

BUZZ

I don't want to live  
I don't want to die

Crying in the river till my tears run dry

If there is a star

To guide lost lovers by

Show me where you are -- please

Won't you hear my cry...

*And her prayers are answered in a vision...*

*An expectant humming -- turning into the throbbing of a mighty motorbike engine, coming closer, faster, louder.*

*A powerful headlamp sears through the fog like a search light. The engine stops.*

SUSAN watches in awe as BUZZ BRAKELAST (aka MISS GIVINGS, in glam-butch biker gear) swaggers into the light.

BUZZ. Hi, kid. Buzz Brakelast, Emergency Breakdown Services, answering your call.

SUSAN. Sorry?

BUZZ. Lone female with blowout, no spare, requesting roadside rescue? Or are you saying it was a hoax?

SUSAN. I - I -

BUZZ. Well, make up your mind. Are you seriously stuck in need of assistance with your onward journey? Or just wallowing in self-pity before you phone home and tell your parents you're sorry?

SUSAN (*tearfully defiant*). I'll never ever say I'm sorry for being true to my heart. Even if I've lost everything, I still believe in love.

I just don't know where to find it...

BUZZ lifts SUSAN up and away.

*Music 14. The Stairways*

BUZZ.

Well you know things may not be as grim as they seem  
I could help you to dispel this bad dream

We could leave your troubles here to drift away  
downstream

When love has left you feeling hollow

And life is all too much to swallow

I'll take the lead if you'll follow me

To a little place that I know

When all you longed for is denied you

Your heart is burning up inside you

I'll be the angel to guide you home

To a little place you should know...

### Scene Thirteen

*The Stairways Club.*

*The club and its glamorous gender-bending bohemian clientele materialise -- as BUZZ delivers SUSAN.*

CLUB-GOERS.

The Stairways

The Stairways

The Stairways

Everyone's waiting

Everyone's waiting for you

SUSAN. The Stairways Club...?

*She looks around in dazed wonderment.*

It's just how I imagined it!

BUZZ.

The moment that you walk through that door

CLUB-GOERS.

The moment that you walk through that door

BUZZ.

You're sure to find what you're looking for

DAIMLER. I – I seem to have misplaced my towel...

MISS GIVINGS produces a handkerchief.

MISS GIVINGS. Here – use this.

DAIMLER takes it and blows her nose.

DAIMLER. Sorry, I'm just a bit down in the dumps.

MISS GIVINGS. So what's whacked you in the shins, then?

DAIMLER. Oh, nothing. Everything. Oh, it's just all completely hopeless.

MISS GIVINGS. Right... Well, I can't give you a plaster for internal injuries, kid. But I can give you my word the game's not over yet – and now is not the time to give up the fight, if you want to help Miss Austin save this school?

DAIMLER looks up.

So – better chin up and get back on the team, hey?

DAIMLER grits her teeth and rallies.

DAIMLER. Well, even if I can't win, Miss, I jolly well know what I'm fighting for.

MISS GIVINGS. That's the spirit!

*She heads DAIMLER off to the showers, then lights up a cigarette and breathes relief – as a wary BENNY creeps in behind her back, then turns to see her – and smirks.*

BENNY. Ooh, dodgy habit for a games mistress, Miss.

*She startles, then snaps back at him in her true persona.*

DIANA. Not as dodgy as your ridiculous accent.

BENNY. Eh? Doncha know yours truly was famed for me Eliza Doolittle in the Footlights?

DIANA. Oh, do grow up, Dorian. Your career at Cambridge was only famed for the glittering speed at which you got sent down.

DORIAN drops his BENNY act.

*Diana*

DORIAN. All right, bossy big sis, but I haven't been entirely useless gathering proof that Bleacher's got to go. Wait till you hear what I taped in assembly – her values are positively Victorian!

DIANA. Luckily the Dosserdalian spirit is still in formidable form on the hockey pitch. And I knew we'd have a trusty ally in dear Miss Austin. But she fears it's only a matter of days before Bleacher forces her into retirement.

DORIAN. Then all we need is for the tiresome lawyers to grant you sole Governorship pro tem in extremis, as per Sub-Clause Twenty-Three – (*Holds up his bag*) sufficient cause QED!

DIANA. So we need you to persuade them to pull their fingers out, Dorian.

DORIAN. Me? Um – how?

DIANA. You went to school with the senior partner's tiresome son, didn't you? So oil the wheels as old boys traditionally do.

DORIAN. You mean – you want me to wine and dine the deadly boring Percy Puttfoot?

DIANA. Drive up to town tomorrow, go to work in your darkroom, deliver all the evidence to his office. Then take him to The Ritz and twist his arm, so we can liberate these poor kids by Friday.

DORIAN (*sighs*). Right. Fine. But, oh God, it's so tedious having to stand up and fight for things.

*School bell rings.*

DIANA. Get some snaps of the library and art room. Then meet me back at The Pig and Whistle.

*They exit separately.*

*Music 7a. Prepare to Pounce*

L'AVINIA. Each and every girl in this school.

ANNATHIE. Cos when the chips are down we are all the other girls!

*They present the petition - and MISS BLEACHER takes stock of it and them.*

MISS BLEACHER. Well! You *have* been busy little bees, haven't you? But I still fail to see what you hope to achieve.

*She tosses the petition aside.*

Whole-school detention. Assembly hall. Now!

MISS AUSTIN sighs.

MISS AUSTIN. A short course in dramatic structure would so assist your interpretive skills. But if I have to spell it out - this is when we turn the tables, so now it's chips for you.

UPPER SIXTH. Boo!

MISS AUSTIN. And all that's left to do is the up the loose ends.

*Enter DIANA and DORIAN, as themselves.*

DIANA. Which is where we come in, Miss Bleacher.

MISS BLEACHER. And you are who?

DIANA. I am Diana Dossertale and this is my brother Dorian.

MISS BLEACHER. Just a minute -

DORIAN. Yes, you know us better as Benny the Bag -

DIANA. And Miss Givings, the temporary games mistress.

MISS BLEACHER. Then what - ?

DIANA. As I'm sure you're aware, Miss Bleacher, our uncle's recent death has left the governorship of the school in a state of hiatus, since my brother and I can only inherit when we're both of legal age.

DORIAN. Which you've no doubt calculated gives you a clear run for another two years till my twenty-first birthday.

MISS BLEACHER. So I repeat, then what - ?

*DIANA*

DIANA. Then our lawyers informed us that Sub-clause Twenty-three of the School Constitution allows me to act as sole governor pro tem in 'Exceptional Circumstances' -

DORIAN. Viz, your flouting virtually every precept this school stands for -

DIANA. With the unanimous disapproval of your pupils -

DORIAN. Proof of which we went undercover to obtain -

DIANA. As now conclusively verified by our lawyers in this telegram. Which - with the constitutionally required quorum of prefects present - gives me the right to demand your immediate resignation, Miss Bleacher.

*She hands telegram to MISS BLEACHER, who studies it.*

MISS BLEACHER. I see... How very unfortunate... that I must crush your hopes once again.

*She rips up the telegram.*

MISS AUSTIN sighs.

MISS AUSTIN. Really, you can't just keep on throwing your toys out of the pram, you know.

MISS BLEACHER (ferce). I never had a pram!

(Composes herself) But I do have this...

*She produces a parchment scroll.*

A codicil to Sir Digby Dossertale's will, signed and witnessed on his deathbed, as per Sub-clause Twenty-four - guaranteeing me, Beatrix Bleacher, lifetime tenure in this Headship, no matter what.

EVERYONE ELSE. Gasps!

MISS BLEACHER hands the scroll to DIANA.

MISS BLEACHER. Please do run it past your lawyers. I'm sure they'll agree it trumps your telegram.

DIANA and DORIAN unravel the scroll and stare at it in shock, watched by MISS AUSTIN and the GIRLS.

MISS BLEACHER glazes.