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**Many thanks,**

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# **RED-HANDED**

**Alan David Pritchard**

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## **Red-Handed**

By Alan David Pritchard

### **Characters**

Brendan - aged 16.

Kurt - aged 16.

Spike - aged 16.

TJ - aged 16.

Father - Kurt's father.

Mum - TJ's Mum.

Miss – teacher.

**(Darkness. Enter Brendan in front of curtains. He laughs defiantly. Suddenly a spotlight on him and he shields his eyes.)**

**Brendan:** The glare. The glare! **(Puts on sunglasses. Peers at audience. Grimaces.)** Oh, it's you. I suppose you want to know why I did it? You people always want to know why. Why did you do it, Brendan? Why? Why? There must be a reason. Everything happens for a reason. Tell us the reason, Brendon. Why did you do it? Well, guess what? I'm never going to tell you. So there. **(Shrugs. Nods to himself. Fidgets.)** What? **(Stares at someone in the audience.)** I told you. I'm not telling you, okay? **(Shakes his head.)** What do you want from me? And don't come with this "We just want you to be honest with us" story. Not with me. Uh, uh. I don't have to tell you anything. And I won't. You will never know.

**Kurt:** **(Offstage. Calls in a hushed tone.)** Brendan!

**Brendan:** **(To the others behind the curtain, also in a hushed tone.)** Coming! **(To the audience.)** Think about that, okay?

**(Fade spotlight. Brendan exits left. The curtains open. He shines a flashlight around the darkness as he, Kurt, TJ and Spike enter upstage left. The boys remain upstage left out of view.)**

**Kurt:** Which way?

**Brendan:** Down here.

**TJ:** **(In a hushed tone, like a narrator on a wildlife programme.)** The gang is making their way to the storeroom. After hours of planning, their plot will soon become a reality. In just a short while, our heroes will enter the forbidden temple to access the secrets of ...

**Kurt:** Shut-up, TJ.

**TJ:** **(Playfully.)** His Master's Voice, I must obey.

**Spike:** Grow up TJ.

**Kurt:** Brendan, where's the key. Where's the key?

**Brendan:** Relax. I've got it.

**(The sound of a door being unlocked and opened. The boys make their way to the area between the tables.)**

**Kurt:** Where's the light switch?

**Brendan:** It's outside the door. Hold on. Back in a mo. **(Exits downstage left, swinging the flashlight, and then turns it off so the stage is totally dark.)**

**TJ:** Our heroes wait for the light. But will we ever see the light? Will we? Won't we? **(The lights go on.)**

**TJ:** ... And we do! Ta daa!

**(Unseen, Brendan walks out through the side door and locks it behind him. He exits.)**

**Spike:** Get a life, TJ.

**TJ:** Get a wife, Spike.

**Kurt:** **(At the filing cabinet.)** Where's the key for this thing?

**Spike:** Brendan's got it. No ... **(To TJ.)** You've got it.

**TJ:** I refuse to comment until I've had a chance to talk to my lawyer. **(To Spike.)**  
You were supposed to bring it.

**Spike:** Brendan said he gave it to you. **(Calls.)** Brendan!

**TJ:** That's not what he told me.

**Kurt:** Excuse me. Sorry, I couldn't help but overhear what you were saying, and I just, like, want to make sure before I punch the crap out of both of you – where is the key for this thing?

**Spike:** Brendan's got it. **(Calls.)** Brendan! **(To others.)** He definitely has it.

**(There is no response from Brendan.)**

**Spike:** Brendan! Where is he?

**Kurt:** This is not funny.

**TJ:** Now what, folks?

**Kurt:** Shut-up TJ.

**Spike:** **(Exits upstage left.)** Brendan! Where's the ... Brendan, where are you? **(He tries to open the door.)** What the ...? Brendan, stop mucking about! Come on Brendan! I don't believe this. He's locked us in. **(He bangs on the door, and again tries to open it.)** Kurt! TJ! Brendan, stop messing around.

**Kurt:** He wouldn't dare ...

**TJ:** Da da daaaa!

**(Kurt and TJ exit upstage left to join Spike.)**

**Spike:** Open the door!

**Kurt:** Brendan! This is not funny!

**Spike:** Kurt, call his mobile.

**Kurt:** I left mine in the dorm, charging. TJ, you call him.

**TJ:** I didn't bring mine either.

**Kurt:** What do you mean you didn't bring your phone? What's wrong with you?

**TJ:** What do you mean 'what's wrong with me?' Mine's also charging. Oh, oh. This is not good. Spike, you call him.

**Spike:** I didn't bring mine, either,

**Kurt:** So, none of us have our phones? How are we supposed to take photos of the exam papers? If he's locked this door, I'm going to kick his face in. **(Tries door.)** I don't have time for this crap. Brendan!

**TJ:** This is a real show stopper, folks. Who knows what will happen next? Wait, what? Seriously? None of us brought our phones?

**Spike:** It's four o'clock in the morning. I didn't think I would need my phone. Brendan said we could use his to take photos of the exam papers. Brendan! Open up! Where's the key?

**TJ:** If you know the answer, send it to us on a post card to the following address ...

**Spike:** TJ, tune into reality, pal. We're locked in!

**TJ:** No, we're not. This is a prank. He'll come back now.

**Kurt:** And when he does, I swear I'm going to kick him in the nuts ... Brendan!

**Spike:** Sssh- the caretaker, stupid! Keep your voice down. Let's just go back and get the exam papers. There's probably a window somewhere.

**Kurt:** **(Enters stage left.)** Get what papers? The cabinet is locked, and ... **(Looks around.)** ...there's no effing window. This better be a flipping prank, because I'm going to hit someone soon ...

**(Spike and TJ enter stage left.)**

**Spike:** Relax, alright? This is not our fault. I thought there was something fishy about this right from the start. Brendan's done this deliberately.

**Kurt:** If he has really locked us in, do you have any idea what that means?

**TJ:** He'll never do something like this. This is only a prank, a joke. He's coming back now, you'll see.

**Spike:** TJ, boy, like your brains, he's gone. Wake up, pal.

**TJ:** He's our mate, one of the gang.

**Kurt:** I'm going to hit him so hard he'll wish...

**Spike:** Dammit, this can't be happening.

**TJ:** It's a joke. He'll come back.

**Spike:** Your life is a joke.

**TJ:** We are locked in.

**Kurt:** What are we supposed to do now? Huh? Do you know what this means?

**Spike:** No, Kurt, both of us have no idea just how much ... Well, maybe that does apply to TJ here, so, please enlighten the lad.

**Kurt:** It means we're going to be expelled. It means...

**Spike:** Why would he do this to us?

**TJ:** The plot thickens ...

**Spike:** The only thick thing around here is you.

**Kurt:** We must get out of here. I swear I'm going to kill him. This is not funny. **(Goes searching, off left.)** There has to be a way out of here.

**Spike:** There is: the door – and it's locked.

**Kurt:** **(Off.)** Brendan!

**Spike:** There is nothing we can do, Kurt. We're trapped.

**TJ:** Will our heroes escape from this one, folks? Where is Superman when you need him most? Where are our phones when we need them most?

**Spike:** Shut-up, TJ.

**Kurt:** **(Kicks boxes off stage.)** I don't believe this! **(Enters stage left.)** I don't flipping believe this!

**Spike:** Relax, Kurt. We must stay calm. There is nothing any of us can do right now.

**Kurt:** We have to get out of here.

**Spike:** We can't!

**TJ:** This is it, folks. This is real life...

**Spike:** Shut-up, TJ

**Kurt:** I'm not going to sit and wait for a teacher to open the door later and find us here. I'm already in enough trouble. God, I swear I'm going to beat the crap out of Brendan. He'll wish he had never met me. I am going to kick his face in!

**Spike:** Stop panicking Kurt.

**Kurt:** Who said I am panicking? I'm not panicking. I'm about to explode, but I am not panicking!

**TJ:** How does he do it, folks? How does this young man cope under pressure?

**Kurt:** TJ, if you don't shut up, I'm going to...

**Father:** **(Enters from stage right. He talks to Kurt from other side of table.)** Kurt!

**Kurt:** What?!

**Father:** Come here!

**Kurt:** What have I done now?

**Father:** Where is it?

**Kurt:** Where is what?

**Father:** Don't play games with me! Where is the fifty quid I left on the table this morning?

**Kurt:** I don't know what you are talking about.

**Father:** It won't help you to get smart with me, my boy. I left fifty pounds on the kitchen table this morning and now it's gone. Come here!

**Kurt:** I don't know what you are talking about.

**Father:** Dear Lord ... **(Looks up.)** ... please forgive my son for being a liar. Forgive his evil ways. Let the blood of your sweet son wash away his iniquities.

**Kurt:** I didn't take the money!

**Father:** You need to pray my boy. You must ask for forgiveness.

**Kurt:** I didn't do it.

**Father:** **(Almost strikes Kurt across the face.)** Don't lie to me!

**Kurt:** **(Is close to hitting back. Stops. To the others as if nothing has happened.)** I swear if I get hold of Brendan, I'll pulverize the crap out of him. I'll kill him.  
**(Father exits stage right.)**

**Spike:** Why would he do something like this? What have we ever done to him?

**TJ:** Maybe there is a way out...

**Kurt:** There isn't. I've checked. Dammit, I don't believe this is happening.

**TJ:** Maybe Brendan will come back?

**Spike:** Why don't you tune into the BBC and find out?

**TJ:** What's your problem?

**Spike:** No, our problem is that we are stuck here because someone we thought was our friend locked us in.

**TJ:** **(Stands on table, left.)** Ten floors up. TJ stares down at his destiny. His doom.

**Mum:** **(Enters from stage left.)** TJ! What are you doing up there?

**TJ:** I'm going to jump, Mum.

**Mum:** Oh, no you are not. Not wearing that shirt, you're not. Look at it. It's filthy. What will people think of me when they see your body on the pavement? I'll tell you what. They'll say you jumped because his mum never washed his shirts. That's what they'll think. Is that what you want? Is that what you want people to think of your mother?

**TJ:** Mum, I'm scared.

**Mum:** You should be scared – of catching a cold! Where's that nice jumper ...ha, ha, jumper... I bought you?

**TJ:** Mum, I have something to tell you.

**Mum:** **(Hearing a knock on the door offstage.)** Not now, TJ. Mommy's got to go. Oh, and if you decide to jump, make sure to clean up after yourself. I don't want Brian to think I have a weird child. **(Exits stage left.)**

**TJ:** Brian? Who the hell's Brian? **(Gets off table.)** Well, folks, what are we going to do now?

**Kurt:** My old man's going to kill me.

**TJ:** My mum will probably check behind my ears to make sure I've bathed.

**Kurt:** I bet you Brendan's with the Head right now. They'll probably call the police.

**Spike:** It's too early to do that. The Head's still asleep.

**TJ:** Call the police? He won't do that, will he?

**Kurt:** I'll break his knees first.

**Spike:** I don't know what his problem is. He's screwed up our entire lives.

**TJ:** I've never been in trouble with the police before.

**Kurt:** I'll stick fish hook through his eyes and hang him up by the lids.

**Spike:** Kurt, you are one sick child.

**TJ:** They won't call the police, will they?

**Kurt:** If they did, what're we going to tell them?

**Spike:** That we went out on a stroll, got lost, and ended up here. At four o'clock in the bloody morning.

**Kurt:** Don't start with me Spike. Not now.

**TJ:** **(Like a boxing announcer.)** And in the left-hand corner we have...

**Spike:** TJ, if you don't stop this crap...

**TJ:** Yes, folks. Tensions are rising here at the...

**Kurt:** Shut it, TJ. We've got to think of a way of getting out of this.

**Spike:** We can't, you idiot. We're stuck. That pus-sucking, vomit-faced friend of ours has locked us in. We're trapped. Get the picture? There is no way out. We're stuck.

**Kurt:** Well, I don't know what to do. **(Scratches his head.)** I like, literally, have no idea what to do. Seriously.

**Spike:** There's nothing we can do. If Brendan doesn't come back, we're going to be caught red-handed. It's happened. This is a thing. We have to accept it.

**TJ:** Mum!

**Mum:** **(Off.)** Not now dear. Michael and I are going for a drink.

**TJ:** Michael? Who the hell's Michael?

**Spike:** I need a drink.

**Kurt:** I need a smoke.

**Spike:** No, I meant – of water.

**Kurt:** Sure, you did.

**TJ:** Don't try this at home kids. Smoking can ruin your health.

**Kurt:** Why don't we wake the caretaker? Maybe we could hide and when he comes in we can ...

**Spike:** Oh, good, yes. Good one. Let's add assault and battery to other charges like breaking and entering.

**Kurt:** We didn't break in. Maybe we could bribe him? How much money do you have? I've only got fifty quid.

**Spike:** You don't get it, do you? There's nothing we can do! And how the hell are we going to wake the caretaker without waking any of the other teachers on duty?

**TJ:** I didn't know you smoked.

**Kurt:** I don't.

**Miss:** **(Enters stage right.)** Spike?

**Spike:** Miss?

**Miss:** Spike, I'll get straight to the point. We're really worried about you.

**Spike:** I'm fine, Miss.

**Miss:** You haven't been yourself lately. And believe me, we understand why. But you need to talk about what you are going through.

**Spike:** Miss, I'm okay, alright? I'm fine.

**Miss:** Are you drinking, Spike?

**Spike:** I'm shocked that you could even think that, Miss. What's your problem?

**Miss:** Because if you are, we can help you. But you need to be honest with us. You must open up and share your pain. Don't bottle it up.

**Spike:** Bottle it up? Very funny. I don't drink. Why don't you believe me?

**Miss:** I'm here if you need someone to talk to. **(She exits stage right.)**

**TJ:** Our heroes are in a predicament. Kurt needs a smoke or to hit someone; Spike needs a drink.

**Spike:** And, TJ, you need a therapist. Stop your crap.

**TJ:** Excuse me for trying to lighten the mood...

**Spike:** You couldn't even light a match.

**TJ:** Very funny.

**Spike:** Of course, you'd find this funny. People with no brains find everything funny.

**TJ:** What's your problem? Run out of beer?

**Spike:** Come on, TJ, if you want a fight ...

**Kurt:** Stop it, both of you, just stop it.

**TJ:** Kurt's right. We shouldn't be fighting.

**Spike:** We're not fighting. We're arguing.

**TJ:** It's bad enough being let down by one friend this morning already.

**Spike:** He's not a friend. A friend would never do something like this. An enemy yes, not a friend. Oh God, I need a drink. Shut up, TJ.

**TJ:** I haven't said a word.

**Spike:** Just in case.

**Kurt:** Spike, what's the worst that can happen to us?

**Spike:** Well, we will probably get expelled from this boarding school. And possibly even end up with a police record. I don't know. I don't want to think about it. There's nothing we can do.

**Kurt:** My old man will kill me.

**Spike:** They might even call the "Evening News". Hey, TJ, you'll finally get your picture in the paper. I can see the headline now: "Intrepid Intruders Foiled by So-called Friend."

**Kurt:** How could this happen? I thought everything was so well-planned.

**Spike:** It was. By Brendan. I'm telling you. We've been set up.

**TJ:** So, maybe it's not our fault? Maybe we won't be in that much trouble? I mean, he stole the key to this room, didn't he? And he told us not to bring our phones so that, if things went pear-shaped, there would only be evidence on one phone: his.

**Spike:** Oh, we're in trouble all right. We're here, remember? Brendan will probably tell the Headmaster that it was our plan all along, and that we roped him into this, or some sort of crap like that.

**TJ:** The plot thickens as our heroes probe the mystery for the missing pieces of the puzzle...

**Spike:** We're so not heroes.

**Kurt:** When my old man finds out...

**TJ:** Tch! Every school has its kids who push the boundaries until they break. We're just a couple of naughty kids who tried to steal some exam papers by breaking in...oh, God – we *are* criminals. We're going to go to jail.

**Father:** **(Off.)** Kurt!

**Spike:** Even if we could escape, we're still trapped.

**Father:** Kurt!

**Kurt:** Oh, God. What?

**Father:** **(Enters stage right, holding a bible.)** I found this in the bin.

**TJ:** Mum!

**Mum:** **(Off.)** Not now, dear. Mummy's got a date.

**Kurt:** I know. I threw it away.

**Father:** God knows everything, Kurt. He knows what's in your heart. You can throw this into the sea, but you can't throw God out of your life. He knows what you are feeling. He loves you so much that he will never leave you.

**Kurt:** What are you talking about?

**Father:** Lord, give me strength to deal with this. Father, I don't know what to do. I'm losing control of my son, because he is turning away from you.

**Kurt:** What if I told you I don't believe in God?

**Father:** If you are not for me, then you are against me. Are you really against God, son?

**Kurt:** According to you, I've been against God all my life. I'm evil, remember?

**Father:** You're not evil son. But the things you do are. The devil is cunning. He's always on the prowl. He'll blind you with the temptations of the world. He'll make you think you are having a good time. You must resist. "Be ye perfect as I am perfect."

**Kurt:** So now I'm a Satanist?

**Father:** **(Looks up.)** Lord, forgive him, forgive Kurt. Don't let him drive you out of his life. **(To Kurt.)** Every time a lamb strays, an angel weeps. God loves you so much.

**Kurt:** What do you know about love? If I did something really bad, could you forgive me? Not just naughty, but really bad ... could you?

**Father:** All things are possible through Christ, our Lord.

**Kurt:** **(Looks up.)** Then get me out of here!

**Spike:** I need a drink.

**(Father exits stage right.)**

**TJ:** I need my phone.

**Miss:** **(Enters, stage right, holding a beer bottle.)** Spike?

**Spike:** Leave me alone.

**TJ:** Wait. So, Superman's not coming to save us?

**Miss:** Look what we found in your PE bag. What is this?

**Spike:** Gee, let me take a guess... I know what it is. It's not mine. And what are you doing going through my stuff? You have no right!

**Miss:** Then you shouldn't leave your stuff lying around the sports hall. I'm disappointed, Spike.

**Spike:** How tragic. How utterly unexpected.

**Miss:** Everybody's trying to reach out to you and you're pushing them away. We just want to help you with your problem ...

**Spike:** Who said I've got a problem? And what is this "we" business? You're the only one I've confided in at this school. I don't believe this. Why did you have to go tell everyone? Who else knows? I thought you said our conversations were confidential?

**Miss:** That's not fair, Spike.

**Spike:** Oh, dear. Well get this, nothing is. There's no point to anything.

**TJ:** Mum, I'm scared.

**(Miss exits stage right.)**

**Mum:** **(Off.)** TJ, I'm busy.

**TJ:** Did I say I was scared? I'm petrified, Ma.

**Kurt:** **(Begins pacing.)** This is not good. I don't like it. I want to hit something.

**Spike:** Well, don't take it out on us.

**TJ:** Tensions are rising...

**Spike:** If you must hit something hit him. Maybe the blow will wake him up.

**TJ:** If you are offended by cheap violence, then please close your eyes ...

**(Kurt moves towards TJ.)**

**TJ:** This is it, folks. This is real life.

**Spike:** Don't provoke him, TJ. And for God's sake, stop your nonsense. You wouldn't know real life if it crawled up your leg and bit you on the arse. You're always away with the fairies. Maybe you are a ...

**Kurt:** Why are you always so insulting?

**Spike:** I'm not insulting, I'm sarcastic. There's a big difference.

**Kurt:** No, really. Sometimes you're, like, really nasty.

**Spike:** Since when have you become so sensitive? I don't ask you why you are so fond of beating people up. Leave me alone.

**TJ:** Leave him, Kurt. It's me he insults. Not you. He's too scared to insult you.

**Spike:** No, I'm not.

**Kurt:** You should be.

**Spike:** Come on, TJ. I don't really insult you. I mean, you're my buddy. We're all friends. What? Are you saying you can't handle my little remarks? You're not that soft, are you?

**TJ:** Of course not, deep down I'm the Man of Steel.

**Spike:** Hit him, Kurt.

**Kurt:** Dammit! I don't want to be here! I want to get out of this flipping place.

**Spike:** Sssh. You'll wake the neighbours.

**Kurt:** I don't give a flying...

**Spike:** Careful, Kurt.

**Kurt:** We have to do something!

**Spike:** There's no way out, Kurt. How many more flipping times do I have to tell you that? Huh? What do you want? Do you want me to write it out for you? Do you want me to spell it out for you? Huh?

**Kurt:** Maybe we could unhinge the door.

**Spike:** **(Becomes hysterical.)** There's nothing we can do! There is no way out! Here - I'll write it out for you ... **(Looks around for some paper. He spots a sheet on the top of the filing cabinet, grabs it, places it on the table and pretends to write.)** T-h-e-r-e-i-s no... hello, What's this? **(Holds up paper.)** I don't believe it, check this out.

**(The others gather around.)**

**Spike:** Ha! I don't believe this. Look at this. **(Reads.)** Prefect nominations twenty-eighteen to twenty-nineteen. Oh, my God.

**Kurt:** Brendan's probably head boy or something.

**TJ:** So that's why...

**Spike:** Wait, wait, wait. Hold on. **(Reads.)** Final list... Thomas James Harris.

**Kurt:** TJ?

**TJ:** They made me a prefect?

**Spike:** Wait, fasten your seat-belts...

**TJ:** They made me a prefect.

**Spike:** **(Reads.)** Kurt Reich.

**Kurt:** Me? Don't talk crap. **(Grabs Paper. Reads furiously.)** I don't believe it. **(Shocked.)** I'm a flipping prefect. **(Reads on.)** Ah ... wait ... ha, ha... Jeremy Spickleton. Spike.

**Spike:** There's something very odd about this school.

**Kurt:** Check this, it's even signed by the Head and everything. And get this: Brendan's not on the list.

**TJ:** I'm a prefect. I'm a prefect.

**Spike:** Which means... of course. He's peeved because we got in and he didn't.

**TJ:** Well, I was a prefect. None of us will be prefects now.

**Kurt:** I swear, when I see Brendan again, I'm going to ...

**Spike:** So, in order to get brownie points with the Head he devised this whole thing.

**Kurt:** But how would he know about the list?

**Spike:** He had the key, remember? What's the bet he came here a couple of ... When did we come up with this plan?

**TJ:** Friday.

**Spike:** He probably came here on Thursday, checked out the exam papers for himself and found this. **(Takes paper.)** See?

**Kurt:** Why would they make me prefect? After all the crap I have caused ...

**TJ:** I didn't even think they knew I was alive.

**Spike:** So, he planned this whole flipping thing!

**TJ:** Good ole Brendan does it again.

**Kurt:** I'm not prefect material. How ... Why would they make me prefect? This is, like, totally weird.

**Spike:** You know that this just makes things worse...

**TJ:** My mum would have been thrilled.

**Kurt:** I thought they hated me.

**Spike:** If we can prove he set us up ... no ... we're still in trouble for choosing to go along with it. Dammit.

**Mum:** **(Off.)** TJ!

**TJ:** Mum?

**Mum:** **(Rushes on stage left.)** Oh, my baby! I've just heard the news! This is fabulous! **(Hugs him across the table.)** I'm so proud of you! **(Rushes off, left.)** I can't wait to tell Philip.

**TJ:** Philip? Who the hell's Philip? **(To the others.)** Do you think they'll tell our folks about this prefect thing?

**Spike:** Of course, they will.

**TJ:** But they can't. They mustn't.

**Spike:** They will.

**Kurt:** So, if we'd chosen not to go along with this plan, our lives would have been completely different.

**TJ:** They'll probably tell the whole school.

**Spike:** Yes, folks. The secret life of Tommy Harris will be revealed to all. We're going to probe his dark closet and reveal his skeletons. Imagine the comments on Instagram!

**Kurt:** But I thought ... me a prefect?

**TJ:** My mum will love me for this.

**Kurt:** Okay, I can understand why they'd choose you, TJ. And maybe even you, Spike.

**Spike:** Thank you, Kurt. I didn't even know you cared.

**TJ:** You've got good qualities, Kurt. You're ... strong leadership material. Okay, you tend to lose your temper sometimes. I don't know how many people you've beaten up already ...

**Kurt:** I'll beat you up. No, seriously. I, like, don't understand this.

**TJ:** Maybe they see something we don't?

**Spike:** They'll see us here in a few hours, you idiot. Oh God, we'll be lectured to death.

**Miss:** (Off.) Spike! Spike!

**Spike:** Here we go ...

**Miss:** (Enters stage right.) I'm very disappointed in you, Spike. Very disappointed.

**Spike:** That's just too bad, Miss.

**Miss:** Everything was going so well ...

**Spike:** How would you know, Miss? You only know what I tell you. And now apparently everyone knows what I tell you. But, you don't really know the truth about me. About what I have been through. You have no idea. You have no perception.

**Miss:** We see more than you give us credit for, Spike.

**Spike:** Yes, but you only see one side! And sometimes I think you only see what you want to see. Because it's convenient to classify, to analyse, to dissect.

**Miss:** Is that what you really think?

**Spike:** That's what I know, Miss. None of you people really understand what is going on. You think you know the reasons why I do things. If I do something and it conforms to your theories, then you think you've got it sorted. Wham. He's an alcoholic. Well, we know how to treat that. He's a drug addict. Well, we know how to deal with that. He has ... personal issues ... Easy, we'll get him to open up. Open up? What does that mean? Open up so that you can probe and criticise? So that you can poke and leer and come to conclusions about me?

**Miss:** You're a confused teenager who is struggling to come to terms with himself.

**Spike:** There you go again. Presto! He's a confused teenager. Let's patronise him.

**Miss:** You're such a lovely person, Spike. Why do you want the world to see this side of you?

**Spike:** Because it's there! And maybe if you realized that you would see that there are other sides to me as well. And for the record, I don't open up to you because you can't keep quiet.

**Miss:** Wait just a minute, mister. Now you're out of line. I don't know how to deal with you ...

**Spike:** What a pity.

**Miss:** Because you haven't given me the chance to get to understand you. I don't understand you because I don't know you, and I don't know you because you are too scared to show your real feelings. And if I need to seek the advice from people who know more than I do, or who have more experience than I, then I do it because I want to help. We all do. But you have

so many walls around you that it's impossible to get through to you. And we want to help you because we know those walls don't just keep the world out, but they also keep you trapped inside. And everything else gets trapped inside as well. And it gets lonely in there, but if you want to have it your way then I will respect your wishes. I'll leave you alone. We all will.

**(She exits stage right.)**

**TJ:** They won't really tell our parents about this prefect thing, will they?

**Spike:** We have no-one to blame but ourselves ...

**Kurt:** What's so great about being a prefect anyway? I mean – you know what lives we lead around here – if we were to be prefects, we'd be hypocrites, wouldn't we?

**Spike:** Why can't I ever say what I want to say in a way that's simple for everyone to understand?

**TJ:** Spike, Spike – you're losing us.

**Spike:** No. The bottom line is we broke into here because we're too lazy to study. And that's exactly what they are going to think. And nothing we can say will change their minds about us. We can't talk our way out of it.

**Father:** **(Off.)** Kurt! Kurt!

**Kurt:** Oh, no...

**Father:** **(Enters stage right.)** I just had a call from the headmaster...

**Kurt:** Oh, crap.

**Father:** I didn't know you were made a prefect. Why didn't you tell me?

**Kurt:** **(Visibly relieved, sighs.)** Because it would probably be the answer to your prayers.

**Father:** I haven't been praying for this.

**Kurt:** You know what I mean.

**Father:** No, no, I don't. Tell me.

**Kurt:** What's the point...?

**Father:** Just be honest.

**Kurt:** I didn't tell you because I was scared it would mean God has made me acceptable in your eyes.

**Father:** All things are possible ...

**Kurt:** Father, Father! I'm not one of your congregation. Wake up. I'm your son. And I lost all respect for your rantings about the Lord a long time ago, so stop it. Please. Stop talking to me from the Bible.

**Father:** When?

**Kurt:** When what?

**Father:** When did you lose respect for me?

**Kurt:** The day you brought Grandad round here after Nanna died.

**Father:** That was years ago...

**Kurt:** And you and uncle Morgan argued about where he was going to stay. Remember? You still told me to go outside. And I did. But I looked through the window of the room Grandad was sleeping in – except he wasn't sleeping. He was on the bed, listening to you. And he was crying. Even I could hear your voices outside.

**Father:** No, wait, Kurt. I can explain. You don't understand.

**Kurt:** Then you threw him into some home where he knew nobody, and he had to die alone. And don't tell me God instructed you to do that. Because the God I believe in would never allow something like that to happen.

**Father:** (Looks at Kurt for a long time.) Listen to me ...

**Kurt:** And all your sermons about God and love are wasted on me. And yes, I did take the money. And, yes, I knew that you knew I took it. But I wanted you to ask me why. Why I took it.

**Father:** (Silence, then ...) Why did you take the money?

**Kurt:** Because if I had asked you for it, you would've wanted to know why I needed it. And if I told you I wanted to go out with my mates, just to get out of the house, to spend some time with my friends, you would have given me a sermon about the evils of Satan and how he is going to tempt me. I just wanted to be with my friends. And they are not bad people – despite what happened that one time.

**Father:** What do you want me to say, Kurt? That I'm sorry? That I'm wrong?

**Kurt:** And I promise you, at the end of next year, when I am out of this school, I'm not coming to stay with you. I'm leaving your house. I'm getting out of there. I don't know how, and I don't know where, but I'm going. I'm sick of being boxed in like a prisoner, too afraid to be myself. You never let me do anything. I need to breathe.

**Father:** And what if I told you, that when you move out, I'm going to move in with you?

**Kurt:** That'll, like, never flipping happen.

**Father:** (He nods as if to say: Think about that.) I can only live by what I believe. I know what the world is like. And I know how important it is to have a good sense of true values in life. Every day you hear about kids getting involved in drugs and knives and goodness knows what else. Do you have any idea how worrying that is for a parent? I haven't told you about the problems Uncle Morgan had when he was your age. You have no idea. And what if I told you that your grandfather wasn't crying because Uncle Morgan and I were arguing. That he was crying because he had lost the only reason he had to live. Uncle Morgan and I weren't arguing about *where* he was going to stay – your grandfather didn't want to stay with either of us – we were arguing about *who* was going to *pay*. Your grandfather would never stay with Uncle Morgan because, well, your uncle has issues. And he did not want to stay with me because my preaching drove him mad. And me, out of his house when I was your age. You've been angry at me for all the wrong reasons ...

**Kurt:** Father...

**Father:** Son ...

**TJ:** I think I'm going to be sick.

(Father exits stage right.)

**Spike:** Chill, TJ. There's nothing we can do. All of this because we're too lazy to study.

**TJ:** I'm not lazy. I'm just not very good at studying. And I need good grades because ... because I am tired of being the one who never gets good grades. That's my excuse.

**Kurt:** I hate studying. That's my excuse. That plus the fact that I am, basically, lazy. But that's not my fault. If you knew the kind of pressure my old man puts on me ...

**TJ:** Same here. But different. My mum is always so eager to brag about me. It's a lot of pressure. I wish I could fast-forward this to a time when we look back and laugh at it all.

**Spike:** Odd how nothing seems to have a happy ending.

**Kurt:** At least we are going through this together.

**TJ:** I have never been in this much trouble before. I wonder what my mum will think. It's her fault I'm in this mess.

**Spike:** Look at what we are doing. His fault, her fault, everyone's fault. We can blame the world until we are blue in the face – when that door opens soon, we need a credible excuse

for being in here. Except ... there isn't one. Everyone knows this is where the exam papers are stored. There is no other reason for being here. Especially at this time of the morning. So, we cannot blame anyone because ... because that is what we always do round here. We are experts at blaming others rather than taking responsibility for our choices. And we chose to break in here. And here we are. No amount of reasons or excuses or blaming others will help us.

**TJ:** So, there's no Superman to save us? My whole life's been a lie.

**Kurt:** My dad's actually not a bad guy. He'll probably blame the devil, rather than me. Don't worry, TJ. We'll protect you. I will sort out anyone who hassles you, and Spike ... Spike will be sarcastic to people who diss you. We'll go through this together.

**TJ:** I'm hungry, and I'm depressed, and I'm scared.

**Spike:** Tell me about it.

**Kurt:** We all are. I'm also scared. But Spike's right. We have to take what comes our way. We'll still be alive when all this is over.

**TJ:** I wish it were all over. Dammit, why did I choose to go along with this idea?

**Spike:** Don't blame us, Spike. We were all worried about failing the exams.

**TJ:** I wasn't as worried as you.

**Kurt:** I was worried. I need the good grades more than you realise.

**TJ:** I'm not sure I can handle any of this. I've never been in so much trouble.

**Kurt:** Trouble's my middle name. Except, I've always been able to fight my way out of things, and now we must just take what's coming to us. Spike's right: we must face up to our choices.

**Spike:** Kurt and I will probably take the brunt of it. We'll tell them we bullied you into joining us, or something. I don't know. But we'll look after you.

**TJ:** Will we go to jail?

**Spike:** What is it with you and jail? Oh, your dad. Oh, God, sorry. No. I don't think that will happen. Don't worry, TJ. It won't be easy. I don't think any of us know what's going to happen later. Or how to deal with it. But Kurt's right. At least we'll go through it together.

**TJ:** You don't know what my mum's like. She'll have more reason to ignore me now.

**Kurt:** Only for a short while.

**TJ:** What am I saying? She already ignores me.

**Kurt:** No, she doesn't. Parents just freak out when we turn into ourselves and not what they wanted us to be.

**TJ:** You don't know her, man. She's weird. I'm telling you. I've got a weird mother. She parties way more than I do. She ... she does housework at three in the morning. She lives in a world of her own. I'm convinced I'm some kind of inconvenience in her life. Like a stray dog that won't go away. And it's the boyfriend this and the boyfriend that. Last time I was home, I let off a fire cracker in the lounge. And I called to her, shouting that I had been shot. And you know what she shouted back? "Don't spill blood on the carpet. My boyfriend's coming over." I'm telling you ... she's not normal. And she won't freak out because of what I did wrong – she'll freak out because she's worried what her latest boyfriend may think.

**Kurt:** You think that's bad ... Remember, my old man's minister of the church. Imagine what he'll do when he finds out.

**Spike:** Back to the reformatory for me.

**TJ:** Reformatory? What are you talking about? Is there something you are not telling us?

**Spike:** Did I say reformatory? I was just trying to be ... it's a joke ... But hey – that's life. We live by the choices we make.

**TJ:** I don't think my mum will throw me out. She's weird, but she won't do that.

**Kurt:** Parents eventually forgive. And sometimes there is no one to blame but yourself. We can't really blame Brendan. Even though I still want to smack him.

**TJ:** Are you going to?

**Kurt:** **(After a while.)** Nah. I know I'll end up in more trouble if I did. I think I'm in enough trouble for now. No. Let's, like, just ignore him, that's all. Leave bad things and go to good things. I'm tired of feeling angry.

**Spike:** Funny how the truth hurts, sometimes. Always. Brendan will wake up sooner or later. In the meantime, I'll just keep quiet. I don't need him in my life. As far as I'm concerned, he's dirt. I don't want to mix with him.

**TJ:** He's the criminal.

**Spike:** Maybe. Maybe not. Listen, I'm sorry if I ... you know ... sometimes say things ... I don't know ... hurt. I say things without thinking.

**Kurt:** My old man's the minister, not me. This is not confession time.

**Spike:** I know. I just ... I just wanted to ... get that off my chest.

**TJ:** Actually, I have been in this much trouble before. The last time I tried to bungee jump off the balcony.

**Spike:** But ... you live on the ground floor.

**TJ:** I know, but my trainers were leaving marks on the railing – which my mum had just polished.

**Spike:** And her boyfriend was coming over?

**TJ:** Exactly.

**Spike:** I know. I remember the last time I visited you, she moaned at me because I didn't wipe my feet on the doormat. TJ, did you tell Kurt about the farting cushion story?

**Kurt:** Not another farting cushion? My old man still hasn't forgiven you for that incident in the church.

**TJ:** No, no. No, this was when we last had a weekend pass. One of mum's many boyfriends was coming over for dinner.

**Kurt:** You didn't ...

**TJ:** **(Nods.)** Except ...

**Kurt:** **(Smiles.)** I wish I'd been there.

**TJ:** Except, well you know we've only got three chairs in the dining room? And the boyfriend sits on the one next to my mum. But I decided to leave the room because I didn't want to be there when he sat down because I knew I would laugh before it happened. So, I leave the room. The boyfriend arrives and sits on my chair, and my mum – don't ask me – I've given up trying to understand anything she does – sits in his place. and you know she is not a small woman. So, anyway, she sits down ...

**(All three boys look towards the door stage right as the sound of footsteps is heard.)**

**Spike:** Sssh!

**(They hear the rattle of keys. BLACKOUT. They hear the door being opened.)**

**CURTAIN**

SETTING A store room in a boys' boarding school. This is minimally represented by three tables in a horseshoe formation, with one table in the middle of the stage, and one on the left and right. Most of the action takes place within the space boxed in by the tables. When Father, Mum and Miss appear, they stand on the outside of the table, talking across them to the other characters. There is a filing cabinet at the back of the enclosed space.

TIME 4 am

PROPS LIST

Flashlight (Brendan)

Cardboard box (Offstage for Kurt to kick.)