

# Bang Up

A radio drama

SCENE 1

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone.  
Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Emma. It's Dad. We've still no news. Katherine's the size  
of a house though. I never thought I'd be going through all this again  
at my age. Anyway, hope you get this message; it would be nice to  
hear from you. Take care, love.

SCENE 2

PRISON WING OF YOUNG OFFENDERS INSTITUTE. THE SOUND  
STARTS OFF DISTINCT. FAST PACED.

LOUD MUSIC PLAYING HIP HOP

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) Bang up twenty seconds. All lads behind doors.

LOUD BANGING ON CELL DOOR

ISHAN: Oy Paddy! Patrick! You got any skins?

DOOR SLAMS

PATRICK: 'Ave 'em mate. Under the door.

ISHAN: Nice one. (BEAT BOX FOR FEW SECONDS) You got any smokes?

FEEDBACK FROM LOUDSPEAKER

PATRICK: Don't push it!

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) Ten seconds. Red entry for anyone still on the  
landings. No negotiation.

FOOTSTEPS MAGNIFIED

ISHAN: Oy, Gov. I was meant to be on the gym list.

GUARD: Not today. Sorry son. (LOUDSPEAKER) Bang up!

ISHAN: (SINGING) I wanna sex you up.

DOOR SLAMS. SILENT BEAT.

INSIDE LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. HIP HOP MUSIC STARTS UP  
AGAIN MUFFLED OUTSIDE CELL DOOR.

LEE: (CLOSE) 7 down. Feeling of frustration. 15 letters. First letter D.  
Desperation. 1,2,3,4 – too short. Disappointment. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,  
9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. Crap.

PATRICK: Dissatisfaction. 15 letters. Fits in with 16 across.

LEE: Cheers.

PATRICK: No problem Lee, my friend. Budge over. I need to use the crapper.

### SCENE 3

EMMA: Friday 4th November.

Morning:

Put rubbish out.

Do ironing.

Find waterproof spray for shoes.

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30-4.

Dinner:

Beans and waffles.

### SCENE 4

THE SCENE TAKES PLACE IN THE CENTRE OF H WING. THERE IS  
BACKGROUND NOISE OF MUSIC PLAYED FROM CELLS, CHATTER,  
SHOUTS, ECHOING FOOTSTEPS, OCCASSIONAL  
ANNOUNCEMENTS

PATRICK: Hey! Are you from housing?

EMMA: Education.

PATRICK: Can you get me a placement in the kitchens?

EMMA: You'll need to fill out an app.

PATRICK: You lot should have that tattooed across your forehead. What do you teach, Miss?

EMMA: Literacy. Are you interested? I can sign you up.

PATRICK: Done literacy already Miss. Got my Level 2.

GUARD: Can I help you, Miss? Who are you after today?

EMMA: Lee Brown. Is he on the wing?

PATRICK: He's banged up with me.

GUARD: I'm glad you're here. That lad needs something to do. Only time he leaves that cell is to go to the gym or change his books. Is he expecting you?

EMMA: I don't think so. Prisoner Services asked me to come and see him.

GUARD: I'll fetch him for you, if he'll come.

GUARD RUNNING UP STEPS

EMMA: Thanks.

PATRICK: So, Miss, d'you fancy coming on a date with me when I get out of here?

EMMA: I don't think I'm your type.

PATRICK: I don't have a type. I like all women.

EMMA: I'm too old for you.

PATRICK: Well if you change your mind, I'll take you clubbing in London!

EMMA: (LAUGHS) It's not allowed. I'd get the sack.

PATRICK: Hey Lee, your new teacher doesn't fancy me!

LEE: Well that's a good sign.

EMMA: Hi Lee. I'm Emma.

LEE: Hi.

EMMA: So, you're happy to sign up for some lessons?

LEE: I wouldn't go that far.

GUARD: Come on now, son. Try your best. Remember what I told you: if you play by the rules, you'll find the game in here gets easier.

LEE: Alright. So, what do I have to do?

EMMA: You could help me unfold this stupid table...

THEY OPEN UP TABLE WITH A CLATTER

LEE: There you go, Miss.

EMMA: Thanks. Right. (PUTS BAG AND BOOKS ON TABLE) Let's get started.

LEE: I can read and write already, Miss. I don't see much point in learning anything else.

EMMA: You'll get certificates to prove...

LEE: To prove I can read and write?

EMMA: (LAUGHS) Look, prisoner services are after formal qualifications. It can't do any harm, Lee.

LEE: I'd rather just go back and finish the crossword.

EMMA: They did mention you getting an extra gym session if you show willing.

LEE: Alright then. I'll tick your boxes if you tick mine.

#### SCENE 5

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone. Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Emma, it's Dad. Katherine gave birth to a beautiful baby girl at 6.20 this morning. A whopping 8lb 4 oz! We're calling her Tara. She's the image of you and Suzy. Ring me if you get the chance, love. I'd really like to hear from you.

#### SCENE 6

##### CENTRE OF H WING.

##### LOUD MUSIC PLAYING. RAP. RAIN HEAVY ON ROOF

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) All lads for gym session 2, kitchens and afternoon Mass. 10 seconds.

RAY: What's up Gov?

GUARD: I've got a banging headache and it's still six hours until I knock off!

RAY: My heart bleeds for you! I've got another six months!

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) Behind your doors lads.

INSIDE LEE AND PADDY'S CELL. RAP BECOMES MUFFLED FROM  
OUTSIDE DOOR. PATRICK IS PLAYING CHRIS DE BURGH  
'LONELY SKY'

PATRICK: What's that?  
LEE: Some literacy bollocks.  
PATRICK: What d'you have to do?  
LEE: Answer questions about healthy eating.

PATRICK FARTS LOUDLY

Shit man, you stink!  
PATRICK: Here. Give us your homework. I'll finish it for you!  
LEE: It's alright. I can do it.  
PATRICK: Suit yourself. (STARTS TO SING LOUDLY WITH THE CHORUS) They'll  
build a cage and steal your only sky...  
LEE: Why aren't you at Mass?  
PATRICK: Father Joseph banned me for two weeks.  
LEE: Why?  
PATRICK: For blaspheming. I said some bad things about our holy mother. You  
got any bog roll? I'm dying for a shit.

SCENE 7

EMMA: Friday 11th November.  
Morning:  
Put out recycling/rubbish.

Cancel travel insurance.

Buy baby card/baby present. Ideas?

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30-4.

Dinner:

Quiche.

### SCENE 8

BACKGROUND NOISE OF MUSIC PLAYED FROM CELLS ON H  
WING, CHATTER, SHOUTS, ECHOING FOOTSTEPS,  
OCCASSIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

EMMA: What's up, Lee?

LEE: Nothing.

EMMA: Well, if you don't want to work today, I've got lads to see on B wing.

LEE: Whatever.

RAY: Can I have a pen, Miss?

ISHAN: Cheapskate! He can buy one from the canteen.

RAY: Yeah, but I need shower gel and I'm skint. Go on, Miss.

ISHAN: Don't give him one.

EMMA: I don't care. He can have a pen. Write something good with it.

RAY: I'm writing a book.

EMMA: Great! What's it about?

RAY: Sex.

ISHAN: Bull. He's kidding you, Miss.

GUARD: Come on Ray, Ishan; move along. Lee's trying to get some work done.

ISHAN: Ray can't even write.

EMMA: Then I'll get you signed up for literacy, Ray, and you can get started on that book of yours.

LEE: Oy Miss! I thought this was supposed to be my lesson.

EMMA: And I thought you said I was wasting your time.

#### SCENE 9

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone.  
Please leave a message after the beep.

#### BEEP SOUNDS

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) It's Dad. Why don't you ever answer the phone when I ring? We've heard nothing from you! Would it have been so hard to just pick up the phone? (SIGHS) Anyway, just to let you know, your sister's doing well. She put on 3 ounces this week. I'll ring again later. I'm not going to give up this time Emma.

#### SCENE 10

#### H WING.

#### FEEDBACK FROM LOUDSPEAKER. NOISE FROM LADS.

RAY: I'm not going outside, Gov. My hair's gonna get pure messed up.

GUARD: Then it'll be a red entry from kitchens.

ISHAN: That'll put you back on basic again, mate.

FEMALE GUARD: Ok. Hands above your head. Out to the side. Turn around. Alright. Off you go.

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) All lads behind doors. Mr. Afshad, that'll be a red entry in 3, 2, 1 seconds. Bang up!

INSIDE LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. MUFFLED SOUNDS OF GUARDS OPENING AND SHUTTING DOORS : SHOUTING NUMBERS AND NAMES FOR ROLL.

PATRICK: (SINGING LOUDLY) Lady in red!

Is dancing with me...

LEE: Please Patrick. Shut up.

PATRICK: It's a classic power ballad, Lee! The ladies really go for it. Hold on there, I'll put it on.

LEE: Oh shit, no!

PATRICK: 100 Greatest Love songs.

MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY AND PATRICK SINGS ALONG

Never saw you looking as lovely as you did tonight,

Never saw you shine so bright...

SPEAKING

I sing it to my little girl on the phone. She laughs at me.

THE CD PLAYER CRASHES TO THE FLOOR AND THE MUSIC STOPS.

LEE: I said shut up!

PAUSE

PATRICK: Alright Mate. Keep your hair on!

SCENE 11

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 18th November.

Morning:

Put rubbish out.

Post parcel for the baby.

Co-op – buy milk, peppers, noodles.

Print off Ballad of Reading Gaol.

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30-4.

Dinner:

Stir fry.

SCENE 12

H WING. BACKGROUND NOISE OF MUSIC PLAYED FROM CELLS,  
CHATTER, SHOUTS, ECHOING FOOTSTEPS, OCCASSIONAL  
ANNOUNCEMENTS

GUARD: I'm sorry. He won't come out his cell.

EMMA: Why?

GUARD: Claims he has a headache.

EMMA: Oh. (SIGHS) I can't work out what I'm doing wrong. I thought I was starting to get somewhere with him.

GUARD: Don't take it personally, Miss. He's not an easy lad to reach.

EMMA: So you don't think he really has a headache?

GUARD: Doubt it. He's just unhappy; doesn't trust anyone.

EMMA: It's such a shame. I keep getting a glimpse of what he might be capable of. He's got a really lovely way with words.

GUARD: Yeah, well, for what it's worth, I think he's a decent enough lad. Stick with it.

EMMA: I will. (PAUSE) I was going to look at a poem with him today. Do you think he'll read it if I leave it for him?

GUARD: Worth a try.

EMMA: Can I post it under his door?

GUARD: Cell 67. Right landing.

EMMA: Thanks.

EMMA RUNNING UP THE STEPS. ECHOES. ISHAN STOPS HER ON LANDING.

ISHAN: Hey Miss!

EMMA: Alright, Ishan!

ISHAN: Will you see Kevin, you know, from building?

EMMA: I should think so. At some point.

ISHAN: Can you get him to put me on the next course? I've been waiting for months.

EMMA: I'll try.

ISHAN: I'm sick of wing cleaning. It's bullshit.

EMMA: I'll say it to him. What's your surname?

ISHAN: Ashraf. Cheers Miss. You looking for Lee?

BANGS LOUDLY ON DOOR

Wake up lazy git! You're teacher's here to see you.

EMMA: It's alright. I can just slide this under his door.

DOOR OPENS

LEE: What?

EMMA: Hi Lee. I'm sorry you're feeling sick.

LEE: I'm not.

EMMA: Oh.

LEE: I just want to be left alone.

EMMA: Ok. I'm going. (PAUSE) I brought this for you to read. I thought you might be getting tired of comprehensions.

LEE: What is it?

EMMA: A poem. A story really.

LEE: Ok.

LEE TAKES IT. CLOSSES DOOR.

EMMA: Ok. There you go, then.

ISHAN: We think he's in here for murder. What do you reckon, Miss?

EMMA: I don't know. (PAUSE) I thought you were all innocent.

ISHAN LAUGHS

SCENE 13

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone.  
Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Emma, it's Dad. Thanks for your card and the little book you sent Tara. It means the world to me you know. Would you think of coming up to visit us? I've been thinking about it a lot; about you and Suzy and when you were little. I did everything wrong, I know I did. Now that I've been given a second chance to get it right, I want to... oh this is madness. I can't talk to a machine!

SCENE 14

H WING.

LOUD MUSIC PLAYING R AND B

PRISONERS TALKING INTO A LONG LINE OF PAYPHONES. WE HEAR SNIPPETS OF CONVERSATION.

PATRICK: Put her on! I said put her on the bloody phone. I'm not stupid. I know she's there; I can hear her playing.

ISHAN: I wanna speak to my brother, Abhas Ashraf. A S H R A F. Yeah, it's an inter-prison call. He's on D wing. Or that's what he wrote in his letter.

RAY: But I love you, babe. I do.

INSIDE LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. PRISON LIFE MUFFLED OUTSIDE CELL DOOR.

LEE: (READING QUIETLY) I never saw a man who looked  
With such a wistful eye  
Upon that little tent of blue  
Which prisoners call the sky,

And at every drifting cloud that went  
With sails of silver by.

(SIGHS. STARTS AGAIN) I never saw a man who looked  
With such a wistful eye...

PATRICK: Give it rest will you, Lee? I'm trying to read Nuts.

#### SCENE 15

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 25th November.

Morning:

Put rubbish out. Don't forget recycling.

Return library books.

Think about plan for Christmas.

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30-4.

Dinner:

Soup.

#### SCENE 16

BACKGROUND NOISE OF MUSIC PLAYED FROM CELLS, CHATTER,  
SHOUTS, ECHOING FOOTSTEPS, OCCASSIONAL  
ANNOUNCEMENTS

EMMA: Did you get a chance to read the verses I gave you?

LEE: Yeah. Some of them.

EMMA: That's brilliant. I was half expecting you to screw them up and toss them in the bin.

LEE: Yeah. I'm sorry about the other day, Miss.

EMMA: So, what did you think?

LEE: I don't really get it.

EMMA: It's partly a protest poem. Wilde seems to be suggesting that the prison system is about destroying people, not reforming them.

LEE: I wasn't talking about the meaning. I don't get why you gave it to me.

EMMA: Because I'm fed of teaching you to pass a test! I want you be excited about our lesson for a change.

LEE: Why?

EMMA: Because, believe it or not, I'm not that keen on just ticking boxes. If I sneak in some poetry and creative writing, I feel better about myself, alright?

LEE: Alright.

EMMA: It's got to be better than talking about punctuation.

LEE: Yeah. (PAUSE) Go on then. You said it's about destroying people.

EMMA: Yes. It's a really powerful poem. It stirs big thoughts and feelings.

LEE: Like what?

EMMA: Whenever I read it, it makes me feel uncomfortable, inspired, sad. (PAUSE) How does it make you feel?

LEE: What do you want me to say?

EMMA: Whatever you like.

LEE: I don't know Miss.

EMMA: Is that it?

LEE: Yeah.

EMMA: Alright. Let's forget the poem for now. (FINDS A PIECE OF PAPER) I marked the sentences you wrote for me. This one here...describing the girl: (EMMA READS LEE'S WORK) Louise's dirty trainers stared up at her accusingly. (TO LEE) It's a great sentence. There's a lot in there.

LEE: I only wrote it 'cos you said I had to use an adverb.

EMMA: But that's my point: I give you a tedious instruction and you write something interesting. Not everyone can do that. I'd like you to write something longer for me, something creative.

LEE: Like what?

EMMA: You could start by describing what you see around you and show me next week.

RAY: (SINGING) You better watch out, you better not cry... (SPEAKING TO LEE) Cheer up, mate. He knows if you've been bad or good... (SINGING) So be good for goodness sake!

EMMA: What happens in here at Christmas?

LEE: I dunno.

EMMA: Do you think they'll try and make it festive?

LEE: I doubt it.

EMMA: Alright Lee. I get the hint; you've had enough for today. I'll tell the gov we've finished.

EMMA GETS UP. STARTS PACKING AWAY

LEE: What are you doing for Christmas, Miss?

SHE PAUSES. SITS DOWN

- EMMA: I don't know. (PAUSE) I've got to choose between spending the day by myself or with my Dad's new family.
- LEE: So go to your Dad's.
- EMMA: I should. I just don't want to. He ruined Christmas when we were kids.
- LEE: How?
- EMMA: Booze, fags, fighting. We had to play quietly, never rock the boat. (SIGHS) I was always holding my breath.
- LEE: So don't go, then, Miss. You could come here instead.
- EMMA: I don't think they'd let me. But thanks for the invite. So, are you going to give this piece of writing your best shot?
- LEE: I'll try, Miss.
- EMMA: Don't look so worried Lee. You're doing really well. (PAUSE) And you don't have to call me Miss. My name's Emma.

SCENE 17

- ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone. Please leave a message after the beep.
- BRUCE: (MESSAGE – SINGING) Happy Birthday to you! Happy Birthday to you! (SPEAKING) I hope you had a great day love and I'm sorry I missed the post. Tara's been up with colic for the last few nights; poor lamb. Anyway, another year older, another year wiser as they say. Maybe you should think about settling down and having kids yourself. (LAUGHS) That would make little Tara an auntie!

SCENE 18

NOISE OF PRISON WING

BANGING ON DOOR. KEYS UNLOCK. OPEN.

GUARD: Just doing roll. You alright, Lee?

LEE: Yeah.

GUARD: What're you writing?

LEE: Something for Miss.

GUARD: Good lad. Keep at it.

DOOR LOCKED AND WE ARE NOW INSIDE LEE AND PADDY'S  
CELL. NOISE OF WING BECOMES MUFFLED OUTSIDE DOOR.

LEE: (READING OUT LOUD) I can't see a lot. I can see bars that go from the top to the bottom of the window. The window is mucky. You told me to write about what I can see. I can see smudges and dust in the corners of the glass. There's a dead spider: it died in prison when it could have gone anywhere to die. It's raining. I can see rain.

SCENE 19

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 2nd December.

Morning:

Pick up prescription.

Find polling card - vote.

Don't forget petrol.

Post back dvd to lovefilm.

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30-4.

Dinner:

Jacket potato.

## SCENE 20

### BACKGROUND NOISE OF PRISON WING

LEE: What do you think, Miss?

EMMA: Call me Emma. We're not at school.

LEE: Sorry, I keep forgetting.

GUARD: C'mon now, head down Lee, lad. Get your work done for the teacher. I want you back on wing cleaning asap. He's the best we've got Miss.

EMMA: I won't keep him long.

GUARD: I'm just teasing. Nothing as valuable as an education, eh Lee?

EMMA: I heard you'd got yourself a job.

LEE: Yeah. It's no big deal.

EMMA: Well, you've made the Gov happy!

LEE: So, what do you think of my writing, Miss?

EMMA: I like it Lee. You've got a chatty style.

LEE: Is that good?

EMMA: I think so: you're a natural.

LEE: Really?

EMMA: Even in this short piece, you start to talk about ideas. You even made me interested in the spider. It's good.

LEE: Thanks. I thought you might say I should have done more.

EMMA: Well, I want you to go back and have another look. Describe what's beyond the window. And if you really want to impress me, use a simile!

LEE: What's that again?

EMMA: Comparing one thing to another, to help make an image stronger. For example, erm....the stranger disturbed me, like a

LEE: A bad dream?

EMMA: Yeah. Yeah. That'll do! So, do you think you can write me something for next week?

LEE: (ALMOST EAGER) Ok.

#### SCENE 21

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone. Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Emma. It's Dad. If you're there, pick up. Emma? Oh well. I just fancied a chat. Katherine's taken Tara to her Gran's for a few days and I'm here on my own. I started feeling, I don't know. Sentimental, I suppose. Too much time on my hands; too easy to start thinking.

#### SCENE 22

#### PRISON WING

#### LOUD MUSIC PLAYING HIP HOP

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) Bang up twenty seconds. All lads behind doors.

RAY: Awww gov. I need to ring my girl. One more minute, please.

GUARD: 'Fraid not, Ray. If she really loves you, she'll still be there tomorrow.

(SINGING) Tie a yellow ribbon round the old oak tree,

It's been seven long years, do you....

INSIDE LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. PRISON LIFE MUFFLED

OUTSIDE CELL DOOR. THE GUARD'S SONG ALSO CONTINUES

BEHIND THE DOOR.

LEE: (READING WORK) I've tried writing this all week, Miss. I mean, Emma.

I wanted to make it so good, really long with loads of descriptions and ideas and all that. Now it's already Friday morning and I'm back from the gym and apart from our lesson this afternoon, the whole weekend's stretching out in front of me like a, like a... just realised this is going to be your simile, Miss! Like a stinking turd! Any good? Ignore that. What about a sleepless night? The whole weekend is stretching out in front of me like a sleepless night. Anyway, now I've got started, it feels better. Here goes.

I can see a spider's web on the outside of the window. It has tiny silver threads, fine threads with drops of water clinging to them and loads of little insects caught up in it. My dead spider is still here on the wrong side of the glass. Maybe he died of hunger.

The prison wall is high and grey. On the top of it is barbed wire. It loops along the top, like you see in escape movies. Look closely, you told me. Alright: dead leaves. They are flying up and over the wall like they might be dancing and chanting, 'Look at us! You can't stop us!' Is that a stupid thing to write? They're just dead leaves.

SCENE 23

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December.

Morning:

Buy toothpaste, bread, fruit.

Get birthday card for Dad. Post it.

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30 – 4.00pm

Dinner:

Pizza.

SCENE 24

BACKGROUND NOISE OF PRISON WING

ANNOUNCEMENT: (LOUDSPEAKER) Bang up! Everyone back behind doors.

MOANS AND SHOUTS OF PROTEST FROM THE BOYS

EMMA: Can I keep Lee for a bit longer? We've only just got started

GUARD: Sorry, Miss. They need to recount; roll's wrong again.

EMMA: How long will they be?

GUARD: How long's a piece of string?

EMMA: What about just one more minute?

GUARD: Alright, but you're going to get me in trouble!

EMMA: Thanks! Alright Lee, a super speedy lesson today. Your writing is expressive, it's...sad. I like the way you write about the spider and

jump from beauty to death. When you're watching the autumn leaves, your writing is so full of hope and then crashes into a kind of despair in an instant. And your simile...

LEE: Stinking turd?

EMMA: Like a sleepless night! I know what a sleepless night feels like and I don't envy you.

LEE: Do you ever do any writing?

EMMA: Sometimes.

GUARD: Come on now Lee, lad: behind your door.

EMMA: Look over the wall Lee. Write about what you see; how it makes you feel.

LEE: (CALLING OUT TO HER) You should write something for next week too, Miss!

EMMA: My name's Emma.

#### SCENE 25

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone. Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Thanks for the lovely card. I wish I still had time for fishing! Have you thought about coming for Christmas? There's a fold out settee in Tara's room. The only thing is you might not get much sleep! She's a little monkey at night. Have you heard from Suzy at all? I presume she's staying in Tokyo. Give us a ring if you get a chance, love.

SCENE 26

NOISE OF PRISON WING. ECHOES. MUSIC. SHOUTS

LEE: I've finished both landings, Gov. Can I knock off now?

GUARD: Washed and polished?

LEE: Can't you tell?

ISHAN: (SHOUTING FROM GROUND FLOOR UP TO LANDING) Oy, Gov. He's taken my turn at pool and I'm gonna knock him out!

GOV: (SHOUTING DOWN) I'll knock both your heads together if there's any trouble. You hear me! (SPEAKING TO LEE) You've done a good job, Lee. Go on, I'll put the machines away.

INSIDE LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. PRISON LIFE MUFFLED

OUTSIDE CELL DOOR.

LEE: (READING OUT LOUD) It's Saturday, Miss. I'm banged up and Patrick has gone to Mass so I've got an hour of quiet. That's a joke, Miss. It's never quiet here.

I'm looking out the window. I can see the path heading down through the fields to some houses; a village I think. Is that where you live? A gov is riding his bike up the path. He looks knackered and his bike's shit.

This is what I see: I see him locking his bike up – really mate, no one's gonna nick it! He's walking along. A better word; lumbering along, fat, tired and something else. Reluctant. There's a good word, eh Miss? 'Lee was reluctant to cooperate': heard that one a few times.

Now I see a girl with a pushchair. It's weird to think that we live in the same place. I fill my lungs up with air and hold onto it. When I let it go, my warm breath mists the window up. The baby girl is out of her pushchair now. She must be older than she looked at first; a toddler.

The air that I breathe in and out is the air that she breathes too. She can see the same heavy yellow sky that I can see. Her mum looks up. She must have felt the flakes of snow I've just seen falling. They don't see me and they don't know me. The girl is excited. She's trying to catch a snow flake in her mouth. I've got a baby girl too, Miss. Did I tell you that already? How does it all make me feel? Useless.

#### SCENE 27

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 14th December.

Morning:

Clear snow.

Buy eggs and milk from Co-op.

Get to work early. Write something for Lee.

Afternoon:

Teaching 1.30 – 4.00pm

Dinner:

Omelette.

#### SCENE 28

#### BACKGROUND NOISE OF PRISON WING

LEE: She's called Lexsie.

EMMA: Does she live with her Mum?

LEE: She's with a foster family.

EMMA: Do you see her?

LEE: No. I want to. I think I could. I mean, I think I still have the right to.

EMMA: Then you should. What do you need to do?

LEE: Loads: a parenting course, anger management. I need to fill out apps so I can talk to people and have meetings. I can't do all that.

EMMA: Don't try and do everything at once. Just take each small step and things will move forwards.

LEE: It scares me.

EMMA: She needs you. You're her Dad!

LEE: And what sort of Dad do you think I am?

EMMA: I don't know but you'll be out of here in a year. Maybe you'll be a really great Dad.

LEE: Yeah maybe. (PAUSE) You said you'd write something. Did you?

EMMA: Lee, I could try and help you to see her again. I could call into family liaison and get someone to come over and talk to you

LEE: Read it to me.

EMMA: It seems a bit frivolous compared to your writing: no big revelations, I'm afraid.

LEE: Don't start making excuses, Miss!

EMMA: Alright. (Pause) It's snowing again. The flakes are light and small but persistent, settling a clean layer of white on the grimy surface of Borstal Village.

LEE: Is that where you live?

EMMA: Yes.

LEE: You're not supposed to tell me that.

EMMA: So shoot me! Shall I carry on?

LEE: Yeah. Go on.

EMMA: My breath is heavy as I struggle not to slip, pass the end of the road and set off through the fields.

There is some lively banter at the gate.

LEE: What banter?

EMMA: I don't know, chatting and joking. The driver shouts something, rolls up the window and moves off. It is only then that I see the snowman.

LEE: I saw it too. I watched them building it from my window. Go on.

EMMA: "H M P" is pressed into his front in small, round stones. His arms are branches, stretching on one side towards the perimeter fence and on the other, pointing over the fields to where the North Downs slide towards Wouldham and Burham. His face is grim, his mouth downturned.

Esther waves to me, points towards the snowman. 'Who made it?'

'It was the lads,' she calls to me with some pride. 'Do you know he's smiling on the other side of his face?'

LEE: It's good. It's almost cheerful.

EMMA: What? Do you mean my writing or the snowman?

LEE: Your writing, Miss.

#### SCENE 29

ANSAPHONE:            (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone.  
Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE:                 (MESSAGE) Hello Emma, love. I got the parcel this morning. I took a  
sneaky peek – Baby’s First Christmas – it’s so sweet. Thanks love. That  
was really thoughtful. Does that mean you’re not coming up to us  
though? It would be nice if you were there to see Tara wearing it. I’ve  
been telling her all about her big sisters. Come on, Emma! Come and  
spend Christmas with us!

SCENE 30

PRISON WING. BOYS TALKING ON PAY PHONES. WE HEAR  
SNIPPETS OF CONVERSATIONS.

RAY:                    I can’t hear you. There’s a fella havin’ a row with his missus. What?  
No! We’re not having a row. The fella on the phone next to me.  
What? No! Just ‘cos I ask you to send me a few quid don’t mean I  
don’t love you. I love you. That’s why I’m ringin’ you!

ISHAN:                 Yeah. A S H R A N. Ashran. I’m trying to get a call through to my  
brother in your prison. His letter said he’s been moved to E wing.

NOISE CARRIES ON MUFFLED BEHIND CELL DOOR

LEE:                    (READING OUT LOUD) I never saw a man who looked  
  
With such a wistful eye  
  
Upon that little tent of blue...  
  
I read those verses from The Ballad of Reading Gaol again this  
morning. I’m sorry I was so crap before when you tried to talk to me  
about it. I didn’t know how to explain the way it made me feel. Do  
you know though Miss? In the end, it was simple. It made me feel like  
I could write about being in here: about being me.

Just describe the sky, you said. I'm looking at it now, just like he was. I keep thinking about that and wondering which of us is luckier. Don't start opening an ACT document on me, Miss. I'm not thinking of hanging myself. It's just that it seems like his life became uncomplicated once there was nothing left to hope for.

It's a light grey sky today, like a concrete pavement. No boring; flat grey like an uneasy thought. It was an angry sky the day they arrested me and that fits well. Did you look up what I did to get banged up, Miss? I bet you did, but maybe not. You might not be so kind to me if you read what they wrote about me. But that's not the whole truth.

I did grievous bodily harm to him and I'd do it again and again and again. I'd smash his skull. The report doesn't say that I still dream about that most nights. Or what he was doing to my family.

When I walked in our bedsit that day, Louise was out of it. He'd given her scag in exchange for, well, you know what, Miss. She let him do it to her on the floor while Lexsie was screaming in the cot.

I should have picked that hot little bundle up and taken her far away with me. I could have left them to it. I think about using my t shirt to dry her tears and the taste of salt when I kiss her angry little face.

I saw Louise's knickers screwed up on the floor. I felt shame and humiliation burn through me and I hated her then for what she'd done. I looked at him there, doing up his fly, tucking in his shirt and with that smile on his face: I just did what I did.

I signed up for those courses, Miss: anger management and Parentis. Sounds a bit like an STD.

### SCENE 31

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 23rd December

Morning:

Ring in sick

Go for walk

Afternoon:

Doctors 2.30pm

Evening:

Ring Dad

### SCENE 32

#### BACKGROUND NOISE OF PRISON WING

LEE: Hey, gov! Have you seen the literacy teacher?

GUARD: Not today. She was in to see Tariq and Mickey on Wednesday.

LEE: She should be here by now.

GUARD: She might be ill, Lee.

LEE: But I've done the work she asked me to do.

GUARD: Good lad. I think you've turned a real corner.

LEE: Can you give this to her if she's here Wednesday? Don't read it gov!

GUARD: Word of honour.

### SCENE 33

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone.  
Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE:                    (MESSAGE) When I got your message, I couldn't believe it! I was jumping about like a chimpanzee. No need to bring anything, just yourself. Oh and when the SAT NAV tells you that you've reached your final destination, you're almost there. Keep going until you see the house painted blue. That's us. See you Sunday, then.

SCENE 34

PRISON WING. CHRISTMAS DAY.

PATRICK:                Bet you're going home for a great big turkey and ham, aren't you Gov? Not the sliced muck they give us here.

RAY:                     I reckon he's got a jolly wife who's warming his socks

PATRICK:                and boiling up the figgy pud.

GUARD:                 I wish, lads. If only.

PATRICK:                (SINGING) So bring me some figgy pudding,  
  
So bring me some figgy pudding,

RAY AND GUARD JOIN IN WITH SONG. HEARD NOW THROUGH LEE'S CELL DOOR.

LEE:                     (READING OUT LOUD) You weren't here to tell me what to write about Miss but I'm going to write something anyway. See how I'm taking responsibility for myself? Tick, tick, tick, lock, unlock, lock, unlock.

They've also told me I'm working on managing my resentments, my addictive personality, my unrealistic expectations of everyone else, my low self esteem and the dim and miserable memories of my whole crappy life spent in local authority care (or couldn't care less). So

you're lucky I have any time left to write. I hope you're noticing my complex sentences and interesting adjectives. Good, eh?

And this is what I can see out of my window today. For a start, the sun is out and the sky is clear and blue. I can see the valley sloping down from my cell into broad, flat fields. These are the North Downs, cut in two by the River Medway. Have a look at that water, Miss. Imagine how good it would feel to leap into it.

What if I was not here but on that river, in a boat with my baby Lexsie? Would I look up towards the dark gatehouse and new pig hut wings? Would I even think about the men inside? No! Not if I had another life. Some men fish and write and build things. Some men are good husbands, workers, friends and dads. Do you know something, Miss? I have never really been anyone's son. That's something to resent. It's something to feel very sorry about.

Patrick's carol singing outside the door so I can't think anymore. I hope you come in on Friday. I've got something to tell you.

### SCENE 35

ANSAPHONE:            (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone. Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE:                 (MESSAGE) Why did you take off like that? Where did you go? Emma? Are you at home? (HEAVY SIGH) Ok. I don't know what to do. Just please let me know you're home safe.

EMMA:                 Dad?

BRUCE:                 Emma. Thank god! Are you ok?

EMMA:                 Not really. It was just too much.

BRUCE:                 But Katherine had gone to so much trouble. She

EMMA: Dad! Stop pretending everything's fine.

BRUCE: What else can I do? I want to make it up to you. I'm trying to be a good dad now.

EMMA: You could have tried when we were little.

WEIGHTY SILENCE

BRUCE: I can't turn back time.

EMMA: And I can't forgive you.

SCENE 37

LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. LATE CHRISTMAS NIGHT. PATRICK IS PLAYING CLASSIC CHRISTMAS SONGS.

PATRICK: Merry Christmas Lee. I rolled you a fag.

LEE: I don't smoke.

PATRICK: Can I have it then?

SCENE 38

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 30<sup>th</sup> December.

Morning:

Buy a card for Katherine. Thank you? Sorry?

Post letter to Suzy.

Ring Medway Canoe Club. 831452. Ask for Sam.

Do I need wetsuit/own canoe/previous experience?

Can I just turn up?

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30 – 4pm

Evening:

Cinema.

SCENE 39

BACKGROUND NOISE OF PRISON WING

EMMA: Long time no see!

LEE: Where have you been?

EMMA: I've taken one small step!

LEE: What?

EMMA: I thought about what I told you to do and it seemed so logical. Take each small step and there you go!

LEE: What are you talking about? You look a bit wild!

EMMA: You can't say that to me! I'm your teacher!

LEE: Sorry, Miss.

EMMA: Emma.

LEE: Emma.

EMMA: You told me to look at the river, so I did and I saw a sign!

LEE: You're really not making much sense, Miss.

EMMA: Medway Canoe Club!

LEE: Cool. Are you alright, Miss?

EMMA: Yes, I am. I read your two pieces. You made me cry. What have you got to tell me?

LEE: They're gonna bring Lexsie in to see me on Tuesday.

EMMA: Lee, that's brilliant!

LEE: Good, eh? I hope she likes me.

EMMA: She will. Give her time.

LEE: Yeah.

EMMA: And Lee?

LEE: What?

EMMA: I've never looked at your file. I don't look at any of the files. I find it easier not knowing.

LEE: But I need you to understand that I'm not a nutter. It was just him. No one should have to put up with what he was doing to us.

EMMA: I know.

LEE: (PAUSE) Okay. Good.

EMMA: And Lee, one more thing.

LE: Yeah?

EMMA: I do like your complex sentences.

#### SCENE 40

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone. Please leave a message after the beep.

KATHERINE: (MESSAGE) Hi Emma, it's Katherine. Thank you for the card. There was nothing to be sorry about. Really. (PAUSE.) He regrets so much. You don't always see the bit of him that's broken but we do. (PAUSE) Anyway, I, erm, I hope you didn't mind me ringing. (BABY CRYING) Oh no! That's Tara again. I better go. I just wanted to say that it was really good to meet you. Ok. See you.

#### SCENE 41

#### PRISON WING. A COMMOTION

ISHAN: Get your hands off me. I swear, there's nothin' in there. Get your hands off my stuff!

GUARD: Calm down lad unless you fancy a trip down the SEG. They're just taking a look.

ISHAN: I'll sue them!

#### NOISES MUFFLED BEHIND LEE'S DOOR

LEE: (READING OUT LOUD) Behind me, the stink of deodorant, sweat, chip fat and bleach. In front of me, everything we named together: Nashenden Farm, Fort Borstal, the Shoulder of Mutton Woods, chalk, grasslands and winter dead blackberry bushes. This is my home.

How had I missed all the ways out of here? Right in front of my eyes, so many possibilities: the road, the river and the railway tracks. Can you hear the 'f you' swoosh of the fast train to France and the weird hum of the wind under the bridge? I hear it some nights behind Patrick's snoring and the lonely shouting from the cells where the new boys don't know yet that no-one listens to them.

When I see canoes on the river, I think of you now and wonder if you ever look up to watch the lorries that I watch, one after another after

another making their way to Dover and across to Calais and all the way to China if they want to. And what do you think I'm going to do with my life? I think about that a lot now.

If she needs her nappy changed, they will do it. If she is hungry, they will feed her. If she cries, they will comfort her. But she is still mine!

#### SCENE 42

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 6<sup>th</sup> January.

Morning:

Phone Prince's Trust – ask about Prison Mentoring scheme.

Order wetsuit.

Shave legs. Or wax?

Afternoon:

Prison. Talk to Lee about mentoring.

Take biscuits for staffroom.

Evening:

Simply Italian!

#### SCENE 43

##### BACKGROUND NOISE OF PRISON WING

GUARD: Who are you looking for today, Miss?

EMMA: Lee, if you can spare him.

GUARD: Sorry, he's not on this wing anymore. Try SEG.

EMMA: SEG?

GUARD: Gimme a second. I'll check for you.

LOUD NOISE OF PRISON WING. BOYS SHOUTING.

EMMA: Hey Patrick! Where's Lee?

PATRICK: SEG.

EMMA: Why?

PATRICK: He went for the new boy! It was savage!

EMMA: What? Which new boy?

PATRICK: Dean someone.

EMMA: When was this?

PATRICK: Dunno. Monday, I think. Hey, can you lock my cell, gov? Them thieving langers want to take my dove shower gel.

GUARD: Done it already, Patrick, my man.

EMMA: So, is he still in SEG?

GUARD: Yeah, he was taken straight down there.

EMMA: What was the fight about?

PATRICK: They knew each other from outside. Dean called your one. You know, Lee's ex, his baby mum.

EMMA: What?

PATRICK: He said she was a crack whore with great tits.

GUARD: Patrick, watch your language in front of the lady!

PATRICK: Sorry Miss, but that's what he said.

EMMA: Did Lee get hurt?

GUARD: I've no idea. He looked fine. More than I can say for the other lad.

EMMA: Why? What's wrong with him?

GUARD: Lee snapped his arm. I heard it go. Horrible, horrible sound!

#### SCENE 44

LEE: (READING OUT LOUD) I didn't see my baby. I didn't see my baby. I didn't see my baby. I didn't see my baby. I didn't see my baby.

Louise, do you miss her too? Do you think about me at all? Where are you? You should have been a proper Mum. What's wrong with us?

#### SCENE 45

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone. Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Suzy's getting married to a Japanese fella. A teacher. Have you spoken to her? (PAUSE) I suppose she's gonna stay out there forever. (PAUSE) I made life unbearable for you all, didn't I? I know I did.

#### SCENE 46

#### SEGREGATION UNIT. CENTRAL AREA. GUARDS CHATTING.

EMMA: Hi. I'm Emma from Education. I was hoping to see Lee Brown.

SEG GUARD: Follow me. You'll have to have to teach him in his cell – I've nowhere else free this afternoon.

EMMA: That's fine.

SEG GUARD: You must be a good student Lee. Your teacher's found you're hiding place.

LEE: Miss.

SEG GUARD: Leave the door open. I'll be in the corridor.

EMMA: I spoke to Patrick and the gov on H. They told me you were here.

LEE: Yeah.

EMMA: They said I could see you for a few minutes. Where are your shoes?

LEE: No shoes on suicide watch.

EMMA: Please don't give up.

LEE: What?

EMMA: You still have choices. This is just a setback.

LEE: You don't get it. I broke his arm.

EMMA: He provoked you. Patrick told me what he said!

LEE: And do you often break people's arms, Miss?

EMMA: No but then I'm not often in your situation.

LEE: I'll go to court. I'll be resentenced. I didn't even get to see her.

EMMA: I know.

LEE: It's spoilt. What's the point anymore?

EMMA: Stop it Lee. Don't say things like that.

LEE: Then let's stop talking about it. Tell me something about you.

EMMA: Like what?

LEE: Your canoeing. How's my river?

EMMA: Yeah, good. Beautiful actually. I got myself a wet suit. I look like a tadpole in it. (PAUSE) Lee, please don't do anything stupid.

LEE: I can't look for you anymore. I can't see the river from here, Miss.

EMMA: But you can see a patch of sky and the corner of B wing. (LAUGHS)  
What more do you want?

LEE: The little tent of blue. See? I remember.

#### SCENE 47

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January.

Morning:

Meet Sam at canoe club – sunrise (hopefully!)

Ring Suzy. Find out how to set up Skype!

Sort out travel insurance/tickets.

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30 -4.

Talk to family liaison about Lee.

Book week off end of March!

Evening:

Meet Sam at 8!

#### SCENE 48

SEGREGATION WING. LEE'S CELL. DOOR OPEN. GUARD AT  
DOOR.

EMMA: Nice to have a private cell.

LEE: Yeah. You'd almost miss Patrick taking a shit.

SEG GUARD LAUGHS

You have the chair. I can sit on the bed.

EMMA: They told me what you tried to do. Why Lee?

LEE: Hey Gov, knock, knock?

SEG GUARD: Who's there?

EMMA: Lee!

SEG GUARD: Lee who?

LEE: Lee who they watch in case he robs  
The prison of its prey. That's who.

EMMA: That's not funny. You've got to

LEE: What? Snap out of it?

EMMA: Yes! I learnt that from you.

LEE: Hmmm.

EMMA: You got so close to getting what you wanted.

LEE: I wanted to die.

EMMA: You wanted your baby girl. And you will get her back. I'll help you. I  
met with family liason and

LEE: No.

EMMA: Stop being so selfish! You're all she's got!

LEE: I'm tired. I want to sleep now, gov.

#### SCENE 49

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone.  
Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) What have you girls been up to? I'm gobsmacked.  
Katherine gave me the tickets after she put Tara down for her nap.  
Best get my suit to the dry cleaners and (STRUGGLES AS IF READING)  
Arigatō as they say in Tokyo. (PAUSE) I know I'll never be forgiven for  
what I did to you girls and your Mum but thanks for the second  
chance.

#### SCENE 50

##### QUIET ON SEGREGATION WING. EMMA TAPS ON OPEN DOOR.

EMMA: Hi. I'm Emma from Education. Can I see Lee Brown?

SEG GUARD: Sorry. He's not here.

EMMA: Where is he?

SEG GUARD: They took him to court, first thing.

EMMA: When will he be back?

SEG GUARD: I doubt he will.

EMMA: What? Never?

SEG GUARD: They'll resentence him and put him in with the big boys, I should  
think.

SEG GUARD 2: There you go, mate. Cuppa tea! Alright Miss! Want one?

EMMA: No thanks. I was just going.

SEG GUARD: She was looking for Lee Brown.

SEG GUARD 2: Are you his teacher?

EMMA: Yes. Well, I was.

SEG GUARD 2: I've got his folder here. If you could file it, you'll save me a job.

SCENE 51

EMMA STARTS TO READ SNIPPETS OF LEE'S WRITING AS SHE FLICKS THROUGH HIS WORK.

EMMA: (READS OUT LOUD) I can see smudges and dust in the corners of the glass....The whole weekend is stretching out in front of me like a sleepless night....They don't see me and they don't know me....I'd do it again and again and again....if she is hungry, they will feed her, if she cries, they will comfort her. But she is still mine.... (FINDS NEW WRITING AND STARTS TO READ) I am in a dark, (LEE'S VOICE JOINS IN) dark room.

LEE: (TAKES OVER READING OUT LOUD) My eyes are closed tight and it is silent inside my head. I am not here anymore. I am stood at the edge of nine acre wood. I watch as your canoe points like an arrow, up river to a different place. There are so many choices. I have made mine, Miss.

EMMA: My name's Emma.

LEE: (TURNS OVER PAGE) Emma.

THE END