

# PEOPLE RESPECT ME NOW

A play from Sweden by  
Paula Stenström Öhman



SWEDISH  
PERFORMING  
ARTS COALITION

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Our main objective is to facilitate and promote the development of the performing arts as well as support international collaborations and the exchange of ideas and knowledge.

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**PEOPLE  
RESPECT  
ME NOW**

by Paula Stenström Öhman

Translated by Catherine England



Foto: Petronelle Halvorsen

## PAULA STENSTRÖM ÖHMAN

Paula Stenström Öhman (born 1972) is a playwright, director and artistic director of Lumor, an acclaimed Stockholm based performing arts company profiled as one of Sweden's most interesting producers of contemporary drama. Stenström Öhman has also written and/or directed for The National Royal Dramatic Theatre, The City Theatres of Stockholm and Gothenburg, Sweden's National Touring Theatre and her plays have been translated to English, German, Finnish and Russian.

Some of her most renowned plays are: *Materia* (2013), *People Respect Me Now* (2015), *Ocean* (2018) and *Ambulance* (2021); all selected to SPACs Swedish Biennial of Performing Arts. *People Respect Me Now* was selected as Sweden's entry for New Nordic Drama 2016 by the Swedish Performing Arts Coalition and has been staged in Finland, Germany, Russia and the US. *Ambulance* was selected to Heidelberger Stückemarkt 2023. Her most recent plays are *Lost Lake* (Stockholm City Theatre 2023) and *My Inferno* (Strindberg's Intimate Theatre 2023).

Lumor was awarded The Swedish Theatre Critics Theatre Award 2022 for their plays in the borderland between social realism and dreamplay.

Stenström Öhman was awarded with The Writers Guild of Sweden's Henning Mankell Scholarship 2015, The Swedish Ibsen Society Prize 2016, The National Royal Dramatic Theatre and Daniel Sachs' Playwriter Prize 2020, and The Swedish Academy's Carl Åkermark scholarship 2023.

## **STRUCTURE**

The events take place a few weeks before a schoolshooting and can be viewed as fragments of a police investigation, linked to several court cases.

The story unfolds through shifts in time and place. Sometimes the actors speak directly to the audience, sometimes events take place on stage, with the fourth wall temporarily broken, allowing occasional comments to reach out to the audience; as well as pictures of the catastrophe. The audience has to piece it all together.

### A NOTE FROM THE TRANSLATOR

This play has been translated into British English. Both when it comes to language and circumstances such as school system, social services, the police, and politics in England. This translation is based on the original version of the manuscript.

### A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Originally the play was set in a suburb close to Stockholm with a mixed population when it comes to social class. Feel free to localise the place, terminology, slang and names. Special note about Blockberget: Blockberget is a suburban park on a hill, surrounded by woods and highways.

*People respect me now* premiered at Turteatern in Stockholm, Sweden, March 2015.

In the original production drawn pictures from Silas' diary were projected. It's also worth mentioning that only four actors played all the parts, cross gender casted. Actors: Eva Rexed, Sandra Huldt, Lars Bringås and Oskar Thunberg.

Paula Stenström Öhman

## CHARACTERS

### Perpetrators

Ante, 12 years old

Ludde, 38 years old

Christer, 42 years old, Filip's dad

Silas, 12 years old

### Classmates in class 6C

Camilla class parent Diana's daughter

Filip, Christer's son

Miguel, Nina's son

Inkan is really called Mathilda, played at Indians with Silas when they were younger

### Parents

Susanne, Ante's mum

Peter, Silas' dad

Diana, Camilla's mum

Nina, Miguel's mum

Christer, Filip's dad (see above)

Jeanette, Filip's mum, is mentioned

### School Staff

Lennart, principal

Pia, assistant principal

Ursula, special needs teacher, substituting school counsellor

Stefan, primary school teacher

Lotti, form teacher

Ludde, music teacher who's been fired (see above)  
Roya PE teacher, mentioned  
Annika school nurse, reported sick, mentioned

#### Ludde's trial

Helena, victim, Ludde's ex  
The Prosecutor Law Clerk (recording)  
Lotti testifies (see above)

#### Others

Åsa, social worker  
Sten, Ante's and Susanne's contact person  
Ante's uncle (voice)  
Telephone Operator Emergency call (voice)  
Police Officer 1. Emergency call (voice)  
Police Officer 2, Proofreading Peter's report  
Yasmine Councillor in the School and Education Committee (mentioned)  
Göran, Director of Education (mentioned)

[IN SQUARE BRACKETS] = SIGN, / = interrupts, () = short pause



## ACT I

### PROLOGUE

After the catastrophe. An abandoned classroom.

### TELEPHONE OPERATOR

No, this is the emergency services, let me put you through, one moment

### POLICE OFFICER 1.

The police yes, that's right... slow down. What's your name?

Excuse me, how old are you...Where are you now? Which school are we talking about? The Stonlake School... It's very great that you're observant... (interference on the phone line) I'm losing you, who's got a gun? Where is he now? I can't hear you, could you please...

(The phone call is cut off)

### THE PERPETRATORS

*Interrogation/death's waiting room/standing accused. All enter, in a line: Ludde, Ante, Christer, Silas.*

### CHRISTER (laughs)

Oh, God!

### ANTE

Ante, or Anton. I'm 12 years old.

### CHRISTER

This isn't me.

### ANTE

Why am I here?

The perpetrators

Interrogation/death's waiting room/standing accused.

All enter, in a line: Ludde, Ante, Christer, Silas.

CHRISTER (laughs)

Oh, God

ANTE

Ante, or Anton. I'm 12 years old.

CHRISTER

This isn't me.

ANTE

Why am I here?

CHRISTER

I'm not here.

ANTE

Shouldn't I be with the other kids? (pause)

CHRISTER

If Jeanette could see me now.. Okay: Christer, 42, - that's me.

But you already knew that, didn't you? Or maybe you get just about anyone for these, whatever this is supposed to be?

SILAS (quietly)

Silas, 12 (loudly) SILAS 12!

ANTE (sees Silas)

Oh, I didn't know he was here.

CHRISTER

I'm sure your intentions are good, I only hope you know what you're doing.

ANTE

I don't think about it

CHRISTER

But definitely -

ANTE

or hardly

CHRISTER

if I can help in any way, naturally I'll be of assistance, no problem. For the boys sake. I'm a football coach, which turns me into a bit of a role model, of course.

ANTE

It wasn't like, ah

CHRISTER

So I laughed, it was a bit sudden, how did I end up here?

ANTE

At least I didn't kill anyone.

*SILAS makes unpleasant sounds when he becomes upset/anxious, sounds of gunshots?*

CHRISTER

The last thing I remember was that I popped over to the school to borrow

some balls from Roya, the PE teacher, and for some reason everyone was on the school yard: Miguel and Camilla and Filip, my son, was probably there somewhere, all the kids and Lotti the form teacher and the principal and assistant principal, yeah everyone was there

SILAS

Everyone was there

CHRISTER

- and then boom, I'm here.

SILAS

some were singing.

CHRISTER

But go for it, and we'll see if I can contribute somehow.

ANTE

But now what's the point?

*Ludde carries a plastic bag with some clothes. He unfolds a piece of paper and gets up.*

CHRISTER (about Ludde) Well?

LUDDE (clears his throat)

Ludvig, but everyone calls me Ludde. 38.

ANTE

It's already happened.

LUDDE (reads from a piece of paper)

"Charged with: harassment, threats, assault, choking, punching, kicking, knocking the victim to the ground in front of their son"

SILAS

XXX

CHRISTER/

Excuse me for interrupting, there must have been a misunderstanding...

LUDDE (continues reading)/

"He takes a bunch of keys, he hits me with the keys in a strap that he swings at my head, his fists against my body, my head, he kicks my body".

CHRISTER

Hello? Can you hear me? Hello!

LUDDE (continues reading)/

"stabs to the scalp, bruises, repeated blunt force to the body and head, not life threatening, but serious injuries all over the body."

(stops reading) Mm.

CHRISTER

Can nobody hear me?

LUDDE

I'm a bit fragile at the moment, but still relieved to be here.

CHRISTER

Seriously...

LUDDE

It's...unforgivable.

ANTE

He came towards me at PE, or from behind: "Ante, I'll show you something".

SILAS

I went and got it, and then came back.

LUDDE

There's so much shame and guilt right now so it's...

SILAS

XXX

CHRISTER (could do the time-out sign)

Why have I been mixed up with these people?

ANTE

"You go with Miguel and I'll catch up"

LUDDE

if they hadn't come, they saved my life

ANTE

That's not what happened.

CHRISTER

Well, this business with Linda...

SILAS

XXX

CHRISTER

it was nasty, but what's it got to do with me? (short pause)

SILAS (reads from a diary)

Dog: barks. Girl: screams. He: You want this, you know you do.

CHRISTER

This is just speculating.

ANTE

THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED!

LUDDE

I called Mum, my hands were all shaky: "Mum, I've done it again"

CHRISTER

It's nasty stuff,

LUDDE

So I packed some necessities

CHRISTER

it could give the boys the wrong ideas.

LUDDE

a toothbrush, some clothes.

ANTE

I didn't want it to happen

LUDDE

Then I stood by the window and waited for them to come and get me.

ANTE

But it happened

LUDDE

Why aren't they coming?

SILAS

XXX

LUDDE

"IF YOU TOUCH HER AGAIN YOU'RE DEAD!"

SILAS

XXX

LUDDE

I wanted to protect her, be a good guy. Kind you feel safe with. That you want to have kids with.

ANTE

What they think of me?

LUDDE

What she thinks of me?

ANTE

Nothing

LUDDE

I can't

CHRISTER

I have no idea.

SILAS

People respect me now

CHRISTER

She didn't say anything.



SILAS

I think they do

ANTE

It's not like anyone cares.

*Everyone except Silas leaves. He looks round and gets a gun out that he wraps in a piece of cloth and puts in his rucksack, leaves.*

## **PART I . [ANTE]**

### **1. ANTE IS INTERROGATED AT A CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRE.**

Ante sitting at an interrogation table. Åsa enters with a glass of water.

ÅSA

There we go, Anton. I just want to mention, again, that you won't have to be present at the trial, instead you'll tell me now, and they'll record it, so they can look at it in court, then you won't have to talk about it again?

Okay? So mum'll be there on her own. She can cope with that, she's an adult and she'll be supported too, so you don't have to worry about her. Does that feel okay?

ANTE

Okay.

ÅSA

Okay. And since you don't want to talk to the police officers, I'll be interrogating you. Okay? There's a camera over there, but you don't need to think about it. And behind this glass wall (pointing at the audience), there are a few people listening, there's a police officer, a prosecutor and a few social workers and a few others, but you don't need to worry about that either.

Okay. Alright, Anton, are you ready? Why did you contact the social services? You've never done that before, have you?

ANTE

No, I don't know how it all started when something happened at school, it wasn't so good, I don't know, I think you'll have to ask me.

ÅSA

Okay, I'll ask questions, and then we'll see if that makes it easier?

ANTE

Mm.

ÅSA

Let's begin with this incident at school? Would you like to tell me about it?

ANTE

We have PE last thing on Tuesdays and ah.

ÅSA

There's no rush. Something happened at PE?  
Start from the beginning.

## 2. SUSANNE LISTENS TO MESSAGES

*Susanne comes home with heavy bags. Listens to messages on the answering machine. Deletes them one by one.*

PETER

Yes, hello, this is Peter, Silas' dad, Anton and Silas are in the same class. if I've reached Anton's mum...perhaps I've got the wrong number, in any case: give me a call when you hear this.

PIA

Hello? Hi Susanne, this is Pia calling, assistant principal at the Stensjö School. I've tried reaching you at this number, as you probably understand it's about Anton.

We had a very unfortunate incident at PE here on Tuesday. And then Lotti, Anton's new form teacher as you know, noted quite a lot of unreported absence lately. It's important that I get the chance to talk to you, so I'd appreciate if you could give me a call. Bye for now.

*The phone rings. Susanne lets it ring. The answering machine goes on.*

SUSANS' MESSAGE

"Hi, you've reached Susanne and Anton. Please leave a message."

STEN

Hi, it's your brother. I'm on this list of relatives that the school has and they've called me

*Susanne picks up the phone.*

SUSANNE

Yes it's me. Now what's happened?

3. ÅSA AT SOCIAL SERVICES

*Åsa at social services, directly to the audience.*

ÅSA

Well my name is Åsa and I work for the social services. I don't know if I can be of much help, since there's not much I can say, as you no doubt

understand. I've known Anton, or Ante as he's called, for many years, so you could say that I know the family. And it's been a long journey... To start with I was on sick leave, that's when these latest reports of concern were filed, so when I returned to work and found them here I was totally shocked. It isn't supposed to be possible to leave a report unattended in an inbox this long, but we're completely overextended, so unfortunately, it happened. And the consequences can be catastrophic.

We use AF, the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, and often, when the child's behaviour is very worrying, as in this case, we see it as a clear sign that the child isn't alright. And then you have to act straight of..

Sure, perhaps we ought to have reported this to the police earlier on, definitely. The regulations are clear, but it's very difficult, especially if it's the parent who's suspected of being the perpetrator. There are a lot of discussions, it's a very sensitive area, and the way these things are handled varies rather a lot in different districts.

You've got to understand that when the child finally turns to us, the situation has already escalated. It's the last link in a long chain, and like I said, unfortunately this case wasn't handled in the way one would have wished for, and the assessment was made that the child, would suffer more if it was reported to the police. But then again, the moment it becomes a case for the police, we risk losing touch with the family, since there's a breach of trust.

Obviously we're completely dependant on getting the parents on board, and in this case it had taken many years to build a relationship with the mother. Now you'll have to excuse me, I've got a meeting with the Reception Team before the next family arrives, so, but good luck!

*Åsa leaves*

#### 4. ANTE AT THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

*Lennart, the principal and Pia, the assistant principal meet Ante in the principal's office.*

LENNART

Well Anton, here we are again. You know me by now and you've also met Pia, the assistant principal.

PIA

Yes, yes.

LENNART

You know that I don't go through the roof for the slightest thing. Boys your age get up to mischief and get into fights, that's natural.

PIA

Oh yes.

LENNART

But now I'm actually really disappointed in you. We take this very seriously, I want to make that clear. Right, Pia?

PIA

Absolutely.

LENNART

We don't behave like that at this school.

PIA

No, it's clearly stated in our guidelines.

LENNART/

You're a smart guy and this type of..

PIA  
bullying

LENNART  
We mustn't assume the worst

PIA  
But Lennart, surely this must, according to our anti-bullying strategy.

LENNART/  
I think Anton here is well aware of my and the school's attitude towards this kind of foolishness, aren't you? You're sulking now. I understand it isn't much fun when everyone blames you. Better than you think. Ultimately I – and not to forget Pia – tare responsible for everything that happens at this school. And we don't need this kind of negative attention.

*Ante makes an attempt to leave. Pia, a bit afraid, stands in his way. Lennart strikes a more threatening pose.*

Now you and I are going to have a serious talk. They're on my case and want me to file a report to the police, but I don't believe in that at all. (outwards) – I'm serious, I don't believe in reporting children to the police, I actually don't. It's stigmatising, and that's never improved anyone. (back to Ante)

In my days a fight at school was a fight at school. That's nothing to report to the police. Rubbish.

Alarmism is spreading like wildfire in society. (outwards) Grownups behaving like insulted little kids, soon it'll be like in the USA where people sue each other over spilt ketchup. (back to Ante) "When life gives you lemons" that's one of those truths. And that's what we're doing now, Anton we're making lemonade..

*Lennart bangs his fist into the palm of his hand, in front of Ante who charges up. Lennart grabs hold of him and gets him down on the floor, Pia has to help holding him down.*

LENNART

There we go, there we go.

PIA

Shall I call someone, Lennart?! I don't want to do this! (is she hitting him?) I don't want to do this!

*It's soon over and Ante sits down again. Ante mumbles something in the commotion.*

LENNART

I can't hear you, speak up. (to Pia) Can you hear what he's saying?

ANTE (says something about how Sila's dad has said that he's an inbred loser)

LENNART

Oh God, (to Pia) has this Silsa got Tourettes as well?

PIA

Silas.

LENNART (to Ante)

Well then I'd have got angry too, but you and I have talked about this before.

If I get angry at Pia - I don't bloody well knee her in the forehead and break her skull, do I?

PIA

Oh God!

ANTE

I DIDN'T DO THAT!

LENNART

I didn't say you did. (to both Ante & Pia) It was an EXAMPLE. (to Ante) Above all, and I'll only say this once, under no circumstances may there be any weapons at school.

ANTE/

IT WASN'T A WEAPON!

LENNART

Yes it is, if you use it like you did. It's completely unacceptable.

ANTE

It wasn't even mine.

LENNART

Let's not put the blame on someone else. I've talked to your friends, one after the other, and I've got a fairly clear picture of what happened. You were the one who was there, Anton.

ANTE

Who said so?

LENNART

Nobody else was there.

ANTE

Who said so?!

LENNART

That's irrelevant. We've discussed this before. You have to take responsibility for your actions, young man.



That's what makes us human:

We can choose, there's always a choice, and with that freedom of choice comes responsibility. (outwards) So you've got to make the right choice, haven't you? (back to Ante) So - how are we going to solve this?

Well, you come back to me and hand in that awful thing immediately, and then we'll forget about this. Can you nod so I know that you hear what I'm saying? Because if we can't agree, I might have to call the police after all. And it would be unnecessary to make your mum sad again, wouldn't it? (Ante nods) Alright, agreed. (Ante leaves, Lennart pats him on the back) Stand tall, Anton and apologise to Silas, you'll see that you'll feel much better. Pia'll inform your mum as usual.

PIA

And Ursula is in the student care area, if you want to chat with someone.

LENNART

Let's make a fresh start, turn over a new leaf.

PIA

Thursdays!

LENNART

That's great Pia.

PIA

Uneven weeks! 10 - 12.

LENNART

Yeah, bloody hell.

PIA

I can't get hold of his mother, what to do? He's been absent a lot now, according to Lotti.

The uncle, who answered, said that he refuses to go to school. Shouldn't we report it to the social services after all? So it doesn't turn into a catastrophe?

LENNART

Now we're back into negative thinking, Pia. It'll be fine with the uncle, won't it? And don't look at me like that.

*Pia leaves, Ursula enters her room. Starts arranging things. Pia and Lennart shout to each other through the wall. Ante walks through a corridor.*

LENNART

Aah. It's such a bloody shame about Ludde. What the hell shall we do about the choir now? Hey, Pia?!

*Ursula sings and arranges things.*

PIA

Mm.

LENNART

Who's going to accompany the choir now that Ludde's leaving? You play the piano, don't you?

*Pia starts playing the piano.*

PIA

Yes, a little bit.

LENNART

Perhaps you could accompany the choir? Just until we find a new music teacher? Come on Pia! I'm in too.

PIA

Temporarily, in that case.

LENNART

That's great Pia. One must make an effort! (to himself) One must make an effort.

## 5. ANTE IN URSULA'S ROOM

*Ursula is substituting school counsellor and special needs teacher.*

*Ante enters.*

URSULA

Well here I am. You must be Anton? I hoped you'd come. Won't you sit down? (Ante doesn't sit down) You're probably wondering: who's this weird lady? My name is Ursula, I'm the new special needs teacher and I cheat a bit as school counsellor too. And I've got some of Annika's tasks as well, but that's just temporary.

ANTE

Has she left?

URSULA

Aha, didn't you know, yes exactly, you'll have to make do with me until they've found a new school nurse.

ANTE

Why did she leave?

URSULA

Well, I don't know. It was all of a sudden, last week. Maybe she was looking for new adventures.

ANTE

Can I have a painkiller?

URSULA

I can probably fix a painkiller for your. Sit down, sit down.

*Ursula gets a painkiller.*

URSULA

I'm better at listening than putting on plasters. The chairs were terrible at my last school, but here they're actually really soft. This room is a bit on the dark side, but you sit comfortably. Well, Anton. Here we're having a good time while the others work away. Would you like a biscuit? They're here if you change your mind. You're in sixth form, aren't you? So it's upper school for you, then. (outwards) Fancy how early it starts these days? (back) Do you think it's going well? I can imagine that there's a lot of new things, it's more demanding and there are grades, I remember that. And girls, maybe? No, that was silly of me to say. But I bet they like you?

ANTE

No.

URSULA

Oh yes. How about your friends? Are you in a big gang or is it more like groups of two? Is there anyone special you like to hang out with?

ANTE

Not really. Maybe Filip and Miguel.

*Ursula writes something down.*

URSULA

Mm. How are things at home? Nothing special? Has anything happened? I'm just curious. Perhaps you've moved or got a new brother or sister.

ANTE

What? No, everything's normal.

URSULA

And what's that like?

ANTE

Don't know. Good.

URSULA

Okay.

*Ante touches his arm.*

Does it hurt?

ANTE

No, it's nothing.

URSULA

I heard something rather upsetting happened last Tuesday. What happened really? (Ante doesn't respond) You know what, Anton, I think it's good to talk about these things, even if it's upsetting.

ANTE

Ludde said that too.

URSULA

Who's Ludde?

ANTE

It won't change anything.

URSULA

No. Of course, nobody can force you to talk. I can't resist any longer (she takes a biscuit) Sure you don't want one? What do you usually do at PE?

ANTE

Don't know, play basketball.

URSULA

Do you like playing basketball?

ANTE

It's ok.

URSULA

I can imagine that you're good at it.

ANTE

Not really.

URSULA

Well you don't have to be good to have fun. I'm terrible at singing but I like to sing, you should hear me in the shower (sings an opera tune, Ante relaxes a bit) It drives my partner round the bend.

Can you keep a secret? I've started singing in the school choir, did you know that the teachers have started a choir? So we can torture the students on the last day of term. I'm joking with you.

So you mostly play ball?

ANTE  
Sort of.

URSULA  
And what was it like last Tuesday?

ANTE  
I didn't go because we had dancing.

URSULA  
Oh but it's such fun to dance. Did you go out instead, or where did you go?

ANTE  
To the boys' changing room. Miguel and I went there.

URSULA  
So Miguel was there. What did you do there?

ANTE  
Nothing, sat.

URSULA  
Was it just you and Miguel there?

ANTE  
At first. Then Silas came.

*Ursula takes notes.*

URSULA  
And you and Silas had an argument?

ANTE

Not exactly.

URSULA

What does he do when things get like that?

ANTE

I don't know, he writes things, says things. Filip got tired of it.

URSULA

Filip? Was Filip there too?

ANTE

Mm. He brought Silas.

*Ursula takes notes and takes out a chart with smileys.*

URSULA

I see. I've got a funny chart here with smileys, have you seen one of these before? Shall we try it out, just for fun? If you could choose one, any one, there's no right or wrong, how would you say you feel when Silas goes on like that?

*(Ante points)* Mhm, that one looks a bit sad to me, *(Ante changes his mind)* not that one, it's okay that fox is baring its teeth. Did that feeling come after this more depressed one, you felt that way directly. And what do you do when you feel like that? Is it okay to hit someone then?

ANTE

Sometimes.

URSULA

How do you think Silas felt then? You can point. Mhm. fairly similar. And how did you feel while you were at it?



Oh, that was a bit different. That one looks quite content, that's fine, one can feel two or three feelings at once, that's how we humans work. How did you feel afterwards? ()

Can you guess?

*Ante leaves hastily*

Anton! Come back if you want to talk! I'll be here on Thursday in a fortnight. You know where I am!

\*\*\*\*\*

### *SCHOOL SHOOTING*

PIA AND LENNART SNEAKING ABOUT, HEAR GUN SHOTS,  
FLEE IN PANIC

\*\*\*\*\*

## 6. ANTE CALLS THE SOCIAL SERVICES

*Ante sneaks out of his room to make a call.*

ANTE

Hi, is Åsa there? Ante, Anton Millgård. Could I talk to Åsa, please?

I'd like to talk to Åsa!

SUSANNE (behind a wall)

ANTE WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT THERE? GO INTO YOUR ROOM!

*Ante leaves.*

*LENNART SMOKES*

*Lennart comes out, coughs, lights a cigarette.*

SUSANNE TAKES A LOZENGE (overlapping)

Susanne on her way to social services, takes a throat lozenge.

## 7. SUSANNE MEETS ÅSA AT THE SOCIAL SERVICES OFFICE

*Åsa and Susanne meet and hug each other.*

ÅSA

Hi Susanne, it's been a while.

SUSANNE

Yeah..

*Åsa notices that there's lots of people there*

ÅSA

Well, let's sit over here, get some peace and quiet. How are the two of you getting on these days?

SUSANNE

Well. Very well, actually.

ÅSA

That's great to hear. And how are you?

SUSANNE

After we moved I've been much better, so things are good on that front too

ÅSA

That's really great. And how are things going for Anton?

SUSANNE

Just fine, I think, he doesn't say much. You have to draw it out of him.

ÅSA

Mhm. And what about school?

SUSANNE

It's going well. He's got a new teacher, Lotti something. I'm sure she's good and that but they've probably got less time for everyone now that he's in upper school. He'll be alright.

ÅSA

Is that how you feel?

SUSANNE

Yes, he's tough, he's great that way. He still gets into trouble sometimes, but what can you do?

ÅSA

Why do you think he gets into trouble?

SUSANNE

He carries his head high, he's got that from me. Nobody can walk all over him. I'll never forget the first time they rang from the nursery and told me off. Then he came home and told me what happened. "Mum, he said that he was going to hit me until I bled, and then I got scared and hit him on the willy." And that was that. "Ante's so aggressive, Ante gets into fights..." So he became that person. I kept being told off about it, as though it was my fault. It's always I who have to take responsibility and apologise.

ÅSA

Mm.

SUSANNE

Sometimes I get the feeling that he gets into trouble to annoy me.

ÅSA

Why do you think so?

SUSANNE

No, I don't know. I suppose he's angry at something, or bored. And then he does something and then they kick up a hell of a fuss, they call about one thing after another, crying parents and teachers I hardly know interfere and I don't know what they want me to do. And here I am again.

ÅSA

Well, I'm glad you came anyway. You see, I've talked a bit to Anton too.

SUSANNE

Oh, why? What did he say?

ÅSA

As you know I can't answer that. We talked a bit about how things have been lately.

SUSANNE

I heard they rang from school, but I actually don't know what it was about. My brother took care of it. It won't be reported to the police anyway, will it?

ÅSA

I'm afraid I can't answer that question either, even if I knew.

SUSANNE

I couldn't take that.

ÅSA

I understand. But Anton said something that rather worried me, so I wanted to have a chat with you.

SUSANNE

No, there's no comparison, and like I said, it's going well. But that goes without saying.

ÅSA

Do you get angry sometimes too?

SUSANNE

Me? No, hardly ever, but don't all parents get angry sometimes?

ÅSA

Of course. What do you do then?

SUSANNE

I don't know, I don't remember, I get a bit annoyed sometimes, but it passes quickly. I'm not violent.

ÅSA

Like Anton's dad?

SUSANNE

I'd prefer not to talk about him.

ÅSA

Has he tried to get in touch with you?

SUSANNE (is she shaking?)

No, you see, I get totally. No, he hasn't tried anything, so I feel safe.

ÅSA

Oh, good.

SUSANNE

Mm. But once, but it won't happen again.

ÅSA

What happened then?

SUSANNE

No, it wasn't a big deal. Anton is the way he is so sometimes we clash, but that's no surprise.

ÅSA

That doesn't sound good to me.

SUSANNE

Well, not clash, but he refuses to listen.

ÅSA

What did you want him to do.

SUSANNE

No, nothing special, just do as he was told.

ÅSA

What happens if he doesn't obey? (Susanne doesn't answer) If Anton does something that you don't want him to do, how do you express that?

SUSANNE (understands that Ante's talked about it)

I'm a good mum, everything I do, I do for his sake. You know what I've been through.

ÅSA

Yeah, I know that Susanne, I'm not questioning that.

SUSANNE/

He's not exactly easy to deal with. Which isn't surprising considering everything, but that doesn't make it okay for him to take my stuff.

Sometimes he lashes out at me, what am I to do? He's strong for his age. No! I wouldn't hit him or anything, I'd never do that, so if I smack him or slap him, to prevent him from harming himself, that's nothing. In that case I might as well report him.

ÅSA

What are you thinking about now?

SUSANNE

He's got to go to school, of course, but if he gets up to a lot of stuff and goes out and talks to people, that won't work. That's probably all he meant. We don't clash, definitely not.

*Susanne leaves. Åsa remains. Looks towards the audience, as in "see what I have to deal with".*

*FILIP & MIGUEL HAVE GOT SILAS' DIARY*

Miguel enters, shouts to Filip. They've got hold of Silas' diary, they leave.

**Part II.**

**[HOME & SCHOOL]**

8. CLASS MATES TALKING ABOUT BULLYING.

The children emerge from the dark. Filip, Miguel, Camilla and Inkan - class mates of Silas and Ante - in a kind of group interview, facing the audience. They're keen to make a good impression but sometimes they forget about the interviewer and talk at once.

FILIP

Will it take long?

INKAN

It was optional.

CAMILLA

We got out of Science class, hello (outwards) I'll begin, will I? I'll act as usual then: My name is Camilla Bengtsson and I'm in class 6C.

FILIP

Filip.

MIGUEL

Miguel Lindström Perez.

INKAN

Mathilda, but everyone calls me Inkan.

CAMILLA

She loves Indians, that's why.

INKAN

Says something quietly to herself, maybe "I'm going to change my name"

FILIP

What did you say?

CAMILLA/

Anyway. We've been picked by Lotti, our form teacher, to answer or more like talk, you could say. Not cause we're being bullied or anything.

*The others agree, definitely not.*

CAMILLA

It's more like some of us here are you know good influence on the rest of the class, or whateve...



*(They are asked a question from someone in the audience/the interviewer. We don't hear the question). Okay... what we think about when we hear the word bullying? Easy question.*

*Nobody responds.*

MIGUEL

Don't look at me, I don't know.

*Inkan puts her hand up but Camilla makes a gesture indicating that it isn't necessary.*

CAMILLA

No but this is totally normal, we can talk normally, that's the whole point.

INKAN

Someone who's alone...

CAMILLA

Does anyone force someone, like now you have to walk here alone? Yeah like, if someone lags behind the rest of the class? They might just have left something behind.

MIGUEL

Or have blisters on their feet.

CAMILLA

Oh shut up! Silas had that disgusting blister on his heel, he had to show everyone.

FILIP

Some people want to be alone.

CAMILLA

I almost barfed.

FILIP

Sometimes I'm a bit tired or get this sort of headache, then I go into the studio and chill.

CAMILLA

And then some asshole comes in when you there like, no thanks. Like slime-Stefan (hides a fit of giggles, gets a grip on herself). More like: kids that do nasty things to other kids.

FILIP

It's got to be several ganging up on one person, hasn't it?

CAMILLA

Or teenagers. Saying something mean, hurting someone, hitting someone.

MIGUEL

Specially several kids.

CAMILLA

Filip just said that.

INKAN

Someone takes your clothes.

MIGUEL

Oh dangerous, they took my hat

FILIP

Who cares.

CAMILLA

Exactly, boys do that all the time, I've stopped caring.

MIGUEL

I know: if someone sits down, and everyone else leaves.

FILIP

Seriously.

INKAN

I didn't know anyone when I was in first grade. That was kind of awful.

MIGUEL

You knew Silas.

INKAN

Yes, but...

FILIP

You still play \* at Indians \* at Rock mountain, don't you?

*Miguel teasingly \* mimes Indians.\**

INKAN

No we don't.

FILIP

Maybe not you.

CAMILLA

I've been through horrible stuff too, so it's not like I don't get how it feels, but I don't go around blablabla how sorry everyone should feel for me.

FILIP

Exactly. My dog died - I didn't even cry.

MIGUEL

It was called Sigrid. A dog called Sigrid? That's not a dog's name?

FILIP/

Several people hitting and kicking one person who's lying down and everyone stands in a circle until the head's bleeding!

MIGUEL

Pushing someone down at the Lövsta pool!

*Miguel pushes down Inkan's head and imitates someone drowning, looks at Filip who grins. Camilla pulls Miguel off him. It happens quickly, nobody makes a big deal of it. Miguel tries to cover it up by grinning. They go on like nothing's happened.*

CAMILLA

It can be little things too. Shoving down the stairs in the canteen. It's so fucking crammed at early lunch so it's like - woaaa - if someone starts pushing you, you fall on the next person standing below and then that person falls on the next and like woaaa, then that person falls on the next and the next like woaaaa...

FILIP/

We get it.

INKAN

Sand wars, itching powder.

MIGUEL

Yeah, I'd forgotten about itching powder.

FILIP  
For real?

INKAN  
Shoving snow in someone's face.

CAMILLA  
Nobody does that to you, though?

INKAN  
Snowballs with gravel.

MIGUEL (demonstrates, Camilla pounces on him)  
This is Camilla: "oh no, don't get me, or yes, go on", admit.

FILIP (slides around, Camilla chases Filip)  
"Oops, I fell in my slippery boots."

MIGUEL  
"Ohh, Filip, stop shoving snow in my face, please Filip".

FILIP (to Miguel)  
Fucks' sake, sit down.

CAMILLA  
Your's so embarrassing.

FILIP  
Am I embarrassing?

CAMILLA  
No, Miguel is.

INKAN  
Fuck him.

MIGUEL (to Inkan)  
What did you say?

INKAN  
(says something quietly to herself, like fuck off)

FILIP  
What?

MIGUEL (imitating Lotti)

"Inkan, you've got to speak up so everyone can hear you!"

*Filip laughs.*

CAMILLA (hits Miguel)  
Eh cool?! (outwards) Please excuse my cute little class-mates.

(silence)

MIGUEL  
Linda in eighth grade brought a gun with her to school.

FILIP (to Miguel, indicating that it isn't smart to bring that up)  
Come on!

CAMILLA  
Yeah after she was assaulted at Rock mountain!

*tense silence*

INKAN

They didn't catch him, did they?

CAMILLA

If it had happened to me, I'd have karate kicked him between his legs and shot his head off, ages ago.

FILIP

Good luck .

CAMILLA

I swear, I would.

INKAN

You're not allowed to have a gun, are you?

CAMILLA

Sure, as self defence.

INKAN

No, you're not allowed

CAMILLA/

Yes because it was meant for protection

INKAN

I know you're not...

CAMILLA/

It doesn't matter anyway! She's lost it or someone nicked it or I don't know...

INKAN

But you're still not allowed...

CAMILLA

BUT! She went to football practice, I KNOW HER! But she's quit, which is a fucking shame cause she was like the best ever. She was \* a forward and Christer, our coach,

MIGUEL (points at Filip) Filip's dad.

CAMILLA

So what. He was like: "get it up there to Linda now Camilla and we'll get them!" She was so fucking fast with the ball, our best scorer, but she went totally crazy after that, we were like: Linda?

Stares apatically

Hello? Like that! She didn't cry, definitely not, more like out of it.

It's a big loss for the team.

FILIP

Thanks for informing us.

MIGUEL

Once in fifth grade, there was a boy in seventh grade with a knife, threatening some people in class 7D.

FILIP

But listen, SEVERAL people attacking one person!

CAMILLA

Yeah, he was more like: one person.

"You are my slaves" Completely insane. But Ludde - our music teacher, who quit because he's going to record an album with his band, SOB SOB (I was like "sob sob"), anyway, he talked to the moron and then everything was cool.



MIGUEL

If it had been our class, and Ante was there, the guy would have been like: "bye bye knife"

CAMILLA

Ante hasn't got it any more. The police took it.

MIGUEL

The police?

CAMILLA

I think so.

FILIP

It wasn't even a knife.

MIGUEL

I mean sword.

CAMILLA

I listened when mum was talking to Silas' dad on the phone, he was totally insane.

MIGUEL

He's scary.

FILIP

You don't believe Ante, do you, he's always lying. It was a shoehorn.

MIGUEL

Seriously?

INKAN

How do you know that?

MIGUEL

It looked like a sword.

FILIP (suddenly frightened)

If any of you tells Ante that I've said that he lies, I'll say the same thing about you.

MIGUEL

Smart. By the way, why isn't Ante here?

FILIP

Exactly.

CAMILLA

Why should he?

FILIP

Cause he ought to. Why should he be let off?

INKAN

He's hardly been at school lately. Very on and off, so to speak.

FILIP

They called me Bambi when I was in nursery school.

CAMILLA

Oh my God that's so cute.

MIGUEL & CAMILLA (teasing)

Ooh, Bambi.

FILIP (leaves, in a bad mood)

You're so fucking lame. I was kidding!

The bell rings. Ad-lib on the way out, Camilla was called little bunny when she was little, and so on.

\*\*\*\*\*

### SCHOOL SHOOTING

Camilla and Miguel walk along the wall, curl up, protect each other, flee.  
Camilla helps Miguel.

\*\*\*\*\*

### 9. LOTTI AND STEFAN IN THE STAFF ROOM

Stefan, primary school teacher, takes care of and wipes the coffee machine in the staff room. Lotti, form teacher for class 6C, enters.

LOTTI (turns off her mobile, as though talking to herself)

So everyone's left, how typical. It's always the same parents on the phone, over and over again. Now it was him again, Peter, Silas in class 6C's dad.

STEFAN

Are you talking to me now?

LOTTI

No, I'm talking to myself.

STEFAN

Of course, I'm just fussing around here.

LOTTI/

Who else would I be talking to?

STEFAN

Oh I see, no, sorry

LOTTI/

I don't know *what he thinks* we do here at school, but I told him, in a friendly but firm way: "I'm sorry but I can't have this conversation now. I've got a ten minute break before I'm back in a classroom with *31 students that need my full attention.*" 32. *On Monday there's a new student. 27 was my maximum for many years but now it doesn't matter* how many diagnoses you have, I hate that word, there aren't any resources anyway.

Camilla peers into the staff room.

CAMILLA

Hello!

LOTTI

Hello there.

CAMILLA

Is Filip here?

LOTTI

No, Camilla, why would he be in the staff room?

*Camilla leaves.*

LOTTI

She could try the school yard, for example.

STEFAN

For example.

LOTTI (whispers)

Then Lennart gives me that look; "keep up with our times, Lotti!"

STEFAN

Yes, there are a lot of new.

LOTTI/ (makes sure that nobody can hear her)

"The number doesn't matter", that's easy for him to say when he wines and dines with the Councillor and Education Committee, turns up wearing a nice tie on the last day of term like some kind of queen (waves like Queen Silvia) well you know yourself.

STEFAN

Yeah. And when we celebrated Lucia, when he came out at the end, wearing those wings (*imitates Lennart as an archangel*)

LOTTI (in a normal tone of voice)

But I thought that was quite fun, it showed the boys that it's okay to joke *around a bit, or what* were you about to say?

STEFAN

I think I thought it was a bit...

LOTTI/

Stefan, now we're talking about middle and upper school. Have you ever taught a middle school class?

No, oh yes, you weren't allowed to follow along with your class, were you?

Ah, I thought that was a pity.

*Lotti goes up to a window that faces the school yard.*

STEFAN

I met Lennart in his office.

LOTTI/

We face tougher demands now. That's a fact. And one thing's for sure: you need to be a qualified teacher to cope, I can tell you that much.

As a consolation. Not only knowledge wise. Comments, fiddling with mobiles, asking about things that I've explained clearly just five minutes ago. Use your little computers for something useful for once! And let's not talk about the documentation . But does that make me scream? Cry like a baby in the staff toilet?

*Now Stefan is also standing at the window with his mug of coffee.*

LOTTI

Does it?

STEFAN

No.

LOTTI

No! I answer in a calm and friendly way: "you'd know if you'd have listened."

*They see a child on the schoolyard getting a ball in the face*

Ouch!

STEFAN

That one hit right in the face.

LOTTI

The playground assistants will have to take care of that.

STEFAN

Yeah

LOTTI

Perhaps we haven't got playground assistants at this school anymore? That's great, cut back on that too, while you're at it. Do they understand how much knowledge and experience you need to catch them so they forget that Miguel is hiding under the desk, drinking a coke?

Let him sit there and we'll see how things go. That's what I think. (They catch sight of Linda on the *school yard*) *There is that poor girl.*

STEFAN

*Oh yes, Linda.*

LOTTI

Will she ever be herself again.

STEFAN

What did he do to her?

LOTTI

And now she's taking Camilla with her, *sneaking behind that corner for a fag...*

STEFAN

*I don't like that.*

LOTTI

But it's better that they smoke there, than when they put out cigarettes in front of the main entrance.

Have you seen that there are cigarette butts there?

When I catch that one. Great, now Camilla will stink of smoke, so they can talk about that for a while.

And Inkan is sitting in a corner mumbling, and Silas sits in another and I can be grateful if Ante turns up at all and then there's three of them putting up their hands: "Miss, may I be excused?" No, just go shit yourself!

*Lotti pretends to take a dump, rolls her eyes as though: yes I know that you aren't allowed to say things like this, but now I'm doing that anyway. They both laugh.*

STEFAN

Tssschhh

LOTTI

Why do you say that?

STEFAN

The boys say "tschhhh" as soon as I say a word with that sound in it.

LOTTI

Really?

STEFAN

Yes. And then everyone laughs.

LOTTI

What? Do they imitate you? In primary school? I would never accept that during my lessons.

STEFAN

It's actually pretty awful.

LOTTI

That doesn't sound good at all. You've got to show them who's boss, Stefan. You're the teacher.



Ludde enters the staff room with a moving box and grabs a mug.

LOTTI

Hi Ludde!

LUDDE

Hi there.

LOTTI

Is it time?

LUDDE

Yes, it seems like it.

STEFAN

What are you going to do now then?

LUDDE

It's a bit of this and that.

STEFAN

Good luck then.

LOTTI

Mm...

LUDDE

Hope you'll be fine.

*Ludde leaves.*

LOTTI

No cake for him. Anyway: then this guy Peter says "I'll call you later this evening then?"

This evening? I say, no don't do that. Then I'll be cooking a meal for a friend!

STEFAN

That's right, you haven't got time to talk on the phone while cooking?

LOTTI/

But I can't say that, can I? Seriously, Stefan, he's not a salesman? What do you say to a parent whose child has been beaten black and blue?

STEFAN

No, I don't know.

LOTTI/

I don't know what the truth is, we shouldn't talk about this, but according to the dad, he came home with bruises, could barely walk.

STEFAN

Oh my God.

LOTTI

Roya found him up there, tied up, and brought him to Annica. She had a nervous breakdown and called in sick so now we haven't got a school nurse either.

STEFAN

That's terrible.

LOTTI

The dad wants the school to report it to the police (mimes perhaps "the police") but you know what Lennart's like, so this conversation (zips her lips)

STEFAN

Of course. But surely the school at least has to (mimes perhaps) report it to the social services.

LOTTI/

Sorry, I don't understand what you mean? I'm not allowed to say anything. Like I said, nobody knows what really happened. But I feel sorry for the dad: he can't help that he's got a kid that, well is like he is. But I'd like to ask where that low self-esteem came from?

STEFAN

It's all about self-confidence.

LOTTI/

No, self esteem. Thanks. There's nothing wrong with his self confidence. But the dad doesn't get the difference either. Silas has to learn to stand up for himself. But he doesn't want to realise that. "We are well aware of the situation that's arisen, but unless it's urgent" I say. "But this is urgent" "I hear what you're saying, and as I've said, I can't discuss other children with you. Lennart's had a talk with the boys in question and will get in touch with you." "He's not in question, he's in danger" "Like I said, we take this kind of incident very seriously and if you have any more questions you're welcome to send an email or get in touch. Should we leave it at that." (mimes hanging up the phone)

STEFAN

Ah it...mm. You couldn't have put it more clearly.

LOTTI (finishes her coffee)

Oh, one mustn't feel guilty. "When life gives you lemons", as Lennart says. I must rush off now. (puts her mug on the table).

STEFAN

I'll take care of it.

LOTTI

Thanks. And I'll bring up the issue of teachers being bullied at the next management meeting. We won't tolerate that sort of thing here!

*Stefan is on his way out with the mugs, changes his mind and puts them down.*

## 10. THE PARENT'S MEETING

*After school in class 6C's classroom Diana, Camilla's mum, preparing things, leaves.*

Christer, Filip's dad enters, walks through the classroom, perhaps he fiddles with something on a desk. Nina, Miguel's mum, enters.

NINA

Christer! God you frightened me!

CHRISTER

Nina?

NINA

Isn't this where we're supposed to be? Where is everyone?

It can't just be us?

CHRISTER

I suppose they're sick of all the whining, that mail thread spammed me all week.

NINA

Yeah, I put it in junk mail directly (they grin), but Diana sent a reminder.

CHRISTER

Yeah, she battles on, she battles on.

NINA

I feel completely out of the loop, Miguel hasn't said anything at home.

CHRISTER

Neither has Filip, but I suppose that's a good sign?

NINA

It's all football with him. By the way, thanks for the match last Sunday, great game!

CHRISTER

The boys keep at it.

NINA

I haven't heard a thing from school either.

CHRISTER

You know everything's alright if you don't hear anything from them.

NINA

Yeah, I don't get it.

*Diana enters with a chair.*

DIANA

Hello hello.

NINA

Oh hi Diana.

CHRISTER (takes the chair)  
You shouldn't have to carry that.

NINA  
It's always the same parents that do their bit, have you noticed that?

DIANA  
Yeah.

CHRISTER  
Mm that's strange.

NINA  
Very strange! I haven't even met some parents.

CHRISTER  
"Someone else'll have to handle that." Manjana manjana.

NINA (giggling towards Christer)  
It used to be so nice in primary school, remember when we used to go for a glass of wine afterwards?

DIANA  
Oh, we should start doing that again!

NINA  
Yeah, I don't have time for this either, but oh well...

*Peter enters.*

PETER  
Hello.

DIANA  
There you are!

*Diana greets Peter. Christer and Nina whisper.*

NINA (to Christer)

Who's that again?

DIANA (to Peter)

How is Silas these days?

CHRISTER (to Nina)

I have no idea.

PETER (to Diana)

No, it...

NINA (greets Peter)

I don't think we've met?

PETER

Surely we have.

NINA/

Oh my God, sorry, there are so many new parents now. (greets him) I'm

Nina, Miguel's mum.

PETER

Peter.

CHRISTER (greets Peter)

Christer, Filip's dad.

PETER

Peter.

*Christer and Nina make a sign to each other as though: who's dad is he?  
I have no idea.*

CHRISTER

Right everyone, let's get started.

DIANA (checks what time it is)

So, I guess not too many more will show up. Maybe I should introduce myself, my name's Diana and I'm Camilla's mum, in case someone doesn't know me by now.

CHRISTER

We do, Diana, we do.

DIANA

I was class parent last year.

*Nina mimes an applause*

DIANA (isn't sure if she's being ironic)

Yeah, thanks Nina. Since those who were supposed to take over, don't quite seem to have managed to do so, we've received loads of phone calls to our house, after this incident (looks at Peter)

NINA (to Christer)

What's happened?

CHRISTER

Oh nothing.

DIANA

So in the end, Peter and I, how shall I put it, took the initiative for this extra parents' meeting.

Let's see, I had the agenda somewhere here...



(checks her mobile)

NINA

Has something serious happened?

CHRISTER

Oh no

DIANA/

No, it's gone. It'll have to be more informal. Can you take notes, Peter?

PETER

Sure.

*Peter pulls out the cable for his computer and starts looking for a socket.*

DIANA

Oh Peter, there's no need for that...it'll be fine with pen and paper.

CHRISTER

I've got a pen here..

Peter pulls out his own pen and notepad.

PETER

Thanks, I've got one.

DIANA

We've obviously got the need to discuss things without the presence of children and teachers.

CHRISTER

Yes thanks, we've noticed that.

*Nina giggles. Peter takes notes.*

DIANA

So we're here to discuss how we can help our children to feel safe at school.

CHRISTER

The problem is mainly the disruptive environment.

DIANA

There is a reason for that.

PETER

You're not supposed to be afraid in school.

NINA

Of course not!

DIANA

That's the point.

NINA/

Is someone afraid?

PETER

I suppose so.

CHRISTER/

No no, nobody's afraid. This is ridiculous. It's the school's responsibility to educate our children, not to bring them up. That has to be the parents' job.

There are a few bad apples in the class.

NINA

Yes, there are a few who ruin things for everyone else.

PETER

Whose children are you calling bad apples?

CHRISTER

Well, I don't know.

NINA

I didn't say so.

PETER

Are you talking about my son?

CHRISTER

I have no idea who's parent you are, or who's your son. You introduced yourself as Peter.

PETER

That's my point. You're talking about someone's child.

CHRISTER (to Nina)

Help me out here!

*Nina shrugs.*

DIANA

Calm down. We must be able to talk about this without it getting personal.

CHRISTER

We should be able to speak frankly, shouldn't we?

PETER

But it could just as well have been one of our kids? One of us sitting here? Or are you talking about Filip?

CHRISTER

Absolutely not! I don't know all the new ones.

PETER

Silas has been in this class since first grade.

NINA (to Christer)

Ahaa...

CHRISTER (whispers something to Nina, for example the apple and tree)

PETER

Excuse me? Can you speak up so everyone can hear you?

DIANA

What I think Christer means...

NINA/ (to Peter)

I just have to say: a lot of the kids have been in the same class since they started school.

Filip, Miguel, well the whole crew from football, they've been best friends since they were in day nursery, they always play together after school, sleep over and do things together, so it's perhaps not so strange if they want to keep that up, or how shall I put it.

DIANA

Let's not mention anyone's name. Something specific happened that triggered all this. I feel that it's become our business when some parents are considering reporting it to the police.

NINA

Oh God! What's happened?!

CHRISTER

Give me a break.

NINA

Surely not in our class? Why haven't we received any information about this?

CHRISTER

They're exaggerating.

NINA

Now I'm all shaky (shows her hand to Christer) look.

CHRISTER (takes Nina's hand and holds it a bit too long, Nina is embarrassed - happy). Boys that age got to let off steam.

Filip mentioned something the other day, there had been an incident in the changing room, with what's his name.

NINA

Was it Anton?

CHRISTER

Who else?

NINA

Or is he called Anthony? What's wrong with him?

PETER

There's probably several reasons...

CHRISTER/

There's nothing wrong with him really. He's been at football practice a few times, he's got lots of energy, he's far behind technically, but that can be fixed, he's got the drive, he's cracking, he's so energetic

DIANA/

Christer, Christer, Christer, Christer...

*Diana tries to interrupt Christer who is getting more and more excited.*

We've got to be able to talk about this without mentioning anyone specific.

PETER

Yes it ought to be the school's duty to report this kind of incident to the police. It can't be the parents' responsibility.

NINA/

Excuse me for interrupting, but after these new kids started. It's actually become more chaotic, it's not just because of the large classes, it never used to be like this.

There used to be a particularly nice feeling, everyone said so.

CHRISTER

I agree, the teachers have lost control.

NINA

That's so true. Why should everyone else be punished?  
Can't they just be removed?

PETER

Removed!?

NINA

Well... excuse me, I have an opinion...

PETER/

Remove them!?!

CHRISTER

No no

DIANA

Calm down! Now I think we should set a good example. (gives Peter a look)

NINA

It's just a matter of time before Lotti calls in sick.

DIANA

You can tell that we need to talk at any rate (haha). But let's return to the "agenda".

PETER

Certainly.

DIANA

Ok,

CHRISTER/

Peace and quiet in the classroom.

DIANA

...or safety.

CHRISTER

Exactly, Diana. The children go to school to learn things. I'm their football coach. I coach our boys (to Diana) - and girls - in their spare time.

DIANA (mimes an applause, like Nina?) Camilla is crazy about football.

CHRISTER/

The teachers' job is to teach and educate, not run round the corridors like fucking social workers.

NINA

In some subjects there aren't any problems. What do those teachers do? Like that music teacher, Ludde, he was wonderful.

CHRISTER

Sure, he was in control.

NINA

That's what I'm saying. Why aren't all the teachers like that?

DIANA

I agree, he was good with the children.

NINA (to Peter)

Wasn't he?

PETER

Yes, he was good.

DIANA

He was at the After School Club too.



NINA

What do they do at the Club anyway? There's at least 100 children and they just sit there with their mobiles. Miguel never wants to go there anymore. It's a scandal that Ludde was fired.

CHRISTER

Was he fired?

NINA

Yep. (snaps her fingers) - just like that! He didn't want to leave and it was a huge blow to the kids. All the school management cares about is money.

Pia, this, excuse me, feeble assistant principle we got, filled in for the music teacher. It's completely insane. Us parents have no influence whatsoever. It's a disaster, when you think about it!

DIANA

I didn't know about that.

NINA

There you see - because we don't receive any information! They're 12 years old - what kind of a world do we live in ?!

DIANA

Yes, sometimes you wonder.

NINA

Christer, pleeeeeease come and play football with the kids after school?

CHRISTER

I'll see if I can get some time off. Then Silas can come too.

DIANA (to Peter)  
How great is that?

PETER  
I don't think so.

NINA  
I really wanted Miguel to go to a state school but now I feel like: the staff has no motivation, it's all down to us! What does the management do?

NOTHING!

CHRISTER  
That's why we're thinking of sending Filip to a private school.

NINA  
Are you?!! Oh God what a pity! Miguel will be at a total loss. This is what'll happen. We ought to do something! Somehow (everyone outwards) – WE MUST PROTEST!

*Everyone leaves. Diana tidies up after the parent's meeting.  
Proj: Silas' diary.*

### **PART 3. [LUDDE]**

#### **11. LUDDE'S TRIAL**

*In the courtroom.*

*The Law Clerk records. Ludde and Helena enter.*

*The Prosecutor reads from his brief.*

**THE PROSECUTOR**

The witness tells us that:

**HELENA**

I scream hysterically because I'm scared to death.

**LUDDE**

It might have been 7 blows, 5 – 6 kicks, from when I took the bunch of keys until our son came in the room, 10 minutes, quarter of an hour after that. 20 perhaps, there were quite a lot of blows and kicks, her shoulder, she squatted down, protecting herself, that's right, I've got a bunch of keys on a kind of strap and then it wasn't there.

**THE PROSECUTOR**

"Not dangerous, Mum, not dangerous, Mum." According to the mother, the boy kept repeating himself as though in shock, and swung between being happy and sad.

**HELENA**

He fights at the day nursery, he's hit me.

LUDDE

This which she says I've done, I take responsibility for it, or I don't because it's not all true, but it's my fault, that I allow her to have that power over me.

HELENA

Yes, I'm really scared, even though I know he's in custody.

LUDDE

I didn't intend to hurt her so much.

THE PROSECUTOR

Special measures apply due to the brutality of the accused.

HELENA

He takes a break in the middle of it, asks me if I want a glass of water, says he's sorry.

LUDDE

She says sorry, I say sorry, I'm sorry Helena.

THE PROSECUTOR

At this point the victim attempts to escape with her son.

HELENA

Then he gets in front of the door. And it starts all over.

*Trial/Café at the Central Station*

LUDDE

Last time I was released I'd behaved well, so I got a train ticket for Stockholm Central Station, that was it. No money, nowhere to live and I didn't want to ask Mum for help, but Helena met me there.

She said we could be friends. So we had a cup of coffee at the station, I borrowed some money for a buss pass and went to a hostel. And this hostel was full of addicts and all sorts of people. This was Friday. On Monday I got in touch with the Social Services, but I didn't have an ID card, so I had to have my photo taken so I could fix that first. But since I was broke, and you have to have receipts to get anything.

Guess how long it took before I got any money from the Social Services? 2 months. And what do you think happened meanwhile? In any case, Helena and I met once in a while for a cup of coffee. I know she has trust issues, so there was all this controlling behaviour and jealousy, but we took our time, no pressure...

I fixed the flat, the job at the Stensjö School, and I enjoyed it. I took her to the cinema for her birthday, proved myself. And one evening when we'd had dinner at Mum's place, on our way to the underground, she said it, that she wanted to give it another try.

HELENA

Everything worked out really well.

LUDDE

And almost a year later Simon arrived.

HELENA (gets up)

That day we'd been for a swim at Långholmen.

*Trial/therapy sofa*

LUDDE (is asked a question, pulls himself together)

Okay. We'd been at Långholmen. We went for a walk with Simon, played on the beach, had ice-cream and had a great time. On our way home, we drove by Katja's place, that's Helena's sister, to pick up a child car seat.

Of course they chatted away and since Katja doesn't talk to me, I took Simon swinging at the back. They peered out the window laughing there in the kitchen and I start feeling a bit irritated. I hadn't eaten anything since the ice cream and I was tired too, and that's a warning signal for me, so I go indoors but they don't notice me, and I stand there in the hall for a while. So I can hear what they're talking about, so to avoid trouble, I say I have to go and get an amp at Janni's. But she sulks, wants to control me, and come with me.

So we get in the car with Simon and there's something wrong with the child car seat and Simon whines and she just stands there while I struggle with this mess and in the end we can drive off and she sits at the back and stares out the window and that's when she says it:

HELENA

Or Simon and I went bathing, Ludde was sleeping in the grass because he was hungover. I wasn't really in the mood.

I'd taken Simon back and forth to the day nursery all week, even though I work full time, cause he can't say no to different temporary jobs, for our sake he says, I was trying to stay in a good mood anyway, for Simon's sake.

So we had ice creams and then Simon was going to sleep so I took him for a walk in the pram and took the chance to call my sister. He doesn't like when I talk on the phone, especially not with my sister. In any case she said that she'd got a child car seat that we can have and Simon has to have one. Well he has to. So I say Simon and I can go there on our own, so he can go home and tidy up after his little party.

LUDDE (doesn't say anything)

HELENA

So we argue about it all the way to Tyresö. I barely ever get out these days so my sister and I were so happy to meet. We're standing in the kitchen, chatting and having some coffee, I almost forget about Ludde. I tell my sister about Simon's new day nursery, how much he seems to like it and we peer out and wave to him in the garden. I try to avoid the subject, but she still asks how things are going. Quite okay I say, we're giving it a shot for Simon's sake, but of course she notices how things are.

All of a sudden Ludde is standing in the hall and says that he has to fetch something at Janni's place. It's not like him, to leave me alone with my sister, so I had misgivings and reached out my hand to him, "let's just go home and have a cosy time instead, just the three of us?"

I go with my sister to the garage and get the child car seat and she hugs me and says "take care of yourself" and that's when I almost start crying.

LUDDE

Simon whines and she just stands there while I struggle with this mess and in the end we can drive off and she sits at the back and stares out the window and that's when she says it:

HELENA

I don't know if this is going to work out.

LUDDE

I try to restrain myself, I can feel it in my whole body now, it's as though she's pressing a button, and she knows it, and that's what makes me so furious. She does it on purpose. But she's bloody well not going to win this time, she's not going to get me where she wants, so I don't say anything and when we get to Sveavägen I suggest that she takes Simon to McDonald's while I straighten up the flat.

It wasn't a party, a friend popped by, and that's another one of those things. But she doesn't want that.

HELENA

What about Simon? He needs some peace and quiet. Sweetheart, would you like to watch something on TV?

LUDDE

And that's it. Of course Simon is pleased and gets all excited. And the way she looks at me, in the lift, mocking me. And just when the lift stops (sound of bell from lift)

HELENA

Have you fixed the fan?

LUDDE

It's like a gunshot. When was I supposed to have done that?

HELENA

Well...

LUDDE

It's Sunday. I told you I'll give them a call Monday.

HELENA

This Monday too?

LUDDE

And the laughter...

HELENA

How hard is it? You've got your hours at the school.



*Lotti, form teacher, testifying.*

LOTTI

He was very good, especially with the boys. When you're the formteacher you notice these things. They were always in a great mood when they'd had music lessons. I'm not saying that it isn't awful, if it's true, but it would be a great loss for the students. And I'll have to inform them: "Listen up everyone, bad news: I think that his band, exactly, they were definitely going to record an album. He wanted you to know that he'll miss you lots." That's what I'll say or else they'll think the teachers are leaving cause they're out of control.

And so their negative self-image is reaffirmed. That's the sort of thing that the principle at this school doesn't understand. Not to mention the politicians. You can't replace people just like that. "There'll be someone new after Christmas."

I digress, but it's all connected. Everything's connected. Perhaps it isn't significant, but a while ago, something happened that I can't quite make out. These things are surrounded by so much secrecy too, but without mentioning any names, and this mustn't leave this room. (makes a teacher face as though "has everyone understood? Good, then I trust you.")

Well, we've had some problems in the class, I'm especially thinking of one student, and I suppose I've wondered if everything's okay, at home, and that. Some of the parents have got in touch with me and then I have to get hold of his parents, but she's difficult to get hold of, his mum. And one day, when Ludde had been teaching the kids music, they came down and were in a good mood, as usual.

But just a few minutes later, this student asks if he can be excused, and I noticed that he looked very pale. Five minutes passed by, ten minutes, and after quarter of an hour I went out in the corridor to take a look and then this boy, a real little tough guy, that never wants to be hugged, he's sitting on a bench further down the corridor and Ludde is sitting next to him.

I can't hear what they're talking about but I can see that Ludde puts his arm around him and even though he's hiding his face in Ludde's arms, I'm pretty sure that he's crying, because Ludde's sort of stroking his back, so I go back in before they see me, and it made me feel all tender.

The next time I bumped into Ludde in the staff room, I took him a bit to the side and asked him if he knew how this student was getting on, but then he just looked at me: "you'll have to ask him". I couldn't make sense of it. And shortly after that he left.

LUDDE

And it goes on when we get home.

HELENA

What's wrong with you? This place looks like a dump, this isn't a home suitable for a child!

LUDDE

I get out of the way and say that I think we should try to have a bite to eat and talk about it later on. But she just goes on and on, and I think to myself that this is just words, it's just words, it's just words, but then she starts packing her and Simons stuff, she knows exactly. That's when I take out the scissors. While it's going on... I can't deal with it. What I did is unforgivable, but there's a lot of exaggerations too. I didn't hit her with the extension tube for the vacuum cleaner. I didn't try to suffocate her, I just held her down because she was biting my thumb. She scratched my face too..

HELENA

He cut himself with the scissors

LUDDE

that's been documented

HELENA

but I've already told you about that.

LUDDE

Afterwards I rushed out, directly to the car because I know I have to hurry up. I don't trust myself. I tried calling Janni, but he doesn't answer, so I rang Mum, my hands were shaking: "Mum, I've done it again. I've hit Helena. You have to come."

HELENA

If she hadn't have come

LUDDE

Mum, you have to help me now. They need help.

## INTERVAL

### Act II

#### 12. QUESTIONS ABOUT BULLYING SECTION 2

*Filip, Camilla, Inkan and Miguel are sitting on the desks when the audience returns. They whisper, point, giggle and make comments. Pull themselves together.*

FILIP

Why some people are bullied? Cause someone thinks you're annoying.

INKAN

Cause you're different, even though you're allowed to, but some people don't think so

CAMILLA

I don't know...clothes, stuff.

MIGUEL

Like what Filip said, cause someone thinks you're annoying.

CAMILLA

When someone's weird, not fair, you're like "shit what a good drawing" and they go "I know". Gossiping, having a weird voice. Giving you things, even money.

MIGUEL

You go like: have you got 10p? Give me 10p.

FILIP

"Have I got to like give them money if they say so, have I got to do that then?"

CAMILLA

Not saying hi, eh, that's nice. Sulks or gets angry easily.

MIGUEL

Never gets a joke, everyone else laughs, then ten minutes later

CAMILLA

You can't force people to hang out with you. Because if you hang out with someone they might get ideas.

MIGUEL

And then the staff at the After School Club go: have you told him he can't hang out with you?

CAMILLA

Then Lotti comes (imitating) "I've switched up the seating arrangements"

MIGUEL (imitating Lotti)

"You seem to get on so well together, now you'll sit next to each other."

*Everyone laughs, Inkan too.*

INKAN

So then you end up sitting next to the same?

CAMILLA/ (as if she gets a question)

Shh! Do we know someone who's being bullied?

FILIP

No, not exactly.

MIGUEL

Not in our class at any rate.

CAMILLA

No.

INKAN

But seriously...

CAMILLA

What?

INKAN

What about Silas?

CAMILLA

For real?

INKAN

But that's how it was: "Let's get Silas, everyone gets Silas"

MIGUEL

Aren't we allowed to make jokes? I'm just asking. Like Ritva at the Club:

(\*translator's note: imitating a Finnish accent.

Please feel free to make adjustments to this character's name and accent if needed.)

"POYS! YOU MAAAAY NOT VRESTEL DURING THE BREAKS!"

*Filip, Camilla and Miguel laugh.*

INKAN

But he panicked, 'cause everyone was lying down on top of him.

CAMILLA

Why did he laugh then?

MIGUEL (imitating Ritva)

"LISTEN POYS: STOP VRESTELLING."

FILIP (laughs)

Poys

MIGUEL

" DON'T PATTLE, PE NICE POYS!"

*Filip and Miguel cracks up laughing.*

MIGUEL & FILIP

Pee Nice!!!!

*Camilla doesn't think it's funny anymore.*

CAMILLA

That's RACIST! Actually, my Mum's Finnish.

FILIP

Why did you laugh then?

CAMILLA

I don't know, at first it was funny.

MIGUEL

That's easy to know...not. FILIP

Why don't you use your safe gesture next time?

FILIP AND MIGUEL

OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOHHHH

MIGUEL (make a safe gesture that they've seen in a porn movie)

THERE

Camilla didn't think it was fun anymore.

CAMILLA

Yeah, really funny. It's actually not funny.

*Miguel and Filip imitating Camilla/laughing.*

INKAN

He hid under the stairs after that, every time we went on our break?

FILIP

Little rabbit.

MIGUEL (sings a Swedish nursery rhyme)

"In a house where the forest ends, a little rabbit looks for friends"

FILIP AND MIGUEL AND CAMILLA

Runs away so fast!

*The three of them laugh, Camilla and Filip realise that wasn't very smart and stop laughing, but Miguel continues with his successful joke.*

MIGUEL

Please help, please help, please help me, or else the hunter will shoot me. Filip turns away, as though he didn't know Miguel, Camilla perhaps holds her hand over Miguel's mouth. It happens quickly and nobody makes any comments.



INKAN  
Seriously?

*Filip walks over to Inkan and sits down close to her.*

FILIP  
Listen Inkan, Silas completely freaked out at PE.

INKAN (shy-happy-he has split feelings)  
I suppose he had to defend himself?

*Everyone gathers around Inkan.*

CAMILLA  
Well...Some people are strong and then they push you down on the ground, but they don't mean for it to be so harsh.

MIGUEL  
Exactly.

FILIP  
Silas' dad terrorised everyone, what's my dad got to do with it?

CAMILLA  
My mum was like: say that I'm not at home if it's Silas' dad.

MIGUEL  
He's always checking up on Silas, calling people: "do you know where Silas is?" Mum had to call him to ask him to stop, like: "Miguel's phone is actually meant for his friends and family".

CAMILLA

Ante hit me with a bandy stick, like this: straight in the face, but I didn't go like "oh teacher, Ante is such a bully" and lock myself in the toilet for half the lesson.

MIGUEL

He probably sat in there and wrote in his little book.

CAMILLA

Fact box: Silas has got a notebook. He writes in it like all the time. He refuses to talk about what he writes and thinks everyone cares. Nobody cares. No, how nasty of me. I was just joking. The end.

INKAN

But his eyes were completely red like blood.

MIGUEL

Maybe he'd rubbed them with soap.

FILIP

We've read his little book anyway.

INKAN

What?

CAMILLA

Have you?

FILIP

Forget it.

CAMILLA

If you notice that someone's been crying, when someone has got red eyes, I usually check up on things like this (to Inkan)

"How are you? Are you okay?" Don't I? I asked you once when Ulle was gone.

INKAN

Mm.

CAMILLA

Don't you remember that? (sulks) And then she doesn't even remember it.

INKAN

What happened in the changing room?

FILIP

Ask Miguel.

MIGUEL (to Filip)

Why me? You were there too.

*(There's a stifling silence, Camilla saves the situation)*

CAMILLA

But there's a difference, if everyone tickles one person who screams with laughter, then you want to have a look, and suddenly they start to cry. That doesn't turn everyone into bad bullies.

FILIP

Why would they be?

MIGUEL

Exactly.

CAMILLA

I swear, my lip was like this big and I was like: oh I see.

FILIP

I just don't get why some people don't hit back?

INKAN

But he did, didn't he?

FILIP

What, no?

MIGUEL

Exactly. He just lies there.

*The children back out. Everyone except Inkan. Inkan gets her scarf that someone's thrown up on a lamp or something like that. She finds a long, metal shoehorn.*

### 13. LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

*Diana and Peter enter. They're chatting and they've got a laptop with them. Inkan hides the shoehorn.*

PETER

Hello Inkan.

INKAN

Hi!

DIANA

Hello dear, what are you doing here at this hour?

INKAN

I just forgot something...What are you going to do?

DIANA

We're just having a meeting.

INKAN

What's the meeting about?

DIANA

It'll be a surprise. Send my regards to your mum.

*Nina enters.*

NINA (to Inkan)

Oh, you frightened me.

INKAN (to Peter)

Send my regards to Silas.

*Inkan leaves, stops at the door for a moment and looks at the adults.*

NINA

Jesus, Christer texted me, he's not coming, he had to be somewhere, I don't know, whatever.

DIANA

It's great that you could come Nina.

NINA

I haven't got much time either, I'll say that directly, I've got to run a lot of errands before I pick Miguel up after his football practice.

DIANA

Oh, what a shame, I'd hoped that we'd have time for a cup of coffee afterwards.

NINA

I'm afraid not.

DIANA

like back in the days

NINA

Well, another time.

DIANA

I miss feeling more connected.

NINA

Mm, let's begin? Sorry to be rushing things like this

DIANA

We've started a bit...

PETER

Mm.

DIANA

Nina, can you see from there? We can swap seats if you like. Peter, would you mind moving a bit so that Nina can see too? I've already read it.

NINA

I'll be alright. You'll be writing too, so...

DIANA

Yes, that's right, yeah I can do that.

NINA

That would be super, I don't have time, this week is completely nuts.

DIANA

No problem, I think this is important.

NINA

It's not that I don't think it's important. I've just got so little time.  
They read.

DIANA

Peter, I understand that you're upset, but isn't this a bit personal?

PETER

Do you think so?

NINA

Yes, I agree with you Diana. Then nobody will sign it.

DIANA

That's what I thought. What about this:  
"Hello Lennart,

NINA

That's REALLY GOOD! Then he'll feel that we're talking directly to him  
and he won't be able to dodge. And then we'll write something tangible,  
that concerns everyone.

DIANA

Exactly.

NINA

So we don't get categorised as being whiny.

DIANA

I can only agree.

NINA

It's about 1. We aren't receiving any information, to begin with and 2 - the children will be getting GRADES now and if the teachers come and go, I'm really worried about how things'll work out for Miguel, and as a parent you shouldn't have to feel that way.

DIANA

Yes, I don't know how Camilla would cope if she didn't have football practice. And then it's important that there's peace and quiet in the classroom.

NINA

And good teachers, it all hinges on the teachers.

DIANA

Peace and quiet in the classroom and good teachers. We'll definitely write something about that.

NINA

And then there's the question of disruptive students. I really agree with Christer: a school is a school, and that's it. If you've got problems you take it to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, or there are private clinics, there's medicine and I'm sure there are apps and other tools, and all sorts of things so there's no reason to burden others, I'm sorry but their parents will have to deal with that on their own.

DIANA

How shall we put it then? Because it doesn't really fit with our demands for increased resources.



NINA

We'll have to be clear and concise: write this: if a child can't behave during class, it has no right to be there.

DIANA

But the children have got to get support at school, they can't help themselves.

NINA

And I go nuts before I have my period but I handle my job anyway, don't I? It's hormones, helloooo: they'll soon be 13.

DIANA

I don't know.

NINA

Well, I don't know, that's what I think anyway. (reads) This, a bit further down, grievous bodily harm, police reports, that's a bit...

PETER

But it's facts.

NINA

I understand that it must be really tough for you, I really do, but everyone's left out sometimes. Not just Silas.

DIANA

Mm...

NINA

It's an accusation.

DIANA

Yes, let's put this in brackets for now.

NINA

I don't think we should single out any of the children, just like Christer said at the meeting. It's so stigmatising. Some children are at a disadvantage.

DIANA

The Welfare Group is supposed to handle that.

PETER

Is there a Welfare Group?

NINA

Didn't you know that?!

PETER

No.

NINA

You see? That's exactly the problem, we don't receive any information!

PETER

What do they do?

NINA

I guess it's anti bullying, or something like that, actually, I have no idea, Diana, do you?

DIANA

No, we've had no reason to contact them, for Camilla, so...

NINA

No God, neither have we, for Miguel (crosses herself, knocks on the table), but check with Pia, the assistant principal, she's knows what's going on, doesn't she?

PETER

But she never answers any calls.

NINA

Oh, ugh, that makes it difficult...

*Nina battles with an inner struggle, panics. Conceals that she's checking what time it is.*

DIANA

Let's continue?

NINA

Oh God, I've got to rush off. I know it's crazy. But have we got something that you can use as a starting point?

DIANA

I guess so.

NINA

Oh, come on - where's your fighting spirit!

*Nina leaves.*

#### 14. THE PARENTS REVOLT, THEIR LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

*Diana and Peter still writing. Peter leaves. Diana continues writing. Diana starts reading the letter, the school staff read the answer (in chorus). At the same time Lennart is smoking and Lotti catches sight of him through the window. Pia discovers something disgusting in her coffee mug and spits it out into Lennart's mug, and so on.*

DIANA (reads aloud)

"Hello Lennart,

This is a parent revolt. We want Ludvig Geijer (aka Ludde) to stay at the Stonelake School."

*Stefan enters the staff room. Fiddles with the coffee machine.*

STEFAN

Now they're angry again.

*Pia enters with the letter in her hand. Has some coffee.*

DIANA

"Ludvig has worked at the school almost three years, on and off and is deeply appreciated by the students. In his role as a music teacher and After School Club leader, Ludvig has provided a safe haven in the midst of an increasingly chaotic environment."

PIA

They forgot to mention that he's a wife-beater. (reading) "It's recently come to our attention that he's been fired. What was your reasoning behind that?"

*Lennart enters, has a smoke.*

LENNART

What luck that they know what I need to do to do a good job.  
Lotti enters the staff room, also with the letter in her hand.

LOTTI

"We're also protesting about the management of the school"

LENNART & PIA

"in particular"

STEFAN

Teachers leaving.

PIA

a lot of temporary teachers as a resulting from teachers on sick leave.

LOTTI

Really?

LENNART

"We're also protesting about the large classes

PIA, STEFAN, LOTTI AND LENNART

Soon 32 children!

LOTTI

Finally!

LOTTI AND STEFAN

Children have told their parents about noisy lessons, where they can't concentrate, and they complain about headaches and stomach aches."

LOTTI  
Oh God.

STEFAN  
"There has been truancy..

LOTTI  
vandalism and recently also:

LOTTI AND STEFAN  
bullying (!)"

LENNART  
and there's a little exclamation mark there.

PIA  
"and there are children who are afraid on their way to and from school!"

LENNART  
They'll have to pick them up? "Last but not least,

PIA  
this is an attempt to get a dialogue going,

PIA AND LENNART  
between the school management and parents, a dialogue that's been  
lacking so far.

STEFAN  
We hope the school management will understand

LOTTI  
Good luck with that.

PIA

as well as the politicians

LENNART AND PIA

that we are seriously concerned about our children's education and safety.

STEFAN

Unless the classes become smaller or there are a lot more resources

PIA

What resources??

LOTTI

The Stensjö School, will unfortunately, and after all these years, no longer

LOTTI, STEFAN AND PIA

feel like an obvious first choice."

LENNART

It's great if some of them leave, that would take the pressure off the classes "We would like you, the principle,

PIA AND LOTTI

...to show that you take this seriously and that the school immediately deals with these problems.

STEFAN, PIA, LOTTI AND LENNART

We just can't go on like this!"

PIA

"We look forward to a prompt reply, regards from the parents of children in class 6c." Stefan leaves. Lotti sits down to mark tests.

PIA

Lennart, have you read this? What shall we do? This email seems to have spread to the other parents and they've sent a copy to the Education Committee.

LENNART

These overindulgent parents. Is it this Göran?

PIA

Yes Göran Ström. And the Councillor on the Education Committee has got a copy too. Soon Radio 4 will give us a call and then we'll have them on our tail.

LENNART

That's great Pia. Arrange a lunch with Göran and Yasmine.

PIA

But Lennart...

LENNART

Now we're back to the negative thinking, Pia, it'll pass.

Ad lib, Pia and Lennart leave.

## 15. INKAN TALKS TO LOTTI

*Lotti's marking exam papers or documenting something. Inkan enters.*

LOTTI (without looking up)

What's on your mind, Inkan?

INKAN

How did you know it was me?



LOTTI

You know I don't miss a trick.

INKAN

I don't know how to say this...

LOTTI

You can tell me everything. You see I was a teacher long before your parents even were born, so I've heard just about everything.

INKAN

It's about Silas.

LOTTI

What now?

INKAN

I knew him, or I know him now too, but when we were little and that. We used to play a lot and no, I don't know. I think he's been a bit weird lately.

LOTTI

Lately?

INKAN

Or, he said something weird.

LOTTI

Oh.

INKAN

You know what happened in Rock mountain, don't you?

LOTTI

Ugh, yes, I don't want to dwell on that. I certainly don't want you to have to dwell on it. But what's Silas got to do with it?

INKAN

He was there that day.

LOTTI

Really?

INKAN

Or I think so, because I met him when he was on his way home and then he went on about a dog and that it was tied up, and I didn't get it.

LOTTI

What was it that you didn't understand?

INKAN

Ah, maybe he made it up.

LOTTI

Well, that's impossible for me to know. Didn't he say anything else?

INKAN

No, I think that was it.

LOTTI

Oh?

*Inkan about to leave.*

LOTTI

Inkan! You did the right thing when you talked to me, that's exactly what you're supposed to do. You're welcome back if you have any thoughts or think of something else. Anything. I'm happy to listen.

INKAN/

Surely you aren't allowed to have a gun in school?

LOTTI

No of course not! A gun, that's ridiculous.

INKAN

I knew it!

LOTTI

Who says that?

*Inkan leaves. Lotti remains.*

*Lennart enters the staff room.*

LENNART

Hello there

LOTTI

Hello.

LENNART (pours himself a mug of coffee )

I'll have this last spot of coffee.

*Lotti documents, Lennart stirs his mug (that Pia spat in?), there's a stifling silence.*

LENNART

My wife wants a divorce.

*Lotti doesn't know what to say. Lennart has a big sip of coffee.*

#### **Del IV**

#### 15. CHRISTER AND CAMILLA

*Christer enters. Sits down on a bench outside the school.  
Camilla approaches.*

CHRISTER  
Camilla!

CAMILLA  
Hello, hi.

CHRISTER  
Are you on your way to kick a ball about?

CAMILLA  
Exactly. Why are you sitting here?

Christer hangs his head.  
How are you? Are you okay?

CHRISTER  
No, it's nothing, it's just, it gets me down sometimes.  
But don't bother about me, carry on...

*Christer almost starts crying just when Camilla is about to pass by him.*

CAMILLA  
But...

CHRISTER

No, no, it's bloody hell, people get on my case.

CAMILLA

Has it got to do with football practice?

CHRISTER

No, you help me survive all this, it's, oh you're so bloody sweet.  
Those fuckers!

CAMILLA

But what's happened?

CHRISTER

Oh you needn't worry about it, it's just...

CAMILLA

People think I'm quite good to talk to, or they say so.  
Not to boast.

CHRISTER

I can trust you, can't I?

CAMILLA

Absolutely, of course.

CHRISTER

Well, they keep asking me a lot of stuff, they say things, what's it all about, you know how much I cared about Linda.

CAMILLA

I know, it's such a pity that she left the team. She really was the best.

CHRISTER

They say that?

CAMILLA

What?

CHRISTER

No.

CAMILLA

I really get that you're sad, you know what, she'd probably be really glad if you gave her a call.

CHRISTER

I'd love to but

CAMILLA

Go on, I can give her a call too, but honestly.

CHRISTER

They talk rubbish.

CAMILLA

she'd be so happy, after all, you got her going.

CHRISTER

Can't I coach a girl's team?

CAMILLA

Of course you can

CHRISTER

Is that really how it should be?

CAMILLA

It wasn't your fault that she quit! Who says that? That makes me mad. It was thanks to you..

Hey, Mr Depressed, you're the best coach, everyone says so.

CHRISTER

You're so bloody sweet, Camilla. You have no idea what it means to me, I take it to heart (heart fist)

CAMILLA

Stop it, it's true.

CHRISTER (looks at Camilla for the first time)

I see you at practice, you've developed fast since the summer. You're getting fast with the ball

CAMILLA

Do you think so?

CHRISTER

You've still got a way to go, you're a bit younger, but you're definitely promising

CAMILLA

Thanks, if that's what you say.

CHRISTER

You've just got to (demonstrates how to kick the ball), you've got to come from the side, and the first impact, is always crucial... We want to develop the team and move a few of the defenders forward.

Would you like to be a forward?

CAMILLA (holds back her delight) Mm.

CHRISTER

You'll have to work a bit on it, but it isn't impossible.

CAMILLA

Sure. Of course I'd like that.

CHRISTER

That's a deal. High five? –

CAMILLA (thinks it's embarrassing)

High five

CHRISTER

If you're going to reach your potential, you know how important it is with team spirit and pep talk. (they high five, Camilla leaves) Camilla! Don't let me down.

*Does he look her up and down as she leaves?*

*Christer leaves.*

## 16. MIGUEL AND FILIP READING SILAS NOTE BOOK

*Filip and Miguel running, they've got Silas' diary, continues from the previous scene. They're looking for somewhere where they can be alone. They go into the studio and start reading. Camilla peers in.*

CAMILLA

What are you doing?

FILIP (hides the diary) I've got a headache.

MIGUEL

Only two people at once in the studio.

CAMILLA

Go fuck yourselves then fagotts!



*Camilla leaves.*

MIGUEL

Fucking bitch!

CAMILLA (shouts)

Cock suckers!

*Filip & Miguel reading Silas' diary.*

FILIP

Him: "What are you doing here all alone?"

MIGUEL

"You look afraid, are you afraid? Are you afraid?"

FILIP

Him: She's okay, don't worry about Sig.

*Filip is upset, runs out, Miguel runs after him.*

MIGUEL

Filip!

## 17. CHRISTER INTERROGATION

*A dog passes by. Christer at an interrogation table. He's brought a glass of water, in the same kind of paper cup that Ante got from Åsa in the first part. He's responding to questions that we don't hear.*

CHRISTER

Well? I look forward to finding out what this is all about?

You've got a damn responsibility, when you question someone. It could be misunderstood, I hope you're aware of that. Where I was the last weekend of September? I have no idea. I'd have to check that. Why don't I tell you some things instead of you cross-examining me. (no, pull yourself together Christer, sorry, I'm nervous)

I'm just a boring married middle-aged man with a dog and a house, I mean what the hell am I doing here? What if Jeanette could see me now...Yes, I'm married. Perhaps you already knew that? Soon, we'll have been together for 15 years, we've stuck together... many of our friends are getting divorced now, but we're lucky. We've got two boys as well:

Filip and Elliot who are both attending the Stonelake school, yeah exactly, we live in the tower blocks on the hill above the school, so when it snows they can sled down the hill to school. So no house. Lucky that one hasn't fallen for every, well, I don't know, maybe it would be nice with a house.

We actually had a dog, Sigrid, but we had to have her put down when it somehow triggered Filip's migraine. That was difficult, I was so attached to Sigrid, the boys still tease me about it, when dad cried, when dad whimpered. That wasn't good. I used to bring her when I went jogging, round The Stone ake, up on to Rock mountain. Of course... Has someone seen me there, whoever that is, then that's got to be the case, I might very well have been there that day, there's nothing strange about that. I haven't got anything to hide.

Yes, I know Linda. She was in the team, but she's quit, so it's been a while since I saw her, unfortunately, she had potential. I invested quite a lot of time and effort on her actually. But she had got some problems too, a difficult divorce, her dad vanished out of the picture, so she was a bit off balance, she could be unfocused, well she was... I think one can say that she was tricky..

*Light on Ludde who's sitting at an identical interrogation table, also with a glass of water.*

CHRISTER

No, I don't think I'm being evasive. Naturally it's uncomfortable when someone claims something that isn't true. Yes, I was there. But what does that prove?

*Ludde and Christer drink water.*

CHRISTER

Nothing.

LUDDE

Nothing, except, the low blood sugar, or I don't know what to call it, but there's nothing going back in time, no, I've never blamed them, I don't think you should, talk rubbish about your parents.

CHRISTER

These are very serious...

LUDDE

I suppose I've thought about some things...

CHRISTER

this is an injustice.

LUDDE

but I'd never hurt Simon. Never.

CHRISTER

Sure! I'm the girls football coach, but I coach the boys too, remember that, I've been a coach for several years, it's a lot of fun, especially now that we're seeing some results, and they've reached a new level. It's real games now! Maybe I favour Filip sometimes, but I'm a good coach. I talk a lot about how important it is with cooperation and team spirit, teamwork of course, but you mustn't overdo it. You've got to dare to stick your neck out, take the plunge, do your own thing.

LUDDE

If anything...

CHRISTER

It's a balancing act.

LUDDE

some people side with their children, or one of their children. Against their spouse, or one of the other children. But they didn't. They always stuck together. I was so sure they'd never split up.

And then when Mum suddenly, "thanks and goodbye" you couldn't be upset about it.

CHRISTER

Let me ask a question, to take a more critical attitude, isn't there a risk that you're reproducing stereotypes, this is just my own view, but you need to be aware that what you're talking about now, only applies to a small minority of men, you need to remember that.

If you've got a clear conscience, and so on, but that's not how it works in reality. It happens so very easily, guilt by association. A vague suspicion turns into a conspiracy theory. Like in this case.

LUDDE

I had a chat with a boy at school, and it was so obvious that I told him "it's not your fault, it's your parent's who need help. You've got to find a way." I don't think he'd talked about it with anyone before. He was 12 years old.

CHRISTER

Surely I wasn't the only one jogging there that day?

LUDDE

When I came into the courtroom, Mum sat there, and I realised she'd heard everything that Helena had said...

CHRISTER

I think it's bloody important that you support the girls right from the beginning. Women get far too little attention in many areas.

LUDDE

She sat to the left, close to the exit. I can't express that feeling in words. They ask if she'd like to testify and she gets up and can't utter a word, she can't take any more, and before she leaves, she whispers something and I blow a kiss, like you shouldn't have to see this, your only son in shackles again. At the same time, right in that moment, she knew that I needed her more than ever. But she left.

CHRISTER (maybe he gets up and begins to argue)

Football practice for example, our women's national football team is among the best in the world!

But the men's national football team, let's not talk about it, it's so depressing, and they still get all the press, for a simple side foot strike. But when the women's national team scores world class goal after goal you'd miss it if you happened to blink...

What kind of message does that send to young girls? I get mad when I think about it. That's exactly why I and Nina, one of the mums at school, started the girls' team, girls born 2000-2002, just once a week and so far it's mixed ages, but there are a few of them who are really talented, not only technically, they've got lots of energy, they really go for it.

They say women have to be twice as good to reach the same standing as men, but the women's national football team isn't twice as good - it's world class! Hello? (as though he isn't getting a response) Do you understand what I mean? () Right? () We get angry don't we?

That's right! And I think this is the same thing. You're focusing on men. You get what you're gagging for.

*Silas enters. Three interrogation rooms are lit up. Silas also at an interrogation table with a glass of water.*

CHRISTER  
This isn't me.

LUDDE  
It's unforgivable.

SILAS (makes strange noises, as from a gunshot)  
xxx

CHRISTER  
I'm not here.

LUDDE  
It's my fault.

CHRISTER  
She's lying.

LUDDE

that I allow her to have that power over me.

SILAS

Everyone was there, some were singing.

CHRISTER

Have you talked to her mum? Okay, I haven't been completely honest with you.

SILAS

xxx

LUDDE

She won't get her own way.

CHRISTER (is he going to admit?)

This girl's emotionally unstable, she's got serious problems.

SILAS

Dog: barks.

CHRISTER

she needs help

SILAS

Girl: screams.

CHRISTER

I admit: perhaps I gave her a bit more attention, to support her, but she misunderstood me.

SILAS

XXX

CHRISTER

She fell in love, I mean, she's fourteen years old, I'm a married man, but she couldn't take it. And then, somehow it all backfired.

SILAS

People respect me now.. (gets up) I think they do.

*The light on Silas fades, he leaves.*

CHRISTER

This is every man's worst nightmare, cause how can you refute it? It's my word against hers. And in these cases, the woman's accusation carries greater weight. It's a bit of a paradox.

But that's the truth. So in this country, from a legal point of view, it's much easier to be a woman.

LUDDE

The moment they lock my cell door,

CHRISTER

Much easier.

LUDDE

is the highlight of the day.

CHRISTER

I'm not a criminal.

LUDDE

I'm scared to death, but I didn't say so in court .



CHRISTER

I'm not a maniac.

LUDDE

I told them that last time was like going on holiday, it was the best time of my life.

CHRISTER

I pay a damn lot of taxes that's supposed to go towards cleaning up and protecting us from these perverts, and now you're accusing me.

LUDDE

That it'll be tough with the treatment but I'm prepared to work hard.

CHRISTER

And instead of being on the football field, coaching the team, I'm stuck here with you...

LUDDE

I'd do anything to get out.

CHRISTER

for Christ's sake

LUDDE

to access therapy

CHRISTER

this hasn't got anything to do with me

LUDDE

I'll say anything.

CHRISTER

This makes me think about the police records of female victims of crime reporting male "perpetrators". It's kind of never a good idea when the authorities make a record/register of innocent individuals and especially when it's vulnerable people, because these women aren't stable, there's no doubt about that, and there's bound to be a variety of explanations, I can't comment on that. Perhaps an unhappy childhood, personality disorders, mental health problems, addictions, self-harm, various diagnoses, or a cocktail with all of these ingredients?

It's impossible for me to know. BUT if you've ever been under suspicion, you'll be on record.

LUDDE

I know what inmates/they think of people like me. I'd be almost at the bottom of the pecking order, just above the paedophiles.

CHRISTER

Guilty or not.

LUDDE

If I'm lucky, they'll transfer me to another unit.

CHRISTER

And nobody would be upset about it.

LUDDE

I don't know why, but murderers are at the top of the food chain. So if I'd killed her, I'd be okay.

*Ludde leaves.*

CHRISTER

Equality has to apply to everyone, right?

LUDDE

That's what she says happened, but were you there? Well, are we finished?

CHRISTER

Yes, bloody hell.. this is something you wouldn't wish on anyone, you won't get a grip unless you've experienced it yourself. But there's no point in speculating. Sometimes it feels like things go wrong, no matter what you do.

*Gets up.*

Hope you get hold of the son of a bitch.

*Knocks at the table, leaves.*

*He glances as though he sees an acquaintance walk by, "Hi, it's been a while"*

\*\*\*\*\*

## SCHOOL SHOOTING

\*\*\*\*\*

*Filip falls into the classroom, he's injured, drags himself further on, hears something, lies down and plays dead, peers to check that the coast is clear, continues.*

## 17. LENNART ANNOUNCES CHOIR ACTIVITIES

*Pia and Lennart enter, Pia fiddles with a microphone.*

PIA

Listen up everyone! We have an important message from the principle to all the students and teachers at the Stensjö School. (to Lennart)

There you go, press there and they'll hear you.

LENNART (in the mike)

Hello! Can you hear me?

PIA

They can't answer, Lennart.

LENNART (in the mike)

This is Lennart, the principle, and I'd like to have your attention now that we've got going with the school term. The days are growing lighter, and I've got some nice news for all of you.

On Friday all classes, teachers and students, are invited to the Staff Choir's first appearance!

We'll all gather on the playground at half past one and the concert will begin shortly after that. There'll be hot dogs and juice...

PIA (makes a sign)

No Lennart, we haven't got a budget for that!

LENNART (to Pia) we'll do as I say (in the mike) for sale. Naturally parents are welcome too. There's more information on the school website. That will be all, thank you.

PIA

Good Lelle. That wasn't very difficult, was it?

LENNART (mimes playing the piano)

Go home and practice now Pia.

PIA

Don't talk about it. It won't work out well. Aren't you going home too?

LENNART

Damn, no, I might as well do some extra work.

PIA

I can give you a lift. I've got the car today.

No, alright, bye then.

*Pia leaves. Lennart still in his office.*

LENNART

Thanks though.

*Lights a cigarette in the office. Regrets it.*

*Dashes off after Pia.*

LENNART Pia? PIA?!

## **PART 5. V**

Silas enters the classroom carrying his rucksack, scouts the room, leaves.

### 18. PETER TALKING TO THE POLICE

*Polis officer calls to correct Peter's police report concerning Ante.*

*Peter on the phone, at home.*

POLICE OFFICER

Alright, I'll read our summary and you can stop me, and correct me as we go.

PETER

Ok.

POLICE OFFICER

This is a police report concerning Anton Millgård, 12 years old. He's accused of assault, causing grievous bodily harm, I removed the bit about torture, and the management of the Stensjö School is accused of failing to create a satisfactory and safe school environment, discrimination and unequal, unfair and abusive treatment, is that right?

PETER

That's right.

POLICE OFFICER

Mm. And like I said, last time we talked, you'll have to file a complaint of your suspicions regarding the improper actions on the part of the Stensjö School,

PETER/

But

POLICE OFFICER/

please don't interrupt me, with the Education Committee or Child and School Student Representative. We had agreed on that. Okay.

What remains is the suspicion of assault.

PETER

This isn't a suspicion!

POLICE OFFICER

This is being recorded. (reads aloud) "Peter receives a call from the School Nurse, nothing odd about that -

PETER

No

POLICE OFFICER

That wasn't a question. I'll go on: "On Tuesday afternoon, the 17th of February 2015, around half past three, Peter receives a phone call from Annika, the school nurse at the Stensjö School.

The nurse says that the PE teacher brought Peter's son Silas to the nurse, just after the end of class, at ten past three, and claims that she's found Silas tied up in a toilet after PE "Are you with me?"

*Silas comes home. Standing, listening.*

PETER

Sure.

POLICE OFFICER

"He's got bruises on his shoulders, arms and the upper part of his body and he's got trouble walking. Silas is shocked and sad, but the school nurse's assessment is that he won't need to see a doctor.

At roughly quarter past four, Peter picks up his son from school." Is this correct, so far?

PETER

He'd got stretch marks of strangling on his throat, his eyes were completely...

*Peter notices Silas, gestures to him to leave.*

POLICE OFFICER

I see, we'll have to back up then, where were we?  
There were bruises on his neck

PETER

Exactly.

POLICE OFFICER

red, thick, blue, narrow, what did they look like?

PETER

I think they were red, or reddish pink.

POLICE OFFICER

Around all of his neck or on part of it?

PETER

I think so.

POLICE OFFICER

Around all of his neck? Did you happen to take some photos of him?

PETER

No

POLICE OFFICER

Mhm, that's a pity. Alright, let's continue: "bruises on his shoulders, arms and the upper part of his body, and he's got trouble walking" Didn't he have any bruises on his legs?

PETER

Yes.

POLICE OFFICER (sighs)

"Trouble walking" as in couldn't walk, it hurt when he walked, he was generally groggy or how would you describe it?

PETER

He was in pain.

POLICE OFFICER (sighs)

I see, let's start from the beginning...



*Police officer exits.*

## SILAS AND PETER MEET AT HOME

*Silas eats a bowl of cereal.*

*Peter with his hands in his trouser pockets.*

*They meet and stop, avoid bumping into each other, leave in different directions.*

## 19. SILAS IN URSULA'S ROOM

*Silas enters Ursula's room.*

URSULA

Yes, here I am, come on in. Are you Silas? I hoped you'd come. (Silas sits down) My name is Ursula, I'm the new special needs teacher and I cheat a bit as school counsellor too. And I've got some of Annika's tasks as well, but that's just temporary. Well, here we are. I'd got some biscuits before, but unfortunately there aren't any left.

How are you? I've heard a bit about what happened last Tuesday, it sounded nasty. What happened? Don't you want to talk about it?

I understand. It can't have been easy. But you're okay now, that's great.

How are you getting on in your class? I can imagine that there's a lot going on just now, there are grades and that, I remember that.

And what about friends?

*Ursula writes something down.*

Mm. How are things at home?

Do you live with both your mum and dad?

SILAS

With my Dad.

URSULA

What's that like then?

SILAS

I don't know. Good.

URSULA

What do you like doing after school?

SILAS

I go home.

URSULA

Oh, I see.

SILAS

It's much faster if you cycle, my record is nine and a half minutes from the bike rack and home.

URSULA

Oh that's very fast. And then what?

URSULA

Mhm. Do you go to any after school activities?

SILAS

I like being in my room. I check up on Kiosk.

URSULA

Who's that?

SILAS

My rabbit. I got him from Mum on my seventh birthday, so he's also going to die soon.

URSULA

Yes, they don't live very long.

SILAS

Neither will you.

URSULA

Well you never know.

SILAS

Or else I go to Blockberget, to mine and Inkan's old place.

URSULA

Is Inkan your imaginary friend?

SILAS

What? No she's real.

URSULA

Mm. (Ursula takes notes)

SILAS

I've hid the gun there.

URSULA

Aha, I see. Do you play at cowboys and indians?

SILAS (takes out his notebook from under his sweater)

It's true. Everything's in my notebook. I write down everything they say.

But it's nobody's business.

URSULA

Yes, sometimes it can be good to write one's thoughts out of one's system.

*Silas takes Ursula's lipstick and paints his face so that he looks like an Indian. Then he splatters blood in his diary. Ursula tries to hide how uncomfortable she feels by joking.*

SILAS

Dad has said that he's going to burn down the school.

URSULA

Oh dear me.

SILAS

Sometimes I trick him into getting really mad because then he might buy me a game later on that week. But then he gets angry at me and says the same things that they say.

URSULA

Oh, what does he say then?

SILAS

Nothing special. It isn't too bad. It doesn't matter.

*Silas gets close to Ursula.*

URSULA

Look. I've got a funny timetable here with little smileys on it  
Does he brush back her hair from her face? Ursula tries to touch Silas, he leaves.

URSULA (gets up and follows him)

Silas, it'll go away if you wash your face with some soap and water. You know where I am.

## 20. PETER AT THE THERAPIST'S

PETER

He doesn't say anything. () "It wasn't too bad, Dad" "it doesn't matter"

Is he afraid? Is that why he doesn't say anything?

Would it make matters worse if I interfere?

Of course I'm worried about him, haha, all the time, sometimes I barely sleep. But I don't show him that. Above all, I'm angry. Sometimes I just want to, and then I bottle it up even more and then bang!

When I'm in town, anywhere. I don't trust myself any more. If I met one of them, Ante or this Filip and Miguel, I can't stand him, then I don't know what...

Once I asked him: "What do you think is worst? When someone hits you or says something nasty?"

Then he thought about it for a long time. And when he finally gets back home, that's the worst part. I get tense and irritated as soon as he puts his keys in the door. I pretend to walk by the hall with my hands in my pockets. He doesn't look at me, I can tell that he's making an effort to seem like he's in a good mood (becomes sad) so I won't be sad.

- Never mind about me! It doesn't matter!

I just want to throw myself on him: "how are you my beloved boy, is everything okay?" Instead I become harsh and strange.

We can't cope being in the same room for more than a few minutes.

We've got our habits, take the rubbish out, he has a bowl of cereal, goes to his room.

Why won't they just leave him the fuck alone?!

When he was little we used to talk about invisible fences and what kind of material they were made of. Do you remember the fence?

He said his was made of rubber. But most of the time he hadn't got one.

So I say it: you've got to hit back if they do something! It's okay to push them or even kick them and hit them with your fist. Use a stick, a stone, use, anything you need.

When it gets too much for him, he goes to Blockberget with his little book. I can see him from our balcony. I wave to him if he notices me.

I wanted to give him the world.

## EPILOGUE

*Ursula, Lennart and Pia make preparations for their performance with the choir, warm up and leave in a procession with black funeral candles in their hands. "I am sailing."*

### ANTE IS INTERROGATED AT A CHILD ADVOCACY CENTRE, SECTION 2

*Ante sitting at an interrogation table, just like in the first scene, (this time he's seen from the camera's p.o.v?) And just like Christer, Ludde and Silas in their interrogation scenes, he's got a glass of water.*

#### ANTE

Our last class on Tuesdays is PE and, ah. We had dancing, so I didn't go, and then Filip said he'd show me something so Miguel and I went to the boys changing room, the one upstairs, and the music class was about to begin downstairs and Miguel had got a skipping rope and soon Filip came with Silas and said that the four of us would do something that you needed four people to do, and Silas said okay, but he wanted to know what it was.

And then it all changed and Filip said, aren't you going to tell Ante what your dad calls him, and you could tell that Silas got scared.

Oh yes, I forgot that Silas has got a notebook that he always has with him. And then Filip said that he'd read it and that Silas dad had called me something that isn't so good, and I got angry, but not very angry, but then Silas lashed out

on Filip instead. I've never seen him like that before, and even though there were three of us against one, he was out of his mind and hit and hit and he wouldn't stop and he kicked and shouted that if he didn't get the book back, he'd tell everyone that Filip's dad raped Linda at The Rock mountain, because he'd seen it, and he'd got a gun. And then Filip said that Silas was a bloody liar and then we tied him up with the skipping rope, in the toilet, and closed the door.

And then, when we were standing outside, Filip got out one of those shoehorns made of metal and gave it to me, but then I didn't want to, because I thought what if it's true what Silas said, but then Filip whispered, so that Miguel wouldn't hear anything, that Silas had written that my mum's a drunken bitch, and then I went in.

*Has a sip of water.*

And then Roya came and banged on the door so I ran out and Filip and Miguel were gone, and then nobody believed me. And when I got back home, Mum was... she didn't know anything about it, so I didn't say anything, and went to school as usual, and then Mum was gone and I made some food and did the dishes and went to bed, and then she woke me up at night and said that I had to get up and tidy up the kitchen and then I took all her bottles and emptied them in kitchen sink, and then it got...

*Pulls his hat down in front of his eyes, lies down with his head on the bench.*

#### A COMPLETELY ORDINARY DAY IN SCHOOL + SILAS NOTE BOOK (A CHILD'S VOICE)

The interrogation room becomes a classroom.

Ante is at sleep by his desk.

During the scene, we hear a child's voice, Silas 12 years old, reading from his notebook.

SILAS (child's voice)

Dad: How were things today?

Me: Good.

Lotti: Does everyone understand? Silas, did you get that too?

Me: Yes.



Lotti: Good, then everyone understands

The children from class enters with rucksacks one by one.  
Miguel throws a ball of paper at Ante so he wakes up.

SILAS (child's voice)

Inkan: Why where you at Rock Mountain? Do you know anything?

Rock Mountain 28th of September 2014

Dog: barks

Girl: screams

He: You want this, you know you want it.

Everyone's waiting, like before or during a lesson.

SILAS (child's voice)

He: Have you been here a long time?

Me: I heard the dog so I came here. Why is it tied up?

He: Sigrid's alright. Did you see anything?

He: You look scared. Are you scared?

Silas enters, like in the first scene, with his rucksack and with his face painted like an Indian.

SILAS (child's voice)

Inkan: Why don't you answer my text messages?

Me:

Dad: knock it off Silas!

Dad: what's wrong with you?

Dad: why can't you just be normal?

Silas sits down behind Ante. Puts his rucksack on the desk. Puts his hand in the bag.

Ante: What had you written about my mum?

Me: I don't know.

Ante: I'll have to punish you if you don't say.

Me: I haven't written anything about your mum.

Ante: ( )

Me: ( )

Me: Now everyone will do as I say.

Ante turns towards Silas as though he's heard him.

Ante and Silas look at each other.

THE END



# PEOPLE RESPECT ME NOW

by Paula Stenström Öhman

Translated by Catherine England



SWEDISH  
PERFORMING  
ARTS COALITION



Read more  
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plays and  
excerpts in  
translation