our music teacher was going to leave us. And worse. There mightn't be a full time music teacher taking her place. And there was another rumour. The LEA still wanted to close us down. I've still got the letter I wrote to the Prime Minister. I thought I could make it a special wheelchair delivery to Downing Street, but I just posted it. Jean said she'd make a news story out of it in the Gazette. It got a little write up there.

"Dear Prime Minister

I am writing to invite you to visit my school. I am writing to you personally because you should know what pupils like me think about where we should be taught. I know that some love the big challenge of a mainstream school. We think we will be much better off here, learning more and enjoying our school days as well. You should see for yourself just how much we will lose if this school is closed. My parents told me this could still happen, even though all our parents said that they wanted it kept open. My childhood was a happy one, but difficult at the same time. When you are in a wheel chair and all your friends have been walking, straight away it clicks you're different. I first went to a primary school, but I was called "old wheelie bin" there, and that was not very pleasant. Some friends of mine were called "spackers."

Then I came here to Brighthouse. They gave me real enthusiasm for living. Brighthouse does not take or give the easy option. It pushes everyone to the full and then pushes some more. They pushed me academically and physically, even though I am in a wheel chair. My pals have competed in Great North Runs, and in the Athens Paralympics. One won a Silver medal there, and another a Gold. And I am planning to get my GCSE's and word processing qualifications. I also play in the Tin Pan Ally Steel Drum Band. We have gigs every week and give a lot of pleasure to a lot of people and especially to ourselves. Children like me don't want to be social experiments. We have got one chance and the staff here know how to make it a real one. If you could just spare the time to come down to our school, and look into the eyes of the children and ask them where they want to be, I personally guarantee you won't want us to go anywhere else. I may not be a voter today. But I soon will be.

Yours sincerely,

Tracy Jones

Scene 5

TRACY I got a long letter back, not from the Prime Minister. We wouldn't lose out. Our parents would be fully consulted. De da, de da, de da.. You know, in Downing Street, that's the one thing the faceless ones are very good at....writing letters. The terrible cloud over the school began to lift a little. Mummy Margaret had come round. It didn't lift altogether though, not for anyone. For a start Mummy Margaret had to learn to live with herself.

One month later

In Margaret Williamson's living room, Margaret is listening to Lizst's "Consolations". She has asked Eileen Winterton, chair of Governors, to call in to see her. The door bell rings and Margaret answers it.

MARGARET Do come on in. I am so pleased you could come.
(Margaret switches off music as Eileen walks into the room.)

MARGARET Do tell me. How are things at the school?

EILEEN We're managing fine. Your stand in, Don Smithson.

MARGARET He's a good egg.

EILEEN Yes, the LEA really helped us, suggesting we called him in. He's getting the show back on the road. The kids like him a lot.

MARGARET I am sure the staff do too. He's not a stranger to them.

EILEEN Meanwhile how are you?

MARGARET A bit better than I have been, and a little worse than I could be.

EILEEN I was hoping you would say you're much better.

MARGARET Well I certainly could be.

EILEEN You gave us all a terrible shock.

We lost Frank Jones you know.

MARGARET I'd heard that.

EILEEN He was as upset as anyone. Keeping an eye on finance for us. He's a big loss. Your er, it was the straw that broke the camel's back. He resigned at our last Governors' meeting. Said it was pressure of business.

MARGARET Oh.

EILEEN I think he felt that the LEA was at the bottom of it all. He's a quiet chap. But he exploded at the meeting. You know Gerry Thompson was there introducing Don Smithson. He said the LEA was stopping kids coming to Brighthouse even though parents wanted them there.

MARGARET True.

EILEEN Well, salami tactics, he called it. Then, looking straight at Gerry he said he was a Rotarian committed to high ethical standards in business and the professions and the Local Education Authority needed a lesson or two. Then he left us.

MARGARET Did Gerry say anything?

EILEEN Nothing he could say. I just had the feeling that he felt he had one less person to worry about.

MARGARET Well, I am very sorry my little troubles led to all that. Anyway, I thought I owed you an explanation. That's why I invited you round.

EILEEN Yes, I feel I should know, if you do want to talk about it. But I did quiz John a couple of weeks ago.

MARGARET Oh. It's still better to get it first hand if you can. Always a bit more reliable that way.

EILEEN Do you really want it that way? I didn't want to bother you with a whole lot of questions.

MARGARET I need it that way.

Door bell rings and Margaret opens it.

JOHN I'm sorry if I'm interrupting you. I wanted to borrow one of your books. Actually to lend to Tracy. Nesbit's "Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare."

MARGARET If you're going to lend someone a book, it's a very good idea to lend someone else's. Do help yourself. *(John goes across to bookshelf and removes book.)*

EILEEN I don't mind if John stays, if he'd like to.

MARGARET Would you like to? I was just explaining to Eileen why I did what I did.

JOHN No, no, I'll leave you to it.

MARGARET Do stay.

JOHN Okay. If you'd like me to.

MARGARET I've had to ask myself quite a few questions. You know the most awful moment? It wasn't taking the overdose. You sort of reconcile yourself to that. The most awful moment is when you wake up and a nurse is offering you a cup of tea. The

nightmare returns, you see. You have to face up to everything all over again, and added to that, there's what you have tried to do and failed. That's when you really hit the bottom... and weep.

JOHN Did you find some help?

MARGARET Yes I did. There was a most wonderful young Indian doctor. A psychiatrist. I was so grateful to him. He listened, which was the most important thing to me at the time. He just listened while I talked, and I needed to. It helped.

EILEEN I am so glad.

MARGARET Then he started talking. He introduced me to Ayurveda.

JOHN I've never heard of it.

MARGARET It's a 5000-year-old science from India. They believe that everyone has three doshas, sort of undercurrents to your being. The essence is to find a balance. The way to cope with life, and the nasties it sometimes throws at you, is to find your true self, accept it, be comfortable with it, yes with all of its imperfections, despite them. And the really difficult bit, you have to forgive them, one by one. I could only find peace within myself if I could do this.

JOHN I thought you suddenly realised you'd be lost without the kids, totally lost, you know unable to help them, that whatever you did you were losing all that.

EILEEN And a bit depressed too about what's going on in schools today. Life just not worth living.

MARGARET Maybe there's a grain of truth in that. People prattle on about equality of opportunity, but what our kids need is just opportunity, and a helping hand from us to find it.

JOHN Some compassion too.

MARGARET Yes, sure. Kids are all equally important, but they are all different. They need different opportunities. Anyway, it wasn't just all of that that got to me. There is a stronger more destructive emotion than despair, you know. Hate. Hate...

JOHN Oh! (*in surprise*)

MARGARET Yes, don't you see? I hated the world and what it was doing to these kids. I hated its (*searching for a word*) mediocrity. I hated myself for betraying them. I hated my imperfections. For a moment, I even hated you John. It's that hatred I have to cleanse out of my system. Better than taking Prozac and all those other pills.

EILEEN I am beginning to see the importance of this afternoon to you.

MARGARET Part of this had to be sharing the truth with you, making my peace with you and with the school. I have to tell you, you see. They leant on me to tell parents the school had to close. They asked me to drop a bomb on my own school, on everything I've tried to build. And I agreed to do it. I hated me. Do you see?

JOHN It wasn't just as you said to me, that you felt like a little lump of plasticine in the hands of the LEA?

EILEEN It went well beyond that?

MARGARET Yes. You know what that Indian doctor helped me to see. The real antidote to despair, to hatred to anger. You know what it is? The gift of love. That's actually what we give our kids.

JOHN Emma would call it the gift from God.

MARGARET I just call it the gift from us. John, one thing I must ask you. Have you forgiven me?

JOHN Well, almost. Your note. *(Remembering the pain.) Oh.*

MARGARET Only almost? Oh dear.

EILEEN What was that lovely piece of music you were playing as I arrived?

MARGARET It's called "Consolations." Emma sent it to me with her best wishes, and from the kids in her class too. I really appreciated that.

EILEEN Play it again.

(Margaret puts on the CD It runs into the next scene. She puts her house key on the table and after a long moment, John picks it up and puts it in his pocket.)

Scene 6

Left Stage

TRACY I've tried to understand it. Why do some people like to destroy things that are beautiful? They do. They really do. Some are just out and out vandals. What they can't have, they don't want anyone else to have. But others? Maybe it's because they think that what's right for them is right for everyone else, when it just isn't, and then they go on to think that everything else is wrong. If that is the reason, they make a big mistake. When you think about it, isn't it a bit arrogant? A bit blinkered? Aren't they - how do you say - sometimes just too clever by half? Certainly too clever for our good. It isn't as though they've always got it right for the kids that want to go to mainstream schools and there are some. Somebody should tell them. The trouble is that they think they understand us. They just don't, and they don't understand what they are stealing from some of us either. The rest of this play is history. It started with a meeting with the parents and the execution squad. I wasn't invited.

David Harding's Office. David makes two phone calls.

DAVID Don - Thank's mate for last night ... it wasn't nothing... It'll be a great relief for the ruling party. You and Gerry really did calm the stormy waters Yes, ... we're putting the wheels in motion straightaway... Good man ... You deserve it. I won't keep you. Cheers, mate.

DAVID Judy, You Okay? ... I've got some good news for you about Brighthouse School. The dogs of war are back in their kennels. Yes ... We had a meeting with parents last night ... Yes, one or two did bark, but their bark was worse than their bite. ... Well, obviously some parents weren't very happy ... bullying in mainstream, I'd say. It's not as though we don't know about that. Gerry's got it in hand ... Don Smithson did us proud. ... No, Governors are on board too ... We had a meeting with them last week. Don explained that half a school wasn't better than none. ... Yes, I suppose Margaret's absence was a blessing in disguise... she's much better these days... Anyway, do pass this on to our friends in London. Tell them they can take us off their hit list.

Scene 7

TRACY Well, it had to happen, didn't it? It was about a year later. Have you ever seen a bulldozer at work? You must have. And have you heard it clanking and grinding? I still can. One moment a building is there. Almost the next it is a pile of rubble, just rubble. And we watched it all happen. I won't forget it. I lost part of myself that day. That bulldozer, well for me, it was sort of symbolic. You see we were all casualties one way or another. Remember the name my friends call me, Katy, after Kate Winslet. I was on the Titanic, too.

A year later

The scene is outside the School. A bulldozer is slowly demolishing the building. Staff, parents and children watch. John Errington and Margaret Williamson have come in together. They are followed by Emma Kirk and Eileen Winterton. All are wearing raincoats.

JOHN Oh God, politicians. Save us from politicians. Scurvy politicians, that's how William Shakespeare described them.

EMMA Jesus Christ said "Forgive them, for they know not what they do". JOHN Sorry Emma, I really can't bring myself to do that.

EILEEN I am a bit surprised to see you here. EMMA I owed it to my memories. It's so sad.

JOHN Yes, so very sad

MARGARET I just felt I had to come. I still wonder whether I could have done anything to prevent this.

EMMA Oh for heaven's sake, now don't you say that. This was always going to happen. We all did our best for the kids one way or another. Anyway, how are you keeping?

MARGARET It's not easy. Good days and bad, but more good than bad, and the medics said I could get back to work. I feel much more like it now. And it's good for me.

EILEEN We all hope so too. You are a wonderful Head. The kids love you. And you really stretched them, and you made them whole, whole human beings.

MARGARET They made me whole. And they stretched me too. I'm applying for a job in the new Academy. I hope that the medics say I am fit enough for that. The LEA thinks I have a good chance to get it, especially with my experience of special needs, and they are short of head teachers these days.

EILEEN You carry all our good wishes. You know that.

MARGARET I do and I am grateful for them.

EILEEN Hopefully some of our kids will get into the Academy.

MARGARET They better had.

EILEEN You hope to go there too John?

JOHN If they'll have me. It's either that or Grovewood Comp.

MARGARET That's my alternative too. It does need to be one of them.

(Jean, Philippa, Terry and Tracy arrive together, the bulldozer noise intensifies.)

TRACY It's a crime

PHILIPPA It's a waste.

JEAN I think it's obscene. TERRY They're all shit.

MARGARET Terry, you shouldn't use that word in polite company.

TERRY Very sorry miss. Those pills can't be working.

MARGARET The money was wasted on you, Terry.

(Enter RANJIT and Harry, bulldozer noise temporarily stops.)

EMMA No Judith with you?

RANJIT Hospital duty calls.

HARRY I don't understand.

RANJIT I don't either. Kids have just one chance, and they spoil it for them with their big ideas. And another thing. They try to make us feel guilty doin' the best for our kids, givin' good schools like this a bad name as a reason for pulling them down.

EMMA They don't understand. That's the trouble. They don't begin to understand. Schools like this have the gift of healing. They engage the spirit. They are for life. That's what's so good about them.

MARGARET Emma, some people don't want to understand.

RANJIT I wish someone would expose the charade of those who say they care. They just don't.

MARGARET No, that's not quite right. Some do care. They do, you know. It's just that they care more about defending their precious little cardboard castles, and then helping others defend theirs.

RANJIT You've hit the nail on the head there. Rights of kids paramount. Words. Empty words. They invite us to their meetings, but they don't listen to what we are saying.

(Bulldozer noises continue in the background until the end of the scene)

HARRY What about all those prayers to God, Miss? They don't seem to work.

EMMA We are not given to understand everything, Harry. At times her ways are very inscrutable.

HARRY What does "inscrutable" mean?

EMMA Well, in my book God's a woman. Sometimes you just don't know whether She's coming or going. Women are like that. They're wired differently. Same power source as men, but different. You'll find out when you're a little older.

HARRY So are you still going to sing her praises on Sunday?

EMMA Sure I am. She knows how I feel. It's just She's got some catching up to do. JOHN Emma dear, please, you really don't have to bring God into it.

EMMA I do bring God into it. I just fear for her temper these days. One way or another - I think we're really provokin' her. She's capable of quite a tantrum when she's provoked. We'd better be a bit more careful with ourselves, and stop provokin' her.

TERRY You're right. Just like my Dad.

JOHN Well I won't disagree with you..., God or no God.

TRACY In a year's time there'll be some lovely houses here.

HARRY I bag the house with our duck pond.

MARGARET Rubble, just rubble. Such a pity.

JOHN Memories, just memories.

EMMA Come on you guys, join me, like good old times. (*Everyone singing*) "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine; you **made** me happy, when skies **were** grey.

ALL You'll never know dear, how much I loved you...please don't take my sunshine away."

Bulldozer continues its demolition. Time for quiet contemplation.

TRACY Remember the little white dandelion heads blowing away in the wind. Well, a couple of weeks ago, in the next street to mine, a boy of twelve – I think he was a bit overweight – well, he tried to take his own life. Thank you for coming to listen to my story. Can I leave you with a really naughty thought to take home with you. There are some little creatures that build and defend their own nests but they cannot move on and they cannot do anything else. That's what they do. They build and defend their own nests. That's all they do That's all they've ever done. That's all they'll ever do. There is a name for them. "*Termites*", yes "*Termites*." If there are any of them here tonight, let them go to their beds and sleep peacefully ... if they can. Y'see I'm not just going to blow away in the wind. Good night.