

# **I WAS ADORED ONCE TOO**

A n adaptation for the stage

by

**STUART HENSON**

*from the short story by*

**Jan Mark**

**SchoolPlay Productions Ltd**

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

I WAS ADORED ONCE TOO

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## I WAS ADORED ONCE TOO

An adaptation from a story by **Jan Mark**  
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*SCENE 1. A school hall.*

*The set is simply the stage, but seen from the rear. Traverse curtains represent the front of stage curtain. Stage lighting suspended visibly above. The audience sees the stage, the back of the wings, and part of the hall beyond. Centre R. the prompter's chair. Down R. the backs of various pieces of scenery, labelled with act & scene numbers, paintpots, brushes etc. Down L. a large raised feature: a platform with a ladder and behind it a confusion of old-fashioned dimmers, cables & plug-sockets, representing the stage lighting gallery. Taped up above it, a hand-written lighting plot.*

*(When the play begins, the stage and auditorium are plunged into total darkness).*

*Voice of **Birkett**: In the beginning Birkett created heaven and earth. (Pause) And the earth was without form, and void; (Pause) and darkness was upon the face of the deep!*

*Voice of **Howell**: For goodness' sake get on with it, Birk!*

*Voice of **Newton**: Yeah. C'mon, Birk! It don't take that long to mend a fuse!*

*A crash, and howls of annoyance as a chair is knocked over in the darkness. SPOTTY is hopping around in agony.*

*Voice of **Spotty**: Aw me shin! Me shin! I'll be off games for a month with this!*

*Voice of **Birkett**: (triumphal) And the spirit of Birkett moved upon the face of the waters. . . (snap of fuse in socket) And Birkett said , Let there be light: (He throws the master switch.) AND THERE WAS LIGHT!*

*(The stage is bathed in a dazzling wash of light. The coloured battens and floods - an important part of the set - are trained towards the real audience. COSGROVE is standing, script in hand, down R. looking up at the lighting gallery. HOWELL is up C. sitting on a small cushion. He is talking to NEWTON. SPOTTY, the A.S.M., is sitting by the upturned chair, nursing his shin. MR. ANDERSON and the rest of the cast are seated beyond the footlights in the dim regions of the school hall).*

**Cosgrove:** Not bad, not bad. Now let's see you make Adam and Eve!

**Mr. Anderson:** When Birkett has finished trying to blow his head off, perhaps we can get on with the rehearsal! Okay then! WHEN you're ready, Suzanne, we'll take it from line 143.

**Howell:** *(throwing the cushion at COSGROVE)* C'mon Cozzy, get yer beer gut on. And remember this time it's Twelfth Night, not Saturday night at the Bricklayers Arms. Sir Toby's supposed to be tipsy in this scene, not paralytic!

**Newton:** Talk about over-doin' it! Can't you remember what you really get like? *(to COSGROVE)* We'll have to get him properly tanked up on the night - it's the only way to get an authentic performance out of him!

*(NEWTON turns to slip off L. As he goes he runs into SUZANNE, who is hurrying back on to the stage. She pushes him off huffily, and he pouts his lips in mock kisses at her as he goes. SPOTTY takes up his prompt-book, rights the chair and sits on it by the stage curtain. The ACTORS take up their positions. For the 'Twelfth Night' excerpts they must remember to play across the stage, presenting their backs to neither the real audience nor the imaginary one).*

**Suzanne as Maria:** Sweet Sir Toby, be patient for tonight: since the youth of the count's was today with my lady, she is much out of quiet. For Monsieur Malvolio, let me alone with him: *(Out of character, HOWELL raises his eyebrows at COSGROVE)* if I do not gull him into a nayword, and make him into a common recreation, do not think I have wit enough to lie straight in my bed. I know I can do it.

**Cosgrove:** *(He has pushed the cushion up his jumper, and is still over-acting as SIR TOBY)* Possess us, possess us, tell us something of him.

**Suzanne as Maria:** Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of puritan.

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** *(He has tucked his trousers into his socks to make himself feel more Elizabethan)* O! if I thought that I'd beat him like a dog.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** What, for being a puritan? thy exquisite reason, dear knight?

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** I have no exquisite reason for't, but I have reason good enough.

**Suzanne as Maria:** The devil a puritan that he is, or anything constantly but a time-pleaser; an affectioned ass, so crammed as he thinks, with excellences that it is his ground of faith that all that look on him love him; and on that vice in him will my revenge find notable cause to work.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** WHAT wilt thou do?

**Mr. Anderson:** No, Cosgrove! Get it right. Make it sound natural: 'What wilt thou

DO?'

**Cosgrove:** (*Piqued by the criticism, mimics*) What wilt thou DO?

**Suzanne as Maria:** (*She has been told to animate this speech by pointing to each part of the anatomy mentioned, and by imitating MALVOLIO'S gait - which she does, rather obviously and woodenly*). I will drop in his way some obscure epistles of love; wherein, by the colour of his beard, the shape of his leg, the manner of his gait, the expresseure of his eye, forehead and complexion, he shall find himself most feelingly personated. I can write very like my lady your niece; on a forgotten matter we can hardly make distinction of our hands.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Excellent! I smell a device.

**Spotty:** (*interrupting*) Gesture!

**Cosgrove:** (*turning to him*) What?

**Spotty:** You forgot the gesture! I wrote it in last time. Mr. Anderson said you got to put your finger on your nose.

**Cosgrove:** (*angry*) How'm I ever going to get into this part if I'm always interrupted! (*Turning back, but insinuating the gesture at SPOTTY*) Excellent! I SMELL a device.

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** (*same exaggerated gesture*) I have't in MY nose too.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** He shall think, by the letters that thou wilt drop, that they come from my niece, and that she is in love with him.

**Suzanne as Maria:** My purpose is, indeed, a horse of that colour.

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** And your horse would make him an ass.

**Mr. Anderson:** It's a JOKE, Howell! Try to make it sound funny!

**Howell:** (*sighs*) And your HORSE now would make HIM an ASS!

**Suzanne as Maria:** (*little, high, false laugh*) Ass, I doubt not.

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** (*skipping around*) O! 'twill be admirable.

**Suzanne as Maria:** Sport royal, I warrant you: I know my physic will work with him. I will plant you two, and let the fool make a third, where he shall find the letter: observe his construction of it. For this night, to bed, and dream on the event. Farewell.

(SUZANNE remembers that this is her exit line and makes a clumsy stage exit, repeating the 'Farewell' exactly as she has been told to do).

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** (*With an exaggerated sweep of the arm, which knocks HOWELL spinning across the stage, stiff-legged, like dividers across a map*) Good night, Penthesilea! (*aside to HOWELL, in his own voice*) Aguecheek is a 'foolish knight', Howly, not a beserk ballerina! Try and keep your twinkle toes planted on the boards.

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** Before me she's a good wench.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** (*cavalier*) She's a beagle, true-bred, and one that adores me: what o'that?

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** (*raising his eyebrows, rather sadly*) I was adored once too.

*(The lights begin to alter: BIRKETT has an idea of his own for this line).*

**Mr. Anderson:** Birkett! Keep your hands off those dimmers! What are you trying to do - black us all out again? And Howell, for goodness sake don't sound so bloody chatty. That's one of your better lines. MAKE something of it!

**Cosgrove:** Yeah. You can get a laugh there. It's the last one we'll get in this scene. Look, do it like this . . . . (*COSGROVE minces about the stage, one hand on hip, one behind his head as he repeats the line*): **I** was adored once TOO.

**Spotty:** (*out of the corner of his mouth*) Ooo, ducky!

*(As he passes, COSGROVE takes a swipe at SPOTTY, but misses. HOWELL repeats and imitates COSGROVE'S actions and his rendition of the line, which at least raises a giggle from the other actors in the school hall).*

**Mr. Anderson:** O.K. O.K. Carry it on.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Let's to bed, knight. Thou hadst need send for more money.

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** If I cannot recover your niece, I am a foul way out.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Send for money, knight: if thou hast her not i' the end, call me cut.

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** If I do not, never trust me, take it how you will.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Come, come: I'll go burn some sack; 'tis too late to go to bed now. Come, knight; come, knight.

*(SPOTTY has begun to haul the curtain across as they exit. COSGROVE makes a mock run at BIRKETT'S ladder, and falls back, repelled suddenly by the impact of his cushion against the rungs. As he picks himself up, he pokes the cushion out from his jumper and grins at BIRKETT, who has come to the rail of the gallery and is looking down at him).*

**Cosgrove:** Don't you get struck by lightning for blasphemy?

**Birkett:** (*puzzled*) Blasphemy?

**Cosgrove:** Smitten with a plague of frogs?

**Birkett:** Blasphemy?

**Cosgrove:** Taking credit for the Universe - all that 'Heaven and Earth' stuff.

**Birkett:** *(smiling amiably)* Oh, that? No offence meant. Just came out. . . . You know.

**Cosgrove:** *(looking at HOWELL)* Ah! And I thought old Birk was actually TRYING to say something witty for once. 'Twas not to be, Howly old son. 'Twas not to be ....

*(COSGROVE and HOWELL turn to exit through the gap in the 'front' curtain, upstage).*

**Cosgrove:** C'mon, Foolish Knight. Let's get at the coffee before our visiting vultures snaffle all the biscuits.

*(From muffled distance, MR. ANDERSON'S voice is heard shouting for the house lights. HOWELL pops his head back through the curtains again).*

**Howell:** Fiat lux, laddie! Fiat lux!

**Birkett:** Y'what?

**Howell:** Never mind. Never mind.

*(As HOWELL'S head disappears again, BIRKETT turns to the audience).*

**Birkett:** Nothin' to do with me. If it's the house lights they want, they're at the back of the hall behind the wall bars. They'll remember in a minute.

*(As BIRKETT speaks, the sound of cups and distant babble of conversation filters through the closed curtains. He sits down facing the audience, confidentially, at the top of the ladder. MR. ANDERSON'S voice is heard shouting to HAYES to run over and switch the house lights on 'at the back behind the wall bars').*

**Birkett:** Hark at him! Peter Brook, you'd think it was! That's our English teacher, Mister Anderson - Andy Capp, we call him. Thinks he knows everything about everything. Well, he has read a few books I s'pose. *(Pause)* But he don't know a thing about all this. *(He looks back at the lighting equipment, with some pride)* This is my pigeon; my little empire. It's all they think I'm good for; but at least they leave me to it. I reckon ol' Andy Capp's got it figured out. Get Birkett up there; he'll do the job - dole fodder otherwise. Fifth form. No GCSE's worth speaking of. No good for the acting - not literate enough. Keep him out of trouble till the end of term. *(Pause)* Well, just so long as he keeps out of my way I don't mind. I like doing this. I'd put

my foot right down on his flat cap if he started coming up this ladder. But he don't. You're on your own up here. *(Pause)* When they're all rushin' about down there, you're sort of remote. . . distant. It's like watching the fish in an aquarium. It's all words, entrances, an' disguises to them, but to me it's just colours - blues, greens, pinks, golds - filters. . . numbers. . . change for your every mood. Which reminds me. I'd better get set up for the next scene. *(standing again)* Duke's Palace. Lovesick, he's supposed to be. Lots of blue! *(thinking aloud)* 1,2,4,5,7 & 9 to point eight; then 6 & 10 to half for the Clown. *(begins to adjust the dimmers)* Bit dodgy, number six - grating in the runner all through Act 1. Reckon I got time to fix it? Should have. They usually take a fair while over the coffee. Chatting up the birds from the High School: right load of little Romeos. Andy Capp too; he's as bad as Cosgrove, and old enough to know better. *(He picks up a screwdriver)* Mind if I switch off for a minute? Don't want to go up in a puff of smoke, do we?

*(He reaches up to the master switch and there is instant darkness, except for a thin slanting beam that dimly illuminates his back - as from a badly shuttered window).*

## SCENE 2.

*(In the almost-darkness BIRKETT repairs the dimmer. Perhaps a fade-in /fade-out of music as he works - a current 'top ten' love song. After a minute or so, the 'front' curtains part and close momentarily as JULIET slips through, carrying a thick china cup of slopped coffee. JULIET is a 'well-built' girl, cosy, with a pretty face, but not the slim, leading-lady glamour that the other girls strive to possess. With BIRKETT she is, apparently, confident - even pushy - but with the other girls she is diffident, something of a loner. As she reaches the foot of the lighting platform, BIRKETT throws the master switch and the stage is suddenly ablaze again).*

**Juliet:** *(with an angry squeak of surprise)* Ow! Now you've made me spill it.

**Birkett:** *(equally surprised, leaning over the rail)* Was that my fault?

**Juliet:** *(squinting up at him)* You made me jump, putting all the lights on like that.

**Birkett:** You haven't lost much. There's plenty left.

**Juliet:** It isn't mine.

**Birkett:** There's no one else here.

**Juliet:** What about you?

**Birkett:** *(again, surprised)* Can't be for me. Nobody's ever brought me coffee before.

**Juliet:** Well, I thought it must be. I was handing out and Tony Cosgrove said, "Don't forget God back there," so I brought it through. Do they call you God?

**Birkett:** Usually they call me Birk.

**Juliet:** *(crossly)* So do you want the coffee or don't you, Birk? Oh look I can't keep calling you 'Birk', now can I? What's your real name?

**Birkett:** Birk's O.K. It doesn't matter.

*(JULIET tries to reach up with the coffee, but BIRKETT makes no move to take it.)*

**Juliet:** Well, I'm Juliet. But you can call me Julie - I like that better. Can I come up?

**Birkett:** If you like.

*(He makes no move to help as JULIET steps uneasily on to the first rung and precariously reaches to slide the cup on to the floor of the gallery.)*

**Birkett:** It'd be easier if you took your shoes off.

*(JULIET looks up at him suspiciously, as if he might be making an improper suggestion, but she carries on up the ladder, clumsily.)*

**Juliet:** My mum warned me about lads like you. *(As she climbs on to the platform, BIRKETT has to step back to avoid contact. He frowns to audience as he does so.)* Cor! There's not much room up here is there? But it's quite snug.

**Birkett:** *(half aside to audience)* About as snug as an oil rig! It's that draughty.

*(JULIET moves to look over the rail at the stage, and BIRKETT has to squeeze out of the way again.)*

**Juliet:** I s'pose you ARE a bit like God, perched up here.

*(An embarrassed silence)*

**Juliet:** You never said what your real name is.

**Birkett:** *(reluctantly)* Actually, it's Reuben. *(JULIET smothers a giggle.)* Now you know why I don't mind putting up with 'Birk'. It's me mum and dad's fault: they're a bit religious. The twelve Tribes of Israel - you know. We used to

go to Chapel twice every Sunday. That old green tin place, down behind the bus station. You must've seen it. (*JULIET looks doubtful, but brightens.*)

**Juliet:** I used to go to Sunday School. My dad usually cleans the car on Sunday. And sits and reads the paper.

**Birkett:** I gave it up in the end. When I got old enough. But it rubs off on you. I can still remember every book in the Bible back to front. Preacher said I must have a photographic memory.

**Juliet:** (*genuinely impressed*) Cor! Most of the boys that I've met only seem to have pornographic memories!

**Birkett:** Anyway, that's how I landed up with a name like Reuben. Could've been worse I s'pose. Might have been Zebulun. Or Gad.

**Juliet:** (*trying to be especially sympathetic*) Yes, I know. It's not much fun being called Juliet either. All those jokes about 'Wherefore art thou Romeo ....' It was terrible after they showed the film at school. Did you ever see that film? There were some lovely bits in it. Up on the balcony. (*She glances round and giggles*) Bit like this! (*BIRKETT winces: he is getting more and more unsettled*) Look, Reuben, now I'm up here, why don't you show me how to turn the lights on and off? (*He is frozen to the spot*) Is it this one up here?

*(The stage is plunged into darkness again. A little, thrilled 'Ooo' from JULIET).*

**Juliet:** Reuben, Reuben! I'm scared. I don't know where the edge is. Reuben, I'm going to fall off!

**Voice of Mr. Anderson:** Birkett! Stop b.....ing about with those lights!

*(After a few seconds the lights click back on again. We see BIRKETT, his back flattened against the dimmers, his arm reaching up to the master switch, and JULIET clinging to him, in half genuine, half pretend fright. His face registers utter shock. JULIET extracts herself and steps back, rather disappointed. There is a silence).*

**Juliet:** Well, aren't you going to drink your coffee?

*(Nervously, BIRKETT steps forward to pick up the cup, but only succeeds in kicking it over the edge of the platform as he bends down. It crashes and spills.)*

**Birkett:** I'm always doing things like that.

**Juliet:** Huh! I was beginning to think you never did anything.

*(She has begun to stomp heavily down the ladder. She picks up the cup and saucer and makes to go during this dialogue. BIRKETT puts his head under the rail to watch her go.)*

**Birkett:** Are you in the play, Julie? I've never seen you on stage.

**Juliet:** I'm a servant. Page sixty, Act Three, Scene Four, don't blink or you'll miss me.

**Birkett:** Ah!

**Juliet:** But I'm understudying Maria, too.

**Birkett:** That's the maid isn't it?

**Juliet:** *(quickly)* It's the best part.

**Birkett:** I thought Lesley Pascoe ....

**Juliet:** *(haughty)* Oh, Viola. That's nothing much. Maria's got the best lines of all the women. And she's funny. *(As she exits through the 'front' curtain)* it's the best part .... but YOU wouldn't know.

*(Slow fade of lights and fade up music as before. If BIRKETT does not have control of the lights in reality, he can lean over the rail, watching the gap through which JULIET has vanished).*

*SCENE 3. Outside, after the rehearsal.*

*(A pool of orange light downstage - suggesting a street lamp. Sound of traffic passing. Possibly effect of car headlights passing. The girls and the boys wear coats, but clearly have two distinct school uniforms. Music fades into traffic sound as LESLEY, CAROLINE, MANDY and TRISHA enter).*

**Mandy:** It's a bit of a laugh, anyway. Better than homework.

**Trisha:** Better than choir practice.

**Caroline:** Or jolly hockey sticks!

**Lesley:** Yeah, but some of us have got lines to learn. And it's not that easy, is it Caroline? Not when you got to stand up there in front of that crowd of yobbos.

**Caroline:** I dunno. Some of them are all right. When they're not trying to show off. One of them actually stood back and opened the door for me on the way out.

**Trisha:** Ah! But he's got his eye on you hasn't he?

**Caroline:** *(pleased, but pretending no interest)* Whatyer mean?

**Trisha:** That one they call 'Noddy', what'sisname - Newton. He thinks just cos he gets Olivia at the end of the play he's quids in with you for the party afterwards.

**Mandy:** What him, Sebastian Stallone! he thinks he's such a hunk he doesn't have to act - - just stand on the stage and pose!

**Lesley:** Trouble is, he doesn't look a bit like me, and he's supposed to be my double!

**Trisha:** I thought he was the spitting image. *(LESLEY turns away annoyed.)*

**Mandy:** Well .... on a dark night!

*(Enter SUZANNE and JULIET. SUZANNE is pointing out something in the script that JULIET has asked about.)*

**Trisha:** An' here's a dark horse for a dark night. Where was our little Julie all through the interval then? Thought you were SUPPOSED to be doing the coffee and biscuits with me, weren't you?

*(JULIET can't say anything. She looks embarrassed.)*

**Suzanne:** Oh leave her alone, why don't you. Some of us have more important things on our mind than instant coffee and cardboard biscuits.

**Trisha:** Yeah, like that skinny-looking weirdo that hides up there in the lighting box?

**Mandy:** Aw! not that kid they call Birk, surely? What's HIS real name then, Extra Terrestrial? *(MANDY and TRISHA giggle cattily)*

**Trisha:** Go on Julie, tell us! She ought to have got THAT far at least, she was up there long enough! *(JULIET colours and turns on MANDY angrily.)*

**Juliet:** Actually -

**Caroline:** Shh! Shut up you two. Look what's coming.

*(Enter NEWTON, HAYES and DOBBIN.)*

**Newton:** *(with a casual air)* 'Ello there ladies! Waitin' for a bus then, are we?

**Caroline:** Well, we weren't waiting for you lot, that's for sure!

**Newton:** *(to the other two)* Cruel! Cruel!

**Hayes:** 'Spect that's what they teach 'em at finishin school nowadays. Bit o' politeness an' they cut you dead.

**Trisha:** ACTUALLY, we were just talking about one of your mates - that funny bloke that does all the lights and stuff. Why don't he come and talk to us like

the rest of you?

**Newton:** Y'mean Birk?

**Dobbin:** 'Es all right. Good lad when you get to know him.

**Hayes:** We reckon it was only that chapel-going that did for him. Particular Adventists - summat like that. Otherwise he'd 'ave been just as normal as the rest of us.

**Lesley:** (*aside to CAROLINE*) That's not saying much!

**Hayes:** Sold his soul. Signed the pledge. Stricken. No fun. No beer. No womanising. Miserable lot if you ask me. Sort of people that turn up on your doorstep with leaflets just when you're in the middle of your Sunday lunch, or the football's on. . . .

(*The subject is a dead end. HAYES peters out and there is a silence.*)

**Newton:** (*in an attempt to re-open the dialogue*) What about you two then - you're not even in the play - what brings you along?

**Trisha:** We're doing the drinks for the interval, aren't we?

**Mandy:** Yeah, and we're going to do some of the make-up an' all; Mr. Anderson said we could, seeing as we know a bit about it.

**Trisha:** Anyway, they need a bit of moral support, don't they? Four innocent little schoolgirls like them, thrown in with all you lot.

(*SUZANNE has seen a car drawing up further along the road.*)

**Suzanne:** Hey, Julie, is that your dad, just stopping now? (*Juliet nods, and they pick up their bags and exit R.*) If you're sure he won't mind; he can drop me by the end of Radcliffe Road. . . .

(*As they go, HOWELL & SWEETMAN arrive, chatting and sharing a bag of chips. This creates three groups: NEWTON, back to audience, is chatting to MANDY and TRISHA. LESLEY and CAROLINE together. HAYES and DOBBIN gather round the chip-bag with the two newly arrived.*)

**Dobbin:** Come on, Howly, give us a chip. I'm starvin.

**Howell:** Get away! It's all right for you. I had to queue up for ten minutes to get 'em, didn't I? (*Nevertheless they all share the chips.*)

**Sweetman:** (*nodding across towards NEWTON*) Noddy's doing all right with the birds then!

**Hayes:** Yeah, they're all right, those two. Them others is a bit snooty, though. Just cos they go to the High School!

**Sweetman:** Nothing to do with it, son. It's just you they don't fancy. What you need is a bit of the old charm; get's 'em going every time.

**Dobbin:** Oh yeah! That's you is it, Mister Wonderful. God's gift to womankind!

**Sweetman:** You said it. Betcha I could have them eating out of my hand in a couple of minutes.

**Dobbin:** *(cynical)* Like to see it!

**Sweetman:** O.K. then. Give us that bag of chips, Howell.

*(Lifting the bag from the hands of the astounded HOWELL, he strolls over to LESLEY and CAROLINE.)*

**Sweetman:** *(casually)* Fancy a chip, Lesley? Bought 'em for you specially.

**Lesley:** *(very cool)* No thank you, Peter. Don't eat chips. Not good for the figure.

**Sweetman:** Naturally, pretty girl like you. I ought to have known. Tell me, now haven't I seen you down at Raffles' Disco sometimes.

**Lesley:** Might have done.

**Sweetman:** Thought so. Very classy dancer, if I may say so. *(LESLEY looks away)* Well I was going to say, if you happened to be thinking of going tomorrow night. I've got my own motorbike, I could drop in along the way and ....

**Lesley:** *(turning on him)* Look, I don't want to be rude, but why don't you take your chips back to your friend. I don't go out with SCHOOLBOYS anyway.

*(TRISHA and MANDY have turned to see this remark, and they join the other two girls, giggling, while NEWTON and SWEETMAN return to the group of boys. The girls have thought up some kind of joke, and draw into a huddle).*

**Hayes:** Well, all you need's a bit of the old charm!

**Dobbin:** Get's em going every time.

**Sweetman:** Aw, give over will you? Can't win 'em all. Even Don Juan had some unlucky days.

**Dobbin:** Don who?

**Sweetman:** You wouldn't have heard of him. You're not just charmless, Dobbin, but ignorant with it.

**Hayes:** You were on a loser there mate, before you even started. You ought to know Lesley Pascoe, she's been going around for years with some really smooth bloke from the Technical College, got his own TR7, works part time for his dad's firm .... Not a chance.

**Newton:** *(who has been looking down the road)* Wouldn't have made any difference - here's the bus coming anyway.

*(Both groups of youngsters pick up their bags and begin to exit R. In the rush, SWEETMAN is left behind somewhat and finds he is face to face with TRISHA, who teasingly throws a folded note up in the air in front of him as she turns to run for the bus).*

**Trisha:** It's from Lesley; she thinks you're great, really.

*(SWEETMAN stoops to pick up the note, unfolds it and begins to read it. As he does so, the lighting cross-fades from street light to full stage light, taking us directly into the next scene. In the instant of the change, SWEETMAN has become SWEETMAN playing MALVOLIO).*

#### SCENE 5.

*(For the first couple of lines SWEETMAN is himself, puzzled, reading the letter to the real audience. By the time he reaches 'Thy Fates open their hands' he has paced to centre and become the actor on the stage. As the 'stage' lights come up they reveal SPOTTY in place in the prompt corner, hauling open the curtain, and COSGROVE, HOWELL and DOBBIN scuffling into position with a flat hardboard 'box-tree' which is supposed to represent the hiding-place of SIR TOBY, SIR ANDREW and FABIAN).*

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** If this fall into thy hand, revolve. In my stars I am above thee; but be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Thy Fates open their hands; let thy blood and spirit embrace them; and to inure thyself to what thou art like to be, cast thy humble slough *(he pronounces it as in 'plough')* and appear fresh. Be opposite ....

**Mr. Anderson:** Er, make that 'slough', Sweetman. As in 'rough'. Like a snake shedding it's skin - - you know....

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Cast thy humble slough .... and appear fresh. Be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants; let thy tongue tang arguments of state; put thyself into the trick of singularity. She thus advises thee that sighs for thee. Remember who commended thy yellow stockings, and wished ....

**Dobbin:** *(to HOWELL in loud stage whisper, making sure SWEETMAN can hear him)* They've got him a pair of yellow tights! Andy Capp told me. His wife's sewing on the garters.

**Howell:** Wicked!

**Sweetman:** *(turning to them, annoyed)* Who said? I'm going to have my brother's football socks. So shut it, Dobbin.

**Cosgrove:** You can't have football socks; they've got green stripes on the tops anyway. You'd look bloody stupid.

**Howell:** Not half as stupid as he's going t'look in yellow tights!

**Mr. Anderson:** Hey, you lot! This supposed to be a serious rehearsal. We're on in less than a fortnight, and if it's not perfect .... I'll pull your arms off and beat you with the soggy ends! *(He subsides)* Get going again!

**Sweetman:** .... and wished to see thee ever cross-gartered: I say remember. Go to, thou art made, if thou desirest to be so; if not, let me see thee a steward still, the fellow of servants, not worthy to touch Fortune's fingers. Farewell. She that would alter services with thee, the Fortunate-unhappy.

**Spotty:** He rolls up the letter and paces up and down. Comic business Sir Andrew and Sir Toby. Remember?

**Sweetman:** All right, all right!

*(During the next speech the three onlookers indulge in a pantomime of coming out from the box-tree and mocking when Malvolio has his back to them and ducking out of sight again as he turns towards them. Again the comedy should be in the deliberateness of their actions).*

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Daylight and champain discovers not more: this is open. I will be proud. I will read politic authors, I will baffle Sir Toby, I will be point-devise the very man. I do not now fool myself, to let imagination jade me, for every reason excites to this, that my lady loves me. She did commend my *(sneers the words over his shoulder at HOWELL and DOBBIN)* yellow stockings of late, she did praise my leg being cross-gartered; and in this she manifests herself to my love, and with a kind of injunction drives me to these habits of her liking. *(At this point he 'forgets' his lines, snapping his fingers in annoyance).*

**Spotty:** *(hissing)* Stars!

**Sweetman:** Y'what?

**Spotty:** "I thank my STARS I am happy ...."

**Sweetman:** Oh yeah! *(out to the school hall)* Sorry!

**Mr. Anderson:** You will be, if you don't know 'em by next week!

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** I thank my stars I am happy. I will be strange, stout, in

yellow stockings, and cross-gartered, even with the swiftness of putting on. Jove and my stars be praised! Here is yet a postscript. - Thou canst not choose but know who I am. If thou entertainest my love, let it appear in thy SMILING; thy smiles become thee well; therefor in my presence still smile, dear my sweet, I prithee. - Jove, I thank thee. I will smile; I will do everything that thou wilt have me.

*(As SWEETMAN / MALVOLIO exits the others dance out into the centre with exaggerated delight).*

**Dobbin as Fabian:** *(woodenly)* I will not give my part of this sport for a pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** I could marry this wench for this device.

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** So could I too.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** And ask no other dowry with her but such another jest.

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** Nor I neither.

**Dobbin as Fabian:** Here comes my noble gull-catcher.

**Spotty:** *(hisses)* Look left Dobbin. You're s'posed to be seeing her coming.

**Dobbin:** Here comes my noble gull-catcher.

*(Exaggerated peering off-stage - SUZANNE does not appear at her cue. With an air of impatience, DOBBIN repeats the line loudly. Finally she arrives on stage, looking flustered).*

**Cosgrove:** *(aside to HOWELL and DOBBIN)* Late on again! Beats me how they get away with it.

**Mr. Anderson:** Get on with the play, Cosgrove!

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** *(falling to his knees at her feet)* Wilt thou set thy foot o' my neck?

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** *(repeating COSGROVE's action in perfect copy)* Or o'mine either?

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Shall I play my freedom at tray-trip, and become thy bond slave?

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** I'faith, or I either?

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Why, thou hast put him in such a dream, that when the image of it leaves him he must run mad.

**Suzanne as Maria:** Nay, but say true; does it work upon him?

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** *(to his feet, and a step towards MARIA)* Like aqua-vitae with a midwife.

*(SIR ANDREW remains on his knees, but shuffles forward to remain parallel with SIR TOBY. In the course of the following speech MARIA moves excitedly back and forth across stage, and SIR TOBY steps after her a pace or so, followed by the shuffling SIR ANDREW).*

**Suzanne as Maria:** If you will, then see the fruits of the sport, mark his first approach before my lady; he will come to her in YELLOW stockings, and 'tis a colour she abhors; and CROSS-gartered, a fashion she detests; and he will SMILE upon her, which will now be so unsuitable to her disposition, being addicted to a melancholy as she is, that it cannot but turn him into a notable contempt. If you will see it, follow me.

*(She makes her exit followed by SIR TOBY at a run, and SIR ANDREW still on his knees - at least for a yard or so).*

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** To the gates of Tartar, thou most excellent devil of wit!

**Howell as Sir Andrew:** I'll make one too!

*(SPOTTY hauls the curtain across and he and DOBBIN exit through the curtain into the 'hall'. BIRKETT fades the front of house lights and the footlights. Then he 'notices' the real audience again and turns to them).*

## SCENE 5.

**Birkett:** Daft line that, I always think - totally irrelevant. Typical of old Aguecheek, though. He's the real fool of the play. Now Franco Hayes, he's playing the Clown and he's always acting it up, but he shouldn't be an idiot like Aguecheek. He's more a wise guy - professional joker. Y'see, I read the script all through last night. It's not bad really, when you think about it. I always thought old Shakespeare was a bit of a poofy twit, that couldn't write a straight sentence to save his life. But you gotta hand it to him; he does know how to string a play together. Very crafty, if you ask me. Y'see there's these two different stories and he's spliced them both together like cords - and then it all ends in a perfect neat knot. Get on very well with Andy Capp, he would. 'Cept HE keeps going for the laughs all the time and some of it ain't very funny - at least not to my way of thinking. I reckon some of it's downright cruel.

*(A crack appears in the front curtain. JULIET peers in with a sugary smile. She crosses to the lighting rig, bringing two coffees and a double Kit-Kat bar).*

**Birkett:** *(sotto voce to audience)* Allo allo! What light through yonder curtain breaks? *(He turns back to the lighting, pretending to study the plot of the next scene.)*

**Juliet:** *(as she reaches the foot of the ladder)* Yoo hoo .... Roo!

**Birkett:** Oh! Hallo.

**Juliet:** Only little me again! I thought you might like something to nibble with your coffee.

*(She throws the Kit-Kat up to the platform. This time BIRKETT feels obliged to reach down and take the cups. JULIET clambers up eagerly.)*

**Juliet:** What you doing now then?

**Birkett:** Not much. Just checking through the plot for the next scene. I never miss a cue. But you got to work at it. *(significantly)* Got to concentrate.

**Juliet:** *(moving up close to him)* Cor. Look at those numbers. All those arrows. I don't know how you understand it all. Looks like Chinese to me.

**Birkett:** Well, it's pretty simple really, when you get to know it. It's my own system: kind of shorthand. Y'see, each of the lights - we call 'em lanterns - is on a circuit, and each of the circuits has got a number. Now when ....

**Juliet:** *(who has already begun to break open the bar of Kit-Kat)* Have a bit of Kit-Kat, go on.

**Birkett:** Well, actually, I got this filling loose; one of me back teeth.

**Juliet:** *(stuffing the chocolate into his mouth, against his will)* Go on. It'll do you good!

**Birkett:** Yeah, well, then you have to plug in each circuit at the patch panel. That's that bit up there. Then you can fade up each one individually, using the dimmers - or you can work them all together in a group, for different scenes. That's what all these numbers mean on the sheet.

**Juliet:** *(pointing)* What, these?

**Birkett:** No, they're the CUE numbers. Every lights change has to tie in with the cue in the play script. If we had a proper A.S.M. he'd be telling me on an intercom, but I can follow it O.K. from up here. I know most of it off by heart already.

**Juliet:** *(impressed)* And do you manage all this by yourself? I wouldn't have thought you'd have enough hands.

*(BIRKETT spreads his fingers across the board and moves all eight or so dimmers*

*at once. The lights alter.)*

**Juliet:** Like a pianist - stretching octaves. What about if you need to turn something else on, at the same time?

**Birkett:** I use my nose. (*JULIET looks unconvinced.*) Honestly, I DO. In the mad scene where Malvolio thinks he's in the nut-house: I turn off this switch here with my nose. Like this.

**Juliet:** Hmn! Well, I suppose it's long enough! (*seeing that she has offended him somewhat with this observation*) You need Tony Cosgrove up here. He's all hands.

**Birkett:** He'd be no good. He'd be talking all the time. You have to pay attention.

**Juliet:** There's no one to talk to.

**Birkett:** There would be if Cosgrove was here. Look, why don't you just sit down there on the steps for a minute while I get set up for the next scene?

*(JULIET obeys, rather reluctantly. As BIRKETT is moving the dimmers, looking over the rail at the stage, making fine adjustments etc. she sips her coffee and obviously enjoys the rest of the Kit-Kat. BIRKETT absentmindedly puts the lighting plot down on the floor beside JULIET as he works. After a minute he has finished and turns round).*

**Birkett:** You're not on in the next scene, then.

**Juliet:** No, not till later. You don't mind if I stay?

*(BIRKETT doesn't actually say yes or no, so there is a silence)*

**Juliet:** I can nip on from the back when it's my turn - just before. And then come back again.

**Birkett:** (*grudgingly*) O.K. then. But don't forget: Act III : Scene 4 "Madam, the young gentleman of the Count Orsino's is returned. I could hardly entreat him back: he attends your ladyship's pleasure."

**Juliet:** (*truly astounded this time*) But that's my lines! How did you ....

**Birkett:** I read it all through last night, didn't I? Wanted to see if you were right about Maria being the best part. I s'pose your bit sort of stuck in my mind.

**Juliet:** (*with a big smile*) Well, I think that's really NICE. (*She picks up the lighting plot.*) Why don't you show me where my bit is on this?

**Birkett:** Well, actually it's .... (*He reaches down, but she is holding the lighting plot on her lap, so he has to sit down beside JULIET*). Actually it comes here, look, between cues thirty-eight and thirty-nine. There's no special lighting change for your entrance.

**Juliet:** No, I suppose not.

*(At this point COSGROVE comes blundering through the 'front' curtain. He is looking about the stage, and at first doesn't bother to look up at the lighting gallery).*

**Cosgrove:** Say, Birk, you seen my copy of the script anywhere? I'm sure I left it ...  
*(He sees JULIET.)* Er, whoops! Didn't mean to interrupt anything. Ah! there 'tis!

*(He darts into the wings and reappears with his book. On his way back across to the front curtain, he pauses, looks over his shoulder, and with a grin towards audience, he begins to sing mockingly, making his exit through the curtains as he does so).*

**Cosgrove:** *"Another bride, another groom, another sunny hu-hunnymoon."*

*(BIRKETT just looks disgusted).*

**Juliet:** *(leafing through the lighting plot)* I don't expect anyone but us understands this. *(looking into his eyes)* It's our secret!

**Birkett:** A minute ago you said it was all Chinese to you.

**Juliet:** Well, what I mean is, it won't be when you've taught me. I can get someone else to bring up the coffee, and I can stay here all the time and be your helper. You won't have to use your nose then, will you?

*(BIRKETT makes no reply, but he gets up and turns hopelessly to the lighting board, as if it might save him. JULIET gets up too, and tries to pin up the lighting plot above the dimmers, at the right page.)*

**Juliet:** It's a good thing we're not fat.

**Birkett:** *(turning back)* Eh?

**Juliet:** Well, it IS rather cramped up here.

*(From this point on JULIET is becoming more and more confident and increasingly intimate. Poor BIRKETT retreats fraction by fraction across the gallery, but she soon has him cornered against the rail).*

**Juliet:** Hey, Roo.

*(Pause)*

**Birkett:** Yes?

**Juliet:** I'm glad I'm not Viola.

**Birkett:** You're even less like Noddy than Lesley is.

**Juliet:** That's not what I meant. SHE'S on stage, all through the play.

**Birkett:** Not all the time.

**Juliet:** No, but on-off-on-off. It's the same with Maria. Suzanne's all sweaty by the end of the evening, from rushing about.

**Birkett:** Dodging Cosgrove?

**Juliet:** And that. I used to wish she'd be ill for a bit so that I'd get a chance at Maria; tonsillitis or something. She's got terrible tonsils; all her family have. When she turns her head you can see great lumps in her neck - just here.  
*(She puts her cool hand on BIRKETT'S throat.)*

**Birkett:** *(shaken)* I've had mine out.

**Juliet:** But I don't wish that any more.

**Birkett:** Wish what?

**Juliet:** That Suzanne would get tonsillitis. I'd rather be here than on-stage.

**Birkett:** *(desperate for something to say)* Well, I wouldn't wish tonsillitis on anyone. Except Andy Capp, maybe. *(Weak attempt at a joke)* It might shut him up.

**Juliet:** Roo, why do you call him Andy Capp?

**Birkett:** You only have to look at him. All he needs is a pigeon on his head!

**Juliet:** And is his wife like Florrie in the cartoon?

**Birkett:** More like the Statue of Liberty. No, really, he hardly comes up to her chin

**Juliet:** Have they got any children?

**Birkett:** *(surprised)* Three. Why'd you wanna know that?

**Juliet:** Well, Roo, I like children. *(Pressing herself close to him)* I'd like a lot of children, wouldn't you . . . ?

*(Fairly quick fade in of music; fade down lights).*

**INTERVAL**

SCENE 6.

*MUSIC: contemporary hits, as for Scenes 1 & 2.*

*Stage dimly lit by unseen floods only. Set as for opening but in addition several large portable stage-building blocks or rostra, stacked, apparently at random L & R.*

*(As the real house-lights go down, BIRKETT slips on through 'front' curtain and downstage towards lighting gallery. He stops as he 'notices' the real audience).*

**Birkett:** *(directly to them)* Hallo! You lot still here then? You're patient enough, I'll give you that. Here, you haven't been sitting there all week have you? Well, you'll be all right tonight: full run through. Sort of almost-dress rehearsal. They might know their words, most of 'em. They're supposed to. You'll have t'excuse me now, though. Bit late. Can't seem to get things organised nowadays. It's partly her fault: she's been up here every night since. Ruins me concentration.

*(BIRKETT swings up into his gallery and begins to set up the lights for the first scene; the colours melt one by one into a bright stage. As soon as this is complete, enter NEWTON and HAYES, LESLEY, MANDY & TRISHA. From this scene on, all the actors who have parts in 'Twelfth Night' are dressed in costume).*

**Newton:** Hey, Birk! Fly down from your nest and give us a hand with these blocks, will you? Andy Capp wants them out front in double quick time. He wants to build out the stage into the hall: 'The Apron' he calls it. Says it makes it more like Shakespeare's own stage - he must be joking!

**Birkett:** Sorry, me little thespian mate. Not my department. Got to get all me checks done, haven't I?

*(Meanwhile the three girls between them have started to lift the first of the blocks through the 'front' curtain. NEWTON & HAYES follow with the second. Sound of blocks being pushed together and shouted instructions ad lib. The girls return immediately and begin the third).*

**Trisha:** I had one end by myself last time. My turn to be on the end with two.

**Mandy:** He's crazy, that Mr. Anderson, making us girls do a job like this. *(imitating)* "Women's lib." he says. "Sex equality. No discrimination here."

And Tony Cosgrove he just stands there, leaning against the wall and he LAUGHS!

*(NEWTON & HAYES push back through the curtain to fetch the fourth block just as MANDY reaches the gap, going backwards. She drops her end on her foot and yells).*

**Mandy:** Why don't you look where you're going, you clumsy great job?

**Newton:** Sorry!

**Hayes:** Hey, Noddy, d'you think old Birk could pass the Stork and Butter Test?

**Newton:** The what?

**Hayes:** You know: just-the-same-but-different. Come here you two.

*(HAYES pulls NEWTON & LESLEY downstage towards BIRKETT, who is poring over his lighting plot. MANDY & TRISHA follow.)*

**Hayes:** If Birk can tell, then anyone can! *(to BIRKETT in a mock T.V. commercial voice)* Ah! Good morning, sir. As a typical member of the ignorant general public, I wonder if you would be so kind as to take part in a little test for us. May I ask, you Sir, Do you usually prefer women, or men?

**Birkett:** *(looking up, bewildered)* What ARE you on about?

**Hayes:** On my left and on my right I have two examples of actors, or actresses, in Shakespearian costume. I would like you to step down here and kiss them both, and then to tell me which one you think is the real Sebastian, or, to put it the other way round, which one is the real Viola!

*(LESLEY lets out a little horrified 'Oh no!' and steps back.)*

**Birkett:** You're a nutter, Franco. A real head case. Anyway, she's just given the answer away, so push off.

*(Laughing they all return to pick up the last two blocks.)*

**Newton:** *(as they go)* Say, Lesley, do you know where we're supposed to be starting tonight? Someone said we're doing the second half first.

**Lesley:** Yes, that's right. He reckons we're not so good on the second half, cause we haven't practised enough. SOME of us don't know all our lines yet either, do we ....?

*(They disappear through the curtain with the blocks. Noises ad lib, SPOTTY and*

*DOBBIN rush in and set up the 'box-tree' and one or two other pieces of cut-out scenery that are meant to represent 'Olivia's Garden'.)*

**Birkett:** *(to audience)* Blimey! Why don't they tell me these things? Interior; exterior. Rooms and gardens: it's got to be completely different!

*(BIRKETT sets about the lights changes, frantically. DOBBIN adjusts the angle of the 'box-tree' and exits. SPOTTY takes his place in the prompt corner. JULIET slips in through the curtain and, with some difficulty - she is in costume - climbs up to the gallery. BIRKETT ignores her.)*

SCENE 7.

*Voice of Mr. Anderson:* Okay, then! Act Three, Scene Four. Starting positions.

*(CAROLINE & SUZANNE rush on to the stage, adjusting their costume and their pose as SPOTTY hauls on the curtain. If it is possible, the extended 'apron' stage should be suggested. Beyond this, if possible, behind the footlights, the other actors are seated. These may now include extras for ORSINO, ANTONIO, ATTENDANTS, GENTLEMEN etc).*

**Caroline as Olivia:** I have sent after him: he says he'll come;  
How shall I feast him? what bestow of him?  
For youth is bought more oft than begg'd or borrow'd.  
I speak too loud.  
Where is Malvolio? he is sad, and civil,  
And suits well for a servant with my fortunes;  
Where is Malvolio?

**Suzanne as Maria:** He's coming, madam; but in very strange manner.  
He is sure possess'd, madam.

**Caroline as Olivia:** Why, what's the matter? Does he rave?

**Suzanne as Maria:** No, madam; he does nothing but smile; your ladyship were best to have some guard about you if he come, for sure the man is tainted in's wits.

**Spotty:** Exit Maria.

**Suzanne:** What?

**Spotty:** Exit Maria!

**Suzanne:** I know! I was just going.

**Caroline as Olivia:** Go call him hither. I am as mad as he, if sad and merry  
madness equal be.

*(SUZANNE exits and returns with a rather reluctant SWEETMAN dressed as  
MALVOLIO. Hoots and whistles from the cast in the hall who are delighted  
by his 'yellow stockings').*

**Caroline as Olivia:** *(raising her voice above the noise and showing her annoyance  
at the interruptions)* How now, Malvolio!

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Sweet lady, ho ho.

**Caroline as Olivia:** Smil'st thou? I sent for thee upon a sad occasion.

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Sad, lady! I could be sad: this does make some  
obstruction in the blood, this cross-gartering; but what of that? if it please the  
eye of one, it is with me as the very true sonnet is, 'Please one and please all.'

**Caroline as Olivia:** Why, how dost thou, man? What is the matter with thee?

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Not black in my mind, though yellow in my legs. It did  
come to his hands, and commands shall be executed: I think we know the  
sweet Roman hand.

**Caroline as Olivia:** Wilt thou go to bed, Malvolio?

*(More whistles and suggestive noises from the cast; to SWEETMAN, haughtily)*

**Caroline as Olivia:** Ignore them!

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** To bed! ay, sweetheart; and I'll come to thee.

**Caroline as Olivia:** God comfort thee! Why dost thou smile so and kiss thy hand  
so oft?

**Suzanne as Maria:** How do you, Malvolio?

**Sweetman:** At your request! Yes; nightingales answer daws.

**Suzanne as Maria:** Why appear you with this ridiculous boldness before my lady?

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** 'Be not afraid of greatness.' 'Twas well writ.

**Caroline as Olivia:** What meanest thou by that, Malvolio?

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** 'Some are born great,' -

**Caroline as Olivia:** Ha!

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** 'Some achieve greatness,' -

**Caroline as Olivia:** What sayest thou?

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** 'And some have greatness thrust upon them.'

**Caroline as Olivia:** Heaven restore thee!

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** 'Remember who commended thy yellow stockings' -

*(JULIET begins to slip down from the lighting gallery for her entrance. She looks nervous).*

**Caroline as Olivia:** Thy yellow stockings!

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** 'And wished to see thee cross-gartered.'

**Caroline as Olivia:** Cross-gartered!

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** 'Go to, thou art made, if thou desirest to be so,' -

**Caroline as Olivia:** Am I made?

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** 'If not, let me see thee a servant still.'

**Caroline as Olivia:** Why this is very midsummer madness.

*(JULIET makes a rather stumbling entrance as 'SERVANT' and a clumsy curtsey).*

**Juliet as Servant:** Madam .... *(pause - she has forgotten)* Madam .... *(she has 'dried up')*.

**Birkett:** The young gentleman of the Count ....

*(There is a murmur of amusement from the actors in the hall, and a growl of 'Get on with it' from Mr. ANDERSON).*

**Juliet as Servant:** *(thankfully)* Madam, the young gentleman of the Count Orsino's is returned. I could hardly entreat him back: he attends your ladyship's pleasure.

**Caroline as Olivia:** I'll come to him.

*(Exit servant - JULIET returns to the lighting gallery looking shamefaced)*

**Caroline as Olivia:** Good Maria, let this fellow be looked to. Where's my cousin Toby? Let some of my people have special care of him: I would not have him miscarry for the half of my dowry.

*(Exeunt OLIVIA & MARIA. CAROLINE glares contemptuously at JULIET as she goes.)*

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Oh, ho! do you come near me now? no worse man than Sir Toby to look to me! This concurs directly with the letter: she sends him on purpose that I may appear stubborn to him; for she incites me to that in the letter. 'Cast thy humble slough,' says she; *(SPOTTY corrects his pronunciation again)* be opposite with a kinsman. surly with servants ....

(*COSGROVE, DOBBIN & SUZANNE enter at a run as SIR TOBY, FABIAN and MARIA*).

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** (*still over-acting*) Which way is he, in the name of sanctity? If all the devils in hell be drawn in little, and Legion himself possess'd him, yet I'll speak to him.

**Dobbin as Fabian:** Here he is, here he is. How is't with you, sir? how is't with you man?

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Go off; I discard you: let me enjoy my private; go off.

**Spotty:** Arrogant wave with handkerchief. Where's the handkerchief?

**Sweetman:** Haven't got one.

**Spotty:** Well, it says here in the prompt-book, 'He waves his handkerchief at them arrogantly.' Somebody lend him one. Suzanne!

**Suzanne:** I'm not lending any hanky to HIM. He'd probably wipe his nose on it!

**Cosgrove:** Just leave it out, Spotty! Let's TRY and keep things going.

**Suzanne as Maria:** Lo, how hollow the fiend speaks within him! did not I tell you? Sir Toby, my lady prays you to have a care of him.

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Ah, ha! does she so?

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Go to, go to: peace! peace! we must deal gently with him; let me alone. How do you, Malvolio? how is't with you? What, man! defy the devil: consider, he's an enemy to mankind.

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Do you know what you say?

**Suzanne as Maria:** La you! an you speak ill of the devil, how he takes it at heart. Pray God he be not bewitched! My lady would not lose him for more than I'll say.

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** How now, mistress!

**Suzanne as Maria:** O Lord!

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Prithee, hold thy peace; this is not the way; do you not see you move him? Let me alone with him.

**Dobbin as Fabian:** No way but gentleness; gently, gently: the fiend is rough, and will not be roughly used.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Why how now my ball-cock! How dost thou -

**Mr. Anderson:** BAWcock, Cosgrove. Bawcock. Stick to the Shakespeare. He doesn't need your improvements, amusing as you may think they are!

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Why, how now, my bawcock! how dust thou, chuck?

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Sir!

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Ay, Biddy, come with me. What man! 'tis not for gravity to play at cherry-pit with Satan: hang him, foul collier.

**Suzanne as Maria:** Get him to say his prayers, good Sir Toby, get him to pray.

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** My prayers, minx!

**Suzanne as Maria:** No, I warrant you, he will not hear of godliness.

**Sweetman as Malvolio:** Go, hang yourselves all! You are idle shallow things: I am not of your element. You shall know more hereafter.

*(Exit MALVOLIO - as SWEETMAN goes music begins fade-up stage lights fade-down).*

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Is't possible?

**Dobbin as Fabian:** If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction.

#### SCENE 8

*(As the usual pop / rock music of the scene break fades, we hear the Elizabethan tones of Feste's song from the end of 'Twelfth Night'. The lights come up again slowly to reveal the back view of HAYES singing with a lute or guitar. The effect of the scene change should be one of time-lapse: the rehearsal has now moved as far as the end of the play.*

*(As the song ends, there is a ripple of applause from the actors seated in the hall. SPOTTY hauls the curtain across. The actors rush in from hall & wings L & R for the practice curtain call. SPOTTY hauls back the curtain. Mr. ANDERSON continues clapping, as does SPOTTY when he is not working the curtain. The actors take their bows to hall in turn).*

**Mr. Anderson:** Okay! Gentlemen and Attendants. GET IN A LINE! Right down on to the apron. From the waist. TOGETHER! Fabian and Feste. QUICKLY! Malvolio and Maria! Come on SMILE! They love it. LOOK HAPPY! Sir Toby and Sir Andrew! Sebastian and Olivia! Come on dear, HOLD HIS HAND! You can curtsy. I'll show you later. And Orsino & Viola! Once more all together! Follow Cosgrove! Okay! Curtain! And. . . .Lights! Quickly, Birkett. Quickly!

*(Mr. ANDERSON'S solo clapping dies away as SPOTTY draws the curtain for the last time and the actors pile out through the wings and the curtain, chattering*

*noisily. The noise recedes as they head for the back of the hall. SPOTTY follows leaving only JULIET sitting miserably at the foot of BIRKETT'S ladder. BIRKETT is too busy fading the lights and writing on his cue sheet to notice her for a minute or so. After a while, he turns, relaxing for a moment. JULIET is so still it takes him a few more seconds to notice that she's there).*

**Birkett:** Hey, you still there? Thought you was supposed to be in on the curtain-call.

**Juliet:** Didn't feel like it. *(pause)* Anyway, nobody noticed, did they? Didn't hear anyone shouting, 'Where's Julie?' Did you see the way Caroline looked at me; just cos I messed up my line? They think they're that important.

**Birkett:** Aw, come on, don't worry about that; it's only a school play, not Hollywood. *(He is trying, at least, to be sympathetic.)* Look, why don't you help me get set up for after the break?

*(JULIET just sits miserably, elbows on knees, head in her hands - she is playing for sympathy from BIRKETT but he doesn't understand and turns back to work with a shrug. After a moment or two she climbs up and stands by his shoulder).*

**Juliet:** Roo.

**Birkett:** *(absently)* Yeah?

**Juliet:** Thanks for the prompt. I felt really stupid. And me with only one line and all that.

**Birkett:** Spotty's job really, but you can't rely on him.

**Juliet:** Well, it was a kind thing to do. Very nice. . . .

*(The noise of cups and conversation has begun to filter through, as before. At this point HOWELL pushes through the curtains with two coffees. JULIET is just pushing herself close to BIRKETT when BIRKETT coughs deliberately. JULIET steps back and looks behind her with an artificial smile for HOWELL).*

**Howell:** *(reaching the bottom of the ladder)* Working overtime, Birk? Nudge, nudge, wink, wink!

*(HOWELL reaches up with the cups and then climbs on to a rung of the ladder, resting his chin on the platform).*

**Birkett:** Push off, Face-ache.

**Howell:** Aguecheek - Agueface - Face-ache! Good thinking Batman! (*HOWELL meanders back across the stage in his Aguecheek walk, knees together, toes apart. Just before he reaches the curtain he turns.*) You know you missed your cue again in Scene Four. That's the second time! (*No response from BIRKETT*) Do you know what Andy Capp said? (*impersonation*) 'Bloody Birkett, busy with his skirt.'

**Birkett:** He never said that.

**Howell:** It was said though. Your Birk-type secret is out, Birk!

(*With a dramatic flourish, HOWELL steps backwards through the curtains. There is a crunch and a yell of pain, and then a silence, followed by the noise of concerned help from behind the curtain.*)

*Voice of Mr. Anderson:* 'All right, all right, stand back. Who on earth shifted that block anyway?'

(*A scream of agony from HOWELL.*)

*Voice of Mr. Anderson:* 'All right, all right, don't move him. Hayes, run over to sick bay for the stretcher. And tell Miss Fisher to phone for an ambulance!'

(*Fade up music, possibly a heart-break love song, and after a few bars, sound of ambulance siren above music.*)

## SCENE 9.

(*As music and siren fade, SPOTTY comes running through the curtain.*)

**Spotty:** Hey Birk, old Howly's done for himself good and proper. Fell off the stage an' broke his leg. Two places the ambulance man said. He'll have to have it in traction.

**Birkett:** (*not much moved by the tragedy*) Serves him right. He oughta been lookin where he was goin.

**Spotty:** Wasn't all his fault! Dobbin and me moved one of the blocks out: Andy Capp said we got to look for his screwdriver, and we thought it might be down there.

*(Enter Mr. ANDERSON through curtain, followed by COSGROVE, DOBBIN, NEWTON & HAYES. With a wry expression Mr. ANDERSON flourishes the aforementioned screwdriver).*

**Mr. Anderson:** And it was in my jacket pocket all the time! Why didn't you look there first you horrible little. . . .

**Spotty:** But, Sir! You never. . . .

**Mr. Anderson:** He might have broken his neck. He deserves to! Goodness knows what we're going to do for an Aguecheek now!

**Cosgrove:** What about my bruvver? He's been prompter ever since we started. He knows the whole thing right through.

**Dobbin:** He couldn't play Aguecheek.

**Newton:** He could probably play Viola if you twisted his arm!

**Mr. Anderson:** God forbid! Anyway, we're not allowing him on stage again. Remember the carol concert? *(SPOTTY grins at the others.)*

**Cosgrove:** *(stepping downstage towards the lighting gallery)* There IS one other person who knows it by heart, though. He remembers everything. He knows half the Bible for a start. *(The others follow him.)*

**Hayes:** Birkett? He can't put one foot in front of the other without falling over.

**Cosgrove:** Who'd notice? He's a dead ringer for Aguecheek. You wouldn't even have to make him up.

**Mr. Anderson:** Er, Birkett! Would you mind doing us a favour and stepping down here for a minute. *(With a meaningful look at the others)* That is, IF you can spare the time! *(Somewhat puzzled, BIRKETT complies)* Good of you to drop in. *(With a frown towards the gallery)* Especially with so much to keep you occupied up there. Now, Cosgrove says you're a quick study.

**Birkett:** A what?

**Mr. Anderson:** You learn things easily.

**Birkett:** Not me.

**Mr. Anderson:** He thinks you know the whole play.

**Birkett:** Not me.

**Cosgrove:** Come off it. You've been sitting up there watching us for the past six weeks. You must know it.

**Birkett:** *(guessing what they are after)* Not me.

**Mr. Anderson:** Not I.

**Cosgrove:** Right then! I think I can prove my point. *(He spins round once, becoming the SIR TOBY character as he does so. He fires the line suddenly and directly at BIRKETT)* 'Did she see thee the while, old boy? Tell me that!

**Birkett:** *(automatically)* As plain as I see you now.

**Cosgrove:** 'Art thou good at these kick-shaws, knight?

**Birkett:** *(He cannot help himself)* As any man in Illyria, whatsoever he be, under the degree of my betters. . . .

**Cosgrove:** 'She's a beagle, true -bred, and one that adores me; what o'that?'

**Birkett:** I was adored once TOO.

**Cosgrove:** *(triumphant)* There you are! Beat that!

**Mr. Anderson:** Is this the case that dropped a thousand bricks? Is this the celebrated numbskull who's forgotten to hand in his homework six weeks out of nine? Well, we've found you out now, you twister. *(Presenting BIRKETT with a copy of the play from his pocket)* There you are, Aguecheek. You've got a week. Get on with it!

**Birkett:** But I don't understand it all.

**Mr. Anderson:** Then you'll have a lot in common with the audience!

**Birkett:** Who'll do the lights then? I'm the only one who knows the plot.

**Mr. Anderson:** Forget the lights! What's the good of lights if we haven't got a play? Leave 'em all switched on. *(Shouting to the rest, he strides back to the hall to organise.)* What do we need? Duke, Curio, Lords, attendants. . . .

*(As soon as he turns, SPOTTY runs to haul open the curtain. BIRKETT rushes over to the foot of the lighting gallery ladder, but as he puts his hands on the rungs, the front-of-house lights come up. JULIET is working the dimmers. She turns to the top of the ladder).*

**Juliet:** Don't worry about me, Roo. I can manage.

**Birkett:** I wasn't worrying. I'd forgotten you were there.

**Juliet:** I told you I could understand it.

**Birkett:** *(furious at finding his place usurped)* Better leave it. I've made alterations - you won't be able to follow them.

**Juliet:** I said, don't worry. I know your writing. Go back on stage. You'll do it ever so well. I know you'll be good.

*(At this point the actors make their entrance. BIRKETT is still pleading 'But I only know it parrot-fashion. . . .' We hear the opening lines of the play: 'If music be the food of love, play on. . . .' as the scene change music fades in and the lights down).*

SCENE 10.

*(As the lights come up and music fades down again, another time-lapse effect: the rehearsal has now reached Act II : Scene 3 - the point 'where we came in' in the first scene of the play proper. This time, of course, it is in costume, and BIRKETT has taken the place of HOWELL. Although BIRKETT carries a book, he does not need to refer to it. He is wearing AGUECHEEK's doublet, over his ordinary clothes. He produces a perfect imitation of HOWELL'S performance, down to the finest detail and intonation).*

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Possess us, possess us; tell us something of him.

**Suzanne as Maria:** Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of puritan.

**Birkett as Sir Andrew:** O! If I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog.

*(The other actors in the hall are laughing raucously at BIRKETT'S version of HOWELL. COSGROVE is forced to go right over the top with his acting in order to compete.)*

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** What, for being a puritan? thy exquisite reason, dear knight?

**Birkett as Sir Andrew:** I have no exquisite reason for't, but I have reason good enough.

**Suzanne as Maria:** The devil a puritan that he is, or anything constantly but a time-pleaser; an affectioned ass, so crammed as he thinks, with excellences, that it is his ground of faith that all that look on him love him; and on that vice in him will my revenge find notable cause to work.

*(A silence: COSGROVE has forgotten. BIRKETT prompts him in a stage whisper - without reference to the book).*

**Birkett:** 'What wilt thou do?'

**Cosgrove:** *(annoyed, between his teeth)* Proper polly parrot, aren't we!

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** WHAT wilt thou DO?

**Suzanne as Maria:** *(repeating the same wooden gestures as before)* I will drop in his way some obscure epistles of love; wherein, by the colour of his beard, the shape of his leg, the manner of his gait, the expressure of his eye, forehead and complexion, he shall find himself most feelingly personated. I can write very like my lady your niece; on a forgotten matter we can hardly make distinction of our hands.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** *(remembering the gesture)* Excellent! I smell a device.

**Birkett as Sir Andrew:** *(just as HOWELL had played it)* I have't in my nose too.

*(More laughter from the other actors).*

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** He shall think, by the letters that thou wilt drop, that they come from my niece, and that she is in love with him.

**Suzanne as Maria:** *(with a wink at BIRKETT)* My purpose is, indeed a horse of that colour.

**Birkett as Sir Andrew:** And YOUR HORSE now would make HIM an ASS!

*(High tide of amused laughter from the hall).*

**Suzanne as Maria:** *(loudly, over the noise, and grinning)* Ass, I doubt not.

**Birkett as Sir Andrew:** O! 'twill be admirable. *(He skips round even more ridiculously than HOWELL did).*

**Suzanne as Maria:** Sport royal, I warrant you: I know my physic will work with him. I will plant you two, and let the fool make a third, where he shall find the letter: observe his construction of it. For this night, to bed, and dream on the event. Farewell. *(MARIA exits - blowing kisses to SIR TOBY).*

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** Good night, Penthesilia!

*(Same sweeping gesture, but BIRKETT deftly side-steps where HOWELL was knocked flying).*

**Birkett as Sir Andrew:** Before me, she's a good wench.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** She's a beagle, true-bred, and one that adores me: what o'that?

**Birkett as Sir Andrew:** *(perfect HOWELL, perfectly AGUECHEEK)* I was adored once TOO!

*(The same gestures and intonation bring hoots of laughter from the hall, but it is cut short by a flickering of the lights, a pyrotechnic smoke flash and bang, and a scream from the lighting gallery where JULIET has been moving the dimmers. After the flickering, the visible lights go out, leaving the actors and stage in a blue glow).*

**Mr. Anderson:** *(hurling his copy on to the stage, and following it to C)* What the hell is going on?

**Birkett:** *(an edge of despair in his voice)* You silly cow! I told you to leave it alone. I altered that bit. I said you wouldn't understand it.

**Mr. Anderson:** *(in a terrible whisper)* Who's up there? Who is it? Come down here, NOW.

*(Slowly, JULIET clumps down the ladder and steps towards the actors, C. Her eyes are round with tears).*

**Juliet:** I thought. . . .

**Mr. Anderson:** THOUGHT? But no-one asked you to think. Who asked you to mess around with the switchboard? It's a skilled job, not a game for silly little girls.

*(JULIET takes another step towards BIRKETT, looking for support).*

**Birkett:** I told you.

**Juliet:** *(pathetically)* I thought I knew it. *(She is crying openly now.)* I thought I had it right. I was always there.

**Mr. Anderson:** Don't we know it? AND we know why! Now get off the stage and get out of the way, there's a good girl. *(nastily)* You can do your courting out of school in future.

*(JULIET tries to look at BIRKETT, again she steps towards him, but he pushes past her roughly and runs to the lighting gallery steps. JULIET turns, her tearful eyes following him. He is up in a trice, and scanning the control-board with a troubleshooter's eye).*

**Birkett:** *(muttering aloud as he thinks)* If she hasn't blown the whole system, then there's just a chance. . . . We've got spare lamps. . . . Until tomorrow. . . . *(Gingerly, he throws the master switch and moves several of the plug-tops around. He reactivates the master switch and slowly puts one hand on a dimmer. As he moves the control, the stage is partially lit again. He looks over the rail).* Will that do? We've lost most of the front-of-house, but we can fix . . . . *(He trails off as he sees JULIET turn slowly, still crying, and walk away off, upstage R).*

**Birkett:** *(suddenly aware of her feelings)* Julie!

*(He is down the ladder and on the stage in an instant, but JULIET has already reached the apron, where she turns, stands for a moment and gives him the most sorrowful of looks, before stepping away into the darkness of the hall - BIRKETT remains motionless, staring after her. In the awkward silence after her footsteps die away MR. ANDERSON turns and picks up his book).*

**Mr. Anderson:** *(a little subdued now, trying to break the tension)* Get on with it,

rabble!

**Cosgrove:** (*adjusting his cushion and dropping back into character*) Good night,  
(*same gesture*) Penthesilia!

**Birkett:** (*Sir Andrew voice, but automatically, without moving or turning to COSGROVE*) Before me, she's a good wench.

**Cosgrove as Sir Toby:** She's a beagle, true-bred, and one that adores me; what o'that?

**Birkett:** (*turning now, full to the real audience, with half a shrug and a wry smile, and a wistful, infinite sadness in his own voice*) I was adored once, too.

(*On this last line there is a snappy fade of stage-lights leaving BIRKETT alone in a tight, bright spotlight, held for a second or two like a still photograph before it too fades, more slowly, leaving the stage in total darkness, as it was when the play began*).

**CURTAIN**