

## ALL CHANGE by JO HARDY

### CAST LIST

**JOE** Husband to Lizzie. Father to Jenny and Kirsten

**NICK** Drug dealer

**LIZZIE** Wife to Joe. Mother to Kirsten and Jenny

**JENNY** Younger daughter

**KIRSTEN** Elder daughter.

Other parts can be filmed, or played as other roles by the cast.

The events of this play cover fifteen years.

There are good meaty roles and opportunities for every member of this cast, making it an ideal play for GCSE. The storyline is strong and tense, full of twists and turns. Staging is simple, though there are opportunities for a willing technical designer to provide film projection as a background to many moments in the play. This is not compulsory, though - and there are physical theatre ways of putting over the same material instead.

Running time should be around twenty-five minutes to half an hour.

**EXTRACT ONE:**

**PROLOGUE. Date: 1997.**

***The following can be accompanied by a slow motion clip of the 'interlude' murder scene, if the director has decided to use this method.***

**JOE** When somebody dies a violent death people tend to react with horror. They daren't allow themselves to imagine exactly what it was like, so they console themselves by saying things like, 'He wouldn't have felt a thing,' or 'At least it was quick.' But, you know, it isn't quick at all. It seems like an age. There is a moment, that moment, when you realise you are about to die. It's only a split second, but time seems to stand still. It's as if that defining moment is so important, it is frozen in time. In my case, it was the certainty that the bullet which was about to hit me would take my life. I watched it travelling towards me. I could see it about to enter my flesh. It was slightly pointed and a dull silver colour. It was as if I had time to study it in detail but no means of moving out of its path. The killer was staring into my eyes with an unnerving expression, which might have been excitement. The strange thing was that I didn't feel any fear, just a kind of sadness - regret. I would never see my wife again - never see the kids grow up. I remember thinking - 'I'm too young for this. This can't be right.' Then the bullet hit me and there was an explosion in my ears and in my head and I knew it was over.

It all started in the airport...

**EXTRACT TWO:**

**AT HOME. Jenny is 4, Kirsten 5. Date: 2000.**

***The scene changes to the family home. Joe sits down and Lizzie comes in with two cups.***

**JOE *leaning back, exhausted*** I thought Jenny was never going to get to sleep. She insisted on me reading to the end of *Fungus, the Bogeyman*. It's an awful book ...

**LIZZIE *amused*** It's meant to be. Kirsten always loved it as well. All kids do. I think it's because it's the opposite of everything they're told to do by their parents.

**JOE** Yeah, but Jenny's always asking questions! Kirsten would just listen and fall asleep, but not Jenny. [*Imitating Jenny.*] Daddy, why do bogeymen live in drains? Daddy, why is snot green? Daddy, why do I have to have a bath every night? Why do I ... ?

**LIZZIE *laughing*** You've made your point. But I'm glad they're different. They're individuals. It wouldn't be right if they were both exactly the same.

**JOE** No. But it would be easier. It's something about girls. They're so ...

**LIZZIE** Complicated?

**JOE** Intense, I think. Boys don't think as much as girls. They're content to just kick a ball around... It's different with boys...

**LIZZIE** But we haven't got any boys.

**JOE** Worse luck.

**LIZZIE** Joe! Our girls are ...

**JOE** I know. I know. Perfect, just like their mother.

**LIZZIE** And there I thought you hadn't noticed. [***A pause.***] You're not really disappointed, are you? I mean about not having a son.

**JOE** You know I'm not. I wouldn't change a thing. [***Lizzie smiles and picks up her coffee.***] Except perhaps ... [***He stops as she pretends she is about to pour the coffee over his head.***] ... er... nothing! No exceptions. Not even a son playing for Manchester United. [***She hovers the mug nearer his head.***] I wouldn't want that. No, really, I wouldn't want a son who played football for Manchester United. [***She smiles and lowers the mug.***] I'd rather he played for Liverpool!

**Freeze.**

**JOE *stepping out of role*** And the day after that I got the invite to the café ...

**SCENE 3. Ten years later. Jenny is 14, Kirsten 15. Date: 2007.**

***The change of age group could be signified by a single change of costume or by dates being displayed on a screen, but the acting and body language should be the real clue as to the age of the children.***

***The scene changes to an evening ten years later.***

**KIRSTEN** Jenny. You've got to stop looking in that stupid mirror. You're spooking me.

**JENNY** Well, go away then.

**KIRSTEN** You're upsetting Mum as well.

**JENNY** Whatever.

**KIRSTEN** You're so selfish. You only ever think about yourself and ...

***Enter Joe.***

**JENNY** Dad!

**KIRSTEN *not seeing her father*** Yes, and Dad, which is stupid because he's been dead for ... Jenny, are you listening?

**JENNY *to her father*** Why have you come here?

**KIRSTEN** Because I'm fed up of ...

**JOE** Because you called me.

**KIRSTEN** ... you being stupid.

**JENNY *to Joe*** How?

**KIRSTEN** By saying you've seen a ghost.

**DAD** By finding the key to time.

**JENNY** In the mirror?

**KIRSTEN** Yes, and you're just upsetting everybody and ...

**JENNY** The key to time!

**KIRSTEN** What? What key?

**JENNY to Kirsten** To time. To travelling back in time. To see Dad.

**JOE** And help me.

EXTRACT FROM:

**PRODUCTION NOTES & TECHNICAL CUES, ETC.**

**INTRODUCTION: THEMES, THE PLAY'S INTENTIONS**

The play explores a 'what if' situation: 'What if' the past could be changed by someone in the future going back to alter an event? But changes, the play argues, can bring even direr consequences. The main argument of the play appears to be that fate is supposed to happen and must not be avoided without a reckoning, which may be worse than the original act. When Jenny goes back in time to save her father from murder, she buys him ten years but the next time he is killed along with the rest of her family. Luckily she is able to undo this, choosing - with her father's help - to opt for her father's original death. However, we are offered one bright spark of hope at the end of the play. This third alteration has at least changed things enough to make sure that the perpetrator of the murder has been recognised - the first time round it was classed by the police as an accident - and he has been put away for life, thus averting another near disaster.

It is a tangled plot, but clear enough in the playing - harder to describe than to do! The characters are strong with good explanatory monologues from the main characters. It is seriously written, though given light relief by the scenes where the two sisters are children. The style is largely naturalistic, though there are narrative theatre [Brecht] and Physical Theatre touches written in throughout.

**CHARACTERS**

**JOE** - is the father who is murdered as an act of petty revenge by a drug smuggler he spotted and gave up to the police whilst at work as an airport security officer. Since the play spans 15 years, his age will range from early twenties to mid-thirties when he re-

turns, brought back to life during his second chance. He is shown as a loving father and husband. The happy family life is emphasised. Much of the character, however, concerns his dwelling on his own death - which is played slow motion again and again in his head - his desperation to avoid that death - and his eventual sad, mature realisation that he has to accept that his death was meant to be. The playing of the character needs someone with good control of long speeches and an ability to carry off emotional depth and 'gravitas.'

**NICK** - is the drug dealer who was sent down and who has brooded on revenge against the airport guard who had him arrested. Played mostly as a nasty piece of work, clearly villainous in his intentions and at times skittery on heroin, he matures a little towards the end showing regret for what he has done and what he has become. This is another character which needs to be taken by someone who can cope with long speeches and show some emotional range. The hardest part for this character to carry off is his 'disguise' as a prospective boyfriend for Lizzie.

**LIZZIE** - is Joe's wife and the mother to Jenny and Kirsten. She is portrayed as light-hearted, happy and loving, a good partnership with Joe. As a single mother she is more sober and it is clear she has changed; she admits that things have been hard but has clearly 'been there' for her children and put them first. Consistent characterisation is needed, which clearly shows that the older Lizzie has its roots in the happy young girl who was first married to Joe.

**JENNY** - is the younger of the two children and the one who has the ability to travel through an old mirror into the past. She is the only one who has a link with her dead father and can talk to him through this same mirror. Her love and concern for her father is clear and separates her, to her detriment, from mother and sister. This should be made obvious. We see Jenny growing up, literally, from a four-year old child to a fourteen year old who has to make some tough and mature decisions and then live with them. The age change must be handled clearly and with precision.

**KIRSTEN** - is the elder of the two children. We see her as a five year old and a fifteen year old. The same kind of skill at the age change needs to be shown by the actress. Body language and voice should be quite different. Kirsten is shown as being close to her mother, with a sympathetic understanding. In the 'alternative' scenes as a fifteen-year-old, she is seen as a very 'typical' stropky teenager [though not overdone]. She doesn't have the tough decisions that her sister has to make, but she does have to show that the two 'paths' shown for her character as alternatives, have made her into different people.

## **SETTING**

There are a large number of short scenes, ranging from the family home to the airport, the empty cafe where the murder occurs, a prison and the street. The number of scenes and the skipping backward and forward in time precludes anything too naturalistic.

From Page 3, different interior scenes are indicated, some of which are used many times so should from here be permanent settings. To one side, you need to establish the family room. Towards one side, a small sofa to remain in place, or two matching easy chairs. A raised area towards the other side with the 'mirror' set on it. This mirror should be a large frame, without glass, standing tipped slightly and angled towards the audience. The central part of the stage should remain empty and neutral, to suggest a number of different places.

## **LIGHTS & SPECIAL EFFECTS**

Central to the play is the scene of the actual murder. The writer suggests as an alternative to a physical theatre option that this is filmed and delivered in slow motion at various points during the play. The film would need to be taken from a variety of angles and well-edited. It would be nice to see shots as if from Joe's point of view and as if from

Nick's point of view, at the very least. The trajectory of the bullet - so often described as an object frozen in space - would also be a good touch to include. There is no reason why both the film and, at times, a physical theatre approach, could not be shown together if you like.

Different parts of the stage need to be separately lit at times to indicate different areas. One side up to and including the centre should be the family sitting room, used often. On the opposite side, on a raised area - needn't be too large - but enough for three characters and the mirror - is the dimmer room, sometimes the attic, sometimes the spare room. The central area of the stage needs to be used for a number of settings, spilling over to include all but the edges. All-purpose light should fill most of the stage, leaving the edges shadowy, which include where furniture and such as the mirror is set, so they are not in focus when this area is used.

In addition, you need a spot for Joe's soliloquys - centre front or to one side, depending on whether you are using film or slide projection. This could double as Jenny's spot, [the same side as the mirror] used on Page 12, or there could be two on separate sides

I think to make the best of the ending, separate spotlights will be needed for both Nick and Joe's faces centre front.

## **LIGHTING CUES**

PAGE 2 Backlighting for shadow show from beginning, or dim stage lighting because of film projection. Joe in spotlight for opening speech, front central or front side - dependent on your decisions as to how to show the murder.

End of first speech. Cue:Joe - 'It all started at the airport' - If using screen and projection of dates, these need to be projected before bright light floods the stage.

bring up lights to artificial bright white for airport, over whole stage.....