



PREVIEW SCRIPT

*“The Hard Yards”*

# **The Hard Yards**

By Tony Layton

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# THE HARD YARDS

## Synopsis

Danny is facing the “Hard Yards” of teenage life; the stress of exams, dealing with parents, keeping fit, coming to terms with his own sexuality and getting to know the opposite sex.

He is bright, a high achiever and appears to be on track for a successful academic career. But then, his strong admiration for Helen changes his life forever. Helen experiences a profound trauma and in his deep concern for her, Danny abandons all conformity.

Moral: Life can be a giggle, a light-hearted bowl of cherries, then something happens that makes you realise that this is not a rehearsal and you have to take serious control of your life. It can be a dangerous gamble but it is certainly an adventure.

## Cast

Danny	17 yrs old. The central character.
Samantha	17 yrs old. A friend of Danny’s.
Helen	Danny’s ideal girl.
Eddie	Danny’s father. A bigot.
Maureen	Danny’s mother. Much put upon.
Black	An alter ego.
White	Second alter ego.
Coach	A sadistic rugby trainer.
Jack Evans	One of Danny’s peers.
Miss Roach	A matronly head teacher.
Lucy	Girl in disco.
Britney	Precocious fourteen year old.
Mr. Price	Drama teacher.
General	In Danny’s dream.
Doctor	Helen’s GP.
Mrs. Lewis	Helen’s mother.
Mr. Lewis	Helen’s father.
Ann	Helen’s peers. The school gossips.
Bet	“ “
Cal	“ “
Dodie	“ “
Marie	“ “
Fran	“ “
Glenda	“ “
Hayley	“ “
Jill	“ “

Rugby players, Supporters, Dancers, Party goers, School assembly

The play can either be performed with a large cast or with a small ensemble, doubling many of the roles.

## Set

An open stage showing a back wall covered with political, sporting and various humorous graffiti, clearly the work of talented local artists. The action is designed so that the scenes blend seamlessly together.

# THE HARD YARDS

*A group of boys run on led by the coach. Danny is trailing behind the rest. They run on the spot.*

**Coach** Lift those knees up. Come on! Up! Up! What are we? Wimps? Shout it out! “We are not wimps!”

**Group** We are not wimps.

**Coach** Louder, you bunch of fairies.

**Group** We are not wimps.

**Coach** Getting tired are we? Lift those knees. Get ‘em working. Blake! Out here. Keep going the rest of you. This isn’t a coffee break. It’s called training. It’s what I’m paid for. I’m paid to inflict pain on your puny adolescent bodies. I get great pleasure watching you all suffer. Was that a smile Danny Blake?

**Danny** No sir.

**Coach** I think it was, sir. Give me ten. Now!

*Danny gets down to perform ten press-ups.*

**Coach** You’re a slacker, lad. A slacker. Any more think training is funny?

**Group** No sir.

**Coach** I should think not. Keep those knees up! Gents, I have been given an impossible task. I’ve got to change you monkeys into a mean, lean squad. I’ve got to turn you into the best squad in the county. They must think I’m a miracle worker. They must think I can walk on water. Get those legs workin’! As far as you’re concerned, I can walk on water. What can I do?

**Group** Walk on water.

*Danny stands up having finished his press-ups.*

**Coach** And don’t forget it. Feel better, Blake?

**Danny** Yea!

**Coach** What?

**Danny** Yes, sir.

**Coach** Get those legs workin’, Blake.

**Danny** Sir.

**Coach** You’re slacking, Blake. You are back sliding. I look at you, lad, and I despair. You see, our friend Blake here is a typical example. Here is living proof that Darwin’s theory of evolution has slipped into reverse. Was that a snigger, Evans?

**Evans** No sir.

**Coach** One, two! One two! One, two! Keep it going! But we are not going to allow that to happen, are we Blake? I don’t want to teach monkeys. I want to see you kicking the living daylights out of the opposition, Blake, in this game we all love, rugby. Understand?

**Danny** Yes, sir.

**Coach** Good, sir! Good! More commitment, lad. More commitment. Ten more laps of the field....go!

*The group run off with the teacher. Danny remains on the spot, jogging.*

**Danny** Look at me...jogging. It’s not natural. I read somewhere that jogging ruins your spine. Who wants a ruined spine?

**Coach** *(Off stage)* Blake!

**Danny** Coming.

**Coach** *(Off stage)* Get your finger out, now!!

**Danny** Barbarian!

*Danny runs off. Samantha enters. She is wearing a school uniform. She is well on the way to becoming a sex goddess.*

**Samantha** Danny Blake? He’s okay. More sensitive than most of ‘em. He writes poetry. He’s the only boy I know who writes poetry, in fact. Never lets me read it. Not for general consumption, he says. He makes me laugh. He talks funny. The words he uses ... talk about complicated. Always got his head stuck in some book or other. Still a virgin. I know, ‘cos he told me. I like to know these things. He took me to the cinema ... back row ... and he made no move on me, which I found very unusual for a seventeen year old. So I asked him ...

*Danny enters carrying two chairs which he places centre stage. Samantha sits on one, he sits on the other. Lighting change and background music of a romantic film.*

**Samantha** Are you a virgin, Danny?  
**Danny** Me? A virgin? Well ...  
**Samantha** Well you are or you're not. It's one or the other.  
**Danny** It depends.  
**Samantha** Depends on what?  
**Danny** What you mean by virgin.  
**Samantha** Virgin can only mean one thing.  
**Danny** That's where you're wrong. You see, in ancient Hebrew, virgin meant a woman who had never had a child.  
**Samantha** Oh!  
**Danny** So you see, all that talk about Mary being a virgin doesn't mean that she hadn't enjoyed carnal knowledge, in fact it meant she hadn't had a baby. Isn't that fascinating. So, yes, I am a virgin. I've never had a baby.  
**Samantha** So that means ... I'm a virgin.  
**Danny** Yep!  
**Samantha** Bang goes my reputation.

*They enjoy the joke.*

**Samantha** Danny?  
**Danny** What?  
**Samantha** Have you ever been to bed with a woman?  
**Danny** Sure. Dozens of times.  
**Samantha** Who?  
**Danny** My mother. I was only a few months old at the time.  
**Samantha** Funny. You know what I mean.  
**Danny** Then there was Alice ... my cousin. She was ten and I was nine. She showed me her bits and I showed her mine, and then she didn't speak to me for ages.  
**Samantha** So, are you still a virgin?  
**Danny** Yes. Better now? Satisfied?  
**Samantha** Thought you were.  
**Danny** It shows does it?  
**Samantha** I can always tell. It's in the eyes.  
**Danny** What happens now? Do I get a bell around my neck ... unclean?  
**Samantha** I'll have to keep my eye on you, won't I. Popcorn?

*She thrusts a popcorn packet in Danny's face. LX fade. Eddie and Maureen enter. They bring on a small kitchen table. It's laid for breakfast. They place the chairs at either end of the table and sit. Eddie picks up a newspaper, reads and drinks a mug of tea which he slurps loudly. At the same time he chews on a piece of toast, which he softens up, with occasional gulps of tea. Maureen quietly sips on her cup of tea.*

**Eddie** Look at that. That's filth tha' is. Pure filth.  
**Maureen** You say the same thing every day.  
**Eddie** If I want a porno mag I'll buy one. This is supposed to be a newspaper, a Labour newspaper. I don't know. The country's going to the dogs. When I read the sports pages I don't want to see nudes all over the shop.  
**Maureen** Write and complain.  
**Eddie** Don't worry, Maureen, I will.  
**Maureen** That'll be the day. I can't remember the last time you wrote a letter.  
**Eddie** What about all the letters I wrote to you?  
**Maureen** Many moons ago. And anyway, you didn't write them. It was your pal George.  
**Eddie** George? Who told you that?  
**Maureen** George told me. George Ray, your pal on night shift. No use denying it, Eddie. You can't put two words together. Never could.  
**Eddie** That's rich that is. Okay, maybe I didn't actually write the letters ... but I spoke and he wrote. They were all my ideas ... not his.

**Maureen** He dropped you right in it. He fancied me.  
**Eddie** George Ray? He fancied you?  
**Maureen** He fancied me for years. Bought me chocolates many a time.  
**Eddie** Chocolates? The two-faced ... I buy you chocolates. Don't I buy you chocolates?  
**Maureen** A Mars Bar's not the same thing as a box of All Gold. He went to Australia.. Melbourne. Asked me to go with him.  
**Eddie** The rat bag. Who can you trust? I'll All Gold him when I see him.

*Danny enters wearing a long dressing gown. He brings on a chair which he places behind the table. He sits and commences to eat his corn flakes.*

**Eddie** Here he is. The ponce!  
**Maureen** That's a nice thing to call your son.  
**Eddie** I've tried being reasonable with him. It doesn't work.  
**Maureen** Perhaps you ought to try a bit harder.  
**Eddie** I've argued with him till I'm blue in the face, woman. I've tried to put him straight. Does he listen? No. Electrical engineering's a good career. There's a future in electrical engineering. But he won't listen. It doesn't make a blind bit of difference what I say. He's like you. Stubborn.  
**Maureen** And I suppose you're not. I suppose you're Mr. Perfect.  
**Eddie** He could have worse fathers. Far worse.  
**Maureen** Face it, Eddie. He's not cut out to be an Electrical Engineer. He doesn't want an apprenticeship with Thomas and Jones. He wants to go to university.  
**Eddie** To join the rest of the ponces. I've been to those places. I've seen them. Drugged up to the eye-balls. Tell me, what damn use is a degree in English? Come on! You tell me!  
**Maureen** It's pointless arguing with you. You'll never agree.  
**Eddie** People will always want electricity. I can get 30 ... 40 quid an hour anytime I like. How many people in this street want to listen to poetry? How many? Not a lot. Not a lot. Very few. Get with it ... both of you. Join the real world.

*Eddie stands.*

Maybe I can't join two words together, as you kindly put it, but I put the food on the table, I pay the bills and I'm respected in this community and that's worth a thousand degrees.

*Eddie exits.*

**Maureen** Toast?  
**Danny** No, ta.  
**Maureen** I'd better go and put my face on.

*Maureen exits. Lights focus down on Danny*

**Danny** It's the same every morning. I suppose on a scale of one to ten that rates about a three as far as breakfast time discussions go. I don't join in anymore, because to be honest, he doesn't listen.. Sad.

*Danny stands and moves forward.*

**Danny** I feel sorry for him. No, I really do. What's he got to show for thirty odd years graft for Thomas and Jones? A semi with paper thin walls and built for midgets. A clapped out Ford. Thing is ... we've grown apart. I watch "Friends" he watches "Coronation Street", for example. There's nothing to talk about.

*Black and White enter taking up position either side of Danny*

**Black** Absolutely right, Danny. Don't be dragged down by his pathetic little life. Branch out. Spread your wings. Rise above it.  
**White** So easy, isn't it. Go against the grain. Hurt them. Do what you want. It's your life.  
**Black** I wouldn't think twice. Don't let the grey people suffocate you in their small unimaginative worlds.  
**White** That is your world, whether you like it or not. That is where you were formed, where you grew where you became you.  
**Black** In spite of them you are what you are. Turn towards the light; don't hide in the shade.  
**White** Reject them and you will learn to regret it...in time.

*Black and White fade away.*

**Danny** I'm only seventeen and already the world's getting far too complicated. Why can't things be more straightforward?

*The rugby players run on led by the coach. They grab hold of the table, turn it on its side, half the group holding up the table by its legs ... the other half forming a scrum against the flat top of the table.*

**Coach** Dig in! What happens when you don't dig in? You fold like a pack of cards. Take up your position, lock and hold. Lock and hold. Now push! Stretch those legs. Let me see those thighs working. Does the word thighs excite you, boys? Does it? Because if it does you're not concentrating. I want to see every sinew, every muscle working. Stop! Stop! *(The group crouch down exhausted.)* You don't get it do you. What are we doing here? Evans, you're grinning.

**Evans** Yes, sir.

**Coach** Why, sir?

**Evans** Thighs, sir.

**Coach** I see. You like thighs, do you Evans?

**Evans** Yes, sir.

**Coach** I see. You like girls do you?

**Evans** Yes sir.

**Coach** Do you buy dirty magazines and stick them under your mattress?

**Evans** Well.....

**Coach** You're a dirty little mongrel, Evans. Down and give me twenty.

*Evans gets down to carry out his press-ups. The group sniggers.*

**Coach** I'm glad you all think that's funny. All of you....twenty!

*They all get down to do press-ups. Danny enters.*

**Coach** You see, lads, what I want here is a machine. A machine that works together. Some of the cogs in this machine are big, heavy and slow ... others are small, light and quick. Individually, you are weak. Together you are strong. You think ... "team". What do you think?

**Group** Team!

**Coach** Again.

**Group** Team.

**Coach** Again.

**Group** Team.

**Coach** And when you're lying in deep mud at the bottom of a writhing ruck on a cold afternoon in January, and icy rain is sweeping across the ground, and someone has just scraped his studs across your face ... you will feel uplifted. And why will you feel uplifted, Evans?

*Evans stands, gasping for breath.*

**Evans** Because ... because ...

**Coach** Because you have the strength of the team around you, that's why, Evans. And where've you been, Blake?

**Danny** Rehearsing, sir.

**Coach** Rehearsing? What for? Life?

**Danny** Romeo and Juliet.

**Coach** Do you like coming second, Blake?

**Danny** No, sir.

**Coach** I don't. I certainly don't. In future, we come first. Training comes first, every time. No argument. Got it? You work around my programme. My programme. Right lads, move out.

*The group jogs off with the table and chairs leaving Danny centre stage. Helen enters reading a script. She is going over some of Juliet's lines and improvising some movement to go with the lines.*

**Danny** That's Helen. Juliet. Her birthday's on June the tenth. Her favourite colour's ice blue. She goes to places like Richmond and Ascot at weekends. Goes to the West End all the time. Her boy friend's a fighter pilot in the RAF. She might as well have a barbed wire fence around her. I think I love her.

*Helen moves across to Danny*

**Helen** Three weeks to go.  
**Danny** Yep.  
**Helen** I think you're doing really well.  
**Danny** Thanks.  
**Helen** By the way, I know it's difficult, but when we kiss...in that scene...  
**Danny** Yes?  
**Helen** Try to imagine I'm someone else. It really works.  
**Danny** Thanks. Good. I'll try.  
**Helen** As long as I haven't got bad breath or anything.  
**Danny** Nope. Not a trace.  
**Helen** Good.  
**Danny** I was wondering....  
**Helen** Yes?  
**Danny** This weekend.....Sunday afternoon.....I thought we could brush up a couple of scenes.  
**Helen** I'd like that....  
**Danny** Good!  
**Helen** But I can't. Going up West. Richard's got leave. Sorry. Next week perhaps?  
**Danny** Next week's good. Fine.  
**Helen** Cool! See ya. Ciao!  
**Danny** Yep! Arriverdecci!

*Helen exits.*

**Danny** What I need is a good solid relationship. Something inspiring. Something totally overwhelming. Like Romeo. Danny and ... Helen. That could work. That could be perfect. Two souls in perfect harmony. Why can't she see that? Danny and ...Samantha. Don't think so. What do I do? What was that thing we had about maturity?

*Miss Roach is lit at a lectern, side stage.*

**Miss Roach** Delayed gratification. I want you all to think about that. Delayed gratification. The first sign of maturity is when you can delay gratification. How often do you run willy-nilly through life, grabbing at this and that, not thinking about the consequences, living for the moment, "I must have it now, now, now!". This "have it now, pay later" is a canker in our society, and believe you me you do pay later, and the bill can be a very hefty one. SEX! There you are. That woke you all up. You think you invented it, but no. We knew all about sex. Oh yes. But we had self-control. Marriage first ... then sex. Delayed gratification. There was no such thing as Aids in our day, you know. Oh no! But I'm talking about exams today. Delayed gratification is all about getting your head into those books. Think about university. Think about success. Delay your gratification and taste the sweeter fruits of life.

*Fade Miss Roach*

**Danny** But, there again, there's a lot to be said for total, immediate gratification.

*The stage is suddenly filled with bright lights, flashing in time to driving disco music. The stage is full of writhing dancers. As the actors deliver their lines the music is subdued and the dancing continues. Danny is dancing centre stage. He has very little natural rhythm. He dances up to a girl.*

**Danny** Hi!  
**Lucy** Hi!  
**Danny** What do you like for breakfast?  
**Lucy** Get lost!

*The girl moves away. Danny approaches his next victim.*

**Danny** Hi!  
**Britney** Hi!  
**Danny** I like your moves.  
**Britney** Ta.  
**Danny** Groovy.  
**Britney** Ta.  
**Danny** Very sensuous.

**Britney** Ta.  
**Danny** Sensual.  
**Britney** Ta.  
**Danny** Very sexy.  
**Britney** Ta.  
**Danny** How old are you?  
**Britney** Fourteen. Why?  
**Danny** You look older.  
**Britney** I'm fourteen and threequarters.  
**Danny** Excellent! Well done! See ya!

*Danny dances away from the girl. The girl follows him.*

**Danny** What?  
**Britney** Have you got a car?  
**Danny** Why?  
**Britney** Can you take me home?  
**Danny** Well ...  
**Britney** I'll make it worth your while.

*Girl freezes in a seductive pose. All the dancers freeze. The music stops. Black enters SR, White enters SL.*

**White** Don't even think about it, Danny.  
**Black** Feel free, I say. It's there. Enjoy it.  
**White** You'll be sorry in the morning.  
**Black** Instant gratification! That's the name of the game.  
**White** Danny! Self control.  
**Black** Go for it. Live a little.

*Black and White exit.*

**Danny** I'll drop you off. Okay?

*All exit leaving Danny and girl isolated in a spot.*

**Britney** This is where I live.  
**Danny** Right.  
**Britney** I can't invite you in.  
**Danny** That's okay.  
**Britney** Are you annoyed with me?  
**Danny** Me? Annoyed? No.  
**Britney** Have you got any condoms?  
**Danny** What? Condoms? Well ...  
**Britney** I think I've got one in my purse.

*She looks in her purse.*

**Danny** I think I'd better go. Early start. Training ... that sort of thing.  
**Britney** Yes! Here it is.

*She hands the condom to Danny*

**Danny** Wonderful! Look, I really must go.  
**Britney** It's one of my mum's. It's got a feather thing ... or something.  
**Danny** Here. Give it back to your mum.  
**Britney** What's wrong with it?  
**Danny** Nothing. Absolutely nothing. They're great. Terrific! Cool!  
**Britney** What you scared of?  
**Danny** Who's scared?  
**Britney** You're not ... ya know ... one of them are ya?

*Danny shakes his head and laughs nervously.*

**Britney** I'm not a virgin ya know.

**Danny** My God! I just remembered. Got this essay. Must be in. Crucial. Sorry!  
**Britney** Wha' about Saturday, then?  
**Danny** Rugby! 'bye!

*Britney exits, peeved. Rugby players run on in track suits led by the teacher. They form a tight group jogging on the spot. Danny puts on his track suit behind the group*

**Coach** Up! Up! Up! Up! Up! Evans! Get those knees up, lad. Up! Up! Up! And stop. Now, listen up. And that includes you Protheroe ... and you Jenkins. (*Danny moves to the front of the Group*) Think of these words. Thrash! Crush! Murder! Annihilate! Got it?

**Group** Yes sir.

**Coach** Now, with me.

*The group shout out the words with the teacher in unison.*

**All** Thrash!! Crush Murder! Annihilate! Thrash! Crush! Murder! Annihilate! **Thrash! Crush!! Murder! Annihilate!** I want you to repeat those words in your sleep. I want you to eat, live and breathe those words twenty four hours a day. And on the day of the match I want you to run on to that pitch screaming those words. Got it?

**Group** Yes sir.

**Coach** Screaming! I want every sinew, every muscle...your very souls to be screaming out those words. Got it?

**Group** Yes sir.

**Coach** Again, with me.

**All** Thrash! Crush! Murder! Annihilate! Thrash! Crush! Murder! Annihilate! **Thrash! Crush! Murder! Annihilate!**

**Coach** Winning is everything! Losing is for losers! Say it!

**Group** Winning is everything! Losing is for losers!

**Coach** If we have to bend a few rules from time to time, so be it. This is a man's game. If we don't do it, they will. Got it?

**Group** Yes sir.

**Coach** But of course, I didn't say that, did I Evans

**Evans** No sir.

**Coach** No sir. So once again, with me.

**All** Thrash! Crush! Murder! Annihilate! Thrash! Crush! Murder! Annihilate! **Thrash! Crush! Murder! Annihilate!**

**Coach** Blake!

**Danny** Yes sir.

**Coach** You're dreaming, lad. Give me ten. The rest ... back and change! Move!

*Danny gets down to perform his ten press-ups. The coach squats beside him.*

**Coach** I worry about you, Blake. I can't make you out. Can you deliver ... that's what I want to know? Have you got the bottle when we get down to the hard yards? Can you deal with pressure, Blake?

*The coach stands and places a foot in the middle of Danny's back, forcing Danny down.*

**Coach** Now push up! Come on! Push, or are you just going to lie there in the mud? Come on!

*Danny tries to push himself up but the coach places more pressure on him forcing his face into the mud.*

**Coach** Happy are we, with our mug in the mud?

*Danny makes another big effort to force himself up.*

**Coach** Is that the best you can do? You'll have to dig deeper than that. You like being pushed around do you, Blake? I think you're a Nancy boy. Is that right? A Nancy boy. Then all boys who do drama are Nancy boys, aren't they. No balls any of 'em. Mummy's boys. No guts. I think we'll put you in the net ball team. How would you like that, Blake?

*Danny makes a sudden twist, grabbing hold of the coach's leg and forcing the coach to fall onto his stomach. Danny quickly sits on the coach's back, pinning one arm up his back.*

**Coach** That's it Blake! At last! That's what I want. I want some fire in the belly.

*Danny stands up exhausted. The coach stands beside him.*

**Coach** There's hope for you yet, Blake. I want to see some of that fire on the field on Saturday. Remember, losing is not an option. Get changed!

*The coach runs off. Danny sits cross-legged. A large mixed group of drama students enter and sit in a space cross-legged. They are followed by the drama teacher, Mr Price, who is carrying a portable compact disc player.*

**Mr Price** Okay, find a partner. Quickly everyone. (*The group stands and get into pairs. Danny is paired with Helen*). Last week we looked at the techniques of fighting with épées, so now, let's try it out. Face your partners side-ways on. Épee in your right hand.

**Jack** (*feigning innocence.*) I haven't got one, sir.

**Mr Price** No, Jack. We are trying to use our imaginations.

*The group giggle at Jack's joke.*

**Mr Price** Left arm held out for balance. Remember, it's light... delicate. Let me see that delicacy go all the way through the fingers of the left hand. Jack! Try! Come on, stand well balanced. Distribute the weight evenly. Hold out the sword. Now, I want this to look like a courtly dance ... but in slow motion. Improvise attack and defence ... make the occasional lunge and try to choreograph a twenty second fight sequence. Ready?

**Jack** Choreograph?

**Mr Price** Plan a fight, Jack

**Jack** Oh.

**Mr Price** I'll play some music so try to synchronise your movements to the rhythm.

**Jack** Synchronise?

**Group** Shut up, Jack

**Mr Price** Okay? Ready?

*The drama teacher plays a tape of Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" suite: the "Capulet's Ball". The scene should demonstrate that the group is capable of interpreting the music with some artistry, even Jack. After a suitable amount of time, enough to create an atmosphere of sensitive work in progress, the school bell rings out loudly. The group immediately begins to exit. The teacher follows them and shouts after them.*

**Mr Price** Right you lot. Rehearsals tomorrow after school ... four till six. No excuses. No sick notes. And Jack ... stop running!

*Helen and Danny are left centre stage.*

**Danny** I borrowed this video ... "Romeo and Juliet". Zeffereilli. Dead good. Could bring it round if you like.

**Helen** Seen it.

**Danny** Oh, right. Wha' did you think?

**Helen** It's all right.

**Danny** Yea! It's okay, isn't it.

**Helen** It's a crap film. Shakespeare's crap. This school's crap. And men are crap.

*Helen runs off. A table and three chairs are brought on. Danny sits on one chair, Eddie sits on another, reading his newspaper, and Maureen is putting a meal on the table.*

**Eddie** Not bleedin' chips again.

**Maureen** You like chips.

**Eddie** Not every day I don't. I'll be lookin' like a bleedin' chip before long. And not fish fingers!

**Maureen** What do you want? Steak? If you do, give me some more house keeping you tight bugger. Tomato ketchup, Danny love?

**Danny** No thanks.

**Eddie** Look at this. Woman wins the lottery and what does she do? Carries on cleaning the bogs at Waterloo. Can you credit that? What sort of moron is that.

**Maureen** So, what would you do?

**Eddie** You wouldn't see my arse for dust. I'd be off ... with a fresh bit of totty on my arm, no messin'.

**Maureen** Thank you.

**Eddie** Don't mention it. And what are you looking so happy about? I'm talking to you, my son, the ponce.

**Maureen** Don't be stupid, Eddie

**Eddie** Well?

**Danny** I'm thinking.

**Eddie** Oh, I beg your pardon. He's thinkin'. There's a novelty. I suppose it's never too late.

**Maureen** What's the matter, Danny?

**Danny** Nothin'.

**Maureen** Something's the matter.

**Eddie** What we need is a bloody good war. That'd give you something to think about, my lad

**Maureen** Eddie, give it a rest. What do you know about wars?

**Eddie** I know all about wars. My family's done their bit.

**Maureen** Here we go.

**Eddie** Korea! Malaya! The Falklands!

**Maureen** Who went to the Falklands?

**Eddie** Frankie. Frankie Baker.

**Maureen** Who's Frankie Baker when he's at home?

**Eddie** Frankie ... for God's sake. Frankie Baker, my cousin. Lives with Karen.

**Maureen** Him. He's not your cousin. He's not even related. They didn't marry.

**Eddie** As far as I'm concerned he's married.

**Maureen** Believe what you want. He's still not married.

*Danny moves into a spot centre stage. Maureen and Eddie freeze.*

**Danny** Sometimes, I wish there was a war to run away to.

*Sudden blackout. Sound of bombs and shells whizzing overhead. Lights up to reveal Danny wearing a helmet, carrying a gun. He is approached by an army officer.*

**General** Well done, Blake. We've taken the hill, thanks to you. By the way, it's Captain Blake now.

**Danny** Thank you, General.

**General** My God! You're wounded man.

**Danny** It's only a flesh wound, sir.

**General** Nurse! Nurse!

*Helen enters wearing a nurse's cape.*

**Helen** Yes sir!

**General** Take care of this officer, will you. Take good care of him.

**Helen** Yes sir.

*Helen places her arms around Danny*

**General** He's an actor you know. They always make the best officers. Good luck, Blake.

**Danny** Thank you, sir.

*General exits.*

**Danny** Now what?

**Helen** It's a field dressing, a good hot bath and a cup of nice cocoa for you, Captain.

**Danny** And then?

**Helen** And then I'm going to wrap you up, nice and cosy, in bed.

**Danny** I'm still a virgin you know.

**Helen** Don't worry. I can cure that.

*Loud explosion. Blackout. Bring up bright lights. Stage filled with party-goers dancing to the latest sounds. There are many imaginative dance sequences on display and one or two people with left feet. The music stops and Jack comes forward.*

**Jack** Right! Belt up! It gives me great pleasure ...

**Samantha** I bet it does.

*The group laugh loudly and ad-lib.*

**Jack** It gives me great pleasure ...

**Jenny** Ooh, Jack! You're just a wild sexual animal. Grrrrrr!  
**Jack** And Jenny ... you're not wrong. Everyone! To Samantha. Happy birthday.  
**Group** Happy birthday.

*The group sings "Happy Birthday". Then a group organise themselves around Samantha to raise her up above their heads and lower her seventeen times. The rest shout out the number of times as it happens. At the end of this Samantha is placed centre stage where Danny is now standing. She places her arms around him and kisses him. As the long kiss progresses the group lets out a long whoop which gains in intensity as the kiss goes on. After the kiss the group goes back to dancing. Samantha dances with Danny.*

**Samantha** So, where's my birthday present?  
**Danny** You've had your present.  
**Samantha** I want more than a box of chocolates. Let's go upstairs. Come on!

*Music stops Everyone freezes. Samantha is frozen in the act of pulling Danny off stage. Danny is leaning back trying to resist. Black enters stage right; White enters stage left.*

**Black** Good old Danny. I think he's about to crack.  
**White** I'm not sure if this is wise Danny.  
**Black** Don't be such a fuddy-duddy. Let the lad live a little. Experience is what he needs.  
**White** He has no feelings for the girl.  
**Black** So what! Are feelings really necessary? They get in the way. Gum up the works. Complicate matters.  
**White** His heart's not in it.  
**Black** So what! He'll be one of the boys. One of the lads. Go for it Danny! Go for it!

*Lights fade to a single spot holding Danny and Samantha. The rest exit.*

**Samantha** Have you got a fag?  
**Danny** Don't smoke.  
**Samantha** What do you do? You don't smoke, you hardly drink ... you don't go with women. You gonna be celibate all your life, or what?  
**Danny** Sorry.  
**Samantha** You've ruined my birthday, that's all.  
**Danny** Sorry.  
**Samantha** I'm not daft. I am on the pill ya know.  
**Danny** Right.  
**Samantha** It's perfectly safe, if that's what you're worried about.  
**Danny** Sorry.  
**Samantha** Mr Perfect! That's you. Or so you think.  
**Danny** I'd better go. Thanks for the party.  
**Samantha** I've got news for you.  
**Danny** Yea.  
**Samantha** Your precious Juliet's late.  
**Danny** What do you mean?  
**Samantha** What do I mean? I mean her monthly visitor didn't turn up. She's overdue. Could be up the spout. Silly bitch! And it gets better. Her boy friend's been posted overseas ... and he doesn't want to know, naturally.

*Cross fade to stage right where Helen is sitting on a chair facing the doctor who is sitting behind a small desk.*

**Helen** I don't want my parents to find out.  
**Doctor** This is all perfectly confidential. What about the father?  
**Helen** He's ... he's abroad.  
**Doctor** And does he know?  
**Helen** Yes.  
**Doctor** What does he think?  
**Helen** I don't want him involved. I just don't.  
**Doctor** So, we go for termination?  
**Helen** Yes.  
**Doctor** Sure?

**Helen** Yes.  
**Doctor** Very well. I'll book you in for next week. How does Wednesday suit you? Wednesday morning ... ten o'clock.? Don't worry! It's all straight forward.  
**Helen** Is it right? What I'm doing ... is it right?  
**Doctor** I thought we'd been through all that. I'm not here to make a moral judgement, Helen. I can only give you medical advice. What's important to you? School? University? A career? A baby?  
**Helen** All those things.  
**Doctor** It needn't be either/or. It could be both ... a baby and the rest. But that could be tough. Tell you what ... go away and think about it. Come and see me next week.

*Cross fade to large group centre stage, grouped for assembly. They sing the last verse of "All things bright and beautiful".*

**Miss Roach** Here we are, already half way through the school year. Time flies! Around the corner ... mocks ... GCSE's ... then 'A' levels for the Sixth. Exciting times ahead for most of you. Who knows where you'll all be in ten years time. Lawyers ... doctors ... surgeons ... politicians ... teachers perhaps; and some of you will become trades people. There's no shame in that. And you'll be living in some leafy suburb I suspect ... couple of kids? Who knows? I'll tell you one thing. Whatever you do, be like the archer, aim high, high above the target if you want to hit the bullseye. What's wrong with the world today? I'll tell you what's wrong with the world today. Not enough spunk. That's the problem. Mediocrity abounds. Easy virtue...easy money ... everything's got to be easy. But remember, easy come, easy go! For some of you the next few months will be the "Hard Yards", as they say on the rugby field. Don't flinch! Don't back off! Dig in! Dig deep and push on until you reach your goal! Is that boy chewing? Yes, you boy. Get it out! Now! I see, it's you Evans. Yes, you are the weakest link. Goodbye! (*Jack Evans creeps off accompanied by nervous laughter from the rest.*) And Britney Price is that lipstick I can see?

**Britney** Yes, Miss Roach

**Miss Roach** Then, wash it off girl, now. If you want to look like a clown, join a circus. (*Britney exits.*) Right! Forms 6a, 6b, 5c, 5d and 5f ... assemble in the gym and await further instructions. Some staff members are absent and you will have to be re-allocated. Lead out! Single file and no shuffling. Barry Watts, do that tie up. You look like a tramp, lad. Single file! How many more times? Single file!

*The group exit leaving Danny and Helen on stage. They are each going over their lines.*

**Danny** "Or am I mad, hearing him talk of Juliet,  
To think it was so? O, give me thy hand,  
One writ with me in sour misfortune's book!"  
**Helen** So where's our Mr Price then?  
**Danny** Having a nervous breakdown like the rest of the staff.  
**Helen** It's no use. I can't concentrate.  
**Danny** Shall we go over Act one?  
**Helen** No. I need to go over this bit. We haven't looked at it yet. You lie there.  
**Danny** We could go down town ... have a coffee?  
**Helen** Lie down!

*Danny lies down, head facing down stage. Helen kneels beside him.*

**Helen** "I will kiss thy lips: Haply some poisons yet doth hang on them,  
To make me die with a restorative."

*She gives him a quick peck on the cheek.*

**Danny** It's supposed to be on the lips ... with a bit of passion.  
**Helen** It will be.  
**Danny** Do it now.  
**Helen** I'm not in the mood.  
**Danny** Do it for art. Do it for Shakespeare. I've brushed my teeth. Fresh mint flavour.  
**Helen** Keep your lips together. I don't want your tongue swishing around my mouth, thank you.  
**Danny** I thought we were supposed to be passionate lovers.  
**Helen** Ready?  
**Danny** Yep!

*Helen kisses Danny*

**Helen** “O, happy dagger!” *(She grabs an imaginary dagger and holds it aloft.)* “This is thy sheath; there rust and let me die.” *(She thrusts the dagger into her heart and falls on top of Danny, who lifts a hand and strokes her hair. She sits up.)* You’re supposed to be dead.

**Danny** No fun being dead.

**Helen** Wonder what it’s like ... being nothing.

**Danny** Well, I don’t believe in pearly gates and Heaven and all that stuff. That’s all religious propaganda to make us think that death doesn’t exist.

**Helen** Suppose so.

**Danny** Anyway, when you think about it we’ve already been dead once.

**Helen** When?

**Danny** Before you were born. You didn’t exist for millions, trillions, billions of years. It was painless.

*Helen stands and starts to exit. Danny stands quickly.*

**The remainder of this play has been deleted from this preview copy, but the following synopsis completes the action ...**

Danny tells Helen that he knows she is pregnant and confesses that he loves her, which she finds difficult to accept. During a school rugby match, Danny injures his arm, but receives little support from his father.

Helen tries to take her own life, while her emotional suicide note is found by her parents. Fortunately, she recovers. Black and White discuss the couples options, but Helen and Danny decide their own route to the future, and whether that future will be surrounded by happiness or heartache.

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For further details on purchasing a full copy of the script, or for information on royalties, please contact :-

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