

## SMALL WORLD by JO HARDY

### CHARACTERS:

KELLY, a prison inmate. She also plays the SUPERVISOR.

ANNIE, a prison inmate

ELEANOR, the new arrival. Also plays KELLY'S MOTHER and BRENDA.

HOLMES, the prison warder. Also plays CLAIRE

KELLY, HOLMES & ANNIE play FRIENDS in Scene 3.

KELLY, ELEANOR & HOLMES play BULLIES & DEALERS in Scene 6.

The play is set in a women's prison. Present time.

The role changes necessary for this play make it a challenging possibility for GCSE.

There are good contrasts, such as the nice polite Eleanor playing the loud, hard mother of Kelly. Each character has plenty to do and there are good long monologues for everyone, as well as dialogue.

Running time is approximately half an hour.

## EXTRACT 1:

### A prison cell. Morning.

HOLMES

Here you are, you two. A new friend for you. Make sure you treat her nicely. [*And she goes.*]

ELEANOR *nervously*

Hello. I'm Eleanor.

KELLY

Posh name. I'm Kelly; she's Annie.

ELEANOR

I'm ... I'm pleased to meet you both.

KELLY

Are you? Well, you soon won't be. You got any fags?

ANNIE

Give her a chance to get in, Kelly. You've got no manners, you. [*To Eleanor.*] Have you got any fags?

ELEANOR

I'm sorry. I don't smoke.

KELLY

Well, we're sorry but we do. When we can bloody get any...

ELEANOR *looking in her bag*

I think I've got some mints...

KELLY *snatches the bag, but Eleanor hardly responds - she seems to have given up*

Nice bag. Mints. [*She throws them to Annie, who offers one to Eleanor, though she refuses.*] And what's this? Oh, nice. A posh powder compact. I haven't got a powder compact. Have you got one, Annie?

ANNIE

No. Let's see. Yeah, that really is posh.

KELLY

It looks like gold. And... ooh, look ... it's got writing on it: 'To my dearest Daisy...' Is that you, or have you nicked it?

ELEANOR

Of course it's me. My husband gave it to me one year after we married. Daisy is a kind of a nick-name.

ANNIE

Was that before or after the divorce? [*She laughs and Kelly joins in.*]

ELEANOR

Peter died... a year ago.

***There is a short but awkward silence. Kelly recovers quickly.***

KELLY

Look at these nice leather gloves, and a purse with some money in it. You look like you've got plenty of dough.

ELEANOR

Dough? I'm sorry...

ANNIE

Money. Loot. Call it what you like. You look like you've got plenty.

ELEANOR

I only have a few pounds on me. They wouldn't let me... When I was arrested... I had to leave everything in the house. I wasn't able to get anything. I didn't even lock the door...

ANNIE

I shouldn't worry. The Old Bill will see to that. They call it 'securing the property.' Is the house empty?

ELEANOR

Yes.

ANNIE

I shouldn't tell too many people your address then. There are folks in here who have ... well - contacts. [*Kelly laughs.*] They'd have the place empty in two minutes.

ELEANOR *worried*

Would they?

ANNIE

Don't panic. You'll be all right if you just keep your mouth shut. In fact, you'll be all right with us.

KELLY

Yeah. We'll look after you. Keep the bullies and lesbians away.

ELEANOR

What!

KELLY

Oh, don't worry, this place is full of weirdos, but I expect we can help you make the right sort of friends. Now if you could see your way to buying us a packet of fags...

ELEANOR

Where from?

KELLY *taking money from the purse*

Hey, Holmes! [*To Eleanor.*] From Sherlock, of course. [*Under her breath.*] Over here, you useless screw.

EXTRACT 2:

***Flashback to the hotel. Annie and Claire [played by Holmes] are maids. The Supervisor can be played by Kelly.***

CLAIRE *sitting on the bed with her feet up*

Some of the folks who stop here are bloody pigs. That lot that left this morning had spilt wine all over the bed and the desk and...

ANNIE

They'd be drunk. They had two bottles of red wine and one of champagne. Room service.

CLAIRE

Bet they weren't married. Bet he'd told his wife he was on a business trip.

***They are both laughing when the Supervisor enters. They jump up guiltily.***

SUPERVISOR

I thought I might find you two in here. Is this the way you get the rooms cleaned?

CLAIRE

Sorry. We were just having a bit of a break. It's been really hectic this morning, with all the laundry and...

SUPERVISOR

Your breaks are at eleven o'clock and three-fifteen p.m. Go and get on with your work.

[*They both start to go but she calls Annie back.*] Miss Watson. Wait here a minute.

ANNIE

I'd better go. I've got Number 4 to...

SUPERVISOR

There will be no need for you to finish Number 4, Miss Watson, as you are no longer an employee here.

ANNIE

No longer an ... What do you mean?

SUPERVISOR

I mean that there have been a number of complaints from our clients about missing articles....

ANNIE

I never took any articles...

SUPERVISOR *ignoring her*

... and we cannot continue to employ a chambermaid who is not to be trusted.

ANNIE

I never did anything.

SUPERVISOR

Miss Watson. I have two people who are willing to swear that they saw you leave room number 3 yesterday afternoon at two thirty p.m. There was no need for you to be in any of the rooms at that time.

ANNIE

I was just fetching my dusters. I left them in...

SUPERVISOR

So you acknowledge that you entered the room?

ANNIE

Yes. No. I...

SUPERVISOR

Mr Johnson had decided he would not prosecute if you were to leave the premises immediately, but then we got a further complaint from number 4. That was just this morning.

ANNIE

But I never went near Number 4!

SUPERVISOR

So why did you just tell me you needed to finish it? [*Silence.*] I must ask you to empty your pockets, Miss Watson.

EXTRACT 3:

KELLY

Do you know what? I think I'm in danger of dying of boredom. What time is it?

ANNIE

Don't know. Ellie's got a watch. What time is it?

ELEANOR

Half past two.

KELLY

Oh, God. I thought it was later than that. Six more hours...

ANNIE .

.. with nothing to do...

HOLMES

At least it's quiet for five minutes. I fancy...

ANNIE

... going shopping. A great big posh shopping mall with ...

HOLMES

... a cup of tea.

ELEANOR

Trees and miles of grass...

KELLY

A great big gin and tonic ...

ANNIE

Store cards...

KELLY

... minus the tonic...

ELEANOR

Riding Crescent over the fields ...

ANNIE

... lots of new clothes...

KELLY

... and Johnny Depp. He'd put his arms round me and say...

ANNIE

...I wish I had a baby.... a little girl with blonde hair...

ELEANOR

... and all day to be free.

HOLMES

Well, at least I'll be home in...

ELEANOR

Three years.

KELLY

Five years.

ANNIE

Ten months.

HOLMES

... just over an hour. If I could get a better job, I'd leave.

ANNIE

I'd buy sweet little clothes for her...

KELLY

... and he'd take me to a big, expensive jewellers and ...

ELEANOR

... all of this would turn out to be some awful nightmare...

ANNIE

... playing with her...

KELLY

... getting my roots done...

ANNIE

... Barbie dolls and dancing lessons...

ELEANOR

... a night at the Opera...

HOLMES

I can't wait for...

KELLY

I wish I was ...

ANNIE

I'd be happy ...

ELEANOR

Anywhere ...

ALL

Anywhere but here.

EXTRACT 4:

***Annie sits alone in the middle of the stage. The other three players become nightmarish images of bullies and, it soon becomes obvious that they are existing in Annie's thoughts or bad dreams.***

ANNIE *calls*

Mum, I can't go to school today.

VOICE *off*

'Course you can. Get up or you'll be late.

ANNIE

But I don't feel very well...

1ST BULLY

You don't feel very well because you're scared.

ANNIE

I'm not...

2ND BULLY

So you'd better hand over...

1ST BULLY

Your money...

2ND BULLY

Your homework...

3RD BULLY

Your life ...

***They all laugh.***

ANNIE

Go away.

3RD BULLY

You know what we did yesterday?

2ND BULLY

We're going to do it again.

1ST BULLY

Today.

***They begin to push her around between them.***

2ND BULLY

And then again tomorrow.

3RD BULLY

Only worse.

ANNIE

Leave me alone!

2ND BULLY

You won't get away.... Not from your scummy family...

3RD BULLY

And not from us.

***They change from being Bullies to shady characters sitting in a doorway in a gloomy street. Annie stands looking at them.***

1ST DEALER

What's up, love?

ANNIE

Nothing.

2ND DEALER

Need something to cheer you up?

***She doesn't answer.***

3RD DEALER

We might have something you'd like...

ANNIE

I haven't got any...

2ND DEALER *butting in*

Nobody mentioned money. Sit down.

***The scene changes again. This time, the Dealers all stand together with Annie alone.***

ANNIE

I'll get the money. I will. Just let me have the stuff.

1ST DEALER

You know the rules, darlin'.

ANNIE

I'll get it!

SAMPLE PAGES from PRODUCTION NOTES:

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

The play is serious in tone, exploring the relationships between the women and exposing the different reasons they are in prison. Kelly is hard-nosed and appears to deserve her sentence - and more - whilst Annie is a victim of her miserable life. Even Holmes feels sorry for Annie. The fact that Kelly, too, has an unhappy childhood gives her a sympathetic side; we feel sorry for her when she wants to go to Australia to find her father - and when we hear that she will never be able to, because Australia will not accept people who have served time in prison. The characters are, therefore not two-dimensional and will need skill to bring out the layers of their personalities.

Eleanor is harder to guess at. She, too, is clearly a victim, both of society and of her fellow inmates. Her death becomes more inevitable as the play progresses and we uncover the weird coincidences that link the cell-mates together. Less of her thought-process is exposed and though she is in for fraud, it is not clear why she has sunk to this. Perhaps we should understand that without her husband and her happy life, she has sunk to this out of a sort of carelessness, or desperation.

As a claustrophobic tale of the inter-meshing lives of these characters, the play has power. There are inaccuracies, for those who are purists about these things: there is no way that Eleanor would have a hand-bag with money and valuables in her prison-cell, for instance - but against the interest of the story-line and the characterisation, plus the acting opportunities this play offers as an examination piece, this is a small matter.

The flashbacks give a wide variety of roles to all the actors except Annie, who remains the same.

## **CHARACTERS**

**ANNIE** - a young woman who, despite her initial hardness, ends up as the most sympathetic character. Though she has been bullied and victimised in the past, she faces up to things and shows courage and determination. Her own sufferings have made her more sympathetic to those of others.

She should have an accent, though not loud or brash. Her face should be animated, smile often, show her emotions.

**KELLY** - is the loud one. Accent should be full on and voice with a tendency to harshness. At the end, Kelly is sorry for her misdeeds, but throughout the play she is hard and defiant about them, with a tendency to boast about what she has got away with. Body language should match her loudness - big laugh, abrupt gestures - a spiky person.

**ELEANOR** - is the misfit. She is a higher social class with a middle-class, though not posh, accent. She comes over as gentle and bewildered much of the time. We should see her fading visibly as the play progresses.

**HOLMES** - Matches Kelly in her hardness when being the prison warder, but shows a softer side with her friend Brenda. She also should have an accent, though this may become less pronounced when she is talking on her own or to a friend. She has become hard in order to cope with the type of prisoners she has to deal with, but from the first she pities Annie - though this should not show in front of Kelly. She is really rattled by her failure to deal with Eleanor's escape onto the roof. The audience should feel that she will probably leave this job.

## **COSTUMES**

As long as the inmates are dressed in the same clothes, I don't think anyone is going to be too worried about accuracy. All except Holmes, then, could be in such as black trou-

sers with a baggy smock-type shirt or T-shirt - grey, grey-blue or faded stripes. Flat shoes.

Holmes needs to be in a uniform - or as close as you can get to one: A-line knee-length black skirt, white shirt tucked in, dark tie would do. Holmes's hair ought to be neat. If long, scraped back into a bun perhaps. Shoes should be lace-ups, black, with black tights.

## **SETTING**

The play would be best done in a single location which easily suggests the variety of places used: a prison cell, the recreation room, flashbacks showing places such as Kelly's childhood home and the street, the rooftop, the gym changing room.

I suggest that you have a single location with certain areas designated. The cell could be a raised area to one side of the playing space. If you can, it would be nice to have the back 'wall' and one side, composed of 'bars' to give the prison feel. An alternative is to use a gobo with bar effect on those blocks. A raised space will give the idea of separation and of people confined in a small area. Smaller raised blocks could give further 'seating areas' within this space and stand for at least two beds, better three. You don't need detail or realism here - indicators are all that are necessary - pillows and grey or other dull plain colour blankets. Therefore, I would have on one side of the stage a raised area, with two sides of 'bars' indicated. Against all but the front side I would have further smaller blocks, as three beds.

This would be the simplest way, but if you want to go for added realism and you have scaffolding, you could suggest prison walls and also the idea of bunkbeds within a scaffold structure.

Towards the back of the playing area I would have further rostra. These can give height to a number of scenes and indicate separate areas for certain flashbacks. If desired, you could use these as the rooftop at the end - though I have other ideas for this too [see the notes page by page]

Try to make the whole thing look bleak and shabby, reflecting their lives and the idea of the prison. Lighting will help you with this effect.

## **LIGHTS**

As said above, lights need to be stark and white where brightness is required and gloomy where it isn't. It would be perfectly possible to do this play just with basic lights covering certain key areas only. You don't need anything fancy. Having said that, it would be good if flashbacks can be flagged up in some way, preferably by lighting. Mixing colour, such as red and orange for such as the cocktail party, and steely blue for the street-scenes, would work.

The prison cell = hard-edged light on raised area only. Should be stark white [like strip lighting would be]. If desired you can add a prison gobo, perhaps as the lights come up

and go down briefly at the beginning and ends of scenes. So - gobo light is the first light up; other lights come up and down the gobo out - reversed at the end of a scene.

## **LIGHTING CUES**

PAGE 2 Beginning of play. Lights up on prison cell area only to bright white.

End of scene - Cue: Annie throws pillow. Lights down to dimmer, same area. Wait for freeze of characters for a beat, then bring lights up again as before.....