

7th

Upper 6th

They fall into a stagey embrace and kiss – as a loud sneeze erupts from inside the cupboard.

What was that?

CAMILLA *hides, leaving SUSAN on the spot, as BRENDA falls out of the cupboard in a jumble of hockey sticks.*

SUSAN. Brenda?!

BRENDA *bolts.*

CAMILLA. Who?

SUSAN. Bleacher's pet, Brenda Smears.

CAMILLA. Since when would that servile little swot dare to bunk off assembly?

SUSAN. She must have been snooping on us all this while.

CAMILLA. Don't credit her with a purpose, darling. She was probably solving some dreary theorem and lost all track of space and time.

SUSAN. In the games-equipment cupboard?

CAMILLA. Well, maybe she was searching for the secret door back to the goblin world. I'd much prefer to contemplate a thing of beauty.

She flips open a compact case to reapply lipstick, as SUSAN hides up the hockey sticks, and JUDITH, LAVINIA and ANNABEL enter in a babble of despair.

JUDITH. So now we know the worst.

LAVINIA. It's even worse than we thought.

ANNABEL. It's like Hellsville, man.

JUDITH. I bet even the damned are allowed to have a Debating Society and an end-of-term discotheque.

LAVINIA. We don't have minds of our own at all.

JUDITH. We're just breeding stock.

LAVINIA. With a duty to spy on each other!

ANNABEL. Yeah, scratch H-ville. We're on the wrong side of the tracks in Zombie Town.

SUSAN *and CAMILLA are bemused.*

SUSAN. Why, what's up now?

LAVINIA. Your number, mes amies, if you don't watch out.

SUSAN. What do you mean?

JUDITH. The purge is on.

LAVINIA. Every girl must answer the call.

ANNABEL. Death to deviants, one and all.

They mime slitting throats.

CAMILLA *(to SUSAN)*. What are they talking about?

DAIMLER *enters with her head in a poetry book.*

SUSAN. Daimler, tell us! What's happened?

DAIMLER. Oh, nothing much. Bleacher's gone off on a full-blown moral crusade. And thanks to your antics in the art room, you're her number-one target.

SUSAN *turns to CAMILLA in alarm.*

SUSAN. That baty old cleaner bursting in on us...

CAMILLA. It's not our fault she went into shock. She should have knocked.

SUSAN. And we tried to explain that naked body painting was an avant-garde conceptual art form.

DAIMLER. You're just lucky she didn't know who you were. But Bleacher's told the whole school we've got to turn you in.

JUDITH. Which obviously we won't.

LAVINIA. As if?

ANNABEL. Like drop dead, daddy-o!

DAIMLER. But we all know who would, so –

SUSAN. Oh no – (To CAMILLA.) That means Brenda Smears was spying on us.

DAIMLER. Where? When?

SUSAN. Here. Just now.

DAIMLER. Oh, Susan! Didn't I warn you not to take stupid risks?

SUSAN. But we didn't have a clue until she fell out of the cupboard!

CAMILLA. Et obvs ergo ditto she won't have a clue about us.

DAIMLER. You hope.

CAMILLA snubs DAIMLER and steers SUSAN aside.

CAMILLA. This is simply too sordid for words, darling.

All GIRLS proceed to change into games kit during the following.

JUDITH. Our dear Dame Dottie must be tossing in her grave.

LAVINIA. She must have gone potty to leave us with Bleacher.

DAIMLER's patience snaps.

DAIMLER. Oh please at least get your facts right.

LAVINIA. Excusez-moi?

DAIMLER. You can't blame the Dame for that. It was her senile brother – Sir Digby Dossierdale – he left us with Bleacher.

JUDITH/LAVINIA. Comment cela?

DAIMLER. Haven't you ever read the school constitution?

ANNABEL/JUDITH/LAVINIA. Quoi?

DAIMLER (sighs). Dame Dottie and Sir Digby were our joint founders – Dottie had the vision but Digby had the money. So when Dame Dottie passed away this summer, all the power passed on to demented Sir Digby – and he passed over Miss Austin and picked Bleacher as our new Head.

JUDITH. Then I wish he was tossing in his grave.

DAIMLER. Well, tossing or not, he's in it. It said in the paper he died last week. Which means our fate now lies with the two next-of-kin.

ANNABEL. Yeah? So who are these guys?

DAIMLER. His niece and nephew – the love children of Dame Dottie's twin sister Daphne, who perished in the Punjab. And Miss Austin's already written to their solicitors about our plight.

The trio perk up.

ANNABEL/JUDITH/LAVINIA. Hope revives!

DAIMLER. But she fears they may be too busy living exciting lives of their own.

The trio slump.

ANNABEL/JUDITH/LAVINIA. Gloom resumes.

DAIMLER. Which isn't to say we should give up all hope.

JUDITH. Whither Hope now?

LAVINIA. Whither the teeniest glimpse?

ANNABEL. Search me.

And CAMILLA intrudes with a more pressing query.

CAMILLA. Excuse me, Earth to Mars? Why are we all meanwhile getting changed into our games kit when we don't have a games mistress?

JUDITH. Because we're getting Miss Givings.

CAMILLA (misunderstanding). About what? Keeping our clothes on?

JUDITH. No – Miss Givings. She's a temp.

LAVINIA. Probably some awful hefty virgin straight out of teacher-training college.

ANNABEL. Should be here like any mo.

CAMILLA. Please tell me you jest?

ANNABEL/JUDITH/LAVINIA. We don't.

CAMILLA. You mean on top of every other trial and tribulation in this hideous place, we have to chase up and down a damp field in pursuit of a stupid little ball?

JUDITH. We used to love playing hockey, didn't we?

LAVINIA. It used to be *fun*.

ANNABEL. Yeah, like way back in the groove.

CAMILLA. But what's the point of playing it now?

MISS GIVINGS. Survival.

All turn as the immensely dashing MISS GIVINGS enters - and swoon as she strikes a pose, hockey stick slung over shoulder.

UPPER SIXTH. Swoon...

Music 5. Navy Knicks

MISS GIVINGS.

There's a big bad world outside those gates

Not to mention within

A fool is she who hesitates

When her battles begin

I don't mean metaphorically

I'm speaking metaphorically

So, get your kit

And let's get fit

To win!

She whips them into hockey action.

Put on your navy knicks

Pick up your hockey sticks

Linger up and watch those muscles grow

Put on your aertex shirts

And those thigh-high pleated skirts

Let's set those rosy cheeks a-glow

Come on and move your centre forward

Tap your feet and step right back

Every girl should know the score

Good luck to all who come under our attack

Play up and play the field

This team will never yield

One two three bully off and here we go

UPPER SIXTH.

Ground stick, ground stick, ground stick - Go!

Dance routine with hockey sticks.

MISS GIVINGS.

Put on your navy knicks

UPPER SIXTH.

Put on your navy knicks

MISS GIVINGS.

Pick up your hockey sticks

UPPER SIXTH.

Pick up your hockey sticks

MISS GIVINGS.

Prepare to deal the deadly blow

UPPER SIXTH.

We're going to whack that ball into the sky

MISS GIVINGS.

Put on your studded boots

UPPER SIXTH.

Put on your studded boots

MISS GIVINGS.

Cultivate your attributes

UPPER SIXTH.

Cultivate your attributes

MISS GIVINGS.

And if you've got it let it show

The Upper 6M

Scene Six

Main lobby.

JUDITH, LAVINIA and ANNABEL enter stealthily, on their mission to tackle BRENDA.

ANNABEL. Here comes the creep!

JUDITH. Right, prepare to pounce.

BRENDA enters, pushing a trolley laden with science equipment. The trio leap out to block her path every which way - and BRENDA is alarmed to find herself trapped.

BRENDA. What are you doing? Is this one of your pranks?

JUDITH. We think it's time you explained what you're doing, Brenda.

BRENDA. I'm on special orders from Miss Bleacher to take this science equipment up to the art room, obviously. Which means if you don't get out of my way I'll report you.

JUDITH. But Dossierdadians don't blindly carry out orders, Brenda.

LAVINIA. Our founder would call that collaborating with the enemy.

ANNABEL. And we ain't hip to that, dig?

BRENDA. Well, for your information our founder was deluded. Because hard work and discipline will shape our destiny, not so-called 'free-thinking'. And I say hip-hip-hoorah!

The others exchange appalled looks.

JUDITH. She's been totally brainwashed -

LAVINIA. To be a sneak and a toady with no shame -

ANNABEL. Like worse than square, she's cubed!

BRENDA. You boarders think you can look down on me just because I'm a day bug, don't you?

JUDITH. Oh, don't be silly. It's not because you're a day bug -

1 BRENDA

ANNABEL. It's cos you're you!

LAVINIA. Any decent Dossierdadian girl would dump that trolley and skive off to sick bay with a 'sprained ankle'.

BRENDA. Well, for your further information, you'll be expelled for that sort of showy-offy disobedience in future. And it serves you right!

JUDITH. Oh, Brenda, why do you persist in being so beastly?

LAVINIA. Do you want us all to hate you?

BRENDA. You've always hated me. Ever since I was in the preps.

JUDITH. But that's not true - (Bemused aside to the others.) Was she in the preps?

Blank looks and shrugs.

ANNABEL. Like - duh?

LAVINIA. We barely noticed her at all until she turned traitor for Bleacher - did we?

And BRENDA scorns them all from the depths of her wounded heart.

BRENDA. You see! You've no idea how horrible you've been to me, have you?

Music 8. It's Not Fair

I am that worn on which the whole world treads
Whom not even God can see
I've never been behind the bicycle sheds
No one shares their sweets with me

ANNABEL/JUDITH/LAVINIA. But that's your fault!

BRENDA.
I can't help being good at trigonometry
It's just the way I was born
I'm tired of everybody going on at me
It's clear I'm an object of scorn
It's not my fault that I'm the best