

CHARACTERS

JAMES

GLEN

TOBY

MATT

SAM

KIERAN

TRISTAN

HENRY

MICHAEL

Nine male actors, aged about 17, play these roles.

HENRY is Singaporean and could be of Chinese or Indian background.

The others can be who they are. I encourage casting actors who can reflect the diversity of our evolving culture.

Some of the actors will need to take on the voices of other characters. These characters are STONE, DEZZY, PERCIVAL, MISS, JULIA, SHANNON, CASSIE, GIRL, and CATHY. For the most part they needn't 'become' the actual character in anything much more than a shift of vocal quality and the use of gestures and presence. But it might be fun to play about and find what works for you.

SETTING

On stage there could be a large structure that can be climbed. Perhaps it's made of twisted school chairs and desks or things from childhood. This structure could be destroyed by GLEN and SAM when they have a rampage towards the end of the play.

TEXT NOTE

/ denotes a point of interruption and generally indicates overlapping dialogue. Dialogue after the first / begins at the same time as dialogue after the second.

Dialogue in italics is reported speech: a line that the boys are quoting from someone else.

All characters are fictional and any resemblance to actual people is unintentional.

MICHAEL *stands before us. Then there is a moment, perhaps a flash of light at which point he vanishes, to be replaced by the eight others:* JAMES, GLEN, TOBY, MATT, SAM, KIERAN, TRISTAN, *and* HENRY.

JAMES: It's Wednesday morning and the last week of term.

SAM: We're in the middle of PE.

TRISTAN: About to win footy when Prior gets this note.

JAMES: He reads it.

TRISTAN: Blows his whistle.

SAM: *Assembly. Change back into your uniforms.*

TRISTAN: What?

JAMES: Now, sir?

TRISTAN: But we're about to / win.

TOBY: / What's happened, sir?

SAM: He shakes his head.

JAMES: Something's happened you can tell.

SAM: Shakes his head again.

JAMES: Because they don't just call assembly like that.

SAM: Takes the ball back. Says: / *Move. Don't make a fuss.*

TRISTAN: / *Move. Don't make a fuss.*

GLEN: Note held above Mrs Petrie's head. Face red, she tells us:

KIERAN: / *Close the books.*

HENRY: / *Close the books, put Iago away, pack him up and go to the hall.*

JAMES: And a normal day.

TRISTAN: A Wednesday just like the rest changes into something else. /
Something's happened.

MATT: / Something's happened.

TOBY: On the way to the hall I see clouds in the sky make a question
mark above. It asks why.

MATT: Hurry up, Toby.

TOBY *follows* MATT.

The eight boys are at assembly.

GLEN: In the hall.

HENRY: We scuff and fiddle and muck about.

JAMES: Harley's on stage under the flags.

GLEN: Look at his face.

TRISTAN: Do I have to?

KIERAN: Face screwed up like a pit bull.

MATT: He looks worried.

KIERAN / SAM: He's not glaring like he usually does.

TOBY: What's wrong with him?

GLEN: Maybe there's a war.

TRISTAN: Good one, Glen.

GLEN: Like ISIS.

TRISTAN: And they're sending you to Syria!

GLEN: They've declared war and we all have to go and fight.

TRISTAN: Right, Glen!

JAMES: These Year Eight boys have heard Glen and they stare at him.

TRISTAN: Scaring the little 'uns. mate.

GLEN: Or maybe some kid's gone wild, gone jihad or insurgent or —

TOBY / MATT: Shut up, Glen.

TRISTAN: Hey, it's Glen's farewell assembly. He's off to special needs school.

KIERAN: Ha!

JAMES: Miss Jones from the office crosses the stage.

GLEN: Look at the Doberman.

HENRY: We call Jones that.

GLEN: Nazi guard dog who runs the school.

TRISTAN: The Doberman whispers something to Harley.

GLEN: Wonder what she's saying?

SAM: *Come and meet me in the book room.*

GLEN: Yuck!

TRISTAN: Then she leaves him alone on the stage.

TOBY: The whole school falls silent.

MATT: And then Freddy comes in late. He's on crutches again and / everyone laughs.

TOBY: / Everyone laughs, but then sound's shot dead.

JAMES: 'Cause / Jones leads in two cops.

KIERAN: / Jones leads in two cops.

GLEN: Cops. Cops. Cops.

TRISTAN: Yeah, Glen. / Cops.

GLEN: / Cops.

TOBY: One woman.

JAMES: One man.

GLEN: She's hot. Is she hot?

SAM: Cops look solemn, not mean.

HENRY: And the hall is on mute, everyone's muted / sound right down.

MATT: / Everyone's still.

JAMES: You can't even hear Zimmerman wheeze.

SAM: Teachers hover at the edges, don't know what's going down.

JAMES: And it's quiet like forever.

TOBY: A whole blue sky full of quiet, no question mark now just a big wide space.

MATT: Harley clears his throat.

TRISTAN: He doesn't start with the usual jokes, just looks out at us and says:

SAM: *Good morning, boys. I'm sorry to say that / I have some disturbing news.*

KIERAN: / *I have some disturbing news. / About a boy.*

SAM: / *About a boy.*

JAMES / TRISTAN: About a boy from this school.

SAM / KIERAN: *This morning, as you can see we have the police here and ...*

MATT: What's happened?

GLEN: A murder.

TRISTAN: Glen!

GLEN: Well, what else? It's death, I know, someone's died, someone's—

KIERAN: I'm wondering how bad it'll be—

TRISTAN: What year? Who is this going to hit?

HENRY: A plane roars right over the hall.

TOBY: Mr Harley searches for words to say in the empty space above our heads.

MATT: Who hasn't been in class?

GLEN: See? Someone's dead?

SAM: Was there an accident?

JAMES: No-one said.

KIERAN: Did someone die?

TRISTAN: Look up and down the rows to see if there is a sign, an empty space.