

Bang Up

A radio drama

SCENE 1

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone.
Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Emma. It's Dad. We've still no news. Katherine's the size
of a house though. I never thought I'd be going through all this again
at my age. Anyway, hope you get this message; it would be nice to
hear from you. Take care, love.

SCENE 2

PRISON WING OF YOUNG OFFENDERS INSTITUTE. THE SOUND
STARTS OFF DISTINCT. FAST PACED.

LOUD MUSIC PLAYING HIP HOP

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) Bang up twenty seconds. All lads behind doors.

LOUD BANGING ON CELL DOOR

ISHAN: Oy Paddy! Patrick! You got any skins?

DOOR SLAMS

PATRICK: 'Ave 'em mate. Under the door.

ISHAN: Nice one. (BEAT BOX FOR FEW SECONDS) You got any smokes?

FEEDBACK FROM LOUDSPEAKER

PATRICK: Don't push it!

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) Ten seconds. Red entry for anyone still on the
landings. No negotiation.

FOOTSTEPS MAGNIFIED

ISHAN: Oy, Gov. I was meant to be on the gym list.

GUARD: Not today. Sorry son. (LOUDSPEAKER) Bang up!

ISHAN: (SINGING) I wanna sex you up.

DOOR SLAMS. SILENT BEAT.

INSIDE LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. HIP HOP MUSIC STARTS UP
AGAIN MUFFLED OUTSIDE CELL DOOR.

LEE: (CLOSE) 7 down. Feeling of frustration. 15 letters. First letter D.
Desperation. 1,2,3,4 – too short. Disappointment. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,
9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. Crap.

PATRICK: Dissatisfaction. 15 letters. Fits in with 16 across.

LEE: Cheers.

PATRICK: No problem Lee, my friend. Budge over. I need to use the crapper.

SCENE 3

EMMA: Friday 4th November.

Morning:

Put rubbish out.

Do ironing.

Find waterproof spray for shoes.

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30-4.

Dinner:

Beans and waffles.

SCENE 4

THE SCENE TAKES PLACE IN THE CENTRE OF H WING. THERE IS
BACKGROUND

EMMA: I don't think I'm your type.

PATRICK: I don't have a type. I like all women.

EMMA: I'm too old for you.

PATRICK: Well if you change your mind,

EMMA: (LAUGHS) Look, prisoner services are after formal qualifications. It

INSIDE LEE AND PADDY'S CELL. RAP BECOMES MUFFLED FROM
OUTSIDE DOOR. PATRICK IS PLAYING CHRIS DE BURGH
'LONELY SKY'

PATRICK: What's that?
LEE: Some literacy bollocks.
PATRICK: What d'you have to do?
LEE: Answer questions about healthy eating.

PATRICK FARTS LOUDLY

Shit man, you stink!
PATRICK: Here. Give us your homework. I'll finish it for you!
LEE: It's alright. I can do it.
PATRICK: Suit yourself. (STARTS TO SING LOUDLY WITH THE CHORUS) They'll
build a cage and steal your only sky...
LEE: Why aren't you at Mass?
PATRICK: Father Joseph banned me for two weeks.
LEE: Why?
PATRICK: For blaspheming. I said some bad things about our holy mother. You
got any bog roll? I'm dying for a shit.

SCENE 7

EMMA: Friday 11th November.
Morning:
Put out recycling/rubbish.

Cancel travel insurance.

Buy baby card/baby present. Ideas?

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30-4.

Dinner:

Quiche.

SCENE 8

BACKGROUND NOISE OF MUSIC PLAYED FROM CELLS ON H
WING, CHATTER, SHOUTS, ECHOING FOOTSTEPS,
OCCASSIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

EMMA: What's up, Lee?

LEE: Nothing.

EMMA: Well, if you don't want to work today, I've got lads to see on B wing.

LEE: Whatever.

RAY: Can I have a pen, Miss?

ISHAN: Cheapskate! He can buy one from the canteen.

RAY: Yeah, but I need shower gel and I'm skint. Go on, Miss.

ISHAN: Don't give him one.

RAY: Sex.

ISHAN: Bull. He's kidding you, Miss.

GUARD: Come on Ray, Ishan; move along. Lee's trying to get some work done.

ISHAN: Ray can't even write.

EMMA: Then I'll get you signed up for literacy, Ray, and you can get started on that book of yours.

LEE: Oy Miss! I thought this was supposed to be my lesson.

EMMA: And I thought you said I was wasting your time.

SCENE 9

ISHAN: That'll put you back on basic again, mate.

FEMALE GUARD: Ok. Hands above your head. Out to the side. Turn around. Alright. Off you go.

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) All lads behind doors. Mr. Afshad, that'll be a red entry in 3, 2, 1 seconds. Bang up!

INSIDE LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. MUFFLED SOUNDS OF GUARDS OPENING AND SHUTTING DOORS : SHOUTING NUMBERS AND NAMES FOR ROLL.

PATRICK: (SINGING LOUDLY) Lady in red!

Is dancing with me...

LEE: Please Patrick. Shut up.

PATRICK: It's a classic power ballad, Lee! The ladies really go for it. Hold on there, I'll put it on.

LEE: Oh shit, no!

PATRICK: 100 Greatest Love songs.

MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY AND PATRICK SINGS ALONG

Never saw you looking as lovely as you did tonight,

Never saw you shine so bright...

SPEAKING

I sing it to my little girl on the phone. She laughs at me.

THE CD PLAYER CRASHES TO THE FLOOR AND THE MUSIC STOPS.

LEE: I said shut up!

PAUSE

PATRICK: Alright Mate. Keep your hair on!

SCENE 11

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 18th November.

Morning:

Put rubbish out.

Post parcel for the baby.

Co-op – buy milk, peppers, noodles.

Print off Ballad of Reading Gaol.

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30-4.

Dinner:

Stir fry.

SCENE 12

H WING. BACKGROUND NOISE OF MUSIC PLAYED FROM CELLS,
CHATTER, SHOUTS, ECHOING FOOTSTEPS, OCCASSIONAL
ANNOUNCEMENTS

GUARD: I'm sorry. He won't come out his cell.

EMMA: Why?

GUARD: Claims he has a headache.

EMMA: Oh. (SIGHS) I can't work out what I'm doing wrong. I thought I was starting to get somewhere with him.

GUARD: Don't take it personally, Miss. He's not an easy lad to reach.

EMMA: So you don't think he really has a headache?

GUARD: Doubt it. He's just unhappy; doesn't trust anyone.

EMMA: It's such a shame. I keep getting a glimpse of what he might be capable of. He's got a really lovely way with words.

GUARD: Yeah, well, for what it's worth, I think he's a decent enough lad. Stick with it.

EMMA: I will. (PAUSE) I was going to look at a poem with him today. Do you think he'll read it if I leave it for him?

GUARD: Worth a try.

EMMA: Can I post it under his door?

GUARD: Cell 67. Right landing.

EMMA: Thanks.

EMMA RUNNING UP THE STEPS. ECHOES. ISHAN STOPS HER ON LANDING.

ISHAN: Hey Miss!

EMMA: Alright, Ishan!

ISHAN: Will you see Kevin, you know, from building?

EMMA: I should think so. At some point.

ISHAN: Can you get him to put me on the next course? I've been waiting for months.

EMMA: I'll try.

ISHAN: I'm sick of wing cleaning. It's bullshit.

EMMA: I'll say it to him. What's your surname?

ISHAN: Ashraf. Cheers Miss. You looking for Lee?

BANGS LOUDLY ON DOOR

Wake up lazy git! You're teacher's here to see you.

EMMA: It's alright. I can just slide this under his door.

DOOR OPENS

LEE: What?

EMMA: Hi Lee. I'm sorry you're feeling sick.

LEE: I'm not.

EMMA: Oh.

LEE: I just want to be left alone.

EMMA: Ok. I'm going. (PAUSE) I brought this for you to read. I thought you might be getting tired of comprehensions.

LEE: What is it?

EMMA: A poem. A story really.

LEE: Ok.

LEE TAKES IT. CLOSSES DOOR.

EMMA: Ok. There you go, then.

ISHAN: We think he's in here for murder. What do you reckon, Miss?

EMMA: I don't know. (PAUSE) I thought you were all innocent.

ISHAN LAUGHS

SCENE 13

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone.

Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Emma, it's Dad. Thanks for your carJETT1 0 0 1 316.h(4.TRA24 38.424 Tm.

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And at every drifting cloud that went
With sails of silver by.

(SIGHS. STARTS AGAIN) I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye...

PATRICK:

LEE: Yeah. Some of them.

EMMA: That's brilliant. I was half expecting you to screw them up and toss them in the bin.

LEE: Yeah. I'm sorry about the other day, Miss.

EMMA: So, what did you think?

LEE: I don't really get it.

EMMA: It's partly a protest poem. Wilde seems to be suggesting that the prison system is about destroying people, not reforming them.

LEE: I wasn't talking about the meaning. I don't get why you gave it to me.

EMMA: Because I'm fed of teaching you to pass a test! I want you be excited about our lesson for a change.

LEE: Why?

EMMA: Because, believe it or not, I'm not that keen on just ticking boxes. If I sneak in some poetry and creative writing, I feel better about myself, alright?

LEE: Alright.

EMMA: It's got to be better than talking about punctuation.

LEE: Yeah. (PAUSE) Go on then. You said it's about destroying people.

EMMA: Yes. It's a really powerful poem. It stirs big thoughts and feelings.

LEE: Like what?

EMMA: Whenever I read it, it makes me feel uncomfortable, inspired, sad. (PAUSE) How does it make you feel?

LEE: What do you want me to say?

EMMA: Whatever you like.

LEE: I don't know Miss.

EMMA: Is that it?

LEE: Yeah.

EMMA: Alright. Let's forget the poem for now. (FINDS A PIECE OF PAPER) I marked the sentences you wrote for me. This one here...describing the girl: (EMMA READS LEE'S WORK) Louise's dirty trainers stared up at her accusingly. (TO LEE) It's a great sentence. There's a lot in there.

LEE: I only wrote it 'cos you said I had to use an adverb.

EMMA: But that's my point: I give you a tedious instruction and you write something interesting. Not everyone can do that. I'd like you to write something longer

SHE PAUSES. SITS DOWN

EMMA: I don't know.

SCENE 18

NOISE OF PRISON WING

BANGING ON DOOR. KEYS UNLOCK. OPEN.

GUARD: Just doing roll. You alright, Lee?

LEE: Yeah.

GUARD: What're you writing?

LEE: Something for Miss.

GUARD: Good lad. Keep at it.

DOOR LOCKED AND WE ARE NOW INSIDE LEE AND PADDY'S
CELL. NOISE OF WING BECOMES MUFFLED OUTSIDE DOOR.

LEE: (READING OUT LOUD)

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30-4.

Dinner:

Jacket potato.

SCENE 20

BACKGROUND NOISE OF PRISON WING

LEE: What do you think, Miss?

EMMA: Call me Emma. We're not at school.

LEE: Sorry, I keep forgetting.

GUARD: C'mon now, head down Lee, lad.

EMMA: Even in this short piece, you start to talk about ideas. You even made me interested in the spider. It's good.

LEE: Thanks. I thought you might say I should have done more.

EMMA: Well, I want you to go back and have another look. Describe what's beyond the window. And if you really want to impress me, use a simile!

LEE: What's that again?

EMMA: Comparing one thing to another, to help make an image stronger. For example, erm....the stranger disturbed me, like a

LEE: A bad dream?

EMMA: Yeah. Yeah. That'll do! So, do you think you can write me something for next week?

LEE: (ALMOST EAGER) Ok.

SCENE 21

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone. Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Emma. It's Dad. If you're there, pick up. Emma? Oh well. I just fancied a chat. Katherine's taken Tara to her Gran's for a few days and I'm here on my own. I started feeling, I don't know. Sentimental, I suppose. Too much time on my hands; too easy to start thinking.

SCENE 22

PRISON WING

LOUD MUSIC PLAYING HIP HOP

GUARD: (LOUDSPEAKER) Bang up twenty seconds. All lads behind doors.

RAY: Awww gov. I need to ring my girl. One more minute, please.

GUARD: 'Fraid not, Ray. If she really loves you, she'll still be there tomorrow.

(SINGING) Tie a yellow ribbon round the old oak tree,

It's been seven long years, do you...

INSIDE LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. PRISON LIFE MUFFLED

OUTSIDE CELL DOOR. THE GUARD'S SONG ALSO CONTINUES

BEHIND THE DOOR.

LEE: (READING WORK) I've tried writing this all week, Miss. I mean, Emma.

I wanted to make it so good, really long with loads of descriptions and ideas and all that. Now it's already Friday morning and I'm back from the gym and apart from our lesson this afternoon, the whole weekend's stretching out in front of me like a, like a... just realised

jump from beauty to death. When you're watching the autumn leaves, your writing is so full of hope and then crashes into a kind of despair in an instant. And your simile...

LEE: Stinking turd?

EMMA: Like a sleepless night! I know what a sleepless night feels like and I don't envy you.

LEE: Do you ever do any writing?

EMMA: Sometimes.

GUARD: Come on now Lee, lad: behind your door.

EMMA: Look over the wall Lee. Write about what you see; how it makes you feel.

LEE: (CALLING OUT TO HER) You should write something for next week too, Miss!

EMMA: My name's Emma.

SCENE 25

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone. Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Thanks for the lovely card. I wish I still had time for fishing! Have you thought about coming for Christmas? There's a fold out settee in Tara's room. The only thing is you might not get much sleep! She's a little monkey at night. Have you heard from Suzy at all? I presume she's staying in Tokyo. Give us a ring if you get a chance, love.

SCENE 26

NOISE OF PRISON WING. ECHOES. MUSIC. SHOUTS

LEE: I've finished both landings, Gov. Can I knock off now?

GUARD: Washed and polished?

LEE: Can't you tell?

ISHAN: (SHOUTING FROM GROUND FLOOR UP TO LANDING) Oy, Gov. He's taken my turn at pool and I'm gonna knock him out!

GOV: (SHOUTING DOWN) I'll knock both your heads together if there's any trouble. You hear me! (SPEAKING TO LEE) You've done a good job, Lee. Go on, I'll put the machines away.

INSIDE LEE AND PATRICK'S CELL. PRISON LIFE MUFFLED
OUTSIDE CELL DOOR.

LEE: (READING OUT LOUD) It's Saturday, Miss. I'm banged up and Patrick has gone to Mass so I've got an hour of quiet. That's a joke, Miss. It's never quiet here.

I'm looking out the window. I can see the path heading down through the fields to some houses; a village I think. Is that where you live? A gov is riding his bike up the path. He looks knackered and his bike's shit.

This is what I see: I see him locking his bike up – really mate, no one's gonna nick it! He's walking along. A better word; lumbering along, fat, tired and something else. Reluctant. There's a good word, eh Miss? 'Lee was reluctant to cooperate': heard that one a few times.

Now I see a girl with a pushchair. It's weird to think that we live in the same place. I fill my lungs up with air and hold onto it. When I let it go, my warm breath mists the window up. The baby girl is out of her pushchair now. She must be older than she looked at first; a toddler.

The air that I breathe in and out is the air that she breathes too. She can see the same heavy yellow sky that I can see. Her mum looks up. She must have felt the flakes of snow I've just seen falling. They don't see me and they don't know me. The girl is excited. She's trying to catch a snow flake in her mouth. I've got a baby girl too, Miss. Did I tell you that already? How does it all make me feel? Useless.

SCENE 27

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 14

EMMA: Do you see her?

LEE: No. I want to. I think I could. I mean, I think I still have the right to.

EMMA: Then you should. What do you need to do?

LEE: Loads: a parenting course, anger management. I need to fill out apps so I can talk to people and have meetings. I can't do all that.

EMMA: Don't try and do everything at once. Just take each small step and things will mos1 0 0 TJEm409()6(5()-8(en)4(t)r4(Md8()JTJ)JTJETBT1 0 0 1 248.983Tf6

LEE: You're not supposed to tell me that.

EMMA: So shoot me! Shall I carry on?

LEE: Yeah. Go on.

EMMA: My breath is heavy as I struggle not to slip, pass the end of the road and set off through the fields.

There is some lively banter at the gate.

LEE: What banter?

EMMA: I don't know, chatting and joking. The driver shouts something, rolls up the window and moves off. It is only then that I see the snowman.

LEE: I saw it too. I watched them building it from my window. Go on.

EMMA: "H M P" is pressed into his front in small, round stones. His arms are branches, stretching on one side towards the perimeter fence and on the other, pointing over the fields to where the North Downs slide towards Wouldham and Burham. His face is grim, his mouth downturned.

Esther waves to me, points towards the snowman. 'Who made it?'

'It was the lads,' she calls to me with some pride. 'Do you know he's smiling on the other side of his face?'

LEE: It's good. It's almost cheerful.

EMMA: What? Do you mean my writing or the snowman?

LEE: Your writing, Miss.

ANSAPHONE: (HUMAN VOICE) Emma (ROBOTIC VOICE) cannot come to the phone.
Please leave a message after the beep.

BRUCE: (MESSAGE) Hello Emma, love. I got the parcel this morning. I took a
sneaky peek – Baby’s First Christmas – it’s so sweet. Thanks love. That
was really thoughtful. Does that mean you’re not coming up to us
though? It would be nice if you were there to see Tara wearing it. I’ve
been te

Just describe the sky, you said. I'm looking at it now, just like he was. I keep thinking about that and wondering which of us is luckier. Don't start opening an ACT document on me, Miss. I'm not thinking of hanging myself. It's just that it seems like his life became uncomplicated

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 23rd December

Morning:

Ring in sick

Go for walk

Afternoon:

Doctors 2.30pm

Evening:

Ring Dad

SCENE 32

BACKGROUND NOISE OF PRISON WING

LEE: Hey, gov! Have you seen the literacy teacher?

GUARD: Not today. She was in to see Tariq and Mickey on Wednesday.

LEE: She should be here by now.

you're lucky I have any time left to write. I hope you're noticing my complex sentences and interesting adjectives. Good, eh?

And this is what I can see out of my window today. For a start, the sun is out and the sky is clear and blue. I can see the valley sloping down from my cell into broad, flat fields. These are the North Downs, cut in two by the River Medway. Have a look at that water, Miss. Imagine how good it would feel to leap into it.

Can I just turn up?

Afternoon:

Prison 1.30 – 4pm

Evening:

Cinema.

SCENE 39

BACKGROUND NOISE OF PRISON WING

EMMA: Long time no see!

LEE: Where have you been?

EMMA: I've taken one small step!

LEE: What?

EMMA: I thought about what I told you to do and it seemed so logical. Take each small step and there you go!

LEE: What are you talking about? You look a bit wild!

EMMA: You can't say that to me! I'm your teacher!

LEE: Sorry, Miss.

EMMA: Emma.

LEE: Emma.

EMMA: You told me to look at the river, so I did and I saw a sign!

LEE: You're really not making much sense, Miss.

EMMA: Medway Canoe Club!

LEE:

Cool.

KATHERINE: (MESSAGE) Hi Emma, it's Katherine. Thank you for the card. There was nothing to be sorry about. Really. (PAUSE.) He regrets so much. You don't always see the bit of him that's broken but we do. (PAUSE) Anyway, I, erm, I hope you didn't mind me ringing. (BABY CRYING) Oh no! That's Tara again. I better go. I just wanted to say that it was really good to meet you. Ok. See you.

SCENE 41

PRISON WING. A COMMOTION

another making their way to Dover and across to Calais and all the way to China if they want to. And what do you think I'm going to do with my life? I think about that a lot now.

If she needs her nappy changed, they will. Will.

EMMA: That's fine.

SEG GUARD: You must be a good student Lee. Your teacher's found you're hiding place.

LEE: Miss.

SEG GUARD: Leave the door open. I'll be in the corridor.

EMMA: I spoke to Patrick and the gov on H. They told me you were here.

LEE: Yeah.

EMMA: They said I could see you for a few minutes. Where are your shoes?

LEE: No shoes on suicide watch.

EMMA: Please don't give up.

LEE: What?

EMMA: You still have choices. This is just a setback.

LEE: You don't get it. I broke his arm.

EMMA: He provoked you. Patrick told me what he said!

LEE: And do you often break people's arms, Miss?

EMMA: No but then I'm not often in your situation.

LEE: I'll go to court. I'll be resentenced. I didn't even get to see her.

EMMA: I know.

LEE: It's spoilt. What's the point anymore?

EMMA: Stop it Lee. Don't say things like that.

LEE: Then let's stop talking about it. Tell me something about you.

EMMA: Like what?

LEE: Your canoeing. How's my river?

EMMA: Yeah, good. Beautiful actually. I got myself a wet suit. I look like a tadpole in it. (PAUSE) Lee, please don't do anything stupid.

LEE: I can't look for you anymore. I can't see the river from here, Miss.

EMMA: But you can see a patch of sky and the corner of B wing. (LAUGHS)
What more do you want?

LEE: The little tent of blue. See? I remember.

SCENE 47

EMMA: (CLOSE) Friday 13th Januar.7 6AT0(Jan)3 0 1 5/F1 7.92 Tf 0 1 262.42 522.86 Tm0 g[8]T.

SEGREGATION WING. LEE'S CELL. DOOR OPEN. GUARD AT
DOOR.

EMMA: Nice to have a private cell.

LEE: Yeah. You'd almost miss Patrick taking a shit.

