

# **THE SCHOOL-ROOM**

A Short Play

**by Charles Hemming**

**SchoolPlay Productions Ltd**

THE SCHOOL-ROOM & LAST DAY OF TERM

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## CAST

<b>Joey Barlow</b>	<i>A slow-witted boy</i>
<b>Baxter</b>	<i>An intruder from another Form</i>
<b>Alan Jenkins</b>	<i>A natural leader</i>
<b>Billy Kent</b>	<i>A straight-forward, normal lad</i>
<b>Treacle Marriott</b>	<i>A mischievous boy</i>
<b>Horrid Mason</b>	<i>A trouble maker</i>
<b>Zimmo Perkins</b>	<i>An evader</i>
<b>Thompson</b>	<i>A boy from another Form</i>
<b>Abdul Ward</b>	<i>A 6th Form Prefect</i>
<b>Whatfor? Simpson</b>	
<b>Flesh Williams</b>	<i>A loud mouth</i>
<b>A Senior Boy</b>	
<b>Clare Adams</b>	
<b>Debra Donnelly</b>	
<b>Carole Ewer</b>	
<b>Elaine Hutchison</b>	
<b>Louise Lavenham</b>	
<b>Susan Lynes</b>	
<b>Wendy Starr</b>	
<b>Amanda Wilson</b>	
<b>Mr. Firkin</b>	<i>The Form Master</i>
<b>Wee Willie Winkle</b>	<i>A small French Master</i>
<b>Stinker</b>	<i>The Headmaster</i>
<b>The Caretaker</b>	
<b>Mr. Jackson</b>	<i>The P.E. Master</i>
<b>Mrs. Birch</b>	<i>The School Secretary</i>
<b>A Police Sergeant</b>	

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**The School-Room** and **Last Day of Term** are both based around the attitudes, behaviour and language of groups of pupils when at school.

Almost by definition, therefore, they need constant updating - both in some of the peer group slang and, most obviously, in all references to famous people, television programmes, etc.

A director undertaking either piece is therefore at liberty to make such changes of this nature as are appropriate but is requested to adhere to the mood and style of the plays in all other respects.

I hope that they are enjoyed by all who experience them.

*Charles Hemming.*

## THE SCHOOL-ROOM

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### SCENE 1

*(Enter a small GIRL, aged 12. Quiet. Pig-tailed. SUSAN. She sits at a desk near the TEACHER'S i.e. Down Centre. She opens a book and begins to read. Silence, which is broken by blood-curdling screams and shouts from TREACLE and ZIMMO, offstage. Sound of running. The door [U.R.] bursts open and a boy [TREACLE] dashes in, followed seconds later by ZIMMO, who stands in the doorway).*

**Zimmo:** What did you nick?

**Treacle:** His pencil case.

**Zimmo:** Did you see him fall down the steps?

**Treacle:** Yeah! Is he coming? (*ZIMMO looks out*).

**Zimmo:** Not yet. What you gonna do with it?

**Treacle:** Dunno. Hide it.

*(ALAN enters).*

**Alan:** Hi! Anybody here yet?

**Zimmo:** No.

*(All this time SUSAN continues quietly to read).*

**Alan:** That burk Thompson in 1.4 is going on about you down the passage. Says you knocked him down the stairs.

**Treacle:** I never! The wally fell down when I ran past. I never touched him.

**Alan:** Well, he was telling that big prefect with the hair when I came past.

**Zimmo:** What, old Abdul?

**Alan:** That's the one. Hard-case.

**Zimmo:** He'll screw you, Treacle.

**Treacle:** 'Course he won't. He can't prove nothing. I ain't afraid of him.

*(BILLY enters).*

**Billy:** Who aren't you afraid of?

**Treacle:** That knock-kneed prefect, Abdul the Hair, the one with the twisted squint.

**Billy:** That's good - 'cos he's on his way up here now.

**Treacle:** Crikey! (*He rises swiftly and throws a pencil-case out of the window U.L.*).

**Alan:** What was that?

**Treacle:** A hand grenade. I'm creating a diversion.

**Zimmo:** You'll need to. I'm going.

(*He makes for the door but is pushed back in by a huge SIXTH FORMER with much hair - AFRO if possible. THOMPSON follows him in.*)

**Abdul:** (*Pushing ZIMMO*). Just a minute.

**Zimmo:** I've got to see Mr. Robinson.

**Abdul:** Why?

**Zimmo:** Er .... he sent for me. He wants to see me.

**Abdul:** He must be daft.

**Zimmo:** Can I go then?

**Abdul:** In a minute. Who's Marriott?

**Thompson:** That's him. (*Pointing at TREACLE*).

**Abdul:** Shut up, you. (*To TREACLE*). This thing says you pinched his pencil-case and pushed him down the stairs.

**Treacle:** I didn't.

**Thompson:** Yes you did!

**Treacle:** I didn't, did I Zimmo?

**Abdul:** Shut up, you. Where's his pencil-case?

**Treacle:** I haven't got it, have I?

**Abdul:** Where is it then?

**Treacle:** I dunno. I'll bet he hasn't got a pencil-case.

**Thompson:** I have - or I did have! He snatched it from me and pushed me down the stairs at the same time.

**Treacle:** (*Shouting*). Course I didn't!

**Thompson:** (*Shouting*). You did!

(*MR. FIRKIN, known as Fiery, enters.*)

**Firkin:** What's going on here?

**Abdul:** This boy says this one took his pencil-case, Sir.

**Firkin:** Oh? Is this true, Marriott?

**Treacle:** No, Sir. I don't know what he's on about.

**Firkin:** Do you know what the time is Marriott?

**Treacle:** No, Sir.

**Firkin:** Well, I'll tell you. It's twenty minutes to nine. (*TREACLE remains silent*).  
Do you know why I'm here at twenty to nine, Marriott?

**Treacle:** No, Sir.

**Firkin:** What time do I usually get here, Marriott?

**Treacle:** I don't know, Sir.

**Firkin:** You don't know anything Marriott, so I'll tell you. I'm usually here at eight minutes to nine, Marriott. (*TREACLE remains silent*). Why do you think I'm twelve minutes early, Marriott?

**Treacle:** I don't know, Sir.

**Firkin:** Well, I'll tell you Marriott. I was walking from my car towards the Staff-Room, looking forward to another day of joy and happiness teaching the citizens of the future. I was deep in thought, pondering upon the indefinables in the cosmos. Do you follow me so far, Marriott? (*TREACLE looks mystified and remains silent*). No, of course you don't. However, Marriott, I was distracted from my philosophising. Do you know what distracted me, Marriott?

**Treacle:** No, Sir.

**Firkin:** I will tell you, Marriott. As I passed beneath this window an object hurtled through the air and deposited itself at my feet.. Do you know what that object was, Marriott?

**Treacle:** No, Sir.

**Firkin:** I think you do, Marriott. (*FIRKIN produces a pencil-case from his jacket pocket*).

**Thompson:** That's mine, Sir.

**Firkin:** I rather thought it was. Take it and go back to your room.

(*THOMPSON exits swiftly.*)

**Firkin:** (*To ABDUL*). Thank-you, Ward, you may go.

(*ABDUL exits*).

**Firkin:** Marriott, come with me.

(*FIRKIN exits, followed by TREACLE who makes a rude sign at the master's back*).

**Alan:** Fiery does build it up, doesn't he?

**Billy:** What'll happen to Treacle?

**Alan:** He'll get bored to death.

*(WHATFOR, HORRID, CLARE and LOUISE all enter).*

**Horrid:** Hey! What's Fiery dragging Treacle off for?

**Billy:** Guillotine.

**Horrid:** Who?

**Billy:** Guillotine! Execution! Chop his head off!

**Whatfor:** Whatfor?

**Billy:** Eh, you tell them Alan, I've got to finish my Maths.

*(BILLY goes up to SUSAN, asking her quietly about the Maths Homework. ALAN talks quietly to HORRID, WHATFOR and ZIMMO who crowd round him. CLARE and LOUISE move downstage).*

**Clare:** Did you go to the Club last night?

**Louise:** No, me Gran came round and I had to stay in.

**Clare:** She's always round yours.

**Louise:** Yeah, I know, and I always have to stay in.

**Clare:** Why?

**Louise:** Me Mum says I have to be polite.

**Clare:** And are you?

**Louise:** Well, I stay in.

**Clare:** Yeah, but I mean, do you talk to her, an' all?

**Louise:** Nah, there's nothing to talk about. She's about 106 and she's deaf and she won't wear her false teeth so you can't hear what she says and anyway she thinks we're still fighting Hitler - whoever he is.

**Clare:** You mean she's loopy?

**Louise:** **Sort of**, besides she doesn't need anybody to talk to. She talks to the telly.

**Clare:** What do you mean?

**Louise:** Well, she thinks they're real and so when they say something she answers them - 'course you can't hear what she's saying but she just sits there mumbling like an old mangy gorilla.

**Clare:** That's not a nice way to talk about your Gran!

**Louise:** No, but she ain't half hairy!

*(They move to their desks and get out books as FLESH, AMANDA and ELAINE enter).*

**Elaine:** Miss Grubbins says we've all got to go to her form room for Registration.

**Whatfor:** Whatfor?

**Elaine:** 'Cos old Fiery's taking Treacle off to the Torture Chamber.

**Alan:** Well, it's not time yet so I'm staying here.

*(Bell sounds loudly and insistently. CAROLE and JOEY and DEBRA and WENDY all enter in a rush and move to their desks. Everybody else begins to exit).*

**Carole:** Cor! I thought we were late.

**Flesh:** You are. We've had Registration already and Fiery marked you absent.

**Joey:** Liar! That was the bell!

**Flesh:** SECOND bell, Stupid! Look everybody's going, see? *(He exits).*

**Carole:** Oh dear!

*(She and JOEY and WENDY and DEBRA collect their gear together hurriedly. By this time everybody has gone out except BILLY and SUSAN).*

**Susan:** Don't worry, Carole. We HAVEN'T had Registration. That Flesh is lying again.

**Debra:** Where's everybody going then?

**Susan:** We've got to go to Miss Grubbin's room. Come on, I'll tell you about it on the way. *(They exit).*

**Joey:** *(To BILLY).* What we got first?

**Billy:** French with Wee Willie.

**Joey:** Oh hell! *(They exit).*

## SCENE 2

*(Ten minutes later. All the CHILDREN enter noisily. Chairs are moved and scraped, books are thrown about, and there is much talking and some laughing. Most of them sit. FLESH and ALAN remain standing).*

**Billy:** Have you done Wee Willie's homework?

**Zimmo:** 'Cos not!

**Billy:** What'll you say?

**Zimmo:** I'll say I couldn't do it. My dad says I can't speak blinking English proper so how the hell can I speak French?

**Billy:** I wonder if Chinese is easier?

**Joey:** I reckon the Chinese must be very clever to speak their language. It's all

squiggles en't?

*(Enter TREACLE).*

**All:** Hurray!

**Alan:** What happened Treac?

**Horrid:** Did you get smashed?

**Treacle:** No, nothing happened.

**Zimmo:** Didn't Fiery do anything?

**Treacle:** No, he just bored my ear off for about three hours and told me not to do it again. I've got to see Stinker later.

**Whatfor:** Whatfor?

**Treacle:** Dunno. Another lecture, I suppose. 'Ere, what we got first?

**Billy:** Wee Willie.

**Treacle:** Don't think I can stand that. Think I'll go to see Stinker now.

**Horrid:** Think I'd rather come too. Anything's better than French.

**Joey:** Yeah! Let's all go!

**Zimmo:** And when he comes the room will be empty!

**Alan:** Great!

**Flesh:** But the girls will be here. They won't come with us.

**Horrid:** Well, they don't count.

**Flesh:** I've got a better idea. Let's barricade the door!

**Alan:** That's too obvious. Here's something better. *(He reaches on top of a cupboard and produces two large wedges for propping the door open in warm weather).*

**Horrid:** Yeah! Quick! Before he comes!

*(The two wedges are driven very firmly under the door and kicked home. The door is securely jammed).*

**Wendy:** You'll get us all into trouble.

**Flesh:** Shut up you! You're just scared.

**Amanda:** Yeah, well, what'll happen when he can't get in?

**Horrid:** Well, we won't have French for a start.

**Carole:** I LIKE French.

**Flesh:** Shut up you!

**Alan:** Come on girls, it's only a joke.

**Horrid:** Yeah, Wee Willie likes a joke, n'est-ce-pas?

**Joey:** What was that?

**Horrid:** French, stupid!

**Joey:** Oh!

*(The door is tried from the outside but doesn't give. There is a moment's pause and the children watch the door expectantly. Then the door is tried again and the handle is rattled).*

**Wee Willie:** Open up! Open this door! *(The BOYS giggle but nobody speaks).* Is this some foolish prank 2.3? Open the door immediately.

**Alan:** We can't, Sir.

**Wee Willie:** You can't? What do you mean?

**Alan:** It seems to be jammed, Sir.

**Wee Willie:** How can it be jammed? What have you done?

**Alan:** Nothing, Sir.

**Wee Willie:** Well, you must have done something. Who are you?

**Alan:** *(Pause).* Perkins, Sir. *(This is Zimmo's surname and he protests).*

**Zimmo:** Hey!

**Wee Willie:** What?

**Alan:** It's me, Perkins, Sir I'm pushing and pulling at the door but without success. *(ALAN is, in fact, leaning idly against the wall).*

**Zimmo:** Sir, it's me, Sir, Jenkins. *(This is ALAN'S surname).*

**Wee Willie:** Well, what is it Jenkins?

*(ALAN has jumped on ZIMMO and put his hand over his mouth. They struggle silently).*

**Wee Willie:** What's going on, Jenkins?

**Treacle:** Sir, Jenkins and Perkins are calling the caretaker out of the window.

**Wee Willie:** Oh good idea!

*(The following action must be absurd and manic)*

**Treacle:** *(Rushing to the window).* Caretaker! Caretaker!

**Horrid, Flesh and Billy:** *(Dancing about madly)* Caretaker! Caretaker! Caretaker! Where are you? We need you!

**Alan:** *(Releasing ZIMMO).* Caretaker! Oh please Mr Caretaker, come to let us out.

**Horrid:** Caretaker! I'm suffocating. I'm dying. I need air. I need French. I need French air. L'air Français.

**Joey:** What was that?

**Horrid:** French, Stupid!

**Joey:** Oh!

**Zimmo:** We can't do our French. We are imprisoned. We are being kept from studying. It's wrong. It's a scandal. The News of the World shall hear about this.

**Billy:** Give me French. I've had cornflakes and bacon and eggs this morning and now I need French!

**Treacle:** Mornings are not complete without French.

**Flesh:** Get some today! Instant French!

**Alan:** Have you got a Wee Willie? If not, send today for free sample. You can try ours. Year's trial. Non-returnable.

**Wee Willie:** (*Shouting above the din*). Will you boys shut up!

**Whatfor:** Whatfor?

**Wee Willie:** Is that you, Simpson?

(*WHATFOR creeps away*).

**Horrid:** Sir, the caretaker seemed not to be able to hear our impassioned pleas from the window.

**Alan:** I think he's gone back to bed.

**Flesh:** We may be here for ever. Think of that.

**Zimmo:** I daren't. What about my poor young mother?

**Billy:** What about my paper round?

**Zimmo:** My mother O O W W ! Mumme!

**Billy:** My paper round! My paper round! OOOh!

**Wee Willie:** Stop that row at once! I'm going to get the caretaker. Be quiet!

(*The BOYS stop and listen. The following conversation is conducted in whispers*).

**Alan:** Take those wedges out gently.

**Horrid:** (*Trying to do so*). They're stuck!

**Flesh:** Here, lemme do it, Feeble! (*But the wedges remain stuck*).

**Alan:** We've got to get them out before Wee Willie gets back.

(*The BOYS tug and pull but to no avail*).

**Billy:** Hurry up!

**Horrid:** It's no good.

**Alan:** I know. Pretend we're all trying to push the door open. That will cover any noise we make getting the wedges out. (*Loudly*). Come on, everybody! Push and pull! Push and pull! Push and pull!

*(The BOYS all join in rattling the door and shouting and the wedges are kicked free and pocketed - just as the door is tried again from the outside. The BOYS all collapse backwards as the door opens to reveal WEE WILLIE and the CARETAKER. WEE WILLIE is very small and the CARETAKER is very large).*

**Alan:** We did it, Sir! We managed to pull it open!

*(The CARETAKER inspects the door. There is nothing wrong with it. WEE WILLIE looks both suspicious and embarrassed. The BOYS look triumphant).*

**Treacle:** I was going to shout "au secours", Sir.

**Wee Willie:** Be quiet and sit down all of you.

**Treacle:** But doesn't 'au secours' mean 'help', Sir?

**Wee Willie:** Yes it does. Sit down.

**Treacle:** So I would have been saying the right thing in the emergency?

**Wee Willie:** Sit down!

*(They sit. WEE WILLIE walks to the master's desk - down centre. The CARETAKER exits).*

**Wee Willie:** First: I shall report this mysterious happening to the Headmaster.  
Second: We will begin on page 34. *(Low groan).*

### SCENE 3

*(An hour later. The double French lesson ends. It is morning break-time. The Bell sounds. WEE WILLIE exits. The CHILDREN relax. As soon as WEE WILLIE leaves the room a SENIOR BOY enters).*

**Senior Boy:** Marriott?

**Treacle:** Yes?

**Senior Boy:** Stinker wants you straightaway in his office. *(He exits).*

**Treacle:** 'Spect he wants to give me a prize. *(He goes out).*

**Zimmo:** Who's coming to the Tuck-shop?

**Alan:** I haven't any money.

*(BAXTER, an older boy, enters furtively).*

**Flesh:** Hey, Whatfor, lend us 10p

**Whatfor:** Whatfor?

**Flesh:** Well, I thought I'd take a taxi up to the Ritz and have some caviare and chips washed down with a bottle of Chateau Pepsi 1947 *(Harshly)*. What do you think I want it for? *(WHATFOR simply shrugs)*.

**Baxter:** *(Who has been listening)*. On the cadge again, Flesh?

**Flesh:** Who asked you in?

**Baxter:** I thought I'd come to the Zoo for a gawp.

**Zimmo:** Well, gawp off then.

**Horrid:** Yeah, go on, shove off to your own hole in the ground.

**Baxter:** Who's going to make me?

**Alan:** Shall we draw lots?

*(The BOYS begin to encircle BAXTER who realises that he is suddenly in an unpleasant spot. He starts to edge towards the door. The movement becomes faster and he bursts for the door followed by ALAN, FLESH and HORRID. The rest of the BOYS crowd in the doorway cheering and jeering. They chant and it rises to a crescendo of noise and cheering and FLESH charges in triumphantly with BAXTER'S trousers. Everybody surges back into the room, except ALAN and HORRID).*

**Debra:** What have you done?

**Flesh:** Well, while we were struggling his trousers got torn so I volunteered to get them mended for him.

**Debra:** Where are they torn?

**Flesh:** Here, look, there's a big hole.

**Debra:** Oh yeah, *(realising)*. Hey, that's where his leg goes through! *(ALL laugh at her slowness)*.

**Flesh:** Cor! You are quick. I thought I'd fooled you then.

**Debra:** Nah! You can't fool me - look, here's the hole for his other leg, see?

**Flesh:** *(Pretending to be amazed)*. Oh yes. Here, everybody, see what Debra's spotted? These aren't tears at all - they're holes for his legs.

**Zimmo:** So they are! Wow, Deb! You ought to be on Mastermind.

**Debra:** *(Innocently pleased)*. Silly!

**Zimmo:** What are we going to do with them?

**Billy:** Send them to the invisible menders.

**Whatfor:** Whatfor?

**Billy:** To sew up the holes, of course.

**Joey:** But ....

**Susan:** Never mind Joey, Billy's making a joke.

**Joey:** Oh!

**Carole:** 'Ere, is that lovely Baxter still out there without his trousers on?

**Wendy:** Go and see Carole.

**Carole:** All right I will.

*(She moves towards the door followed by CLAIRE and ELAINE).*

**Flesh:** Hey Elaine! Do you think that you are old enough?

**Elaine:** Don't be cheeky.

*(Before the GIRLS reach the door ALAN and HORRID return).*

**Joey:** Where's Baxter?

**Alan:** He's hiding in the toilets.

**Horrid:** We chased him through the cloakroom and that new young teacher was on duty there. She nearly fainted.

**Alan:** So did Baxter. *(General laughter).*

**Louise:** What did she say?

**Alan:** *(In a high voice).* "What on earth is going on?"

**Amanda:** What did you say?

**Horrid:** I said he was the School mile champion and he'd just got changed for P.E. - but I don't think she believed me.

**Alan:** She didn't. She went straight to the Staff Room. I expect she's gone to get a bloke to get Baxter out.

**Zimmo:** What are we going to do to Baxter's trousers?

**Joey:** Throw them out of the window.

**Zimmo:** No, they'll probably land on Fiery.

**Billy:** *(From the door).* Hey - watch out! Stinker's coming!

**Zimmo:** Get rid of those trousers.

**Flesh:** Oh Lord! Where?

**Alan:** Master's desk. Quick!

*(FLESH hurriedly puts the trousers in the MASTER'S desk and the CHILDREN all sit or stand around innocently. There is an expectant silence .... Footsteps .... and the HEADMASTER'S voice is heard in the corridor).*

**Headmaster:** *(Offstage).* Come on. Don't dawdle.

*(He appears in the doorway and surveys the scene. He steps into the room and looks outside).*

**Headmaster:** Come on in, Marriott.

*(TREACLE enters slowly).* Come on, Boy!

*(BAXTER enters even more slowly, minus his trousers. The GIRLS giggle).*

**Headmaster:** Quiet there!

*(Silence. The HEAD surveys the class. Silence. He walks slowly round. Silence. The CHILDREN watch him. The atmosphere is ominous).*

**Headmaster:** This Form is causing too much trouble. *(Pause).* Already this morning I have had reported to me a case of a stolen pencil-case; a master has been unable to get into the room; and a boy has been attacked and had his trousers taken. And it's not yet 11 o'clock! *(Pause).* The idea of coming to School is to work, to learn, to mature, to become civilized citizens of the future. You treat the place like a fairground or a holiday camp. I expect some high spirits and even some rebellious attitudes when you are in the middle and upper school but you are still juniors! If you don't learn to behave now you'll have no respect for the laws and conventions of society as you grow older and stronger. You have to be taught that there is a line beyond which you cannot go with impunity. You have to be made to understand that you cannot just take what belongs to another, that you cannot show disrespect to your elders, that you cannot treat your fellows *(indicating BAXTER)* in such an undignified and indecent way. I intend to punish you. I am going to stamp out this unruly behaviour. You will resent the punishment now, but I hope that later you will recognise that your actions leave me no option. Tonight you are to tell your parents that you will be home late for the next three days, starting tomorrow. You will be kept here in Detention for threequarters of an hour. Is that understood? *(Silence).* I said, is that understood? *(Some murmurs from the CHILDREN).*

**Alan:** Please, Sir?

**Headmaster:** You needn't tell me you've got a football practice. This Detention takes priority.

**Alan:** Please, sir?

**Headmaster:** I will hear no excuses.

**Alan:** Sir?

**Headmaster:** Well?

**Alan:** Sir, the girls haven't done anything.

**Headmaster:** Say that again.

**Alan:** The girls haven't done anything, Sir.

**Headmaster:** What is your name?

**Alan:** Jenkins, Sir.

**Headmaster:** The point you wish to make, Jenkins, is that the girls ought not to be punished?

**Alan:** Yes, Sir.

**Headmaster:** That's very gallant of you, Jenkins. Somewhat unexpected.

*(He surveys the BOYS and GIRLS again).*

**Headmaster:** *(Cagily).* What's the next move, Jenkins? If I agree that the girls go unpunished, do you then tell me that this boy here didn't do anything, or this boy here, or yourself perhaps?

**Zimmo:** Sir, I never ....

**Headmaster:** *(Pounces).* There! You see!

**Alan:** No, Sir. Most of the boys were involved in the things you said, but the girls weren't.

**Headmaster:** MOST of the boys?

**Alan:** Well, ALL of the boys.

**Zimmo:** I ....

**Alan:** Yes, you were, so shut up!

**Headmaster:** Are we agreed then that the boys stay in Detention but the girls go free? *(Slow murmurs of agreement).* Very well. Inform your parents tonight. Now. This boy's trousers. Where are they? *(Silence).* Be sensible. You have misbehaved. You are going to be punished. Return the trousers and we'll all start again.

*(FLESH goes to the MASTER'S desk and gets the trousers out. He gives them to BAXTER ).*

**Headmaster:** Put them on quickly, boy, and clear off. *(BAXTER is already doing so).* The rest of you get ready for your next lesson.

*( He goes out. Silence. The CHILDREN look at each other).*

**Joey:** What was that all about?

**Susan:** The Headmaster was annoyed with us.

**Joey:** Oh!

**Wendy:** 'Ere Alan, thanks.

**The Girls:** Yes. Thanks, Alan.

**Billy:** Look at him - the Ladies' Hero!

**Alan:** Oh shut up!

**Joey:** Hey, what does "impining" mean?

**Flesh:** What?

**Joey:** What Stinker said. Something about crossing the line impining.

**Clare:** We did it in Geography, didn't we? Something about the Equator?

**Louise:** No, that was Maths. Quadruple Equations.

**Amanda:** I thought ruples were Russian pounds.

**Flesh:** The Russians don't have pounds!

**Amanda:** That's what I said. They have ruples.

**Billy:** But what was Stinker so ratty for?

**Alan:** We are going to become civilized citizens.

**Whatfor:** Whatfor?

**Flesh:** So that we don't cause anybody any trouble.

**Zimmo:** 'Ere, what did you get the girls off for Alan?

**Alan:** Well, they were innocent.

**Zimmo:** So was ....

**All:** No you weren't!

**Treacle:** Well, come on you lot. It's P.E. next.

*(There is a general exit with the CHILDREN talking amongst themselves. The bell sounds).*

#### SCENE 4

*(An hour later. P.E. has just ended and the CHILDREN have finished morning school. All the CHILDREN enter except BILL, SUSAN, DEBRA, JOEY, CAROLE, ELAINE and LOUISE).*

**Alan:** Cor! I dunno why I always look forward to P.E. I always feel knackered afterwards.

**Zimmo:** It's all those late nights.

**Horrid:** And cigarettes, and whisky, and wild, wild women.

**Flesh:** Well, fag-ends, and cider, and Susan.

**Alan:** Shut up you!

**Treacle:** 'Ere, why doesn't Susan ever do P.E.? Is there something wrong with her?

**Horrid:** She's got ass-mar, ain't she?

**Clare:** I think that's it.

**Treacle:** But when anybody else has got a cold or something and can't do P.E. they have to walk around the field or something like Billy Kent did today. But she always goes to the Library.

**Wendy:** Yeah, well, her mum sent a note, didn't she?

**Horrid:** I wish my mum would send a note.

**Wendy:** Won't she?

**Horrid:** No.

**Wendy:** Why not?

**Horrid:** She can't write.

**Treacle:** Anyway, you wouldn't be happy in the Library with all those books, would you?

**Horrid:** Why not?

**Treacle:** Well, what would you do with them?

**Horrid:** I'd have a bonfire!

*(Enter MR. JACKSON, the P.E. MASTER. He is in a hurry and is plainly agitated).*

**Mr. Jackson:** Where's Kent?

**Amanda:** Bottom right hand corner.

**Mr. Jackson:** Billy Kent. Where is he?

**Alan:** Hoisting chips, Sir.

**Mr. Jackson:** What?

**Flesh:** He is partaking of his noon repast thoughtfully and economically provided by the Local Education Authority, containing a balanced nutritional ...

**Mr. Jackson:** I'll see you later, Williams. Send Kent to see me as soon as he comes back. O.K.?

**Alan:** Yes sir.

*(MR. JACKSON goes out).*

**Horrid:** Hey, you want to watch it, Flesh. He'll sort you out.

**Flesh:** Nah, he's all right. What was he so uptight about though?

*(DEBRA comes running in).*

**Debra:** Hey, have you heard? Someone's nicked the swag-bag!

**Flesh:** What? Eh? They can't have. I got my watch out of it.

**Debra:** The girls' one, stupid!

**Alan:** Who's nicked it?

**Debra:** I don't know, do I? Nobody knows.

**Alan:** So that's what Jacko was jumping for!

**Wendy:** Why did he want Billy?

**Flesh:** P'haps he thinks Billie nicked it.

**Zimmo:** You mean, 'cos he wasn't doing P.E.?

**Flesh:** Yeah, well, he's a prime suspect 'en he?

**Treacle:** He was roaming around on his own while we were all chasing around in the grass after a little ball.

**Alan:** Someone better go and tell him before Jacko clobbers him.

**Zimmo:** Well, if he did take it he won't have it with him, will he?

**Flesh:** Won't he?

**Zimmo:** No, he'll have destroyed the evidence.

**Debra:** What? The money? Destroyed it?

**Clare:** No, he'll have posted that to himself.

**Flesh:** You do say some daft things.

**Clare:** It's what they do on the telly.

**Flesh:** No wonder they always get caught.

( *CAROLE enters*).

**Carole:** They've copped Billy.

**Alan:** What?

**Carole:** Mr. Jackson - lovely man - came along to the pig trough with Sinner and they took Billy off to the Head's study.

**Whatfor:** Whatfor?

**Alan:** Where have you been? They reckon he's got the girls' valuables bag.

**Flesh:** Come on. Let's go to see.

## SCENE 5

(*The Form Room just before afternoon Registration. All the CHILDREN are there except BILLY and SUSAN. FIERY FIRKIN comes in and calls the Register*).

**Mr. Firkin:** Answer your names: Clare Adams.

**Clare:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Debra Donnelly.

**Debra:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Carole Ewer.

**Carole:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Elaine Hutchison.

**Elaine:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Louise Lavenham.

**Louise:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Susan Lynes. (*Silence*). Susan? (*MR. FIRKIN looks up*). Has anybody seen Susan? (*The CHILDREN look about*). It's unusual for Susan to be away or even late. Wendy Starr.

**Wendy:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Amanda Wilson.

**Amanda:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Boys. Barlow.

**Joey:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Jenkins.

**Alan:** Sir. (*MR. FIRKIN deliberately does not call BILLY'S name*).

**Mr. Firkin:** Marriott.

**Treacle:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Mason.

**Horrid:** Sir

**Mr. Firkin:** Perkins.

**Zimmo:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Simpson.

**Whatfor:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Williams.

**Flesh:** Sir.

**Mr. Firkin:** Right. Listen everybody. The Headmaster is coming along to see you in a moment. Something rather serious has occurred and he wants to have a word with you all before afternoon classes begin. Ah ....

(*HEADMASTER enters*).

**Headmaster:** Thank-you Mr. Firkin. Well, 2.3, I seem to need to spend a large part of my day on this room.

(*Pause*).

Some of you will know that the valuables bag was taken from the Girls' Cloakroom during lessons 3 and 4 this morning. The cloakroom was locked as usual while you were out doing P.E. but somebody broke in. I want to

know if any of you know anything which may help to find the culprits.

*(Pause).*

I know that you were doing P.E. at that time, of course, but it is possible that you saw something, or that you knew of some plan to break into the changing room.

*(He looks around expectantly).*

If you do know of anything it is your duty to come forward to tell me. You should have no sense of loyalty towards a criminal - because that's what the person who took the bag is. It's not a joke or a jape. To break in and steal valuables - money and watches - is a criminal act and if I don't discover who is responsible I shall have to call the police. I was talking to you this morning about your behaviour and I pointed out then that things can go too far. First a pencil-case is taken, then perhaps it's something a little more valuable, and then it gets out of control and then something like this happens.

*(Pause).*

It is possible that the boy responsible acted on his own but I believe that it is more likely that he had an accomplice either for keeping a look-out or for creating a diversion. If that accomplice is here now, I must warn him it is better to own up now, than to be found out later. Now I'm going to do something unusual. I'm going to leave this room. Mr. Firkin will come with me. We will wait a few yards down the corridor - out of earshot. If any of you know who is involved, I suggest that you persuade him to own up immediately before the situation gets worse. It is in the interests of all of you to identify the thief or thieves. We will be gone for two minutes only.

*(HEADMASTER and MR. FIRKIN exeunt. There is silence).*

**Joey:** What was that all about?

**Alan:** He thinks one of us did it.

**Horrid:** No, he's got Billy 'en he? He wants to know who helped him.

**Debra:** But Billy wouldn't have done it.

**Joey:** What's 'jape' mean?

**Wendy:** What does Stinker want us to do?

**Alan:** I think Horrid's right. Stinker reckons that Billy did it. He's hoping someone here will crack and give himself away and Billy too.

**Treacle:** He must be off his nut.

**Elaine:** Why?

**Treacle:** Well, we were all doing P.E., Billy was traipsing around the field. What's all this guff about diversions and accomplices? How the hell are we going to create a diversion while we're playing football?

**Clare:** But do we know that Billie was walking round the field all the time?

**Flesh:** Do we know he wasn't?

**Treacle:** Yeah! Innocent until proved guilty. Is that right?

**Alan:** Anyway -

**Elaine:** Here they come!

*(HEADMASTER and MR. FIRKIN enter).*

**Headmaster:** Well, 2.3? *(Silence)*. Hasn't anybody got anything to say?

**Alan:** Sir.

**Headmaster:** Yes - er - Jenkins?

**Alan:** Nobody here knows anything about it, Sir, and we don't think Billy did it.

**Headmaster:** Billy who?

**Alan:** Billy Kent.

**Headmaster:** Nobody has said he did do it. *(ALAN is silent)*.

**Headmaster:** Well, 2.3, I have tried to impress you with the seriousness

*(Noise in corridor)*

of the situation and I can

*(Knock on door)*

only hope

*(SECRETARY'S head pops in)*

Yes, Mrs. Birch?

**Mrs. Birch:** Excuse me Headmaster, I thought you ought to know immediately. There's a policeman here with one of our girls.

*(She stands aside and SUSAN enters self-consciously, followed by a POLICE SERGEANT).*

**Sergeant:** Good afternoon, Headmaster. I hope I'm not interrupting but I thought you should know as soon as possible.

**Headmaster:** Yes, sergeant?

**Sergeant:** This young lady has enabled us to catch a thief who took a valuable bag from your school this morning.

**Headmaster:** Good gracious! How did this happen?

**Sergeant:** You tell the Headmaster, Susan.

**Susan:** Well, sir, I was in the Library lesson 4. I don't do P.E. because of my asthma. One of the library windows looks across to the flat roof of the kitchen and I saw a man climbing into the high window of the Gym changing rooms. There was nobody in the library to help and I was afraid to go to the Office in case I missed him so I ran down to the bike shed and hid so that I

could see him when he came out.

**Headmaster:** Very good thinking!

**Susan:** I was only just in time. He was only in there for about three minutes. When he came out I followed him. He only lives in Hazlewood Crescent, about three streets away. I saw which house he went in and then I went to the call-box in the corner and dialled 999.

**Sergeant:** And we caught him with the bag on the kitchen table!

**Headmaster:** Excellent news! - er - Susan, is it? Susan, I'll see you later. Sergeant, please come to my office. Carry on Mr. Firkin.

*(HEADMASTER, SERGEANT and MRS. BIRCH go out. Immediate uproar from the CHILDREN).*

**Alan:** Great stuff!

**Horrid:** Susan, the super dick!

**Clare:** See! Stinker was wrong.

**Elaine:** Who was he, Susan?

**Zimmo:** Sleuth!

**Wendy:** You're brave, Susan.

**Treacle:** House point for Susan!

**Carole:** Was he a lovely villain?

**Debra:** What about Billy then?

**Joey:** What's a diversion?

**Mr. Firkin:** Quieten down, everybody. Get ready for lessons.

**Alan:** Yeah, what about Billy then? He's innocent.

**Susan:** He's just coming. The Deputy Head was in the Office when I came back with Sergeant Jones and he went to get Billy and bring him along.

**Flesh:** They hanged an innocent man!

**Whatfor:** Whatfor?

**Flesh:** Something he didn't do, stupid.

*(BILLY enters. ALL cheer).*

**Alan:** You O.K. Billy?

**Billy:** Sure!

**Flesh:** Did they grill you?

**Billy:** Third Degree! Spotlight! "Where were you Period 4?"

**Clare:** What did you say?

**Billy:** In the toilets being sick.

**Zimmo:** Were you?

**Billy:** No, I was in the toilets all right, but I was having a fag, wasn't I? But I thought I'd get more sympathy if I said I was ill.

**Zimmo:** I must try that.

**Billy:** Er .... Susan .... I believe I've got to thank you for proving my innocence?

**Susan:** Oh, that's all right.

**Billy:** Anyway, the experience had one shining, blissful moment.

**Debra:** What was that?

**Billy:** Well, just now, in the corridor I met old Stinker.

**Horrid:** So?

**Billy:** He APOLOGISED to me!

**THE END**