

# Ronnie the Fird

A Play in three acts

by

Keith Passmore



## **Ronnie The Fird**

**Copyright © October 2018 Keith Passmore and Off The Wall Play Publishers**

**<http://offthewallplays.com>**

This script is provided for reading purposes only. Professionals and amateurs are hereby advised that it is subject to royalty. It is fully protected under the laws of South Africa, New Zealand, India, the United States of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion of Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including but not limited to professional, amateur, film, radio, and all other media (including use on the worldwide web) and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved; and any unauthorized use of the material may subject the user to any and all applicable civil and criminal penalties. For any information about royalties or to apply for a performance license please click the following link:

**<http://offthewallplays.com/royalties-and-licensing-of-plays-sold-by-off-the-wall-plays/>**

## **Characters**

(in order of appearance)

Ronnie Mills, a student

Sanders, History Master

Jamieson, a student

Henry Henderson, a student

Jacobs, a student

Rivers, a student

Vaughan, a student

Grey, a student

North, a student

Mr. Simpson, Headmaster

Professor Spindleforth, retired Professor  
of History

Yvonne Brookman, ex - College Matron

Burrows, a student

Bayliss, student and first XI Cricket  
captain

Linda, Henderson's girlfriend

Emily, a cleaner

Dorothy Clamp, Simpson's secretary.

Brigadier Henderson

## Ronnie the Fird

### Synopsis

The play is set at Weatherly College, a fictitious public school in the south of England during the early 1960's.

Ronnie Mills, a street wise Londoner, aged 16 years, whose parents were killed in a motor car accident is sent to the college by his wealthy grandfather. Ronnie is a keen student of History and has a great interest in The Plantagenet kings, particularly Richard III. The students pick up on Ronnie's interest and nickname him 'Ronnie the Fird' (partly using his vernacular). He is admired by retired college Professor Spindlethorpe who views Ronnie as a mature young man and a useful tool in helping to solve the social problems at the college.

Ronnie's first social engagement is with a college bully, Henry Henderson, the son of a wealthy army officer and a benefactor of the college. Ronnie is subjected to a bout of name calling and punches Henderson, knocking him to the ground, and narrowly escapes expulsion from the college.

Henderson seeks revenge and Ronnie is involved in a series of confrontations with Henderson and his cohorts, including Jacobs, Henderson's right hand man. The situation culminates in Ronnie's new found friend Jamieson being forced to fall from a balcony and admitted to hospital in a coma. The college is informed by the police that there is no evidence against the alleged bullies, who were cleverly disguised, and no evidence of an attack was found on Jamieson's body. The police regard the matter as being part of a schoolboy prank by all those involved. However, a knife discovered close to the place where Jamieson fell reveals its owner as a member of Henderson's gang and Ronnie helps to solve the problem and expose the members of the gang.

The play almost ends in tragedy when the Professor is shot and wounded by Jacobs, who is charged and committed to a mental hospital and Henderson is severely reprimanded by his father and with the threat of enrolling him at a military college the following year.

Happily, the college problems are resolved and Ronnie is 'crowned' by the students as Ronnie the Fird.

There are number of interesting characters in this play, young and older, particularly the Professor and the Headmaster, Mr. Simpson who, if he had

been more assertive and an effective leader, may have prevented this play from being written.

#### Production Notes

Each scene is clearly defined throughout the script, including the descriptions of the characters.

Apart from Simpson and The Professor's rooms, the other scenes are set in Lighting Spots and simply furnished.

Time: Early 1960's

Place: Weatherly College, semi – rural south of England

Costumes: All costumes should depict the fashion of the era.

Scene 1: The History classroom – a Wednesday morning in late spring.

*The stage is empty apart from at C where there is a school desk and chair.*

*Ronnie, who is 16 years of age, stocky, has pale skin, dark hair and wears the college dark blue uniform sits at the desk with an open text book and exercise book. He sucks at his pen and stares at a page in his exercise book.*

*Mr. Sanders, the History master stands behind at Ronnie's right shoulder, peering at his work. Sanders is in his thirties, tall, slim and has thinning fair hair. He wears a neat dark brown jacket, fawn trousers, brown tie over a cream shirt and brown shoes.*

*Ronnie sighs and closes his exercise book.*

*Mr. Sanders opens the exercise book, picks it up and shows Ronnie the page while tapping it with his finger. Ronnie shakes his head, places his hands behind his head and leans back in his chair.*

Sanders: *(irritably)* Don't slouch, sit up.

*Ronnie looks up at him and slowly drops his hands and sits up looking at the page.*

Sanders: You've only attempted one question.

Ronnie: S'right...sir.

*Sanders reads aloud from the book.*

Sanders: No matter what I write it'll be wrong, so what's the point? The question is a load of bollocks.

*A chorus of raucous laughter and giggling can be heard from the rest of the class of boys, who are not on stage and therefore have been created by a sound effects system.*

*Sanders turns to the class*

Sanders: *(raising his voice)* That's enough!

*The class becomes quiet after murmurs.*

*Sanders resumes his attention on Ronnie*

Ronnie: *(miserably)* It is sir! A load of....

Sanders: *(quickly interrupting)* Alright, alright. *(he sighs heavily before replying)* I was under the impression you enjoyed history.

*Ronnie does not respond*

Sanders: Well?

Ronnie: Not when it's wrong sir.

Sanders: True or false, that's what makes history fascinating. In most cases it's extremely difficult to prove that an historical fact or incident is true or not. However, if you can persuade an examiner or a reader with a convincing argument, you should succeed.

Ronnie: Yes, sir you've already told me that, but all the bits and pieces and quotes, which are often difficult to find...

Sanders: *(interrupting and firmly)* You must always support your argument.

Ronnie: But the so called you know, supporting fingies....

Sanders: *(again interrupting)* The evidence?

Ronnie: In my opinion the evidence is wrong. Richard the First was without doubt a great Plantagenet King!

Sanders: *(sighs)* Richard the Third, boy.

Ronnie: That's what I said, Richard the First.

*He gives Sanders a look of incredulity, as Sanders sighs loudly and shakes his head. The boy chuckles.*

Sanders: Just finish the exercises.

*Ronnie responds with a grimace aimed at Sanders; which Sanders fails to observe.*

*The bell rings. Unnoticed shuffling of and slamming of desks, and chatter can be heard. Sanders addresses the darkened empty stage as Ronnie stands and closes his books.*

Sanders: OK everyone, finish the questions for homework, due on Monday of next week. See you tomorrow, period three, when we shall move into the Tudor age.

*There are groans from the darkness followed by the sound of noisy exiting.*

*Ronnie walks slowly to exit carrying his books, except one.*

*Sanders picks up the book and calls after him*

Sanders: Come here.

*Ronnie crosses to him. Sanders flicks through the book.*

Ronnie: Sir?

Sanders: Be careful what you say, there are some dubious characters in this class.

Ronnie: Really sir?

Sanders: Heed what I say Mills, watch it. *(handing him the book)* D'you know, I think we could make you into a pretty good historian. We must have a further chat about your views on Richard the Third. Close the door on your way out.

*Sanders crosses UL to exit*

*Ronnie turns to him and scoffs*

Ronnie: I don't fink so. Wiv respect sir, you know nuffing about 'im.

*Sanders laughs briefly*

Sanders: Cheeky devil. Don't forget, keep a low profile, lad.

*Sanders exits*

*Ronnie slowly crosses to exit UL when Jamieson enters UL.*

*Jamieson is seventeen, average height, ruddy faced and his brown hair is neatly combed with a pronounced parting. He is dressed smartly in the college uniform. He carries some books.*

*Jamieson holds out his hand, which Ronnie, slightly embarrassed, shakes.*

Jamieson: I'm Jamieson. You must be the new boy.

Ronnie: Yes, my name's Ronnie, er, Mills.

*Jamieson smiles*

Jamieson: Pleased to meet you. As you've probably been told, we call each other by our surnames here, but if we become good friends, in private you can call me Dan, not Daniel and never Danny, which I hate. Shall I call you Ron or Ronnie should the occasion arise?

Ronnie: Ronnie.

Jamieson: You probably didn't notice me, but I was in the History class. It's not the best, socially and...

Ronnie: *(interrupting)* Socially?

Jamieson: If you're not a member of the in crowd, you definitely won't fit in.

Ronnie: And I s'pose you're not.

*Jamieson nods*

Ronnie: Sanders told me to watch it.

Jamieson: He's right. Stay away from the likes of Henderson and his followers. Sanders does his best, but he's far from being a disciplinarian. History can sometimes be disastrous.

Ronnie: What's the problem with Henderson?

Jamieson: I won't go into details; in this place walls have ears. Anyway, d'you enjoy sport?

Ronnie: Football, in the winter.

Jamieson: Well, that's out. Rugby's the sport here.

Ronnie: I enjoy cricket.

Jamieson: Oh good, I might be able to get you into one of the teams. Batsman or bowler?

Ronnie: All-rounder. I open the bowling some of the time. I bat number six.

Jamieson: That's jolly good.

*He turns to exit UL and Ronnie follows him.*

Jamieson: We'd better get to our next lessons. I've Science, for my sins. What about you?

Ronnie: My worst subject I fink, Latin.

Jamieson: What d'you mean, you think?

Ronnie: I 'aven't 'ad it before. I don't fink I'd be good at it.

Jamieson: Come on, *(he raises an arm and his voice)* Let's seize the day! Carpe diem!

Ronnie: Carp? 'Ave you tried seizin' such a bloody big fish?

*They laugh and exit. The Scene ends as the lights go down, but they quickly come up on the next Scene.*

Scene 2: A corner of the Quad. Later the same morning.

*A spot comes up on Ronnie as he enters R carrying books. Henderson and Jacobs enter the spot behind him. Henderson is seventeen, tall with light brown wavy hair and an attitude of superiority. Jacobs is a tall, dark haired wiry seventeen-year-old, also superior in attitude. They are both dressed in school uniform. Jacobs is Henderson's sidekick.*

Henderson: Well, if it isn't the great Latinate.

*Ronnie turns to them*

Jacobs: It means you are a fine Latin character.

*Henderson and Jacobs chuckle*

Ronnie: I've never learned Latin

Henderson and Jacobs (*sarcastically, together*) No?

Jacobs: We wouldn't have guessed.

Henderson: Well, we won't be seeing you again for Latin.

Ronnie: Probably not.

Henderson: What are you doing here, anyway?

Ronnie: I'm `ere to learn just like you.

Henderson: Just like me? You're nothing like me. In fact, you're nothing.

*Jacobs laughs*

*Ronnie shakes his head slowly and turns to cross L when the spot widens on a group of four boys, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey and North all dressed in College uniform as they enter L in front of Ronnie. Rivers is sixteen, short and stocky and has untidy black hair. Vaughan is the same age, taller and skinny with reddish hair. Grey is seventeen, of average height, dark and with a dull complexion. North is also seventeen, slim, fairly tall and has brown hair.*

Henderson: Hallo lads. Meet the new recruit. Not only is he a disaster in Latin, he's useless at History. Richard the Fird we call him.

*The boys laugh and begin to taunt him*

Boys: Richard the Fird! Richard the Fird! Richard the Fird!

*Ronnie crosses in front of them and sticks up two fingers at them.*

*The boys laugh again and Henderson approaches Ronnie and pushes him from behind. The boys cheer. Ronnie ignores the push and is about to continue walking L when Henderson approaches him from behind again.*

Henderson: What 's the matter? Would you prefer to be called Ronnie the Turd?

*The boys laugh and Henderson places his hands on his hips and grins. Ronnie stops walking but does not turn. He looks down at the ground.*

The rest of the boys: Ronnie the Turd! Ronnie the Turd! Ronnie the Turd!  
Ronnie the Turd!

*Henderson raises a hand to stop the chant at the same time grinning at Ronnie. Henderson draws nearer to Ronnie and prods him in the back with his fingers and places his hands on his own hips again.*

Henderson: Well Ronnie the Turd? What've you got to say for yourself?

*The rest of the boys' laugh and taunt Ronnie with more jeers, such as 'Useless', and 'Turd'.*

*Ronnie turns slowly and without warning hits Henderson hard on the chin with his fist. Henderson falls to the ground. The other boys gasp. Ronnie stands over Henderson.*

*Spot off and Lights down quickly*

Scene 3: The Headmaster's Office - the next day, Thursday morning.

*The stage is empty except for a desk and leather armed wooden chair CL. The Headmaster of Weatherly College in the south of England, Mr. Simpson is seated in the chair. He is tall, in his early sixties, has smartly groomed silvery hair, wears a light grey suit, a blue tie over a white shirt.*

*On the desk is a large blotter, upon which is a folder. A small pile of books is on the upper right corner and a decorative lamp and telephone on the left hand side. There are two wooden chairs UC.*

*Ronnie stands at the other side of the desk with his hands behind his back.*

Simpson: You're a very fortunate young man, Mills. You could've broken Henderson's jaw.

*Ronnie looks up at the ceiling.*

Simpson: Well boy?

Ronnie: What d'you want me to say sir?

Simpson: *(irritably)* Don't you feel any remorse?

*Ronnie looks down at the floor*

Ronnie: No, not really. 'E deserved it. 'Enry 'Enderson's a bully, sir.

Simpson: *(firmly)* And what does that make you?

Ronnie: Sir, if I came running to you and complained about 'is calling me names, what would you fink of me? You'd tell me not to be stupid and stick up for meself. That's what I did.

*Simpson shakes his head slowly*

Simpson:*(gesturing to the wooden chairs)* Pull up a chair and sit.

*Ronnie crosses and moves a chair to the desk and sits.*

Simpson: Henderson's father could have insisted on your being expelled. I told him this was your first offence and happily, he was prepared for me to deal with the matter in my own way.

Ronnie: And what about 'is son? What if I provided some sort of evidence of 'is bullying? Would you do anyfing?

*Simpson clears his throat*

Simpson: *(unconvincingly)* Er, I would look into it, yes.

*Ronnie sighs and discreetly looks away, unimpressed.*

Simpson: More importantly, what do we do with you?

*Simpson stands and crosses behind Ronnie rubbing his chin.*

Simpson: I'm not going to punish you as such, but if it happens again or something similar occurs, I shall have no alternative, but have you expelled.

*Ronnie shifts round at him*

Ronnie: *(quietly)* I don't want that sir.

*Simpson crosses to the desk and picks up an exercise book, scans the pages and replaces the book on the pile.*

Simpson: I've had a look at your work books and History appears to be your best subject. I believe it would be to your advantage if I put you in the care of our man of History, the legendary Professor Spindleforth.

Ronnie: Yer, I've 'eard of 'im.

Simpson: You won't forget him either; I can assure you. *(He smiles)* Although he no longer lectures, he's remained at the college and lives within the campus. We've a special regard for him. He'll take your mind away from this mess and away from Henderson and his merry men. Of course, I should inform your grandfather of your misdemeanour, since he is the one who sent you here.

Ronnie: *(quickly)* Don't do that sir. E'd be devastated.

Simpson: Yes, I daresay he would be. In that case the onus is on you. Stay out of trouble. If you don't it'll be the end of your time here at Weatherly College. I'll not inform your grandfather of the current incident, but next time I'll have no option. Is that clear?

Ronnie: *(relieved)* Fank you, sir!

*Simpson is about to sit at his desk, but instead remains standing, looking down at Ronnie.*

Simpson: Fank you? Good heavens, we must work on your diction!

*Lights down*

Scene 4: Professor Spindleforth's study - the next day, Friday morning.

*A simple setting.*

*At C is an old sofa which bears a number of old books, in front of which is an old coffee table littered with newspapers and periodicals.*

*Slightly DL angled DR is a tired leather armchair and slightly DR is a wooden armed chair angled DL. There are exits L and R.*

*The rest of the stage is unlit.*

*Ronnie enters R cautiously and calls.*

Ronnie: 'Allo?

*He enters the room, stops and looks around.*

*At that moment Yvonne enters hurriedly L, smoothing her printed dress which she wears to just below her knees. She also fusses with her shoulder length hair. She is in her early forties, attractive and speaks softly, but assuredly.*

*She stops C and addresses Ronnie quizzically.*

Yvonne: Hello. I'm sorry, was the Professor expecting you?

Ronnie: 'Er yes. Praps I should've waited, but the door was unlocked and so I...

Yvonne: *(interrupting and smiling)* Please, that's alright.

Ronnie: 'Er shall I come back later?

Yvonne: No, no, make yourself at home. He should be here soon.

*She gestures towards the wooden armed chair DR.*

*Ronnie crosses and sits in the wooden armed chair*

*Offstage R is the sound of heavy footsteps on stone steps.*

*Ronnie stands, wipes his hands on the sides of his thighs and looks R towards the sound.*

*Professor Spindlethorpe enters R, breathing heavily. He carries a bulky leather briefcase which has seen better days. He is a portly, ruddy faced early septuagenarian of average height. His shock of dark hair is turning white and could do with a trim. His shiny, dark grey suit hangs on him and his pink shirt is undone at the neck allowing part of his shirt collar to stick out over his lapel. He also wears black socks and brown, scuffed shoes. He has a soft, clear, refined voice, but he is inclined to raise it in moments of annoyance and frustration.*

*He speaks directly to Yvonne, tapping his briefcase*

Professor: Sorry I'm late Yvee (*pronounced Eevee*) I just had to pick up some more books (*smiling*) One should never allow the mind to suffer.

*Yvonne smiles. She remains standing and watches him*

Yvonne: You have a visitor.

*The Professor crosses in front of Ronnie without looking at him and drops the briefcase beside the armchair. He falls into the armchair, groans and wipes his face with a chubby hand.*

*He looks across at Ronnie and studies him briefly.*

Professor: I'm sure Yvonne helped you to make yourself at home. Well, as much at home as you could be, I suppose.

*Ronnie is confused.*

Ronnie: Sir?

Professor: Never mind. Mills is it?

Ronnie: Yes, sir.

Professor: I knew a Mills once, taught him, member of a circus family. Not related are you?

Ronnie: No Sir. My grandfarver owned a scrap metal business in Rover'ive.

Professor: Did he now? Rotherhithe, London. Became rich, no doubt.

Ronnie: Self-made millionaire.

Professor: (*slightly sardonically*) Is he? We must make ourselves known to him shouldn't we Yvee?

Yvonne: (*Smiling broadly*) We might be able to buy that lovely thatched cottage in the Cotswolds.

*The Professor chuckles and clears his throat.*

Professor: Does he speak like you? Gutter language?

Ronnie: Er, I'm not sure, but where're you from sir, the English countryside, Home Counties?

*Professor is slightly taken aback*

Professor: I suppose I am, why?

Ronnie: My grandfarver used to say, people from those parts speak as if they 'ave plums in their mouvs and look down at people like us. 'E told me 'e 'ad to prove 'e was just as good as them or better and 'e reckoned 'e was, by a mile.

*Yvonne smiles broadly*

Yvonne: Good for you, young man.

*Professor laughs heartily and then bursts into a bout of coughing. He takes a large handkerchief from his coat pocket and blows his nose. He clears his throat.*

Professor: I suppose I deserved that.

Yvonne: Yes, you certainly did.

Professor: I admire honesty, provided it's not clothed in rudeness. Tell me, what about your parents?

Ronnie: They're both dead sir. Motor accident.

Yvonne: Oh dear, how terrible for you, poor lamb.

*She crosses and stands close to Ronnie and places her hand briefly on his shoulder. Ronnie looks at her and smiles, embarrassed.*

Professor: I'm sorry. I must have missed it in your file.

Ronnie: Two years ago it 'appened. My Grandfarver took care of me and later on 'e said I was good fodder for this place, so 'ere I am.

Professor: Well, your records suggest you're far from stupid. Now Mills...

Ronnie: *(interrupting)* Ronnie, sir.

Professor: No. I shall always address you as Mills. It prevents familiarity.

Ronnie: If you say so, sir.

Professor: Now sit down; you're making the room more of a mess than it already is.

Yvonne: And who makes the mess I wonder?

*The Professor ignores her remark*

*Ronnie sits in the wooden armed chair.*

Yvonne: Aren't you going to introduce me?

Professor: Oh, I apologise! Mills, *(he smiles)* Yvonne Brookman is my delightful housekeeper. You may call her Yvonne if she doesn't mind. She detests formality.

Yvonne: *(smiles)* Indeed.

Professor: She used to be the college matron, but the powers that be decided, rather narrow mindedly, that matrons were no longer a requirement of the college. We now have to send our sick or injured specimens to the local hospital or call upon the local quack, god forbid. As for the boys' pastoral and motherly needs, well...

Yvonne: *(interrupting)* He does go on doesn't he?

Ronnie: *(to Yvonne)* Pleased to meet you.

*Yvonne smiles*

Yvonne: Likewise; *(with some sarcasm)* the Professor rescued me from the threat of starvation and here I am; for the moment anyway.

*The Professor laughs*

Professor: Hardly starvation and much more than a moment I should hope.

*The Professor and Yvonne share a smile.*

*Ronnie looks at them quizzically.*

*The Professor reaches down to the brief case and places it on his lap. He undoes the case and takes out a cardboard file. He replaces the brief case and opens the file. He struggles with and puts on a pair of glasses which he takes from the inside pocket of his suit. He reads the file.*

Yvonne: Shall I leave you two to get on?

Professor: *(dismissively, without looking up)* Yes, why not.

Yvonne: *(to Ronnie)* No doubt we shall meet again.

*Ronnie stands*

Ronnie: That'd be nice.

Yvonne: *(to the Professor, without malice)* The boy has good manners, which is more than can be said for you.

*The Professor is too busy reading to respond.*

*Yvonne sighs, shakes her head, nods and smiles at Ronnie and exits briskly L.*

Professor: *(calling to her)* A cup of coffee would be welcome! *(to Ronnie)*. You've been here two weeks. Didn't take long to make an impact did you?

Ronnie: Impact sir?

*The professor ignores his response.*

Professor: Your father was a painter and decorator. Is that correct?

Ronnie: When 'e got work, yes. E' was a good painter and 'e also did some gilding. He worked at Oxford University one time and took me up there and proudly showed me 'is work. I'll never forget that.

Professor: And your mother, what did she do for a living?

Ronnie: She worked for a baker before she married and afterwards she worked part time in a grocery. Home and Colonial.

Professor: Your father was never invited to work for your Grandfather then?

Ronnie: No, I dunno why. I fink my dad wasn't impressed with Grandfarver's involvement in supplying metal for munitions during the war. My dad wondered who was actually getting it, the allies or the enemy. P'raps both.

*The Professor smiles knowingly*

Professor: Yes, I can imagine.

Ronnie: I get on famously wiv my Grandad. 'E encouraged me to do as well as I could at school.

Professor: A wise man. Please sit down.

*Ronnie does so.*

*The Professor continues to read.*

Professor: Interesting, your father's name was Ronald.

Ronnie: No, Ronnie.

Professor: Oh, yes I see, and so too was your grandfather.

Ronnie: S'right, both Ronnie.

*The Professor smiles and closes the file. He chuckles.*

Ronnie the Turd. *(he continues to chuckle)*

*Ronnie looks up at the ceiling and clasps his hands. The Professor realises he has touched a nerve in Ronnie and takes off his glasses.*

Professor: I do apologise, but it is a comical expression under the circumstances; I mean your fixation or obsession with Richard the Third.

Ronnie: *(indignantly)* It's not an obsession, sir. It just so 'appened I 'ave strong views about 'ow 'istorical characters 'ave been treated and Richard the Fird is one of 'em. Even Shakespeare portrayed 'im unfairly in his play.

Professor: Well, he had to impress the Tudors somehow to earn a living.

*He smiles and studies Ronnie briefly as Ronnie sits back in the chair.*

*The Professor puts on his glasses and continues to read the file and without looking at him continues to address him.*

Professor: Have you considered becoming a pugilist?

Ronnie: You mean a boxer?

Professor: It seems you have a very effective right hook.

*Ronnie suddenly stands and half turns his back on the Professor.*

*Ronnie tries hard to control his annoyance.*

Professor: Have I offended you?

Ronnie: I don't like people takin' the mickey.

Professor: Taking the mickey? No, no, I'm perfectly serious. If you're able to look after yourself, and it appears you are, you might like to join the College Boxing Club. They'd welcome you with open arms.

*Ronnie turns to him*

Ronnie: I'm not interested... sir. I want to try and forget what 'appened.

Professor: Yes, of course, but personally, I wish you'd knocked the shit out of him.

*They look at each other and burst out laughing. They control themselves and the Professor crosses to Ronnie and taps the file on Ronnie's chest.*

Professor: How many subjects do you share with Henry Henderson?

*He moves away slowly*

Ronnie: Only 'istory and Latin and I see 'im at tutor groups.

Professor: Well then we'll have to keep a look out for you.

Ronnie: 'Ow long will it go on for; I mean this sort of protection you 'ave in mind?

*The Professor turns to him*

Professor: We'll play it by ear. Your movements will be monitored, don't worry.

Ronnie: Why should I be worried?

Professor: Henderson'll be out to get you, you know.

*Ronnie scoffs*

Ronnie: That's a bit sort of over dramatic, don't you fink?

Professor: He's caused a great deal of grief to others in the past. The boys, including his cohorts, are wary of him. He has an adverse effect on the college community. Personally, I want him driven from our midst as soon as possible. Unfortunately, his father has a great deal of influence, money talks you know, but if we can expose the young man's true colours to others that matter, we might succeed in getting rid of him.

Ronnie: You want me to act as a sort of bait then?

Professor: In a way, yes.

Ronnie: Surely other students could 'elp?

Professor: Having read your portfolio and listened to you, it's clear you are more worldly. Most of the boys here belong to a cloistered way of life, relying on their wealthy families, having their noses and arses wiped by over indulgent parents who are often at their beck and call. The boys would rather submit to Henderson having his way.

Ronnie: What about the 'ead and other masters?

Professor: I shouldn't really say this in front of you, but you see, apart from the Head, well, to some extent, they simply lack the strength and skills to

deal with the situation effectively. Even in the classroom Henderson and his cohorts disrupt lessons in deceitful ways. Anyway, apart from my teaching you History in the short term, your life at the college would proceed as normal.

Ronnie: What if one or more of the students complained?

Professor: Nobody has and probably never will if we allow the situation to continue. The students are fearful of any repercussions.

Ronnie: Well, if I get involved, what if nuffing `appens?

Professor: Wonderful! Let's live in hope. Now Mills, let's talk about History.

*He returns to the armchair and sits and drops the folder next to the briefcase.*

Ronnie: I don't `ave my books.

Professor: No matter. Period one tomorrow will do for written work.

Ronnie: It's Saturday tomorrow.

Professor: Oh, so it is. What are you doing in the morning?

Ronnie: Playing cricket.

Professor: For the College?

Ronnie: Yeah, for the first team.

Professor: (*surprised*) Really? Are you any good?

Ronnie: (*indignantly*) Yes, I am.

*The Professor smiles*

Professor: (*impressed*) I'm pleased to hear it.

Ronnie: The team is short this week and I've been asked to play. I love cricket so I said I would. I'm an opening bowler.

*The Professor gives a nervous laugh.*

Professor: Henderson is sure to be opening as well.

Ronnie: (*sarcastically*) That could be fun then.

Professor: Well, I'm not so sure.

Ronnie: If you're goin' to ask me to drop out, forget it sir. I'm keen to play and I can look after meself.

The Professor: Then take care boy, I want you in this room on Monday. I don't want to be waving farewell to you.

Ronnie: *(assuredly)* I'll be fine sir.

*The Professor attempts a brave smile*

Professor: Good.

*He leans forward as if he were about to take Ronnie into his confidence*

Professor: Today, let's talk History.

*At that moment Yvonne enters L with a tray of cups and saucers and a coffee pot.*

Yvonne: *(smiling)* Coffee?

Professor: Excellent Yvee.

Yvonne: Ronnie, would you make a space on the coffee table?

Ronnie: Course.

*He crosses to the coffee table and removes a number of periodicals and newspapers, which he places underneath it. He assists Yvonne in placing the tray and items on the table. The conversation continues while this is happening.*

Yvonne: Thank you Ronnie.

Professor: He's quite domesticated, isn't he?

Yvonne: Then you should take note.

Professor: Well done Mills. Do you enjoy coffee?

Ronnie: Not much.

Professor: What a shame. You'll find it's part of Weatherly College life.

Ronnie: *(faking innocence)* Why, is there a course on coffee?

*The Professor laughs and Yvonne beams a smile.*

Professor: Oh, very good. Yes, there should be, it would suit a few of our misguided students.

*At that moment there is a knock on a door off stage and Simpson enters.*

Simpson: Ah, you all appear to be enjoying yourselves. *(acknowledges Yvonne)* Yvonne, good morning.

*She smiles*

*The Professor struggles to his feet.*

Professor: Headmaster, what a pleasant surprise.

Simpson: Please sit, Professor.

*He does so.*

Professor: Coffee?

Simpson: Perhaps in a moment. Mills, I hope you haven't been overwhelmed by the Professor.

*Yvonne pours and gives a cup of coffee to the Professor.*

*Ronnie shrugs*

Ronnie: Not really.

Simpson: *(a little taken aback)* Well, that's a good start.

Professor: We've had some interesting discussion.

*He sips his coffee.*

*Simpson briefly studies them both*

Simpson: I'm pleased to hear it. *(to Ronnie)* Now Mills, I'd like you to leave so that I can have words with the Professor and Yvonne, er, Miss Brookman. Er, give us an hour, would you?

*Ronnie looks across at the Professor.*

Professor: Yes, Mills find a beverage in the refectory you might find more appealing.

Ronnie: An hour did you say?

Simpson: Yes. Good lad

*Ronnie exits slowly R.*

Simpson: *(to the Professor)* How did you get on with young Mills?

*The Professor smiles and stands*

Professor: He's an interesting lad. I shall look forward to future discussions with him. Now Headmaster, what is it you want? We're all ears, aren't we Yvee?

Yvonne: Of course. *(she smiles demurely)* are you ready for your coffee Headmaster?

Simpson: No, no thank you. I am in a quandary, er Ernest.

*Professor looks at Yvonne who smiles knowingly*

Professor: Really?

Simpson: Yes. Two things. I've just had a meeting with Lennox, our young Geography teacher. He's handed in a letter of resignation.

Professor: What on earth for?

Yvonne: What a pity. He's such a nice young man.

Simpson: He said he's had enough trying to control one of his classes, which consists of Henderson and some of his friends. It seems everything came to a head yesterday morning when Henderson snidely remarked that Lennox, forgive me for mentioning this, had been seen passionately kissing Yvonne within the college grounds. The class immediately collapsed into raptures of laughter, which Lennox failed to disperse.

Yvonne: That's absolutely pathetic! I'm old enough to be his mother.

Professor: How outrageous!

Yvonne: It was Lennox's birthday. I hugged him and kissed him on the cheek, admittedly in front of a number of students. When I explained it was his birthday they shook him by the hand and I walked away.

Simpson: Perhaps not the most appropriate greeting though, Yvonne.

Yvonne: Oh for goodness sake!

*She crosses to the coffee table and pours herself a cup of coffee and drinks.*

Simpson: Well, we are dealing with immature...

Yvonne: *(interrupting)* With respect Headmaster, I was once Matron here. I don't need to be lectured on the minds of adolescents.

*Simpson clears his throat.*

Simpson: Of course not.

Professor: Yvonne mentioned the incident to me in passing. Hers was an innocent reaction.

Simpson: Yes, under normal circumstances.

*Yvonne throws him an incredulous look and slowly shakes her head.*

Professor: You mentioned two things, Headmaster.

Simpson: Alas, Lennox was treated to a series of allegations of misconduct by yourselves, thrust upon him by the boys. I shan't go into details. It's unnecessary at this stage anyway.

Professor: What!

*Yvonne laughs incredulously*

*The Professor stands, crosses to the coffee table and places his cup and saucer on it and confronts Simpson.*

Professor: *(beside himself)* Well, let's go and confront the little bastards and sort this out.

Simpson: Please, calm yourself. You know that would be entirely inappropriate.

Professor: I'm certainly not going to let this go!

Yvonne: You made reference to 'at this stage', Headmaster, what were you getting at?

*Simpson clears his throat*

Simpson: You're not going to like what I'm about to say.

Professor: *(angrily)* Everything you've said already, has been despicable.

*Simpson sighs heavily*

Simpson: One of the boys discussed the situation with his parents by telephone and as a result I was asked for my comments. Additionally, two other parents contacted me just before I came here and demanded a meeting to discuss the situation.

*The Professor and Yvonne look at each other in amazement.*

Professor: And?

Simpson: I'm seeing them tomorrow.

Professor: Saturday?

*Simpson nods*

Professor: Then we shall be there.

Simpson: No, it would make matters worse. Let's hear what they have to say. However, the two parents I spoke to this morning questioned your relationship and wanted to know why you were living together.

Professor: What? Did you explain we don't live together; we share the accommodation. I pay for Yvonne's keep, out of my pension and investments and I also pay the rent, at a low enough rate I know, but that is it.

Yvonne: And I contribute part of my small savings. Without the Professor's help I don't know where I'd be.

Simpson: You don't have to convince me dear. *(to the Professor)* The other parent mentioned that his son seemed to think that you preferred the company of younger women.

Professor: What?

*Yvonne laughs hysterically.*

Yvonne: My word!

*The Professor gives a brief, noisy laugh.*

Professor: Thank God I don't have such feelings for you my dear, I'd be dead by now!

Yvonne: *(scoffing, without malice)* If you'd been given the chance, of course.

Professor: Huh, I daresay! We have to sort this out.

Yvonne: Of course, but the Headmaster's right. We should carry on as normal. Let him have his meeting and if the worst happens ....

Professor: *(interrupting)* Then I shall consult my lawyer.

Simpson: Heaven forbid! I'm sure it won't come to that.

Yvonne: It's all been conjured up by immature pimply faced adolescents. It's a fuss about nothing.

Professor: If necessary, you can inform the parents of my intention, and I do mean it Headmaster.

Yvonne: No, no, no, that won't do. Headmaster, please let us know the result of your meeting as soon as possible.

Simpson: Of course.

Professor: *(without malice)* Thank you for ruining my day Headmaster. I shall go to the village later and get pissed in the Hare and Billet.

Simpson: You take care Ernest; I don't wish to hear about any allegations of drunkenness. And now I think I shall have that coffee.

Yvonne: It'll be cold. I'll get some more.

*She goes to exits L with the coffee pot.*

*Simpson calls after her*

Simpson: Try not to dwell on the situation my dear.

*Yvonne stops, turns to him and smiles.*

Yvonne: There's nothing for me to concern myself.

*Simpson smiles*

*Yvonne exits*

Professor: Tell me Headmaster, will Henderson's father be present at the meeting?

Simpson: I'm not sure, but it wouldn't surprise me if he turns up.

Professor: The reason I asked is that Mills is playing cricket for the first team, tomorrow.

Simpson: *(at first concerned)* Oh dear. *(smiling)* However, Henderson sometimes excels at cricket. I should think he'll behave, especially if he knows his father's here.

Professor: I hope you're right.

*Lights Down*

Scene 4 – The Cricket Dressing Room- the following day, Saturday.

*A simple setting in a wide spot*

*RC is a trestle table upon which are a few cricket bats, gloves and pads.*

*LC is a bench and U of which is a coat stand bearing items of college uniforms and cricket wear.*

*DC are two angled wooden chairs. The rest of the stage is unlit.*

*There are exits R and UL*

*Burrows is seated on one of the chairs, removing his wicket keeping gloves, pads and boots. He is a short, curly blonde haired seventeen-year-old. He wears cricket whites and a cricket jersey which is too big for him.*

*Bayliss, Jamieson and Ronnie enter R*

*Bayliss is the team captain and is smartly dressed in his whites. He is seventeen years old, tall, dark haired and fairly broad.*

*Ronnie is in his whites, but his trousers are a little short for him and his shirt tight. He sports a fast bowler's red stain on the inside right leg of his trousers. He stands apart from the others with his hands in his pockets.*

Bayliss: *(to Burrows and slapping Ronnie's back)* Our new boy here bowled bloody well. What d'you think David?

*Burrows crosses to table and deposits his pads and gloves.*

Burrows: Oh yes, marvellous! Well done Mills.

Ronnie: Fanks.

*Jamieson crosses to table and shifts the gear and sits on the edge of the table.*

Jamieson: I must say Mills; you can swing a ball both ways. *(he demonstrates the out and in swinging ball with his hand)* Ninety-six for four. Couldn't be better. We're certainly in with a chance. *(to Ronnie)* Played much in the past?

Ronnie: Sort of.

*The others look at each other, a little disappointed with his brief response.*

Burrows: Well anyway, it looks as though we've found ourselves a fine opening bowler. Isn't that right skipper?

Bayliss: *(smiling broadly)* It does seem that way, David. Come on lads, let's have lunch, it should be ready by now. Mills, don't forget to take your boots off before you enter the pavilion.

*Ronnie kneels and takes off his boots. Bayliss and Jamieson do the same.*

*Ronnie stands, holding his boots and trying to conceal the large hole in his sock. Bayliss and Jamieson place their boots underneath the table. Ronnie follows suit.*

*Jamieson looks down at Ronnie's feet*

Jamieson: A holey sock Mills?

*Ronnie nods, embarrassed.*

Jamieson: *(smiles politely)* Nothing worse.

*Ronnie responds with a weak smile*

Bayliss: We're fielding very well today lads. *(he scoffs)* It's quite remarkable.

Burrows: Where're the others?

Jamieson: Lining up for lunch I should imagine.

Bayliss: I hope they don't eat too much. We must play our hearts out this afternoon.

*At that moment Henderson enters R with Jacob. The latter wears the college uniform.*

*The other boys, except Ronnie, are wary of them.*

Jamieson: Have you had lunch already Henderson?

Henderson: Don't be bloody silly. *(to Bayliss)* Bayliss, you took me off too early, why?

Bayliss: No, I don't think I did. I want you fresh for the after lunch session.

Henderson: You kept Mills on far too long. I was in a position to see them off. You took away our complete advantage.

Burrows: In my opinion Mills was bowling very well and seemed stronger.

Henderson: Nobody asked for your opinion. Keep out of it Burrows.

*Burrows and Jamieson look at each other and shake their heads slowly and move away.*

Henderson: You should ask me how I'm feeling before you take me off, d'you hear?

Ronnie: Anyway, we 'ave 'em on the ropes.

*Henderson glares at him and Jacobs prevents Henry approaching Ronnie by grabbing his arm. Henderson sneers at Ronnie, who smiles and shakes his head.*

Jacobs: Come on Henry.

Henderson: *(to Bayliss)* You make sure I'm bowling immediately after lunch.

*Bayliss nods without looking at him.*

*Henderson follows Jacobs and they both exit R*

Jamieson: Well that was a merry interlude.

*Bayliss crosses R*

Bayliss: Come on lads, I think it's time we had lunch.

*The others follow him and exit R*

*Spot off and Lights down*

Scene 5 – The Cricket Dressing Room – in the afternoon of the same day.

*The sound of a lavatory being flushed off L followed by a cistern filling.*

*Ronnie enters slowly UL into a wide spot. He is still in his whites and wears his boots. He carefully sits on one of the chairs DC. He exhales noisily and cradles his head in his hands.*

*At that moment Jamieson quickly enters R, also in his whites.*

*Jamieson crosses to Ronnie*

Jamieson: Are you OK Mills?

Ronnie: *(without looking up)* What're you doin' 'ere?

Jamieson: Skipper asked me to find you. A sub is on for me. D'you want me to get a doctor?

Ronnie: No, I'll be alright. What's the score?

Jamieson: We'd be batting now if you'd carried on bowling. When you took number six's middle stump out the ground, wow! And when you suddenly disappeared at the end of the over I couldn't believe it. Then I saw you, moving like a rocket!

Ronnie: Yer and so did me guts. I asked, what's the score?

Jamieson: When you left it was ninety-seven for five. Now it's a hundred and seventy-three for six.

Ronnie: What about Henderson, didn't he bowl?

Jamieson: Yes, he was hit all over the place. Now he's fielding in the deep. *(he laughs briefly)* No doubt sulking. Never mind about him, are you OK to carry on?

Ronnie: I feel so bleedin' weak. I don't fink I'd make it to the lav next time.

Jamieson: D'you reckon someone spiked your food?

Ronnie: I 'ope not, but if it was it must 'ave been the dessert. All that chocolate pud and ice cream.

Jamieson: I'm glad I had the fruit then. *(Jamieson rubs his chin)* I wonder...It could've been a bloody awful prank.

Ronnie: What d'yer mean?

Jamieson: There was a spate of food tampering at the College about six months ago. Someone stuffed the pudding with a hell of a strong laxative and half the college queued up at the lavs for nearly a week. The powers that be, couldn't prove who did it. We all thought it was Henderson and his gang and I wouldn't be surprised if he did the same to you.

Ronnie: He was with us, 'ow could 'e 'ave done it?

Jamieson: He's a nasty swine and he would have been prepared. He's friends with one of the kitchen staff. I've seen him in the town with her on at least two occasions.

Ronnie: Her?

Jamieson: Yes, she's a good looker too, a bit drippy though and he has powers of persuasion, of course.

Ronnie: Nah, sounds too much like an Agatha Christie plot. I don't fink so some'ow.

Jamieson: You'd be surprised.

*At that moment Burrows enters breathlessly R wearing his wicket keeping gear, but he carries his gloves.*

Burrows: Come on Jamieson, they're nine down and the skipper says if you don't take the field now you won't be able to bat when it's our turn. We're in the middle of another drinks break. God, it's hot out there.

Jamieson: OK, will do. What's the score?

Burrows: Sod the score, hurry up! What about you Mills?

*Ronnie shakes his head*

Jamieson: Forget him, he's too rough to resume.

Burrows: Oh shit.

Jamieson: Exactly.

Ronnie: *(He groans and rises slowly, at first)* Oh no. *(he rushes to exit UL)*

Spot off and *Lights down*

Scene 6: A College Garden – later the same day

*A simple setting in a wide spot DC where there is a park bench and a rubbish bin L of it. The rest of the stage is in darkness.*

*Linda, a pretty, nervous, quietly spoken sixteen-year-old brunette of average height, is seated on the bench eating a snack.*

*Jamieson enters R carrying his cricket bag and bat strapped to it. He is smartly dressed in school uniform. He stops when he sees Linda.*

*Jamieson throws his bag onto the bench, which startles Linda. Jamieson places a foot on the bench and looks down at her. Linda shifts along the bench away from him.*

Linda: What's wrong with you?

Jamieson: Finished for the day?

Linda: Yes, why?

*He scoffs, moves his bag to the end of the bench and sits and leans back with his arms stretched across the back of the bench. His right hand touches Linda's shoulder. She tries to shift further away without success.*

Linda: D'you mind?

*She finishes her snack and dabs at her mouth with a handkerchief*

*Jamieson smiles at her.*

Jamieson: Aren't you seeing him this evening?

Linda: Who?

*Jamieson laughs briefly*

Jamieson: Your boyfriend.

Linda: Boyfriend?

Jamieson: You've seen a lot him lately, haven't you?

Linda: I don't know what y'mean. In any case, what's it to you?

Jamieson: You know who I mean.

*Linda stands and Jamieson forces her back to her place on the bench. She gives a little yelp.*

Jamieson: You know full well what I'm driving at. Lover boy Henderson.

*Linda laughs nervously*

Linda: You must be joking.

Jamieson: No, I've seen you with him on at least three occasions, in the College grounds and in the village.

Linda: If it were true, is it any of your business?

Jamieson: It becomes my business when a talented member of our team nearly landed up in hospital. He could have been poisoned.

*Linda, alarmed, suddenly rises.*

Linda: Poisoned?

*She turns her back on him and makes to leave.*

Jamieson: Stay where you are.

*Linda stops and turns to him*

Linda: Who d'you think you are, telling me what to do.

Jamieson: (*quickly*) Come on, who put you up to it?

Linda: You're mad!

Jamieson: Why did you do it? Did Henderson force you to?

Linda: I don't know what you're talking about. Just leave me alone.

Jamieson: I shall get the truth out of you one day, or someone will, d'you hear?

Linda: I said, leave me alone!

*She runs and exits L*

*Spot off. Lights down and up quickly onto the next scene*

Scene 7: The College garden - later the same afternoon.

*The setting is the same as in the previous scene in a wide spot.*

*The Professor enters L. He is wearing a cream linen suit, a pale yellow shirt opened at the neck, a Panama hat and brown shoes which have seen better days. He carries a brown paper carrier bag.*

*Simpson enters DR. He wears a green and brown check sports jacket and light brown trousers and shoes.*

Simpson: Back so early from the public house Ernest?

*The Professor doffs his hat before replying*

Professor: The pub? Closed! Two hours ago, Headmaster. Opens again at five.

Simpson: I'm glad I found you. I said I'd report back after my meeting.

Professor: I'd clean forgotten about it...of course, what happened?

Simpson: Good news! The parents accepted that it was teenage tomfoolery. They are convinced there's nothing sordid between yourself and Yvonne or otherwise.

Professor: (*disappointedly*) Oh, in some way I am a little saddened, but when I look in the mirror each day I can understand why.

*He laughs and Simpson smiles broadly.*

Professor: (*cheerfully*) But I'm pleased. Thank you Headmaster. Perhaps we should celebrate when the Hare and Billet re-opens.

Simpson: Oh, no, no, no. I have a dinner engagement this evening with one of the parents.

Professor: No offer in my direction I suppose, after all that's happened?

*Simpson smiles and clears his throat.*

Simpson: Off to purchase a bottle of wine.

Professor: Off licence is not open until five.

Simpson: Of course. Damn.

Professor: I must hurry along to tell Yvonne the good news. She'll be so pleased.

Simpson: She knows, I told her half an hour ago.

Professor: You know how to wet one's powder, don't you Headmaster. (*tapping the carrier bag*) I should have bought some celebratory caviar with this fish. (*sardonically*) Have a delightful dinner Headmaster.

Simpson: Yes, thank you Ernest. Er, by the way, there's something else I had to mention.

Professor: Oh?

Simpson: There were two council members at the meeting and they referred to the rent for your accommodation.

Professor: (*knowingly*) Go on.

Simpson: They considered an increase in rental.

*The Professor shakes his head and laughs briefly.*

Professor: They obviously hope that might be the solution for my leaving.

Simpson: No, it might appear to be the case, but you must agree you've enjoyed a very fair rental over time.

*The Professor sighs heavily*

Professor: (*sardonically*) Thank you Headmaster. I suppose you've told Yvonne.

Simpson: No, of course not. You're the tenant. Anyway, I'll keep in touch Ernest.

*He turns and crosses to the DR exit and turns back to The Professor upon hearing his response.*

Professor: I shall await the outcome and in the meantime (*he taps the carrier bag again*) I shall enjoy this skate and a very good Chablis. It could be my last.

*Simpson waves a hand in farewell and exits DR*

*The Professor removes his Panama hat, scratches his head, smiles wryly and looks in the direction of the departed Simpson.*

Professor: (*to himself*) You have a jolly good time Headmaster.

*Spot off and Lights down*

Scene 7: The Quad – dusk the same day

*The lighting widens to reveal a simple setting. The stage is empty, apart from a paved narrow sloping walkway UL which leads to a landing where there is a balcony with a stone balustrade. There is also a park bench at DR.*

*There are four exits – R, L, DR and UC.*

*The stage is dimly lit in a rosy hue to depict a setting at dusk.*

*The College clock chimes seven o'clock as Jamieson, his hands in his pockets enters R. Jamieson sports a jersey over a blue shirt and wears light linen trousers. He looks at his watch and crosses to the park bench. He stands by the bench and checks the time again.*

Jamieson: (*to himself*) Mills is late. I hope he hasn't had a relapse.

*He sighs and is about to sit on the bench when out from the evening shadows, five figures dressed in black hoods, capes, black face masks, black gloves, black shirts and jeans appear from R, L and DR. and approach him. Three of them carry wooden clubs crudely made from tree branches.*

*Jamieson backs away from the park bench and carefully watches the figures as they approach him. The figures consist of Jacobs, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey and North.*

Jamieson: What is this?

*Without speaking the figures surround him.*

Jamieson: Who are you? What d'you want?

*Jacobs approaches him rapping a club into the palm of his hand.*

*Jamieson scoffs*

Jamieson: Whoever you are you've obviously been watching too many gangster films at the local flea pit.

*The others circle him and Rivers and Vaughan come up behind him and go to hold his arms behind his back*

Jamieson: Oh no you don't!

*Jamieson breaks away and backs away from the whole group. Rivers and Vaughan draw knives while the others approach him with their clubs.*

Jamieson: Come on then hit me. Carve me up with your pen knives! I think I know who you are.

*The attackers take a cue from Jacobs and slowly shake their heads.*

*Jamieson turns and runs up the sloping walkway chased by two of the figures, Rivers and Vaughan. He enters the balcony and stops at the balustrade. He turns to his pursuers and realises he cannot avoid them when Rivers and Vaughan approach him and stop. Below the walkway the others rap the clubs into their palms, creating a steady beat. Jamieson backs away from Rivers and Vaughan. Rivers rushes at him and in a brief struggle Jamieson falls over the balustrade, crying out.*

*There is no further response and Rivers and Vaughan look over the balustrade and run down the walkway to the others, panic stricken.*

*Jacobs threatens Rivers with his club and gestures to them all to leave.*

*Ronnie quickly enters R.*

Ronnie: What's going on!

*North comes up behind him and hits him across the back with his club. Ronnie falls to the ground. Rivers, who is not carrying his knife checks his belt, but Vaughan pulls him away and the whole group exit R, L and DR*

*Ronnie slowly clammers to his feet and looks about him, stretching his back.*

*Suddenly there is a woman's scream from UC off and Ronnie makes his way up the walkway, holding his side. and looks over the balustrade.*

Ronnie: *(calling)* Jamieson!

*Lights down quickly*

Scene 8 – Another part of the Quad

*The stage is in darkness except for a wide Spot in which there are four large paper sacks, which are full of paper and cardboard CR and Jamieson, who is draped over the sacks on his back with his right leg over two of them and the other on the ground at the front. His arms are spread-eagled and his head touches the ground.*

*Ronnie enters from UC and enters the Spot. He surveys the scene and observes Jamieson. Emily, the cleaner, looks down at him.*

Ronnie: Oh my Gawd!

*He hurries and carefully kneels beside him.*

Ronnie: Can you `ear me Jamieson?

*Emily, a Female Cleaner, is simple minded, aged about thirty and dressed in overalls. She holds a paper sack, which she drags behind her.*

Emily: What's goin' on? Scared the life out of me `e did!

*Ronnie looks up at her.*

Ronnie: Go and call an ambulance. Quick!

Emily: I wanna know `ow `e came to be `ere.

Ronnie: He must've fallen from the balcony.

Emily: What? *(she utters a short incredulous laugh)* Drunk was `e? Tryin' to act like a man no doubt.

*Ronnie stands, wincing at the pain in his back*

Ronnie: *(firmly)* I'll ring for an ambulance. Where's the nearest phone?

Emily: *(Pointing R)* In the office.

Ronnie: Stay `ere and keep an eye on `im.

Emily: There's no one there. The phone is on the table; you can't miss it.

*Ronnie exits R*

Emily: *(calling after him)* Don't be long, I've got jobs to do. I pack up soon. I've nearly done me six hours. It's nearly dark.

*She looks at Jamieson and sniffs loudly.*

*(to herself)* He doesn't look too good does he? I dunno', these students. They drive me up the wall.

*She fusses with a sack next to Jamieson and places it in the sack she had earlier been dragging, when she observes the knife on the ground. She drops the sack.*

*She stoops to pick up the knife and looks across towards exit R*

Emily: A knife! 'E's bloody stabbed 'im, that's what 'e's done!

*Ronnie enters the Spot from R.*

Ronnie: It's on its way.

*Emily backs away from him, brandishing the knife*

Emily: Stay away from me. Don't come any closer.

Ronnie: Where d'you find that?

Emily: You don't fool me, murderer, but don't worry I'm not goin' to scream again, unless you move.

Ronnie: Was it in or near the body?

Emily: You know full well what 'appened.

Ronnie: Did you take it out of the body?

Emily: What a thing to say. As if I'd do that. You probably did though, after you stabbed 'im.

Ronnie: Don't be so bloody silly.

Emily: I ain't silly! *(pointing the knife at him)* Don't you ever call me silly again!

Ronnie: *(calmly)* Alright, I'm sorry.

*Ronnie shakes and scratches his head and looks over at Jamieson whom he approaches and kneels beside.*

Ronnie: I fink he's breaving.

Emily: Lucky for you 'e is then, ain't it.

*Ronnie stands and slowly approaches Emily*

Ronnie: *(firmly and quietly)* Give me the knife before you 'urt yourself. Please.

*Emily chuckles and takes a step back*

Emily: What? I might be simple, but I wasn't born yesterday.

*At that moment Yvonne, wearing a smart, light summer overcoat and carrying a shopping bag enters the Spot from L*

Yvonne: Ronnie? Emily? Emily, what are you doing working so late?

*Emily turns to Yvonne, still holding the knife. Yvonne gasps*

Yvonne: Emily!

Emily: *(beside herself)* I didn't stab him! 'E must 've done it! I didn't! Don't blame me! I'm no murderer!

*Yvonne looks at Ronnie, horrified. Ronnie bows his head and drops to his knees holding his back. Emily shudders and drops the knife. She drops to her knees, sobbing.*

Emily: *(through her sobs)* I'm just Emily; I ain't no murderer.

*Spot off and Lights down*

End of Act One

## Act Two

Scene 1: The Headmaster's office two days later.

*The office is set as in Act 1 Scene 3.*

*Simpson is seated at the desk, running a pencil through his fingers and on the other side, at an angle to the audience The Professor is seated on a wooden chair. The other wooden chair is UC.*

*The Professor sips at his coffee cup.*

Professor: *(placing cup and saucer on desk)* You need to buy some decent coffee, Headmaster *(grimacing and raising himself from the chair and sitting)* and some decent furniture.

*Simpson completely ignores his remarks and places the pencil beside the blotter. He sits back and runs his fingers through his hair.*

Simpson: The situation isn't the best is it Ernest?

Professor: Forgive the cliché, but they do say some things are meant to try us. Any news about Jamieson?

Simpson: Still in a coma. Oh, if only Mills had sent for me at the same time as he called for an ambulance. Things wouldn't have been so public.

Professor: Come now Headmaster, Yvonne and Mills helped save the poor boy's life.

*Simpson sighs noisily and picks up the pencil with which he taps the desk sharply. He suddenly throws it across the desk.*

Simpson: Ernest, I've no idea how the police investigation is progressing. The police consider that Jamieson's attackers may have been members of a gang from the other side of town. Apart from searching the college for the attackers' disguises they are disinclined to interview our students at this stage.

Professor: They need to put the fear of God into them. Why would any gang want to attack any of our students? There's no monetary gain in it. It's helpful that Mills turned up when he did otherwise we'd have no information.

Simpson: Unless....

Professor: *(interrupting)* Yes Headmaster?

Simpson: I simply make the observation that perhaps he hasn't told the complete truth.

*The Professor shakes his head*

Professor: You disappoint me Headmaster. Yes, the boy comes across as a rogue, no doubt because of his background and the manner in which he communicates, but I am convinced of his truthfulness, even if you doubt it. I think I'd better be going.

*He crosses R to exit*

Simpson: *(dejectedly)* I was merely thinking aloud, Ernest.

*The Professor turns to Simpson.*

Professor: Generally, a dangerous thing to do, Headmaster.

*He goes to exit R. There is knocking off R.*

*Simpson sits up and quickly tidies his desk. The Professor stops.*

Simpson: Come in!

*Simpson's secretary, Miss Dorothy Clamp, enters briefly. She is in her early thirties, short and neatly dressed in a white blouse, grey skirt, stockings and high heels. The Professor stops.*

Dorothy: I'm sorry to disturb you, Headmaster, Professor, but young Mills and Miss Brookman have arrived.

*Simpson clears his throat.*

Simpson: Yes, please ask them in. Thank you Dorothy.

Professor: In that case I shall stay.

*Dorothy smiles and exits R*

Simpson: You misunderstood me Ernest.

Professor: I hope so.

*Yvonne and Ronnie enter R*

*Ronnie is in college uniform and Yvonne is dressed in a colourful blouse with a long beaded necklace, brown skirt, stockings and low casual tan shoes.*

*The Professor smiles broadly.*

Yvonne: Any news of Jamieson?

*The Professor shakes his head.*

Simpson: Nothing I'm afraid. Mills, bring up a chair for Miss Brookman.

*Ronnie crosses UC and brings the wooden chair to the desk. Yvonne crosses and sits.*

*Simpson crosses to his chair at the desk and sits.*

*Ronnie steps back and listens to the conversation.*

*The Professor remains R, watching them.*

Simpson: Professor, Won't you sit?

Professor: I've done with sitting, thank you Headmaster. Mills, how's your back?

Ronnie: A bit bruised, but I'm alright, fanks.

Professor: You were lucky it wasn't your head.

*Ronnie smiles*

Ronnie: When I told my grandfarver, 'e said it would 'ave knocked some sense into me.

Professor: Are you sure you didn't notice anything, which might've suggested that one of the attackers was a student?

Ronnie: It all 'appened so quickly. As I said earlier, I'd arranged to meet Jamieson that evening and ....

*Simpson holds up his hand to indicate that Ronnie need not continue*

Simpson: What I can't understand is the presence of the knife.

Yvonne: It was obviously dropped by one of the attackers, yet not one stab wound was found on Jamieson.

Simpson: Mills, what were you doing there in the first place?

Professor: Oh, really Headmaster.

Yvonne: Ronnie has explained everything to you and the police.

Simpson: Yes, yes, but are sure that you've told us absolutely everything.

*The Professor sighs impatiently and looks at the floor. Yvonne looks up at the ceiling and then at her hands.*

Ronnie: I'd 'ad the runs, and I decided to go for a walk. Sittin' in my room didn't seem to be doin' me any good. I've told you the rest. I didn't recognise any of the attackers. I was 'it from behind. I 'ave my suspicions, but I didn't mention it to the police as I 'ad no proof who they were.

Professor: I'm sure we have the same suspicions, Mills. *(to Simpson)* How Mills got the runs is another incident we should be investigating. *(firmly)* I really do think you should stamp out the niceties, haul up Henderson and company and have it out with them.

Simpson: I don't think this is the right occasion to discuss the situation.

Professor: Some determined action, might impress Mills. Eh, Mills?

*Ronnie looks at the floor.*

Simpson: We'll see what happens with Jamieson and what action the police intend taking.

Professor: *(exasperated)* God help us.

*Simpson clears his throat*

Simpson: Was there something you wished to discuss with me, er Miss Brookman?

Yvonne: No, no. I was enquiring after poor Jamieson.

Simpson: We are all very concerned, my dear.

*The telephone rings*

*Simpson reaches for the receiver and speaks into the phone*

Simpson: Hello! Aha. Yes, I'll hang on. *(he places a hand over the receiver and speaks to the others)* It's the hospital. Quite coincidental Yvonne.

*The others stir in anticipation*

Simpson: *(into the phone)* Yes sister, Simpson speaking. Jamieson? Yes, what's the story?... *(his face lights up)* He's back with us? Oh marvellous! *(the others in the room show relief)* Wonderful news. What's that? .... Oh yes, he would be. That's understandable. No visitors at this stage, apart from his parents and the police, but you'll keep me informed, won't you? If you can of course.... Yes, I do understand. Thank you so much.

*He replaces receiver and falls back in chair*

Simpson: What a relief! He's out of the coma, but very weak, of course.

Yvonne: I shouldn't think he'll remember much at this stage. Don't expect an awful lot from him.

Professor: Quite, but at least we can move forward with a view to putting everything to rights.

*The telephone rings. Simpson picks up the receiver and speaks into it.*

Simpson: Simpson speaking. Oh, hallo. Yes, the hospital rang a few moments ago... Right, yes, yes, that's fine by me... No, no I shan't make any announcements. Mum's the word. Of course. Thank you, goodbye.

*He slowly replaces the receiver and speaks to the others.*

Simpson: That was the police. We are privy to Jamieson's recovery. At this stage, anyway. Mills, you must not utter a word to anyone. Do you understand?

Ronnie: No sir, I won't.









