

Characters (all seventeen/eighteen years old)

Jason, from the hood, popular and straight talking, with a sharp street edge

Chloe, monied, arrogant yet incredibly charming, witty, cool and calm

Oli, clever guy, but not that smart, with big aspirations

Melissa, Chloe's best friend – forever?

Abigail, Chloe's older and much, much, much wiser sister

Tammy, Abigail's doormat, but also quietly heroic and ready for a revolt

Debs, clued-up classmate

Sol, very well spoken, mummy's 'little gangsta'

Rash, solid and straight-up

Rachel, reluctant messenger

Mark, key voter and Lane's passionate boyfriend

Lane, key voter and Mark's passionate girlfriend/boyfriend

Noel, moany voter

Shay, key voter

'Online' characters can be played by different actors:

Online Jason

Online Chloe

Online Oli

Online Melissa

Online Abigail

Online Tammy

Other Students (ideally no fewer than seven performers – but this is

subject to the size of the company)

Interior of a classroom set up in typical fashion: students' desks and chairs lined up in rows; tutor's desk at the front, whiteboard on the wall behind it. Your quintessential, academically inspirational learning environment . . .

From behind the screen a young man appears.

Online Jason Yo, Oli, you blocked me or something? Hit me up, man. (Waits. Disappears.)

Online Abigail appears.

Online Abigail Are you on your way, Chloe?

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe Just chill.

Online Abigail You do know what time you were supposed to be here?

Online Chloe Yep, five minutes ago.

Online Abigail And that doesn't bother you at all does it?

Online Chloe Don't worry, big sis. I'm the one who's late, not you. Your rep will remain intact. Unless I'm another ten minutes late of course. Ha ha.

Online Abigail Grow up.

Online Abigail disappears.

Online Chloe You there yet, Mel?

Online Melissa appears.

Online Melissa Where are you?

Online Chloe Two minutes.

Online Melissa Late. Always. Loser. Oli's here already.

Online Chloe Ha. He reckons being early will get him more votes.

Online Melissa (laughs) That loser needs all the help he can get.

They both disappear. **Online Jason** appears.

Online Jason Don't need to keep blanking me, man. I told you. That thing with your moped was nothing to do with me. (Waits.) Yo. (Waits.)

Online Jason disappears.

The live characters appear outside the classroom. The noisy group of twenty or so students file in and sit in their various cliques. We recognise Abigail and Melissa from the clothes they are wearing that match those of their online personas. Abigail looks around and nabs Melissa.

Abigail Mel, do you know where my sister is?

Melissa Literally, she'll be here any second.

Abigail I'm so sick of having to look out for her – just constantly. Like looking after a two-year-old.

She storms off in a huff. Melissa catches the attention of a boy walking past.

Melissa Oli! Good luck! (*Talks loudly to make sure she is heard.*) You know if you were up against anybody else but Chloe you'd get my vote.

Oli (*winks conspiratorially*) Who knows, still might get your vote, innit . . .

Melissa looks around then giggles and punches Oli on his arm.

Oli walks off and approaches two boys. Before he gets there he is stopped by another girl – Debs.

Debs (*shy and sincere*) Oli, my mum says thanks again for those flowers.

Oli No worries. Tell her get well soon, yeah?

Debs smiles gratefully and walks off. Oli gets to the two guys – Sol and Rash.

Sol Alright, Ol.

Rash Yes, mate! How's it going?

Oli Feeling good! Your votes are gonna make a big difference today.

Sol The only difference I want to see is with our science lessons. You got that covered, right?

Oli Sorted. Trust.

Rash Be good to get some other bits and pieces though. Been talking about getting proper lockers –

Sol (*interrupts*) – in the changing rooms, and getting better food in the canteen and blah-de-blah-de-shut the hell up. We heard it the hundred and eighth time you said it.

Oli I'm on it, Rash, don't worry.

Rash About time. We need a president who's gonna care about more than just the shade of their lipstick or something.

Sol Exactly. Eyeliner's just as important.

They all crack up.

Rash Oh yeah, Ol, can you give me a lift home later?

Oli No, uh . . . I didn't ride in today.

Rash How come?

Oli Uhhh . . . it wouldn't start this morning.

Sol Guttled. I thought it was new?

Oli (*ultra glum*) Yeah, I know.

Rash and Sol wave to Jason as he enters. Oli looks up and he and Jason exchange a glance. Jason nods a hello but Oli blanks him and turns back to his cronies. Jason pulls out his phone and begins to text.

Online Jason appears from behind the screen.

Online Jason You really want to go there? I'm not that guy, bruv!!!!

Oli pulls out his phone.

Online Oli appears.

Online Oli After what you did, you're the one getting angry with me?

Online Jason I. WAS. NOT. INVOLVED.

Online Oli Liar. Play it how you want, I don't care.

Online Jason and Online Oli disappear.

Abigail and her reluctant sidekick Tammy walk over to Jason.

Abigail (*sarcastic*) Comrade Jason! Thought you weren't coming back?

Jason And miss this pantomime? Nah I want a front-row seat for this. (*Looks around.*) And I mean, it's not exactly the most diverse group is it? You might need people who actually have their own opinion.

Abigail It's all a big joke to you isn't it?

Jason To be honest, the way it's been run the past few years, it has been. It's not like things have got much better for the students who actually need some support.

Abigail If you're talking about your 'crew', I don't think they're that interested in politics, Jason.

Jason My crew? (*Laughs to himself.*) Yeah, you're right, I don't think the student population from my endz of the social scale *are* that interested in politics, we're more interested in systems that will actually achieve something.

Abigail (to Tammy) You see, Tammy, there he goes again. (*To Jason.*) We can really do without your crap this time, okay? Some of us take this seriously.

Jason Then you should understand I'm doing you a favour by being here. Being an elitist wouldn't look good on your CV. (*Cheeky.*) Or in your case, maybe it would.

Tammy starts laughing. Abigail gives her an evil glare.

Abigail Something funny?

Tammy chokes back her laughter.

Jason (smiles) No need to feel threatened, Abi. I'm just a 'humble observer'.

Abigail Oh, I'd love to see that.

Jason turns to walk off.

Jason This is your lucky day then, innit?

Behind them, Chloe enters the classroom without a care in the world. It is clear she is popular with some of the Other Students.

Tammy taps Abigail.

Tammy Your sister's here.

Abigail So the silly cow has decided to show up.

She approaches Chloe with a face like thunder. Tammy trails behind her.

Chloe (puts on a voice to annoy Abigail) Wassup, homie? (*Smiles at Tammy, normal tone.*) Hey, Tam Tam.

Tammy scowls. Abigail pulls Chloe aside to talk in private.

Abigail Are you nuts? How do you think it makes us both look with you turning up this late for your own election?

Chloe My election? (*Faux shock.*) So my victory is a foregone conclusion?

Abigail Well, it wouldn't be if you didn't have me helping you out.

Chloe I really don't think I need your help.

Abigail I wouldn't think too much. It doesn't suit you.

Chloe Oh screw you, Abby!

Abigail You can tell Daddy how mean I was when you become the new student president.

Chloe You can tell Daddy . . .

Abigail Exactly. (*Walks off to front of class.*)

Chloe flops down irritably in a chair next to Melissa.

Melissa Where you been?

Chloe I just had an interrogation from Abby, thanks. I swear she thinks the world revolves around her. Anyway, how do I look? Big moment coming up.

Melissa Is that new lipstick? You weren't wearing it earlier.

Jason walks past.

Jason Yes, Mel. How you doin', Chloe?

Melissa Hey, Jason. (*Gives him a genuine and warm smile.*)

Chloe (offhand) Oh hi, J. You alright?

Jason (equally offhand) Cool.

Jason and Chloe barely exchange a glance. Jason sits at a table nearby. Casual. A couple of flirtatious girls join him.

Chloe looks at him quickly then turns away.

Melissa What's that about?

Chloe What?

Melissa You two.

Chloe Who two?

Melissa (playful nudge) You and Jason!

Chloe (confused) What are you talking about?

Abigail is standing at the tutor's desk.

Abigail Okay, everybody. Can I . . . can I get your attention please. Everybody. (*Waits for people to gather and be quiet.*) Mark. Lane.

Mark and Lane stop their canoodling in the corner.

Abigail Tammy, come here please.

The long-suffering Tammy slowly walks over to stand just behind Abigail.

Abigail Thank you all. Thank you. Well, first of all I just want to say it's been an honour to be your student president for the past two years and to work with all of you as part of the student council.

Already losing a few. The natives are restless . . .

I know it's our lunch break but it's important that we take voting seriously, so if we want to eat, let's all work together and get this done.

Mark When are we going to talk about the prom?

Noel Yeah, the teachers are saying it might have to be in the gym even though we have to pay for tickets. I'd rather stay at home and watch Corrie with me mam!

Class laughs.

Mark We want a proper rave-up, especially if we're paying for it!

Abigail Is that the only reason you're here?

Lane (*snuggles up to Mark*) Some of us are looking forward to the slow jams . . .

The class 'Woouooooos'.

Abigail (*raises eyebrow at the loved-up Mark and Lane*) Mmm. Anyway, all of that will get sorted out after voting. We can decide on a venue and DJs and stuff and then the first act of the new president will be to get the Principal to stump up more money. But before all that . . . (*Inhales and holds herself regally.*) . . . let me just say a few words . . . (*Ignores the rolled eyes of the class and carries on in mute as . . .*)

Online Oli appears.

Online Oli So what you got for me?

Online Melissa appears

Online Melissa Huh?

Online Oli Any more dirt?

Online Melissa Don't say it like that.

Online Oli Okay. Anything to help a noble cause, m'lady?

Online Melissa (*laughs*) You're such a loser.

Online Oli Not for long.

Online Oli and Online Melissa disappear.

In the classroom Melissa laughs out loud and disturbs Abigail's speech. Everybody looks at Melissa and Abigail gives her a cold glare then continues talking.

Abigail As I was saying – (*Back to mute.*)

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe What was so funny?

Online Melissa appears. *Pause.*

Online Chloe Helloooooooooo.

Online Melissa Nothing. Your sister is just such a loser.

Online Chloe She thinks she's something special right?

Online Chloe and Online Melissa disappear.

Abigail is hitting her stride.

Abigail . . . So going forward our priorities as a student council must be ensuring that every student is valued as an individual! Respected as a person! We must –

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe How long is this going to go on for?

Online Tammy appears.

Online Tammy How should I know?

Online Chloe (*sarcastic*) Well, Miss Vice-President, you should know these things. Didn't you write her speech for her?

Online Tammy Leave me alone.

Online Chloe and Tammy disappear.

Abigail continues with her speech.

Abigail So with campaigning over, our two candidates will now give their final speeches.

Online Melissa appears.

Online Melissa Kill it!!!!

Online Chloe Get my Oscar ready.

Online Chloe and Online Melissa disappear.

Noel Oh come on, do we have to sit through more speeches?

Abigail No, Noel, you don't. The door's that way.

The class 'Oooooohs'.

Noel Alright, alright, I was just asking.

Sol And you got told!

Abigail (to Chloe and Oli) So, strict rules. You talk for one minute. I'll keep time on my phone. (*Pulls out phone, looks at screen and acts surprised.*) Oh wow! This is amazing. My dad – and Chloe's as well of course – just sent a text to say he'll cover our venue hire. He'll pay for that pleasure-boat cruise we were looking at. The one that Mr Francis said was too expensive. Listen to this: 'To the student council – great achievements this past year. "Smooth sailing" (*Laughs.*) for the year ahead. Very best, Henry Worthington, QC.' Isn't that amazing?

Some of the people in the room look excited and begin to whoop and clap. Others just roll their eyes. Oli and his friends look annoyed.

Abigail And I'm sure that with the savings we make, members of the school council can get free tickets.

Noel I'll drink to that!

Jason And everybody else that maybe can't afford it still has to pay, right? Jokers!

Abigail Thank you, *humble observer*. Okay, everyone. Let's do this. (*Lets this settle in with everybody for a moment.*) Tammy, could you set the ground rules please?

Tammy (sarcastic) Sure, Abigail. Thanks. (*To class.*) Okay, so after the speeches you'll all come up here and cast your votes into our ballot box. (*Taps box on the desk.*) After that, we'll – (*continues in mute as:*)

Chloe pulls out her phone.

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe You are such a bitch!!! You had to go and make this the bloody 'Abigail show'!

Online Abigail appears.

Online Abigail Daddy did this for you.

Online Chloe I don't need help from you or him!

Online Abigail Whatever. Just don't do or say anything stupid. Play it safe and this is all yours.

Online Chloe and Online Abigail disappear.

Tammy – simple and fair. Okay?

Abigail Good job, Tammy. Have a seat now. Chloe, Oli, up to the front please?

Chloe and Oli walk up as the Other Students applaud.

Abigail Right, strict rules. One minute each, no more okay? Let's keep it clean.

Chloe takes centre stage. She is all smiles.

Chloe First of all can I say a huge thanks to Abigail. I'm sure she's really tried to do her best for the past two years. But now it's time for a fresh start. I'm focused on creating a real school community. And the most important way to achieve this is to have more activities like our prom where we can really come together and bond. Knowing that we can count on each other and support each other as students. We don't need outside help – not from teachers, and not from those that think they're superior or know better than us. (*Lovely warm smile to her lovely sister.*) This is our time now. Let's make the changes we want to see as a community for our community.

Led by Melissa, applause has already begun.

Chloe First and foremost, this is about us.

Applause continues although some students aren't clapping at all. Chloe steps back, demure but triumphant.

Online Melissa appears.

Online Melissa And the award for best actress goes . . .

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe Oh, you're too kind, darling!!!

Online Chloe and Online Melissa disappear.

Oli *steps forward and waits for the applause to die down.*

Oli I truly believe in the power we have as a student council, and that's why I agree with Chloe. Change does need to happen. But it needs to be the right change in the right way. Yeah, the social side is important, but long-term action is better. We all want a great end of year bash, but what about afterwards? We need to get a better academic environment around here and more opportunities so that we can get to where we want to be in life. Universities and employers want to see achievements on our CVs, not Instagram posts from a boat. To do this we need to establish a better working relationship with our teachers. We need their input and there are some of them that really want to help. This isn't about me. It's not even about us in this room. It's about everybody and all of our futures. Thank you.

Moment's silence. then hearty and sustained applause.

Chloe and Abigail look worried.

Abigail *steps forward.*

Abigail Thank you, both. Great speeches. Makes me wish I were able to stand for election again . . . (*Quick glance at Oli.*) and really give you some competition. Okay . . . Let's vote!

All the students apart from Jason get up from their seat and line up in front of the desk. Abigail gives him a pointed look. He stands reluctantly.

An impatient, athletic student bursts into the classroom – Rachel. She is dressed in a football kit.

Rachel Hey, Abigail, Francis asked me to come and get you. He wants to speak to you right now.

Abigail What are you talking about?

Rachel Aren't you the school president or something?

Abigail Yes.

Rachel Then why you so dumb? Francis. His office. Now.

Abigail Er, are you blind? I'm busy.

Rachel And I'm supposed to be on the pitch. Not running around trying to find you.

Abigail Well, now you found me you can go back and tell Francis –

Rachel (*interrupting*) I'm not your minion. Listen, Abigail, this whole 'school president, alpha-bitch attitude' really doesn't do it for me. Just get to his office or not only him but my whole team are going to be on your case. *Again!*

She lunges menacingly towards Abigail, who flinches backwards.

Abigail (*embarrassed*) The lot of you are a bunch of cows.

Rachel (*laughs*) That's right.

She turns to walk out the door. She spots Rash.

Rachel Hey, Rash, you working on getting those lockers sorted?

Rash Yeah, well, Oli said he'd look into it.

Rachel Whatever. Same old.

She leaves. Abigail gathers herself.

Abigail Guys, I'm gonna have to pop out for five minutes. Yet again, another case of teachers interfering with what we're trying to do. So the vote will have to wait until I get back.

The group grumbles.

Sol That's long.

Lane We're starving and it's chicken nuggets today.

Noel My mum's outside. I gotta go dentist.

Abigail No vote. No student president. No one to sort out the prom.

Noel (*on his way out of the room*) Your dad said he was going to pay for it. What's to sort out?

Abigail Tammy, do me a huge favour, please. Make a note of everybody that leaves the room whilst I'm not here. They're obviously giving up their free tickets to the prom.

Noel *sits back down in a hurry.*

Noel Alright, alright, just hurry up then.

Tammy (*to Abigail*) I can get everybody to fill out the cards at least.

Abigail No, Tammy. As President, I'll take care of everything when I get back. But you can make sure there's no more campaigning or speeches. Okay?

Tammy *says nothing. Sulks.*

Abigail Okay?

Tammy Yes. Fine, boss.

Abigail What?

Tammy Nothing.

Abigail Okay, everybody. Everybody. Just talk amongst yourselves.
(To **Chloe** and **Oli**.) But no campaigning, Tammy's in charge.

Tammy For once.

Abigail I'm sure my hearing's going. Did you say something, Tammy?

Tammy Nope.

Abigail strides from the room. **Tammy** addresses the room.

Tammy Well, that's it, folks. We'll just wait for her to come back and take charge.

Sol How long is she gonna be?

Tammy Ask Abigail. I'm sure she'll be able to hear you.

She goes to sit by herself, frustrated. The rest of the class start their own conversations. Jason sits by himself, but people constantly approach him – he's like a magnet. Melissa flits from student to student.

Online Abigail appears.

Online Abigail Watch out for Oli. Could actually give us a bit of trouble.

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe Us? You mean me. You're old news. What's Francis want?

Online Abigail Does it need to be anything? You know I hate his guts. And for some reason he's got it in for me.

Online Abigail and **Online Chloe** disappear.

Oli approaches **Chloe**. They smile at each other although the smiles are not entirely genuine. **Oli** seems just a touch on edge.

Oli Great speech.

Chloe Thanks. Yours was good as well I thought.

Oli Well. You know.

Chloe Seriously. It really made me think about things from a different perspective.

Oli That's good. I mean it's useful for us to see things from another point of view.

Chloe Uh-huh.

Oli You really got across how much you care about people.

Chloe That's important. And you too. We might be going in different directions but ultimately we want the same thing.

Oli True.

Silence. They stare at each other. Chloe is calm and confident. Oli is a bit embarrassed. He looks away.

From opposite ends of the room Jason and Melissa are watching them.

Oli looks up at **Chloe**. Plays it cocky.

Oli Anyway . . . whatever happens, I just want you to know it's nothing personal. (Smug grin.)

Chloe Oh really? That's so sweet of you. And what I said to you the other day. That wasn't personal either.

Oli (grin drops – defensive) Well . . . Uhh . . . That was just . . .

Chloe It's fine, Oli. Let's move on. Forgotten, okay?

Oli Sure. All right. Well umm . . . Good luck.

Chloe (smiles the sweetest of smiles) You too.

Oli moves in for a polite hug and peck on the cheek. **Chloe** steps back and holds out her hand to shake **Oli**'s.

Chloe Easy, tiger . . . don't want to give you the wrong idea. Again.

Oli is ultra-embarrassed. He shakes **Chloe**'s hand awkwardly, then walks off. **Jason** is watching.

Online Jason appears.

Online Jason You wanna talk about me being two-faced. Look at you. 'She's so stuck up.' 'She's so arrogant.' Yeah, right.

Oli pulls out his phone.

Online Oli appears. *Pause. Online Oli disappears.*

Oli puts his phone away and then puts as much distance as possible between himself and **Jason**.

Chloe walks up to **Debs**.

Chloe Oh, Debs – How's your mum at the moment? She's out of hospital now isn't she?

Debs Yeah, well the –

Online Melissa appears

Online Melissa What did Oli say?

Debs – and with the medication –

Chloe (has her phone out – interrupts) Sorry. One second.

Online Chloe appears

Online Chloe Nothing.

Online Melissa Looked like you two were getting veeeeeeery friendly . . .

Online Chloe As if. He's an idiot. I'm going to walk this election.

Online Melissa With Abigail helping you at every step.

Online Chloe Puhleeeeeease.

Online Chloe and **Online Melissa** disappear.

Debs What was that?

Chloe Nothing.

Debs Look, Chloe, I'm going to be honest with you okay. I'm not voting for you.

Chloe What? Why?

Debs I don't really want to go into it.

Chloe It's fine, Debs. Honestly.

Debs Well. Oli's sincere.

Chloe And I'm not?

Debs Did you actually listen to your speech? I did.

Chloe And every single word was true.

Debs There's a big difference between being honest and being sincere.

Chloe Meaning?

Debs C'mon, Chloe. I've known you for years.

Chloe Exactly!

Debs And you haven't changed. Even a minute ago, I'm trying to tell you about my mum and all you care about is your phone. There's always something more important and it's usually you.

Chloe Okay, thanks, Deborah. Really good to know my friends are on my side. Especially since the last time I spoke with them they said they'd be voting for me.

Debs That's just it then isn't it? You shouldn't be so sure about who you can trust. People don't always say what they mean. Right?

She walks off. Chloe watches her go. Mark and Lane pass by.

Mark (to **Chloe**) Top speech.

Lane Can't wait for that boat party. Your dad's a legend!

Mark 'Oli who', right?

They both laugh and continue on. Chloe watches them, then can't believe it as they start talking and laughing with Oli. She becomes nervous. Pulls out her phone.

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe Hey, hun.

Online Jason appears.

Online Jason Sup, babe?

Online Chloe I know you said you weren't going to talk about it, but you are going to vote for me right?

Online Jason If I did vote, it would have to be for your amazing opponent.

Online Chloe So what we just did in the toilets meant nothing?

Online Jason I've had better.

Online Chloe Ohhhhhh. So that's why you're voting for Oli, more your type.

Online Jason (laughs) Idiot.

Online Chloe You know you love me. Just vote for me as well.

Online Chloe disappears.

Sol and Rash approach **Jason**. **Jason** quickly puts his phone away.

Online Jason disappears.

Rash Sorry, J, you got a minute.

Jason Don't be stupid, man, of course. How you both doing? Ain't seen you in ages.

Rash Studies, bro. Killing us.

Sol Francis is a prick. No let-up. You think you're doing okay and then bam! Man slaps you with a D. I worked mad hard for that test.

Rash He's a proper knob.

Sol Yeah, man. Proper. You get me. (*This use of slang sounds entirely wrong.*)

Jason I hear you. Your parents must be screwing as well with that D. I know those weekend tutors don't come cheap.

Sol looks embarrassed as **Jason** and **Rash** burst into laughter.

Sol That was just that one time. It's not like I have them every week.

Jason Chill, man. Just joking, innit.

Sol (to **Rash**) Rah, one tutor session and man's on me fam'. Swear down.

Jason Oh seen, they provide elocution lessons as well? (*Posh voice.*) By Jove I think he's got it!

Rash laughs.

Sol Alright, J.

Jason Sorry, man.

Sol What did you think of the speeches anyway?

Jason Sounded exactly the same. 'Vote for me.'

Rash laughs again.

Sol Well, we're going for Oli obviously.

Jason Why obviously?

Rash Aren't you voting for him?

Sol Y

Jason

Sol V

Jason

Sol I

elemen

Jason

Sol

Jason

Rash

like t

Jason

Rash

Sol

Jason

Sol

Jason

Sol

(Tr

Jason

Sol

Pa

Ja

So

Ja

R

So

R

th

tr

Sol Yeah, we thought you were.

Jason I'm asking why you are.

Sol Well, we're tired of Chloe and her sister thinking they own the school.

Jason Is that it?

Sol No. Oli said he'd speak to the teachers about negotiating reduced elements of the curriculum. (*Checks himself.*) Get me.

Jason Is that right? What does that mean anyway?

Sol Well, you know, I suppose just making our lives a bit easier.

Jason Really . . . Okay . . .

Rash And he said he'd be looking at getting all the other stuff sorted, like the lockers, and the –

Jason (*interrupts*) – yeah, Rash, we know.

Rash Alright, alright. But still.

Sol Aren't you going to vote for him though?

Jason What difference does that make to you?

Sol Nothing.

Jason Exactly. You want to vote. Vote. Whatever I'm doing is just me.

Sol But I bet you're bang on the prom now though. Free tickets . . . (*Trails off.*)

Jason Meaning?

Sol Nothing.

Pause. Jason looks hard at Sol. Sol looks awkward.

Jason Boys, I'm leaving you to it, yeah. Catch up in a bit.

Sol Alright, bruv, (*Slang still sounds wrong.*)

Jason shakes his head and walks off.

Rash You're such an idiot.

Sol What?

Rash You know what. Embarrassing him about the tickets. And all that. (*Imitates Sol.*) 'You get me, bruv! Yeah, man, wicked!' What you trying to prove?

24 Ben Bailey Smith and Lajaune Lincoln

Sol ignores him.

Jason approaches Oli who is talking to another student – Shay.

Jason You got a second?

Oli I'm busy. Later, yeah.

Jason Why you going there?

Cold stand-off.

Shay Hey it's cool. You two talk.

Oli You sure?

Shay Course. Just remember about getting those toilet seats fixed in the Girls, yeah?

Oli Done.

Shay walks off to another group.

Jason Sounds like you're promising the world to everyone. You gonna be able to pay up?

Oli Yeah, well, I'm a man of my word. Got ethics. Unlike some.

Jason Grow up, bruv.

Oli Get out my face!

Jason You've got things so twisted it's a joke.

Oli Me? Your friends rob me and you're still saying you didn't know what they were going to do.

Jason First of all, yeah, they're not my friends. Just cos they live on my estate don't mean we're buddies, right. Second, if you're gonna come round on your 'ped, bigging yourself up and running your mouth off, what do you expect? If people see an opportunity they're gonna take it.

Oli People like you.

Jason Seen. Is that how you're going on? 'People like me' now? (*Cold Dangerous.*) Yeah you're right. Us 'people', we're all the same.

Oli (*nervous*) I didn't mean it like that.

Jason For real? Break it down for me then, man.

Oli
don't
get

Jason
small
with

Oli
could

Jason
rob
may

Brief

Jason
hold

Oli

Jason
you
no
ma

Oli
An

Silence

Jason

Oli

They
be

Jason
you

Oli
he

Jason
le

Oli

Oli I meant, you know, people that are just in it for themselves and don't care about the consequences for others. How much did all of you get for my moped? Enough to pay for boat-party tickets?

Jason Have you actually stopped and listened to yourself? You're a smart guy so how come you end up adding two and two and coming up with foolishness?

Oli You wanted to go to the prom though didn't you? Doing that, you could afford to go.

Jason This stupid prom! Really? You think I'd set up my boy to get robbed for that? Neither of us are that dumb. (*Pause.*) Sol and Rash maybe.

Brief silence. Then Oli quietly laughs. The tension eases.

Jason What's going on, man? I know this is about something else. You holding some grudge against me?

Oli (*too defensive*) No! Something else like what?

Jason You tell me. (*Eyes Oli suspiciously.*) What's been going on with you this past week? You gunning Chloe the other day for no reason and now getting all pally-pally with her. And then you blaming me for all this madness with your 'ped. What's gwarnin'?

Oli Times change. Not like you've been around that much either. Anything you want to tell me?

Silence. The two guys stare at each other.

Jason Just been busy planning how to rob my friends.

Oli (*smiles*) Joker.

They smile at each for a second . . . and then the moment is gone. It becomes awkward again.

Jason So uhh, listen, Sol the 'Original G' was telling me about how you're gonna convince Francis to ease up on timetables or something.

Oli (*evasive*) Well, things are hectic at the moment. We need all the help we can get.

Jason Yeah? (*Questioning look.*) How is your work going? Five A levels is a lot.

Oli Tell me about it.

Jason Did you get the grades you needed?

Oli It's complicated.

Jason Yeah?

Oli Look, J, I got a lot to focus on right now. Need to get me some votes. I got yours though, yeah? (*Stares pointedly at Jason.*) No reason for you to vote for Chloe, right?

Jason You gave a good speech. (*Smiles.*) You've got *some* principles.

Oli (*forces a smile*) I uhh . . . I appreciate that, man.

Jason Anyway, you go chat to your *people*. Later.

He walks off.

Online Melissa *appears.*

Online Melissa We need to talk.

Online Chloe *appears.*

Online Chloe Give me one minute.

Online Melissa No. Right now.

Online Chloe and Online Melissa *disappear.*

Chloe drags herself away from two students she is talking to and makes her way to Melissa who is waiting in a corner.

Melissa I'm not sure this election is going to be that easy. A lot of people seem to be going for Oli.

Chloe Whatever. I'll always be more popular.

Melissa Well, maybe that's it. Suppose this isn't a popularity contest, and people actually want someone who's going to stand up for them and make a difference.

Chloe Well, what's Abigail done for the past year? If they voted for her then they'll definitely vote for me. I'll be a much better president.

Melissa You know you don't need to constantly compare yourself to her. She's such a loser.

Chloe Who's comparing?

Melissa That's all you do.

Chloe What do you mean?

Melissa (*sighs*) Nothing, Chloe.

Chloe No, go on. Say it.

Melissa Well, it's just like you think you're in a competition with her or something.

Chloe Which I'd win.

Melissa You see? Just forget it.

Chloe She's the one who tries to be like me.

Melissa And maybe that's exactly why people want to vote for Oli. They don't want more of the same.

Chloe Since when did you become a political analyst?

Melissa Yeah, right. I'm just saying you'd be better off distancing yourself from your sister. She isn't doing you any favours.

Chloe It's not like I'm asking for her help. And even if I was, people are happy to stick with more of the same, as long as the same works for them. If people aren't going to vote for me it must be something else.

Melissa If I find out what, I'll let you know.

She walks off. Chloe watches her thoughtfully then pulls out her phone.

Online Chloe *appears.*

Online Chloe You told anyone about us?

Online Jason *appears.*

Online Jason No. Why?

Online Chloe Nothing. Doesn't matter.

Online Jason You're really worried about this election, innit?

Online Chloe Well, apparently people aren't voting for me.

Online Jason Hold up. Is that why you're asking if I told people about us seeing each other? You worried about what people might think?

Pause.

Is it?

Online Chloe It's not even like that.

Online Jason Doesn't need to be. Doesn't matter if it is.

Online Chloe We both said we wanted to keep this a secret.

Online Jason *disappears.*

Online Chloe Jason?

Online Chloe *disappears.*

Chloe *looks over at Jason. He purposefully walks over to the girls*
Chloe *was previously chatting with. They appear intimate.*

Chloe *looks upset.*

She takes her phone out.

Online Chloe *appears.*

Online Chloe Abby, where are you? I really want to talk. *(Pause.)*
Please, Abby.

Silence stretches uncomfortably.

(Angry.) Fine!

Online Chloe *disappears.*

Chloe *gathers herself together and walks over to Tammy.*

Chloe Hey, Tam Tam.

Tammy You know I hate being called that.

Chloe Yeah, I know.

Tammy So why do it?

Chloe How's things going? Abi still being a cow?

Tammy You'd know better than me. Seeing as how you're both so similar.

Chloe *(loses her cool)* Really, Tammy? I'm just saying hello.

Pause.

Tammy Okay, sorry. I guess —

Chloe I know what she's like. And I'm not her. Alright!

Tammy Geez, okay, I said sorry.

Chloe *(calms down)* Have you heard from her?

Tammy No.

Chloe People are getting a bit restless. This is their lunchtime they're giving up . . .

Tammy Not much we can do.

Chloe So we just have to sit here and wait?

Tammy *Rules is rules.*

Chloe I mean, can't I even stand up and say a few words or something?

Tammy Nope. Looks like you've been keeping yourself busy anyway.

Chloe I'm not the one going around campaigning still. You should have a word with Oli.

Tammy He already had words with me. *(Smirks.)* Very interesting.
(Walks off.) Good luck with the votes.

Online Abigail *appears.*

Online Abigail Just got your message. Everything okay?

Online Chloe *appears.*

Online Chloe This whole election. Starting to wonder if it's all worth it.

Online Abigail All of what?

Online Chloe The whole act. 'Hey, everybody, it's Miss Perfect. Vote' for me and all your dreams will come true.'

Online Abigail Have you gone crazy?

Online Chloe What's taking you so long?

Online Abigail You would not believe.

Online Chloe Try me.

Online Abigail I already booked the boat using the student council account, and now Francis is talking about misappropriation of school funds. Fraud.

Online Chloe Are you serious?

Online Abigail He is.

Online Chloe Why didn't you ask Francis first?

Online Abigail Because I knew Daddy would just pay it back later.

Online Chloe So what are you going to do? Do you need me?

Online Abigail It'll be fine. Gotta go.

Online Abigail and Online Chloe disappear.

Chloe looks over at **Jason**. He is still talking with the two girls. **Chloe** walks over.

Chloe You don't mind if I interrupt?

Jason Course not, let's make this a party.

Chloe Actually, can we talk in private?

Jason (acts shocked) Wow! (To girls.) You hear that. Our soon-to-be President actually wants to talk to me – alone. I must have done something right today.

Chloe (pleads) Jason.

Pause.

Jason Okay, okay.

He walks off with **Chloe**.

Chloe You were the one who said you wanted to keep things a secret.

Jason No. You said you didn't want anybody to know if it wasn't going to be serious.

Chloe So what was all that about your 'boys finding out' and then cussing if they knew we were together?

Jason That's just boys, innit. At least I'm not the one trying to hide it from their dad.

Chloe That's just because he wants me to focus on my studies.

Jason Oh for real? Is that why you're always cussing him and messing around in class? Because you care so much about what he wants you to do? Just be honest, you're not worried about your dad finding out you're going out with someone, just someone like me.

Chloe Don't be stupid.

Jason So I'm stupid now as well?

Chloe You're acting like it. I didn't even want to have this discussion right now.

Beat. **Jason** sees real concern in **Chloe**. He softens.

Jason This election is really getting to you isn't it?

Chloe No it's just . . .

Jason What?

Chloe Well, I thought you might have some ideas or something.

Jason Ideas?

Chloe A lot of people look up to you, you know. Like Sol and Rash . . .

Jason And you want me to get them to vote for you?

Chloe Only if they want to.

Jason Sure, babe. I'll do that for you. (Pause.) I mean, I'm not going to vote for you myself, but I'll see what they say.

Chloe What do you mean you're not voting for me?

Jason We need somebody who's actually going to do some good around here. Especially for the people that need help most, not just those that are interested in partying.

Chloe Is that what you really think of me?

Jason Honestly? When it comes to you I don't know what to think.

Chloe So you and me meant nothing then?

Jason It's really funny how you bring out the 'you and me' when it suits you. Let me tell you something. I never wanted to keep us a secret. I would have told the whole world about us.

Chloe Yeah, right. What about your boys then?

Jason D'you really believe I care what they think? I was making an excuse so I didn't look like some loved-up fool to you. (Bitter laugh.) And look at how that's turned out.

Melissa walks up to them.

Melissa Hey, you two. (Teasing.) Now tell the truth. What is going on?

Jason Your friend almost had me convinced she was the one. Proper had me fooled. Later.

He walks off. **Chloe** watches him go and tries to conceal her upset.

Melissa So he's voting for Oli then?

Chloe (watching Jason) Something like that.

32 Ben Bailey Smith and Lajaune Lincoln

Melissa Anyway, another update. I just spoke to Mark and Lane and they were really cagey about who they were going to vote for.

Chloe You're kidding. A minute ago they were telling me how excited they were about the boat!

Melissa Well, that's what I thought you said. But then I got thinking, they don't actually need to vote for you to go to the prom do they? Your sister's already got it all sorted. No way she'd back out now.

Chloe *thinks.*

Chloe Give me a minute, okay?

Melissa Where you going?

Chloe *walks off to a quiet corner. Melissa watches her like a hawk.*

Online Oli *appears.*

Online Oli Everything cool?

Online Melissa *appears.*

Online Melissa She thinks everyone hates her. Gonna implode soon!

Online Oli Crash and burn. Good work.

Online Oli and Online Melissa *disappear.*

Online Chloe *appears.*

Online Chloe Hey, TamTam, I want to run something past you.

Online Tammy *appears.*

Online Tammy Why you messaging me? I'm right here.

In the classroom Tammy waves over at Chloe who looks up from her phone, ignores her and continues typing.

Online Chloe Better to talk on here.

Online Tammy What d'you want?

Online Chloe I think we should get things moving again. I'll say a few words.

Online Tammy Hello? Campaigning's over.

Online Chloe It's not campaigning.

Online Tammy I don't think people would be too impressed with you trying to go behind Oli's back.

Online Chloe And I don't think people would be too impressed if I told them a little something about you.

Pause.

Tammy Something like what?

Chloe Something that you shouldn't have told Abigail because she came and told me straight away.

Online Tammy You bitch!

Online Tammy and Online Chloe *disappear.*

Chloe *looks over at Tammy who shakes her head in disgust. Chloe looks upset. Lane walks past her.*

Lane Hey, you okay?

Chloe I don't feel that great actually.

Lane What is it?

Chloe Nothing. It's my own fault.

Lane D'you want some water or something? I've got some mints in my rucksack.

Chloe Nah, I'll be okay. Thanks though.

Lane That's what friends do. Look out for each other, right?

Tammy *reluctantly walks to the front of the classroom.*

Tammy People. One second please.

Sol When's Abigail back? This is some long ting! (*Gives Jason a knowing nod.*) Man like me got places to be, dred! (*Slang sounds embarrassing.*)

Jason Oh yeah, you don't wanna be late for Roadman Club.

Everybody laughs. Sol shrinks.

Tammy As Vice-President and currently in charge, can I ask Chloe to give everybody an update?

All heads swivel round to Chloe.

Chloe Are you sure, Tammy?

Tammy Oh yes, Miss Worthington. Absolutely, positively.

Chloe Well I did get a text from Abigail, so it makes sense for me to fill you all in.

She walks to the front of the class.

Oli takes out his phone.

Online Oli appears.

Online Oli What's going on?

Online Melissa appears.

Online Melissa You're asking me? Do you think she knows?

Online Oli Not unless you told her.

Online Melissa Don't be stupid.

Online Oli and **Online Melissa** disappear.

Chloe faces everyone with a charming smile.

Chloe Hey, everyone, I know we've been waiting for ages so I wanted to apologise on behalf of Abigail. She's actually been called in to see the Head. There's a problem with booking the boat . . .

The class groan and jeer.

Lane That's so lame. Why?

Mark Both of you are jokers.

Noel You've made us sit in here all this time for nothing.

Chloe Hold on. Hold on. The reason it *might* not go ahead is because of what Abigail did. I can make sure that it *definitely* happens.

Mark How?

Melissa turns from the group, who are all focused on **Chloe**.

Online Melissa appears.

Online Melissa You might wanna be here to see this. Chloe's saying the boat might not happen coz of you. People getting angry . . .

Online Melissa disappears.

Oli Sorry, but I'm going to jump in here. I thought we weren't allowed to give any more campaign speeches.

Chloe We're not.

Oli So what were you just doing then?

Chloe I'm updating everyone on the current state of affairs.

Oli Sounded to me like you were making a last-minute effort to get votes. (*To Tammy.*) Are you seriously going to allow this, Tammy?

Tammy Technically, it wasn't a speech.

Sol Same old Chloe and Abigail. Rigging the system. Paigon business!

Chloe I'm not rigging anything.

Oli Tammy, if she's got the chance to give another speech I want one too.

Tammy Oli, I'm really sorry about this. But rules are rules.

Jason (*loudly*) This is bullshit!

Everyone turns to look at Jason who is at the back of the room.

Jason I was gonna keep my mouth shut but I just gotta say it. Chloe might not have rigged the system, but she's playing it. Yep, yet again, same old people getting the same opportunities, whilst the rest of us don't have a chance. They already have a head start and then they still get help along the way. So where's that leave the rest of us that aren't related to the student president, or whose daddy can't put a little sweetener on the table? All this crap about equal opportunities. Everything's unequal from the start!

Oli You hear that, Tammy? Jason's backing me.

Jason I ain't backing anyone. I'm just sick of seeing certain people always getting what they want when they already have it all.

Chloe Don't hold back, Jason. Anything else you want to add?

Jason You know me, babe, full of *ideas*. Where d'you want me to start?

Oli Am I going to get the chance to speak, Tammy?

Rash Yeah, Tammy, if Chloe got the chance to campaign again so should Oli.

Debs It's only fair, Tammy.

Tammy looks around the room at everybody, under pressure. A steely determination washes over her.

Tammy Jason's right. The same people keep doing the same thing, and the only people it's helping is themselves. (*Turns to Oli.*) You get the floor, but we do it properly. Have a proper debate and get the truth out there. (*Turns to Chloe.*) That's only fair, right? Give everybody one last chance to really find out the kind of person they're voting for.

Chloe (*sweet smile*) Fine by me.

Noel More bloody speeches.

Online Melissa appears.

Online Melissa Don't trust Tammy. She's up to something.

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe Don't worry about it.

Online Chloe disappears.

Online Melissa I think Chloe planned this all along.

Online Oli appears.

Online Oli How?

Online Melissa Don't know. What shall we do?

Online Oli I'll work something out. She's done. Trust me.

Online Melissa And you did mean what you said to me last night, didn't you?

Online Oli Talk later. She's watching us.

Online Melissa and Online Oli disappear.

Melissa nervously looks over at **Chloe** but she and **Lane** are talking. **Melissa** looks at **Oli**, puzzled. But he avoids her gaze.

Tammy finally takes charge.

Tammy Okay, guys, let's get all these desks and chairs moved.

The students begin to shift furniture around.

Online Abigail appears.

Online Abigail What have you done?!!!!

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe Hey, sis, how's it going?

Online Abigail You stupid cow. I told you not to do anything crazy.

Online Chloe What?

Online Abigail Lying about me and the boat.

Online Chloe I needed the votes.

Online Abigail So just ruin my reputation in the process? Wait till I tell Daddy.

Online Chloe Tell him what you want. Sometimes you have to make a stand.

Online Abigail You sound like that idiot Jason.

Online Chloe He's not an idiot.

Online Abigail He shouldn't even be on the council. Guys like him. No class.

Online Chloe No class, or wrong class?

Online Abigail Same difference.

Online Chloe (*offended*) Sometimes I can't believe we're actually related.

Online Abigail Tell me about it.

Online Chloe Jason's a decent guy. More intelligent than you'll ever be.

Online Abigail Intelligence doesn't get you anywhere. Knowing the right people does. Anyway, I haven't got time for a heart to heart right now. I'll be back soon.

Online Chloe Fine. By that time I would have been a cow to everybody, lied to my friends and forced people to do things they don't want to do. I can really see why you loved being President.

Online Abigail I know. It's great. Oh and whilst we're on the subject of lying to your friends, tell Mel thanks for keeping me in the loop about what you did.

Chloe shoots a look at **Melissa**.

Online Abigail disappears.

Silence stretches.

Online Chloe disappears.

The students have moved the desks and chairs into two rows facing each other. The tutor's desk is at the head of the rows. The room now resembles the House of Commons.

Oli positions himself on one row with his key followers beside him – **Sol, Rash, Debs** and a couple of others.

Chloe sits on a chair on the opposite row along with her supporters – **Melissa, Mark, Lane** and a few others.

The overall numbers on each side are very even.

Jason stands by himself away from it all.

Tammy stands at the tutor's desk. She is on the phone having a conversation with somebody.

Melissa (to **Chloe**) Exciting.

Chloe (cold) Is it?

Melissa You got a plan?

Chloe Not really. I'm just thinking it's about time we were all honest with each other. Right?

Melissa laughs nervously.

Oli Hey, Tammy, you ready?

Tammy gets off the phone, stares at **Chloe** and shakes her head in disbelief.

Oli Tammy.

Tammy Okay, yeah. Alright everyone, listen up. Oli will go –

Chloe Wait a minute.

Tammy What now?

Chloe I think somebody else should moderate.

Tammy I'm Vice-President.

Chloe We need somebody neutral.

Tammy Are you trying to say I'm not?

Chloe and **Tammy** stare at each other.

Tammy Okay, fair enough.

Rash I'd say the best person is Jason. He's always straight up.

Tammy That's true.

Jason

Rash

Oli

This

Jason

done

Oli

Tam

Chlo

Oli

Onl

Onl

Onl

Onl

Onl

Onl

Onl

Ja

Ja

Ta

Ja

m

W

L

S

J

E

S

e

t

Jason You're better off getting someone else.

Rash There isn't anybody.

Oli Just leave him. Get somebody who actually cares.

This annoys Jason. He looks long and hard at Oli.

Jason You know what? Count me in. It's time something different got done. (To **Oli**.) You cool with that?

Oli Fine by me.

Tammy What about you, Chloe?

Chloe I'm all right with it.

Oli Cool. We can get everything out in the open.

Online Chloe appears.

Online Chloe I'm glad you agreed to help. You've got a lot to offer.

Online Jason appears.

Online Jason If you're trying to get me on your side, I'm telling you now, it's not gonna happen.

Online Chloe Oh forget it, Jason.

Online Jason and Online Chloe disappear.

Jason walks to the front of the class.

Jason Before we start, can I make a suggestion?

Tammy Go for it.

Jason How do people feel if we lock the phones off? No texting or messaging. As Oli says, get everything out in the open.

Worried murmurs from the class.

Lane I don't know, Jason . . .

Sol Yeah, what if somebody wants to link, mans?

Jason Mummy will know where to find you, Sol, don't worry.

Everybody laughs.

Seriously though, if there's anything anybody wants to say about this election, you should be able to say it in front of everyone, not hide behind some screen. What do you think, Chloe?

Chloe Hundred per cent agree. Right, Mel?

Melissa (*awkward*) Sure.

Jason Oli?

Oli Works for me.

Jason Let's do it then.

The whole class take out their phones and collectively switch them off. Online personas collapse on their platforms. It is a momentous occasion.

Everybody is quiet for a second.

Jason Okay. This is it now. Oli, what do you want to say?

Oli stands.

Oli I don't think I'm alone when I say I've had enough of Chloe and Abigail. The pretentious, arrogant, walk-on-water act does my head in. All this talk about caring about others – as if! We all know they're just in it for themselves. Chloe doesn't care about you, doesn't care about me (*Slight pause.*), doesn't care about the school. And why should she. It's not important to her if she gets good grades or not. She already has her future sorted, all paid up, whatever she wants to do. Not like the rest of us. If we don't get our grades we're stuffed. But why should she worry. She's just a spoilt brat, who always gets her own way and throws a tantrum when she doesn't. It's about time somebody else came out on top.

He sits down. Sol and some of the other guys next to Oli begin to cheer. Rash, Debs and the girls on Oli's side are taken aback.

Lane, Mark and the other people on Chloe's side begin to shout angrily.

Lane Idiots!

Mark Shut up!

Sol You shut up. You know Oli's right. Wasteman!

Mark Your mum.

Sol D'you want a slap, rudeboy?

The exchange of cusses and jeers heats up.

Jason Okay, everyone, 'low it. Relax!

The cussing continues.

Jason (*shouts*) Everyone, just chill!

The noise quietens down.

C'mon, man, what are you lot? We're supposed to be responsible people, not screaming and shouting up the place like little kids. What kind of example you setting? Fix up!

People look embarrassed.

But, Oli, I gotta tell you, man, it's interesting.

Oli What?

Jason I know we want the truth, but the truth about your mandate, not how you feel about Chloe.

Oli People need to know the facts for them to decide who to vote for.

Jason So your plan to get people to vote for you isn't to talk about the good stuff you're going to do, it's just to cuss your opponent?

Chloe I'm glad somebody else noticed that.

Oli I'm just saying how it is.

Chloe No, you're saying what you think. And correct me if I'm wrong but you think I'm a spoilt brat and you're bitter that I've got plans for the future. Yeah, that would get my vote.

Oli It would if you thought that everybody having the same opportunities as you was important.

Chloe Oh give me a break *please*! You all complain about not having opportunities, and then when I'm offering them you're still moaning.

Oli Some cheesy school disco with a crusty DJ and free 7 Up isn't exactly the same kind of opportunity as a guaranteed job in Daddy's law firm.

Jason Alright, Oli, you made your point about Chloe. We get it. But let's get back to business. Why should any of us vote for you?

Oli Well, like I've said a million times, I'm focused on us getting real power, making a real difference.

Jason And you plan to do that how?

Oli We need better relationships with the teachers. More dialogue and understanding would be good for everybody.

Jason Any teachers in particular?

Oli No. Not really. Mr Francis said he'd be interested in supporting us.

Jason Francis?

Oli Yeah.

Jason Your science teacher? Who everyone thinks is a dick?

Oli He's not a bad teacher. He just has high expectations.

Jason I know I asked you before, but how are your grades going?

Oli (pause) What's that got to do with anything?

Jason I just wanna find out what's going on that's all.

Oli So what you trying to say? That I'm trying to improve my grades by getting on Mr Francis's good side?

Jason Are you?

Oli No. But yeah if I was, what's wrong with students establishing a good working relationship with their teachers to ensure they reach their full potential?

Jason That sounds like something Francis would say. Is it?

Oli Can we move on? I thought you said this wasn't supposed to be some personal thing? That we should both be focusing on our presidential mandates?

Jason Yeah, you're right. I'd love to talk about yours but I don't know if we've got time. From what I hear you've promised everything to everyone. Reduced study periods, new toilet seats in the Girls, even Rash is finally going to get his five-star, fur-lined lockers.

Everybody laughs.

So, yeah, you gave a good speech. Had me and a few of us thinking this is a guy who's got everybody's best interests at heart. But that's the thing. We need to unpick all these promises you've made. How you gonna do all this?

Oli Well, Mr Francis has said he's happy to look at what he can do to help us.

Jason For real? Francis has never come across as the type to want to help anybody apart from himself. What's he want in return?

Oli Nothing.

Jason Nothing?

Oli Yeah. He's just happy to be able to advise us on the areas we should be focusing on as a student council.

Murmurs of discontent from the class.

Jason And what does that mean?

Oli Well, I'm not sure yet. He hasn't discussed that with me.

Jason So let me get this straight. You want to come in here and just be some puppet for one of the worst teachers there is, so he can start controlling us from a distance?

Murmurs of discontent grow louder.

Oli No. Not at all. He's really happy to come and sit in our meetings as well.

Sol You muppet!

Debs No way. We are not having that!

Oli So how do you lot think we're going to get anything? You really think we've got any power ourselves? We need the support of the people that are really in charge. They help us, we help them, everybody's happy.

Chloe And you get your grades.

Oli Not everyone can afford to buy them like you.

Jason So just sell everybody out. That's a good look.

Oli At least what I'm doing will benefit the whole school, not just a select few.

Chloe Oh listen to yourself, Oli. You're the one that just said we can't get anything done without the teachers. So what makes you think they'll let us do anything that they don't want us to. What I'm doing means we might not change the world, but at least we can get something for ourselves and do it on our own terms.

Oli But if there's at least a chance we can change things shouldn't we take it?

Chloe What kind of change? Change that the teachers want?

Oli No. Not necessarily.

Chloe Helloooooo. It is NOT. GOING. TO. HAPPEN. The system is what it is. I'd rather get a few things for some of us than nothing for everybody.

Oli Well, I'd rather try and fail than do nothing.

Chloe Is this a new tactic of yours? Make a stupid point just to disagree with everything I'm saying even though you know I'm right.

44 Ben Bailey Smith and Lajaune Lincoln

Rash I'm not saying Chloe's right, yeah, but, Oli, we definitely don't want teachers coming in here and telling us what we should do. Especially Francis.

Debs That's not what we signed up for.

Rash Yeah. I'm not having Francis ordering me around everywhere. Even if that means we don't get our lockers.

Everyone looks at Rash in surprise.

Sol Big tings!

Oli (*panicked*) Okay, okay, look. I'll uhh . . . focus more on student power. Yeah, let's keep the teachers out of this. This is our council; we need to be in charge.

Chloe That was quick. What happened to more dialogue and understanding with teachers?

Jason Grow some balls, man. How can you change your entire position just like that? You interested in becoming President because you really believe in something, or you doing it for some power trip?

Chloe We all heard what he said before. He's only doing this to get good grades for himself. Wouldn't surprise me if he says one thing now to get everybody's votes and then flips as soon as he gets into power.

Oli smiles smugly as if this is the moment he has been waiting for.

Oli Oh, I see what's going on now. It had to happen eventually, didn't it? Is this actually supposed to be a debate, or is this all part of your and Jason's masterplan to do me over.

Jason What you on about?

Oli C'mon, man. The same way you set me up to get robbed, the same way you're setting me up now. You and Chloe working together to take me down and guarantee she gets voted student president.

Chloe Are you crazy?

Oli Are you gonna deny it?

Jason Course.

Oli So you're gonna deny that you and Chloe are going out as well?

Ripple of surprise amongst the class.

Jason We're not going out.

Chloe Where'd you get that idea?

Oli Oh, so it's just casual booty calls? Get some wherever you can – in the toilets, at the back of Chicken Express, wherever's clever.

Mocking laughter from students.

Chloe (*to Jason*) You just couldn't keep your mouth shut could you?

Jason (*to Chloe*) I didn't say a word I swear! (*To Oli, cold and angry.*) You know what, bruv. This is you and me now, yeah.

Oli So you gonna do me suttin' now, bredren?

Jason 'Low the slang, bruv. You ain't from the ends, yeah.

Students laugh. Apart from Sol.

Oli I'm just telling the truth. Everybody needs to know this whole thing was a set-up between you and Chloe. The star-crossed lovers.

Chloe Okay, Oli, you want to tell the truth? I reckon you're just jealous because I blanked you when you asked me out last week.

Another ripple of surprise amongst the students and mocking laughter.

Melissa (*complete shock*) What? Oli, is that true?

Chloe What did you say, Oli? That we were made for each other? Something lame like that.

Jason So that's why you're screwing with me. You're just vex because you think me and Chloe are going out, not because you think I set you up to get robbed.

Chloe And that's why you're trying to embarrass me in front of everybody.

Rash Is this true, mate?

Oli (*to Chloe*) Who embarrassed who? Blatantly leading me on when you're going out with my friend.

Chloe I never led you on. Get real. If a girl can't smile at you without you thinking she's in love with you then you're in trouble.

Jason And we are not going out, man. You let some girl come between us and for what? Chloe doesn't even care about me anyway and you're getting all jealous.

Oli Well, she's yours now. You can keep her.

Chloe Oh, he can keep me now can he? Screw both of you. I'm not some trophy that you can trade between you. (*Stands.*) You know what,

I've had it! I'm sick of being used like some pawn in other people's games so they can get what they want. I'm not 'some girl', I'm my own person and I'll do what I want and live my life on my own terms. Not to please my dad, or Abigail or even you two idiots. Whatever I decide to do will because I'm doing it for myself, not other people.

Everybody looks at Chloe with newfound respect. Her supporters begin to clap and cheer.

Lane And that's why she's getting my vote.

Tammy What a load of bollocks!

Everybody looks at Tammy in shock.

Tammy Don't let her fool you and don't buy into all of this 'poor little, persecuted me' crap. Chloe, do you want to tell everyone how you blackmailed me so you could get the chance to campaign again. Or how you stabbed your own sister in the back to get more votes.

Lane Oh my days!

Sol Deep.

Tammy Don't even think about denying it. I've got all the texts you sent me and I spoke with Abigail on the phone earlier and she says that the boat trip was always going to go ahead.

Chloe looks around at everybody and takes a deep breath.

Chloe I'm not going to deny it.

Pause. A moment of real sincerity. She swallows.

I did lie. And I've been a right cow to people. Maybe I wanted this too much, but there's nothing I can say as an excuse.

Tammy And you've just realised that have you?

Chloe (looks at Jason and Debs) I've realised how crap it is when people take you for granted. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

Tammy So you still expect people to vote for you?

The room is silent.

Melissa (to Chloe) Didn't I tell you not to trust her? She is such a loser.

Chloe (tired) Mel, please just shut up. Loser this, loser that. You're the loser. I know you told Abigail what was going on. What kind of friend are you?

They stare each other out . . . Melissa backs down.

Melissa (quiet) I was just trying to help that's all.

Chloe No. You're just two-faced.

Melissa Me two-faced?

Chloe Whatever. I'm fed up of it and I'm fed up of you.

Melissa I'm glad I told Oli what was going on between you and Jason. You're the one who's two-faced. Lying to everybody, even yourself. And now everybody knows.

Lane Whoa!

Chloe How did you find out?

Jason Is that who told you, Oli?

Oli I don't want to get involved.

Jason You are involved. Fool!

Chloe So Melissa's been helping you out behind my back.

Oli No.

Mark You know what though. Chloe, I didn't want to say anything but Mel has been kinda badmouthing you a little bit. I mean it wasn't like, serious at the time but now . . .

Debs Yeah, and she told me how you were saying how I should just get over my mum being ill and stuff. Sorry, I should have said something as well. Actually I'm not sorry, but you should know what your so-called friends are saying about you.

Chloe So why were you doing this then, Mel? To help Oli get votes?

Oli Hey, I didn't really know about any of this, okay?

Melissa Really, Oli?

Oli (to the class) Mel isn't doing anything for me.

Melissa Wow! You've changed your tune since staying at mine last night.

'Oohs' from the class.

Yeah. I'm not ashamed to say it. I own it. I was really into you, Oli, but I guess you were just using me to get at Chloe. You know what? You're a slut.

48 Ben Bailey Smith and Lajaune Lincoln

Noel (to Oli) That is kinda desperate, man.

Chloe (to Oli) Not nice is it? To be embarrassed in front of everybody.

Oli So out of everybody I'm the bad guy?

Melissa No, you and Chloe are both liars.

Lane Is this what happens when we switch off our phones? We should do it more often.

Rash This is some kind of joke.

Tammy (to Chloe and Oli) Are you two serious?

Everybody is getting angry. Chloe and Oli stand isolated.

Jason I'm listening to everything and you know what, you two are messed up. You've just used us as stepping stones to achieve your own personal agendas. Yeah – we're just the suckers that get caught up in the middle of your crap. Look at me. I'm there thinking I'm a friend, a boyfriend, and all I am is just some punk that the both of you are using to get what you want. (Pause. Looks at everybody.) But in saying that, we're the ones to blame because we actually let it happen. We just watch whilst they blatantly lie and sacrifice any decency or principles they might have. And all that so they can stand up and say they're doing us a favour, whilst the only people benefiting are them and the people pulling their strings.

Chloe and Oli stand alone.

Jason (to Oli and Chloe) The thing is, I'm not standing here right now asking for your understanding because you'll never get me. I'm not asking for your friendship or your charity. All I want, all any of us want, is your respect. Just act and treat us with a bit of decency, some honour, a bit of class you know. (Stares at Chloe and Oli and then laughs to himself. At himself. He looks round at everybody.) But this is the system and this is how it works. We all know that we can scream and shout but nothing's going to change. Right? So just get on with it. Vote for your next president and then you can all sail off on a boat party into the sunset. That's all you lot really care about, right? (Picks up one of the voting cards. Looks at it.) But you can count me out. (Puts card down.)

The Other Students pick up their voting cards.

Suddenly, Abigail bursts into the classroom, sees everybody holding their cards.

Abi
(Loc
Any
boat
nor

Sile

Ras
defi
favo
with

Oli

Ras
wel

Del

Ras

Oli

Ch
we
son

Oli
cor

Sol

Ta

Oli
bet

Ja
to

Oli

He

Th

Ra

Ta

Abigail Just in time. It's okay everybody, everything's sorted out. (Looks around the room.) Well, looks like you have been having fun. Anyway, I know what you've been told but it's all back on the track. The boat's secured, there's no need to worry. So let's get things back to normal. Let's vote. Is everybody ready?

Silence. People look at each other.

Rash I don't know about all of you, but if we are going to vote, I'm definitely not voting for Oli. (To Oli.) Sorry, mate, Chloe isn't my favourite person in the world, but what you did was messed-up. At least with Chloe we know what we're going to get.

Oli Yeah, a nice little disco.

Rash No. Francis not taking over and telling us what to do in here as well.

Debs What happened to you, Oli? You used to be the nicest guy.

Rash Yeah, man, you lost it.

Oli (to class) I was doing this for all of us.

Chloe No you weren't. You can't even fool yourself into thinking you were doing it for yourself. (Looks at Abigail.) You were doing this for somebody else, and that's the worst place to be. Trust me.

Oli (to class) So this is it, then. You're just gonna let Chloe and Abigail come out on top like they always do.

Sol You done messed up, bredren.

Tammy Sol's right, Oli. For once.

Oli Fine, do what you want. (Walks to door.) Like Mr Francis said, I'm better than all of you put together. I don't need this.

Jason You need to drop some of those A levels. The pressure's getting to you.

Oli Yeah, yeah, yeah.

He leaves. Slams the door behind him.

The class watch him go in shock.

Rash What a dick move.

Tammy (to Chloe and Abigail) So that's it. You've won.

Abigail No, no, no. We still have to vote. You just don't quite get it do you, Tammy? *(To class.)* People! Voting cards.

Chloe *walks to the desk and looks at the class. Everybody looks fed up.*
Jason *doesn't look at her at all.*

Chloe *holds her voting card up. Rips it in half. Then drops it to the floor.*

Abigail *(frantic)* What are you doing?

Chloe *(to class)* Jason's right. You shouldn't vote for either of us. Oli because he wanted to be president for the wrong reason. And me because I don't want to be president at all.

The class look at each other in shock.

Abigail She's just messing around. *(To Chloe.)* Right?

Chloe No. *(To the class.)* We're all told what to do, what to think. Whether it's our parents, our sisters, what we see online. It's crazy. We need to start thinking for ourselves. This is our time now and if we want to do it, we can make a difference. *(Takes a moment then turns to face Jason directly.)* Jason, you're right about the system. It doesn't work, but let's change it. I might not know how exactly, but whatever we do, I want to do it together.

The Other Students turn to Jason.

Chloe Jason?

Jason *stands up, holding his voting card. He stares at Chloe, smiles, then rips his voting card in half as well.*

Jason Let's do it.

Moments pass. Then apart from Abigail, every other student also stands and rips their card.

Abigail You've all gone mad. Taking away the system is how everything ends!

Jason Exactly. And it's how everything else begins.

The End.

How

'We v
also c
be int
realis
also e
some
State
inter
ins a
that,
under
medi
on p
impa
to cre
that
impe
of ou
oppe
play

WH

'It c
the p
then
hopi
is ab
us, h
now
mor
onli