

RODGE!

A Play

by

ANDY EVANS

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

RODGE!

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CAST

Max	<i>10 years old, smart and full of self-belief</i>
Silva	<i>10 years old, trusts Max</i>
Bobby	<i>13 years old, large build, slow witted</i>
Jason	<i>10 years old, weasel like</i>
Dad	<i>mid 30's</i>
Gran	<i>old, but quick witted and fun</i>
Maggie	<i>16, Max's babysitter</i>
Sally	<i>10, a classmate of Max</i>
Janet	<i>10, a classmate of Sally</i>
Miss Chapman	<i>early 20's, Max's teacher</i>
A Fireman	<i>any age</i>
A Doctor	<i>any age</i>

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SCENE 1. A Street Corner.

Max: *(Runs on stage in a panic).* RODGE!!!

(He runs off in a panic, the SIBBERT Brothers run on and then off again. MAX re-enters and believes he can spare about a nanosecond)

Max: Hiya Rodge. Sorry you haven't heard from me for ages, but I haven't really needed to get in touch for a while. I don't like to bother an angel unless it's really urgent. But, well, see it's the Sibbert brothers. They've gone a bit mental. I've run miles and I've got no breath left. Will you help me? I've got to get away from them and I think my legs are getting worn down.

(MAX ducks behind something as the SIBBERT brothers run on and then off again).

Max: Rodge please, I know it's been a while, well three months or so. Well, it's not really my fault, my parents kept nagging me saying I was getting too old for invisible friends. And it's not their fault either really, I mean they are parents, grown ups, they can't see guardian angels. I think you have to be really old or really young to believe but Oh no, I think I can hear the Sibbert brothers. I'll catch you later Rodge got to go! Bye! *(He runs off).*

(From the opposite side we see the SIBBERT brothers enter. BOBBY is a big lad and very menacing with a slightly deranged look in his eye. JASON is younger and smaller, quite weasely. JASON is the mouthy one and BOBBY is the enforcer).

Jason: I don't believe it, he's got away again!

Bobby: Again!

Jason: How does he do it?

Bobby: It!

Jason: Let's look around here and see if we can find him.

Bobby: Him!

Jason: Bobby you go over there and look.

Bobby: Look!

Jason: He's got to be around here somewhere. I saw him running down here and I didn't see him leave as we came down here. He's a little toe-rag!

Bobby: Toe-rag!

Jason: Bobby!

Bobby: Jason!

Jason: Will you stop repeating things I've said?

Bobby: Sorry!

Jason: How often do I have to tell you? You don't sound clever; you don't sound hard; it just makes you sound thick! Just pack it in! I have to tell you at least three times a day. It's no wonder the other kids take the Mickey out of you!

Bobby: No they don't!

Jason: Yes they do!

Bobby: No they don't; they're scared of me!

Jason: Who does Webber make fun of then?

Bobby: King Kong!

Jason: !!!

Bobby: They all make fun of King Kong!

Jason: Who is King Kong?

Bobby: He's a great big ape!

Jason: Exactly!

Bobby: So it's not me they take the mickey out of then, is it?

Jason: Bobby! It's you! They take the mickey out of you! YOU'RE KING KONG! Why do you think we're chasing Webber now?

Bobby: Because you said to get him!

Jason: Why did I say to get him?

Bobby: To rip his arm off and beat him with the soggy end!

Jason: No, think about this! That's what I said we'd do to him, not why we were chasing him. What did he say to Silva before we chased him?

Bobby: Oh! I can remember that! He said "Why did King Kong and Bubbles cross the road? To beat up the man who owned the banana tree!" Ha! Ha! I thought it was funny.

Jason: He meant you! You're King Kong!

Bobby: Well, why did he mention Bubbles then? Cause Bubbles is Michael Jackson's monkey, he wasn't even in the film of King Kong?

Jason: He was having a go at me!

Bobby: At you? Oh! You're Bubbles! Ha! Ha! That's funny! Bubbles! Ha! Ha!

Jason: No, it's not funny, that's why we want to mutilate him, because he made fun of us.

Bobby: So it's not funny then?

Jason: No, you big ape, it's not funny!

Bobby: Well, we'd better see where he is and then I'll smash him! (*Under his breath*) Ha! Ha! Bubbles!

Jason: What?

Bobby: Nothing broth, I was just laughing like you do.

Jason: Like you do, you mean!

Bobby: Leave me alone.

Jason: Oh shut up and do as you're told. Look behind those boxes, I'll ask those kids.

(JASON goes off as BOBBY keeps looking. He looks in some pretty unlikely places as well as behind some boxes).

Jason: (*Re-entering*) They said he ran off. Seems he's faster than we thought.

Bobby: What if they're lying?

Jason: Why would anyone lie to protect Webber, nearly everyone hates him, the only person who'd lie for him is that geek Silva. Everybody else would love to see him get beaten up, even the teachers. Right, well there's no point in hanging around here if he's gone. We'd better go home or Mum will go mental.

Bobby: Mental!

Jason: Will you pack that in?!!!

Bobby: Sorry!

(They leave. MAX comes back on stage looking a bit sheepish and a little bit sweaty, he checks that the coast is clear).

Max: Hiya Rodge! Sorry about that! (*MAX takes a walk to a suitable seat*). You might not recognise me as it's been so long since I last called you. It's Max, Max Webber.

I expect you could have been in the middle of something else when I called, like saving kids from a burning orphanage or something. Oh heck! I hope I didn't stop you from saving someone else! No! That's what guardian angels do for a living, isn't it?

Dad says how can you be real when nobody can see you, but I said that you can't see electricity but he still believes the light will come on when he clicks the switch. He was quite impressed with that! He said it was a warped but sophisticated logic!

(In the far distance we hear MAX'S MUM call out "Max Max").

Max: I think I'd better go home now cause mum will go spare. I'm already late for dinner and Gran's coming over too. Do you remember Gran? She's the one who told me all about you. She still believes in you. That's what I mean: it's only the young and the old who really believe in guardian angels.
See you Rodge, got to go now. Bye!

SCENE 2. A Living Room.

(The WEBBERS have eaten their dinner and are settling down to watch some television. We see MAX sat on the floor playing with a toy plane, DAD is reading his paper, GRAN is watching the TV and MUM is in the kitchen).

Max: Do you remember Spitfires, Dad?

Dad: I remember making models of them when I was your age.

Max: But didn't any ever fly over the house when you were in the war?

Dad: I might be old, but I'm not that old. The most I know about the war came from the Victor or old copies of the Commando comic that I bought on holiday.

Max: It must have been great; they had great planes then didn't they?

Gran: No it wasn't great. Nothing about it was "great"; lots of people were killed and there was a lot of damage caused unnecessarily. It was awful and I don't like to hear you say things like that.

Max: No, but I mean the planes were great. There were Lancasters and Mosquitoes and Spitfires. Even the Germans had some great planes too, like the Junkers JU88 divebomber!

Gran: It was never as romantic as it sounded. They killed people with those planes, people died in them.

Max: They should have called up their guardian angels, shouldn't they Gran?

(DAD and GRAN exchange a look of concern).

Dad: I thought you'd agreed that guardian angels didn't exist after the last time.

Max: Well, yeah, but you can never be certain can you?

Dad: Well you can be pretty sure if no-one's ever seen them.

Max: But you won't see them if you don't believe in them, Gran told me!

Dad: Mum!

Gran: Well, what harm can it do? I told him about them to cheer him up when he

was ill with measles that time. You know it helped!

Dad: It helped cheer him up because no-one was allowed to play with him, and it gave him a new "friend", Roger!

Max: No, just Rodge, not Rodger.

Dad: Whatever. Anyway it took us nearly eight months to persuade him that he wasn't being accompanied by an invisible guardian angel called Roger

Max: Rodge.

Dad: Whatever. The neighbours, his old friends, his teachers all thought he'd gone loopy. People began to avoid the whole family because we'd done it on purpose, we were members of some weird religious sect that believed people like bank managers went on to become angels in their afterlife! Anne got people shouting abuse at her in the shops, they blamed us for that protest he held on the town hall steps. You DO remember the protest don't you, after Councillor Jackson had made a jokey remark about angels in a council meeting.

Gran: Well, you read the report out to him, I blame you!

Dad: I thought it would help persuade him that real sensible people don't believe in angels. I still don't know where he got the idea to lead the other kids on the town hall and to handcuff himself to the railings until he got an apology from Jenkins.

Gran: I still don't know where he got the handcuffs

Max: He did apologise though and it said so when my picture was in the paper.

Dad: Yes, but your friends were told to stay away from you from that point on. You were very nearly dubbed public enemy number one by the whole community

Max: That lady from the newspaper didn't think so, she was nice and put my picture on the front page. She called it a "victory for childhood". I liked her, she was interested in Rodge.

Dad: Well, my point is it cost this family a lot. You didn't have any real friends until Martin and his family moved into town and his mum ignored the gossip and let him play with you. Then you forgot about Roger and we all got on with a normal life.

Max: Rodge!

Dad: Whatever. Anyway, the point is if you start on about him again you could lose the only friend you've got

Max: There's Maggie!

Gran: Oh yes, your girlfriend!

Max: She's not my girlfriend!

Dad: No, she's your baby sitter and she's sixteen, she's not really going to be interested in you. You're a job to her, you're just pocket money, not a friend.

She's far more interested in boys and clubs than guardian angels.

Max: She's still my friend! She said so, everyone knows!

Gran: Well, she didn't let you down when the rest of the town was turning it's back on the family, did she, Robert?

Dad: I guess.

Gran: He's ten years old! What harm can a guardian angel really do?

Dad: Well. He's given all that up now; haven't you, little man.

Max: Umm, yeah, I suppose. I was only joking about the pilots, honest! (*He looks worried by his betrayal of RODGE*)

Mum: (*Offstage*). Max, will you come and help me dry the plates?

Max: Okay mum! (*He goes off*).

Dad: I hope he was joking mum, I couldn't bear going through all that again you know!

Gran: He's ten years old, he'll soon see that it's like the Easter Bunny; the others don't believe so it won't be cool to be different.

Dad: That's the trouble with Max, he's always been stubborn, he doesn't believe in following the crowd. I'm just afraid it could all start up again. Anne wouldn't be able to go through that again. We even had visits from the Social Services thanks to Mrs. Crossley, our helpful neighbourhood watcher.

Gran: I wouldn't mind but there isn't a neighbourhood watch round here. She's poison that one, thinks she's so much better than everyone else. I remember her when she was plain Elsie Morton, before she snared poor old Jimmy Crossley.

Dad: All right mum, that's enough. The point is that it nearly cost us our marriage the way people treated us and we can't afford anything like that to raise its ugly head again. People blame the parents, that's just the way it is!

Gran: It'll pass. I mean he's so keen on aeroplanes now, isn't he? Why don't you take him out to the airport for an afternoon, take his mind off it? You could take Silva too; they'd love it.

Dad: Well, it might work. Look, don't tell Anne that he brought it all up again, she'd only panic.

Gran: And you didn't? Okay, Scout's Honour; I won't say a word!

Dad: You were never a scout.

Gran: I can respect other people's views, can't I?

SCENE 3 *Near the Airport.*

(MAX and SILVA are in a field near the airport watching planes take off and land. They are wearing kagouls and DAD has a pair of binoculars. They also have a flask and a brolly and all three are seated in deck chairs).

Dad: What do you think eh? Pretty spectacular here, isn't it, watching them fly over your head! Better than being up on the platform with all the others, getting the same view as everyone else.

Max: I think it's going to rain.

Dad: No, don't worry about that. Its not going to rain.

Max: Dad, if it's not going to rain, why are we wearing kagouls and carrying an umbrella?

Dad: To make your mother feel better, son. You'll understand why when you get older, son.

Silva: Mr. Webber, when will we see a Spitfire?

Dad: Uhh, I don't think we'll see any today.

Silva: But Max said we could see a Spitfire!

Max: No I didn't, I said it would be like watching Spitfires.

Silva: But this is boring, it's just jets flying back and forth. I want to see Spitfires and Hurricanes and Lancasters and Mosquitoes and everything.

Dad: I don't think that you'll be in luck, I'm afraid; there are very few remaining aircraft of that type in the country. Most were destroyed during or after the war.

Max: Have you ever seen them Dad?

Dad: I have actually, there's a special group called the Battle of Britain flight that still tour the country and appear at certain air shows. They've got a Lancaster and a Spitfire, and a Hurricane I think

Silva: I don't think the Hurricane is as good as the Spitfire.

Max: Me too.

Dad: Why?

Max: Oh Dad! Which one won the Battle of Britain?

Dad: Both, I thought!

Silva: But the Spitfire was the best and did the most; I saw the film on telly.

Dad: I'm not sure of the historical accuracy of that, but I'll take your word for it. Hey, just a minute, there's another plane coming in over the horizon. What is it?

Max: Give me the binoculars, Dad!

Silva: What is it? Can you see properly?

Max: It's a jet I can't see it properly cause of the sun. Hang on I think it's

yeah, I reckon it's a Virgin plane.

Dad: Coming back from America then.

Silva: Can I see too, Max?

Max: Sure, here you go.

Silva: I can see the colours, it's a Virgin plane.

(The plane screams overhead and the three duck and cover their ears).

Dad: Perhaps we'll be able to afford to go on a plane one day, eh, Max? What about you Martin, have you ever been on a plane?

Silva: Yes, with my Mum and Dad. We went to Spain. It was good but it wasn't like flying in a Spitfire, it was more like being on a train ... but just in the sky.

Max: I want to fly. I'm going to be a pilot when I grow up and I want to join the RAF and fly fighter planes.

Silva: Spitfires?

Max: I don't think they fly them any more. They use jets and stuff, you know like Harriers and Stealth Bombers.

Silva: They're not as good as Spitfires.

Max: But I don't care what planes they fly. I just want to fly. Haven't you ever wanted to fly, Dad?

Dad: I wanted to fly when I was younger, I wanted to be like your grandad. He was a flier in the war. He wasn't very old but I thought it was really glamorous.

Max: I didn't know grandad was a pilot!

Dad: I didn't say he was a pilot, I said he was a flier. I think he was a member of a crew on a Wellington. Gran. doesn't talk about it. In fact it was her who kept talking me out of it. Telling me it was a bad thing over and over.

Silva: I can't believe it! How jammy can you get? My grandad was a bus conductor!

Max: Yeah! I really want to fly now! Hey Silva, we could join the RAF together! but I'd have to explain that you're my friend or else they might think you should be a bus conductor like your grandad and not a pilot.

(DAD laughs, MAX walks forward into a spotlight and the lights dim on SILVA and Dad).

Max: Rodge, can you believe it? My grandad was a war hero, and in the RAF! Could you help me Rodge, to become a flier like my grandad? You must know all about flying, being an angel and all. I know its a bit different cause you've got your own wings, but you must like flying or else you'd have

become a desk angel, wouldn't you? How did you learn to fly? I suppose I'll have to get used to heights and stuff. Perhaps I should learn to parachute, too, just to be on the safe side!

I'd better not tell anyone about you just yet, cause Mum and Dad will go mental, and Silva will think I've cheated by getting an unfair advantage and a head start. Still it's not my fault his grandad worked on the buses, is it?

(He turns and laughs with SILVA; his DAD exits).

SCENE 4. A Classroom.

(SILVA and MAX are there with JASON SIBBERT and two girls, SALLY and JANET. The teacher, MISS CHAPMAN, is at the front).

Miss: So you see that's the legend, if you think about it, it must be quite sensible really: man cannot fly like a bird or even like a bumble bee.

Sally: Miss, what about his sister?

Miss: Pardon?

Sally: Ickiest, he had a sister.

Miss: Icharus not Ickiest. Why do you think he had a sister?

Janet: Miss, he did, it was on telly. She was cool and she jumped off a cliff and could fly with her wings cause she wasn't all sweaty.

Sally: S'right Miss, we've all seen it, haven't we?

Class: Yes, miss!

Miss: I think you'll find that was just an advert for an anti-perspirant, not part of the myth. They made her up for TV.

Max: But you might be able to fly Miss, if you keep cool and don't fly too near the sun. Or else how could angels fly? Although, they come from Heaven, so they must have to fly past the sun every day! That doesn't make sense to me. Their wings don't melt.

Miss: *(looking concerned that MAX is on about angels again).* That's quite enough Max. We'll have no more talk of angels here do you understand?

Max: Oh! I've got it, they take the long route; they must fly at night past the moon, so they don't melt their wings, and arrive in the morning.

Miss: That's enough Max. You know that you're not allowed to talk about angels in class, we agreed that you could come back if you forgot all that nonsense.

Sally: Miss, my mum says if he starts talking about angels again I've got to go

straight home.

Janet: Miss, so does mine!

Jason: Mine too Miss!

Miss: That's enough! Max please stop this now before it all gets out of hand again.

Jason: Miss, it's not his fault; he can't help it, he's just a loony!

Sally: Ha! Ha! Baby Loony Tunes!

Silva: Leave him alone! He only asked a question, he didn't say they existed.

Max: They do though Silva!

Silva: Shut up, Max, I'm trying to help here!

Janet: If he didn't say they exist then we don't have to worry about how they fly past the sun do we?

Max: Moon not sun!

Silva: Max!

Miss: All right, that's quite enough! Max Webber go and stand outside! I've had more than enough of your disruption, I didn't want you in my class anyway. You're a bad influence. And I think that in future Martin, you'd better sit next to Jason. Max can sit on his own until he learns to stop making up silly stories! Now, get out!

(MAX gets up and walks downstage).

Max: Sorry Rodge, they just don't get it, do they?

What would you do if there was a burning building and there was me and Silva, Sally, Janet, Jason and Bobby in it? Would you rescue me and Silva but leave the others there? Yeah, I reckon that's what you'd do! You wouldn't let me down would you?

SCENE 5. The WEBBER'S living room.

Maggie: Max, come and sit down, Top of the Pops is on. You might learn something watching this.

Max: I don't like pop music, you know that Maggie.

Maggie: You like the Spice Girls though, don't you!

Max: I didn't say that, I think they're stupid.

Maggie: I think what you actually said was that the posh one was sexy.

Max: I just said she looked nice, I don't fancy her!

Maggie: Well, what do you mean she "looks nice"?

Max: She looks nice, kind. You know what I mean.

Maggie: I think she looks a miserable old cow. She thinks it's cool to look like a slapped bum and point at the camera in every picture she's in. She's a right moody tart. I don't think she's "nice" at all. And she goes out with David Beckham; it's not fair, some girls get all the luck!

Max: Well, anyway, I don't like the Spice Girls and I don't like Top of the Pops.

Maggie: What do you like, Max?

Max: I like planes and flying. I did a project on it at school. Miss said it was good but that I should have chosen a smaller project because there was too much to try and get in.

Maggie: How do you mean too much?

Max: Well, I copied a bit out of a book on the way in which men in mythology have tried to fly and I drew some pictures. Then I wrote about how in medieval times people tried to fly. I drew pictures of Spitfires, so did Silva, that's what his project's about. Then I wrote about how I believe a man could fly without using a plane and drew pictures of what I would do to try and fly without a plane.

Maggie: I expect Miss thought that was very good, didn't she?

Max: Miss never thinks anything I do is any good; she said my work was childish rubbish.

Maggie: I'm sure she didn't mean it. Perhaps you misheard her and what she said.

Max: She said "Max will you get on with your work and stop going on about flying again? Why can't you pick a nice topic for a project, like all the normal children?"

Maggie: She said that? Max, that's awful.

Max: Miss always says things like that; she says she hates me and lets other kids call me names.

Maggie: Max, you're not making this up, are you? Because this is very serious. You should tell another teacher.

Max: Another teacher isn't going to believe me, are they?

Maggie: Well, you must tell your mum and dad, they could complain.

Max: I think they'd rather not hear either, it's all because of Rodge.

Maggie: The angel?

Max: Yeah, well, Miss is always afraid I'll start mentioning him in class again. But I don't, not since Gran told me others wouldn't understand.

Maggie: Well, I can't see what harm you'd be doing even if you did. Don't your friends say anything?

Max: Silva's not allowed to sit with me any more. He has to sit with Jason Sibbert and he picks on both of us, and nobody else will talk to me about Rodge. They just call me Baby Loony Tunes!

Maggie: Oh, that's awful, you poor thing. Come here.

(She hugs him and he falls asleep as the lights fade. DAD enters the room after a pause and the lights rise).

Dad: Hi Maggie! Oh, I see that you spoiled him again.

Maggie: Mr. Webber, I think there's something you ought to know. About Max and school.

(MAX starts to wake up but is still a little groggy and unsure what is going on).

SCENE 6. The Classroom.

(DAD has had to come in to see MISS CHAPMAN about MAX'S behaviour).

Miss: Thank you for coming in Mr. Webber, I appreciate your time.

Dad: I'd like to say it's a pleasure, Miss Chapman, but I'm struggling with the thought that you believe my son is mentally unstable!

Miss: That's not quite what I said! I said I believed he was suffering from delusional episodes during which he talks to non-existent persons, in particular an angel called Roger.

Dad: Rodge.

Miss: Whatever. Anyway he is disturbing the other pupils. They're very scared of him. I've had numerous parents ring me or write to me to complain about the stories he tells starting up again. I had to send him out of my class yesterday because he started again, and when I went out to have a private word with him he was talking to Roger.

Dad: Rodge.

Miss: Whatever. Anyway, my point is that if he had been a normal little boy, he would never have been sent out.

Dad: And that's precisely my point Miss Chapman! You don't treat him like any normal little boy, you treat him as if he's a leper. I don't enjoy the fact that he claims to be on first name terms with an angel any more than you do, but what harm is he doing? Lots of children have imaginary friends, haven't you ever heard of Drop Dead Fred? Harvey? He is just a bit lonely, he's got one

friend who's mother isn't frightened by the scaremongering done by hysterical women who are probably in the wrong job because they can't cope with a slightly unusual little boy!

Miss: I'm sorry Mr. Webber, I didn't want to tell you this but would a "slightly unusual boy" climb on to the school roof at break time just to stand there and look down at the height for no apparent reason?

Dad: Max has already told me about that, he wants to be a pilot and believes he should conquer his fear of heights first. If you ask me it's the school that's at fault for not supervising the kids properly. That had nothing to do with Roger.

Miss: Rodge.

Dad: Whatever. I've got a good mind to make a complaint officially about the way my son is being treated at this school.

Miss: I'm afraid it will be your word against ours, Mr. Webber.

Dad: Not when it becomes known that you told the whole class that you don't want my son in your lessons and that you never did, or that you let other children call him a loony without taking any action!

Miss: I suppose Max told you that did he?

Dad: Fortunately no, Martin Silva's mother rang my wife to tell her what Martin said. He was more than a little upset that you have split them up in class. So you see Miss Chapman, it won't be just your word against my son's. You'll have to persuade all the other children to lie for you too. You see, I happen to know that Mrs. Silva rang Sally's mum before ringing my wife and Sally also confirmed it was true. And she certainly wouldn't call herself a friend of Max's, she thinks it's funny to call him Baby Loony Tunes!

Miss: I, uummm, I uhh

Dad: Oh, for goodness sake, close your mouth and listen. I want you to see Max and apologise to him in front of the class, to let him sit with Martin and to treat him as any other normal child. Do you understand, because if you refuse I'll be on to the local education authority quicker than you can say Icarus!

Oh, and one more thing! IF and I mean IF Max mentions angels again I would like you to contact either me or my wife and we will deal with the problem. Do you understand? Good; then I'll leave it at that; good day Miss Chapman!
(He leaves).

SCENE 7. Outside the WEBBER'S house.

(MAX appears with a flying cap and giant cardboard wings. He climbs a ladder and jumps off after a few steps attempting to launch himself. His displeasure is apparent to all. He goes a bit higher and closes his eyes as he tries once again but fails).

Max: It's no good Rodge, I'm going to have to get really high to launch myself properly; I think I'm going to have to go all the way on to the roof to launch myself. You'll catch me if I fall, that's your job after all. I mean, I know I won't be able to fly like this; well I haven't got an engine have I? I'm not stupid Rodge, but I reckon that I could catch enough air under my wings to let me sort of float back down to earth. Gently, you know.

(He climbs and finds himself on the roof, where he looks around nervously. The height is far greater than he thought, he steals himself to the task and begins to get ready to go just as his Gran arrives in the garden).

Gran: Max! Max! Where are you? Its Gran! Are you about? Where's my favourite grandson? Your mum says you've got to come in now because its going to rain soon, and tea's nearly ready. Max? Where is that boy? Honestly his head is in the clouds, it really is! Well, he'll come down to earth with a bump one of these days, you mark my words! Oh well! *(She stands directly in Max's flight path).*

Max: *(To himself).* Oh Gran! Don't stand there or I'll land on you! She's got the whole garden why does she have to choose my landing pad to look for me? I can't shout or she'll hear me and see that I'm on the roof! Listen Rodge, could you do something? You know, conjure up a bit of a miracle to get Gran out of the way. Then I'll take my first solo flight!

(Suddenly there is a rumble of thunder and the rain begins to fall, rapidly getting heavier).

Gran: Oh dear! Well, I'm not standing out here in this waiting for him. I'll get Anne to ring Silva's house, he's probably there.

Max: At last! Well done Rodge! A stroke of genius! You made it rain at just the right time! Excellent! Oh no! The rain is ruining my wings they're going floppy! I'm going to have to get down by ladder! I guess I should have been more specific, eh Rodge? Next time I'll remember to ask for a dry miracle, its not your fault Rodge, you just sorted out the Gran problem for me. Well I'll

have to make another set of wings and try again in a few days

(He gets down the ladder).

SCENE 8. The school playground.

(JASON and BOBBY are standing on stage; BOBBY has a cigarette).

Jason: I don't care what you say, Bobby, I'm not going to smoke too, I think it's stupid

Bobby: It's cool, it makes me look dead sophisticated.

Jason: Only a body transplant and a personality overhaul could make you look sophisticated'

Bobby: Shut up, right? You're always picking on me; I could smash you.

Jason: Yeah, but then Mum might just accidentally hear about why your bedroom smells of cigarettes and matches. And there's plenty of other things she might just hear.

Bobby: All right, I'm sorry, I didn't mean it.

Jason: Yes you did, Bobby! We go through this every time you decide to try and get the better of me by smashing me.

Bobby: Well, I'm older! You should look up to me, that's what younger brothers should do.

Jason: That's because most younger brothers aren't about fifty times smarter than their big brother. Who was it who saved you from detention by giving your fag to that little kid just as the teacher came over?

Bobby: You.

Jason: And who was it that saved you by telling mum that the dirty books under your bed had been given to you to take to the school jumble sale?

Bobby: You.

Jason: And who was it that lied to the policeman when he found you picking on Stuart Piper?

Bobby: You.

Jason: And what did I tell him?

Bobby: To come quick because an old lady was about to get into a fight in the pension queue at the post office.

Jason: Precisely! And would you have the brains to come up with those excuses?

Bobby: No!

Jason: And what would you think of a big brother who did that sort of thing?

Bobby: That would be cool!

Jason: Precisely. So what if you had a younger brother who would do all that and stand up for you?

Bobby: That would be cool!

Jason: I'm talking about me! I AM that brother. You've already got him, you ape; that's what I'm saying.

Bobby: Oh, right!

Jason: So, no more talk about smashing me, okay?

Bobby: Okay. Hey! You must be pretty cool!

Jason: Shut up! *(A paper plane flies on stage)*. It's Webber, quick hide and we'll get him now!

(They hide).

Max: Where did it go? Oh, there it is, excellent! *(He bends to pick it up)*.

Jason: Webber!

(He steps out in front of MAX. MAX turns to run but BOBBY is there behind him).

Max: Ah! Jason!, Bobby! How lovely to see you.

Bobby: It won't be!

Max: Look, I'd love to stay and play with you boys but I just remembered I've got to, umm, go and, umm, do a thing, yes do something!

Jason: You're not going anywhere, Webber. Bobby, let's take little Maxie to our torture chamber!

Bobby: Where?

Jason: To our torture chamber!

Bobby: Right! Where's that then?

Jason: The cupboard in that classroom dimwit!

Bobby: Oh yeah, let's go into our torture chamber!

Max: *(Under his breath)*. Rodge, help!

Jason: What did you say?

Miss: *(From offstage)*. Ah, boys, could you just carry some books for me please?

(MAX slips BOBBY'S grasp and makes off).

Max: Sorry boys, must fly! Thanks Rodge!

(The SIBBERTS go off and JASON re-enters carrying a massive pile of books, boxes

etc. which he drops and struggles to pick up, dropping more each time. Eventually, he leaves the pile of books on stage, exits and re-enters with a broom and sweeps them offstage).

Jason: I am going to kill that creep Webber one day! Bobby? Bobby? Where are you? Bobby? Oh I see, there you are! Bobby you're not meant to be looking at the pictures in the books. Look, just give me a hand!

SCENE 9. A Hospital waiting area.

(GRAN and SILVA are talking).

Gran: I still don't understand, what was Max actually doing on the garage roof this afternoon?

Silva: Experiments he said, for his school project.

Gran: The one on flying?

Silva: Yeah, he wanted to demonstrate the new Spitfire wings he made. I told him they looked more like Hurricane wings when he jumped, it's no wonder they didn't work.

(DAD enters).

Dad: Well, he's uncomfortable, but not in any real danger.

Gran: Let me get this straight. Max had made Spitfire wings to try and fly.

Silva: Yeah, but they were more like a Hurricane.

Gran: And these wings were made out of brown cardboard and some string and sticky back plastic?

Silva: I don't think he used any sticky back plastic.

Gran: That was a joke

Silva: Oh!

Gran: *(To DAD).* You should have seen him, he was writhing in agony when I found him. He'd twisted his leg and hurt his wrist. He was a mass of cardboard and snotty nosed. He didn't look very happy; he kept saying he'd forgotten to call Roger

Silva: Rodge.

Gran: Whatever. Anyway his angel didn't turn up because he was off saving a burning orphanage or something, but that Silva would be okay; at least I think

that's the gist of what he was saying, wasn't it, Martin?

Silva: I dunno, he was rambling on, the ambulance man said it was hysterical.

Gran: No, he said Max was hysterical not "it"; he meant Max didn't know what he was saying.

Silva: Oh that's okay then, I thought he found it funny. I was quite nervous about having to go to hospital to have my tonsils out. I thought that the nurses would call the doctors to come and laugh at me!

Dad: You'll be lucky if you see a doctor in this place!

Silva: Well who's going to take my tonsils out? I'm not having an operation if there's no doctor.

Dad: No, that's not quite what I meant

Doctor: Mr. Webber?

Dad: Yes, see Martin, they're not extinct yet!

Doctor: I hope not! Right, Max has got a sprained ankle a few bumps and bruises and may have torn a ligament in his wrist. The swelling's quite bad at present, but nothing's broken. He'll be able to come home with you. How did it happen exactly? I can't quite make sense of Max.

Gran: Join the club.

Dad: He flew a Hurricane when he trained in Spitfires!

Doctor: Ah, I see; it all makes perfect sense now, doesn't it Roger? (*To SILVA*).

Silva: I'm not Roger, I'm Martin.

Doctor: Oh right, I thought you might be Roger.

Dad: Uhh, Roger's not here right now, just us three.

Doctor: Right. Well, I must crack on, there's not enough hours in the day.

Gran: Or doctors on duty! Right let's get the patient and go home. By the way it's Rodge not Roger.

(They all exit).

SCENE 10. The School playground.

Max: Hiya Rodge. I bet that kept you pretty busy huh? I heard about the school in Mexico where all the children were saved from an earthquake by hiding under their desks when the school collapsed. I know that was you! You're pretty good at your job.

I saw the Sibbert brothers in school and they thought it was quite cool to have my arm in a sling. They were all right to me and Miss Chapman asked if

anyone else had ever been to hospital or in an ambulance. I think the other kids in my class could quite like me now; Miss doesn't let them call me names now and so they've stopped teasing me about you.

(A school bell rings and MAX begins to make his way offstage as SILVA enters).

Silva: Come on Max! it's time we went back in, play time's finished. Who were you talking to?

Max: No one, I was just erm.... thinking out loud.

Silva: Well Miss wants you back in - you'd better come....

(He goes back in to school. MAX turns back to the audience).

Max: I'm still in training for flying though. I climbed on to the roof of the school at lunchtime but I ducked down and nobody saw me. Just as well really, or they might realise my wrist isn't too bad after all. It isn't hard to get on the roof, Rodge, there's a ladder in the caretaker's room - going up to the roof. Nobody knows I get up there like that. Its pretty high, higher than the shed roof, probably higher than the roof of the house. It's good training to be a pilot, cause I'm not scared of heights now. *(He turns to leave when he hears the bell go again).* Is two sheets enough to make a parachute Rodge? Perhaps I'll bring a few in and join them together before I jump, better to be safe eh?

SCENE 11. The Classroom.

Miss: And so that's how Anne Frank managed to hide from the Nazis in the attic.

Sally: Miss, why do we have to learn all this stuff, its boring.

Janet: Its got nothing to do with us any more; there's no Nazis now, are there Miss?

Miss: Well there are several groups across Europe who believe that Adolf Hitler was possibly right.

Jason: Are they Nazis, Miss?

Miss: They are what we call Neo Nazis, but we shouldn't be talking about this.

Silva: Miss does that mean we'll go to war with them again?

Miss: I don't think so. There aren't many of them.

Max: But Miss, what if they start doing the same thing as the real Nazis, Miss?

The government won't let them do those things to the Jews again, will they?

Miss: I don't think so. It's not very likely, but we are going on to look at another book. It's called "Zlata's Diary" and it's about the war in the former Yugoslavia.

Max: Miss, my Dad says that some of the things they do in Bosnia are the same as the Nazis. Is that true Miss?

Miss: Your Dad might be right. Anyway, about Zlata

Sally: Miss could we go to a world war again?

Miss: I don't think so. I hope not.

Jason: Boring.

Miss: But British troops have been sent out there as peace keepers.

Silva: Miss do you think that we should build some more Spitfires in case we have to go to war again?

Miss: I don't think that they would last very long against modern jets really, Martin!

Silva: I think they would Miss, they won the Battle of Britain.

(The fire alarm goes).

Miss: Oh dear, we weren't told about a drill today; just wait a moment.

(Smoke begins to fill the classroom)

Miss: I think it might be a real fire. Don't panic, leave your things and make your way out on to the playground. Oh dear, I don't think we're going to get out of here that way. Get back into the classroom by the windows.

Jason: Miss, we can't get out of the windows, we're on the second floor.

Miss: Ooh, I feel a bit faint, I think it could be the smoke I just *(She faints).*

Janet: Miss! Miss! What are we going to do now? Miss wake up!!!

Sally: We're going to die!

Jason: I don't want to die! I don't want to die!

Silva: Max, what about Rodge?

Max: What?

Silva: You said he saves kids from burning buildings. Make him come! You've got to make him come!

Max: I don't know if I can make him; he could be busy somewhere else!

Jason: Please Webber! Call your guardian angel; I'm really sorry!

Janet: We all are! Call him!

Class: Call him! Call him! Rodge save us! etc.

Max: Rodge? Are you there? I, I mean we need you now. It's Max, Rodge,

come on! Where are you? (*Turns to the CLASS*). I don't think he's going to make it. I reckon he's on another job somewhere.

Jason: I hate you Webber! You and your stupid angel; nobody's going to save us.

Silva: I wish we had a rope we could climb out. Maybe we should jump?

Sally: It's too high; I'm frightened!

Max: It's not that high, I was going to parachute from higher than this, from the school roof!

Janet: You're such a liar! You haven't even got a parachute!

Max: Yes I have! I made it, well I'm going to make it when I tie all the sheets in my bag together!

Silva: What sheets?

Max: The ones in my bag!

Silva: Max! We can make a rope! We can tie them together and climb down them!

Jason: I can't; it's too high!

Max: Well, we can tie them round your waist and lower you down and the girls if you want. And Miss, she'll have to be lowered.

(They all tie the sheets together and they lower the GIRLS, then JASON and then SILVA goes down with MISS, just leaving MAX anchoring the line. The smoke is virtually engulfing MAX and he faints).

Silva: Max!!!

(Suddenly there is a thundering crash as the classroom seems to collapse. The smoke is too thick to see what has happened. Out of the smoke emerges a FIREMAN in breathing apparatus carrying MAX).

Man: This kid is one of the bravest I've ever seen, he stayed in there to save his friends and nearly died doing it.

Silva: They're not his friends; they're just his classmates.

Man: I don't care who they are, they owe their lives to him. It was only cause I heard him call my name that I realised he was there at all. That's the strangest thing, I don't know how he could have known my name!

Silva: Your name! You're called Rodge, aren't you!!

Man: *(Pause)*. No, I'm called Pete.

SCENE 12. The School Playground.

Max: When Rodge didn't come in the class room I felt more sad and more empty than I've ever felt before. Everyone was looking at me, like Rodge was their only hope. I suppose he was. But he didn't come. He wasn't there when I needed him most.

Everybody called me a hero after the fire. The reporters came and took my picture. I got to meet the Mayor at the Town Hall; luckily he didn't mention the protest with the handcuffs.

(A group of photographers come on and take a few photos which MAX poses for, then as quickly as they arrived, they disappear).

Max: As a special treat the class has been invited to take us to a special air show; The Red Arrows are doing a display there and guess what? The Battle of Britain flight is going to be there too and they're going to let me and Silva go into the Spitfire and the Lancaster; we said we didn't want to go in the Hurricane. The R.A.F. man didn't see why.

(Enter the SIBBERT brothers).

Jason: Hi Max!

Bobby: Hi Max!

Jason: Bobby will you stop copying me!

Bobby: Sorry! I mean I wasn't - I was saying hello to Max!

Jason: Oh, I see, sorry Bobby!

Max: The Sibbert brothers follow me everywhere now and if anyone threatened me then Bobby would smash them for me, and they don't even mind being called King and Bubbles now. Hi Kong! Hi Bubbles!

Together: Hi Max!

Max: Miss Chapman is giving up teaching to get married but she's promised to keep in touch when she moves away. She keeps telling me to tell my Dad she's REALLY sorry. Don't know what for though!

Mum and Dad and Gran are really proud. Gran gave me a medal that was given to my Grandad in the RAF. I'm still going to be a pilot, but I'm going to be more sensible without a guardian angel to look out for me.

(A paper aeroplane flutters on to the stage).

Max: What's this? It's a note! "Well done we're all proud of you - Rodge". No

.... somebody's having a laugh. Who's there? Who threw this? It couldn't be
..... could it?

(A small bell rings - BLACKOUT)

THE END

