

ROMY & JULIAN

Inspired by William Shakespeare's
Romeo and Juliet

by

Clive Duncan

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Characters in the play

- Actor 1** - Julian
- Actor 2** - Romy
Juliet
- Actor 3** - Mrs Moore
Sara
Mercutio
Chorus
- Actor 4** - Ben
Mr Caple
Al
Tybalt

Worksheet available online
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Scene 1

To the back of the acting area is a large backdrop which shows a collage of tower blocks which merge into leafy suburban streets of large detached and semi-detached houses. There are also four simple chairs and a sound system.

Music.

Julian enters. He is dressed in his school uniform - black trousers, white shirt, school tie, black blazer. He has his phone in his hand and is checking for messages.

JULIAN: I went to see a play. Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare. It was a school trip, so I had no choice. Don't get me wrong, Shakespeare's ok, but this was a *school* play, yeah? Put on by a bunch of school kids. Not the best way to spend a Friday night. Not ... cool. I didn't want to go, but my mate, Ben, he said it'd be a laugh because the school putting on the play is The Greyfriars School for Girls – an upmarket¹ school, in an upmarket part of town, not like the crappy comprehensive² I go to. But the point was - girls, see? No boys, just lots of... well, girls! Ben thought it'd be fun to see the girls prancing about³ the stage in tights. Yeah? Only, they'd got hold of some lads from another school to play the men's parts, so we had to watch a load of boys prancing about in tights.

The Chorus from "Romeo and Juliet" enters and stands behind Julian.

JULIAN: Luckily, we got a seat on the back row, so the teachers couldn't see I was on my phone most of the time...

He notices he's standing in front of The Chorus and steps out of the way.

Elizabethan music.

JULIAN: *(to audience)* Oh, sorry.

CHORUS: Two households, both alike in dignity⁴,
In fair Verona where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge⁵ break to new mutiny⁶,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

Julian steps in front of the Chorus who continues although we no longer hear the play.

¹ gehoben, teuer...

² miese Gesamtschule (öffentlich)

³ herumstolzieren

⁴ Ehrenhaftigkeit, Würde, Ansehen

⁵ Groll

⁶ hier: Kämpfe

JULIAN: I couldn't understand a word of it. I like his rhymes and rhythms but it would have helped if Shakespeare had written it in English. Ok - from what I could make out of it - there were these two families who didn't like each other... What's new? Ever been to a wedding?

A second actor enters and a sword fight begins behind Julian...

JULIAN: There was always beef¹ whenever they met. Then one of the families decides to have a party. Of course, members from the other family gatecrash², just for fun. Everyone is wearing masks, don't ask me why, so nobody knows who anyone is.

Juliet enters in a mask. A male actor puts on a mask and dances with her.

JULIAN: Can you imagine it? You're at a masked party, you move in on a girl, then at the end of the night, she takes off the mask - and it turns out to be your.... Aunt! Aaaagh! So, we have Romeo, from one family, meeting Juliet from the other. What happens? Spoiler alert! - they fall in love. Just like in the movies!

Juliet removes her mask.

JULIAN: I did sit up at this point in the play. The girl playing Juliet... she took off her mask and even from where I was sitting, I could see that she was... fit³!

Juliet and the other actors exit.

JULIAN: After the party they all go home and Romeo just happens to pass Juliet's bedroom window - as if!

Juliet enters and stands on one of the chairs...

JULIET: Aye me⁴!

JULIAN: She speaks!

JULIET: O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo⁵?

JULIAN: They chat for a bit, then decide to get married. Secretly. Fast workers! But, as someone once said, the course of true love never did run smooth⁶ - it would have been a happy ending ...

Enter Mercutio and Tybalt with swords. They start fighting.

JULIAN: ... if Juliet's cousin hadn't started a fight with Romeo's best mate ...

MERCUTIO: I am hurt. A plague o' both your houses! I am sped.⁷

JULIAN: Romeo couldn't stand by and do nothing...

Julian takes Mercutio's sword.

JULIAN: Mercutio's soul

Is but a little way above our heads

¹ Streit, Spannungen

² ohne Einladung teilnehmen

³ attraktiv

⁴ Ausdruck von Kummer (Sprachform zu Shakespeares Zeit)

⁵ Why are you... (Sprachform zu Shakespeares Zeit)

⁶ ... wahre Liebe geht niemals glatt ...

⁷ Ich bin verletzt. Ein Fluch (eigentl.: Pest) über beide Familien. Mit mir ist es vorbei.

Staying for thine¹ to keep it company:
Either thou, or I, or both, must go with him.

They fight. Tybalt falls.

JULIAN: Romeo kills his wife's cousin. Not the best start to a marriage. Romeo has to get out of town fast and Juliet's parents try to marry her off to some prince, not knowing she's already married.

Juliet enters.

JULIAN: Juliet takes a couple of pills and pretends to be dead. She's put in a tomb²...

Juliet lies across two chairs.

JULIAN: But Romeo hears about it, comes galloping back, sees her dead and takes a couple of pills himself... (*clutching at his stomach*) ...

Thy³ drugs are quick. Thus, with a kiss I die.

Julian seizes his opportunity and kisses Juliet. He collapses next to her and "dies".

JULIAN: Juliet then wakes up and sees her dead husband...

Juliet takes the sword from Julian's hand.

JULIET: O happy dagger⁴!

Juliet stabs herself and falls into the waiting arms of Julian.

JULIAN: End of play.

The Chorus enters and stands over the dead couple.

CHORUS: O, never was a story of more woe⁵
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

Juliet and the Chorus leave.

JULIAN: Woe? Apart from the sword fighting and the fit girl who played Juliet, it was two and half hours of woe! What a waste! I could have been at home gaming, working on some beats, hanging with the crew⁶ on the estate - anything but sit through that!

Scene 2

Ben enters. He is dressed identically to Julian.

JULIAN: Then my mate Ben suggested we go to the party. What party?

BEN: The end of play party. It's the last night tonight. They're having a party backstage.

JULIAN: We're not invited.

¹ alte Form von 'dein(e)' (Akk.)

² Grabmal, Gruft

³ alte Form von 'dein(e), diese' (Nom.)

⁴ Dolch

⁵ Tragik, Unglück, Schmerz

⁶ Gruppe von Freunden mit denen man „abhängt“

BEN: I've got a friend who's got a sister who goes to this school. She said it'd be all right. She said no one would notice.

JULIAN: No one would notice two boys at an all-girls school?

BEN: We won't be the only boys - there'll be Romeo and that lot. They'll be a whole crowd - no one'll notice there's two more.

JULIAN: Cool!

BEN: But it'll be mainly girls - and not much competition.

JULIAN: There's Romeo and his mates.

BEN: Exactly - no competition!

JULIAN: It'll be like shooting fish in a barrel¹.

BEN: Taking candy from a baby.

JULIAN: Hang on, the uniform is a bit of a give-away.²

They remove their ties and blazers. Ben pulls two cans of cider from the pockets of his. He throws a can to Julian.

JULIAN: Where did you get this?

BEN: The corner shop, where do you think? We want the party to go with a swing.

JULIAN: How do we get in?

BEN: Follow me.

Julian and Ben go.

Party music.

Scene 3

Romy and Sara enter. They are dressed in their "Romeo and Juliet" costumes.

SARA: Now it's all over you can tell me... what was it like snogging³ Romeo?

ROMY: Stop it...

SARA: Was he any good?

ROMY: It was only acting. It wasn't real..

SARA: That's not what he's saying on the socials....

ROMY: Which is why I've blocked him.

SARA: Do you think he'll keep his costume on for the party?

ROMY: I'm sure you'll be able to persuade⁴ him to take it off!

SARA: Romy!

Sara shrieks with laughter as Julian enters. He is holding a can of cider and looks lost.

ROMY: Who's he? He didn't have anything to do with the play.

SARA: I don't know. Oh! He might be one of my guests. I told my sister to mention

¹ Fass; hier: shooting fish in a barrel = ein Kinderspiel

² ... aber in der Schuluniform fallen wir auf ... (give-away = verraten)

³ ... mit Romeo schmusen (umgangsspr.)

⁴ überreden

the party to a few boys.

ROMY: What? You are going to get into such trouble...

SARA: No one will know. You can't have a party without boys.

ROMY: What's wrong with the ones who were in the play?

SARA: I want one who isn't acting.

ROMY: He looks... nice.

SARA: He looks a bit basic!

JULIAN: Ben was right – not many boys. They stood around the edge of the stage watching the girls dancing. The girls had managed a glow-up between the play and the party. The way they danced and laughed it was clear they'd sneaked in some cheeky vodka with their Dr Peppers! The music was loud, but not my scene, so I moved backstage to check out the vibe there. Two girls – they were onto me at once. One was giving me the eye. Big time! Well...I don't need telling twice...

Julian flashes a big smile at Sara.

ROMY: He's looking at you, could be your night!

SARA: He should be so lucky! He's far too young for me!

Sara flashes a big smile at Julian.

JULIAN: She looked a bit needy, but I won't worry about that

ROMY: He's coming over! What do you think his chat up line will be?

SARA: If it's not witty and charming, he's out that door!

Julian approaches them but stops before he gets to them.

JULIAN: Then the other girl looked at me and smiled.

The party music stops.

And the world...stopped...dead! The room dissolved¹, blood roared in my ears, my heart pounded, skin tingled, breath all gone. I'd never seen a girl this beautiful before – her eyes, rich jewels, burning into me; her smile lit up her face, the room... and my entire life!

The music continues. Julian is transfixed by Romy.

SARA: Has nobody told you it's unpolite to stare!

ROMY: Sara!

JULIAN: Sorry?

SARA: What's wrong, is this the first time you've met a member of the opposite sex? Do you not get out much?

JULIAN: What? Yes! ...er... no! I... I ...er...I... (*To the audience*) What's going on? I've got brain-rot²! Never happened before. Where's the clever chat when you need it? (*To Romy*) ... Hi,..er...yes... I'm Julian...

SARA (*mimicking as if he's stupid*): Hi..er...er..er.. I...I...I... I'm Julian!

ROMY: My name's Romy.

JULIAN: Romy. Oh!... you played Juliet! You were gor... (geous)... good.

¹ löste sich auf

² Hirnfäule

SARA: Romy, I think you have a fan. I'm called Sara, by the way, the one you've just been smiling ridiculously at!

JULIAN: Hi, I'm Julian. Were you in the play?

SARA: No, I always dress like this. I played the Chorus.

Romy motions Sara to leave, but she stands her ground.

ROMY: I'm glad you enjoyed the play.

JULIAN: Oh, I did. That's why I came backstage. To tell you - you really ate that part¹!

SARA: Excuse me whilst I throw up...

JULIAN: You nailed it. And remembering all those words!

SARA: I think my social battery is getting low.

Romy waves her away and Sara moves off a little. Julian is painfully stuck for something to say.

JULIAN: I'd better bounce². I'm not really supposed to be here.

ROMY: Don't go!... yet. I'm sure no one will mind. Did you really like the play?

JULIAN: Not gonna lie, I couldn't understand what most people were saying, but when you were speaking – I did! Every word!

SARA: (*sarcastically*) Thanks.

ROMY: Are you studying Romeo and Juliet at your school?

SARA: He's certainly studying Juliet!

Mr Caple, Romy's father, enters. He nods to Sara, then slowly realises there's a boy talking to his daughter...

ROMY: Don't mind, Sara. She has a strange sense of humour.

SARA: Ha-ha!

Julian sees Mr Caple and hides his can of cider behind his back.

JULIAN: That's random. What's he doing here?

ROMY: Who?

JULIAN: Mr Caple. He's the headteacher of my school.

ROMY: Ah!

JULIAN: I didn't know he was coming to see the play. Miserable old sod...

ROMY: He came to see me. He's my father.

JULIAN: Ah!

MR CAPLE: Romy, introduce me to this member of your adoring public. I didn't think fans were allowed backstage.

SARA: Oh, he's just selfie-hunting with the stars of the show, Mr Caple.

MR CAPLE: Really? What did you make of the play, lad?

JULIAN: Very good, sir. Romy was the best thing in it. As Juliet, I mean...

MR CAPLE: Correct answer! They teach diplomacy at your school, do they?

JULIAN: Er....

¹ Du hast die Rolle großartig gespielt.

² Ich gehe lieber

SARA: (*sweetly*) You tell us, Mr Caple.

MR CAPLE: (*catching on*) Of course... I didn't recognise you for a moment – you're not in your proper school uniform. It's...er...

JULIAN: Julian Moore, sir.

MR CAPLE: Yes, I know. Year...um...

JULIAN: Eleven, sir.

MR CAPLE: The school trip, of course. I wasn't aware that The Greyfriars School had invited the audience to the casts' after-show party...

JULIAN: No, Mr Caple. But my mate... I mean my friend, Ben, you see, he's got a friend who knows a girl whose sister...

ROMY: Is Sara! Who thought...

SARA: (*cutting her off*) Thanks!

MR CAPLE: And that qualifies as an invitation, does it?

ROMY: (*pleadingly*) Dad...

MR CAPLE: Well, I suppose if you behave yourself, I can square it with¹ Greyfriars' Head and you can stay for half an hour or so. But no trouble. And we'll speak further on Monday, Mr Moore.

JULIAN: Yes, sir. Thank you.

ROMY: Thanks, Dad.

Mr Caple is about to go when he realises Julian is hiding something.

MR CAPLE: What's that?

JULIAN: Er...

MR CAPLE: Behind your back. Let's have it, lad...

Julian shows the can of cider. Mr Caple takes it from him.

MR CAPLE: That's it. I'm sorry Romy, but you know the school rules: no alcohol.

(To Julian) You – out!

ROMY: He didn't know. He's only just got here.

MR CAPLE: Everyone's underage². The school has a duty of care³. Out, I said.

Julian starts to move, followed by Mr Caple and Sara.

JULIAN: I'm sorry, sir, I didn't mean...

MR CAPLE: Out!

Julian, Mr Caple and Sara leave. The music ends abruptly.

ROMY: Julian Moore. There's something about him I like. He's different, not like the boys who were in the play. I wonder what he's into. Where does he live? Does he want to see me again? I'd like to see him again. Didn't get the chance to swap numbers.... This party's ruined, thanks to Dad. I think I'll go home, I'd rather be in bed doomscrolling. Oh, perhaps I'll find him on Instagram! Julian Moore...

She goes.

¹ es absprechen, Bewilligung einholen

² minderjährig

³ Aufsichtspflicht

Scene 4

Music.

Julian enters.

JULIAN: Thrown, unceremoniously, out of a party! Not only that – he kept my can of cider! I was furious! I stormed off into the night, not waiting for Ben...

BEN (*off*): Julian! Julian!

JULIAN: I turned street corners¹, this way and that, not noticing where I was going...

BEN (*off*): Julian! Wait for me!

JULIAN: A bus shelter, dimly lit and evil smelling, offered a place of sanctuary²...

He's in a bus shelter...

BEN (*off*): Julian? Julian!

Julian takes out his phone and hits a speed dial number...

JULIAN: Hi, Mum. It's me, Julian. I'm at Ben's. We saw the play. Boring. Just messing about on the Xbox. Be back at half eleven. All right, eleven then. What – traffic noises? Ben's window is open...

He holds the phone out of the phone box...

BEN (*off*): Julian! Julian!

JULIAN: See! See you at elevenish. I waited till I knew that Ben had gone...

BEN (*off and very faintly*): Julian! Julian!

JULIAN: ...then roamed the streets³ and, quite by chance, saw a car pull up to the kerb⁴; Romy and her father got out and went into a house! Wow! Nice house. Huge. Makes the flat I live in look like a real dump⁵. But I was curious, so, checking the coast was clear⁶ I climbed the wooden fence and dropped into her garden... It was raining now, and I landed in a puddle. My shoes let water in and my trousers were splattered with mud⁷. Then a rose bush snagged my blazer⁸, tearing it. Great! Rain ran down the back of my neck. I was freezing and I suddenly felt dumb – all this because of a girl I'd only just met? Nah! I was being extra⁹, so I thought I'd go home. But then a light shone from a bedroom window. Curtains were drawn. Romy! I threw a stone up and it bounced off the glass. Nothing. I chucked another. Ping!

Mr Caple's head appears over the top of the backdrop...

¹ planlos herumlaufen

² ...ein Buswartehäuschen, schwach beleuchtet und übel stinkend, wurde mein Zufluchtsort ...

³ ...ich bin durch die Straßen gezogen...

⁴ ... ein Auto blieb am Straßenrand stehen ...

⁵ Bruchbude, Drecksloch

⁶ umschauen of die Luft rein ist

⁷ mit Schmutz bespritzt

⁸ ... dann blieb ich mit meinem Blazer an einem Rosenstrauch hängen ...

⁹ überdramatisch

MR CAPLE: Who the bloody hell is throwing stones at my window at this time of night!

JULIAN: Oh, God! Wrong window!

MR CAPLE: Who's down there?

JULIAN: I tried to get away but my blazer got caught on the rose bushes. I would have left it, but it had my name in it.

MR CAPLE: Who's there?

Romy enters; she's wearing a dressing gown.

ROMY: What are you doing here?

JULIAN: Romy!

ROMY: Shh!

JULIAN: Hey – nice house. It's almost a mansion¹!

ROMY: What?

JULIAN: I was trying to get your attention. I thought that was your window.

ROMY: Do you often climb into people's gardens in the middle of the night?

JULIAN: Do you often wander about outside in your dressing gown?

ROMY: I saw you out here - wondered what you were doing.

MR CAPLE: Is that you, Romy?

ROMY: Dad'll kill you if he comes down. It's only me, Dad! *(To Julian)* Go away!

JULIAN: I wanted to see you again.

MR CAPLE: What are you doing out there?

ROMY: I wanted to see you, too. *(To Mr Caple)* I was putting the recycling out, the door closed behind me and locked me out.

MR CAPLE: Why didn't you knock on the door? You could've broken the window...

ROMY: Now you've seen me, go away!

MR CAPLE: Is someone with you?

ROMY: Let me in, it's raining.

Mr Caple disappears.

JULIAN: Can I see you again?

ROMY: If you like.

JULIAN: When?

ROMY: Tomorrow.

JULIAN: Where?

ROMY: In town. Outside *Starbucks*. Go!

He's about to go.

JULIAN: What time?

ROMY: I don't know. Twelve o'clock. Please, go.

He's about to go...

JULIAN: Can I have your phone number?

¹ Villa

ROMY: Tomorrow. If Dad...

JULIAN: All right, I'm going ... Just one more thing...

Julian takes Romy's hand, he is about to kiss her, but just as he gets there Mr Caple appears.

MR CAPLE: Romy?

ROMY: *(matter of factly)* Here I am.

She turns and runs and both she and Mr Caple go.

Scene 5

Mrs Moore enters. She's in her dressing gown with a towel around her head.

MRS MOORE: WHERE-HAVE-YOU-BEEN?

JULIAN: *(to audience)* This is my mother. And she's going to unalive me¹...

MRS MOORE: It's past midnight!

JULIAN: Let me give you the background deets²: It's just me and her. Dad?...

Ancient history...

MRS MOORE: And don't tell me you were at Ben's...

JULIAN: We live on the Verona Hill estate – six grim council blocks³...with a badass reputation.

MRS MOORE: I checked. And I've phoned you five times!

JULIAN: We're on the tenth floor. Broken lifts, yelling neighbours...

MRS MOORE: *(yelling)* We agreed eleven o'clock!

JULIAN: Get the picture? But I can't be grounded⁴, not now, so I need to get round her. Watch and learn. *(To Mrs Moore)* I know. Phone's dead. I'm really sorry, mum...

MRS MOORE: Don't you "sorry" me! I have been so worried...imagining all sorts!

JULIAN: Ok, too direct. I'll try the touchy-feely thing...

Julian puts his arms around his mother, but she shrugs him away.

MRS MOORE: Look at the state of you! Have you been fighting?

JULIAN: Here we go!

MRS MOORE: You've been hanging out with that gang!

JULIAN: Mum's current worry – that I'm part of a gang. *(To Mrs Moore)* It's a crew not a gang...

MRS MOORE: Same difference!

JULIAN: *(to audience)* Fact – anything that comes out of the Verona Hill Estate has to be bad. I try to tell her – *(to Mrs Moore)* it's just the kids on the estate who hang together...

¹ Sie wird mich umbringen,

² kurz für „details“

³ Sozialbauten

⁴ Hausarrest bekommen

MRS MOORE: That's a gang!

JULIAN: There's nothing here! No shops, no facilities, just "keep off the grass" and "no ball games allowed", nothing for kids my age – so we just... hang...

MRS MOORE: That's how the trouble starts.

JULIAN: What trouble? There's been no trouble.

MRS MOORE: Yet! You're frightening the old folk. They're all moaning about your "crew", hanging around, playing your music too loud...

JULIAN: Well, excuse us for being young!

MRS MOORE: Enough of your lip!¹

JULIAN: (*to himself*) Don't ground me, don't ground me, don't ground me...

MRS MOORE: And what about....

JULIAN: (*to audience*) She's going to say the K word...

MRS MOORE: ...what about knives?

JULIAN: No one has a knife.

MRS MOORE: As far as you know. A boy was killed on this estate. Stabbed. He was younger than you.

JULIAN: Mum, that was three years ago. Yes, that was a gang and bad things happened, but they aren't here now. And we aren't them. We're just a crew hanging out.

MRS MOORE: Nobody sees it like that. It's starting up again and it only takes one person to do something stupid. Why can't you just stay clear of them?

Mrs Moore is becoming tearful.

JULIAN: Mum, I'm not an idiot! I know the difference between right and wrong. Thanks to you.

MRS MOORE: I've tried. Believe me, I've tried. I wanted so much more than this for us, for you. I've asked the council to move us, but they say we're not a priority.

Julian puts his arms around Mrs Moore.

JULIAN: It's ok. I know how hard it's been for you, and I see the long hours you work, and I respect that, I respect you, I really do. Living in a place like this, not being a priority, doesn't mean I'm going to be... anything other than what you've taught me to be.

MRS MOORE: Yeah?

JULIAN: Of course. Anyway, I haven't been with the crew tonight.

MRS MOORE: So where have you been?

JULIAN: I watched the play and there was a party afterwards which we crashed...

MRS MOORE: Julian!

JULIAN: ...but I didn't stay – not my vibe. I wanted to think about what I'd seen tonight. So, I went for a walk around town, then lost track of time. Sorry.

MRS MOORE: You? Thinking about Shakespeare? I must be doing something

¹ Sei still!

right! Ok, but next time.... I know I worry too much...It's late. Off to bed.
And no screen time.

JULIAN: I know. Oh, have my new sweats been through the wash?

MRS MOORE: Think so, why?

JULIAN: No reason. Thought I might wear them tomorrow.

MRS MOORE: Are you going out? Who with?

JULIAN: Oh, nobody in particular.

MRS MOORE: It's a girl!

JULIAN: (*to audience*) How does she know? How do mothers do that? (*To Mrs Moore*) It's not a girl.

MRS MOORE: A boy then, that's ok as well...

JULIAN: (*to audience*) My mother's generation is so cringe! (*To Mrs Moore*) It's not... I'm not...er...Ok, it might be a girl.

MRS MOORE: Julian's got a girlfriend!

JULIAN: Now you sound like a schoolkid!

MRS MOORE: Where did you meet?

JULIAN: Oh, at the play tonight.

MRS MOORE: What – she goes to The Greyfriars? That's... yeah...a classy school. Does she know what school you go to?

JULIAN: As my school was visiting hers, I think she worked it out for herself.

MRS MOORE: You know you can talk to me about ...anything...

JULIAN: (*to audience*) Cringe! (*To Mrs Moore*) It's late, Mum. I must go to bed!
(*To audience*) Before she starts talking about sex!

Julian goes.

MRS MOORE: Hmm, The Greyfriars... Why do I feel someone's going to get hurt...?

She goes.

Music.

Scene 6

Romy enters. She is bright and colourful in clothes from charity shops or Vinted sites: vintage dress, big cardigan, big boots and an eye-catching bucket hat. She looks around. Checks her watch and looks around again, then begins to tip-toe off.... Mr Caple enters.

MR CAPLE: Going out?

ROMY: (*surprised*) Er! What? Yes! Just popping into town...

MR CAPLE: Mum's making lunch.

ROMY: Won't be long...

MR CAPLE: Hang on a minute – you're not going out like that...

ROMY: Like what?

MR CAPLE: A ragbag¹! Scruffing about² in charity shop clothes, can't you wear something nice?

ROMY: Nice? The big brands that sell "nice" clothes are major polluters of the world. And wasteful. It takes 700 gallons of water to make just one cotton shirt! Two thousand gallons for a pair of jeans. Don't even get me started on microplastics. That's why we should all be wearing second-hand clothes... and not buying "nice" new stuff all the time.

MR CAPLE: Thanks for the lecture. Now go and change.

ROMY: I'll be late!

MR CAPLE: What's the hurry? Ah – you're meeting up with someone.

ROMY: Just some... school... friends...

MR CAPLE: (*suspicious*) This hasn't anything to do with that boy you were talking to last night?

ROMY: Who? The one you threw out of the party? I only had time to say hello before you became embarrassing, Dad.

MR CAPLE: You are not going out looking like a bag-lady³. Either change or stay in. The choice is yours.

Romy lets out a shudder of frustration, then turns and goes off the way she came on. Mr Caple shakes his head and goes off the other way. As soon as he's gone, Romy appears. She checks the coast is clear and makes a dash for it.

Scene 7

Mrs Moore enters with a laundry basket which she drops on the floor and then begins to fold the clothes, piling them on a chair. Julian enters. He is dressed in an Adidas track suit, trainers and a baseball cap.

JULIAN: Catch you later! I'm off into town....

MRS MOORE: So, this is the big date with Miss Greyfriars, is it?

JULIAN: We're just hooking up – that's all.

MRS MOORE: Ok. Just thought you might want a bit of feminine advice...

JULIAN: About?

MRS MOORE: What you're wearing. You look like a gangster.

JULIAN: Get in! That's the look I was going for...

MRS MOORE: Not Gangsta - gangster, hooligan, drug dealer - like you've just walked off the Verona Hill Estate.

JULIAN: I will have just walked off the Verona Hill Estate.

MRS MOORE: Yeah, but you don't have to advertise it. What's wrong with the jeans and the jumper I gave you for Christmas?

¹ Lumpensack

² herumwühlen

³ Obdachlose

JULIAN: They're great, mum, honest. I just look a bit preppy¹ in them.

MRS MOORE: And you think little Miss Greyfriars isn't going to be preppy?

JULIAN: Nah, she's cool. This outfit is cool. I don't expect you to get it, things are different now to how it was in your day. It's not so tribal², kids are into everything and we respect that. As long as it's cool – it's cool!

MRS MOORE: And that's cool?

JULIAN: It's Adidas, it's not skanky³. It's clean, it's gleaming, trainers and cap to go with it and on top of all that – I smell good! I intend to make a big impression.

Mrs Moore is putting the folded clothes back in the laundry basket.

MRS MOORE: Oh, you will. But not the impression you're hoping for.

JULIAN: Wish me luck!

Mrs Moore picks up the laundry basket. Julian kisses her on the cheek.

MRS MOORE: Hope you don't get stopped and searched by the cops on the way!

She goes.

JULIAN: I love you too, mum!

Julian walks with a pimp roll to one side of the stage.

Scene 8

JULIAN: *(to the audience)* Thanks to mum I missed the bus and had to walk. So I'm late. I hope I haven't missed her.

As he's scoping out the street, a breathless Romy arrives.

ROMY: I'm late, thanks Dad! We said twelve and it's gone five past. I wonder if he's still here...

Julian swaggers past Romy without noticing her, she doesn't recognise him. They stand apart from each other. They look at each other and double take.

JULIAN: Romy!!!

ROMY: Julian???

They move towards each other awkwardly.

JULIAN: I didn't recognise you...

ROMY: Me, neither...

JULIAN: ...dressed like.... You look ... really good!

ROMY: Thanks!

JULIAN: *(looking at her hat)* My Nan has a lampshade like that.

ROMY: Thanks. Have you come from the gym or football or something?

JULIAN: What!? No! This outfit's too good for sport! Adidas – it doesn't come

¹ wie konservative Kids aus der Oberschicht

² hier: Outfits und Stil sind nicht mehr so stark von der sozialen Herkunft bestimmt.

³ anrühlich, schmuddelig

cheap!

Romy recoils a little. Julian feels awkward. They don't know what to do next.

JULIAN: Shall we.... Grab a coffee?

ROMY: (*uncertain*) Yeah, ok.

They sit on two chairs facing each other as if there is a table between them with Starbuck paper cups of coffee. Ben and Sara enter and take chairs to sit on either side of Romy and Julian. Ben and Sara are having a conversation with Julian and Romy respectively, whilst Romy and Julian are talking to each other.

SARA & BEN: You went out with who!?

SARA: You mean an actual date?

BEN: With that girl who played Juliet?

SARA & BEN: What was it like?

ROMY: It was – ok...

JULIAN: It was – good. Yeah. I think she's into me. Although her clothes are weird – charity shop stuff.

BEN: Ick.

ROMY: I think he was trying to impress, but he turned up in Adidas tracky top and bottoms...

SARA: With stripes? Aaagh! Red flag! I bet he's dealing...

JULIAN: She did wear a cute hat, though – it looked a bit like a lampshade!

SARA: I wouldn't be seen dead with a roadman¹!

BEN: But she's at The Greyfriars – her parents must be rolling in dosh².

ROMY: Pre-loved³ clothes reduce your carbon footprint. 10% of carbon emissions globally are from the fashion industry and 80% of all textiles end up as landfill.

JULIAN: Wow! Cool stats⁴! You know your stuff!

SARA: So, what did you talk about?

ROMY: Oh...you know...

JULIAN: What music are you into?

ROMY: Indy. You?

JULIAN: Drum 'n' bass, grime – anything with a beat.

ROMY: Er... favourite artiste?

JULIAN: Dave⁵, of course, who else? You?

ROMY: CMAT⁶.

An awkward pause.

BEN: Did you tell her where you live?

JULIAN: Of course – not gonna lie...

¹ slang für jungen Mann, der in einer Gang ist, ev. mit Drogen dealt.

² im Geld schwimmen

³ second hand

⁴ Abk. für „statistics“

⁵ brit. Rapper

⁶ Irische Musikerin aus der alternativen Szene

SARA: No! The Verona Hill estate? Big, giant, mahoosive¹ red flag time!
 BEN: And she didn't leave?
 ROMY: Everyone's got to live somewhere...
 SARA: But Verona Hill – they're all thugs² there!
 BEN: Where's her place?
 JULIAN: By the park on the other side of town.
 BEN: They're mansions, man!
 ROMY: It's a four-bed detached³. Actually, it's not that big.
 JULIAN: It's nice, though... what I've seen of it.
 BEN: I bet her mum holds coffee mornings and rides horses!
 ROMY: She works for the NHS⁴...
 JULIAN: Snap! Mine too!
 ROMY: (*pleased to have made a connection*) Oh! Yes, mum's a surgeon.
 JULIAN: (*deflated*) Ah. Mine's a receptionist.
 SARA: Get a grip. You can't go out with an oik⁵ from a council estate!
 ROMY: But Julian isn't...
 BEN: Poor little rich girl meets poor little poor boy - I've seen the movies - disaster movies!
 JULIAN: She's not.... she's different.
 SARA: There's a gang on that estate. Have you not seen the local news?
 ROMY: It's not a gang - it's just a crew...
 SARA: OMG! He's part of the Verona Hill gang!?
 BEN: She could never be part of the crew.
 SARA: Seriously, Romy, you need to forget it. Block him on all socials.
 BEN: She'll soon get tired of roughing it⁶ and then – heartbreak city⁷!
 JULIAN: Thanks for your expert advice!
 ROMY: Just because he lives in the rough end of town it doesn't mean he's like everyone else there.
 SARA: Oh! And you discovered this over a pumpkin spiced latte in *Starbucks*?
 ROMY: Is it like everyone says – Verona Hill?
 JULIAN: It's er ... how can I describe it? ... Ok, I wrote this...
Julian sets up a rhythm using his chair as a drum. The other three might join in.
 Living on the tenth floor you get good views
 You can watch them coming with the blues and twos
 Shaking down the young kids from the crew,
 Done nothing wrong but it still makes the news.

¹ massive

² Schläger

³ kurz für: a detached (alleinstehend) house with 4 bedrooms.

⁴ National Health Service (entspricht unserer ÖGK)

⁵ Prolet

⁶ primitiv leben

⁷ Zustand von Verzweiflung und Herzschmerz

The lifts aren't working, so take the stairs.
No lights in the stairwell, the council don't care.
Shady dealers in the basement pushing their wares¹,
A domestic² on the landing³, stuff of nightmares!
The paradox is there's a three-year wait
To get accommodated on Verona Hill estate,
But when you get your keys then you're sponging off the state⁴.
There's shame, shame on you brother, and there aint no escape!

ROMY: Hey! That's really good!

SARA: He rapped! In the middle of *Starbucks*!

BEN: Wow! That's enough cheese to make a *margherita*⁵

SARA: Must have been embarrassing. You don't even like rap...

ROMY: The point is – he thinks about things, he wrote it, it's poetry...

BEN: Did you have to translate it into posh English?

JULIAN: Romy's cool, she's not stuck up. She really cares about things, knows what she wants...

BEN: I bet – anything her parents can buy for her!

JULIAN: What's the plan when you've finished school?

ROMY: Get out of this town. And as far away from my parents' hopes and dreams as possible.

JULIAN: I'm with you there – can't wait.

ROMY: I want to go to university. You?

JULIAN: Student debt? No way. What do you want to study?

ROMY: The environment.

JULIAN: Saving the planet?

ROMY: Doing my bit. It's a big subject – I don't know what I want to specialise in yet... Something to do with conservation. There's a lot going on in the world I know, but the environment has to take priority.

JULIAN: That's really cool.

BEN: She's an eco-warrior. She'll recycle everything – even you!

ROMY: If you're not going to uni, how you do get out of this town?

JULIAN: I'm going to study law. There are apprenticeships – earn while you learn. There is so much injustice in this world, too many people without a voice, and I'm going to help them. If I can.

ROMY: That's pretty cool.

SARA: So, he wants to be Batman – help the little people.

BEN: What did you do after *Starbucks*?

¹ Drogen verkaufen

² gewalttätige Auseinandersetzung innerhalb einer Familie

³ Flur

⁴ Sozialhilfe beziehen

⁵ im Sinne von cheesy – kitschig

Romy and Julian get up and move to one side of the acting area. They are holding hands.

JULIAN: Romy had to get back home.

ROMY: He walked me to the bus stop.

SARA: A proper gent!

BEN: Did you get anywhere?!

JULIAN: Shut up!

SARA: Did he... you know!?

ROMY: Shut up!

JULIAN: We talked for a bit at the bus stop...

ROMY: Hey thanks, it was nice – being able to open up like that.

JULIAN: Yeah, it's good to find someone you can sync with¹ ...

Julian leans in for a kiss, but Romy, seeing her bus approach, looks the other way and he misses...

ROMY: Oh! Here's my bus!

Romy gets on the bus and is gone.

SARA: Are you going to see him again?

ROMY: We didn't fix anything up, but we swapped numbers, so....

BEN: Are you going to see her again?

JULIAN: Do you think I should?

SARA: Delete his number.

BEN: You're wasting your time, Bro.

SARA: He is such bad news.

BEN: She's not going to be into...

SARA: An estate kid? Who's in a gang?

BEN: Your mum knows who her dad is, yeah? And that she lives on millionaires' row?

JULIAN: Not yet.

SARA: Did your parents flip when you gave them the happy news?

ROMY: I haven't exactly mentioned...

SARA & BEN: Well then!

BEN: I'm getting bad vibes.

SARA: If you think anything good can come of this...

BEN: ... Then you are...

SARA & BEN: Delulu!²

Sara and Ben go. Romy and Julian are on opposite sides of the acting area. They both have their mobiles in their hands.

JULIAN: *(to audience)* Ben's right, I suppose. Romy's great, I really like her, but we're worlds apart. Her dad wouldn't be too pleased if I turned up on his doorstep offering to escort his precious daughter to the school prom.

¹ auf derselben Wellenlänge sein

² umgangssprachl. für „delusional“ (verrückt)

ROMY: (*looking at her phone*) Text, text, come on, text! Although it's probably best if he doesn't – then it's over with. Sara's right. Can I even tell mum and dad about him? He's one of your students, oh and by the way, he's from the Verona Hill estate and is part of the gang everyone is talking about. Oh... never mind.

She puts her phone away.

JULIAN: Nah! Not going to text. Let's just forget the whole thing.

He puts his phone in his pocket. But then whips it out again and begins texting...

JULIAN: Thanks-for-a-lovely, no, great-afternoon. Let's-meet-up-soon.

Er...smiley emoji! Send.

SFX: *Ping!*

Romy punches the air.

ROMY: Yes! (*She reads the text.*) No, delete, delete, delete! And then block.

She's about to delete but changes her mind and texts.

Yes-it-was-good-really-enjoyed, no loved-it. Hug emoji. Send.

SFX: *Ping!*

JULIAN: Whoa! She replied! Ah, she didn't pick up on the meeting again bit.

Perhaps she was just being polite. Ok, the worst she can do is say no... Are-you-free-any-evening-next-week. Kiss emoji. Send.

SFX: *Ping!*

ROMY: He wants to see me again! Weeknights? Difficult. Let's think, er... yes!

Isn't-there-a-parents-evening-at-your-school-next-Thursday. Could-be-in-school-car-park- about-seven-See-you-then-question-mark. Heart emoji.

Send!

SFX: *Ping!*

JULIAN: Wow, Parents' Evening – clever. She's one smart girl. Heart! Send!

SFX: *Ping!*

Romy looks at her phone, sighs and then goes.

Scene 9

Mrs Moore enters. She is carrying a sheet of paper.

MRS MOORE: She was nice, your English teacher, but then English teachers always are.

JULIAN: (*to the audience*) I don't usually like Parents' Evening, but tonight I'll make an exception...

SFX: *Ping!*

MRS MOORE: Right, who shall we see next? (*Consulting her sheet of paper*)

Oooh, I'd like to see how you're doing in Art!

SFX: *Ping!*

JULIAN: The Art block is miles away, and all the teachers are saying the same things. Why don't we leave – it's gone seven...

MRS MOORE: Parents' Evening doesn't finish till eight. Plenty of time.

SFX: Ping!

Julian looks at his phone and smiles.

MRS MOORE: Turn it off. School rules.

JULIAN: But it's the evening! I'm not theoretically at school.

Mrs Moore holds out her hand for the phone. Julian turns it off and puts it back in his pocket.

MRS MOORE: So, Art block!

They set off, just as Mr Caple enters coming the other way.

JULIAN: *(to audience)* Oh no! Coming down the corridor was Mr Caple. *(Julian guides his mother in a different direction.)* Shortcut!

MR CAPLE: Mrs Moore, I presume!

JULIAN: Too late!

MRS MOORE: *(to Julian)* Who's this?

JULIAN: *(to himself)* Ah – Romy...

MRS MOORE: Mr Romy?

JULIAN: Mr Caple, the headteacher.

MR CAPLE: I was hoping to catch you. Now I'm sure you've been hearing positive reports about your son...

JULIAN: *(to audience)* He's been checking up on me!

MR CAPLE: ...We expect him to do well in the exams. But I wanted to stress that it's important he keeps up the good work. The fewer distractions the better.

MRS MOORE: Distractions?

JULIAN: *(to audience)* He means Romy.

MR CAPLE: There's so many! Social media, er...girlfriends! Friends, generally, I suppose...

MRS MOORE: Ah, you're referring to last night's trouble at Verona Hill.

MR CAPLE: Oh! Well, such incidents are... concerning.

Mr Caple and Mrs Moore continue to speak although we cannot hear them.

JULIAN: *(to audience)* Ok, newsflash! Last night the crew were hanging out on the estate, when this old guy comes home and has a go at them. The crew disrespect him back. It was only words. But the old guy calls the cops and next thing, there's sirens and flashing lights, the crew scatter. End of story. But because it's Verona Hill – the news has gone viral. I wasn't there, by the way.

MRS MOORE: Why do I get the feeling we're being singled out? Are you saying this to all parents or just those on the Verona Hill estate?

MR CAPLE: All year eleven pupils need to keep their focus, of course.

MRS MOORE: But especially those from the council estate!

MR CAPLE: I'm not saying that... I only meant....

MRS MOORE: I would expect the headteacher of a school like this to be more open-minded and not believe everything he hears and sees on the news!

Julian is no different to any of his classmates whose parents are ... business owners or accountants or, or teachers!

MR CAPLE: Of course! All young people...

MRS MOORE: If anything, he has to work harder to fight the prejudice!

MR CAPLE: Mrs Moore, if I have started this conversation clumsily, I apologise. This school supports all pupils equally whatever their background. Look, there's refreshments in the hall, let me get you a cup of tea and perhaps start our conversation again. It's this way, and you can sample the delights of the food technology class...

He leads Mrs Moore off.

JULIAN: *(to audience)* Did I mention it – you don't tangle with¹ my mum! *(He gets out his phone.)* Ten missed messages from Romy! Now's my chance, it'll take ages to calm mum down. I know!

Julian goes.

Music

Scene 10

Romy enters. She puts two chairs together to make a car. She sits in the passenger seat, listening to the music and scrolling through her phone.

ROMY: *(reading)* “75-year-old attacked by Verona Hill gang.” *(She scrolls.)*

“It was terrifying, said pensioner Derek, all I did was ask them to keep the noise down and suddenly this gang was shouting and swearing at me.” *(She scrolls.)* “More trouble at Verona Hill as the elderly fear for their lives.”

This is terrible. Julian told me the crew was cool. Where is he? No reply to all the texts I've sent! Parent's evening finishes soon. He's not coming. I should have just gone home.

She turns the music up full blast. Listens to it for a moment and then begins to dance in her seat, letting herself be taken by the music. Julian appears, searches the car park, notices Romy and moves carefully towards her. She doesn't know he's there and continues with her head-banging... He watches her, bemused, for a moment before tapping on the glass. She sees him, composes herself and turns off the music.

ROMY: Oh, hi. I didn't think you were coming. I was just ...

JULIAN: What? I can't hear you.

ROMY: What did you say?

JULIAN: Sorry, I didn't?

ROMY: I can't hear you...

JULIAN: Open the window.

ROMY: What?

¹ sich mit jn. anlegen

Julian motions to her to put the window down.

ROMY: Oh!

She opens the car window.

ROMY: Sorry. I – I didn't think you were coming. I was just listening to...

JULIAN: I heard it. From the science block.

ROMY: Was it loud? Do you want to get in?

JULIAN: Better not.

ROMY: Why?

JULIAN: It's your dad's car. The headteacher of my school....

ROMY: Right.

She gets out of the car. Their physical closeness makes them feel awkward. To break it, she pulls out her phone and clicks on a news site...

ROMY: Have you seen this?

JULIAN: Yes. And?

ROMY: You said you were a cool crew, not a gang who terrorises old people!

JULIAN: Ok, first, I wasn't there. Second, what you're reading is one side of the story.

ROMY: How can you defend them?

JULIAN: Show me on your *Buzzfeed* one quote from any of the kids. Just one quote. No? Of course not. Sixteen-year-old kids don't have a voice. They've put an angle on it and bigged it up to get lots of views and clicks to sell advertising. It's nasty clickbait.

ROMY: But all this coverage, and they're all saying the same things...

JULIAN: You sound just like your dad. He's just been telling my mum that I'm likely to screw up my exams because I live on a council estate.

ROMY: No! He said that!?

JULIAN: He used the word "distractions". He meant the crew. Or you.

ROMY: But I haven't said anything to my parents, yet.

JULIAN: My mum read him the riot act¹! Told him he was out of order singling out us estate kids. He's trying to calm her down with tea and cake. It'll take more than that.

ROMY: He is such an arse, my father! Hypocritical too. His father was a factory-worker. He's got no reason to be so judgemental². (*A moment and then Romy starts to laugh.*) I'd have loved to have seen his face! Your mother sounds a real firecracker³ – I'd love to meet her.

JULIAN: (*taking Romy's hand*) I'd love you to meet her, too.

ROMY: I'm sorry. Even if it's not as bad as you say, I should have known you wouldn't have had anything to do with it.

JULIAN: Lonely old man and bored kids swearing at each other. Shouldn't have

¹ jn. die Leviten lesen/ eine Standpauke halten

² wertend, voreingenommen

³ eine temperamentvolle Person

happened, but there's bigger things to worry about.
ROMY: And dad, I can't believe he'd do that.
JULIAN: It's ok, I'm used to it. Anyway, he got a fright when he met my mum!
ROMY: I'm sorry I read it wrong...
Julian pulls Romy to him. They hold each other and are about to kiss when Mr Caple enters carrying a briefcase. They spring apart.
MR CAPLE: Ah! I think your mother will be wondering where you've got to, Julian. Parents' Evening ended five minutes ago.
JULIAN: Right. Yes, I'd better go. Bye, then.
ROMY: Bye. See you.
Julian goes.

Scene 11

Mr Caple and Romy get in the car. He turns on the radio, with music underscoring the following... Mr Caple drives the car.
MR CAPLE: You seem to be close to Julian Moore?
ROMY: Close?
MR CAPLE: From what I saw you couldn't have been any closer.
ROMY: I like him, Dad. I like him a lot. Is something wrong?
MR CAPLE: Look, I don't mind you having a boyfriend, that's only natural, but Julian Moore? Seriously?
ROMY: He's nice, he's bright, he's intelligent...
MR CAPLE: Look at this traffic. Come on hurry up!... Oh, he's bright enough. He'll pass his GCSEs¹ no problem, but look at the way he dresses. And you know where he lives? There's something edgy² about him – dangerous. Get a move on, will you...!
ROMY: You've got him all wrong. He's just like any other sixteen-year-old. Actually, he really cares about things. He's really passionate...
MR CAPLE: I bet! Oi, use your indicators³! I've seen it all before. I've taught lots of kids from council estates who, like Julian Moore, were very capable but never came to anything. Ended up in dead end jobs or claiming benefits⁴. Look at that maniac – this is a 30 zone! You can take the kid out of the estate, but you can't take the estate out of the kid. It's the way they're brought up. There was trouble again last night at Verona Hill. He's probably involved with that gang, most of the kids on the estate are. Quick before it turns red!
ROMY: I'm glad you're not my headteacher!

¹ General Certificates of Secondary Education: der wichtigste Schulabschluss der Sekundarstufe in Großbritannien.

² gefährlich

³ Blinker

⁴ Sozialhilfe beanspruchen

MR CAPLE: What do you mean?

ROMY: Aren't you supposed to be inspirational to your students and not just throw them on the scrapheap¹?

MR CAPLE: He won't need my help getting to the scrapheap.

ROMY: Julian's mother was right – you are prejudiced²!

MR CAPLE: Oh, and there's another one. I was only giving advice, trying to be helpful, but would she listen? Too much of a chip on her shoulder... Don't stop there, it's a double yellow!

ROMY: But why hit on Julian and his mother in particular?

MR CAPLE: I'm the headteacher, for heaven's sake! I'm supposed to talk to parents at Parents' Evening. I said the same thing to quite a few parents, who thanked me for showing an interest. They didn't kick off and play the working-class hero card. And that's my point about Julian Moore – people don't change, because they don't want to. If you mix with people like him you'll only find yourself in trouble. Oh – who's parked there!

The car is parked. Mr Caple turns the music off. Romy is silent. Mr Caple regards her for a moment.

MR CAPLE: (*gently*) Look, Romy, all I said to Mrs Moore was with exams coming up, now was not the time for any distractions. And that applies to you too. You need to keep your head down, work hard and get the best grades you can. Once they're over, that's the time to have fun. Me and your mother, we won't mind you letting loose a bit, going out with friends. Even boyfriends. As long as it's not someone like Julian Moore, because, really, you can do so much better.

Romy gets out of the car, she's about to go, but she turns to Mr Caple as he's getting out of his side of the car.

ROMY: You were like Julian once. Grandad worked in a factory, Nan cooked school dinners. So, people can change, although, obviously, not always for the better. The difference between you is, that Julian's not ashamed of where he comes from. You've changed into a self-important, stuck-up snob!

MR CAPLE: Romy! How dare you...! (*Romy storms off.*) That's it, I forbid you to see Julian Moore again, do you hear? Romy? Romy?

Mr Caple follows her off.

Scene 12

Mrs Moore enters. She is wearing her coat and carries a heavy shopping bag. She puts the bag on a chair and begins to take off her coat as the doorbell rings. She goes off the way she came in.

¹ Schrotthaufen

² Vorurteile haben

ROMY (*off*): Hello, is Julian in?

Mrs Moore returns with Romy following.

MRS MOORE: Come in. He's at a meeting – he's the youth representative on the estate council. They're discussing what happened the night before last. I think it will be a very long meeting.

ROMY: Ah, ok....

She's uncertain of what to do.

MRS MOORE: No need to rush off. Please...

She removes the shopping bag from the chair for Romy to sit down.

You should have phoned ahead, saved yourself a journey.

ROMY: I thought of that when I was on the bus and then realised I'd left my phone at home. Silly me!

MRS MOORE: It's brave of you to come onto the estate at night – a young woman alone. Brave or foolish... What do you make of it? Very different to where you live. Julian said you have a beautiful house in a lovely part of town...

ROMY: He's told you about me then...

MRS MOORE: And you're passionate about the environment...

ROMY: It should be the most important thing to everybody – more than politics, or wars or religion...

MRS MOORE: I can see why Julian is so into you.

ROMY: Oh! Well, I like him, too, Mrs Moore.

MRS MOORE: I'm sure you do. But I'm worried about Julian getting hurt.

ROMY: I would never...

MRS MOORE: (*cutting her off*) Not intentionally, no. But you're a headstrong girl, you do things without really thinking them through, such as coming here tonight, alone, with no phone. Is wearing charity shop clothes really helping the environment? Is that the real reason you dress down? You can afford good, sustainable¹ clothes, but I suppose that doesn't scream from the rooftops what you're about. Virtue signalling², I think they call it. And I'm worried that Julian is a statement, too. Well-off middle-class girl dates not so well-off council estate boy.

ROMY: It's not like that at all!

MRS MOORE: Your parents track your phone. That's why you've left it at home. They don't know you're here, so either you haven't told them about Julian, or they don't approve. And your friends at the Greyfriars, they'll be cool about it and invite Julian to all their parties, will they? Can you withstand all that disapproval³? Eventually you'll cave in. You're headstrong, but I can tell that you're sensible. So, I'm asking you to be sensible now – the

¹ nachhaltig

² Zurschaustellen moralischer Korrektheit

³ Kannst du so viel Missbilligung aushalten?

longer you leave it, the more you'll hurt Julian. I don't want my boy to get hurt.

ROMY: Yes, I get that, Mrs Moore. It was good to meet you.

Romy leaves hurriedly. Mrs Moore sighs and takes the bag of shopping off.

Scene 13

Julian enters.

JULIAN: Bad news! I got dumped¹. By text. Classic, eh? A couple of days after seeing Romy at my school, she *WhatsApped* me (*He reads from his phone.*) "I'm so sorry, but I can't see you again." Broken heart emoji. That was it. I felt as if I'd slammed into a wall. Of course, I texted back, I sent hundreds. No, she's ghosting me. We hardly know each other, so why does it feel this bad? Mum said, "there's plenty more fish in the sea", but I don't want a fish – I want Romy. The way I see it, there must be some misunderstanding. Or perhaps it's some sort of test, I dunno. So, I left it for a week, and here I am at the bus stop on my way to Romy's place. I have no gameplan, I'll figure it out when I get there. If her dad's car isn't there, I might ring the doorbell...

Sara enters, she is followed by Al, wearing a duffle coat. They stand at the bus stop, next to Julian. Both get out their phones and begin scrolling. Sara recognises Julian.

SARA: Oh, hello...

Julian nods.

SARA: It's Julian, isn't it?

JULIAN: Yeah. You're Sara, Romy's friend?

SARA: You and Romy didn't last long.

JULIAN: Er... no.

SARA: It's not surprising, her father won't allow it, he thinks you're dangerous, part of the Verona Hill gang.

JULIAN: Does he?

SARA: And he should know, as he's your headteacher. This is Al, by the way. My boyfriend. He's at Uni. Oxford.

Julian nods at Al but there's no response.

SARA: So, where are you going?

AL: If he's catching the same bus we are, he's probably wants to find out how normal people live.

JULIAN: Sorry?

AL: Don't be. Do you think his mother knows he's left home in his jimjams².

¹ Ich wurde abserviert.

² umgangsspr. für Pyjama

JULIAN: Smart arse.

AL: Hey, chill, sonny. Now you're off that grubby¹ estate, you've not got your little gang to back you up.

SARA: Are you still messaging Romy? She said you keep texting. (*Pretending to cry...*) Please take me back, boo hoo!

AL: People on Welfare² are so selfish – you've got to let poor Joni go.

JULIAN: Romy!

AL: It must be love!

JULIAN: Shut it!

AL: I'd play it low key³, if I were you...

SARA: So what bus are you catching?

AL: Not ours, I hope.

SARA: You're going to Romy's! What are you going to do, climb into her back garden again?

AL: What's this?

SARA: He broke into Romy's garden – threw stones at her parent's bedroom window!

AL: No wonder her old man's not into him. Rule one, Julie, be polite to your girlfriend's parents. Have you learned nothing at the Young Offenders Institution⁴?

JULIAN: I think I'll... catch a later bus.

AL: Yes, go back to Verona Hill, where you belong.

Al trips Julian as he goes.

AL: Careful! You don't want to spoil those nice new trainers.

JULIAN: They're dirty enough from standing next to you.

Julian and Al get up close to each other.

AL: They'll have blood on them soon, if you don't show respect.

JULIAN: You think so?

AL: You estate yobs⁵ should stay on your estate and leave our girls alone. They're out of out of your league⁶.

JULIAN: (*to the audience*) All right, I shouldn't have done it. I know I shouldn't have done it. Later, the police called it an unprovoked attack, me – a vicious young thug⁷. But I was provoked. They were goading⁸ me because of where I come from. They were putting me down. But even so I could... I should have walked away. But the injustice burned within me; because of where I live, I

¹ schmuddelig

² Wohlfahrt (Sozialhilfe)

³ Ich würde ruhig bleiben/kein Aufsehen erregen

⁴ Jugendstrafanstalt

⁵ Rowdy

⁶ Sie sind eine Nummer zu groß für euch,

⁷ ein böstiger junger Schlägerto

⁸ aufstacheln

was judged not good enough for Romy Caple, and one of those judges, who I'd never met before, was looking at me like I'd crawled out of a sewer¹. So when he said...

AL: Pluck, pluck, pluck! The roadman is a chicken!

JULIAN: I let him have it...

Julian pushes Al. Al pushes him back. Sarah is working her phone...

Julian head butts Al and he goes down.

JULIAN: I should have left it there. He was on the ground...

Al, still on the ground, has pulled out a knife. Sara has her phone up and is filming...

AL: You are going to pay for that!

JULIAN: But when I saw the knife, I wanted to show them I wasn't scared. What I didn't see was Sara recording it...

Julian gives Al a hard kick as he struggles to his feet. He goes down again, Julian stamps on Al's hand holding the knife. Julian picks it up. He turns and comes face to face with Sarah, brandishing the knife. She has her mobile phone between them. She stops filming, then presses another button.

SARA: If Romy didn't believe her father before – she will now!

Sara helps Al up and they go.

Scene 14

JULIAN: She streamed the fight. It went viral. The whole world watched. From the angle Sara had filmed it you couldn't see Al pulling the knife, just me sticking the boot in, angry face, yelling and me holding it. The police were called. Nobody believed the knife wasn't mine, that's what it looked like on the clip, but they couldn't prove it and as Al only had a few bruises, I was given a caution and a police record². Of course, the media went crazy – "Oxford University student attacked by knife-wielding³ gang member" and "Verona Hill gang out of control!"⁴ MPs⁴ and councillors demanded action. All blown out of proportion. But I was suspended from school for the rest of term. Mum was...furious. She grounded me for six months, took away my phone, changed the password for the internet, wouldn't let me hang with the crew. The only person I was allowed to see was Ben, when he brought schoolwork round for me. But worst of all, Mr Caple took out a restraining order⁵ – it meant I wasn't allowed anywhere near Romy's house or school. Although I don't suppose she ever wanted to see me again. She would have

¹ Kanalisation

² ...Verwarnung und Eintragung ins Vorstrafenregister

³ messerschwingend

⁴ Abk.: Members of Parliament

⁵ eine einstweilige Verfügung erwirken / hier: Annäherungsverbot

watched that clip and believed what everyone else did. I couldn't blame her for that. I knew I'd lost her.

Julian goes.

Scene 15

Romy enters followed by Ben, he's trying to catch up with her, but she's not waiting for him.

BEN: Hey! Hang on. Wait, will you. It's me, Ben.

Romy stops.

ROMY: Do I know you?

BEN: A friend of mine knows Sara's sister. I saw you when you did your school play.

ROMY: And you crashed the party afterwards. What do you want?

BEN: It's about Julian.

ROMY: (*Angry*) He sent you!?

BEN: No. But I heard what happened, what really happened, from Sara's sister.

ROMY: Oh? What really happened?

BEN: It wasn't what was plastered all over the media; vicious young thug attacks innocent bystander.¹

ROMY: I saw it on *TikTok*. It certainly looked that way!

BEN: You saw the end of it. According to Sara's sister, Al started it. He and Sara were riding² Julian about your dad not letting you see him. Al threatened him, then tripped him and Julian gave it to him, wham!

ROMY: And that makes it all right?

BEN: No. But it doesn't make him a crazed hooligan, either. Stupid, yes, crazed hooligan, no. And then... Al pulled a knife on Julian.

ROMY: Julian was the one with the knife...

BEN: Yeah. Because he disarmed Al. Sara was filming Julian, so you don't see Al pull the knife. She's going out with him, so she isn't going to make him look like the villain, is she?

ROMY: Why are you telling me this?

BEN: Thought you'd like to know the truth. So you can make up your own mind. See Julian how he really is. He had a choice; he could fight back or walk away. Ok, he made the wrong decision, but there were reasons.

ROMY: He really doesn't know you're here?

BEN: He'd kill me if he knew. Not really. Vicious unprovoked attack is more his style. I know how he feels about you and... it's just not fair. It was a great party by the way, till your dad threw me out. Bye.

¹ ... hinterhältiger junger Gewalttäter fällt über unbeteiligten Passanten her ...

² provozieren, aufziehen

Ben goes on his way...

ROMY: Ben! Thanks.

Romy goes.

Music

Scene 16

Julian enters. He is wearing jeans and a jumper. He carries a hold-all.

JULIAN: It's past midnight, the wee small hours¹. The whole town sleeps. Peace.

I'm leaving town tomorrow. My uncle, Mum's brother, lives in the west country². I'll stay with him and go to college there. Mum's pleased – it gets me off the estate. A fresh start.

Julian takes clothes out of the bag and lays them on the ground as if he were laying out a dead body.

This bag contains the Julian that was. I've shed a skin³, hoping to find a better

one beneath. I'll lay him out under Romy's window. When she wakes up, she'll see that he has gone, this estate kid, this roadman who upset her so.

He places a letter on top of the laid-out clothes.

This is my only way to say goodbye.

Julian leaves. Romy enters in her dressing gown with a bundle of clothes. She looks for Julian but can't find him.

ROMY: Julian? Julian? Too late, he's gone. *(She picks up the letter and reads it).*

Why leave these clothes? They're not and never were the real you. *(She holds up her dress).* Just as these are not the real me. In fooling others, we only fool ourselves.

Romy lays her clothes out next to Julian's. Julian enters at the back, but Romy is unaware he is there.

ROMY: Lay there entwined for the wind and rain to spoil, the sun to fade⁴: a love that could have been but never was. There is no sadder end to this tale of

Romy and her Julian.⁵

Romy goes. Julian comes down to see what she has done. Romy returns. They look at each other for a moment.

ROMY: Cornwall? That's... miles away.

Julian shrugs.

¹ ganz früh am Morgen ... (zwischen Mitternacht und Sonnenaufgang)

² im Südwesten Englands

³ eine Haut abstreifen

⁴ Auf dass Wind und Regen Euch zerstöre und die Sonne Euch ausbleiche' (Anlehnung an Shakespeares Sprache)

⁵ vgl. die Schlussverse von *Romeo and Juliet*

ROMY: I'll visit you!

She goes to him and they kiss.

MR CAPLE (*off*): Hello! Is someone down there?

Romy pushes Julian away.

ROMY: Go now, you really shouldn't be here.

MR CAPLE (*off*): Romy! Is that you?

Julian turns to go...

ROMY: Julian!

He stops. She goes to him and they kiss again.

ROMY: You have my number, call me when you can.

JULIAN: Goodnight then, Romy.

ROMY: Goodnight, Julian.

They go their separate ways.

The End.