

# **Under a Cardboard Sea**

**by Silva Semerciyan**

**Devised with the Bristol Old Vic Young Company**

# Characters

## The King Family

Addie  
Tabitha  
Michael  
Jeremiah  
Frannie  
Tilly

## The Children of the Theatre

Josie  
Dolly  
Hessie  
Frank  
Molly  
Sid  
Lily  
Milo  
Young child actors (6-10 years old)  
Child actors (11-16 years old)

## The Adults of the Theatre

Recruiter  
Lucy—actress  
Mrs Carwardine—theatre owner  
Matron  
Clock Face—the acting master  
Tobias—stage manager  
MC  
Stagehands  
Company Actors

## The HMS Islander

Benjamin Bradley—sailor  
Captain  
Cook  
First Mate  
Helmsman  
The Crew

## Others in the City

Crazy Jane  
Doctor Pine  
Object  
Inspector  
Miss Hyacinth  
Lord Mayor  
Posh Lady  
Young Princess  
Queen  
The Committee  
Reformers  
Engineers

**Note:** Many character tags are left generic e.g. 'Child Actor' so that directors can allocate lines as they wish and to whichever gender they wish.

\* indicates song lyrics created by Brian Hargreaves, Hal Kelly, Hattie Taylor and members of the young company

# PART 1

## THE MACHINE

*At the Theatre Royal. A gilded proscenium arch, velvet curtains, the height of Victoriana. In the auditorium, spectators are dressed in Victorian fashion. As the safety curtain goes up, we hear an anthem being hummed. On stage, the entire company are assembled to enact various elements of what will be the Victorian version of a propagandist newsreel. Over the strains of the anthem, the **MC** steps forward and addresses the auditorium.*

### Master of Ceremonies

The machine. The heart of our city. A sea of metal: copper, tin, iron, gold. Composed entirely of the latest clockwork componentry. Over fifty city blocks wide and growing. A masterwork in perpetual motion as the wheels of progress move ever forward. Progress, citizens. Progress is the key to survival. The machine is at the vanguard of that progress, gainfully employing millions of workers both skilled and unskilled. *(the workers are shown as eager, industrious, zealous)*. And ever at the helm, the master engineers, first citizens of our society. *(a fist in the air)* The machine must never stop—

*Suddenly, **Crazy Jane** rises in our theatre audience to interrupt.*

### Crazy Jane

Rubbish! RUUUBBISH! LIES ALL LIES!!!

*The music on stage cuts out, the cast stop singing. **Mrs Carwardine** leans in from the wings and gestures to the back of the auditorium. Two stern-looking theatre staff approach swiftly and escort **Crazy Jane**, still shouting, 'That's not what the machine does! That's not what the machine is!' out of the theatre. **Mrs Carwardine** gestures to the **MC** to resume.*

### MC

And ever at the helm, the master engineers, first citizens of our society. The machine must never stop! The machine is life is the machine!

*The audience raises fists to the air and repeat the mantra.*

### Audience

The machine must never stop! The machine is life is the machine!

*A repeated riff on a snare drum, low and mechanical, then increasing in volume. We hear this any time we are in the presence of the machine.*

### MC

And now, ladies and gentlemen, we invite you to sit back and enjoy tonight's performance of *Sinbad and the Sailors*. In this, the year of our common era: 2016.

## **QUESTIONS**

Through the changing seasons leading up to 29<sup>th</sup> March.

*In the shadow of the machine. **Addie** (14) and her father, **Michael** (38), are spending the day together. She has a clock spring stuck in her hair, and he is trying to untangle it.*

### **Michael**

You're a curious one, Addie King. Always asking questions, questions, so many questions. Do you know what happened to the girl who wondered too many things? Her head exploded and the thoughts came pouring out of her ears. No joke of a lie.

### **Addie**

You already used that one for my teeth. 'Do you know what happened to the girl who didn't clean her teeth? The next morning, cockroaches came pouring out of her mouth'.

### **Michael**

Ah, that's like you, Addie—take advantage of my poor memory to make me look foolish.

### **Addie**

People with poor memories should be more careful—ow!

### **Michael**

There there, girl. You can add it to your book of firsts. First time you've ever had a clock spring stuck in your hair. That'll teach you to get too close to the machine.

***Addie** likes this notion and immediately takes out a log book to make a note of it. We can see that it is well-worn through years of use.*

### **Addie**

So what does the machine actually do?

### **Michael**

Well... There are cogs. All interlacing, like. You see these many spiky things. They're cogs.

### **Addie**

I know what a cog is, Dad. What do they add up to?

### **Michael**

Ah... You see, they work in tandem to produce....evolutions of kinetic energy that... release into the stratosphere and are harnessed into a hologram of automaton particles.

### **Addie**

Are you sure?

**Michael**

Oh positive. Positive. No joke of a lie.

**Addie**

In tandem—is that like a tandem bicycle? That’s one behind the other. This is more like a giant snowball made of millions of snowflakes.

**Michael**

Look, no one’s quite sure what it does, Poppet. All anyone knows is that the machine must never stop or a terrible calamity will befall the city.

**Addie**

What calamity?

**Michael**

No one knows for sure.

***Crazy Jane** crosses in front of the machine, muttering to herself.*

**Addie**

I bet you that Jane knows.

**Michael**

Crazy Jane? Listen, your mother and I have told you a hundred times to stay away from that barmy old goose. You don’t want to end up like her, do you? Shouting in theatres and all sorts.

**Addie**

Someday, I want to be an engineer and work on the machine.

**Michael**

You’ve got to be dead clever to work on the machine, Poppet.

**Addie**

Then I’ll have to be dead clever.

***Michael** finally frees the clock spring from her hair ‘Aha!’ and hands it to her.*

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*At the docks. **Addie** and **Michael** stand looking out over The Channel.*

***Michael** approaches a balloon seller and buys **Addie** a balloon. He hands it to her. A gust of wind. She accidentally lets it go. A passing sailor, **Benji** (18), catches it and hands it back to her. She smiles. He goes off, carrying a reel of rope.*

**Addie**

Balloons float, but most things fall to the ground. Why’s that, Dad?

**Michael**

Well...it's the, er...aneurysm. You see, everything that goes up must come down. Common knowledge. The heavier the thing you drop, the faster it lands. So, of course, two things that weigh the same will land at exactly the same time.

**Addie**

Are you sure? Because watch this.

*She takes two identical sheets of paper. She crumples one up and drops them both to the ground. The balled up one lands first.*

**Michael**

Oh, will you look at that—time for dinner!

\*\*\*\*

*At a pub. **Michael's** manner is furtive. He's here on his own recreational agenda but pretending it's educational. As he talks, he keeps looking over his shoulder.*

**Michael**

Er, no need to tell your mother about this little, er, educational outing to the pub. It's called the Ostrich because this is where they used to offload feathers for ladies' hats, er, back in the olden days, like. From Alaska.

**Addie**

Wait. Isn't Alaska terribly cold for ostriches?

**Michael**

How would you like a half of bitter shandy?

\*\*\*\*

*Beneath the suspension bridge.*

**Addie**

Fascinating... But why doesn't the suspension bridge fall into the gorge?

**Michael**

Ah...the thing is there are...chemicals...at work here. And the, er, chemicals are pushing up against the weight of the bridge. Come on, you'll love this next one!

\*\*\*\*

**Michael**

See? The train goes straight up that hill. It's called a funicular railway. Clever, eh? Just like you.

**Addie** looks a bit sad.

**Michael**

Hey. Hey, Poppet. You're not cross with your old dad for taking you out of school, are you? It's only they raised the price and what with the new baby and all.

**Addie**

Ma said you had your pay docked for skiving.

**Michael**

Skiving, what skiving? I was five minutes late back from dinner, at the pub, that's all.

**Addie**

It's just...If I don't keep up with the others, I won't get an apprenticeship.

**Michael**

Listen, I promise we'll send you back just as soon as we can. You'll catch up in a jiffy. Besides, what can them teachers learn ye that I can't? Eh?

*He nudges her playfully. She smiles.*

**Addie**

Well, I don't quite get this stuff about the aneurysm. Shouldn't the train fall to the ground? Show me how it works.

**Michael**

You've had enough lessons for one day. Up you get.

**Addie**

Come on, Dad. Show me.

**Michael**

*(sternly)* Really Addie. It's enough. *(to lighten it)* Don't make me use stern Dad voice. Nobody likes stern Dad—not even stern Dad's wife.

**Addie**

Oh come on, please?

**Michael**

Alllll right, you tinker. Twist my arm.

*He walks up hill on the tracks pretending to be a train. Addie laughs.  
He turns and looks down at her.*

**Michael**

See? The tracks hold it in place. Now this is what happens when you jump.

*He jumps. He lands wrong on his foot. He cries out and falls to the ground.*

Whoops. Whoopsy daisy.

**Addie**

*(shaking her head at him)* Come on, Dad. Ma's making steak and kidney pudding for supper. She'll whip the pair of us if we're late—especially you.

***Michael** struggles to move. A train whistle.*

Dad, the train is coming. Get up.

**Michael**

I, er, I think I've broken something, Poppet. I can't put any weight on it. Give us a nudge, will you.

*Another train whistle, jolly and unaware. **Addie** tries to nudge him, then pull him. He tries to pull himself but can't.*

**Addie**

Please, Dad! It's coming! Use the, use the chemicals to send the train back up the hill! Or tell me how to do it. I'll go up and use chemicals to / stop the train.

**Michael**

*(a difficult admission)* The chemicals aren't real, Addie. *(with more urgency)* Clear off the tracks, Addie. GET OFF THE TRACKS, ADDIE! NOW!

*The train is too swift. He only manages to get his torso off the tracks in time. A terrible crescendo of noise and music reaches its peak.*

**Addie**

DAD!!!

**HMS ISLANDER**

3 April, daytime

*On board the HMS Islander. The **Captain** and **First Mate** stand on high surveying the channel. The crew create the prow of a ship with ropes. A whistle and the sailors break off from their work. They laugh and joke.*

**First Mate**

A fine Easterly wind, Captain. Should push us all the way to port.

**Captain**

Blind me, it's like a flamin' regatta out there. The sooner we get clear of the Channel, the better. Full sail as soon as we hit open sea. *(to the Helmsman)* Mind your helm, McTavish. Five degrees off course to the right.



**Helmsman**

Aye, Captain.

***Benji** and a cluster of sailors have been arm wrestling over an overturned crate. **Benji** wins. The sailors cheer.*

**Captain**

Who's that?

**First Mate**

Name's Benjamin Bradley.

**Captain**

Benjamin Brick Outhouse more like. I don't hold with show offs. He can just keep himself to himself if he knows what's good for him.

***Benji** wins another round of arm wrestling. The **Captain** watches, perturbed.*

**Captain**

Call him here.

**First Mate**

Bradley! Oy! Get on up here. Captain's orders.

***Benji** looks to the other sailors in surprise. He obediently mounts the stairs to the upper deck to stand before the **Captain**.*

**Captain**

Benjamin Bradley, eh? How old are you, Benjamin Bradley?

**Benji**

Eighteen, Sir.

**Captain**

You didn't want to work on the machine instead?

**Benji**

I reckoned shipping on account of my strength. *(cheeky grin to the crew)*

**Captain**

Is that right. *(He gestures to a lowly sailor swabbing the deck)* Relieve that man of his bucket and mop.

***Benji** slowly obeys, unsure why he's been singled out.*

Sailors! Oy! Have a gander up here at your good mate, Benjamin Bradley. He's got some work to do. *(to Benji)* Well? What are you waiting for?

***Benji** swabs for a while.*

**Captain**

Faster! (*Benji goes faster.*) Faster! (*Benji goes faster still.*) I said faster! (*Benji goes very very fast. The Captain is satisfied that he has the upper hand.*) Good. (*addressing the men*) And now your good friend is off to clean the lavvy. Make sure you've all used it first. (*to Benji, a bit smugly*) Off you go.

*Benji clenches his fists and jaw but obeys. He grasps the mop and goes off.*

**DR PINE**

5 April, afternoon

*A mechanical ticking oppresses a waiting room. Michael is in an old fashioned wheelchair. Addie and Jeremiah wheel him into the doctor's office. We can't see his legs but assume they are in a very bad way.*

**Michael**

Let's go home, Addie. This place gives me the heebie-jeebies. No joke of a lie. Besides, we've no money for a doctor.

**Jeremiah**

Doctors are kind, Dad. They want to help.

*Something that looks like a machine comes out of the doctor's office. Michael recoils at the sight of it.*

**Object**

Don't be scared. I'm right as rain now that the doctor gave me a mechanical torso. So often people cling to flesh when they're much better off without it. The doctor made some adjustments and now I'm back to work.

**Dr Pine**

(*from within*) Next!

*Addie and Jeremiah wheel Michael in. Dr Pine lifts the blanket over Michael's legs, gives a cursory glance.*

**Dr Pine**

I must tell you these are beyond repair. Medical science can only do so much, and then we must turn to mechanical science. I can't save the flesh, but I can give you new legs.

**Michael**

New legs. You mean mechanical ones.

**Dr Pine**

Three guineas. Per leg.

**Michael**

Six guineas? But that's a fortune! More than a month's wages.

**Dr Pine**

Go where you like, the price is the same. You can have another doctor fit them, but I'm the best.

**Michael**

I have twenty shillings, fivepence. My life savings.

**Dr Pine**

For twenty shillings, fivepence, I can give you metal injections to slow the disintegration.

**Addie**

No, Dad. It's so final.

**Dr Pine**

Not as final as death from shock. The injections won't heal you, they will only buy you time.

*A slight pause.*

**Michael**

Looks like I've no choice.

***Michael** hands the money to **Dr Pine**. **Dr Pine** immediately produces an enormous syringe full of molten metal and squirts a bit off the top.*

## **MUTINY**

**6 April, morning**

*The HMS Islander. **Benji** and the **Cook** have been peeling potatoes for hours and hours. **Benji** smothers a sigh and goes to the barrel.*

**Benji**

No more spuds in the barrel.

**Cook**

You're a bright lad, aren't you. Go down in the hold and fetch another.

***Benji** obeys and trots off. He begins to climb down one ladder. He stops and transfers to another. He goes down into the hold. There, he encounters hundreds of barrels. He puzzles. He opens one, dips a hand in and pulls it out. He smells his hand. He frowns. Suddenly the **Cook** appears.*

**Cook**

What are you doing? Come on up out of there.

***Benji** grasps a handful from the barrel and lets it run out of his hand.*

**Benji**

What is this? It's like nothing I've ever felt before...

**Cook**

Oh no? Don't look so dumb. That's the city's chief export, boy. What keeps us rich.

**Benji**

But what is it?

**Cook**

Tester meal. Best fertilizer on the planet.

**Benji**

Wait. You mean, it's fertilizer made from...

**Cook**

Dead testers. Aye. We can't have the poor cloggin' up the streets, can we?

**Benji**

No. No, this is wrong. I can't do this. I can't be on this ship.

***Benji** goes up above deck and to the railings of the boat. He looks out to sea and breathes deeply trying to quell his nausea. The **Captain** spies him and charges over.*

**Captain**

Get back to the galley, Sailor. At once.

**Benji**

I've seen the cargo... *(half to himself)* I knew dangerous things were tested on them with the machine... But I had no idea....

**Captain**

You'd better get back to work or it'll be the strong room for you.

*A crowd gather. **Benji** expands the argument to include them.*

**Benji**

*(to the others)* Your father was a tester, wasn't he? And your mother? And yours? You think they ran off and left you to starve. It's not true. This is what they've become. Fertilizer for crops on the other side of the world!

*He lets the tester meal drain out of his hand onto the deck. The other men look to the **Captain** for confirmation.*

**Sailor 1**

Is'at true, Cap'n?

**Captain**

Get back to work. Any man not in his place on the count of ten will be shot.

**Sailor 2**

Answer the question, Cap'n.

*The **Captain** withdraws a pistol and points it at **Benji**. He starts counting.*

**Sailor 3**

Reckon he's got summat to hide.

**Sailor 4**

And me!

*The sailors lunge for the **Captain**, push the barrel away as the gun goes off. They've got him by the wrists. A big sailor steps forward, a level stare, then:*

**Sailor 5**

Throw him overboard, lads.

**Benji**

*(hurrying after them)* No, no, no, no! Don't!

*The sailors hoist the **Captain** up and fling him overboard.*

**Helmsman**

You'll regret that. Mutiny is a hanging offence.

**Sailor**

No one knows our names. We were hired straight off the docks. There's only the ship's record to say we were ever here. And there it goes.

*Flings it overboard. They all start menacingly towards the **Helmsman**. **Benji** hurries towards them.*

**Benji**

Lads... Lads, wait! Listen. Listen! My family's waiting for my pay. Same's all of you.

*A slight pause.*

We have to go back.

## **BAD LEGS**

6 April, day

*At the King household. The two youngest children, **Frannie** and **Tilly**, are poised, waiting for **Tabitha** to turn her back. The minute she does, they snatch a bottle of cough syrup and run out. **Tabitha** catches sight of them.*

### **Tabitha**

Oy! Frannie and Tilly! You can't drink that, it's cough syrup! You'll make yourselves sick!

*She follows after. **Addie** puts down a book entitled 'Mechanics' and stares at two large metal contraptions. She has tried to construct mechanical legs for **Michael** but they are a shambles: made of too many bits and too little design. **Jeremiah** picks up the book and reads.*

### **Jeremiah**

Transferral of motion depends on linkage mechanisms. Like the joints of a leg, linkages need to have joints too. All mechanisms have joints because they determine how far each linkage moves.

***Addie** nods. Check. They work together to fit them around **Michael's** damaged legs. But when he tries to stand, the legs immediately collapse. **Addie** is distraught at this failure and runs off. **Michael** tries to call after her. 'Addie, Addie, I'm all right—' but she is gone. She ends up at the machine, furious with herself. She sees **Crazy Jane**.*

### **Crazy Jane**

*(Muttering to herself)* Twenty tonnes of force per meter squared. Too heavy, too heavy. The foundations will collapse. What's to become of us? Oh where will we go when the machine has pushed us out?

### **Addie**

Jane? Jane! I couldn't do it, Jane. I thought I was so clever.

### **Crazy Jane**

There, there, girl. You're only fourteen. Plenty of time to get clever.

### **Addie**

As clever as you?

### **Crazy Jane**

Heheheh. No one's clever as that. I was a rich man's daughter and then a rich man's wife. I had all the time in the world to read and to think. *(muttering again)* Mining ore from beneath the foundations only to heap them on top. The whole thing will collapse, and for / what?!

### **Addie**

What should I do?

**Crazy Jane**

You'll think of something. Remember, an engineer is first and foremost a problem solver. *(she taps her own temple, thinking)* Gear tooth strength. Wt equals SxFxY over Dp. No, no, no. Too weak, too weak.

**Crazy Jane** continues muttering to herself and making calculations.

**Addie** pulls out her pencil and logbook. She writes.

**Addie**

First time I've ever approached the committee.

**Crazy Jane**

The committee? Huh. You want to watch that lot. They're all crazy.

**THE COMMITTEE**

**6 April, day**

*Outside the committee building, reformers are shouting: 'Education for all! FREE education for all! Every child in school!' Inside the building, the raucous cacophony of a meeting of the committee. They stand behind a length of cardboard, a wall of grim-faces in black and white robes.*

**Committee Member**

We turn *yet again* to the question of free universal education. And perhaps we will at last come to a decision.

**Committee Member**

There is only one decision to be made. Not all children belong in school. If every child were unable to work, millions of poor families would be made even poorer.

**Committee Member**

What hope will the poor have of raising themselves out poverty if they lack the education, the connections and the capital with which to do so?

**Committee Member**

But is it kind to fill a poor child's head with dreams they can never realise?

**Committee Member**

The question is not whether education is a universal good, it is whether education should be the right of the masses or the preserve of a few.

*Final roars of approval and disapproval. **Addie** approaches timidly.*

**Addie**

Your honours.

**Committee Members**

*(in unison)* Name?

**Addie**

Addie King, your honours. I've come about my father, Michael.

**Committee Member**

Ah yes. The undeserving.

**Committee Member**

Heel-dragger.

**Committee Member**

Work-shy.

**Committee Member**

Lazy.

**Committee member**

We heard of his accident.

**Addie**

Then you know why I've come. I need six guineas to have him fitted with mechanical legs or he will never walk again. Please help us. You control everything in this city. The docks, the banks—

**Committee Member**

These are hard times. We must be frugal and keep the machine going or tidal waters will envelop the city.

**Committee Member**

*(correcting)* No. A terrible drought.

*Addie looks from one to the other, confused.*

**Committee Member**

I'm afraid we can do nothing for a heel-dragger. To save him would be tantamount to condoning his laziness.

**Committee Member**

And if he is no longer gainfully employed, he will have to become a tester.

**Addie**

A tester? What's a tester?

**Committee Member**

They test things.

**Committee Member**

Or rather, they help *us* to test things.

**Committee Member**

They serve the machine—for the good of us all



**Committee Member**

A noble vocation.

*Not fully understanding but instinctively repulsed by the notion.*

**Addie**

No. My father won't be your tester.

**Committee Member**

Then get him some mechanical legs and get him back to work. You have until the day of the queen's visit.

**RECRUITMENT**

10 April, morning

*In the marketplace. A busker comes on with a sign on around her neck that reads: 'I lost my arm to the machine'. She sings:*

NOT A PENNY HAVE I TODAY  
A HELPING HAND WOULD GO A LONG WAY  
PLEASE I NEED SHELTER I PRAY TO THE SKY  
OR I WILL CRY TILL THE DAY THAT I DIE\*

*The people of the city swarm around her and she disappears from sight. A gaggle of reformers push their way to the fore, shouting: 'Free Universal Education for all! End Child labour! End exploitation! A better future! A chance to rise!' Passers-by largely ignore them. The vendors tout their wares. One vendor chases a boy. **Crazy Jane** wanders through the market, muttering engineering equations to herself.*

***The Recruiter** arrives with a display case. He whips off a sheet to reveal a child actor, **Josie**, dressed as the ideal Victorian moppet. Spectators gather to marvel at the sight. **Tabitha**, **Addie** and **Jeremiah** enter the square. **Tabitha** is dressed in her best and carrying a baby in her arms. As **The Recruiter** begins his pitch, she scans the marketplace, obviously looking for someone.*

**Recruiter**

Roll up, roll up! Child actors wanted for the Theatre Royal. A life of splendour, life of ease!

**Tabitha**

Life of splendour indeed. Like tossing fish heads to seals. Now I want the pair of you to wait here while I speak to that lady in the posh coat. She's my last chance of finding work, so mind yourselves. And don't let that overdressed busker talk to you. I've no good opinion of the theatre. Full of half-wits and degenerates if you ask me.

**Addie**

And artists.

**Tabitha**

Same thing.

***Tabitha** goes off.*

**Jeremiah**

I'm going to watch the butcher. He's funny.

**Addie**

All right, but back in five minutes. Oy.

*He stops. She tousles his hair. He smiles at her. As he goes off, he pretends to be the butcher, exaggeratedly hacking into meat and mimicking his banter, 'She's a heartless old bird, she is! Oops! Bit of a bad back, she has! Hahaha!' **The Recruiter** snaps his fingers and a waiting motley crew instantly bursts into action, singing a recruitment song. As they sing, they hone in on various children, but parents protectively whisk them away. Only **Addie** remains unguarded.*

**Recruiters**

MARBLES, TRINKETS AND CANDY  
COME TO THE THEATRE  
COSTUMES AND HATS FOR ALL TODAY  
COME TO THE THEATRE  
LOTS AND LOTS OF MONEY  
AND LAUGHS  
HA HA HA HA THE THEATRE!  
HEROES AND VILLAINS AND EVERYTHING GOOD  
COME TO THE THEATRE

COME TO THE THEATRE (TODAY)  
AND YOU SHALL SEE THE MAGIC AT PLAY  
AT THE THEATRE!\*

***The Recruiter** jerks his chin to **Josie**, and they make their move.*

**Recruiter**

Face of an angel. Hasn't she, Josie?

**Josie**

An angel.

**Recruiter**

Could melt the iciest heart.

**Josie**

Melted heart.

**Recruiter**

Have you considered a life in the theatre, young miss?

*He gives **Josie** a covert nudge. She immediately begins a rehearsed pitch.*

**Josie**

Hello, I used to be a clock winder. Lost my hand in the cogs. But then I found the Theatre Royal, and now I earn eighteen and six a week. All you have to do is put on a costume and stand on stage.

**Addie**

*(amused)* Is that what actors do? Sounds like a shocking waste of time to me.

**Josie**

Oh no. Hundreds of children appear on stage every night. The machine workers love to see us in plays. So we're in everything. Even Shakespeare.

**Addie**

21 shillings in a guinea, times six, divided by eighteen and six. Factor in cost living... That's roughly six weeks...

**Recruiter**

Come along, Josie. There are plenty of other children who would jump at the chance.

**Josie**

*(sotto)* Be warned, Miss.

**Recruiter**

*(sharply)* Pardon?

**Josie**

I said, be warm, Miss. The dormitory fires are always blazing.

*The **Recruiter** takes **Josie** a bit gruffly by the arm and begins to lead her off. **Addie** looks to **Tabitha** and the **Posh Lady** who is shaking her head and waving a dismissive hand. **Tabitha** begins to walk away sadly.*

**Addie**

Wait! I'll join. I said I'll join.

*The **Recruiter** gives **Josie** a look of smug satisfaction.*

**Recruiter**

That's a clever girl. Just sign here.

*A contract is immediately placed before her. **Addie** takes the pen and signs. The **Recruiter** spirits her into a waiting wagon where other child actors are waiting.*

**Addie**

Please, I just want to say good-bye to my family—

**Recruiter**

Yes, yes, we'll send word.

*He knocks against the side of the wagon. It starts off. There is no room for **Josie** so she is left behind to walk. Now we see that she is only wearing one shoe. **Tabitha** spies **Addie** and starts to chase after, shouting Addie? Addie! She can't run with the baby in her arms. She looks on helplessly as the wagon recedes from view. **Josie** approaches her.*

**Josie**

Don't worry, Ma'am. She's joined the Theatre Royal. Duchess Street. I used to think that sounded very grand... *(She hurries away leaving **Tabitha** in distress.)*

**ON THE RUN**

10 April, late morning

*In the city. **Benji** is on the run from the **Undercovers**. In the streets, he ducks and dives, uses furniture being carried aloft to travel unseen, grabs a lady's hat and pulls it down over his face while he pretends to play a piano etc... At last, his flight takes him to the stage door of the Theatre Royal. In an open window above, **Lucy** is practicing Juliet's speech.*

**Lucy**

Romeo Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? No. Romeo. No. Romeo—

***Benji** shouts up to her.*

**Benji**

Let me in! Oy, you there! Let me in let me in! I'm, er, looking for work...

**Lucy**

There's nothing for you here. They've already found sailors for the hornpipe dance.

**Benji**

My name's Benjamin Bradley. I have an urgent message for the theatre's owner. *(sees that she's not buying it, sotto)* Look, there are men after me. They'll kill me. *(sees them)* Oh days, there they are. I'm done for.

*He cringes, squeezes his eyes tight, one last desperate heartfelt plea.*

Please.

*She looks at him. A split second decision. She hurries down, opens the door and lets him in.*

**Lucy**

Who are they?

**Benji**

Undercovers. They had the ship surrounded as soon as we got to port. I had to dive in and swim for my life. The rest did the same, half were drowned or shot.

**Lucy**

Why? Are you a thief? *(she looks at him sharply)* Or a murderer...?

**Benji**

I've done nothing wrong. I saw an injustice and tried to put it right. Just remember that, no matter what happens.

**Lucy**

Remember it when? You're nothing to me. *(She looks over her shoulder nervously.)* They're all in a closed rehearsal. No strangers allowed in the building.

**Benji**

What if I offered to help? In a sort of voluntary capacity. I can hoist ropes. Fetch and carry. Sing. Anything that needs doing.

**Lucy**

You can sing? *(thinks she's calling his bluff)* So let's hear you.

*He sings (quite well).*

BEEN SAILING THIS GOOD SHIP FOR MANY A YEAR  
THAT'S THE WAY THAT'S THE WAY THAT'S THE WAY\*—

*He stops. He looks at her.*

**Lucy**

Well, I wouldn't hire you. They're always recruiting stagehands. Wait here.

*She begins to go out.*

**Benji**

Thanks. What's your name, Miss?

**Lucy**

My name is Lucy Patent. Someday the world will know it.

*She goes out. **Benji** looks around, touches bits of scenery. **Tobias**, the stage manager, comes in. Sees **Benji**.*

**Tobias**

You there! Who let you in?

**Benji**

Er she didn't tell me her name. Said you were recruiting for backstage. I'm a deft hand with a rope. From working on ships. Shall I show / you?

**Tobias**

Oy! Don't touch 'em. Who the crimson heck d'you think y'are?

***Tobias** looks him over. He could use another pair of hands. He whistles. A stagehand appears and drops a length of rope.*

Let's see you hoist that one in twenty seconds. One, two, three...

***Benji** races to the rope and starts hoisting it. He does so easily and long before the twenty seconds are up.*

**Tobias**

All right, Swab-head. I'll give you a try. Rule number one. We time everything backstage with whistles. So don't let me catch you whistling for fun—if you do, I'll give you a clout over the head that'll make you write home to mother. Understood?

***Benji** nods. **Tobias**'s gruffness melts into geniality as he slaps **Benji** on the back and leads him off.*

## **DORM LIFE**

10 April, 12pm

*Bedlam. Children swarming over the space, some playing, some squabbling. **Addie** looks around, not knowing where to go and feeling out of place. She tries to find a bed, but they are seized, one after the other, before she can claim one. She has no choice but to stand in the middle of the room. A cluster of children surround **Dolly** and **Hessie** to watch them gambling.*

**Dolly**

Oy, Hessie! Ha'penny on three heads.

**Hessie**

You're on.

*She flips three coins. They land.*

*(elated)* Ha! Hand it over, Dolly, you old pinchfist.

**Dolly**

*(grumpily)* Double or nothing on two heads and a tails.

**Hessie**

Ah ah ah. Pride goeth before the fall. It can only end in tragedy, Mrs Macbeth.

**Frank**

Me next, Hessie. I want that tuppence you got off me last week.

**Hessie**

What you want is a guardian angel, Frank. Stop you losing all the time.

*She and the others laugh heartily at **Frank's** expense. The **Matron** blows a whistle. The children quickly hide their coins and go silent. **Mrs Carwardine** sweeps in, grandly. She is immaculately turned out and proud of her appearance which is in contrast with the children's dishevelled clothing.*

**Mrs Carwardine**

Good *morning*, children! Indeed you are *all* my children, my *only* children. I am Mrs Carwardine, owner and director of this majestic establishment. We artists have but one way to serve the machine. By serving its workers. Offering brief glimpses of colour to their grey lives. In six weeks time, in honour of the queen's visit, we will be presenting a special gala performance of *The Pied Piper*. It is therefore essential that each of you apply yourselves diligently so that we may all be a credit to our fine city. The machine must never stop! The machine is life is the—!

**Addie**

I beg your pardon, Ma'am, but when do we eat? Don't know about everyone else, but I haven't eaten for ages.

*The other children exchange knowing looks and stifle snickers. **Mrs Carwardine** gives a sidelong glance to the **Matron**.*

**Matron**

What is your name?

**Addie**

Addie King.

**Matron**

You've made us notice you, Addie King. See that it doesn't happen again. *(to all the children)* You have five minutes to wash your face and hands, use the lavatory and then report back here for your 1pm call. Remember, this is the theatre, and the curtain waits for no one.

*The **Matron** blows her whistle. A mad flurry of activity as the children ready themselves for rehearsal. **Josie** is nearby washing her face with*

*only one hand. **Addie** leans forward to peer at her missing hand, this confirms it.*

**Addie**

It's you. (**Josie** moves away.) Er, she's a right one, that Matron, eh?

**Josie**

Not as bad as some. Been at school over the Red Vale since I was ten.

**Addie**

The reform school? Why?

**Josie**

I'm sorry, I. I have to wash my foot. Clock Face is very particular.

***Addie** notices for the first time that **Josie** has only one shoe. **Josie** hurries away. **Addie** pulls out her book of firsts. She pulls the pen from behind her ear and writes.*

**Addie**

First time I've seen a girl wearing only one shoe. How on earth do you lose a shoe?

*A cluster of children approach. They try to wind her up.*

**Child Actor (Milo)**

Addie King, eh? You'd better get a move on if you know what's good for you.

**Child Actor (Libby)**

Yeah. Clock Face is a right stickler when it comes to punctuality.

**Child Actor (Molly)**

You don't want to get on his wrong side.

**Child Actor (Lenny)**

Not that he has a right side.

**Child Actor (Cora)**

Right and left, he's evil.

**Child Actor (Nanette)**

A monster.

**Child Actor (Frederick)**

A freak.

**Addie**

Who's Clock Face?



*The other children exchange looks: she'll soon see. **Addie** puts her book away and hurries to get ready.*

### **CROSSING PATHS**

***Addie** and **Benji** cross paths as they make their way to positions backstage. She drops her log book. He picks it up and hands it to her. They frown, half-recognising each other. They carry on.*

### **CLOCK FACE**

**10 April, 5pm—2am**

*The children are assembled on stage. **Addie** is among them. There are three thuds of a cane. The children take this as their cue, and all begin to chant:*

Clock. Face.  
Clock. Face.  
Clock. Face.

*And then there he is, the dreaded **Clock Face**. **Addie** involuntarily gasps in shock at the sight of him. **Clock Face** hears this and clocks her. Whilst the other children cower in awe and fear, eyes downcast, heads averted, **Addie** meets his gaze and stares at him, curiously. He notes this with suppressed fury. He'll show her.*

*With occasional thuds of the cane, he puts the children through their acting paces. It's gruelling and most of the children are exhausted by it, but not **Addie** who thinks herself outside and above it all. The set is flown in and out, furniture moved across the stage and back again, children dressed and undressed and dressed again, stage hands, including a gormless **Benji**, swarm and disperse. All the while, **Clock Face** never takes his eyes off **Addie**, and she never takes her curious eyes off him.*

### **Tobias**

*(backstage) This is your beginners call for 'Count Domingo and the Wild Children'. Beginners, please. Miss Patent and Mr Kent, your call to stage.*

*Final scrambling backstage, movement of props, set etc, **Josie** helps **Addie** find her place.... Lighting change. We are at the melodramatic climax of the play.*

### **Adult Actor as Count Domingo**

*Yes, lovely Penelope! Guilt! Guilt is the reason I imprisoned you in this ice house and blackmailed your angelic sister. These wild children are all MINE. I AM THEIR FATHER!!!!*

*He gestures to the tableau which comprises no fewer than fifty children. The children sing.*

**Children**

WE ARE THE KIND OF CHILDREN WHO WILL NEVER EAT GREENS  
WE ARE THE LITTLE MONSTERS WHO WILL HAUNT ALL YOUR DREAMS  
WE ARE NOT MEEK AND MILD HEAR OUR ROARS AND OUR SCREAMS  
WE ARE THE WILD CHILDREN!!!!\*

*The song comes to an end, and the children are ushered off.*

**Tobias**

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Running time was 1 hour and 53 minutes.  
Your beginners call for *Babes in the Wood* in 10 minutes.

*Addie sighs with relief. Clock Face approaches her.*

**Clock Face**

First performance, young lady. Quite a milestone in your life. What is your name?

**Addie**

Addie King.

**Clock Face**

Ah yes. Charming. On your next entrance, try to convey a sense of excitement, hmm? Really sing out.

**Addie**

But aren't we finished for the night?

**Clock Face**

Gracious, no. That was only the first performance. We do three a night, until two in the morning. So many machine workers to entertain. 'The machine must never stop' and neither must we. Now. Precision, girl. The audience awaits... *(to himself as he walks off)* Another plateful of tripe...

*Addie is flabbergasted. This isn't what she signed up to.*

**Child Actor (Dolly)**

You'll get used to it.

**Child Actor (Frank)**

Here we go. Performance two.

**Child Actor (Hessie)**

Chin up. It's better than being a clock winder.

**Child Actor (Milo)**

Marginally.

**Tobias**

Beginners please for *Babes in the Wood*. Beginners, please.

*They children are ushered back onto the stage.*

**Lucy**

Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep and in their place, she's found the babes of the wood! Sing little ones, sing! Sing! Sing!

**Children**

HEAR OUR HEAVENLY VOICES  
FA LA LA LA LA  
SEE OUR CHERUBIC SMILES  
FA LA LA LA LA  
LOOK UPON OUR ROSY CHEEKS  
AND SEE THE SUNLIGHT TWINKLE IN OUR EYES\*

*As the children sing, an adult actor as sheep scurries up to Lucy. She pets his head, smiling. The song ends. He instantly stalks off, self-absorbed.*

**Adult Actor**

I really thought I BECAME the sheep.

**Lucy**

*(following after)* You BECAME the sheep.

*Suddenly, **Clock Face** pours cold water over **ADDIE**. She screams.*

**Clock Face**

WAKE UP! You call that a performance? In the next performance, hit your mark and sing out and don't make me say it again. *(resuming his bonhomie)* Two down and one to go.

**Addie**

No, none to go! I don't have to take that kind of—

**Tobias**

Beginners for performance three. Beginners, please.

*Before **Addie** can storm off, the children are ushered back onto the stage again. This time it is a serious play—with some adjustments...*

**Adult Actor as Macbeth**

*(giving it tragic welly)* Is this a dagger which I—

*He is interrupted by a child actor wandering on, late. The child stops.*

**Child actor**

Sorry.

**Adult Actor as Macbeth**

*(resuming)* Is this a dagger which I see before me?

**Lucy as Lady Macbeth**

No, my lord, it's the children of Dunsinane. And they have come to sing you to sleep.

*Once again, the children sing.*

**Children**

SLEEP NO MORE

SLEEP NO MORE

MACBETH HAS MURDERED SLEEP

MACBETH HAD MURDERED SLEEP\*

*This time, **Addie** straightens up and sings out with gusto. The children go off stage again. **Clock Face** is waiting for her.*

**Clock Face**

That's more like it. *(to the other children)* Out of your costumes and back to the dormitories. Tomorrow morning, rehearsals begin at 6 am sharp. *(to Addie)* So pleased you've joined us, Addie King. I do enjoy a bit of sparring.

***Josie** has comes over; she puts a kindly hand on **Addie's** arm.*

**Josie**

Come on. You'll be all right. The first night's always the worst.

***Clock Face** smiles smugly, turns to go. **Addie** holds her ground.*

**Addie**

What happened to your face?

*He jerks his head towards her—what?! He starts towards her. **Josie** quickly grabs **Addie's** arm and drags her off.*

**Letters 1**

**Addie**

Dear Dad,

How are you? I hope the medicine is keeping you comfortable. I get paid once a week and will of course be sending you everything I earn. The theatre is not how I thought it would be, but I won't give up yet. Please write and let me know how you are doing. I miss you.

Your Addie.

**Michael**

Dear Addie,

I hope you're not still brooding about the accident. You've always been too hard on yourself, girl. Someday, you'll get that apprenticeship, and someday you will learn how things work. Your Ma and I will do the best we can, but could you spare a little something for us? I hate to ask, but Mrs Lamprey has threatened to turn us out. This time, I fear she means it.

Love Dad.

***Clock Face** walks across the stage, stops to listen. He carries on.*

### **MARINER'S REST**

**10 April, after the shows**

***Benji** and the other stage hands are down the Mariner's Rest. They are in the midst of a drinking ritual that involves each taking turns to be the focus of a drinking song. **Benji** is trying his best to blend into the background, fearful of being spotted.*

**Stagehand**

And now Benjamin Bradley. Get on up there.

**Benji**

*(trying to hide his face)* No, I'd rather sort of, you know, watch and learn.

**Stagehand**

Only way to learn is to muck in. Raise yer glass, and no more stalling. Ready lads? After three. 1,2, 3!

*As they begin singing, one stagehand gives **Benji** an insistent shove. He reluctantly climbs up on the table.*

**Stagehands**

DRINK IT DOWN, BENJI  
GET THE JOB DONE  
CAUSE IF YOU DON'T  
YOU'LL RUIN OUR FUN

DRINK IT DOWN, BENJI  
GET THE JOB DONE  
DRINK IT DOWN, BENJI  
GET IT DOWN IN

1! 2! 3! 4! 5! 6!...\*

***Benji** dutifully drains his drink in time.*

**Stagehands**

We-hey!!!

*They clap him on the back. The **Inspector** approaches.*

**Inspector**

Good evening, all. Oh hello, Tobias. Thought I recognised that smell.

**Tobias**

Hiyer, Inspector. Drinkin' on the job again?

**Inspector**

Just making polite conversation. You'll remember it from that posh boarding school you attended. (*notices Benji*) You're new aren't you?

*Paralysed with fear, **Benji** is lost for words.*

**Tobias**

(*interceding*) Naaaaw, 'es been with the backstage crew for yonks. We just never let 'im out of his rat hole til now.

**Inspector**

Oh yes? Why's that?

**Stagehand**

'E wun't of suitable drinkin' age, Inspector.

**Stagehand**

Yeah! That should be obvious from 'is sweet li'l face.

**Inspector**

(*looking around*) You lot should choose a different pub. Sailors are an unsavoury bunch at the best of times. (*to Benji*) Oh, I beg your pardon. You're not a sailor are you?

**Benji**

Who me?

*The big moment. Will the other stagehands give him away...?*

**Tobias**

'E can't even swim! Throw 'im in the harbour and see fer yerself. What gives, Inspector, you lookin' fer someone?

**Inspector**

I might be. The devil of it is, I don't know his name or what he looks like. No one does. (*to Benji*) You take care. Mrs Carwardine and I are old friends. I'll keep an eye out for you next time I'm at the theatre. And you, Tobias. By then, I hope you'll have found that bar of soap you mislaid.

*She goes off.*

**Tobias**

That one wouldn't trust her own mother with a pint of milk. *(to Benji)* Well well. Man 'o mystery. You're one of us now, Swabbie. You best do us proud!

*They all cheer and raise their glasses to him.*

**A VISITOR**

The next morning

***Mrs Carwardine's office. Mrs Carwardine and Miss Hyacinth are in the midst of a heated argument.***

**Miss Hyacinth**

That is all very well, Mrs Carwardine. But you must know that there have been troubling reports about the working and living conditions of the child actors in your theatre.

**Mrs Carwardine**

The children here are treated in a manner consistent with children everywhere. These are children that have no where else to go and no prospects in life. They are lucky and grateful to have a roof over their heads.

**Miss Hyacinth**

Forgive me, but how do you know? If wealthy benefactresses like you were to take even one of them in hand and educate them, you could effect a real change.

**Mrs Carwardine**

As it happens, I have done precisely that.

**Miss Hyacinth**

Indeed? Please do / tell me—

**Mrs Carwardine**

But where one central authority governs all schools, they govern minds. We are a highly advanced society. An education reform act has never been passed, but just look at our understanding of clockwork. Now if you'll excuse me, Miss Hyacinth, I am wanted on stage.

**Miss Hyacinth**

Our cause is gathering speed, Mrs Cawardine. And this theatre is very much in our sights. It will be made an example of—for better or worse. You would be advised to put your house in order.

## **STRIKING CHORDS**

**Date and time: 11 April, late morning**

***Josie** and **Addie** sneak into a store room. There is a mountain of props and other theatre debris. Under a drop cloth, there is a dusty old piano. **Josie** beckons **Addie** over.*

**Josie**

Come on. We've got an hour while they rehearse the adult company. You can always hear Mrs Carwardine from anywhere in the building. But watch out for Clock Face. You never hear him until he wants you to hear him.

**Addie**

He has it in for me.

**Josie**

He doesn't like being looked at, much less seen for what he is. You did both.

**Addie**

I can't help it. My curiosity always gets the better of me. Who is he anyway? What's his real name? Where does he come from?

**Josie**

Don't go asking too many questions, Addie. None of us do.

***Josie** plays.*

**Addie**

Where did you learn to play?

**Josie**

My mother. She was a musician. When dad died, she had to go do washing for the big house but couldn't take it any more and ran off.

**Addie**

You didn't like the big house.

**Josie**

I hated it. Spent all day winding clocks. That's how I lost my hand. The tower clock. Then they sent me to the reform school. You're meant to sit on a bench from dawn to dusk, unpicking old rope, but I couldn't. The matron was going to send me to be a tester, but I found out and ran away. I'm lucky to be here. They let me hide my hand on stage. Children are supposed to be perfect, aren't they.

**Addie**

No. We make mistakes, same as anyone. Play something else?

***Josie** plays a pretty little tune. She messes up. She laughs, whoops. **Addie** leans in conspiratorially.*



**Addie**

Come on. I want to know how his face works.

**Josie**

You what?

## **PASSING SHIPS**

*Benji and Lucy see each other in the theatre—he's carrying rope. They have a good long look but both are too shy to say anything. Passing ships.*

## **DOLPHIN**

11 April, later that morning

*The youngest child actors are under the stage, playing near the star trap. It is a dangerous place for them to be: springs, gears, sharp objects, heavy weights, but they are blissfully unaware.*

**Young Child Actor**

Something about a girl called Juliet. She's in love with a boy called Mercutio.

**Young Child Actor**

No, she's in love with Tybalt. I heard her weeping and wailing over him in Act Vee.

**Young Child Actor**

There's this apothecary who gives them a potion that brings Paris back to life.

**Young Child Actor**

And they all live happily ever after.

**Young Child Actor**

The end. Come on, let's play hide and seek.

**Young Child Actor**

I'm bored of playing hide and seek. We always do that.

**Young Child Actor**

*(covering ears in dismay)* No fighting!

**Young Child Actor**

How 'bout this. Let's pretend we found a dolphin under the stage.

**Young Child Actor**

Yeah! And we have to keep it safe from Clock Face.

**Young Child Actor**

And feed it!

*They make a pretend dolphin. One of the children pretends to stroke its head. Another pretends to cover it with water. Another pretends to feed it. Suddenly they see **Addie** and **Josie**. They gasp and run off.*

**Josie**

I really don't think we should be doing this.

**Addie**

If we can find Clock Face's winding keys, we can figure out how many and what size winding pegs his face contains. If we do that, we can begin to understand the principles of his mechanisation. *(thinking of her father)* And how they might be applied elsewhere. *(she sees the star trap, goes over to it)* What's this?

**Josie**

Oh that. It's called a star trap. You stand on this bit and the stagehands winch you up through that trap door there. It's for transformation scenes. Like if you want Cinderella's fairy godmother to appear out of nowhere.

**Addie**

Such a simple design. Does it work?

**Josie**

So long as the stage hands are awake. Last week, they timed it wrong and Dick Whittington's still got a thumping headache.

*They chuckle. **Addie** spies a room beyond; it is **Clock Face**'s private quarters. **Addie** ventures in curiously. **Josie** follows timidly.*

**Josie**

This is Clock Face's office...

*They see a photograph of a child made into a bulls-eye. **Clock Face** has been throwing darts at it. **Addie** goes to make a closer inspection.*

Maybe that's the boy that died. They say Clock Face covered it up and buried him under the stage. Don't make him hate you, Addie. A bucket of water over the head is nothing.

**Addie**

He doesn't scare me.

***Clock Face** thuds his cane. They look at each other and dart away. They don't know it but he has been observing all along.*

## **STAR TRAP**

**11 April, early afternoon to 2 weeks later**

*On stage. The star trap in its many uses night after night. **Clock Face** stands before the entire child company.*

**Clock face**

A volunteer for the star trap. If you please.

*He taps one of the children on the shoulder. The child moves to the centre of a tangle of ropes. The stagehands and ensemble lift these above the child. This is the star trap.*

**Lucy**

And then with a wave of her magic wand, Little Delia was transformed into a beautiful princess!

***Tobias** whistles. The stagehands slam the ropes down on the stage around the child actor. The child actor smiles an above-stage smile.*

**Clock Face**

A volunteer.

*He taps another child who moves to the centre of the tangle of ropes. The ropes go up as one. The child winces and cringes, waiting for it.*

**Company Actor**

In the blink of an eye, Sabu's rags became the robes of a great maharajah!!!

*Whistles. The ropes slam down. The child actor is now a maharajah. The ropes go up again.*

**Clock Face**

A volunteer.

*He taps another child. The same process again. The child actor waits for it.*

**Company Actor**

A twinkling of lights and...

**Company Actor**

The past melted away...

**Company Actor**

To reveal a beautiful.

**Company Actor**

Magical.

**Company Actor**

Angelic.

*Whistles. The ropes go down, but at different times, incompletely, forming a web around the child. The star trap was mis-timed. The child actor's leg is caught in the trap door. She screams.*

**Child Actor**

My leg! Help! My leg is stuck!!!!

*The audience gasps. There is murmuring and concern.*

**Clock Face**

*(to the child from below the stage)* Silence! Keep your mouth shut for three minutes and I'll give you a tea cake afterwards.

*The child actor stifles the urge to cry out. The audience relaxes. The scene ends. The child is released. They walk two steps and faint.*

**Clock Face**

*(to a stagehand)* Forget the tea cake, just get her out of the theatre—as fast as your little ham hocks will carry you.

***Addie** overhears this. She shakes her head, removes a bit of costume and drops it on the stage in disgust as she begins to storm off. She sees **Josie** and stops short.*

**Addie**

I've had enough of this. Will you come home with me, Josie?

**Josie**

Another mouth for your parents to feed.

**Addie**

You'd be welcome. I know you would.

**Josie**

I can't. Good bye, Addie.

**Clock Face**

*(swiftly approaching)* Off to a garden party, Miss King?

**Addie**

I've decided to leave. I hope you'll treat the others better after I'm gone.

**Clock Face**

Gracious. I think you'll find that rather difficult. You see, if you leave us before your two months is up, the theatre can rightly sue your parents for breach of contract. And I hear that breach of contract can be costly.

*A slight pause.*

**Addie**

All right. But you can't make me do anything I don't want to.

**Clock Face**

Oh I can. I can dock your pay. Anything that you do that I don't like—I can dock your pay.

**Addie**

That's not fair...

**Clock face**

That'll be two shillings.

**Addie**

You can't do that.

**Clock Face**

More insolence. Another two.

**Addie**

But—

**Clock Face**

And another. Take care, Miss King, or you'll find yourself *owing us* money. Now. Down into the star trap with you. Remember, without the machine to generate wealth there would be no theatre. You owe those workers your life. If indeed you must trouble the earth.

*He is now close enough for her to get a good look at his face. She stares, puzzling over it. How DOES it work? This riles him even more.*

Into the star trap, you. Now.

***Addie** is poised to leave forever, but these threats have been far too compelling. She slowly moves to centre stage. The lights dim around her until her frightened face is all that we can see. She cringes, waiting for the star trap cue. A low roll on a kettle drum. A rim shot. Whistles. The lights go out.*

*We wait. Is she ok? The lights slowly fade back up. **Clock Face** is gone. **Addie** is an older and a wiser girl now. Other children crowd round.*

**Hessie**

Cheer up, King. At least you've got a family. Mine chucked me in here and never looked back.

**Sid**

Don't worry about old Clock Face. Tonight, I'll play an excessively handsome sword fighter and run him through! (*lunging*) Ha-ha!

**Lily**

Keep it down, Sid. You're always bellowing like a Cyclops.

*Thuds of the cane from the wings. The children trot offstage, taking **Addie** with them.*

**Milo**

Here we go. Performance two. Titus Andronicus at the Orphanage...

**Letters 2**

**Addie**

Dear Dad,

Are you all right? I was hoping I'd hear from you by now. Please write to me and tell me if you would support my decision to leave the theatre. No matter what the consequences might be.

Your Addie

**Michael**

Dear Addie,

The metal injections are wearing off sooner than expected. Won't you please send home some of your earnings? I promise I'll pay you back every penny. Every single penny.

Love Dad.

**WAGES**

**25 April, after the last performance.**

*Late at night. **Tabitha**, enters the main house as if entering a throne room. She stares amazed at the beautiful set on stage. She looks around for signs of life. **Clock Face** appears out of the shadows. He is making small adjustments to his face. He spies her and sweeps over.*

**Clock Face**

*(with false cordiality)* The performance is over, Madam. Please make your way to the exit.

**Tabitha**

I didn't watch the show. I couldn't afford a ticket. My daughter works here. Addie King. It's been two weeks, and I've not received her wages.

**Clock Face**

Ah yes. The somewhat painfully precocious Addie King. Your daughter was paid on Sunday like everyone else.

**Tabitha**

But nothing has been sent home.

**Clock Face**

I think you'll find that the cause is simple but regrettable: your daughter has squandered her wages rather than send them to you. I am so sorry, Madam. It is often the case.

**Tabitha**

My Addie would never do that. I insist on seeing her.

**Clock Face**

It is very late. I'm sure she's fast asleep, enjoying a hard earned rest. She is making a success of herself, Mrs King. It would be a pity for anything or anyone to hold her back. But I will be only too happy to deliver your message.

**Tabitha**

Oh. I see... Please give her this.

*She hands him a note.*

And please tell her that her family are in a desperate situation. Addie's younger sisters were caught stealing metal dust from the machine. The committee have decided to summon Addie's father to the testers yard. We *must* have money as soon as possible.

**Clock Face**

Madam, have no fear. I will deliver your message to her.

**Tabitha**

Thank you. *(doubting him)* You are very kind.

***Tabitha** hesitates briefly then goes out. **Clock Face** looks in a mirror at his face. He touches it, thinking. He tears up the note.*

## **KNOTS**

**27 April, afternoon**

***Addie** sneaks below the stage to have a nose around for clues about **Clock Face**. She spies his cane leaning against a wall. She goes to it and begins to inspect it. Suddenly **Benji** appears carrying rope. She quickly puts down the cane. She indicates the riggings.*

**Addie**

Er, how does it all work?

**Benji**

An actress who wants to know the mechanical side. That's a first, surely.

**Addie** smiles brightly. She takes out her log book. **Benji** worries it's for a darker purpose and snatches it out of her hands.

**Addie**

Give it back! Immediately!

**Benji** has looked it over and decided it's harmless; he hands it back.

**Benji**

I don't like anybody taking down my words is all.

**Addie**

Your words are hardly memorable. I was only going to note that it was my first time talking to a stage hand. I won't now.

**Benji**

If that's how you feel, you best run along back to your dormitory. *(she begins to go off, dejected. He feels bad.)* Unless... *(She stops and turns.)* Want to learn how to tie a mooring hitch? It's a kind of knot. I can tie at least a hundred different sorts.

*She stops, her curiosity piqued. He takes some rope and starts to expertly tie the knot. She tries to mimic, but can't do it.*

Don't worry, took me ages to get the hang of it. *(He takes out a photograph.)* This is my sister. Only twelve but she doesn't suffer fools. You remind me of her a bit, when you frown. *(Addie cracks a smile. Benji holds up a letter.)* There's a lady I've been wanting to see again, but stage hands like me aren't allowed in the actors' lodgings. Do us a favour, eh, and deliver it to her? Her name's Lucy Patent.

*She thinks. She extends her hand.*

**Addie**

That'll be four shillings.

**Benji**

Four shillings! That's outrageous!

**Addie**

And if you want her reply, that's another four. Unless you expect her to pay?

*He grudgingly puts the money in her hand. She begins to go off, then stops.*

You must know...How does his face work? Clock Face. Is it one mechanized system for the whole? Or separate systems for his eyes, mouth, cheeks and so on?



**Benji**

I mind my own business. People who ask questions have to be prepared for questions to be asked about them. You best keep your curiosity in check.

**Addie**

I've got nothing to hide. Do you?

***Benji** ignores the question and starts gathering his tools. **Addie** goes off. He sings a bit of a sea shanty:*

THAT'S THE WAY IT ALWAYS WAS  
THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GONNA BE  
WON'T SOMEBODY HELP ME  
TAKE ME BACK TO Sss\*---

*The **Inspector** has entered and **Benji** stops short of singing the word, 'sea' at the end of the lyric.*

**Inspector**

No, no, don't let me keep you from your work.

***Benji** continues stiffly, knowing he's being scrutinised. Suddenly, the **Inspector** spies the knots in the ropes.*

These are mariners' knots. Highly specialised. Are there any mariners about?

**Benji**

(putting on the dumb act) Er, loads of 'em. They does the hornpipe dance every night, dun't they?

*The **Inspector** looks **Benji** over closely.*

**Inspector**

Mrs Carwardine doesn't know all her workers, but there are plenty that do. The timber merchant for one. I'll be making further enquiries. And of course, if you find out who tied them, you will let me know, won't you?

**Benji**

Er, yes Ma'am.

*The **Inspector** gives him one last searching look, then goes.*

**ONLY TEMPORARY**

**27 April, later that afternoon**

***Lucy** sits writing a reply to **Benji**. **Addie** is admiring **Lucy**'s personal effects which include a long fluffy writing quill.*

**Lucy**

Addie King. Excellent name for the stage. Memorable.

**Addie**

Oh, this is only temporary. As soon as I can, I'm going to try for an apprenticeship with a top engineer.

**Lucy**

You know, I began like you. I thought I wanted an ordinary life. But then one day, I saw a great actress on stage. Annabel Monterey was her name. She played Desdemona and the entire audience wept. I thought, I want to do that. When the queen comes to watch the performance, I want her to think me...wonderful...

*She hands **Addie** the letter.*

Here. I'll spare you the trouble of peeking. It says he's not to send any more letters. I musn't have any distractions from my career.

**Addie**

*(nervously)* The thing is, he paid me for this, and I was hoping... See if I don't deliver his letters and your replies, I won't get paid. I really need the money for my dad. So he can have mechanical legs.

*She takes out her log book and shows **Lucy**.*

I've only managed to save two guineas, two shillings so far.

**Lucy**

I see. That's quite a responsibility for a chi—*(stops herself saying 'child')* for anyone to undertake. What's this old book of yours?

**Addie**

*(clutches it protectively)* It's my book of firsts. *(opens and reads)* First time I kept the ice cream from dripping down the cone. First time I slipped on wet pavement. *(softly)* First time I hurt someone.

**Lucy**

Well now, suppose I write a friendly reply—this once, so you'll have one more errand?

*She writes.*

**Addie**

Is it true that Clock Face killed a boy?

**Lucy**

Goodness. You've heard that? My advice—don't dig into the past.

*As Lucy Speaks, Clock Face crosses upstage. His face turns towards them once.*

I was a child actor like you once. I hated him then, but he can't hurt me now.

**Lucy** hands her the letter.

**Addie**

What's your name again?

**Lucy**

Lucy Patent. I'm actually quite famous.

**Addie**

Yes of course. If you say so.

*They share a smile. Addie pockets the letter and leaves.*

### **Letter 3**

*Clock Face has remained onstage to overhear the following.*

**Michael**

Dear Addie,

How I wish I could see you on the stage. You must be making a riot of it. A regular Annabel Monterey. Your mother has taken your brother and sisters to live under the bridge. I am in the holding area. At night, all I can hear is the machine. There are no birds anymore. Please write. I'm sure time doesn't mean much in the theatre, but I certainly feel it out here.

Love,  
Dad.

### **GO BETWEEN**

**28 April--2 weeks later**

*Music. Choreography. Addie serves as the go-between for Lucy and Benji. At first, it is hesitant and protracted, notes being exchanged clumsily for money. But by the end, it's like a perfectly timed dance with Addie whisking the letter out of Benji's hand as her back hand receives payment, then graceful and slick manoeuvring through the theatre to repeat the process on Lucy's end. Lucy's face changes over time. From haughty and indifferent, to softened, to smiling and demure. He is winning her over by degrees. Back stage, they dart furtive and shy glances at each other from opposing wings.*

*She performs in The Winters Tale. Benji is mesmerised by her performance and we watch him watch what is happening onstage. A child actor plays Mamillius. There are several more children including Addie, dotted about as*

*playmates for the young prince. It is the height of Leontes tirade against Hermione.*

**Company Actor (as Leontes)**

No; if I mistake  
In those foundations which I build upon.  
The centre is not big enough to bear  
A school-boy's top. Away with her! To prison!  
He who shall speak for her is afar off guilty  
But that he speaks.

*He strikes Hermione.*

**Lucy (as Hermione)**

I am not prone to weeping, but I have  
That honourable grief lodged here which burns  
Worse than tears down!

*Lucy exits weeping to Benji's side of the stage. She sees his moved expression. They kiss. Onstage, Addie yawns. Clock Face pulls her into the wings and clouts her with his cane. She gasps. He hisses into her face angrily.*

**Clock Face**

You are a disease! Yawning onstage?! I won't have you infecting the others with your impudence. You think yourself above all this, but I was born to thrash that notion out of you. Now get back in your place and perform with spirit or you'll be indentured to this theatre for the rest of your superfluous little life.

**Addie**

*(matching his anger)* Who are you?

**Clock Face**

What did you say?

**Addie**

I know that you killed a boy. The boy in the photograph. I'll tell the committee, and they'll put a stop to you once and for all.

**Clock Face**

Oh, I know all about you, too, Addie King. The girl who broke her family.

*He shoves her back into place on stage. Addie's mind is reeling. She hisses through her teeth to the other child actors.*

What if all of us ran off the stage right now? Right down through the audience and out the door?

*The other child actors shrink away.*

**Josie**

They're all too scared, Addie. They know there's nothing for them out there.

**Addie**

Of course there is. The machine! Let's make a break for it. Haven't you all had enough? Come on! Who's with me?!

*(No one answers. She looks to **Josie**.)*

**Josie**

Addie, I just can't. Good luck to you.

*The scene ends. **Addie** is herded towards the wings. Suddenly she makes a break for the stage door. A little entourage including **Hessie**, **Dolly** and **Frank** follow her. **Clock Face** strolls over to **Benji**, pegging the floor jauntily with his cane.*

**Clock Face**

You. Stage hand. Go after them.

**Benji**

They won't listen to me.

**Clock Face**

Make them listen or don't bother coming back. We can't have the other little cherubs thinking its all right to leave.

***Benji** follows after.*

**LETTER 3**

*During this letter, **Dr Pike** and another doctor measure **Michael** in his wheelchair, especially his head circumference.*

**Michael**

Dear Addie

I have seen what they do to the testers. You must send money if you have it. Even five shillings would buy me some time. Addie, think of all the years I cared for you. Won't you do this one thing for me? Please, girl. There's no other word to beg with than please.

**CRAZY JANE**

10 May, late evening

*At the Machine. Workers move spiritlessly back and forth. **Crazy Jane** is making calculations, shaking her head and muttering to herself.*

**Crazy Jane**

*(to herself)* Isochronous speed.  $N$  equals one over two pi times the square root of  $g$  over  $h$  where  $N$  equals speed,  $g$  equals gravity and  $h$  equals height. Hmmm. Need paper, need paper.

*The children run on laughing.*

**Frank**

Hahaha! Did you see his face?

**Hessie**

Noooooo! But I'll bet he was really *ticked off*!

**Dolly**

Oy! Twopence says I can flip three heads.

**Hessie**

Shilling says you can't. Nor you, Frank. I'll give you another thrashing so you can keep up your losing streak—

*They stop. They listen. They look up.*

**Dolly**

There it is. The machine.

**Hessie**

I heard that without the machine, all the crops would fail and we'd be forced to eat glue.

**Frank**

No, you div, the machine protects us from the sun.

**Crazy Jane**

Looking at the great big nothing are you? The heavy heavy nothing? It's too big much too big. What's to become of us?

**Addie**

Jane. It's all right, Jane.

**Crazy Jane**

I'm sorry, children. So sorry. This machine is your great bequest and you don't even know why or how it works. By the time you're old enough to find fault with your elders, another cycle of nonsense will have ended.

**Milo**

Aw, go away, Jane. She's crazy as a cactus.

*An **engineer** appears and begins to make adjustments to the machine. It's the moment **Addie** has long hoped for. She looks to the others.*

**Addie**

Two shillings says I can get her to take me on as apprentice.

**Hessie**

TEN shillings says you can't.

*A slight pause, should she? **Hessie's** doubting smirk is too much for her.*

**Addie**

You're on.

*She musters courage and approaches the engineer.*

Hello...my name is Addie King. I am fourteen years old, and I'm looking for an apprenticeship with an engineer—

**Engineer**

All I've got is clock winding.

***Addie** is crushed. She looks to the other child actors.*

**Addie**

Maybe clock winders move on to apprenticeships?

**Engineer**

None that I know. Take it or leave it. And there's only one place this section, so fight it out between you.

***Hessie** smugly extends her hand. **Addie** pulls out a purse and hands it over to her.*

**Crazy Jane**

*(to Addie)* Aren't you going to ask about your father? He's alive and well. Well, not very well. But alive. Alive for now, shall we say.

**Addie**

You've seen him? Where is he?

**Crazy Jane**

Derived kinematic quantities. Velocity.  $v = dr \text{ over } dt$ .

**Addie**

*(frustrated)* I don't understand. You're always speaking to me in equations, in riddles. For once, can't you just tell me the answer?!

***Benji** enters.*

Benji? What are you doing here?

**Benji**

Clock Face sent me to bring you and the others back to the theatre.

**Addie**

No. Stay away from us. We're not going.

**Benji**

Don't be daft, I can't drag you all back. *(he gestures to the machine workers)*  
Look at the workers. They're grey with care. This is no place for you,  
Addie—none of you.

**Addie**

Nothing could be worse than working for Clock Face. I think I'd rather be a tester. All right, there's a chance of getting hurt, there's risk in every—

**Benji**

Addie, listen. Listen! All testers die. It's only a question of how soon.

**Addie**

What?

***Benji** draws her to one side.*

**Benji**

If I tell you something, you have to promise not to tell a living soul. I was a sailor. I thought I knew what happens to testers. Then I found out the truth. Sit down here, and don't interrupt.

*As he speaks to her, we can see her growing alarm. Back at the theatre, **Clock Face** leads the child actors in rehearsal of a song that grows ever louder.*

**Children**

BEEN SAILING THIS GOOD SHIP FOR MANY A YEAR  
THAT'S THE WAY, THAT'S THE WAY, THAT'S THE WAY  
WE'VE HAD SOME GOOD TIMES AND PLENTY OF CHEER  
LET US PLAY, LET US PLAY, LET US PLAY  
SO HAUL IN THE RIGGING AND HOIST UP THE MAST  
SAIL AWAY SAIL AWAY SAIL AWAY  
THE SEA FOAM WILL CARRY US FAR FROM THE LAND  
EVERY DAY EVERY DAY EVERY DAY

THAT'S THE WAY IT ALWAYS WAS  
THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GONNA BE  
WON'T SOMEBODY HELP ME, TAKE ME BACK TO SEA

THAT'S THE WAY IT ALWAYS WAS  
THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GONNA BE  
WON'T SOMEBODY HELP ME, TAKE ME BACK  
BACK TO\*—



*As the singing reaches it's zenith, **Addie** rushes forward in alarm, the singing cuts out abruptly, and there is darkness.*

*End part 1.*

## PART 2

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MACHINE

11 May, afternoon

***Addie** is one of the theatre children who have volunteered to honour the machine at its birthday celebration. She stands at the forefront of a cluster of children, singing out with gusto.*

#### **Children**

OH GLORY BE TO VICTORY  
OUR HARD WORK MAKES US STRONG  
THE GREAT MACHINE WE LOVE TO SERVE  
THAT KEEPS US SAFE FROM WRONG

OUR SAVIOR FULL FIVE HUNDRED YEARS  
WE LIVE TO MAKE YOU GLEAM  
AND RAISE OUR VOICES NOW TO SAY  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY MACHINE!\*

*The song ends. Cheers, confetti.*

#### **Clock Face**

Good to have you back, Miss King.

#### **Addie**

I won't run away again. You have my word.

#### **Lord Mayor**

Citizens, in just two weeks time, her majesty the queen will be arriving to celebrate the 500 year anniversary of the machine. There are few greater legacies we can give to our children, than a strong work ethic. We are a community which thrives and prides itself on work. Once, idleness threatened to destroy the city, to leave gardens untended and rubbish in the streets. But now we have the machine. The machine, which generates the very water we drink. The machine must never stop! The machine is life is the machine!

*Cheers. Dancing? Throughout the celebration, workers continue spiritlessly moving from post to post, making adjustments to the machine. A few workers have clipboards and they jot down observations about the work of other workers. **Tabitha** enters with the*

*baby in arms. She looks even more careworn than previously. She approaches one of the clipboard holders.*

**Tabitha**

Please Ma'am. Any bolts to tighten? If I could just have a day's work, it would see off the worst of the children's hunger.

**Engineer**

*(of the baby)* Poor thing. He needs sunshine, not the shadow of the machine.

**Tabitha**

Seems like there's less sunlight with every passing year.

**Engineer**

I'm very sorry. The decision is not mine to make. Ask someone else.

*One by one, **Tabitha** makes her way through all the machine workers and is turned away each time. Although they grow ever closer to one another, she and **Addie** keep missing each other.*

**Lord Mayor**

And now, citizens, there will be free soup for all!

*A mad scramble from the destitute who have gathered hopefully for this precise moment. They all have cups or bowls at the ready, but **Tabitha** has none. The reformers including **Miss Hyacinth** begin to disrupt proceedings, shouting for universal education. **Tabitha** is jostled further and further away from the head of the queue. She looks around, trying to find a makeshift container. She can see nothing. She looks down at her boot and takes it off. She clutches it to herself and presses forward. Suddenly, someone snatches it out of her hands. Startled, she shouts after them: 'No! Don't!' but they are gone. She stands, one boot on, one boot off, in despair. And still she and **Addie** do not see each other. **Crazy Jane** approaches **Tabitha**. She shrinks away distrustfully.*

**Crazy Jane**

There there. The engineers never listen to me either. Even though I used to be one of them.

***Tabitha** reels away from **Crazy Jane** and almost collides with **Miss Hyacinth**. **Miss Hyacinth** looks **Tabitha** over pityingly and extends some coins.*

**Miss Hyacinth**

You poor dear. This wouldn't be happening to you if you had been educated.

**Tabitha**

*(fiercely)* Don't pity me. I don't want to be like you. If you really want to help me, then hold this baby so I can work. *(Miss Hyacinth shrinks from the baby)* No? Thought as much.

**VOLUNTEER**

11 May, evening and other days that week

*The child company are all assembled before **Clock Face**. Once again, **Addie** is at the front of the group, bound and determined.*

**Clock Face**

A volunteer, please, for the flying devil? An extra shilling for the day.

***Addie's** hand goes up. She swings back and forth across the stage.*

A volunteer, please, for the death drop. Two extra shillings for the—

***Addie's** hand goes up. She is dropped from a great height.*

A volunteer, please for the cupid launch. A half a crown—

***Addie's** hand goes up. She is launched across the stage.*

**Clock Face**

A volunteer for—

***Addie's** hand goes up. Some new stunt.*

**Clock Face**

A volunteer—

***Addie's** hand goes up. Another stunt.*

**Clock face**

A—

***Addie's** hand goes up. This time, when she lands, she withdraws her book of firsts and pulls the pencil from behind her ear. She makes a note of them all and calculates her earnings.*

**Clock Face**

Excellent work, Miss King. Shall you squander a bit of your earnings this week?

**Addie**

No, Sir. I'll continue to send all my wages to my parents.

**Clock Face**

Of course, of course. They're fortunate to have a daughter like you.

*He goes off. **Josie** approaches.*

**Josie**

Hey Addie. Want to learn how to copy a key with a tin of boot polish?

**Addie**

Sorry, Josie. I haven't really got time to play.

**Josie**

Did you know that the speaking parts can earn an extra six shillings per night?

***Addie** thinks. She looks down at the calculation. It is still a meagre sum. She closes the book and goes off. **Josie** looks after her, sadly.*

**WINDING DOWN**

23 May, day

*The youngest child actors are playing under the stage.*

**Young Child**

Well, from what I can make out, Olivia is Count Orsino's twin sister. And they're shipwrecked on an island called Viola.

**Young Child**

I know! Let's pretend that this box is a ship and this stick is a mast.

*A chorus of yeahs. The children all join in.*

**Young Child**

Look! Sharks off the starboard bow!

*They all scream in delighted terror.*

**Young Child**

And some flying fish! Look at their wings!

**Young Child**

And look! A giraffe that can swim!

**Young Child**

I wish I could swim.

**Young Child**

I know! Let's pretend we can swim!

**Young Child**

Hey! That was my idea!

**Young Child**

Hay is for horses.

**Young Child**

*(covering ears in dismay)* No fighting!

**Young Child**

Let's pretend that we've all fallen overboard and we're swimming and the sharks are after us and we've already just seen a big fat sailor eaten alive a few minutes ago!

*A chorus of Yeahs!!! They shriek in delight trying to get away from the shark. Suddenly **Clock Face** and **Mrs Carwardine** enter. They see the children and stop short. The children are paralysed with fear.*

***Clock Face** shouts 'Boo!' The children shriek and run away.*

**Mrs Carwardine**

Yes, you frighten the little ones. But can you keep all the children in line? It was most fortunate the others were returned safely to us. There must be no obstacles during the queen's visit or the theatre will lose its royal charter. How long do you think any of us would last outside the walls of this theatre? I see it every day on my role as patroness, the thin little faces of those struggling to make ends meet at the machine and failing. But I needn't tell you...

**Clock Face**

I assure you there will be no further difficulties.

**Mrs Carwardine**

This ring leader, Addie King, must be brought under control. Have you considered her for...

**Clock Face**

Indeed, yes. But I suspect she may resist.

**Mrs Carwardine**

Often it is when we've no other choice that we make the right one. Find a way to convince her. I need not remind you what you owe me after all these years.

**Clock Face**

Consider it done.

**TESTERS**

*A row of testers move towards the machine and disappear within.*

## **ACTING LESSONS**

24 May, day

*In the rehearsal loft. The adult actors are warming up their voices and bodies, testing costumes, etc...*

**Lucy**

And then you place the back of your wrist against your forehead and sigh. Like this.

*She demonstrates. **Addie** mimics.*

This one has a variety of uses.

**Adult actor**

*(jumping in to demonstrate)* Oh, whoa is me!

**Adult actor**

I'm in love!

**Adult actor**

Oh wheeeeere is my mother?!

**Lucy**

Try it.

***Addie** places the back of her wrist to her forehead and sighs.*

**Addie**

Oh wheeeeere is my dinner?!

**Lucy**

This one can be used for Desdemona, Ophelia, Hero—all the great Shakespearean roles, actually.

**Addie**

All the great Shakespearan roles are a bit rubbish, if you ask me. Desdemona is thick. And Ophelia mucks about with flowers when she should be giving Hamlet a kick in the shin. It doesn't seem real.

**Lucy**

But it's not reality. It's theatricality. Characters are supposed to do things that are out of the ordinary or why not simply watch a couple arguing in the park? Let's hear those last lines again.

**Addie**

'He pipes us to the churning sea. To the water's edge, then in are we. Without a thought that we might drown. And still, we follow, follow'.

**Lucy**

Not bad. Try for a wistful sort of look. Audiences hate self-pity but they love yearning. If only they knew what we go through to entertain them.

**Addie**

Aw, it's good enough for a few extra shillings, that's what counts.

***Addie** pats her change purse which is carefully hidden inside her costume. She is a bit forlorn, thinking of her family.*

**Lucy**

Have you written to your family? Sometimes all it takes is a letter.

**Addie**

All the time. They never answer. They know how it is for me and they don't want to hear about it.

**Lucy**

That assumes an awful lot... (**Addie** shrugs) Will you deliver this for me?

***Addie** takes **Lucy's** letter and places the back of her wrist to her head.*

**Addie**

Oh Benji, wheeeeen will we ever be together?

**Lucy**

Now now. Here. (*hands **Addie** money*)

***Addie** opens her log book and calculates.*

**Addie**

With this and the money I earn tonight, I'll have sent home 5 guineas, 11 shillings and tuppence. I'm sure my mother has managed to save a few shillings.

***Addie** is about to go.*

**Lucy**

Addie...It only takes one push to topple a house of cards. Write to your parents.

***Addie** goes out. **Josie** is waiting, hidden. She follows **Addie** back stage, watching her curiously. **Addie** takes out **Lucy's** letter, ready to make the handover to **Benji**. Suddenly she sees **Josie**. She quickly pockets the letter again.*

**Josie**

Hey Addie. How would you like to go up in the flies and see the etching of a ship? It's from the nineteenth century.

**Addie**

Not now, sorry. I wish I had time to play childish games, but I don't. (*gentler*)  
Maybe later.

***Addie** disappears to an unseen office. **Josie** waits. When she sees **Addie** emerge again, she hides slightly. **Addie** goes to the ropes. She ties a knot. It's her signal to **Benji** that there's a note waiting for him. Suddenly **Clock Face** appears. The sight of him makes **Josie** shrink back into the shadows.*

**Clock Face**

Miss King. I was needing a volunteer for recruitment.

**Addie**

Yes, Sir. I'll do it.

*She goes off with him. **Josie** is about to follow when suddenly, the stage hands appear. They immediately spy **Josie** and grab her by the collar.*

**Stagehand**

Oy. What you doin' back here, shrimp?

**Josie**

Nothing.

**Stagehand**

I bet it's 'er keeps on tying all them fancy knots in the ropes. Well lookie here. Another bloomin' knot needs undoing. Get on wid it.

***Josie** takes out her left hand and shows it to them.*

**Stagehand**

Crickey. That's a right pickle, innit?

**Stagehand**

(*making fun of Josie*) Actually, it's more of a left pickle.

***Benji** comes in, sees **Josie** surrounded and in distress.*

**Stagehand**

Oh now, don't cry little girl. How will you dry your tears?

*Another **stagehand** pretends to try to use his foot to dry his tears. They laugh heartily.*

**Benji**

Come on, lads. Leave her alone.



**Stagehand**

Only having a bit o' merriment with the little devil. Or is she an angel?

*He lifts **Josie** up.*

**Stagehand**

You're flying, Angel! Whoo! You're flying through heaven!

**Stagehand**

Time for the angel launch!

**Stagehand**

The angel drop!

*The stage hands toss **Josie** to and fro between themselves. She is terrified and begging them to put her down. **Benji** finally gets in there.*

**Benji**

Oy, shouldn't we—shouldn't we—OY. OY!!!!

*They stop.*

Shouldn't we get back to the paint shop?

**Stagehand**

Better had. *(to Josie)* That'll learn you to put knots in our ropes. And tell your friends what happens to kiddies who slink around backstage—that is, if you've got any friends.

***Josie** goes off, distressed.*

**RECRUITMENT 2**

24 May, afternoon

*In the marketplace. **Reformers** shouting again: 'Free universal education for all' 'No child overlooked' 'Fair pay for children!' 'Fair hours!' 'Fair working conditions!'*

**Recruiter**

Roll up, roll up! Child actors wanted for the Theatre Royal production of *The Pied Piper*! Her majesty the queen and the young princess will be in attendance. Eighteen and six per week, food and lodging.

**Addie**

Best job in the world!

***Jeremiah** approaches hesitantly. Is it really her?...*

**Jeremiah**

Addie...

**Addie**

Jerry! *(She hugs him, then looks him over, concerned.)* Why are you dressed like that?

**Jeremiah**

I've been winding clocks, Addie.

**Addie**

But Ma swore you never would.

**Recruiter**

Young sir, you have the face of a cherub. Doesn't he, Addie?

**Addie**

A cherub.

**Recruiter**

And have you heard? The life of an actor is the best in the world. Free of danger, free of strife. Eighteen and six a week. You would like to sleep in a warm bed and have lots of puddings and sweets to eat, wouldn't you?

*Jeremiah looks to Addie.*

**Jeremiah**

*(with a note of accusation)* Now I see why you never sent home your wages.

**Addie**

What do you mean? I've sent home every penny I've earned!

**Jeremiah**

We've had nothing from you. I haven't eaten in two days. The last thing I had was out of a rubbish bin. Ma's probably gone a week without food. Dad's nearly... *(he is upset)*

**Recruiter**

Sign here and you shall have the best breakfast money can buy. Eggs and sausage. Hot muffins and ham. Can't you just smell the chocolate in the pot—

**Addie**

Jeremiah!

*He stops, poised to sign.*

Don't. They must have kept my wages. They'll do the same to you, and then Ma will be on her own. You have to look for something else—screw fixing, gear cutting—

*The recruiter snaps his fingers. Henchmen come for Addie.*

**Addie**

Jerry—Jerry!

*She is stifled and whisked away. The **Recruiter** withdraws an iced bun. **Jeremiah** cannot restrain himself. He signs on the dotted line and seizes the bun. He is swept into the fold. **Addie** is spirited back to the theatre and thrown into the strong room. She is searched, her money is discovered and taken off her.*

No, no, that's all the money I have! You can't do this! Let me out!

*The door is shut. She can't be heard. She looks around the room. It is impenetrable. She sits down in despair. Day gives way to night. At last, **Matron** opens the door.*

**Matron**

I hope you've learned your lesson. Now back to the dormitory with you.

### **IN THE QUEUE**

***Michael** is one of the queue of testers moving towards the machine. **Dr. Pike** halts the procession to shine a light into his terrified eyes. She steps aside and he rolls onwards in his wheelchair to disappear within.*

### **THE OFFER**

24 May, late at night.

***Clock Face** in his quarters. The photograph of the boy is riddled with even more holes. He throws a dart which pierces the child's eye. He lets out a sigh of satisfaction. **Addie** pushes the door open.*

**Addie**

(commandingly) Clock Face.

***Clock Face** half turns to see **Addie**, standing alone and determined.*

**Clock Face**

Addie King.

*He reaches up and adjusts his face. He resumes throwing darts.*

**Addie**

Where's my money? I want it back. All of it.

**Clock Face**

The truth is simple but regrettable. Your mother has received your wages and spent them. It is often the case.

**Addie**

You're lying. I want my money right now or I'll see to it that the entire child company leaves the theatre before the queen arrives.

**Clock Face**

Do you suppose they can't be replaced?

**Addie**

They can. But not in time.

**Clock Face**

Well, wind me down, that seems a very drastic step. And what good would it do you? You would still leave the theatre penniless.

**Addie**

You—you have to give me my money. I'll tell the inspector.

**Clock Face**

The inspector has a way of disbelieving things that are not in her interests. Like outlandish claims from lowly actors.

*He goes to fetch a small pouch.*

There are three guineas in this pouch. Take them. Lead the child company in the queen's gala and there will be another three for you.

**Addie**

What do you mean?

**Clock**

Oh for pity's sake, can you really be so stupid, girl?

*Clock Face points to the dart board.*

Do you know who that boy is?

**Addie**

No.

**Clock Face**

That's me. That was me. I'm quite cute, aren't I? I look like someone in the child company. Long ago, I had an accident on the machine. I was a tester. My family were all testers. Some stupid person made a mistake, and I had an accident. A person like you or your imbecile dad. Yes, I took your money. Do you know why I took your money? Because you're not worth the money I owe you. But! If you can prove to me that you are useful... You don't have to be like your dad. You can be so much more. I have a chance now to be who I was. To have a real face. The only way I can do that is by finding someone to replace me. I think you would be a great leader, don't you? You can look after your family as I did mine. *(She is shaking her head.)* Forget it. I'll ask

someone else. Although, six guineas is a lot of money. And it would be a shame to give it to someone else when I know that your imbecile dad needs it so desperately.

*He extends the money again. **Addie** stares at the pouch.*

**Addie**

He's not an imbecile.

*She takes the money.*

And neither am I.

**MEDLARS**

25 May, morning

*The **Inspector** appears backstage. She sees **Benji** deftly working the ropes.*

**Inspector**

Well well. Looks like everything is ship shape in advance of the queen's visit. Eh? What do you say, Swabbie?

*A slight pause.*

**Benji**

I in't a sailor, remember?

**Inspector**

*(mimicking)* In't you? *(laughs to lighten it)* Well you're no stage hand either, at least not until recently. I've asked around. None of the tradesmen had seen hide nor hair of you before the spring. What's your real trade?

**Benji**

Been here and there. With my fruit 'n veg cart.

**Inspector**

Hard work pushing a cart. Where was this?

**Benji**

All over, like. Got to cover the city to turn a profit, dun' I?

***The Inspector** notes the word 'profit': he's not as stupid as he's making out. **Tobias** and the other stagehands enter.*

**Tobias**

Oy, lover boy, where's you? We got ter get them flats in 'fore it chucks it down.

*He sees the **Inspector**.*

Hiyer, Inspector. Skivin' off work again, are ye?

**Inspector**

Oh, I'm on my own time, now. I'm something of a connoisseur when it comes to art. Perhaps you've heard the term.

**Stagehand**

A common sewer, are ye? Well, if you says so.

**Inspector**

Would you be so good as to put this poster up backstage for me? I've already placed several across the building.

***Tobias** looks at the poster. He whistles. He clouts himself over the head for whistling.*

**Tobias**

Ow! *(to one of the stage hands)* No wonder you hates it when I thump you. *(to the inspector)* Ten guineas. That's a lot. All for one man?

**Inspector**

Oh, he isn't just any man. This man led a mutiny aboard the HMS Islander and killed his captain. This is the man we most need to find.

**Tobias**

Well, we'll keep a look out. Won't we, lads?

*The stage hands mumble their assent.*

**Inspector**

Thank you very kindly. Oh and er, Benji, I've got a medlar tree in my garden. I'll bring you some next time it fruits. They're at their best when first picked, aren't they.

**Benji**

Yeah. Fresh and crisp.

*The **Inspector** withdraws a revolver.*

**Inspector**

Medlars have to be left nearly to rot before they can be eaten. Any fruit seller would know that. You're all under arrest for harbouring a mutineer. I must say I'm most disappointed in you, Tobias. I shall miss our repartee. In light of the queen's visit, I fear the committee will be particularly harsh.

*One of the stagehands whistles. A piece of scenery descends. The **Inspector** is startled. The **Stagehands** overpower her and drag her off. She shouts to **Benji**.*

I know you, Sailor! I've seen your face! The undercovers know where I am and will come looking for me! I know you!!!

**MOVING ON**

**25 May, morning**

*Benji steals into the ladies' dressing room. The female actors, who are in all stages of dishabille, gasp, shriek, strike at him with bits of costume as he runs the gamut of hostile actresses to arrive at **Lucy**.*

**Lucy**

What are you doing here?

*He draws her to one side.*

**Benji**

I have to leave the city. Go away for good. Tonight.

**Lucy**

Leave?

**Benji**

It's not safe for me anymore. The inspector knows who I am.

**Lucy**

But you can't just suddenly run off. What about the performance?

**Benji**

Listen, I want you to come with me.

**Lucy**

Where?

**Benji**

The Southern islands.

**Lucy**

But there's no good theatre in the Southern islands!

**Benji**

Is that all that matters to you?

**Lucy**

Mostly. With a little bit left over for you.

**Benji**

*(he whistles)* Rude.

**Lucy**

You expect me to leave everything I've worked for? How can I be famous if I go to some wilderness, where there are no machine workers to know my name?

**Benji**

There's more to life than the machine. You're not the only one who has ties here, but I would give up everything for you.

**JOSIE VOLUNTEERS**

**25 May, morning**

*The children have been assembled on the main stage. **Mrs Carwardine** is conferring, unheard, with **Clock Face**. She stops and turns at last to address the child company in an excited manner. The children do not share her enthusiasm, but she takes no notice.*

**Mrs Carwardine**

Children. In two days time, her majesty the queen will attend the opening of our latest play, *The Pied Piper*. Never before has it been so crucial that you hit your marks and listen for your cues. The Machine must never stop! The machine is— *(to Clock Face)* Why are they itching like that?

**Clock Face**

Lice, Madame. Lice. It's the costumes and wigs, you see. No way to keep it under control. I've tried using my cane, but I just keep on missing...

**Mrs Carwardine**

You need lye soap and lots of it. We can't have them itching like this on stage. They'll spoil the tableau. *(to the children)* And now children, a word from your esteemed acting master.

**Clock Face**

Children of the company. I present to you...my apprentice.

***Addie** appears, dressed a bit like **Clock Face** and carrying a cane. The children gasp in surprise. She takes her place by his side.*

You will treat her with the utmost respect and deference at all times. Apprentice King will address you.

***Jeremiah** steps towards her.*

**Jeremiah**

Addie?! What are you doing?



**Addie**

*(ignoring him, she addresses the company)* Owing to slight adjustments in the play, we will be needing a volunteer for the star trap. An extra five shillings for the night—

**Josie** raises her hand.

**Josie**

I'll do it.

***Addie** is taken aback. She hadn't counted on **Josie** challenging her new status. She is lost for words, and the two girls are locked in a silent standoff. **Clock Face** quickly intercedes.*

**Clock Face**

Precisely. Come along, then, Josie. Down below the stage and onto the platform.

*The stagehands wander in. A clatter as something is knocked over. **Clock Face** hastens over to them. **Addie** moves swiftly to take **Josie** aside.*

**Addie**

You don't have to do this. Are you trying to make me feel guilty?

**Josie**

Not everything is about you, Addie King. I can double my pay. Get out of this horrible place where I don't know anyone and nobody cares about me.

**Addie**

I'm sorry if it seems like I've been ignoring you.

**Josie**

You're not the only one who's brave.

***Clock Face** sees them conferring and moves towards them. **Josie** goes below the stage. **Addie** stares after her, conflicted.*

**Clock Face**

Is there a problem, Apprentice King?

**Addie**

No, Sir.

**Clock Face**

Run the scene at least five times and ensure the stagehands are drilled with the cue.

**Addie**

Yes, Sir. Straight away, Sir.

***Addie** takes her place at the helm but her manner is less confident. The stage hands including **Benji** take their places. For the first time, he notices **Addie** in her new clothes and is shocked at the sight.*

And now, on my command. Stagehands standby. Actors standby. The cue line is: 'But one little girl got away'. Begin.

**Child Actor**

And so the children of Hamelin all were drowned.  
And funeral rites must end our play.  
The Pied Piper himself was never found.  
But one little girl got away.

*Whistles. **Addie** holds her breath. The star trap is activated. **Josie** suddenly appears through the trap door. She gives **Addie** a triumphant look.*

**Addie**

*(shakily)* And again.

**MISSING**

***Michael** is in the queue, being pushed towards the machine for another round of testing. He is missing an ear. He holds a hand over it and slumps in his wheelchair, heartbroken and despondent. **Dr Pike** looks on.*

**DRESS REHEARSAL**  
**25 May, afternoon**

*Rehearsal for the Pied Piper. Onstage, **Addie** is trying to lead proceedings with sheepish and ineffectual thuds of the cane. The children are running circles around her. She keeps calling out, 'Places. Places please', but no one pays her any mind. At length, they shuffle into position, nattering away.*

**Addie**

And on my cue. The cue—the cue line is— PLEASE stop talking! One little girl got—QUIET! Positions please everyone. Is everyone ready below stage?

**Stage hands**

Ready!

**Addie**

On my command, the last two lines. Go.

**Child actor**

The pied piper himself was never found.

**Child actor**

But one little girl got away.

**Addie**

Too slow. Again!

**Child actor**

The pied piper himself was never found, but one little girl got away.

**Addie**

No, no, no, no. It's still not right. Again!

*The children grumble. **Lucy** and **Benji** rush in, arguing.*

**Lucy**

The two of us, unwed, on a ship bound for nowhere. Like a pair of convicts.

**Benji**

Marry me, then. I've sent for my sister, Eliza. We'll book a passage on board a foreign ship.

**Lucy**

I had hoped one day you would go on the stage with me. I'd have taught you everything. We could have been a famous acting couple and played all the great parts. But that's impossible / now.

**Benji**

Listen, Lucy—listen! The inspector is in the strong room, but they can't keep her there forever. As soon as this dress rehearsal is over, I have to go. Now, are you coming or not?

**Lucy**

Remember when we first met I said you were nothing to me? I was wrong. You're no good to anyone.

**Benji**

That's a low blow. *(He whistles.)*

*The stagehands mistake this for their cue. **Josie** is catapulted up and hits the stage from below. A sickening thud. The other children look at each other perplexed by the sound. **Addie** steps forward.*

**Addie**

What was that?

**Child Actor**

It sounded like a twig snapping.

*The children all rush forward, trying to get a look. **Clock Face** strides across the stage to the trap door, opens it and peers down.*

**Clock Face**

Oh gracious. Not another one.

**Addie**

What happened? Josie? No! Josie! Josie!

*Lucy gives Benji a horrified look.*

**Lucy**

Go on. What are you waiting for? Tell them it was you.

*He hesitates. She storms off disgusted. The stagehands are grumbling, the children are crying and the rehearsal is in danger of disintegrating into complete chaos. Clock Face lifts Addie to her feet and turns her to face the company.*

**Clock Face**

We will be needing another volunteer for the star trap. Tell them, Apprentice King.

*A deathly silence. The children shrink with fear.*

This was an accident. Something out of the ordinary. The device works perfectly well when operated properly. Come now, which one of you will it be? I said which of you will it be?

**Addie**

Me. I'll do it.

*Jeremiah quickly steps towards her.*

**Jeremiah**

Addie, no.

*Clock Face pulls Addie to one side.*

**Clock Face**

This is all very exciting. Have you forgotten our deal?

**Addie**

People keep getting hurt because of me.

**Clock**

The stage hands would not have been careless if you hadn't been weak. There is a leader in you. Now go back over there and take this company in hand. Go!

*Addie goes to the stage. She looks around uncertain. Then she plucks up her confidence.*

**Addie**

Molly, down into the star trap.

**Molly**

No please, Addie.

**Hessie**

Addie, come on. You know how scared of it she is.

**Addie**

You will not address me informally. And you, Dolly. Do you think I can't hear you clinking like a change purse? Empty your pockets and no more gambling.

**Frank**

Apprentice King, eh? We liked the old Addie better.

**Addie**

*(to a stagehand)* Escort Frank to the stage door and throw him out of it. Into the star trap, Molly.

***Molly** is whisked down to the star trap, upset. **Addie** looks around at the hostile faces. There's no going back now.*

Now, on my cue—sing!

*They sing.*

## **AFTERMATH**

25 May, afternoon

*Backstage. **Benji** and the stagehands sit, sombre and contrite. Only **Tobias** is on his feet, darting nervous glances in the direction of the imprisoned Inspector.*

**Benji**

*(to Tobias)* I wish you'd give me that clout you promised.

**Tobias**

This sorter goes beyond a clout, dun' it?

**Stagehand**

I feel bad now, I do. She wun't a bad kid.

**Stagehand**

What are we gonna do with the inspector? We can't keep her and we can't let her go.

**Tobias**

*(to Benji)* You need to get out of this theatre, mate. Soon as ever.

**Benji**

What about you? She'll arrest the lot of you.

**Tobias**

Oh, I known her a long time. She might be won over. Anyhow, if she will or she won't, we can't all hare it over to the ships, can we?

**Stagehand**

*(earnestly)* I always thought I'd make a brilliant sailor.

**Tobias**

*(to Benji)* Go on, Mate. While you've got the chance.

**Benji**

I've made a right mess of everything. I can't go until I've put it right.

**Tobias**

You mean you can't leave your sweetheart. She don't want you, mate. Best thing you can do for all concerned is ship out.

*Benji's pride is a bit bruised.*

**Benji**

What will happen to Josie?

**Tobias**

Mrs C has her ways. There was a boy died once. Mrs C knew if there was an inquest, Clock Face would've been dragged through the city like a one man freak show. So she made an arrangement with the testers yard to come and take the boy's body away. It won't be long before the undercovers turn up here. You got ter go, Benj. Soon as ever.

*Benji rises purposefully and starts off.*

**Benji**

No. I told you. I can't. Not yet.

## **RETURN OF SPRING**

**25 May, afternoon**

*Once again, Miss Hyacinth stands before Mrs Carwardine. She is more assured and insistent this time, whereas Mrs Carwardine is much more nervous.*

**Miss Hyacinth**

Good day, Mrs Carwardine. I would like a tour of the premises.

**Mrs Carwardine**

I'm afraid that won't be possible. We are very pressed for time as you can imagine. Suffice to say, I have been a generous and fair benefactress to these unwanted children.

**Miss Hyacinth**

Like the child you saved. The one who is now a man called Clock Face.

*This has taken **Mrs Carwardine** by surprise.*

**Mrs Carwardine**

He is not my prisoner. After his face was damaged, I generously paid for him to have a new one.

**Miss Hyacinth**

A mechanical one. You should be ashamed of yourself.

**Mrs Carwardine**

For what? He came here and received a fair wage. I taught him everything I know. One day he told me he wanted to go home. That very night, he returned and said that he would never leave again. His own family had turned him away.

**Miss Hyacinth**

My group and I believe the origin of most suffering in this city is the machine itself. We're not certain exactly how, but—

*One of the young child actors runs in.*

**Young Child Actor**

Mrs Carwardine! Mrs Carwardine! They've come for Josie's body! Come quick!

*The actor runs out again. **Miss Hyacinth** is momentarily shocked into silence, then, shaking in outrage, she raises an accusing finger to **Mrs Carwardine**.*

**Miss Hyacinth**

I will have this theatre shut down. The committee will be informed of this poste-haste.

**Mrs Carwardine**

They already know. I sit on every board in town.

**Miss Hyacinth**

Then the queen must hear the truth, and my group will be in the audience at the gala to ensure she does.

**Mrs Carwardine**

I will bar you all from entry.

### **Miss Hyacinth**

How? A reformer looks very much like any other paying customer. Until the queen's gala.

### **BROKEN CHORDS**

25 May, late afternoon

#### **Benji**

Hello? Clock—er, acting master? I wanted to talk to you about Addie King—

***Benji** slowly enters **Clock Face's** room. He looks around, briefly. He sees a wooden chest, half open. He opens it. It is packed to the brim with letters. He opens one and reads. The child actors and parents speak their letters. They may overlap.*

Dear Lily, I hope you are having a wonderful time at the theatre.

Dear Ma, I hope you haven't forgotten me.

Dear Jimmy, it might be a few more months before I can afford to bring you home.

Dear Dad, this is the worstest place ever. They don't even let you have pudding.

Dear Mother

Dear Milo

Dear Hessie

Dear Frank

Dear Josie, I heard you had taken work at the theatre royal. Are you still there? I found a position playing incidental music for a group of travelling players, but now I've returned to the city. I am living above the Lion and Lamb on Mortimer Street. Will you come home? Your mother.

#### **Clock Face**

Dear Mrs Smith, I regret to inform you that your daughter Josie is no longer with us. Yours respectfully, the acting master, Theatre Royal.

***Benji** spies the box with **Michael's** letters to **Addie**. He reads. He pulls out a cluster and puts them in a satchel. Suddenly, a sound. **Lucy** has followed him.*

#### **Lucy**

Theft now, too? After mutiny and murder it seems a trifling occupation.

#### **Benji**

Clock Face is the thief. He's kept all the—



**Lucy**

Give me one good reason why I should not turn you over to the committee?

**Benji**

You love me.

**Lucy**

You can dream.

**Benji**

No, that's right, you hate me. You could watch them hang me.

**Lucy**

I don't have to watch a thing to know it's right.

**Benji**

Then do it. Tell them. But promise me you'll be there the day I hang. What's the matter? It shouldn't be hard to do.

*He has called her bluff. She goes.*

\*\*\*

*Dr Pine is examining **Clock Face's** face.*

**Dr Pine**

Such a pity. My finest work.

**Clock Face**

Your finest work is yet to come. A real life for a real man with a real face.

**Dr Pine**

Ah yes, of course. Has Mrs Carwardine accepted your resignation?

**Clock Face**

In all but writing.

*Dr Pine writes on a clipboard. **Clock Face** studies her closely.*

After all these years. You're no better than you were.

**Dr Pine**

I beg your pardon?

**Clock Face**

People think the committee controls the machine. They're wrong. The machine controls the committee. *(He is very near and puts the handle of his cane against her cheek, threateningly.)* The committee mistakenly believes that the best way to serve the machine is to completely mechanise the

workforce. And you provide them with testers. But you can never mechanise a brain, no matter how many you kill trying.

*A dangerous moment. Will he hurt her? He withdraws the cane.*

I trust this time you'll do a better job.

\*\*\*

*The **undercovers** break down the door of the strongroom. **The Inspector** emerges. The **undercovers** wait for instructions.*

**Mrs Carwardine**

*(to the Inspector)* A thousand apologies—

**Inspector**

He was here. Back stage! Well, don't just stand there gawping. Come on!

***The Inspector** rushes off followed by the **Undercovers**.*

\*\*\*

***Addie**, alone, before the company. Her manner and posture are confident and assured. She thuds the cane commandingly. **Jeremiah** runs up to her.*

**Jeremiah**

Addie, why are you acting like this? Addie, I'm sorry I didn't listen to you. You were right. I shouldn't have—

**Addie**

*(coldly to Jeremiah)* Back to your place.

*On stage, the children are still singing. **Benji** strides over to **Addie**.*

**Benji**

Addie, I need to speak with you.

**Addie**

You will not address me informally.

**Benji**

Stop it, Addie. This isn't you.

**Addie**

I have the power to dismiss you. And more.

**Benji**

It was my fault. The Star Trap. I whistled and caused the lads to mistime it.

**Addie**

You? But I thought...

**Benji**

Come with me and face the committee. Demand that they grant your father a reprieve. Demand that they help your family.

***Addie** points to the wanted poster.*

**Addie**

I could buy my dad's legs twice over with the price on your head.

**Benji**

Don't do it, Addie. I'm the only friend you have left. Clock Face has been lying all along. You can't trust him to keep his word. Look.

***Benji** withdraws the stash of letters and hands them to her. She reads.*

**Addie**

They're from my dad.

*She reads on becoming angrier and angrier.*

I could have spared him all this if I'd only known.

**Benji**

Clock Face has kept all the letters. From all the children.

***Addie** looks at her cane. She drops it in disgust. She looks at the singing children, wanting to stop them and tell them the truth.*

**Addie**

They won't believe a thing I say now... *(remembering Crazy Jane's words)*  
An engineer is first and foremost... Listen, I have an idea for the gala.

*Suddenly the **undercovers** burst in through the top of the auditorium.*

***Benji** sees them. It seems hopeless. He puts his hands in the air and begins to approach them. **Addie** quickly picks up her cane and moves to stand before the children. She thuds it three times.*

**Addie**

*(commandingly)* Places! Places please for the Pied Piper sequence!

*The children all swarm across the stage, making it impossible for the **Inspector** and **Undercovers** to get past them. **Benji** has a head start on them and is gone. The **Inspector** turns to the **Undercovers**.*

**Inspector**

Keep the theatre surrounded. If he's still in this building tonight, we'll find him.

*The **Undercovers** go off. **Addie** thuds the cane. Something dislodges. It is the winding key for **Clock Face**'s face. She holds it up.*

### **ARRIVAL OF THE QUEEN**

*The **Queen** and **Young Princess** are paraded through the streets of the city. The people of the city bow and curtsy, present flowers, shake hands. The **Young Princess** looks bored and irritable, more interested in her own dress than anything else. They arrive at last at the theatre. **Mrs Carwardine** presents flowers. The **Queen** receives them, ho-hum. Back stage, **Clock Face** holds up his cane and makes to remove the winding key. It is not there. He touches his face in alarm.*

### **PIED PIPER**

*The Queen's Gala. The children are assembled in a grand tableau on multiple tiers. The stagehands move into place with their ropes to create the star trap. Drumming on a base drum begins, low and foreboding.*

#### **Tobias**

Beginners please for Pied Piper. Beginners please.

***Molly** takes her place in the star trap, looking terrified. **Addie** gently taps her on the shoulder, indicating they should trade places. **Molly** smiles in grateful relief and skips away. **Addie** waits in the star trap, heart in mouth.*

#### **Child Actors**

And so the children of Hamlin were drowned.  
And funeral rites must end our play.  
The Pied Piper himself was never found.  
But one little girl got away.

*The cue is given, the star trap activated. The ropes slam down. **Addie** immediately rushes forward and shouts to the royal box.*

#### **Addie**

Your majesty! This performance is not as it seems! We children are overworked, half-starved—

***Mrs Carwardine** has gestured to **Clock Face** who hurries to pull **Addie** off into the wings.*

—our wages are kept from us and our parents are sent to be testers. One of us died on this very stage! Only you can help us!

***Miss Hyacinth** rises from her place in the auditorium.*

**Miss Hyacinth**

It's true, your majesty! It's true! Do you hear, Mrs Carwardine? Your negligence is laid bare for all to see!

*She begins to boo and jeer. The other reformers join in. They start chanting: 'Education for all! Free Education for all!' Addie turns to her fellow child actors.*

**Addie**

Follow me! Come on! We'll leave by the front door!

*The children hesitate, not trusting her.*

You thought your parents forgot you. It's not true. Clock Face kept all your letters.

**Clock Face** grabs **Jeremiah**.

**Clock Face**

Silence, Addie King! Or this story will end tragically.

**Benji**

No!

***Benji** rushes onstage. **The Inspector** points a pistol at **Benji** fires. He falls to the stage wincing. **Lucy** rushes to him. **Addie** shouts to backstage.*

**Addie**

Now!

*All the stolen letters rain down on the children. They snatch at them, open and read. **Clock Face** tries in vain to prevent this, but it is no use. The children surround **Clock Face** menacingly. **Addie** grabs **Jeremiah** by the arm and together they run down stage, but **Addie** accidentally kicks over a lantern. The stage catches fire. The ropes catch fire. **Tobias** and others try to stamp it out, but it is hopeless. The children scream and flee the stage. **Mrs Carwardine** hurries downstage centre.*

**Mrs Carwardine**

Everyone please remain calm. There is absolutely nothing to be—

*She looks fearfully at the flames, turns and runs off.*

**Tobias**

*(to the stagehands)* What are you waiting for? Lower the safety curtain!

**Stagehand**

We can't! The ropes are on fire!

**Tobias**

Get out of it! Run!

**Clock Face**

My money! I need that money for my face!

***Clock Face** races to a ladder.*

**Tobias**

Are ye mad? What are ye doin'?

**Clock Face**

Let go of me, you brute. My money is up there. I must have the money for my face!

**Tobias**

Ye'll never get back down!

*They struggle. **Tobias** pushes **Clock Face** off the ladder just in time before it is enveloped in flames. **Tobias** gives up on him and runs off.*

*Only **Clock Face** remains on stage. He looks around him at the burning theatre, knows he is defeated. His winding keys are lost. His money is lost. He will never be the boy he was again. He stalks up stage centre for the last time, pauses briefly, takes a breath and charges into the smoke.*

## **END OF THE MACHINE**

***Addie** stands before the committee in the shadow of the machine. **Mrs. Carwardine** and the **Inspector** stand to the side, looking at her accusingly. **The Committee** confer in muffled grumbles. At last, they pronounce judgement.*

**Committee Member**

Addie King, it is the belief of this committee that you deliberately started the theatre fire hoping it would spread across the city to the machine itself.

**Committee Member**

And as you know, the machine generates the very air we breathe. An assault on the machine must be considered an attempt on all of us.

**Committee Member**

You will serve out your time as a tester. Your father is already in the mechanisation room and today you will join him.

***Benji** steps forward.*

**Benji**

No, she won't. Your honours, I am the man who caused the mutiny aboard the HMS Islander. The time has come to make a change—

**Committee Member**

Arrest him.

**Benji**

Stop! The eyes of the city are on you. And they are behind us.

**Committee Member**

Proceed at once.

***Crazy Jane** rushes forward, in time to halt the **Undercovers** with the force of her voice.*

**Crazy Jane**

It transgresses all the laws of mechanics! The great big nothing. The nothing nothing nothing. (*grabbing **Addie** by the shoulders*) Where there are several explanations, there may be just one. (*to the committee*) The mind of a child is greater than the biggest machine!

***Addie** thinks. A penny drops. The music swells and cuts out. She swiftly moves to the machine and holds up her log book.*

**Addie**

The machine doesn't actually DO anything, and I can prove it.

**Committee Member**

Come away from there! You risk us all!

*She clutches her log book one last time, takes a deep breath and throws it into the works. A chain reaction and the machine shuts down, one gear at a time until it is still and silent. The people of the city hold their collective breath, awaiting calamity. Nothing happens. The machine has been stopped for good. The committee look to each other in amazement. **Crazy Jane** smiles a slight smile at **Addie**. She no longer seems or sounds crazy.*

**CRAZY JANE**

You did it, girl. You did it.

**REUNITED**

***Benji** and **Lucy** are on board a ship, performing to sailors. At first we think they are sailing off to the Southern Isles, but then with a few shifts of scenery, the action opens outward and we see that the ship is actually part of a set on stage at the Theatre Royal. The company performs to an audience of*

reunited families. **Benji** is making his stage debut in the Merchant of Venice and loving it. He can't quite ignore the audience.

**Lucy as Portia**

So doth the greater glory dim the less:  
A substitute shines brightly as a king  
Unto the king be by, and then his state  
Empties itself, as doth an inland brook  
Into the main of waters.

**Benji as Bassanio**

Dear Lady, Welcome home.

*He kisses her. Some child actors come on stage making rowing gestures with their hands. The littlest ones wave to their parents in the audience.*

**Benji as Bassanio**

Oh look, Portia, it is the children of Venice in gondolas come to wish us well. Let us lead them in song.

*He begins a song of reunion. The children all join in.*

\*\*\*\*

*The King Family are reunited in their family home. **Addie** and **Crazy Jane** are putting the finishing touches on legs that she has designed with **Jane's** mentorship, this time with proper engineering and science behind them. She fits them onto her dad. He rises. They work. He smiles and does a naff little jig.*

**Tabitha**

Well, they're obviously faulty.

**Michael**

Not so. They're magnificent, Addie girl.

**Jeremiah**

Ma, can I go watch the fishmonger? He's hilarious.

**Tabitha**

Back in time for tea.

***Frannie** and **Tilly** are below a table level and only little hands can be seen feeling their way towards a bottle of cough syrup. **Tabitha** sees this and quickly swaps it with another bottle. She waits for it.*

**Frannie and Tilly**

Ew! What is that?!!!



**Tabitha**  
Castor Oil.

**Frannie and Tilly**  
Ahhhhhhhh!!! Yuck!

**Tabitha**  
You two come with me to the quayside. There may be a great ship coming or going and we don't want to miss that, now, do we.

**Crazy Jane**  
(to Addie) That's where we'll meet tomorrow morning to observe the phenomenon of zero resultant force acting on a boat. And come prepared to ask questions. My apprentice must always question everything.

*They all go out. **Michael** is testing and re-testing his new legs. **Addie** sits in his wheelchair, and he begins to wheel her forward.*

**Addie**  
(affectionately joshing) So Dad. How do you reckon these legs of yours work, then?

**Michael**  
(playing along) Ah. Well you see, Addie. There are these things called molecules.

**Addie**  
Molecules.

**Michael**  
And they rotate in a clockwise direction to produce serendipity. No joke of a lie.

**Addie**  
Fascinating.

*He laughs, leans forward and swiftly wheels her off the stage.*

*End.*