

PLAY 4 ME!

Original Plays for children, teenagers, youth theatre and special needs groups by Emer Halpenny

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AUNTY MARGARET'S REVENGE

By Emer Halpenny

CHARACTERS:

AUNTY MARGARET

MUM

HILLY

MILLY

BILLY

BABE, THE EASTER BUNNY

MRS JONES – NOSY NEIGHBOUR 1

MRS SMYTHE JONES – NOSY NEIGHBOUR 2

SAL, THE MAKEUP GAL & BABE'S PA

COP 1 (WILLIAM or BILL)

COP 2 (BENAMIN or BEN)

COP 3 (ROBERT or BOB)

CALM AGGIE, THE NEGOTIATOR

*The stage is divided into two rooms, split from upstage to downstage along the centre by an invisible wall. The illusion of the wall can be established by the actors from early on; opening and walking through the door; closing the door; shouting from one room to the other etc. It is important later on that actors never look at each other through the invisible wall, but look outwards towards the audience.**

Stage Right is the sitting room, with a front door off right and a door left of the centre line. There is a single sofa in the room facing the audience. The back of the TV is downstage of this. Stage Left is the kitchen, with a small table centre and three chairs positioned around the table (none with back to audience). On opening, MUM is busily setting the table for supper in the KITCHEN, while HILLIE, MILLY and BILLY are slouching in front of the TV in the SITTING ROOM. Remember to make a big deal of opening and closing the door between the sitting room and the kitchen!

We hear the sound of the TV; canned laughter – while the children occasionally react to the programme. MUM is humming to herself.

MUM *(shouting through the wall)* A little help in here would be nice!

(Canned laughter again. The children don't react to her.)

MUM *(walks to the door, opens it and leans through to talk to the children)* I said, a little help in here would be nice! *(she walks back into the kitchen and MILLY gets up and closes the door, returning to her spot on the sofa)*

MUM *(goes back to the door, opens it and walks into the sitting room, hands on hips)* How about a hand, kids?

(They all start clapping)

MILLY Let's hear it for Mum!

HILLY & BILLY Woo hoo, Go Mum!

MUM Very funny you three.

MILLY Mum, we're trying to watch TV

BILLY Yeah! Stop interrupting.

MUM (*sarcastically*) Oh, I'm sorry, am I disturbing you?

HILLY Just a bit.

MUM Tough! (*she switches off the TV to reactions from the children*)

KIDS Awww! Come on! Etc.

MUM (*with her back to us and pointing off right*) Get into that kitchen and eat your supper!

MILLY But it's too early for bed. (*she walks into the kitchen and sits*)

MUM Hoosh! (*BILLY & HILLY join her, and MUM follows, closing the door behind her*)

(*All three children yawn and stretch, MUM pours milk*) You see? You're exhausted. And tomorrow is a big day.

KIDS Easter!

BILLY And the Easter Egg Hunt!

MILLY & HILLY Chocolate....mmmmm!

MUM Well, it's not *just* about chocolate, but yes there will be a lot happening, so –

(*she is cut off by the sound of the door bell*)

BILLY Who's that?

HILLY This late?

MILLY It's the boogie man!

MUM Stop being silly. I'll answer it. (*she walks through the centre door and opens an imaginary door off to the right of the sitting room*)

BILLY & HILLY Who is it?

MUM There's no one here...

MILLY What's that? (*she points off stage and MUM picks up a huge parcel, colourfully wrapped and in the shape of an Easter egg. They bring it in, close the front door and place it on the TV, forming a semi circle around it, facing the audience.*)

KIDS It's a giant Easter egg!

MUM Wait, there's a note: (*she reads*) With lots of love from your Auntie Margaret.

KIDS Auntie Margaret?

MILLY Do we even have an Auntie Margaret?

MUM I think so...I'm not sure...maybe...possibly...

MRS SMYTHE JONES (*entering from outside*) Ah! I heard!

MUM Oh! Mrs Jones!

MRS SJ It's Mrs Smythe Jones actually. Mrs Jones lives in the four bedroom two doors down. I have a five bedroom.

MUM What are you doing here Mrs Smythe Jones?

MRS SJ I heard all about it.

KIDS All about what?

MRS SJ The mystery package. At least, I saw it from my sitting room, from behind my silk net curtains.

MUM Well, it's only just arrived...

MRS JONES (*enters from outside.*) I heard about the mystery package!

MRS SJ That's Mrs Jones. Four bed. Semi.
MRS JONES I got here as soon as I heard.
MRS SJ Mrs Jones, delightful. I had already heard by the time you heard.
MRS JONES I noticed it from my...conservatory window (*she stresses it for MRS SJ's benefit*)
MRS SJ (*makes a jealous squeak*)
MUM Mrs Jones. Mrs Smythe Jones. Thank you for dropping in but it's the children's bedtime and –
BILL (*the Policeman enters looking around suspiciously*) A mystery object has been reported.
MRS J That was me.
MRS SJ Me too.
BEN (*enters and takes out a notebook*) A suspicious looking individual was seen around the area around the time of the mystery object.
MRS J & MRS SJ : (*impressed, they didn't know about that.*) Oooh!
BOB (*entering*) We can take said mystery object down to the station for (*a little cough*) – investigation. (*BILL & BEN rub their tummies and lick their lips*).
MUM No! Thank you everyone. But this is a gift for my children. Now, if you wouldn't mind leaving so they can go to bed.
MILLY Tomorrow's Easter you know.
(*Everyone ad-libs that they know full well what day it is and what treats they might have in store, as they exit*)
MUM Well! That was all very silly. Off to bed children. We'll leave this on the floor and open it in the morning.
MILLY Night Mum. Do you think the Easter Bunny will come?!
MUM Of course!
BILLY & HILLY Yippie! Night Mum! (*They exit stage left. MUM closes the front door, and then leaves through the sitting room 'door' and closes it, exiting stage left. All quiet. Lights down.*)

While the lights are down AUNTY MARGARET enters and positions herself behind the Easter egg mystery package. See props notes for details of how to make this. Lights come up, though not fully so that we still have the impression that it is night time. AUNTY MARGARET tip toes around the sitting room with her oozy choco splatting sub machine gun.

AUNTY MARGARET (*In a sweet voice*) Come on....come on...come on little Easter Bunny...Little Bunny Wunny...(a little harsher, she is getting impatient) Come on now little bunny...(aggressively) SHOW YOURSELF YOU MANGY RABBIT!!! (*This brings MUM and then the children into the sitting room – don't forget the door!*)
MUM What's going on! (*lights up fully*)
KIDS What's going on!
AUNTY M Ha! Hold it right there! (*she points the gun at them and they freeze, hands in the air*)
MUM Who are you?

AUNTY M Why, I'm your Aunt Margaret dear. Didn't you get my 'mystery package'?

KIDS Aunt Margaret! Thank you SOOOOOO much! *(they run around her hugging her)*

AUNTY M Yeuch! Get them off! Get them off!

MUM Children – leave her alone! She's dangerous! She has a gun!

AUNTY M Yeah, and I'm not afraid to use it. You! Kid!

BILLY Me?

AUNTY M No, the girl. You.

HILLY Me?

AUNTY M No. The older one. You!

MILLY Me?

AUNTY M Yeah. You....Where ya hiding the Easter Bunny Kid?

MILLY Nowhere.

AUNTY M Oh yeah? Well I don't believe you. Move! All of you – into that room *(she gestures towards the kitchen)* Get going!

MUM Better do as she says kids. She's crazy.

AUNTY M I'm not crazy! I've...got issues.
(They move into the kitchen during the following – AUNTY M sits on the chair stage L of the table, so that we see her side on, and puts her feet up on the table, gun pointed at the others who stand with their back to the 'wall'.)

AUNTY M Crazy! I'll show you who's crazy! *(she points the gun – they all scream and cower)*. Ah, relax, I won't do anything. Yet. You! Kid!

MILLY Me?

AUNTY M No the younger one.

HILLY Me?

AUNTY M No! The boy!

BILLY Me? Yes! Kid. Lock the door. *(he does so)*. Gimme the key. *(he does so. She swallows it.)*

AUNTY M Nobody's going anywhere till I get face to face with the Easter Bunny.

MUM Hey! Now how will we get out?

AUNTY M I'll worry about that when the time comes.
(MRS SJ enters the house. She looks around, sees the half opened Easter egg and calls out)

MRS SJ Hellooo? Anyone home?

MUM Mrs Smythe Jones? Is that you?

MRS SJ Yes dear. I heard a fracas.

AUNTY M How did she get in? How did you get in, nosy neighbour?

MRS SJ I have a master key. Full set; one for every house in the neighbourhood. Just in case. You never know.
MRS JONES enters

MRS J Ah ha! Here before me again Mrs Smythe Jones. I heard a hullabaloo.

MUM Mrs Jones! Get the police!

AUNTY M Nobody move anywhere! I've got a gun on these people and my finger's getting awful itchy.
MRS SJ & MRS J shriek.

MRS J What do you want us to do, Crazy lady?

AUNTY M I'm not crazy!

KIDS She's got issues.

AUNTY M These are my hostages now. I'm not coming out till you get me the Easter Bunny. We need to talk.

MRS SJ Oooh, what will we do, Mrs Jones?

MRS J Get the police dear!

MRS SJ Right! You stay here and keep Crazy Lady calm.

AUNTY M I heard that!

MRS J Ok! And you go find those policemen we spoke to earlier.

MRS SJ On my way dear! *(she exits. Lights down. Music: time passing – 10 seconds. Lights up, MRS JONES is finishing off a story)*

MRS J It's true! The old 'glass tumbler to the wall' trick works every time.

(MUM & AUNTY M yawn. The KIDS have fallen asleep. Everyone is dying of boredom. Enter MRS SMYTHE JONES WITH THE THREE POLICEMEN)

MRS SJ I found them! *(shouts out)* I've brought the police!

BILL *(has a loudspeaker cone)* Now listen here, Crazy Lady.

AUNTY M The name's Margaret. Aunt Margaret to you.

BEN *(takes the loudspeaker)* Aunt Margaret, you need to listen...

AUNTY M I'm not listening to nobody no how.

BOB *(takes the loudspeaker)* Well, maybe you'll listen to

ALL 3 COPS Calm Aggie.

EVERYONE ELSE Calm Aggie?

CALM AGGIE enters – She is the negotiator. She has a presence about her. She oozes calmness.

CALM AGGIE Someone call for Calm Aggie?

AUNTY M What sort of name is Calm Aggie?

CALM AGGIE Hey, it's better than Crazy Maggie...

MUM Don't antagonize her! She's got a gun!

AGGIE Don't worry. I'm here to calm the situation. I'm going to calm the situation with a bit of negotiation. I am, if you like, sort of an Agony Aunt. Someone you can tell your troubles to.

AUNTY M I am deeply troubled.

AGGIE I can tell.

AUNTY M It all started when I was 8. I asked the Easter Bunny for a Pepper Pocket Easter egg, but I got a lousy Bart the Builder one instead. I cried for months. It affected my whole life. I vowed back then that one day I would seek my revenge. Then I remembered I was distantly related to this family. "Three kids?" I thought – that's it! So I disguised myself as a giant Easter egg and planned to ensnare the Easter Bunny but he never turned up.

SAL, the make-up gal enters with phone, folders, baskets and make-up brushes. She is organized but overworked.

SAL You mean *SHE* – the Easter Bunny is Female.

MRS J Who are you?

AGGIE This is Sal, the make-up gal – The Easter Bunny's make-up gal that is.

MILLY *(with a glass tumbler to the wall)* The Easter Bunny wears make-up?!

BABE the Easter Bunny enters dramatically. She might speak with a French accent.

BABE But of course! I am not as young as I used to be you know.

EVERYONE Ad-lib: Wow! It's the Easter Bunny! It's really her...etc.

BABE Oh I just love that reaction. I could listen to it all night. You see, Sal? Everyone still adores me!

SAL Of course they do, Babe.

EVERYONE Babe?!

BABE But of course. That is my name...Babe!

AUNTY M Like the pig!

SAL *(covering BABE's ears)* Don't listen to her Babe.

BABE How dare you! This is an outrage!

SAL She didn't mean it.

AUNTY M Did so!

AGGIE Alright! ALRIGHT! Everyone please...be calm...and quiet...and nice and peaceful...We can sort this out like human beings.

BABE There you go, insulting me again!

AGGIE Oops sorry Easter Bunny.

SAL *(to BABE)* How about some blush? Hmm? A little bit of lippy? The glossy one you love..?

BABE *(who has been sulking, now comes round)* Well, alright...a little of bit of *(she looks at the lipgloss)* 'hushed whisper' always makes me feel happier somehow.

SAL There now, you see?

(BABE giggles as she looks at her reflection in the mirror. She snaps her fingers.)

BABE A little chocolate for everyone Sal! *(Sal hands out some chocolate to everyone in the sitting room.)*

MUM Hey! They're getting chocolate out there.

AUNTY M Forget about chocolate! I have no quarrel with you – or any of you. I just want to have a little 'chat' with the Bunny and everyone can go home.

MILLY We are home.

AUNTY M Shush!

MRS SJ We're all going to DIE!

AGGIE Nobody's going to die. Please, if everyone could just let me do the talking.

BILL Ladies, please sit down over here *(he gestures to the sofa)*

MRS J Oh that's alright.

BEN No, no, we insist...have a seat.

MRS SJ Not at all! We're happier standing. We can see more.

BOB SIT! (or SIDDOWN!) *(they push them down onto the sofa – room for some choreographed humour)*

MRS J & MRS SJ *(shocked ad-libs).*

AGGIE Now I can hear myself think.

(Suddenly there is the sound of thunder and other storm effects. Both

AUNTY M and BABE react fearfully)

AUNTY M & BABE *(scream)* A storm!

AUNTY M I hate storms!
 BABE I also hate storms!
 AGGIE How alike you are.
 AUNTY M No, really...storms just bring on bad memories.
 BABE I have always been frightened of bad weather...
 AGGIE Well, when I feel sad or frightened I just think of nice things.
 AUNTY M & BABE Really? Like what?
 (*CUE SONG : FAVOURITE THINGS*)

BEN That song always makes me feel better.
 BILL & BOB Me too.
 BEN It makes crime seem not so bad...
 AGGIE Crime is always bad gentlemen. Though people aren't
 AUNTY M (*breaking down*) I never meant for things to go this far! I don't
 want to hurt anyone!
 MUM (*calmly*) I'll just take this gun...
 AUNTY M I'm a good person. Deep down I just want to be loved.
 AGGIE Of course you do. We all do (*encourages ad-lib agreement*).
 BABE I remember now!
 SAL What do you remember Babe?
 BABE It was a long time ago...I was just a tiny bunny...It was my first
 Easter Gig...
 AGGIE Go on. What can you remember?
 BABE I was a little anxious as you can imagine. I was such a small
 cute little bunny. Really I was gorgeous.
 SAL I bet you were.
 AGGIE ...and then –
 BABE And then there was a storm...it was loud and I was frightened.
 It was horrible – horrible!
 (*Ad-lib sympathies from some*)
 BABE I was confused. I forgot what to do! I think I even left a Bart
 the Builder Easter egg for a little girl who wanted a Pepper Pocket Easter egg!
 I was so ashamed.
 AUNTY M What's that?!
 BABE Silly, wasn't it? Imagine making such a mistake.
 AUNTY M But...all these years...I never knew...
 BABE But tell me Crazy Lady – why do you hate me so?
 AUNTY M I don't hate you, you frightened little Bunny Wunny! (*She goes
 to open the door but of course it's locked*)
 KIDS It's locked.
 AUNTY M Hey you kid.
 MILLY Who, me?
 AUNTY M No the other one.
 BILLY Me?
 AUNTY M No, the one in charge.
 HILLY Me?!
 MUM I think she means me.
 AUNTY M Yea, you; Mum. Got a spare key?

MUM No.

MRS J What will they do now?

MRS SJ And I thought it was happily ever after...

BILL Stand aside ladies, leave this to me. *(He runs at the door to ram it down but fails, falling backwards. Note : as each policeman does this they could land one on top of the other. Have fun with the choreography of this, while everyone else ad-libs shock and those in the kitchen wonder what's happening 'outside the door'.)*

BEN I'll save you. Stand back!

BOB Let me try!

(The 3 policemen are stunned. SAL comes forward).

SAL I say...I might be able to help.

MRS SJ No offence...but you're just a make-up gal.

MRS J Yes, what can you do?

SAL *(taking out a tweezers)* You'd be surprised what some tweezers can do...*(as she starts working on the door)*

BABE *(laughing embarrassedly)* Why Sal, I never realized you had some tweezers in that make-up bag of yours. I certainly never saw them before.

SAL *(opening the door)* Voila!

AUNTY M We're free!

MUM Well...yes?

KIDS Horray! *(they run out and bombard BABE for some chocolate which she gives to them.)*

(There is a quiet respectful moment as BABE and AUNTY M make friends)

AUNTY M I'm awfully sorry for hating you all these years.

BABE I'm sorry I made you hate me.

AUNTY M Friends?

BABE But of course! *(they hug and everyone ad-libs Awww)*

BABE There's only one problem.

AGGIE What's that?

BABE We have spent a lot of time here – I'm not sure I can finish my job before Easter morning.

MRS SJ Pish Posh! Of course you can. We'll help you.

SAL Are you sure? It's very late.

MRS J A chance to see the inside of everyone's house? You betcha!

BEN *(as the 3 of them get up and walk oozily towards the door)* We'll lead the way.

MILLY Mum, can we go too?

BILLY & HILLY Please?

MUM Well...I suppose you were held hostage...

KIDS Yay!

AUNTY M And they really were very well behaved...

MUM You're right. We'll all go.

(Ad-libs as everyone gathers their things, puts on their coats and exits excitedly to music : MY FAVOURITE THINGS)

THE END

STARS IN YOUR EYEDROPS

By Emer Halpenny

AGE: 12 – 15 years

GENDER: 2 female, 4 male

PARTS: 6

RUNNING TIME: The play runs for 20 minutes approximately

GONERIL, a witch and coven ball committee member

REGAN, a witch and coven ball committee member

WARLO, a warlock and heart-throb boy band member

MR (JOE) PROMO, an impersonator

JOE (PROMO), Warlo's manager

MIGUEL PLENTIMUNNI, a Spanish-American multi-billionaire who turns two-bit singers into megastars overnight. He also plays the part of the OLD HIPPIE GUY

SCENE 1 : THE COVEN BALL OFFICE

GONERIL & REGAN, two witches are making final preparations for the coven ball. There is a banner on the wall which says "ANNUAL COVEN BALL TICKET OFFICE". GONERIL and REGAN sit under it at a table. They are going through stacks of tickets, using date stamps etc.

GONERIL I swear I'm giving up my position on the committee next year.

REGAN I'm with you. It's always the same people giving us the same headaches.

GONERIL I notice Sabrina hasn't paid for her tickets yet.

REGAN That's teen-agers for you. If you ask me, I think – *(she is interrupted by a knock on the door.)* Come in! *(She sings it)*

An OLD HIPPIE GUY enters.

HIPPIE Oh hi! *(He sounds sort of American and smokes a cigar)*

REGAN Hello there. I'm afraid you'll have to put that out.

HIPPIE Huh? Oh, yeah sorry about that. *(He looks around for a place to put the cigar and GONERIL offers him a glass of water, which he throws it into)*

GONERIL Fire regulations.

HIPPIE I understand.

GONERIL And it's just a plain nasty habit.

HIPPIE Yeah I know. I'm trying to quit.

REGAN Good for you. Now how can we help you?

HIPPIE I was wondering what the music is going to be like at the Coven Ball tonight. I might go along.

GONERIL *(rolling her eyes)* Oh! Sure don't you know it's a boy band again this year.

REGAN The ladies go mad for the boy bands. I can't see what all the fuss is myself.

HIPPIE Right. Well, gimme a couple a tickets will ya?

GONERIL We certainly will. How many?

HIPPIE Forty.

GONERIL Oh! Well, that will take just a couple of minutes. Do sit down.
There follows a little double routine between GONERIL and REGAN – getting the tickets, stamping them, going the filing cabinet for the cash box etc – all choreographed perfectly so they compliment each other and they are humming/singing a little tune as they do so. This is important as we'll discover later...

REGAN There we are! Forty tickets all packaged up nice and neatly.

GONERIL *(Taking the HIPPIE's money)* It's a pleasure doing business with you.

HIPPIE Likewise I'm sure. See you ladies later?

GON & REG Absolutely. *(he exits)*

GONERIL What a nice man.

REGAN Yes, pity more people can't be like that. Unlike - *(she is interrupted when the phone rings)*

GONERIL Oh Bother! *(into the phone, pleasantly)* Hello? Coven Ball Committee? May I help you? Uh huh, uh huh, oh dear. Oh no. Well you'd better come over then.

REGAN Who was that?

GONERIL Warlo, the warlock from the wizard boy band we've booked tonight.

REGAN What did he want?

GONERIL Well, he's coming over to – *(she is interrupted as WARLO appears)*

WARLO I got here as soon as I could.

REGAN I say, that was quick!

GONERIL Very impressive magic indeed.

WARLO No time for that! I can't play at the coven ball tonight.

GON & REG. What??!!

REGAN It's too late to back out. We'll never replace you.

WARLO No more compliments, please.

REGAN I only meant we wouldn't have enough time to –

GONERIL - er Warlo, dear. What's happened?

WARLO My manager, Joe Promo, has gone missing!

GONERIL What do you mean, missing?

WARLO Well, he didn't call this morning to wake me up and take me jogging. I mean he always calls. There was nobody to give me breakfast in bed!

REGAN That's hardly a catastrophe.

WARLO Well, I can't play unless he turns up. If he's not there, who would fight the girls off me?

REGAN Excuse us Warlo please. *(aside to GON)* Who does he think he is?

GONERIL Look, we should go along with this – his ego needs it. We do need him to play after all.

REGAN Oh alright.

GONERIL Look Warlo, you er – stud... why don't you stay here for a while and have some sticky buns and cream cakes with us and see if your manager chap turns up?

REGAN He's probably off doing something very important after all.

WARLO Well, ok but then I have to go and get ready. My image is everything you know.

GONERIL *(grabbing the plate of sticking buns, aside to REGAN)* We have to keep him happy until we find this manager of his. What's he doing?

REGAN *(looking over her shoulder)* He's just sitting there biting his nails.

They both look over at him and smile and wave. He gives them a 'hey babe' wave back.

REGAN Doesn't half fancy himself. What are we going to do?

GONERIL Hit him with the comatose spell.

REGAN Via the sticky buns. I like it.

GONERIL Go to it. Use my wand.

They aren't very good at covering up but WARLO is oblivious. They wave over again.

REGAN Just a minute Warlo!

WARLO *(looks at his watch and takes out a pocket mirror to fix his hair)*
I'm in a bit of a rush you know.

REGAN Quick! Hold them steady.

GONERIL holds out the plate of buns and REGAN does her magic on them –

REGAN Dozy, drowsy, slumberry shower – eat these cakes and sleep for an hour.

GONERIL Only an hour?

REGAN That should be long enough.

WARLO *(standing)* Listen babes...

GONERIL *(laughing politely)* A ha ha ha! Here we are – yummy sticky buns and gooey cream cakes, just for you Warlo.

WARLO *(he licks his lips and reaches for one, then-)* No! I – I'm not supposed to. It's not good for my physique. That's what Joe always used to say *(he turns away so they can't see how upset he is)*

REGAN *(aside)* Blast and Carbuncles! He's on a diet?

GONERIL But Warlo! You don't think two gals like us would have full fat buns in our office, do you?

REGAN No, no, no...these are extreme low fat sticky buns. Great for dieters!

WARLO I'm not on a diet, exactly...

GON & REG Of course not... *(they push the plate under his nose)*

WARLO *(smiling sheepishly)* Well, I guess one or two isn't going to ruin my looks...

GON & REG No, no – go on...go on...

WARLO Yummy! *(He takes a huge bite and seems to be enjoying it. Then mid bite he falls suddenly to the ground.)*

REGAN Is he asleep?
They listen. We hear snoring. They look at each other. GONERIL checks her watch.

GONERIL We've got less than 55 minutes.

REGAN What's the plan?

GONERIL *(grabbing a nearby golden pages/magic numbers)* We need to find an impersonator and a good one.

REGAN Brilliant! Someone who can pretend to be this Joe Promo.

GONERIL OK, here we are : Mr Mundy...Mr Noodle...Mr Oh...Mr Joe Promo *(they look at each other)*...Mr Joe Promo: Impersonator.

REGAN Amazing. An actual Joe Promo impersonator. Exactly what we are looking for.

GONERIL What luck! Let's call him. *(She dials a number. Lights up on stage ext. JOE PROMO IMPERSONATOR enters and answers. He is dressed as Bat Man/ Superman and takes the costume off during the phone conversation. He is dressed quite normally underneath. To avoid confusion, he will be called MR PROMO.*

MR PROMO Hello?

GONERIL Oh hello, Mr Promo?

MR PROMO Yes?

GONERIL Thank goodness! We need your help. We need you to do a bit of impersonating.

MR PROMO Well, that is what I do. *(he is pleasant, aware this is a potential customer and wants the gig)*

GONERIL Yes, well we need you to do it today. Now, in fact. Immediately if not sooner!

MR PROMO Delighted. But er, who do you want me to impersonate?

GONERIL Joe Promo of course!

MR PROMO You need me to impersonate myself?

GONERIL No, no, no. Joe Promo!

MR PROMO Lady, I'm Joe Promo.

GONERIL Joe Promo the Boy Band Manager?! *(she is excited she may have found him)*

MR PROMO No, Joe Promo the Impersonator. Where did you get my number?

GONERIL *(to REGAN)* I'm so confused.

REGAN Give it to me *(she takes the phone)* Mr Promo, we need you to impersonate someone for us. We need you to impersonate Joe Promo.

MR PROMO Joe Promo the Boy Band Manager?

REGAN Yes.

MR PROMO Gotcha.

REGAN Can you do it today? Now, in fact?

MR PROMO Yes, I should be able to squeeze you in, but I'll have to be paid in cash.

REGAN *(whispering to GONERIL)* Have we got cash? *(GONERIL holds up the cash box)* Yes, that's no problem.

MR PROMO Great. Now what's he like?

REGAN *(realises that she has no idea. She gestures GONERIL to help her)* What's he like? Um, em, he's uh, he's er...

GONERIL Patient.

REGAN Yes, patient. He's a very patient man. *(they both look over at WARLO, who snores)*

MR PROMO *(trying to stay patient himself)* What does he look like? Is he old?

REGAN Um...

MR PROMO Is he – Canadian?

REGAN Uh...

MR PROMO Is he funny? Does he have a limp?

GONERIL Give it to me *(she takes the phone)* He's old. He's definitely old. And – and – and – possibly he is Canadian. Yes, he's old and Canadian. And patient.

MR PROMO Ok...I'll do my best but that's not a whole lot to go on. Give me the address.

GONERIL Tell you what. We'll come and get you. It's easier. *(They put the phone down)*

REGAN Broomsticks?

GONERIL Definitely.

Music plays for 10 sec or so, then fades. We hear WARLO snoring. There is a knock at the door.

WARLO Mummy? *(he is still asleep)*

JOE PROMO *(the manager) opens the door and looks around. He will be called JOE.*

JOE Hello? Anyone here?

WARLO snores and JOE lets himself in. He looks around, checks out the diary on the table etc. Then he spots WARLO.

JOE Warlo! My man! There you are.

WARLO uhyummaweeyayibbieuh *(or some other garbled nonsense)*

JOE Warlo! Wake up. *(He can't revive him)* I recognise this – there's dirty magic here. And I should know all about dirty magic – I probably invented it heh heh! But which spell? *(he looks around and spots the sticky buns)* A-ha! Sticky buns. And what's this? Cream cakes too. Warlo! *(he wags a finger at the sleeping WARLO)* What have I told you about the calories in these things? No magic works against fat – it's too powerful! How many times? Now, let's see...*(clicks fingers)* I have it! Someone used the comatose spell on you. But why? Why? Never mind why – Gesundheit! *(WARLO wakes up, still a bit dozy, but awake. JOE helps him to his feet.)*

WARLO uhyummaweeyayibbieuh *(or some other garbled nonsense)*

JOE I know. Very few people know that kind of magic.

WARLO Huh?

JOE It makes you as you were before. One simple word :
Gezundheit! *(WARLO immediately falls asleep and JOE has to be quick to catch him).* Wooah! Shouldn't have said it again. Gesundheit! *(WARLO wakes up. He is very confused)*

WARLO What the...where...
JOE picks up the buns and looks at him questioningly. WARLO looks around confused, scratching his head. He turns around fully, looking for the WITCHES but not sure if he just imagined them.

JOE Warlo. *(louder)* Warlo! *(he has his attention)*

WARLO Joe! Where were you? I couldn't find you. I woke up – no breakfast – no foot massage – nothing. I had to get out of bed *ALL BY MYSELF!*

JOE Relax Warlo. It's ok. I had to meet a very important person actually. A very influential person.

WARLO Oh yeah? Who?

JOE Tell you in a sec. *(he picks up a bun and is about to eat it when he remembers the comatose spell. He drops the bun)* Listen, I don't want you to sing at the Coven Ball tonight.

WARLO Are you mad? A thousand screaming witches who all adore me, and you don't want me to sing? *(he tries to take a bun but JOE slaps his hand away.)*

JOE Ever heard of Miguel Plentimunni?

WARLO Of course! He's the Spanish-American multi-billionaire who turns two-bit singers into megastars overnight. Why?

JOE Ever think he'd like to meet you?

WARLO I don't consider myself a two-bit singer *(he is beginning to cop on)...but I could be...(getting excited) why?*

JOE He wants to meet you! *(WARLO faints, but falls on JOE the same way as before. JOE slaps him and shakes him)* Wake up! Warlo! Don't go to pieces on me, man.

WARLO Miguel Plentimunni wants to turn me into a megastar! Wow!

JOE Yes. Now listen. You don't mess around with the likes of Miguel. He wants you to play at his wife's 40th birthday bash tonight. And what Miguel wants, he gets, comprende?

WARLO Huh?

JOE That means you can't play the Coven Ball tonight. Got a problem with that?

WARLO No.

JOE Good. He's going to drop in to say hi.

WARLO What? Here? Now? *(he is checking his hair in his pocket mirror)*

JOE *(slapping the mirror off him)* Don't let him catch you with that! Miguel is a bit of a hit with the ladies himself and he doesn't want any competition. We may have to ugly you down.

WARLO *(panicking)* What?!

JOE He wants to meet you on your own, so I'm going to disappear. I'll come back for you later. And remember, whatever he says, you agree to. Got that?

WARLO Yeah yeah.

JOE I mean it! Agree to everything he says. *(JOE leaves. WARLO experiments with how he will be sitting when MIGUEL arrives. He tries sitting on the table, leaning against it etc. Obviously he will knock something over*

and be on the floor in an embarrassing position when there is a knock on the door...

There is a knock on the door. It is MR PROMO, dressed as he imagines JOE PROMO MANAGER might look – old, Canadian and patient. He enters, a little unsure.

MR PROMO *(in an atrocious Canadian accent, that could possibly be mistaken for a Spanish-American accent)* Ahem, ahem, ahem! Mr Warlo I presume?

WARLO *(who is picking up papers etc off floor)* Huh? Oh, yes, that's me! Mr Warlo! Or just Warlo...Come in! Come in Sir! *(shaking his hand and leading him to a nearby seat)*

MR PROMO *(very unsure of what he should say)* Well, as you know, I am your, er, manager... *(WARLO almost squeaks with suppressed excitement)* ... yes, your manager, and I was wondering if you might...be so kind as to...that is to say...

WARLO Anything! I'll do anything you ask. Just say, 'Warlo my boy, will you do it?' And I'll do it!

MR PROMO Ah, yes. Well then, Warlo – er, my boy, I want you to sing at the concert tonight.

WARLO Which concert?

MR PROMO The witch concert.

WARLO Yes, which concert?

MR PROMO The witch – that is, the Coven Ball. I want you to sing at the Coven Ball tonight. My boy.

WARLO Okay. What about your wife's 40th?

MR PROMO *(trying to go along with his very limited information)* Yes, er my wife and her 40 friends will be there too.

WARLO Wonderful! Excellent!

MR PROMO So then, it's a deal?

WARLO It's a deal Mr Plentimunni sir! *(they shake hands)*

MR PROMO Mr who?

WARLO Miguel then. It's a deal. I'll be there, don't you worry.

MR PROMO *(too confused to argue but happy that he has done what he came to do)* Alright then, my boy. I'll see you at the concert.

WARLO You won't be disappointed! *(MR PROMO exits. No sooner has he gone then MIGUEL PLENTIMUNNI appears – he is confident, arrogant and has an atrocious Spanish-American accent.)*

MIGUEL Ahem!

WARLO *(has his back to him and is checking out his hair in the mirror. He thinks this is JOE behind him)* Well that was easy! I had Plentimunni eating out of my hand!

MIGUEL Ahem, ahem!

WARLO And by the way, I wouldn't say Miguel Plentimunni is a hit with the ladies. He looks kind of old to me. And that weird accent...

MIGUEL Ahem, ahem, AHEM!

WARLO *(turning)* That's a nasty cough – Oh! Who are you?

MIGUEL I beg your pardon? You dare to ask me who I am? Don't you know that I am –
(at this point GONERIL and REGAN enter to see how things are going. They presume that MIGUEL is MR PROMO in a fantastic disguise.)

GONERIL Hello? How are things in here?

REGAN Oh, I see you found your manager Warlo.

WARLO Huh?

GONERIL *(winking and nudging MIGUEL)* Hello, you must be Warlo's manager. Delighted to meet you.

MIGUEL Warlo's manager? What is going on?

REGAN *(with a knowing look and marvelling at his acting skills, going along with it)* We are the Coven Ball organisers and we're Warlo's number 1 fans!

WARLO Really?

MIGUEL Look, I don't know who you think I am but I should tell you why I am here –

GONERIL So, is Warlo going to play at the Coven Ball tonight?

WARLO I certainly am!

MIGUEL What? That is not the way it is supposed to be!

REGAN What are you saying, Mr Promo?

WARLO & MIGUEL Mr Promo?

MIGUEL Why you are talking about Joe Promo? He promise me Warlo will not play at the Coven Ball tonight.

EVERYONE What?

MIGUEL I want Warlo to play at my wife's 40th tonight. Is very important to me. I am Miguel Plentimunni and I am used to getting what I want, when I want it! And now I am getting a little angry!
There follows a short silence while everyone tries to work out what's going on.

REGAN Miguel who?

GONERIL Plentimunni what?

WARLO Your wife's 40th?

MIGUEL Where is Joe Promo?

EVERYONE That's what we'd like to know!
Enter JOE PROMO. He has no idea things have gone so wrong, so he is cheerful.

JOE Hey! A party eh? And no one invited me? Warlo, my man. See you met the main man – the man who can!

Enter MR PROMO.

MR PROMO I was wondering if I could get paid now? I have another gig to get to downtown and–

MIGUEL Who are you?

MR PROMO I wish I knew.

JOE *(With his arm around MIGUEL)* So, our boy Warlo, eh? What cha think? And he can sing too. You know, most of the boy band singers can't even sing.

MIGUEL He insult me.

JOE What?

MIGUEL He say he play the Coven Ball.
 WARLO He told me to play the Coven Ball (*pointing at MR PROMO*)
 JOE Nobody knows who he is, not even him.
 GONERIL We know who he is. I'm afraid Regan and myself are responsible for this mix up.
 REGAN Yes, you see, Warlo couldn't find you this morning and panicked. He said he wouldn't play the Coven Ball without you.
 JOE But I was setting up a meeting with Warlo and Miguel. Miguel was going to turn Warlo into an overnight Rock Sensation. (*he says this last part bitterly*)
 MR PROMO Then I was hired to pretend to be you (*to JOE*) so that Warlo would agree to play the Coven Ball.
 WARLO I thought he was you (*to MIGUEL*)
 MIGUEL I See. He is a master of disguise.
 MR PROMO Well, not so masterful obviously. I'm afraid I didn't do a great job. If only I knew whom I was trying to impersonate – it would have been such an advantage.
 MIGUEL I, too, like disguises.
 GONERIL You do?
 MIGUEL Yes. It will not matter if Warlo play at my wife's 40th, because I already have another act in mind for the Coven Ball.
 REGAN Who? Who can replace a boy band at such short notice?
 MIGUEL A girl band, of course.
 GON & REG Sorry?
 MIGUEL Don't be. I heard you sing this morning. I saw your act. I loved it.
 GONERIL What do you mean?
 MIGUEL (*taking out a cigar*) Do you mind if I smoke?
 REGAN It can't be...
 (*MIGUEL puts on the OLD HIPPIE GUY wig*)
 REGAN It is!
 GONERIL The old hippie from this morning!
 MIGUEL I want to make you girls the next big All Girl Rock Sensation!
 GON & REG Us? Really? Yippie!
 JOE What about Warlo?
 MIGUEL And Warlo too. I want to turn him into the next big Heart throb Sensation!
 WARLO I'd like to thank Joe Promo for all this.
 JOE & MR PROMO It was nothing.
 MIGUEL Well, hadn't you better get ready? We got two concerts to do!
Music and ad-libbing as everyone exits. Finish with a boy band/girl band song...

T H E E N D

PRODUCTION NOTES, SET AND PROPERTIES

The entire play is set in the ticket office of the Coven Ball, except for Mr Promo's house, set up to the side of the playing area.

A banner on the back wall should read : ANNUAL COVEN BALL – this could include the year also.

A table centre, large enough to seat two people. On the table : Boxes of tickets, date stamps, cash box, containers with pens, scissors etc., stacks of paper, a phone and a plate of sticky buns and cream cakes – at least one of them edible.

Two chairs behind the table, facing the audience.

An easy chair to the right of the table, CSR.

A filing cabinet to the left of the table, CSL

Two brooms rest against the filing cabinet.

An actual free standing door on stage would enhance the whole farce type humour but it is not essential – the door can be situated off stage, in the wings.

Mr Promo's House :

A telephone on a phone table.

COSTUMES AND PERSONAL PROPS

GONERIL and REGAN	Either dress in a traditional witch costume or as a funky younger witch, whichever will suit the student. Keep it mostly black. A witch's hat is essential. Goneril needs to carry a wand, which she gives to Regan.
WARLO	In 'boyband' gear but with a cloak – not full length as he has a lot of movement. Hair gelled etc. Carry a pocket mirror
MR PROMO	A bat man, superman or other superhero type costume over jeans and a t-shirt. As 'Joe Promo' : A suit and grey wig, possibly grey moustache. Carry a stick and a briefcase.
JOE	Black trousers, black sports jacket and white t-shirt or similar look.
MIGUEL PLENTIMUNNI	Blazer with cravat, trousers, ridiculously expensive looking shoes and jewellery. Carry hippie wig and cigar in pocket.

OLD HIPPIE GUY

Jeans, desert boots or similar, dirty t-shirt (pref with a hippie type logo), a long grey wig. Carry a cigar.

TED'S LUCK

By Emer Halpenny

This play is very 'Irish' – the humour may not work elsewhere...

AGE: 11 - 15

GENDER: 12 female, 3 male – though many parts could be either

PARTS: 15, with cameo roles for camera and makeup (perhaps stage crew or teachers)

RUNNING TIME: 20 minutes

CHARACTERS:

BREFFNI O'GO hAILAINN, the Lottery Presenter

MICHAEL GUNNER, Independent Observer

TED, Studio Handyman

CAMERA

MAKEUP

MAY, Ted's wife

ISABELLE, their daughter

ANNABELLE, another daughter (with a Cinderella complex)

NOBELLE, another daughter

GRANNY

MISS COLDCUT, Housekeeper in the castle

DOTTY, the Maid

CHANTELLE, the Celebrity Chef

BIBI, the sous-chef

BERNARDO, the commis chef

BETTY, the Laundry Lady

JAN, the Gardener

Scene 1: The TV studio of the National Lottery.

Breffni O Go hAilainn, the Lottery Presenter is discussing things with Michael Gunner, the Independent Observer.

BREFFNI So Michael, I was thinking that you might need to stand a little further away from me this evening.

MICHAEL Why so Breffni?

BREFFNI Well, your tie is clashing with my outfit and we can't have that, now can we? *(she flashes him a big smile)*

MICHAEL I don't think the nation of Ireland will mind if my –
(They are interrupted by Ted, the studio handyman)

TED Sorry now, just have to get by you there. *(He carries a toolbox and makes his way over to the stand where the lottery balls will be released.)*

MICHAEL Who are you?

BREFFNI Oh that's just Ted, the studio handyman. How are things, Ted?

TED Not too bad. Just have to adjust the drum here.

MICHAEL What's wrong with the drum?

TED Just a bit wobbly mister, that's all.

MICHAEL It looks fine to me.

BREFFNI Really Michael, will you let it go.

MICHAEL I'm the Independent Observer!

BREFFNI *But you don't have to comment on everything you observe! Honestly! Now, let's get you to wardrobe to change that tie.*

MICHAEL *(as they head off stage)* But my wife bought this tie specially...

TED is now alone in the studio. He looks around nervously as he opens the tube above the drum and removes the balls. He tiptoes over to side stage to check all's clear. He tiptoes back and takes a bag out of his toolbox containing new balls, which he empties into the tube. He is just packing up his toolbox when BREFFNI and MICHAEL arrive back with the Camera and Make-up persons.

CAMERA We're on in 10 seconds Breffni.

BREFFNI *(looking into a hand mirror)* Make up! Shine. On the nose. *(make up person powders Breffni's nose as Ted moves ds taking out his lottery ticket. Michael quickly pulls away the tissues around his collar and looks guilty about his new coloured tie – a perfect match to Breffni's dress.)*

CAMERA 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

BREFFNI Good evening and hello and a thousand million welcomes to you all. We here in Studio 1 wish each and every one of you the very best of Irish luck during this, the nine thousandth anniversary of the National Lottery. I'm Breffni O Go hAilainn and I'm absolutely gorgeous. With me in R-2-3's studio 1 is Michael Gunner, our Independent Observer. Good evening Michael.

MICHAEL Good evening Breffni.

BREFFNI That's right, and sure amn't I a lovely girl as well?

MICHAEL That's what everybody's granny thinks anyway Breffni.

BREFFNI Now enough of this silly talk and on with the gambling! Shall I go ahead Michael?

MICHAEL Release the numbers Breffni.

BREFFNI *(as she presses a button on the drum)* Ah would you look at that? My nails match the colour of the drum. Would you credit it?

MICHAEL A mad coincidence alright. Shall we look at the numbers then?

BREFFNI Yes Michael. The first number is number 1, uimhir a haon.

TED Yes! *(He is hopefully looking at his ticket)*

BREFFNI *Next is number 6, uimhir a se.*

TED Come on! Come on!

BREFFNI And now we have number 17, uimhir a – a – em, that's number 17.

TED *(makes the closed fist gesture of gentle victory often seen displayed by super-golfers)*

BREFFNI *Next up is number 29, number 29.*

TED *(squeaks and shoves his fist into his mouth)*

BREFFNI *Now its number 5, uimhir a cuig.*

TED *(does a little dance of joy)*
 BREFFNI And finally, it's number 30, uimhir a *(pause)* 30.
 TED YES!! Yes! Yes! Yes! *(He punches the air and jumps up and down before running off stage.)*
 BREFFNI Did you observe that, Michael?
 MICHAEL I did Breffni.
 BREFFNI And that's it from us here in R-2-3 where all the famous people hang out. I sincerely hope you all won something tonight.
 Goodnight.
 MICHAEL Goodnight.

Scene 2: The tiny flat where TED lives with his family

Ted's wife MAY and their daughters ISABELLE, ANNABELLE and NOBELLE. We see MAY trying to get dinner organised, ANNABELLE scrubbing the floor and ISABELLE and NOBELLE fighting over a scrap of material. GRANNY is sleeping in the corner.

ISABELLE It's mine!
 NOBELLE It's mine!
 ISABELLE It's mine this week!
 NOBELLE Mum! Tell Isabelle it's my turn!
 MAY Isabelle, it's your sister's turn to wear the nightie.
 ISABELLE But mum! It's so cold this week. It's much colder than it was last week.
 MAY Well, that's the luck of the draw.
 ISABELLE But mum!
 MAY That's it Isabelle! That's what we agreed. We can't afford two nightdresses.
 NOBELLE Humph! *(She grabs the nightie triumphantly)* Told you it was my turn.
 ISABELLE What about Annabelle?
 ANNABELLE I'm just happy to wear the rags I always wear. *(She wipes sweat from her brow and carries on scrubbing)*
 GRANNY Why is that child scrubbing the floor?
 MAY She likes to help.
 GRANNY But it's a carpet. Wouldn't she be better off getting the Hoover out?
 ANNABELLE We don't have a Hoover, Granny.
 NOBELLE Daddy sold it to buy lottery tickets.
 MAY That's enough Nobelle! I'll not hear you say such things!
 GRANNY And why is that child called Nobelle? Surely you meant to call her Noelle?

MAY Ah, I got confused with Isabelle and Annabelle always screaming and crying. When she came along, one more belle didn't make any difference.

GRANNY I think you're losing it May. And where is Ted? The man of the house should be home by this time of day.

MAY He's at work Mammy.

GRANNY Well, at least he might bring home the bacon.

TED I'm home!

GRANNY Did you bring the bacon?

TED I brought more than the bacon. May, whip off your apron! (*He whips it off for her, perhaps spinning her*)

MAY Ted! For goodness sake!

TED Get used to becoming a lady of leisure. May, girls...I did it – I won the lottery! (*Silence*). We're millionaires!

GRANNY Holy moley!

MAY Are you sure?

TED Just checked the numbers! It's true – we're rich! Rich beyond our wildest dreams!

ISABELLE Do we get our own nightdress?

NOBELLE Do we get our own bedroom?

ANNABELLE A bucket of coal will do me, to keep me warm next to the hearth.

TED We'll live like royalty! I won't buy you a nightdress – I buy you the whole shop! We'll live in a castle – you can have your own wing! You'll never have to work again!

ANNABELLE Noooo!

OTHERS Yahoo!

GRANNY But – where's the bacon? I'm famished.

Scene 3: At the Castle.

The Staff are getting prepared to meet the new owners.

MISS COLDCUT, the housekeeper is walking up and down inspecting the other staff: DOTTY, the maid, CHANTELLE the celebrity chef, her sous-chef BIBI, her commis chef BERNARDO, BETTY the laundry lady and JAN the gardener.

MISS COLDCUT By gum you'd better keep that line straight before the new Master gets here or there'll be hell to pay. Feet together. That's better. Chantelle?

CHANTELLE Oui Madam?

MISS CC Why is Bernardo's hat askew?

CHANTELLE (*whispers harshly in 'French' and fixes his chef's hat*) Pardon Madam. (*She whacks him over the head with her tea towel and his hat is askew again*)

MISS CC I expect the new Master and his family any second now. In fact, he was scheduled to arrive two and a half minutes ago, so he is

late. I shall have to speak to him about that. Now! Let me see you all...you'll do. Yes, you'll do.
(We hear a car horn honking outside).

DOTTY *That sounds like them now Miss Coldcut!*

MISS CC Oh dear how common! Honking the horn like that. That's new money for you.

DOTTY *(who has run to look out the door)* I can see them. There's the master now... and the mistress...and

MISS CC Dotty! Get back in line! What has come over you?

DOTTY Yes Miss Coldcut.

MISS CC Stand up straight everyone. Suck in those tummies.

(TED and his family arrive on stage with their suitcases, looking around in awe as the castle's interior. MISS CC greets them, shaking hands with TED, then MAY)

MISS CC Master! Mistress. How do you do? I am Miss Coldcut the housekeeper. Welcome to your new home.

MAY My, this is fancy schmancy.

GRANNY It'd cost a bit to heat a barn like this.

MISS CC Madam! I assure you this is no barn.

TED Lovely to meet you Miss Coldcut. And please, don't call me Master. My name's Ted.

MISS CC I'm afraid I can't call you that, Sir. I shall call you Master, or perhaps Mister, um...?

TED Mooney. Ted Mooney.

MISS CC Mr and Mrs Mooney then?

MAY Oh you can call me Mistress! I don't mind.

GRANNY You can call me what you like, just don't call me too early in the morning!

MISS CC *(laughing falsely)* Well, let me introduce you to the staff. I run a tight ship here Mr Mooney. And I expect everyone to follow my rules...including yourselves. Now, this is Dotty, the general maid.

DOTTY *(curtseying)* Pleased to meet you. I'll be cleaning up after you all.

ANNABELLE *Oh no! Then what will I do?*

MAY Annabelle! Not now!

MISS CC Ahem! And this is Chantelle LeMonde, the celebrity chef. We "poached" her from the TV programme "Make My Dinner".

CHANTELLE Delighted Monsieur, Madame...and you and you and you and you.

NOBELLE Ooooh! Our own chef.

MAY Oh no! Then what will I do?

TED May, I'm sure you can make dinner whenever you want.

CHANTELLE *(greatly insulted)* Mais NON! Nobody enters ze kitchen except me! And of course my sous chef Bibi. Bibi say `ello.

BIBI Ello.

MISS CC I'll do the introductions thank you Chantelle. This is the sous chef, Bibi. Bibi, say hello.

BIBI Hello. Pleased to meet you.

CHANTELLE And my commis chef, Bernardo.

MISS CC The hat! (*CHANTELLE whacks him and the hat sits properly*)
Bernardo?

BERNARDO Bonjour.

ISOBELLE Oh, are you French too?

BERNARDO No.

MISS CC This is Betty, the laundry lady.

BETTY Howeriz doing Mr and Missus? And the auld Granny? And the young wuns?

MAY Ah, sure we're grand, aren't we Mammy?

GRANNY Cuppa tea now, and I'd be perfect.

MISS CC Yes, yes all in good time. Finally, this is Jan, the gardener.

JAN (*holding out her hand to shake*) Welcome to Castle Comfort. I hope you'll be very happy here. I've been planting tulips all morning.

MISS CC (*gasping*) Jan! Your nails! They're filthy!

JAN It's just good old fashioned muck, is all.

MISS CC I'm mortified Mr Mooney! Shall I have her fired?

TOM For dirty fingernails? Certainly not Miss Coldcut.

MISS CC Well then, a tour of the castle and we'll get that nice cup of tea.

GRANNY But me bunions! I'll never get up them stairs.

MAY Come on, Ted will carry you if you get tired.

TED Eh?

MISS CC Now, this is the west wing of the castle, which was built in 1765 by Lord Comfort himself...(*this line said as the family and MISS CC exit. The staff is left standing in a line. They relax when the others are out of view*).

DOTTY I thought they'd never go! What do you think of them?

BIBI I think they're nice.

CHANTELLE Zat woman will never zet fut in my kitchen! Never!

BETTY Ah relax Chantelle! When she gets a taste of your lovely food, sure she won't want to.

CHANTELLE Yes, I am ze best chef in – in –

BERNARDO County Offaly?

CHANTELLE No, in –

DOTTY Leinster?

CHANTELLE No! In –

BIBI Ireland?

CHANTELLE In the world!

BETTY Nothing like a bit of confidence, that's what I always say.

JAN They're the lotto winners aren't they?

DOTTY Yes but I heard that the Master used to be a handyman in R-2-3.

BETTY I heard he worked in the same studio they do the lottery in.

JAN That sounds a bit dodgy.

BERNARDO So long as we have a job I don't care.

CHANTELLE Zat reminds me Bernardo, you have a whole sack of spudz to peel.

BERNARDO Great.

BIBI I'll help you Bernardo.

(In comes MICHAEL, the independent observer. He looks around checking to see if anyone is following him)

DOTTY May I help you?

MICHAEL Yes please. Do you all work here at the Castle?

BETTY Nah, we're going to a fancy dress ball.

MICHAEL Oh, I see...sorry to bother you...*(he turns to go)*

BETTY Ah I'm only joking with you. Yeah, we work here.

MICHAEL My name's Michael Gunner.

DOTTY Hey! Aren't you the guy from the lottery?

MICHAEL *(pleased to be recognised)* Yes I am! I am the Independent Observer.

CHANTELLE *Wot do you want?*

MICHAEL I suspect that *(he checks if anyone is behind him)* Ted Mooney may have tampered with the lottery balls.

BIBI You think he cheated?

MICHAEL I don't have any proof. But I think so, yes.

BERNARDO What do you want us to do?

MICHAEL I want you to be my eyes and ears here in the castle. I can *(little cough)* make it worth your while. *(He gestures money with his fingers)*

JAN we're all ears.

BETTY And eyes.

MICHAEL Great. Ted and May are throwing a lottery ball – that is, a 'party' in a week. Hopefully you'll have gathered enough evidence against them by then. With your help, I can prove that Ted Mooney is a cheat and a thief. I'll see you at the 'ball' in a week.

MUSIC as he exits and the staff disperse. Set up the stage for the Lottery Ball.

Scene 4: The Lottery Ball.

BREFFNI is chatting with MAY downstage right, MICHAEL is chatting with TED downstage left, everyone else is moving around, looking busy. ISABELLE and NOBELLE are at a drinks table in the centre.

BREFFNI Tell me May, where did you get the jewels? Are they real?

MAY I suppose they are Breffni, but sure I wouldn't notice anyway.

BREFFNI Well they're fabulous. Fabulous. Actually, they'd look great with this outfit...

ISABELLE Mum! Nobelle keeps drinking fizzy drinks and making rude noises.

MAY What kind of noises?

NOBELLE *(burps loudly)* Oooh! ExCUSE me!
 ISABELLE That kind of noise.
 MAY Nobelle please! You're embarrassing me. Where's Annabelle?
 DOTTY Mistress, I can't stop her!
 BREFFNI Can't stop who?
 DOTTY Miss Annabelle. She's cleaning everything in sight. I have nothing left to do!
 MISS CC Dotty, please! Hand these out to the guests *(hands her a tray of canapés)*.
 DOTTY Busy again! Thanks Miss Coldcut.
 MISS CC Are the young girls having a nice time?
 NOBELLE *(burps loudly again)*
 MISS CC Delightful.
 MAY I'm so embarrassed.
 MICHAEL So, Ted. Enjoying the high life, eh?
 TED Well we haven't really been doing much. The telly's a bit bigger is all...
 MICHAEL Oh come on now Ted, being as rich as you are...you must be wheeling and dealing all day long!
 TED I help Jan out in the garden a bit. That's about the only wheeling I do. With the wheelbarrow, you know? *(Polite laughter)*

Enter ANNABELLE with her bucket and scrubbing brush. She starts scrubbing centre stage, sighing and looking forlorn.

BETTY Ah come on now love, enough is enough.
 ANNABELLE I don't know what you mean, Betty.
 BETTY Where's your lovely party frock?
 ANNABELLE All I own are the rags I'm standing up in.
 BETTY I'll tell you what...enjoy yourself at the party today, and I'll give you a job in me laundry from tomorrow. How does that sound?
 ANNABELLE *(overjoyed)* Do you mean it?
 BETTY I do. Now run along and try to act normal. There's a good girl.
 ANNABELLE Thanks Betty! *(She runs off with her sisters – quick change backstage before re-entering)*
 GRANNY *(entering the room)* Ooooh! It's Breffni O Go hAilainn! I love her! She's a lovely girl.
 BREFFNI *I am indeed. How do you do?*
 GRANNY Can I get your autosignature?
 CHANTELLE, BIBI and BERNARDO enter. BERNARDO rings a bell and everyone is quiet.

BIBI Ladies and Gentlemen, a word from our chef :
 CHANTELLE *(clears her throat)* Dinner is served.
 TED This way everyone...I think you're in for a treat. *(He looks at May)* A little treat that is.
 MICHAEL Just a minute please! I'd like to propose a toast first.
 GRANNY I love a bit of toast.
 MICHAEL To Ted, who's come a long way from handyman to millionaire.

BREFFNI Michael, for goodness sake.
MICHAEL From handyman in R-2-3...From handyman in Studio TWO in R-2-3...From handyman who I observed tinkering with the lottery drum just moments before the draw...
TED What are you saying Michael?
MICHAEL I'm saying you rigged the whole thing! I don't know how but you're a sneak and a thief and I have proof!
MAY Ted! What's he saying?!
GRANNY Ted give that man his bit of toast and shut him up.
MICHAEL I have my eyes and ears here in Castle Comfort.
Everyone looks around and the staff slowly steps forward.
MICHAEL Jan, the gardener?
JAN I didn't do it! Everyone always says the Gardener did it! Well it's not true I tell you! It wasn't me!
MISS CC Didn't do what?
JAN I didn't spy on Mr Mooney. I couldn't. He's a lovely man and a great gardener.
TED Thank you Jan.
MICHAEL Betty? Dotty?
BETTY Ah...no, I didn't bother meself. Sure there's nothing suspicious about Mr Mooney.
DOTTY He's a very kind man actually.
MISS CC Are you saying you tried to bribe my staff?
MICHAEL I told them it would be worth their while. Chantelle?
CHANTELLE You ask me, I tell Bernardo. He do it. He spy.
BERNARDO Didn't see nothin'.
BIBI Me neither!
MICHAEL But...you have to admit...it looks awfully suspicious.
GRANNY I did it! *(Everyone looks at her)* I made Ted do it. I've been blackmailing him. I told him to change the lottery balls...all the balls were made too big to pass into the drum – all except the six with our numbers on them.
MAY Mammy! Is that true?
GRANNY No...but it wouldn't have been very funny if it was.
TED It's true I've been blackmailed though. I only have a small share of the win.
MICHAEL By whom? Tell us who Ted!
TED I will tell you, because I don't care what happens anymore. It's –
BREFFNI But sure look, does it really matter to any of us here? Ted's a lovely man and his lovely family are happy here, and sure the staff are delighted with them...Michael, do you really need to know?
MICHAEL I suppose not Breffni. I'm sorry I ever started this. *(He looks sadly at his tie)*.
JAN Then Mr Mooney's not in trouble?
MISS CC I sincerely hope not, for everyone's sake.

MICHAEL No...I guess I'll just be quiet from now on.
CHANTELLE Good! Now please! Dinner will be cold!
Everyone exits, adlibbing about the events. TED and BREFFNI are the last to leave.

TED So, my secret is safe?
BREFFNI Yes it is Ted. I'm not giving up my half of the win. *(They shake hands)*
TED Do you think we'll ever get found out?
BREFFNI How can that happen? Sure who else knows? *(They turn to walk away, then stop and turn back towards the audience – perhaps gesture to us to shhhh.)*

T H E E N D

PRODUCTION NOTES:

The TV studio could be set up stage right, while Ted's flat could be set up stage left. Once the TV studio is struck, Granny could be wheeled into the flat from stage right, filling out the space.

Studio: A TV camera, set up on a tripod DSR. The Lottery machine also downstage, a little further centre – the creation of this can be left to the imagination of the class as a project.

Ted's flat: May could be ironing instead of making dinner, which might be easier to set up, but if you can manage it, a freestanding counter with a 'hob' on top would work well. May can stand upstage of it, facing out, stirring something in a pot. Granny can be wheeled in if possible on her armchair, or can hobble in on a Zimmer frame.

The Castle: Doesn't need much furniture – adorn the back wall with fancy drapes. For the Lottery party, set up a drinks table centre. I would suggest a loud burp sound effect or talented stage crew member for the sound of Nobelle's burp – our little girl was just not loud enough for it to be funny.

BLACK SCIENCE

By Emer Halpenny

GENDER: 4 male, 6 female, 2 either male or female

PARTS: 12

RUNNING TIME: The play runs for just under 20 minutes

The play is set in a school on its open day.

CHARACTERS:

MR CRIBBAGE, the school principal, trying to get students to attend the school

MISS PLOTTER, the science teacher, would love a student to win the Young Scientists Competition

GINA, a student who would like to attend the school, bright but embarrassed by her family

VICTORIA, her mother, heavily pregnant

RONNIE, her father – her parents can be played anyway, but hillbilly type characters work well

CHARLENE and

GLORIA, the twins, her sisters, who may go to the school next year, a bit silly

JUDE, a student who may attend the school, very cool.

JULIETTE, a student in the school, very concerned with appearances

SAM, a student in the school, very intelligent and laid back

TOM, a student in the school, takes his work seriously

MAXWELL, a student in the school, likes to 'push' school science lab equipment

Scene 1: The Science Lab

A school science lab – there are three lab desks (centre) set up with various experiments on them. There is a skeleton between the centre desk & the desk stage R. On the wall behind is a large sign saying SCHOOL OPEN DAY and another under it saying VISIT OUR SCIENCE LAB! MISS PLOTTER, the science teacher is at the centre desk, working on an experiment. She is completely engrossed in what she is doing (pouring one substance into another) that she doesn't notice MR CRIBBAGE coming in. He moves quietly until he is just behind her.

MR CRIBBAGE That looks fascinating Miss Plotter!

MISS PLOTTER *(throwing experiment up in the air)* Ahhhh!

CRIBBAGE Goodness! Take it easy Miss Plotter. Your nerves are very much on the edge.

PLOTTER You snuck up behind me, Cribbage!

CRIBBAGE I didn't sneak. I didn't want to disturb your – um, work...*(he is looking at the ruined experiment on the floor)*

PLOTTER Well you did.

CRIBBAGE Hmm?

PLOTTER You did disturb me. I'm very disturbed now Mr Cribbage!

CRIBBAGE Now, now, Miss Plotter. We're all a little nervous today, what with the Open Day.

PLOTTER I don't get nervous. I get busy. I am busy, Mr Cribbage, as you can plainly see.

CRIBBAGE Now don't get testy Miss Plotter. I am merely doing my job. I am Head Master after all. And the families will be here any second.

PLOTTER What families? What are you talking about?

CRIBBAGE Families! Students and their parents. Potential students.

PLOTTER I don't have time for all that nonsense.

CRIBBAGE Possible future 'Young Scientist' Competition winners...I saw some of them in the car park – very intelligent looking...

PLOTTER *(he has her attention. She would love her students to win the Young Scientist competition.)* Well, alright. I'll go along with this charade...

CRIBBAGE Oh, thank you Miss Plotter. Good for you.

PLOTTER Send me down some students from 4A. I'll set them doing some interesting experiments. It will make us look good.

CRIBBAGE Excellent.

Music as the lights fade. Some people move into the area stage R: VICTORIA, RONNIE and GINA, JUDE, CHARLENE and GLORIA. MR CRIBBAGE joins them as MISS PLOTTER exits. Lights up on Stage R as the music fades. They are getting a general tour of the school by MR CRIBBAGE. They try to look interested.

CRIBBAGE And over here we have the overflow underground storage area. It's where the central heating system is. And we have a fantastic variety of school scarves, which for some reason always end up here...*(he is thinking about that as his group get bored and turn away – turning their backs to us)*.. Ah-ha! Yes, lost property I imagine. Anyway – on with the tour! This way everyone, this way...*(he gestures towards the left)*

RONNIE Mr Cabbage –

CRIBBAGE Cribbage.

RONNIE Beg pardon?

CRIBBAGE The name's 'Cribbage'. Not cabbage. Cabbage is a vegetable.

RONNIE I do apologise. Cribbage.

CRIBBAGE Thank you.

RONNIE So, Mr Cabbage, how many students you got here at this fine establishment?

CRIBBAGE There are only 60 students in the whole school, Mr – uh...?

RONNIE Mister'll do just fine.

CRIBBAGE Oh. Yes, all classes are very small. That way they get a fantastic education.

VICTORIA Sure is expensive though.

CRIBBAGE Well, yes...of course, you do pay a little more than most schools, but it's worth it.

GINA Do you have a swimming pool?!

CRIBBAGE No. But we do have a pond in the garden out back.

GINA No pool? But you have an ice rink, right?

CRIBBAGE *(trying to move things along)* Uh, why don't I take you to visit our science lab?

CHARLENE Mom! Do we have to do science?

GLORIA Yeah Mom! I don't want to do science.

CHARLENE Science is for boys!

GINA Charlene that is so not true.

CHARLENE It so is!

GLORIA Yeah!

JUDE Actually, I have no interest in Science, and I'm...very much a boy. *(it is said with an abundance of confidence)*

GLORIA Indeed you are.

GINA Well, I am hoping to enter the Young Scientist of the Year competition.

CRIBBAGE Then I know someone who would love to meet you. Let's move along.

VICTORIA So you have no pool, no ice rink, an out-dated central heating system, a lot of lost scarves and a science lab. That doesn't sound like much. Does that sound like much to you honey? *(to RONNIE)*

RONNIE Well no, it doesn't sound like much. But I'm sure the nice Mr Cabbage has more to show us.

CRIBBAGE This is a very modern school actually. We have a very sophisticated security system in fact.

VICTORIA Oh yeah? What's so great about it?

CRIBBAGE In the unlikely event of an emergency, the security system will completely lock down. No one will be able to get in or out. The power would fail and nothing would work. *(a pause while everyone thinks about it)*

GINA What would be the point of that?

CRIBBAGE *(he is confused for a moment – he hadn't thought about it before. He tries to fob her off)* Oh, I wouldn't expect you to understand my dear. Anyway, time stands still for no man...

GINA Or woman.

CRIBBAGE Let's go.

VICTORIA Charlene honey, grab us a few of those scarves.

Music as they walk across the stage and exit L. Lights down and the STUDENTS enter the science lab : JULIETTE, SAM, TOM and MAXWELL with MISS PLOTTER. JULIETTE and SAM are at the desk stage R and TOM and MAXWELL stage L. MISS PLOTTER is centre, scribbling in a journal.

JULIETTE So I said "I don't care if it's your first day on the job, look at my hair!"

SAM What's wrong with your hair?
 JULIETTE You mean you can't see it?
 SAM See what?
 JULIETTE This is last year's shade. I really worry about you, Sam.
 SAM Don't worry about me. I'm quite happy. Hold this.
(They are working on an experiment as they chat. Perhaps pouring the same substances MISS PLOTTER was pouring earlier)
 JULIETTE Ugh! There's gunk on the outside of this! *(SAM takes it and wipes it clean)*. Thanks.
 SAM You know, I've been looking for a partner for the Young Scientist competition.
 JULIETTE Oh yeah? Any luck?
 SAM Not yet. Want in?
 JULIETTE Absolutely not! Are you crazy? That's like – extra homework!
 SAM OK. Suit yourself. Thought you'd be interested, that's all.
 JULIETTE What's the experiment anyway?
 SAM Nail varnish.
JULIETTE gasps her excitement. She is all ears.
 SAM "Does a simple shade like 'cocoa confusion' change when the wearer undergoes a physical disturbance?"
 JULIETTE Like what kind of disturbance?
 SAM I don't know...like a sudden surge of adrenaline, extreme stress, that sort of thing.
 JULIETTE OK, I'm in. On one condition;
 SAM Which is...?
 JULIETTE Change the shade. 'cocoa confusion' is so –
 SAM & JULIETTE Last year!

MAXWELL Pssst!
TOM looks at him. He looks around. Could he really be psssting Tom when he is sitting right beside him?
 MAXWELL Pssst!
 TOM Are you talking to me?
 MAXWELL *(in a heavy whisper)* Yes I'm talking to you!
 TOM Well why didn't you just say my name?
 MAXWELL Tom.
 TOM Yes.
 MAXWELL *(looks around conspiratorially)* Wanna buy a Bunsen burner? *(he shows TOM one he is hiding in his inside pocket)*
 TOM What? What is wrong with you? Where did you get that?
 MAXWELL It's okay. I didn't steal it.
 TOM Maxwell, you have a Bunsen burner in your pocket. You didn't steal it?
 MAXWELL No. Not exactly; I...came by it.
 TOM I don't want to know. *(he continues working on his experiment, spooning bright green granules into a container)*
 MAXWELL How much do you think I'll get for this?

TOM Who is going to want a Bunsen burner?
MAXWELL You never know. Very handy. Especially if there was a power failure.
TOM Maxwell, take my advice. Keep your head down. Do your work.
MAXWELL I can give you a good price on hydrochloric acid...*(he stands up and starts checking his jeans pockets)*
TOM Tell me you don't have hydrochloric acid in your –
MAXWELL *takes out a pocket calculator and looks questioningly at TOM*
MAXWELL How much?
TOM *(turning back to his work)* I'm not listening to you.
MAXWELL Starch gum?
TOM ignores him. MISS PLOTTER looks over suspiciously.
MISS PLOTTER Something you want to share with us, Maxwell Van Hauton?
MAXWELL No miss. *(he goes back to his experiment)*

MR CRIBBAGE and his tour arrive from USL and move to surround MISS PLOTTER's desk centre.

CRIBBAGE And this is our science lab!
RONNIE It's a mighty modern place. I'm impressed Mr Cabbage.
VICTORIA What do you think Gina? You're the one who knows about science.
GINA I like it.
CRIBBAGE Miss Plotter! There's someone here you might like to meet...*(he introduces her to GINA and her parents. The TWINS amuse themselves by looking around. JUDE moves over to talk to TOM and MAXWELL.)*
JUDE Hey.
TOM Hi. *(he stands up and shakes JUDE's hand)* Tom. This is Maxwell. Don't listen to him.
JUDE I'm Jude.
MAXWELL Hah! Jude the dude!
JUDE Pretty much.
MAXWELL Wanna buy a siphon?
JUDE Yeah actually. I've been on the look out for one.
TOM You're not serious?
JUDE Sure.
TOM What could you possibly want with – it doesn't matter. I don't want to know.
MAXWELL *(handing him the siphon as JUDE hands him an undisclosed amount of cash)* Pleasure doing business with you Dude. Wanna buy a Bunsen burner?
JUDE Uh, no.
MAXWELL OK. Hope you won't regret it.
TOM Thinking of coming to this school?
JUDE Yeah, I thought I might.
TOM Didn't you come with your parents?
JUDE Nah, they're in the Gobi Desert. They're explorers. I pretty much look after myself.
MAXWELL Cool!

JUDE What are you guys working on?
(TOM shows him the experiment and they work on it together)

The TWINS have moved over to JULIETTE and SAM. They watch them for a moment.

CHARLENE Oh look Gloria. They're using 'cocoa confusion' nail varnish.

GLORIA That's so last season.

JULIETTE For your information it's still in season. It won't be out of season till March. Oh My God! *(she realises it is March).* * NOTE : *change the month to suit your production**

SAM It doesn't matter. It 's just for an experiment.

CHARLENE What experiment? Can you do it on me? *(she sits between them and holds out her hand)*

SAM Sure. What sort of mood are you in?

CHARLENE Pretty good, I guess. Bored a little. We don't start here till next year so, we're not really taking any notice, are we Gloria?

GLORIA What's to notice?

SAM Alright, hold still. *(she paints the nails of one of CHARLENE's hands)*

JULIETTE Oh no, that shade does nothing for your complexion.

CHARLENE Well it's all in the name of Science. Doesn't bother me, Platinum Blonde!

JULIETTE *(gasping with shame. To SAM)* I told you!

SAM Platinum Blonde, Ash blonde, Honey blonde...what does it matter?

ALL 3 It matters!

SAM There. That hand is done. Come back to me when you feel different.

CHARLENE Different how?

JULIETTE When you're stressed out, upset, distraught. You know, if you go to the bathroom and catch sight of yourself in the mirror?

CHARLENE is outraged but before she can say anything MISS PLOTTER speaks

PLOTTER *(to RONNIE)* Oh, no, no, no Mr – um...?

RONNIE Mister'll do just fine.

PLOTTER Indeed. Anyway, you're wrong about Bunsen burners. We threw all ours away. What all the modern science labs use these days are hot plates.

VICTORIA Hot plates of what?

PLOTTER Madam, it is an electrical heating element. A source of heat that is much safer to use than a Bunsen burner.

RONNIE How so?

PLOTTER Well, there's no risk of explosion for a start.

GINA Miss Plotter, could we look at the experiments these students are working on?

PLOTTER Of course, I'd be delighted, my prize – er – my award – I mean, my dear.

They move to where TOM, JUDE and MAXWELL are sitting.

PLOTTER Now over here, as you can clearly see, we are working on...Tom – what's wrong with your hot plate?

TOM Nothing. It was working perfectly a second ago.

PLOTTER (*embarrassed, but laughing it off*) If I just press this re-boot button –

MAXWELL No! Don't touch that!

PLOTTER I beg your pardon?

MAXWELL It's – I – don't – please. Don't. Touch. That.

PLOTTER Oh, pish posh! I've worked here for 20 years! I know what I'm doing.

MAXWELL Miss Plotter – believe me – I've tampered with -

PLOTTER And I just pull the lever like so –
There is an explosion sound and the lights flash on and off. The power has failed and the lights go off – for the effect, the lights will flash on and off, then stay on, but dimmed – enough so we can see the action. Actors will have to act blind – as if they are moving about in pitch darkness.
EVERYONE reacts as one would in this situation : they panic until someone calls for calm. Ad lib and improv as you like until –

CRIBBAGE FREEZE! Everybody just freeze right where you are!

VICTORIA Oh my God there's a man with a gun here somewhere!

RONNIE Where is he? I'll get him with this here – with this here – well, whatever this here is in my hand. What is this here in my hand anyhow?
(some unbreakable piece of science equipment)

CRIBBAGE There's no man with a gun. This is Mr Cribbage – appealing for calm. Calm everyone!
Everyone has stopped in their tracks and are looking about them blindly, occasionally waving their hands in front of them.

PLOTTER (*appearing from behind the desk with her hair spiked out and glasses askew*) Never in all my years as a science teacher...I don't know what went wrong...where am I?
TOM, MAXWELL and JUDE now also appear from behind the desk, hair spiked out.

ALL 3 That was cool!

CRIBBAGE Miss Plotter - don't walk!

PLOTTER Eh?

CRIBBAGE Everyone remember – we are in a science lab. Lord knows what's just in front of us.
EVERYONE ad-libs their terror at this.

CRIBBAGE Stop! Stop! Just calm down. Now, I'm going to try and find the door. If it's open, we can try to get out of here.

GINA What do you mean, 'if it's open'?

CRIBBAGE I mean the lock down. Remember – any emergency and the whole place locks down.

CHARLENE We can't get out.

GLORIA And nobody can get in.

VICTORIA Girls! You were listening! I'm so proud. Where are you so I can hug you?

RONNIE Honey! Protect your bump if you're going walking!

CHARLENE Mom! We're over here. Mom? Is that you? *(she has grabbed JULIETTE)*

JULIETTE Ughhh! Get off me! I'm not your mom!

GLORIA I've found you Charlene! *(she is holding the skeleton's hand)*
Your nail varnish is still wet! I have your hand!

CHARLENE Huh? There's nobody holding my hand.

GLORIA Then whose hand am I holding? *(we hear panic rising in her voice)*

GINA Gloria! Don't touch anything! Just keep talking and I'll make my way to your voice.

GLORIA Whose hand is this? I'd really like to know.

GINA Who is holding Gloria's hand? *(silence)* Gloria, what does the hand feel like?

GLORIA Sort of skinny. And cold. Awful cold.

MAXWELL *(laughing)* She's got the skeleton!
GLORIA screams and knocks the skeleton – this action knocks 'the experiment' onto JULIETTE's head, so that she ends up with a bowl on top of her head. JULIETTE screams –

JULIETTE Aghhhhhh! Get it off! Get it off me! It's stuck!

SAM What is it Juliette? What's stuck? Where are you?

JULIETTE Sam! Help me! It's all gooey! I can feel goo all down my face!
(she breaks down in tears)

SAM I'm coming. Just keep on crying – I'll move in that direction.

VICTORIA Has the man with the gun gone away?

CRIBBAGE There is no man with a gun. There's only me – Mr Cribbage – appealing for calm.

JUDE I am so coming to this school!

MAXWELL Hey dude! Wherever you are – wanna buy a zippo lighter?

JUDE Excellent idea. Where are you? Light yourself up with the zippo.

TOM No! Maxwell don't do it! Just in case.

MAXWELL Just in case what?

GINA Just in case you blow us all to kingdom come.

MAXWELL And who are you, Apocalypse girl?

GINA Never mind, Mayhem boy. If gas has escaped, and you light that lighter – we're history.

RONNIE What kind of gas? Because I have to tell you, some gas has escaped from my –

GINA *(cutting him off, quick)* Look, everyone listen. We need to work together.

JULIETTE Who put you in charge?

SAM Ignore her. Go on, whoever you are.

GINA Thank you. First off, everyone stop exactly where you are and don't touch a thing.
(we hear a couple of things drop)

GINA Good. Now, can anyone hear anything? Stay quiet...can you hear a sort of hissing sound? Anyone?

RONNIE Can the hissing be coming from your own body?

GINA No dad. Just hush. Anyone? Any hissing at all?
There is silence, maybe the odd 'no'.

GINA OK. Now – can you smell anything you wouldn't normally smell? A nasty smell?

RONNIE Well, actually –

GINA Not you dad.

RONNIE I'm just trying to help.

VICTORIA Hush up.

JUDE I can smell something.

GINA Ok. Good. What can you smell?

JUDE *(dramatically)* I can smell fear. *(the boys explode with laughter)*

MAXWELL Nice one dude!

GINA Very mature.

CRIBBAGE I'm at the door!

PLOTTER Oh thank God!

CRIBBAGE It's locked.

PLOTTER Oh...no.

JULIETTE Wait! I have an idea!

SAM Juliette, with all due respect, your ideas are –

JULIETTE I can't believe anyone didn't think of it yet!

TOM No platinum blonde ever had a good idea in a crisis.

MAXWELL That is so sexist of you Tom. I'm surprised.

TOM I apologise. I think I'm studying too much.

JUDE And you have the shade wrong. That's no platinum blonde. Why, that would be too last season.

JULIETTE A boy with a sense of style! Where are you boy wonder?

MAXWELL We call him the Dude. And you can't have him.

SAM Juliette, do you have an idea?

JULIETTE Yes! I do! It's so simple.

CHARLENE & GLORIA Well?

JULIETTE Who's got a phone?

EVERYONE Me...

JULIETTE So...

TOM Wait! We still can't see anything.

MAXWELL No problem. By the light of my Bunsen burner...
We hear the sound of everyone phoning – first the beeps of the numbers being crunched, then the ad-libbed conversations...

PLOTTER No! Wait! There are too many experiments in hiatus in here! Please, it's too danger –
Sound effect of a large explosion as the lights go out suddenly.
Music.

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES, SET AND PROPERTIES

The play is set in the school science lab with the exception of one scene. On the back wall is a large poster : SCHOOL OPEN DAY and under it : VISIT OUR SCIENCE LAB!

Three lab desks set up stage left, centre and stage right, all facing towards the audience, with various experiments on them :

On the centre lab desk – a stack of copybooks and a pen, jars of liquid substances (they will be poured one into the other) they can be coloured with food colouring.

On the desk stage right – jars of liquid substances, test tubes, a plastic bowl, big enough to sit on a head. other science looking equipment.

On the desk stage left – test tubes and other containers, some with brightly coloured sand.

Miss Plotter's brightly coloured spiked up wig (same colour as the sand) should be hidden behind the desk. If your budget allows it, you will also need a similar wig for each of the three boys. If not, a jar of strong gel hidden behind the desk will suffice – the students will have just enough time to spike their hair. They may not even need gel. All four actors could smear black face paints on their faces too.

Also on the desk - a hot plate. The 're-boot' button can be out of sight – under the desk for example. A lever type handle can be left on the desk and Miss Plotter can hold it in place with one hand while she appears to pull it with the other.

A full size skeleton stands between the desks centre and right. If you cannot borrow a skeleton from a school or doctor, improvise with some Halloween decorations. Even an improvised skull and other bits will do, but it's important to have at least an arm and hand.

The explosion : You will need to get a recorded sound effect and flash the lights on and off. If you have a smoke machine, now is the time to use it!

The black out : This will be effective if actors simply act as if they cannot see anything. Practice during rehearsals with blindfolds and let them observe each other and how they move. Make sure everyone has something unbreakable in their hands before the line: '...and don't touch a thing...' as we want to hear the sound of several things dropping.

A School Corridor : This can be played in an area to the right or left of the main playing area, or on a stage extension. Several school scarves are strewn about the floor.

COSTUMES AND PERSONAL PROPS

MR CRIBBAGE	A suit and clipboard. A mobile phone.*
MISS PLOTTER	A skirt and blouse. A white lab coat. A mobile phone.*
RONNIE	A tracksuit – zip up top, with a shirt and tie underneath, perhaps Wellingtons. A mobile phone.*
VICTORIA	An 80's style tracksuit, headband. Padding to make her look heavily pregnant. A mobile phone.*
GINA	Jeans and a top, jacket. A mobile phone.*
CHARLENE	Dressed in the height of the current fashion. A mobile phone.*
GLORIA	Dressed in the height of the current fashion. A mobile phone.*
JUDE	Jeans, white t-shirt, black leather jacket or denim jacket. Large wad of cash in pocket. A mobile phone.*
JULIETTE	School uniform, hair perfect. Make up. A mobile phone.*
SAM	School uniform. Nail varnish in pocket. A mobile phone.*
TOM	School uniform. Carry on a hardback book. A mobile phone.*
MAXWELL	School uniform. Jacket with large inside pockets with : a Bunsen burner, some hosing, a siphon, other science stuff. A pocket calculator in trouser pocket. A mobile phone.*

*it sounds obvious but ensure everyone has their phone switched off before the play.