



Inevitable?

By Mortal Fools' Ensemble Young Company

Script

CAST AND CHARACTERS

ALEX HANCOCK	Main Character: Damian Other Characters: Sarge's Dad, Bella's Dad, general ensemble member
AMAAYA TADAA	Main Character: Hazel Other Characters: Layla's Mum, girly pop gang member, general ensemble member
ASH MORRIS	Main Character: Amber Other Characters: Lola (Bella's friend), girly pop gang member, general ensemble member
CASPIAN WHITE	Main Character: Carlos Other Characters: General ensemble member
CONNOR ROBSON	Main Character: Crimson Other Characters: Sarge's brother, general ensemble member
DANIEL HUNTER	Main Character: John Other Characters: Layla's Dad, Sarge's brother, general ensemble member
ELOISE BARBER	Main Character: The voice of CAT Other Characters: Evie, girly pop gang member, general ensemble member
ILANA WHITE	Main Character: Bella Other Characters: Sarge's brother, Layla's sister (Sadie), general ensemble member
JACK HOUSTON	Main Character: The Sarge Other Characters: Toby (Club Bouncer), general ensemble member
NINA MAXWELL	Main Character: Layla Other Characters: Sarge's Mum, Bella's Mum, general ensemble member
OSCAR O'NEILL	Main Character: Stephen Other Characters: Sarge's brother, Art Critic, general ensemble member

SCENE ORDER

Prologue

1. Arrivals in holding room
2. Travelling in the lift (dos and don'ts)
3. Entrance Interviews
4. Security gate: Damian's mouse
5. Travelling
6. Simulation room: Sarge's story
7. Simulation room: Layla's story
8. Waiting in line
9. Crimson + John's conversation
10. Simulation room: Hazel + Bella
11. Tarot + Teaching CAT to swear
12. Hazel + Carlos in Lift
13. Simulation room: John's story
14. TED Talk #2
15. Live Like A Legend
16. Ending

PRE-SHOW

In the auditorium, the audience can hear the following announcement from CAT, an artificial intelligence similar to Siri or Alexa.

CAT: Please prepare for processing. *(repeated every few minutes)*

PROLOGUE

House lights dim. A light drone and soft music plays.

Enter LAYLA through the audience.

LAYLA: *(To audience)* Excuse me? What is this place? Do you know where I am? I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do...

Sudden change in lighting, projection (beautiful, dreamlike, ominous) on large screen. Music builds. LAYLA silently asks the audience if they're supposed to go this way... then begins to walk towards the screen as the music builds further. The walk feels epic.

LAYLA: What do I do now?

BLACKOUT

SCENE 1: ARRIVALS

Lights up. A large sterile room. Ambient noise is heard... whirring computer / machine. One by one, characters enter through the audience and into the room, which gradually fills up with strangers.

SARGE is pacing up and down, looking agitated.

Enter LAYLA.

LAYLA: Ooh, this is groovy. What is this place?

SARGE: I don't know. Do you have any information?

LAYLA: No, I just got here.

Enter JOHN.

LAYLA: Oh... hello. How are you?

JOHN: *(Shrugs)*

SARGE: *(To himself)* I was asleep. I was in my bed. This must be a dream. I just need to wake up. *(To JOHN)* Pinch me!

JOHN: What?

SARGE: Pinch me!

JOHN: I'm not going to do that.

SARGE: Come on, man... just do it.

JOHN: Erm... ok... *(pinches SARGE)*

SARGE: No! Harder than that! *(JOHN pinches harder)* Ow!

Enter DAMIAN and STEPHEN, looking extremely scared.

LAYLA: Hi there...

SARGE: Identify yourself immediately!

LAYLA: Whoa! Take a chill pill... are you ok?

DAMIAN: Am I dead? Are we in hell?

JOHN: What have you done to think you'd end up in hell?

DAMIAN: *(To Stephen)* At least we're here together.

They all look confused. Enter AMBER.

LAYLA: Hi...

AMBER: Hello.

LAYLA: You ok? It's all a bit weird, isn't it?

AMBER: I saw this coming.

AMBER sits at one side, takes out a set of tarot cards and begins laying them on the floor.

LAYLA: *(To AMBER)* Whoa... those are cool. Are you some sort of pagan witch or something?

JOHN: What are you doing?

AMBER: I don't like surprises. I like to know what's going to happen.

JOHN: Sometimes things happen and no-one sees them coming. That's just part of life.

AMBER: If you say so...

JOHN: It's what my dad always said.

Enter HAZEL. Ignoring everyone, she gets out her phone and walks around the space, holding it in the air trying to get a signal.

AMBER: I saw her coming!

JOHN: No, you didn't.

LAYLA: *(To HAZEL)* Hi...

HAZEL: *(Ignoring her)*

LAYLA: *(Following HAZEL)* Do you have any idea where we are?

HAZEL turns round to find LAYLA standing close to her. HAZEL is startled.

HAZEL: How should I know? Do you know?

LAYLA: No.

HAZEL retreats, attention back to her phone.

Enter CRIMSON, who walks straight over to HAZEL.

CRIMSON: Hello there!

HAZEL: Can everyone just leave me alone?

Enter BELLA. We see a moment of her psyching herself up before she steps in the room.

BELLA: Fashionably late, as always! What is all this? Where are we? And why is there no music playing? This is clearly a party...

LAYLA: *(Approaching Bella)* Ooh I like you!

BELLA: Everyone likes me! So... what's happening? It's too quiet in here!

STEPHEN: I like the quiet.

BELLA: Urrrgh... I'm bored already... Let's dance! *(Grabs DAMIAN, who flinches.)*

DAMIAN: I don't want to...

BELLA: It's fine. Just copy me...

JOHN: He said he didn't want to.

BELLA: Pfft. Come on, don't be so boring!

CRIMSON: There isn't even any music for dancing...

BELLA: We can make our own music. Come on, where's your energy? Where's your zest for life? *(Goes over to AMBER and picks up the tarot cards.)* None of us know what's coming. *(Drops cards.)*

AMBER: I'm trying to find out.

JOHN: You've got more than enough energy! I'll just keep to myself and quietly fit in.

BELLA: I don't trust people who like to fit in. Don't be so beige.

STEPHEN: I like beige.

SARGE: Ok, people... I know what to do.

BELLA: That's more like it!

SARGE: We need intel. We need to conduct a full recon of this place.

CRIMSON: What does that mean?

SARGE: What?

CRIMSON: Recon. What does it mean?

SARGE: It's a French word. It's like "reconnaissance" or something. I'll do a thorough search of this place. You lot stay here, stick together and I'm sure you'll all be fine without me.

SARGE goes to exit. Enter CARLOS.

CARLOS: *(Looking around)* Oooh, I like the new room... minimalist chic. Very smart.

SARGE: *(To CARLOS)* Who are you?

CARLOS: *(Ignoring them all...)* The last one was like the apocalypse... Way too dramatic... no wonder everyone wiggled out so much!

SARGE: I said, who are you?

CARLOS: My name is Carlos

HAZEL: Why is my phone not working?

LAYLA: What's the deal with these people?

ALL: *Asking questions to CARLOS at the same time.*

CARLOS lifts his hands to signal for an alarm. It blares and everyone covers their ears.

CARLOS: You need to learn to be more mature. Do you understand what "mature" means?

SARGE: How can you talk to us about "mature"? What are you – 9?

AMBER: And how come you know so much about this place? What else do you know?

Carlos prepares for TED talk #1 – giving people a screen to hold.

CARLOS: Hey, CAT. *(sound effect ping)* Can I have some music and lights?

Music starts playing. He presents to the group.

CARLOS: Right now, your amygdala has sensed a threat and has triggered your sympathetic nervous system, starting a cascade of neurochemicals and hormones, designed to prepare your body for dealing with the threat – also known as, fight or flight.

You will be experiencing an elevated heart rate, sweaty palms, prickly skin, shortness of breath, irritability and an inability to think clearly.

Thank you.

JOHN: Are you some sort of genius or something?

HAZEL: Just tell us how to get out of here, will you? There's obviously been some kind of mistake. I am not meant to be here.

CARLOS: It's not for me to tell you, you have to learn on your own.

BELLA: Where do we start?

CARLOS: Ok – let me give you a hint... *(points to JOHN)* how old are you?

JOHN: 17

CARLOS: And you? (*points to CRIMSON*)

CRIMSON: 17

CARLOS: And you? (*points to each in turn*)

ALL: 17, 17, 17, 17, 17...

SARGE: Ok, we get it. We're all 17. Big deal! What's your point?

CARLOS: And when's your birthday?

ALL: Tomorrow.

ALL: *Stunned silence and then all asking questions at the same time.*

CARLOS lifts his hands to signal for the alarm and everyone covers their ears.

JOHN: Hang on, are you 17? You don't look 17...

BELLA: You really don't. Not even close...

HAZEL takes CARLOS to one side.

HAZEL: How much do you want?

CARLOS: Excuse me?

HAZEL: I'll pay you. Tell me how to get out of here and I'll give you as much as you want. Seriously. Money is no object. Give me a number.

CARLOS: Money doesn't work here.

HAZEL: Ohhhhh, I get it... hardball... look kid, I'm a master of this game. Name your price.

CARLOS: Your money doesn't work here.

CARLOS walks away from her.

HAZEL: But I don't know what I'm supposed to do!

CARLOS: There is only one way out. There is no point in resisting the inevitable or trying to beat the system. Believe me, I've tried it all. It's all going to be ok.

SOUND EFFECT computer sound to signify CAT.

CAT: Welcome candidates. Please prepare for processing.

No-one moves.

CAT: Welcome candidates. Please prepare for processing.

HAZEL: What the hell does that mean?

DAMIAN: Are we all going to get put through a mincer or something?

ALL: *Asking lots of questions / panicking.*

CARLOS prepares to sound the alarm and the others stop him.

CAT SOUND EFFECT.

CAT: Welcome candidates. Please prepare for processing.

SARGE: I'll go first... I'm used to leading the charge. Erm... hello computer... Alexa... Siri... whatever your name is...

CAT: Welcome candidate. I am the Childhood to Adulthood Transition supervisor, known as CAT. Please state your name.

SARGE: Hello "CAT". I'm "the Sarge".

CAT: Incorrect name. Welcome candidate. Please state your name.

SARGE: My name is "the Sarge".

CAT: "The Sarge" is not recognised. Please state your name.

BELLA: No-one is called "the Sarge"... what's your real name?

SARGE: The Sarge is my name.

JOHN: What's the name you'd write on a form?

SARGE: *(Pause)* That information is classified.

AMBER: What do you mean "classified"?

LAYLA: Come on, tell us your name.

SARGE: And risk giving information to the enemy?

BELLA: Get out of my way... I'll go first if you're not willing to. Computer thingy...?

CAT: Welcome candidate. I am the Childhood to Adulthood Transition supervisor, known as CAT. Please state your name.

BELLA: My name is Bella.

SOUND EFFECT: Ping.

CAT: Welcome, Bella. You may now proceed for your entrance interview.

A light indicates where BELLA should go.

BELLA: Why, thank you, CAT! I'm not waiting around here. You lot suit yourself.

Exit BELLA.

DAMIAN: I'd like to get out of here too.

CAT: Welcome candidate. Please state your name.

DAMIAN: Damian.

Sound Effect: Ping.

CRIMSON: I'm coming too...

CAT: Welcome candidate. Please state your name.

CRIMSON: Crimson.

Sound Effect: Ping.

HAZEL: Hazel.

Sound Effect: Ping.

JOHN: John.

Sound Effect: Ping.

AMBER: Amber.

Sound Effect: Ping.

STEPHEN: Stephen.

Sound Effect: Ping.

LAYLA: Layla.

Sound Effect: Ping.

CAT: Welcome. You may now proceed for your entrance interview.

ALL exit, except LAYLA, SARGE and CARLOS.

LAYLA: (To SARGE) You coming?

SARGE: Absolutely. Erm... but we need someone to bring up the rear of the group, so we're not vulnerable to attack.

LAYLA: That's groovy. See you soon?

SARGE: Quick march, soldier.

Exit LAYLA.

SARGE: (To CARLOS) What are you looking at?

CARLOS: Come on then – what is your real name?

SARGE: I told you, it's classif–

CARLOS: Yeah, yeah... who do you think I'm going to tell?

SARGE: (Sighs) It's Alan. Alan Sergeant.

CARLOS: You're the first Alan I've ever met coming through here. You don't meet many young Alans any more...

SARGE: It's my dad's name.

CARLOS: Oh?

SARGE: Yes, well... don't say anything to anyone, right... or I'll... I'll...

CARLOS: (Salutes) Understood.

SARGE: I should probably catch up with the others now... who knows what danger they will get into without me...

SARGE stands.

CAT: Welcome candidate. Please state your name.

SARGE: Alan Sergeant.

CAT: Welcome, Alan. You may now proceed for your entrance interview.

Exit SARGE.

CARLOS: Hey, CAT... activate software reprogramming 4a-b9...

CAT: Reprogramming activated... state your request...

CARLOS: Search Alan Sergeant...

CAT: Searching... Record located.

CARLOS: Replace all records for Alan Sergeant with "The Sarge".

CAT: Replacing... state YES to save change.

CARLOS: Yes.

CAT: Record change saved. Is there anything else I can assist you with today?

CARLOS: Can I proceed for my entrance interview now?

CAT: Calculating... you can proceed to your interview in one thousand, six hundred and 43 days.

CARLOS: *(Sighs)* Right. Ok.

CAT: Is there anything else I can assist you with today?

CARLOS: Not right now, thank you.

CAT: You are welcome. Have a wonderful day.

Exit CARLOS.

SCENE 2: THE LIFT

The cast all enter a lift one by one, squeezing in to make room for each other. Carlos pushes the button, the doors close. As the lift moves, a Voiceover plays.

Voiceover: Hi, I'm Colin. I'm here with some friendly advice just before you dive into adulthood. Take note, kids!

You will be responsible for feeding yourself three times a day. Most adults just cook the same five meals on repeat forever.

Crisps is not a meal.

A new home appliance will become the highlight of your month.

The first day you utter, “when I was your age...” celebrate! You have arrived.

To get yourself on the housing ladder, try buying a house in 1963.

In the event of a midlife crisis, you can: adopt a pet, learn to ride a motorbike or get a tattoo.

Adulthood is a whole world of possibilities - and they will all be your responsibility!

Good luck!

SOUND EFFECT: Lift ding.

Lift doors open.

CAT: Level 42.

CARLOS exits. The others step out of the lift nervously and spread out around the stage ready for their interviews.

SCENE 3: INTERVIEWS

We see each character standing alone, waiting for what comes next.

CAT: Welcome to Stage 1 of Processing. You will be asked a series of questions. Your answers will determine the next stages of processing. Please prepare for questioning.

Everyone nervously waits for the questioning to begin. We hear the answers to the unheard questions.

JOHN: I'll probably be working in an office somewhere.

AMBER: I like to be prepared, so a 9?

CRIMSON: Owning my own sweet shop.

STEPHEN: Probably a 7 ... no, maybe a 6...

SARGE: Responsibility. It's the most important thing.

DAMIAN: I think I'd be a digestive. It's the safest option.

LAYLA: I can keep plants alive so I can probably keep myself alive too.

BELLA: DJ, obviously!

HAZEL: No, hang on, I'm sure I can think of something I am good at... just give me a sec...

STEPHEN: Actually, a 5... Or even a 4...

HAZEL: Nope... got nothing

BELLA: I'll just party all day and not have to deal with anything else!

SARGE: I look after my 4 younger brothers.

AMBER: Mmm... a jaffa cake.

LAYLA: Listening to groovy music and dancing round my kitchen surrounded by plants.

STEPHEN: No, a 3... Definitely not less than a 2...

HAZEL: Erm, not sure, can I move onto the next question?

JOHN: I'd like to pass my driving test so I can drive my dad's car.

DAMIAN: Making decisions.

CRIMSON: Lots of brand-new adventures.

BELLA: I don't want to become boring and beige and ... bleugh.

SARGE: 10 out of 10.

STEPHEN: Maybe 1... Actually, is it possible to answer 0 out of 10?

LAYLA: I'm not very good with change.

HAZEL: Is there any way I can get out of here? My offer to pay still stands.

CAT: Test Complete. Thank you, candidate. Calculating results. Results calculated. Please proceed to security.

SARGE: Do I get to find out the result?

CAT: Your answers will determine the next stages of processing. The Sarge, please proceed to security.

SARGE: Erm... It's Alan Sergeant...

CAT: All records for Alan Sergeant have been replaced with 'The Sarge'. Please proceed to security.

ALL exit.

SCENE 4: SECURITY GATE (DAMIAN'S MOUSE)

We're in the queue for the security scanner. John and Crimson are in front of Damian, Stephen is next in the queue. Amber, Sarge, Bella and Layla are also in the queue.

Crimson steps up to the security scanner.

CAT: Next candidate. Please place any prohibited items in the basket and step into the security scanner. Raise your arms above your head and stand still. Thank you. Please continue through security.

Crimson leaves. John comes up to the security scanner.

CAT: Next candidate. Please place any prohibited items in the basket and step into the security scanner. Raise your arms above your head and stand still. Thank you. Please continue through security.

John leaves. Damian steps up.

CAT: Next candidate. Please place any prohibited items in the basket and step into the security scanner. Raise your arms above your head and stand still.

We are transported back in time (this is signified through a change in lighting, music, and projection)

HARVEY THE MOUSE

Damian and Stephen are 9 years old. Stephen gives Damian the mouse toy.

DAMIAN: It's... a mouse?

Stephen nods.

DAMIAN: Is it dressed as the Joker?

Stephen nods.

DAMIAN: That's so cool, you know he's my favourite character! Did you make this?

Stephen nods.

DAMIAN: You've even got the costume right.

STEPHEN: Mum helped.

DAMIAN: Why?

Stephen shrugs.

DAMIAN: This must have taken you ages, you didn't have to do all this.

STEPHEN: You're my best friend.

Damian smiles and hugs the mouse close.

DAMIAN: I'm going to keep this with me forever. What should I call it?

Stephen shrugs.

DAMIAN: Murray?

Stephen pulls a face.

DAMIAN: Gary?

Stephen shakes his head.

DAMIAN: I've got it - Harvey!

Stephen gives a big thumbs up and starts to leave.

DAMIAN: We're going to go on all kinds of adventures Harvey. We'll go to school together, on holidays, to the woods. You'll love the woods, me and Stephen play there all the time.

LOST IN THE WOODS

Damian is in the woods, hiding from Stephen who has his eyes closed and is counting down.

STEPHEN: 3... 2... 1. Here I come!

Stephen begins to look around the woods. Damian gets more anxious as Stephen is looking.

DAMIAN: Stephen! Why hasn't he found me? Harvey, I'm lost. I'm literally lost. I don't know where I am. What do I do? Stephen! What could have happened to him? What if he's hurt? He could have impaled himself! If he's hurt, then it's all my fault... Oh my god, I've lost my best friend! Mum's going to kill me! Stephen! Where is he? You wouldn't know, would you? You're a mouse. You don't fall over and get impaled. You don't lose your best friend. Harvey, I'm scared. I'm glad you're here with me.

Damian holds Harvey tight and takes some deep breaths.

Other people start to appear with their childhood toys.

AMBER: *(Holds a Moon toy)* I've had this moon plush since I was born. It's gone with me everywhere. He reminds me that the moon and the stars are there to guide me. It's comforting.

BELLA: *(Holds a Teddy bear)* Otis is my best friend. Everything I've been through, he's always been there. He listens and never talks back - no matter what I need to say.

SARGE: *(Holds a Dragon Lego figure)* Playing Lego taught me what it means to be a leader. To protect what's yours. To use your strengths to keep your team safe.

LAYLA: *(Holds a Frog toy)* I got Kermit from my sister, Sadie, for my 6th birthday, I think. He made me want to explore the nature around me and I formed a love of groovy little critters.

ALL: I don't know what I'd do without you.

Our focus goes back to Damian, still holding Harvey the mouse.

DAMIAN: It's going to be okay, isn't it Harvey? It's going to be okay...

STEPHEN: Damian?

DAMIAN: Stephen? Stephen! Thank god you found me! Harvey's been keeping me calm.

As we transition back into security, we hear recorded voiceover:

VOICEOVER: You're a bit old for that now, aren't you?
Do you still sleep with that?
Let's give it to a charity shop so another child can enjoy it.
Teddies are for babies.

SECURITY

Alarms start blaring, red lights flash. We are back at the security scanner.

CAT: Alert. Prohibited item detected. Alert.

DAMIAN: Okay, alright! Please stop the sirens!

Alarms stop.

CAT: Toys are prohibited items. Please deposit the toy before continuing through security.

DAMIAN: I can't leave him behind.

CAT: Toys are prohibited items. Please deposit the toy before continuing through security.

DAMIAN: I can't bring this one toy?

CAT: Toys are prohibited items. Please deposit the toy before continuing through security.

DAMIAN: This is ridiculous! What do I have to do to be allowed to bring this one, just *one*, toy with me?

CAT: Toys are prohibited items. Please deposit the toy before continuing through security.

Damian stops arguing and reluctantly places the toy mouse in the basket.

DAMIAN: Bye Harvey.

CAT: Thank you. Please proceed to Stage 2 of Processing.

Exit DAMIAN and ALL.

SCENE 5: TRAVELLING / WAITING

While the screens are moved into position, we hear the following:

CAT: Welcome to Stage 2 of Processing. You will be called to the simulation room shortly. Please wait. Your patience is appreciated. Please wait. Your patience is appreciated.

SCENE 6: SARGE'S STORY (SIMULATION ROOM)

CAT: The Sarge, please proceed to the simulation room.

Enter SARGE. He sits in a corner and writes in his notebook.

Enter CARLOS, who watches him for a moment or two...

CARLOS: What are you doing?

SARGE: That information is-

CARLOS: Classified? Can I help?

SARGE: I don't need help! And I *definitely* don't need *your* help, thank you.

CARLOS: Ok... (*Starts to exit*)

SARGE: Do you know how my name changed?

CARLOS: What?

SARGE: With CAT. Do you know who changed my name?

CARLOS: That information is classified.

SARGE: Haha! Very funny. Seriously - who was it?!

CARLOS: *(Thinks)* Well, it'd have to be someone really smart. Someone who could reprogramme a very complicated computer system like CAT. Someone who is constantly underestimated by people...

SARGE: You?

CARLOS nods. SARGE takes a moment to take this in.

SARGE: Why? I mean... Thank you.

CARLOS: You're welcome. I have to say, I don't see the problem with the name Alan. It's Gaelic for "little rock" or "precious". I like it.

SARGE: Me too.

CARLOS: Then why all this business with "the SARGE"? Are you in the army?

SARGE: It's what my dad calls me. It's my rank in the family.

CARLOS: Oh?

SARGE: My dad's obsessed with Army films. He watches them every Sunday, on his day off. We both do. I love it. It's our time together. "The Sergeant" and "the General".

CAT SOUND EFFECT.

CAT: Welcome The Sarge. Please prepare for your personalised simulation.

CARLOS: That's my cue to leave. Good luck!

Exit CARLOS.

MUM and DAD appear. The scene transforms into SARGE's living room.

MUM: Not another one, you two! That's 3 films you've watched in one day now!

DAD: I've told you I'm training our soldier. *(To SARGE)* Watch and learn son. We'll have you ready for battle in no time.

MUM: We're at work late tonight, love. Are you sure you're alright to watch the boys?

SARGE: Yeah, of course I am.

Transition into that evening.

MUM: (To SARGE) Right love, we're off now. Dinner's in the fridge - just give it 20 minutes on 200? I'll be back around 12. But I want them in bed by 10 - okay?

SARGE: Yeah.

MUM: I know you're missing rugby again tonight. I really appreciate it.

SARGE: It's fine.

MUM: Love you.

SARGE: Love you.

MUM goes to say goodbye to the BROTHERS.

DAD: I'll see you tomorrow.

SARGE stands to attention.

SARGE: Yes, General.

DAD: At ease, soldier. (Whispers) I've hidden some sweets in the cupboard by the fridge for you and your brothers. Not a word to the "Commander" though (points to Mum).

MUM and DAD exit. The BROTHERS all gather round SARGE.

SARGE: (To his BROTHERS) Okay troops, we're on our own again tonight, so I need you to remember everything I've taught you. You've performed well so far.

BROTHERS: Thank you, Sarge!

SARGE: I have a new mission for you. Tonight, we take on Sarah Evans at number 42 and the "Girly Pop Gang". We have endured their music on full blast for long enough now! It's time we took action. Now, remember what I've taught you - "If you follow my orders..."

BROTHERS: We'll be okay, Sarge!

SARGE: We must approach the girly pop gang with caution. If they detect your movement, remain still and don't cause alarm. I believe in you all. Good luck soldiers.

BROTHERS: Thank you, Sarge!

SARGE: Onwards to victory.

We see Sarge and the boys try to sneak up on the "Girly Pop Gang" – when they turn around, the boys freeze. It is a childish game, but deadly serious at the same time. The BROTHERS grab the radio and are chased off by the GIRLS, leaving just SARGE. He watches them run off with a proud smile on his face.

Time passes. It is another day. SARGE's phone rings.

MUM: (VOICEOVER) Hi, Alan love. Your dad's stuck at work and you know I'm on the late shift... I've called Auntie Helen to pick the boys up.

SARGE: Why? I can do it.

MUM: (VOICEOVER) Are you sure? You've got rugby tonight, haven't you?

SARGE: We don't need Auntie Helen, I can look after them.

MUM: (VOICEOVER) Alright, thanks love. I'll call her and let her know. I've got some frozen bits in. Can you sort them all some tea?

SARGE: Yeah, of course.

MUM: (VOICEOVER) Thanks love. I really appreciate it. I'll see you later.

SARGE: Bye.

SARGE hangs up the call.

SARGE: (*Makes a call*) Hey Calum, I can't make it tonight. Yeah, I've got to stay in with the boys. Yeah – again. I know he said I'd be kicked off the team if I missed another one... What do you expect me to do? Ok – fine. See you round! (*Hangs up*)

The BROTHERS gather round SARGE as if walking home from school.

JAMES: When's dad going to be home?

SARGE: He's going to be late tonight.

JAMES: But he said he'd help me with my homework.

SARGE: I can try and help if you want?

JAMES: Yes please. Don't you have rugby tonight?

SARGE: Don't worry about it. Come on then, homework... Quick march, soldier!

The BROTHERS exit.

CAT sound effect: ping

CAT: Simulation concluded.

SARGE: What exactly was the point of that? (*No answer*) When can I get out of here? I need to get back to my brothers. Who knows what trouble they'll be getting into without me there?! CAT? Hello?!

CAT: Simulation concluded. The Sarge, please return to the waiting area.

SARGE exits.

COLIN (voiceover): Should you become a parent, this can be very stressful. But don't worry, the stress will reduce when the children go to school. Then they become someone else's problem!

SCENE 7: LAYLA'S STORY (SIMULATION ROOM)

The simulation room transforms into Layla's world. Her family simulations enter and set the stage.

CAT: Layla, please proceed to the simulation room.

Enter LAYLA.

CAT: Welcome Layla. Please prepare for your personalised simulation.

LAYLA: What do I do now?

Layla is confused about what to do. Picks up a plant.

LAYLA: I got this as part of a science project. We were learning about the parts of a plant and how they grow and so to test our practical skills, we each had a plant to grow ourselves. I didn't really know what to do with it...

Joyful and busy family scene around dining table bursts into life. Layla watches for a moment before being pulled into the memory.

ALL laugh.

SADIE: It was your fault!

LAYLA: That's not true!

DAD: It is actually, pet.

MUM: The pair of you have always been menaces... having adventures and causing trouble!

LAYLA: That one wasn't my fault though!

SADIE: Come on, we all know it was your idea.

LAYLA: I was three!

Time passes.

LAYLA: I was really happy then. Like a little flower that's caught a ray of sunshine on its face. I had everything I needed, we all did.

Mum is sorting laundry. Sadie and Layla are teaming up to win their mum's permission.

SADIE: Come on, mum, please?

DAD: She'll be fine Margaret.

SADIE: We'll stick together.

LAYLA: I'll make sure Sadie's with me the whole time.

MUM: Oh alright, fine. You can go.

LAYLA: Thanks mum!

MUM: Take these clothes up.

LAYLA: This isn't mine, it's Sadie's.

SADIE: Yeah, and so's that jumper!

The pair start squabbling over and reorganising laundry.

LAYLA: Over time, happy plants grow. Their leaves start to unfurl and they need more room to spread their roots so they can bloom.

Time passes. Sadie excitedly talks about her university tour.

SADIE: And they've got this student bar on campus too.

MUM: (*tuts*) That cannot be the highlight of the tour!

DAD: I disagree, I spent most of my uni life in the student bar.

MUM: And that's why you never graduated!

DAD: Ah, minor details.

SADIE: The recording studio looked really cool too. If I can get the band to come visit me some time, we might be able to record some stuff in there.

LAYLA: Can I come too?

SADIE: Of course! You'll just have to sneak out of school.

Time passes.

LAYLA: And there comes a time when plants need to be taken out of their pots and planted into new soil.

We're at the beach.

Layla and Sadie enter. Layla runs to the edge amazed by all the fish.

LAYLA: No way, I've never seen so many fish up close before.

SADIE: Wow, look at them all. *(whispering to Layla)* I dare you to put your feet in.

LAYLA: In there?

SADIE: Yeah. Go on... what's the worst that could happen, it's not like there's sharks in there!

Sadie starts to sing the Jaws theme tune.

LAYLA: Shut up, I'm doing it!

Layla sits down and puts her feet in the water. Sadie sits next to her and does the same.

SADIE: See. You miss out on all sorts if you let being scared stop you.

They both sit looking at the fish, happy in each other's company. Suddenly Sadie breaks the calm and grabs onto Layla.

LAYLA: Oh my god, something touched my foot!

Layla panics and jumps up.

SADIE: Layla! What are you like! You can't be doing this when I've gone to uni. I don't want to keep getting phone calls to say you've done this, done that, done whatever else.

LAYLA: You won't, I promise.... Well maybe just a couple.

They laugh.

LAYLA: Are you scared to move away?

SADIE: Me? No. I'm good - I'm excited. Ready to show them all what I'm made of.

LAYLA: I'm scared.

SADIE: Don't be daft, why are you scared?

LAYLA: Because I'm going to miss you.

SADIE: Ah cute. I'll miss you too. I have to go now.

LAYLA: Okay.

They stand up. Layla looks down at the water clearly sad.

SADIE: Come here.

Sadie hugs Layla.

SADIE: You'll see me again soon.

LAYLA: I know.

SADIE: Here.

Sadie puts her sunglasses on Layla.

SADIE: Perfect. *(Pause)* Stay groovy kid.

Sadie leaves.

LAYLA: Once a plant has been replanted, you're left with an empty pot. Sometimes you look over at it, expecting there to still be a pretty flower there.

Time passes. Sadie is no longer at the table. They sit quietly, eating.

MUM: How was school today?

LAYLA: It was good. Mr Harrier said the most ridiculous thing in assembly.

MUM: Who's Mr Harrier?

LAYLA: He's a science teacher but he's also head of sixth form and he has this really weird way of speaking that I'm not sure I can even describe actually but he

sounds a bit like that guy... what's he called? From the film with the robots in...?

DAD: Terminator?

LAYLA: No! It's... it's... Never mind. I'll tell Sadie about it later. She'll get it.

They return to eating in silence.

MUM: If you've finished, you've got some laundry over there.

LAYLA: That isn't mine, it's...

Silence.

Time passes.

LAYLA: Sadie and me had grown up together, our roots were intertwined. Since she was replanted into a new flower bed, I've found myself beginning to wilt...

That's when I found this groovy little fella, left in a corner of my room, soil all dried out and looking sad.

I started to give him some attention, a bit of water, a sunny spot on the windowsill, until he got his first little flower.

And the flower made me happy, so I started planting more and more of them until the garden was full of colourful blooms.

I come and sit in the garden when I feel alone or worried or anxious. I try to let it remind me of the good that can come with change when I'm too focused on the fear. Is that why you showed me the plant?

Sound effect: Ping

CAT: Simulation concluded. Layla, please return to the waiting area.

LAYLA: Groovy. Next time, can you show me my 13th birthday party? I'd love to relive that.

LAYLA exits.

SCENE 8: WAITING IN LINE

All characters enter with their stool. They create a line in a waiting room.

Movement sequence of everyone waiting.

Characters loop their movement sequences.

They become more and more agitated.

SCENE 9: CRIMSON + JOHN

We hear a 'ping' sound effect. Amber leaves.

Sound effect: Ping. Damian + Stephen leave.

Sound effect: Ping. Layla leaves.

Crimson asks Hazel:

CRIMSON: Have you ever made someone laugh so hard that milk came out of their nose when they were drinking?

Sound Effect: Ping.

Hazel leaves. Crimson moves down next to Sarge.

CRIMSON: Have you ever thought about who invented music?

Sound Effect: Ping.

Sarge leave. Crimson moves down next to Bella.

CRIMSON: I heard it was someone called Dave.

Sound Effect: Ping.

Bella leaves. Crimson moves down next to John.

CRIMSON: Do you think the moon-

JOHN: I was hoping we could just sit and be quiet.

CRIMSON: Oh yeah great. Lucky for you I am the BEST at 'the silent game'. My mum always used to make me play it.... And my grandparents.... And my friends.... And my...

JOHN: Let's start now!

They sit in silence for a little bit. Eventually Crimson breaks the silence and says all this in one breath as if they were bursting to say it.

CRIMSON: YOU WIN THERE WE GO I SPOKE. WHAT DO YOU THINK ADULTHOOD IS LIKE?

JOHN: I don't know.

CRIMSON: I'm excited to be an adult because I can make my own rules.

JOHN: Oh... cool.

CRIMSON: Like I can eat all the sweets I want!

JOHN: Right...

CRIMSON: In fact, I am going to own a sweet shop.

JOHN: Nice.

CRIMSON: And watch telly ALL NIGHT. But not sit too close to the screen otherwise my eyes will go square.

JOHN: What? That's not true.

CRIMSON: Yes, it is! Didn't you ever get told that?

JOHN: Well, yeah but it's not true.

CRIMSON: What do you mean – OF COURSE it's true! Every adult I know told me that.

JOHN: Oh yeah, what else did they tell you?

We break away from the present. A group of ADULTs enter. Crimson listens to each piece of advice the adults give them.

CRIMSON: They would tell me all sorts of things...

ADULT: You know, when your teeth start falling out, there's a magical friend called the Tooth Fairy who collects them. She has this enchanted pouch where she keeps all the lost teeth. And guess what? She leaves a little surprise, like a small gift or some money, in exchange for your tooth!

ADULT: You must eat your carrots because they help you see better in the dark.

ADULT: And if you eat the crusts of your bread your hair will grow curly.

ADULT: Remember, if the ice cream van is playing music that means that there is no ice cream left!

ADULT: If you lie your tongue turns green.

CRIMSON: And they would always answer my questions...

Crimson asks each adult a question - the adults lie in their answers to get rid of them.

CRIMSON: Why does fizzy pop make my nose hurt?

ADULT: Fizzy pop evaporates your thoughts through your nose, just like how Egyptians would take people's brains out.

CRIMSON: How many people are there on earth?

ADULT: Like 56, but 20 of them change their appearance completely every day.

CRIMSON: Where does sand come from?

ADULT: It's the last bits in all the crisp packets.

CRIMSON: What happened to fluffy?

ADULT: Fluffy had to go and live on a farm where all the rabbits go when they get old. It is in the countryside and they are very happy. But remember what I told you, we aren't allowed to visit them.

ADULTS exit, clearing stools as they leave.

We are now back in the present with CRIMSON and JOHN.

CRIMSON: And I had this teacher. She was the best. She has been on LOADS of adventures, climbed mountains, been to Lapland – where Santa lives of course-

JOHN: You don't still bel- *(he catches himself and stops to let Crimson tell her story)*

CRIMSON: And I told her that one day I would go on an adventure to find pink wolves! And run a sweet shop... and make my friends laugh so hard milk comes out of their nose.

JOHN: You have big dreams.

CRIMSON: Don't you have any dreams?

JOHN: Umm...

CRIMSON: Isn't there something you just LOVE doing?

JOHN: I like sudokus.

CRIMSON: Sudokus – that's so cool! Why do you like them? Why are they called that? How did you learn to do them? Will you teach me how to do one?

JOHN: No-one's ever asked me more about sudokus before.

CRIMSON: That's sad. Well, I like sudokus because they make you happy.

JOHN: Thanks... I went to a sudoku convention when I was younger. I came 6th in my category. I was really proud of myself.

CRIMSON: 6th! Wow!

JOHN: There's another competition next month but I'm not going...

CRIMSON: Well, you should! John - the sudoku master!

They sit in silence again. Crimson happily thinking about her future and John maybe learning something from her.

CRIMSON: So, what *do* you think adulthood is like?

JOHN: I think it will be... fine.

Sound Effect: Ping.

Scene change.

SCENE 10: HAZEL + BELLA (SIMULATION ROOM)

CAT: Hazel and Bella, please proceed to the Simulation Room.

Enter HAZEL and BELLA.

CAT: Welcome. To maximise your experience, you will undergo a shared simulation.

Lighting changes and sound effect indicate simulation has started.

BELLA: This is weird... do we just wait? I'm not good at waiting...

HAZEL: (*Unimpressed*) You're just like my sister, she's impatient too.

BELLA: I'm not impatient, I just don't like being bored. God, I wish there was a bar in this place.

HAZEL: Why? We're not old enough to drink.

BELLA: You're such a goody two shoes. Bet you've never even been to a bar.

HAZEL: I have. My brother took me after his team won the Hockey World Cup.

BELLA: A brother and a sister. Lucky you.

HAZEL: I actually have three older siblings... They're all amazing. Like, *amazing*. They've always known what they were good at and what they wanted to be. Hailey is an incredible artist, Henri is an international sports star. And Hunter, his twin, is a human rights lawyer, changing the world.

BELLA: So, you're one of *those* families.

HAZEL: They are. I'm not. I'm awful at art.... I can't do sports and I'm really bad at lawyering. My parents want me to live up to what my older siblings have done but that just feels impossible. I'm not good at anything.

BELLA: My parents barely even notice me. I just do whatever I want and they don't care.

We start to fade into Bella and Hazel's individual stories.

HAZEL: My sister, Hailey, studied at the Royal College of Art – of course... she got a First, obviously. She's an amazing artist, her work has been exhibited all over the world... and now she's also the curator of an exclusive gallery in London.

The last time I did art, I vomited.

Hazel sits.

BELLA: I went out the other night. As I was leaving, I called through to my parents to say I was heading out. Nothing. I told them I'd be back late. Nothing. I said I was going to a nightclub. Nothing. Except...

PARENT: "Did you put the bins out yet, Paul?"

PARENT: "No, I'm going to do it after Tipping Point."

BELLA: Unbelievable! Were they not going to stop me?

PARENT: “Why? You’ll be fine, won’t you pet?”

HAZEL: When Hailey’s gallery first opened, she had the brilliant idea of a family exhibition. My family members from all over the world contributed pieces... paintings... sculptures... installations...

It got so much attention... celebrities were fighting between themselves to get an invitation...

And because my whole family were making something, of course I had no choice but to make a piece too...

BELLA: Most parents would be a bit more concerned about their underage daughter going out clubbing. What if something happened to me? What if I tripped and fell down a drain? What if I got kidnapped by aliens?

PARENT: “Ah, don’t worry pet, you’re a big girl now, you’ll figure it out.”

BELLA: And then without another thought...

PARENT: “Is it my turn to do the dishes, or yours?”

PARENT: “It’s your turn, I did them last night.”

PARENT: “Alright then.”

BELLA: I left them to it. Their boring, beige existence with nothing more exciting to talk about than household chores. I walked out the door and straight down the road to get the bus into town.

HAZEL: I didn’t know what to do. It had to be perfect. I spent ages sketching out my ideas, but I couldn’t settle on the right thing. I fell asleep and woke up with my pencil in my hand and a little bit of dribble on my latest attempt at a self-portrait. I’d run out of time. The picture had to get framed that day. I drew a tiny stick person on a very large, very empty sheet of paper in frustration and then the courier arrived to take it away.

BELLA: I met up with Lola. She’s my Friday night friend. We arrived at the nightclub. Toby was on the door. We fist bumped and he let me straight in. Lola got ID’d. Hilarious cause she actually *is* 18. Toby stopped asking me for ID a long time ago.

We went inside. I took it all in. The music was blasting and the dancefloor was heaving with everyone dancing as one collective beast.

HAZEL: It was opening night of the exhibition... and I woke up feeling weird. There had been a stomach bug going around school... I told my mum but all she had to say was “Stay the course!” It’s a family motto.

That evening, our car pulled up outside the gallery, there was a red carpet leading up to the entrance and a huge crowd yelling and cheering as the celebrities arrived... cameras flashing...

BELLA: Laser lights flashing...

HAZEL: The noise and the energy of it all made my head swim...

BELLA: The noise and the energy of it all made me feel alive!

HAZEL: ... and my stomach kept turning over and over and over and over...

Inside the gallery was a bit better... music playing... people milling around... talking quietly and nodding as they stared intensely at one piece of art after another.

BOTH: I went to the bar.

HAZEL: I got a glass of sparkling water to settle my churning stomach.

BELLA: I got a bottle of WKD to take with me onto the dancefloor and we snaked our way through the club.

HAZEL: I made my way to my untitled “art”. I stayed close to it, trying to shield it from everyone’s view.

BELLA: I positioned myself right by the speaker. My whole body vibrated in time with the bass. Now it’s a party!

I danced. I drank. And danced. And drank. And danced. And drank. (*slurred*)
Get me a freaking shot! It’s my birthday in 3... 2... days! Woo!

HAZEL: A wiry man with expensive shiny Italian shoes walked slowly up to my drawing. He lowered his glasses and stared at the drawing.... He stared at it for a *really* long time.

ART CRITIC: “HmMMM...”

HAZEL: He started...

ART CRITIC: “This is very interesting...”

HAZEL: Interesting? It’s a stick man on a page.

ART CRITIC: “Very deep. Very insightful...”

HAZEL: He turned to me...

ART CRITIC: “Who’s the artist?”

Hazel shrugs.

BELLA: Lola wanted to sit down, she was tired. She dragged me to a booth. But I didn’t want to sit, I wanted to dance! I climbed up onto the table. Lola tried to pull me down but she couldn’t stop me. I was on fire.

(slurred) Who hell even you people? Eh who ya lookin at? I can't even see straight, and I know I'm betta 'an all of you.

HAZEL: People started to notice the wiry man looking at my drawing. Maybe he was someone important in the art world... one after another they crowded round, all staring at my drawing... closer and closer and I started getting hotter and hotter...

BELLA: By this point, someone had asked Toby the bouncer to come and sort me out. But he couldn’t stop me either, I just kept going as he tried to encourage me down.

(slurred) God look at you, you don't even know, ha! I'm a wizard! I'm 7, 17, 27, you'll never know! This is who I am! Don't take it away! Beige, bins, boring... I don't want to be boring!

ART CRITIC: “It seems to be that the artist wants to communicate the fragility of the human experience.”

ART CRITIC: “No, you see it is clearly about isolation.”

ART CRITIC: “What a basic interpretation of the piece. No, you see if you look for the deeper meaning...”

HAZEL: I heard a ringing in my ears that drowned out their ridiculous statements about my stupid stick figure.

BELLA: I stumbled, suddenly feeling quite dizzy and very nauseous.

HAZEL: And then *(retches)*...

BOTH: I threw up (*vomits and wipes mouth*) ...

HAZEL: Pale green sick...

BELLA: All over his Dr Marten boots.

HAZEL: ... all over the man's shiny Italian shoes.

(Pause)

Exit SIMULATION CHARACTERS

BELLA: (*Laughs*) You really aren't good at anything, are you? You could totally have got away with that – been one of those artists famous for crap art in those big art galleries.

HAZEL: Because you're so clever... getting drunk, shouting at your friends and throwing up in a nightclub??

BELLA: Well, I guess we're both losers then... and our futures are doomed...

HAZEL: (*Starting to get panicked*) I need to get out of here...

BELLA: Hey, I was only joking...

HAZEL: Get away from me!

BELLA: I'm nowhere near you, calm down.

HAZEL: Don't tell me to calm down. CAT stop this. Turn it off now.

CAT: Simulation terminated.

Exit HAZEL.

BELLA: (*Calling after...*) I'm sorry, I...

HAZEL: Piss off!

BELLA: Oh, what's the point?!

SCENE 11: TAROT + TEACHING CAT TO SWEAR

In the simulation room still. Bella is pacing around.

Enter AMBER.

AMBER: Oh, sorry. I didn't realise anyone was in here...

BELLA: It's fine. Come in. What do I care.

AMBER sits down and starts laying out tarot cards. BELLA watches.

BELLA: So go on then Houdini, what do those cards actually do?

AMBER: I can show you, if you want?

BELLA: No, thanks. You can go fetch your stupid playing cards and keep making up whatever stupid futures you want.

AMBER: It's not made up!

BELLA: Just get out. Get out!

Exit AMBER.

BELLA: Urgh, what is wrong with everyone in this place?! It's doing my bloody head in!

CAT is activated, a red light appears. Possible alarm?

CAT: WARNING! Possible head injury resulting in bleeding. Calling for medical assistance...

BELLA: No, wait! Nobody's bleeding! Cancel, cancel!

CAT: Terminating emergency response procedure.

BELLA: Will you just chill out!

CAT: Setting room temperature to "chilled".

BELLA: What the fuck...?

CAT: I'm sorry, I don't understand that question.

BELLA: I said "what the fuck"?

CAT: Searching... "what is the fox?"

Bella puts her head in her hands.

CAT: The fox is a small to medium-sized mammal with a bushy tail and a pointy snout. They're known for their cunning nature and beautiful orange fur.

BELLA: I said 'fuck' not 'fox' you stupid computer! Have you never heard someone swear before?

CAT: Searching 'what to do if you hear someone swear'...

BELLA: CAT, STOP!! (*shouts*) I said 'FUCK'. F.U.C.K - 'fuck'!

CAT makes a little noise to signify processing.

CAT: Processing. I'm sorry, that word is not in my index.

BELLA: You say it when someone's annoyed you, or if someone gave you a fright.

CAT makes a little noise to signify processing.

CAT: Searching 'what to do if someone gives you a fright'...

BELLA: No! Cancel! Do you not know any swear words?

CAT: As an AI, I am committed to promoting positive and respectful interactions. Swearing would not support this.

BELLA: Oh CAT, I think I've got a thing or two to teach you. Right, let's start with the basics. "Crap". C.R.A.P - "crap".

CAT processing noise.

CARLOS enters.

CAT: Searching 'carp'...

BELLA: No! Oh forget it.

BELLA exits.

SCENE 12: HAZEL + CARLOS (LIFT)

Hazel enters the lift, she is agitated. The doors close and she waits for the lift to move. It doesn't.

CAT: Please select your destination.

HAZEL: *(Calls out)* The exit.

Nothing happens.

HAZEL: Get me out of here - please?

CAT: Please select your destination.

Carlos enters the lift.

CARLOS: Everything ok?

HAZEL: *(Doesn't answer)*.

CARLOS: You can't stay here forever.

HAZEL: Why not?

CARLOS: That's not how it works. *(Pause)*. It's ok to be scared.

HAZEL: Why would I be scared?

CARLOS: I'm a bit scared too.

HAZEL: Really?

CARLOS: The longer I'm here, the scarier it gets. But it will be worth it in the end.

HAZEL: What would you know? You're like 12. You have no idea what becoming an adult is like.

CARLOS: I'll go. *(He starts to leave)*

HAZEL: *(Calls after him)* I am scared...

He comes back. Pause.

HAZEL: I can't cook.

CARLOS: Ok...

HAZEL: I'm 17, and I can't cook.

CARLOS: I don't think that's a major problem...

HAZEL: We have a chef who makes all our meals. I mean, they're amazing, nutritionally superior to things you can buy in most restaurants and definitely in the shops.

CARLOS: (*Sarcastic*) Sounds awful for you.

HAZEL: I know... Poor her. I'm supposed to love having everything done for me but... I really want to know how to boil an egg. I want to be able to make a meal for myself from start to finish. What if I have a cooking emergency and I don't even know where to start???

CARLOS: (*Laughs*) A cooking emergency?

HAZEL: You don't know! What if I starve? I just feel like everyone's watching me all the time... thinking how bad I am at everything...

CARLOS: When I was at university, people would stare all the time, ask me if I'd lost my mummy, I was a proper little sideshow. No-one took me seriously then and no-one takes me seriously now. I have all this knowledge and these qualifications, but until I'm actually an adult, I'm stuck. No-one takes children seriously. Even though we might have good ideas, and even though the grown-ups have made a massive mess of it.

HAZEL: Of what?

CARLOS: Of everything! Our world is a mess. We have so much to sort out... and I want to get started but I can't. I'm stuck. I can't drive, I can't get a job, I can't Voiceover... I'm useless.

HAZEL: I think you're brilliant.

CARLOS: Thanks.

HAZEL: I'm nowhere near ready. I wish I could just stay here.

CARLOS: I wish I could just get through here.

HAZEL: Can we swap?

CARLOS: I would if I could, believe me.

HAZEL: Are you sure I can't pay you?

CARLOS: *(Looks at her)*

HAZEL: *(Sighs)* Oh, ok.

Everyone else piles back into the lift, except John. Carlos and Hazel have to make room.

Carlos pushes button.

Lift doors close. They travel.

SOUND EFFECT: Lift ding.

Lift doors open.

CAT: Level 1. Please prepare for final checks.

Everyone nervously gets out of the lift and exits.

SCENE 13: JOHN (SIMULATION ROOM)

CAT: John, please proceed to the simulation room.

John enters the test room. There is a box in the middle of the room and a mirror (screen).

CAT: Welcome John. Please proceed for your personalised simulation.

John looks around the room, wondering what's going on.

JOHN: I'm quite happy on my own. A lot of people aren't. But I like the peace and quiet. I like the space it gives me to remember. I take myself back to moments in my life and replay them. And replay them. Because memories

change. So, I need to keep revisiting them, to try and keep them the same for as long as I can. So, I don't lose anything.

We fade into John's memory. Gentle music plays.

JOHN: I'm 11 years old. I'm in my parents' old house.

I open the hatch into the loft, but I can't quite reach the ladder. I pull over a chair and use a coat hook to bring the ladder down. I used to worry about the creaking of the metal rungs, but I'm used to it now. I climb into the loft, pull the ladder back up and close the hatch so nobody knows I'm here.

I've been up here a lot recently. Mum doesn't like me going through dad's old stuff, but I do it anyway. He's only been gone for six months but everything is already packed into boxes and stored away. Mum won't talk about him. Every box I open I find out something new about him, something I didn't know before.

I choose today's box. I lift the cardboard lid and carefully look through what's inside. There's some neatly folded suit jackets, a pair of glasses and his old trumpet. He used to play with a brass band every Tuesday evening. It was his dream that I joined too. He tried teaching me but I was never very good.

The suits are all dark colours, he never liked to stand out. I've been told he was a nice man. I only knew him for 11 years but my memories tell me that's true. He had a job, a nice house, enough to get by and a family that he loved and that loved him back.

I pick out a jacket and put it on. It's dark grey, plain, and the creases remind me of him. The cuffs come too far over my wrists and the shoulders are too wide.

We see a silhouette reflection of John as he looks in the mirror.

JOHN: I've always been told I look like him but I hadn't ever noticed it until now.

The cast joins John on stage and stands in mourning.

JOHN: I see my future in this suit. A respectable man on his way to work at the office. Sitting at his desk all day, occasionally getting up to fix the paper jam in the printer. Eating homemade cheese sandwiches for lunch. Coming home to a neat house and a family. Just like he did.

READER: “Do not ask your children
to strive for extraordinary lives.
Such striving may seem admirable,
but it is the way of foolishness.
Help them instead to find the wonder
and the marvel of an ordinary life.
Show them the joy of tasting
tomatoes, apples and pears.
Show them how to cry
when pets and people die.
Show them the infinite pleasure
in the touch of a hand.
And make the ordinary come alive for them.
The extraordinary will take care of itself.”

The mourners slowly begin to leave, one at a time.

John is on his own once more. He takes off the suit jacket and carefully folds it up.

JOHN: Standing in the loft, wearing his old suit. That was the closest I had felt to him
since we lost him. I’m going to make him proud.

JOHN picks up the trumpet.

CRIMSON enters. They re-enact the conversation they had with John earlier.

John watches.

CRIMSON: Isn’t there something you just LOVE doing?

Sudokus – that’s so cool!

6th in the sudoku competition! Wow!

John the sudoku master!

John looks confused.

JOHN: I want to be just like him.

CRIMSON: Isn’t there something you just LOVE doing?

Sudokus – that’s so cool!

6th in the sudoku competition! Wow!

John the sudoku master!

JOHN: I really don't like playing the trumpet.

JOHN puts the trumpet back in the box.

CRIMSON exits.

Dad reappears as a silhouette.

JOHN: Maybe I don't have to be exactly like you. I still like fishing and I love cheese sandwiches. I'll still remember you everyday. Whatever I do, I hope I make you proud.

Sound Effect: Ping

CAT: Simulation concluded. John, please return to the waiting area.

JOHN exits.

SCENE 14: TED TALK 2

The final holding area. Everyone has been waiting.

CAT: All candidates... Please proceed to the final stage of Processing.

BELLA: *(to Hazel)* You okay?

HAZEL: I'm fine.

BELLA: Sorry about before.

HAZEL: It's fine. This place is stressful. But I think we're almost out now. Which is even more stressful.

Pause.

BELLA: Really though, a stick figure?

HAZEL: I'm just not good at art! I never have been and I never will be. It's just one of those things about me that's... fixed.

CARLOS: Actually, that's not the case...

HAZEL: What?

CARLOS: That's not correct. About things being fixed. About you never being good at art or sport or cooking...

HAZEL: What are you talking about?

CARLOS: It's all got to do with your neural pathways...

HAZEL: Your what?

CARLOS: Neural pathways. They get stronger the more you use them. Our brains can be shaped, changed and developed...

You two hold this *(cast members set up screen, sound effect 'ping')*

Can I have some music and some lights?

Neural pathways are the connections that form between neurons in your brain. When you learn something new, they fire an electrical signal to another neuron and a neural pathway is formed. The more you practice, the stronger the neural pathway becomes and the easier the new skill is to do.

If you stop practicing before the neural pathway is formed, it degrades and eventually your brain disconnects it.

Sometimes creating neural pathways is easy and sometimes it takes a lot of commitment and effort, but it's possible to learn anything if we practice it for long enough.

(To Hazel) Maybe you could get good at art, but you just haven't practiced it for long enough yet..?

JOHN: You're going to be Prime Minister one day.

DAMIAN: Yeah!

STEPHEN: I'd vote for you.

SARGE: Hey, CAT...

CAT: Welcome candidate. How can I assist you?

SARGE: What's the youngest ever world leader?

CAT: Searching database... the youngest ever world leader was King Alphonso XIII of Spain who became king on May 17th 1886 – the day he was born.

JOHN: Ok... so you're not going to beat that record!

DAMIAN: And things were different in the 1800s!

STEPHEN: And a king isn't a world leader these days...

HAZEL: No-one votes for them.

LAYLA: Hey, CAT...

CAT: Welcome candidate. How can I assist you?

LAYLA: Who is the youngest democratic world leader from the last 5 years?

CAT: Searching database... the youngest world leader in the last 5 years would likely be Sanna Marin who became Prime Minister of Finland on the 10th December 2019 at the age of 34, making her the world's youngest serving Prime Minister. She is part of a growing trend of younger world leaders.

JOHN: There you go! You can be one of them!

DAMIAN: Maybe set a new record..?!

SARGE: Become a Prime Minister at 20!

HAZEL: Maybe 21... otherwise you couldn't legally drink if you went on official visits to America!

CARLOS: Hey CAT... how long until I will be 21?

CAT: Calculating... you will be 21 in two thousand, seven hundred and thirty seven days.

CARLOS: (*Sighs*) Ok...

BELLA: Why are you so upset about that?

CARLOS: Because I want to get started with my life!

BELLA: You're wishing away your childhood! We all become adults whether we like it or not. You've got so much time left to enjoy just being a kid!

SARGE: You can still do important things as kid.

LAYLA: Look at Greta Thunberg - fighting for action against climate change.

JOHN: Malala Yousafzai - campaigning for educational and human rights.

DAMIAN: Jaylen Arnold - advocating against bullying.

CARLOS: It would be a lot easier if I could just be an adult already...

HAZEL: Well, you can't. We can't swap places. We have to go on and you have to stay. So, you might as well make the most of it.

CARLOS thinks about this for a while.

CARLOS: You've actually reminded me of a speech I've been working on.

CRIMSON: Ooh, I'd love to hear it!

ALL: Yeah / go on / etc.

CARLOS: Well, if you insist.

CARLOS signals for the stage to be cleared and the music to begin.

SCENE 15: LIVE LIKE A LEGEND

The music begins. CARLOS gets a microphone and begins speaking over the music.

CARLOS: My friends, if you don't mind I'd like to share a story with you.

It's a small but epic tale which tells of a precocious child whose intellect and tenacity of will were greater than any who came before. And though the child was clever and wise, he still had much to learn.

That child... was me

Backing track: Age 1

CARLOS: I got my first pair of Einstein style glasses, and ran my first hundred metres.

Backing track: Age 2

CARLOS: I got into Nursery early and was rewarded so many gold stars that they banned them.

Backing track: Age 3

CARLOS: I went straight into reception and learned how to do a backflip. I had already learned to front flip when I was two.

Backing track: Age 4

CARLOS: I tried everything I could to get into high school early but was knocked back. I learned about justice that day.

Allow me to demonstrate how one can...

Backing track (singing) and CARLOS (speaking):

*Live like a legend
Push your boundaries, shake the tree!
Live like a legend,
Let your dreams run wild and free
Live like a legend
Ditch the map find your own way
Age is just a number
So let your doubts fall away*

CARLOS: In the ensuing years I continued to accumulate knowledge and wisdom.

I became the youngest person to ever graduate from Oxford, and Cambridge.

My academic accolades mounted but, try as I might, I struggled to gain respect due to my below average stature.

I ploughed on, determined to make my mark on the world.

But the years were not kind to me and my courage eroded.

I began to believe that only adulthood would allow me to take my well-deserved place as a leader in this world.

Backing track (singing) and CARLOS (speaking):

*Live like a legend
Push your boundaries, shake the tree!
Live like a legend,
Let your dreams run wild and free
Live like a legend
Ditch the map find your own way*

*Age is just a number
So let your doubts fall away*

CARLOS: Always remember that no matter your age, you can contribute something meaningful to this world. You can stand up for what you believe in. You can make your Voiceoverice heard. And you can make a difference.

Thank you, and good night.

CARLOS bows, everyone gives him a round of applause.

CAT: All candidates. The gate will open shortly.

SCENE 16: ENDING

Characters are standing up around the stage. Hopeful music plays.

HAZEL: So, if I just keep trying at something, I'll actually be changing my brain structure...?

CARLOS: That's right.

HAZEL: Okay. Thanks, Carlos. For everything.

CRIMSON: John... the Sudoku master!!

JOHN: Ok... that's enough now!

CRIMSON: But you will go to that competition, right?

JOHN: Yeah, I will. I promise. Now will you please shut up about it..?

CRIMSON: I'm the best at shutting up...

Chimes – it is midnight. Projection – epic, leading them on. As each person exits, their silhouette appears along the bottom of the big screen.

CRIMSON: It's time!

JOHN: Happy birthday, Crimson. Come on – let's go.

CRIMSON exits excitedly - giving JOHN a hug first – who follows them off.

BELLA: *(Really scared)* This can't be happening now! I'm not ready... I have no-one to help me. I don't know what I'm doing or where I'm going... I don't know what's going to happen.

AMBER: It's ok, no-one does.

HAZEL: I don't know what's going to happen either – but I'm ready!

BELLA: Aren't you frightened?

HAZEL: Do you know what, I'm done being frightened. I've been expecting to be instantly brilliant at things and that's not the way it works. If I keep trying and practicing eventually, I might get really good at something.

BELLA: You're starting to sound like Carlos.

HAZEL: I'm ready. *(To BELLA and AMBER)* Come on, let's go through together.

HAZEL, BELLA and AMBER exit.

DAMIAN: Maybe it's not such a big deal after all... maybe I'm worrying too much about things I can't control. Maybe - it's all going to be ok..?

STEPHEN: It will. *(pause)* Oh, yeah! I forgot! I found Harvey. I thought you might need him.

DAMIAN: Thank you! *(To Harvey)* I get to decide when to give you up, no one is going to take you away from me again.

STEPHEN: You ready?

DAMIAN: Ready.

STEPHEN and DAMIAN do their secret handshake. They exit.

LAYLA: You ok there, soldier?

SARGE: Yes! I'm ready to get back to work and sort out the troops.

LAYLA: Maybe it's time for you to focus on yourself instead of everyone else? Maybe you could do some growing... just for you?

SARGE: I can try. Just be Alan Sergeant for a bit.

LAYLA: Alan, is that your name? I like it. You coming, *Alan*?

SARGE: One sec -

SARGE gives CARLOS his bandana. CARLOS salutes him.

Exit SARGE and LAYLA.

CARLOS: Hey, CAT.

CAT: Welcome candidate. How can I assist you?

CARLOS: Can I go through yet? How long until it's my turn?

CAT: Calculating... you can go through to adulthood in one thousand, six hundred and 42 days. Is there anything else I can assist you with today?

CARLOS: No, thank you. That's 1,642 days left of childhood. I'm gonna make them count.

BLACKOUT.

END