

MY GRAN

By Hannah Ellis Ryan

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CHARACTER LIST

CHLOE – our hero. Chloe is 14-years old, passionate, headstrong and articulate. She is like a dog with a bone when she wants something. Will stop at nothing for justice. A modern Lisa Simpson.

TIM – Chloe’s father. Tim is a single-parent and loves Chloe more than anything. He is keen to support her, and be a fun, grounded presence in her life.

REBECCA – young, a carer in Gran’s nurse home. Rebecca is withdrawn and timid, easily bending to pressure and wanting to stay out of trouble. She wants to keep her head down and do her job as well as she can.

MARGARET – middle-aged, a carer in Gran’s nurse home. Speaks with a thick Northern accent. Margaret is frustrated, difficult and strict. She has worked at the care home most of her life and feels irritated when working with new people and dealing with new residents. Feels she is the backbone of the care-home and essentially runs the place.

MARCUS – a pioneer in his field. Works with Care Quality Ecosystems. He is direct, kind, measured and passionate about changing the future of the care industry and taking risks to do so.

MEGAN – Chloe’s best friend. Fun, caring, supportive. But maybe a bit more interested in her phone and checking Facebook than Chloe’s story.

STAGING NOTES

The set/staging needs to be versatile enough to represent: a bedroom, a waiting room, the external of a nursing home & an office.

Suggested that **projection** would work well for this (a projected back wall that can change between bedroom, care home, outdoors, etc).

There are scenes with film & text on screen. Again – projection would be an ideal format.

SCENE ONE

Chloe's Bedroom.

CHLOE, 14, sits with a laptop open in front of her, some books and scrap bits of paper. She is staring blankly at her laptop.

At a loss, she picks up her phone and turns it to face herself, almost like taking a selfie. As she does, her face appears projected onto the back wall.

CHLOE: Chloe Gavin here, recording live from... my bedroom... investigating the startling discovery of... Another day with absolutely zero ideas! We contacted Chloe's brain for comment, but sadly, no one was home! *(A long pause, Chloe's upbeat demeanour shifts into failure)*. I feel so stupid. I know. I know, 'bad word'. I can see Mum's face glaring at me. But that's how I feel. I should be good at this by now. *(Pause)* I don't think anyone even wants me Editor anymore...

There is a knock on her bedroom door.

CHLOE hastily turns her phone off, embarrassed.

CHLOE: Go away!

TIM: Hey now. C'mon Chlo – it's delicious.

CHLOE: How many times? I'm not hungry.

TIM: As if! The way you get about on that skateboard all day? Then you'll be rummaging around making toast at 10pm. Not on my watch. C'mon, have some pasta.

CHLOE: Dad, I'm trying to concentrate.

TIM: You know what's great for concentration?

CHLOE: Dad!

TIM: Fine, fine....

CHLOE watches the door for a bit. Then gets back to staring at her laptop, tapping it impatiently.

After a few moments the door opens and TIM enters, holding a bowl of pasta.

CHLOE: Dad!

TIM: Until you're eighteen, I have a parental obligation to make sure you eat properly.

CHLOE: 'Make' more like...

TIM sits down next to her, smiling. He holds out the bowl and CHLOE takes a mouthful of pasta, chomps it down stubbornly and opens her mouth, presenting to TIM.

CHLOE: Satisfied?

TIM: Almost. Now, if we can just do that about ten-to-fifteen more times...

CHLOE smiles, in spite of herself. TIM puts the bowl down beside her.

TIM: What's going on, Chlo?

CHLOE: This...

She gestures to her computer.

TIM: Not working right?

CHLOE: It's me that's not working right. Deadline is in two weeks and I have no idea what to write.

TIM: Writers block.

CHLOE: Yeah.

TIM: Well, not eating isn't the answer.

CHLOE: I know. It's just... after last month I know I need to do something good. Something amazing.

TIM: That wasn't your fault.

CHLOE: I need to work harder. Really think outside the box.

TIM: Well, let me help! Let's brainstorm.

CHLOE looks at her Dad, sceptically.

TIM: Hey! I'm very good at brainstorming....

CHLOE: *(Smiling)* Sure. You shouldn't have to work this hard to do what you love, right?

TIM: I dunno. Usually when we do what we love regularly, it does take a bit of work now and then. The good news is, you're a cracking writer. Once you find what floats your boat, you'll whip it out in no time, I'm sure.

CHLOE: *(Unenthused)* Thanks, Dad.

TIM: So ... come on.... Any teachers' stealing stationary? Math test conspiracies? Investigation into shifty lunch ladies?

CHLOE gives her Dad a 'not funny' look.

TIM: Wait. I have a real idea.

CHLOE: Yeah?

TIM: Mum ...

CHLOE: Mum?

TIM: Sorry. My Mum. Your Gran.

CHLOE: What?

TIM: Yeah.

CHLOE: I don't get it....

TIM: Wait here.

TIM gets up and leaves. CHLOE waits for him, perplexed.

After a moment, TIM returns holding a small collection of books.

TIM: Check this out.

CHLOE takes them and picks one up, carefully. She reads aloud.

CHLOE: A Traveller's Tales by.... *(she gasps)* Gran was an author!

TIM: Yep. A brilliant one. I can't believe I haven't given these to you before.

CHLOE: This is crazy. There's so many!

TIM: She wrote twelve published books of poetry. That I know of, anyway.

CHLOE: Can I...?

TIM: They're yours. Maybe I'll borrow one occasionally.

CHLOE: I can't believe this... Gran....

TIM: Maybe she can help? Have a chat about writers' block? I'm sure she'll be able to offer way better advice than I ever could.

CHLOE: Thanks Dad.

A pause.

TIM: You okay?

CHLOE: For a second, I thought you were going to talk about *my* Mum.

A longer pause.

TIM: One day. Not tonight, yeah?

CHLOE: Okay. *(Beat)* It's been a while since I saw Gran. Do you think she'll be alright with me?

TIM: Chloe, Gran loves you. She loves you. She'll be over the moon to see you.

CHLOE: Will you come?

TIM: I would love to – but the soonest I could go is the weekend. You need to get there as soon as possible, no?

CHLOE: Yeah. I'll go after school tomorrow.

TIM: Brilliant. Take her a few of these? Tell her you're starting to read them. She'd love that.

CHLOE looks down at the books, stacking them in a neat pile.

TIM kisses her on the forehead and stands up to go.

TIM: Get to sleep now. No all-nighters needed, yeah?

CHLOE: Yeah. Thanks Dad.

TIM goes, CHLOE stares at her laptop, smiling, excited.

Lights down.

SCENE TWO

North Pines Care Home.

Lights up.

The entrance of NORTH PINES CARE HOME.

CHLOE enters on a skateboard, with a backpack slung over one shoulder. She pulls up, as MARGARET, a carer comes from the front door, watches her carefully.

MARGARET: You can't ride that on the grass!

CHLOE: Oh, sorry.

CHLOE picks up her skateboard and holds it under her arm. She approaches MARGARET.

MARGARET: Can I help you?

CHLOE: Yeah... I'm here to visit someone.

MARGARET: Have you booked in?

CHLOE: Booked in?

MARGARET: Made a booking? Called ahead.

CHLOE: I didn't know you had to....

MARGARET: It's a common curtesy. Like not skateboarding on freshly mowed grass.

CHLOE: Right. So, I don't need an appointment?

MARGARET: Just showing up can be complicated. Meal times, breaks... There are all sorts of considerations.

An awkward pause.

CHLOE: I see. Well, I'd like to see my Gran please, so, shall I just...?

CHLOE makes to push past MARGARET, who steps in front of her.

MARGARET: Excuse me! Who is it you're here to visit.

CHLOE: My Gran. Catherine Hobbs.

MARGARET: Well, I'm glad I checked. Catherine hasn't been well for a few days. She's not up to visitors.

CHLOE: I'm sure she'll be happy to see me.

MARGARET: I can't allow it. She's not well.

CHLOE: Is she contagious?

A pause.

CHLOE pushes past MARGARET with ease, entering the care home. MARGARET is infuriated.

SCENE THREE

North Pines Care Home.

CHLOE enters the care home, looking around.

She sees REBECCA, a young carer, and approaches her.

CHLOE: Excuse me?

REBECCA: Hello! How can I help?

CHLOE: I'm here to visit my Gran. Catherine Hobbs, Room 7.

REBECCA: Miss Hobbs?

CHLOE: That's right.

REBECCA: Erm....

REBECCA begins to consult her notes a bit nervously.

REBECCA: I know she's not been very well the last few days.

CHLOE: I heard. I've bought some things... books, some old stuff of hers. She'll be happy to see me.

REBECCA: I'm sure she will. Just know she may not be herself.

CHLOE: Is it still Room 7?

REBECCA: Just down the hall and to the left.

CHLOE: I remember. Thanks!

CHLOE heads off.

REBECCA is alone for a moment before MARGARET approaches her.

MARGARET: Where did that girl go?

REBECCA: To see her Gran. Catherine Hobbs. I warned that –

MARGARET: You warned that what?

REBECCA: That she... isn't well.

MARGARET: That's what I said. It's true, really. She's been a nightmare!

REBECCA doesn't say anything. She looks at her notes, wanting to avoid confrontation.

MARGARET: This is just what I need today! As if I haven't got enough on my plate.

REBECCA: She seems fine? I think she just wants to visit.

MARGARET: You'll see! She's a trouble maker. And what are you standing around for? Have you finished rounds?

REBECCA: Almost.

CHLOE re-enters, and approaches the two carers.

CHLOE: I... I need to talk to someone.... I...

REBECCA: Are you okay? What's wrong?

REBECCA swoops to support CHLOE, who bats her away and composes herself. She is deeply upset.

CHLOE: My Gran has a black eye...

REBECCA: I'm sorry?

CHLOE: A black eye!

MARGARET: Whoa, be calm. Keep ya voice down.

CHLOE: Calm?! What is ...? How does that happen?

MARGARET: What were your name again?

CHLOE: Chloe.

MARGARET: Chloe. (*Points to herself*) Margaret. Again, stay calm don't go jumping to conclusions.

CHLOE: I don't know how many ways there are to get a black eye!

MARGARET: Bruises are very common when looking after those who are frail. Bruises happen.

CHLOE: That can maybe explain her arms. 'Cause there are bruises *here* (*CHLOE gestures to her own arm*) but a black eye?

MARGARET: Your Gran has not been herself lately. She has been talking back! Been difficult, particularly in the evenings....

CHLOE: Difficult? So, what? Someone punched her!?

MARGARET: Excuse me! Course not!

REBECCA: Chloe, I understand you are confused and upset ...

CHLOE: I just want to know how what happened! If I came home from school with a black eye, my Dad would go nuts! How is this different?

REBECCA is silent for a moment looking between the two of them.

REBECCA: I have to get back to my rounds. Excuse me.

She leaves. MARGARET stares after her, furious. She turns back to CHLOE.

MARGARET: What's different is that your Gran is a frail woman, in the later stages of her life and she does have a lot of bumps and falls. That isn't suspicious, it's normal. It happens all the time with residents. I know you don't visit *often*, so don't have much of an understanding of how things work 'round here. We take care of her – we make sure she's fed, looked after, in bed on time. *We* do

all of that, Chloe. When residents are difficult, or upsetting others, sometimes scuffles happen. Now, I have a job to get back to. Make sure you do us the courtesy of calling ahead next time, or coming during visiting hours!

CHLOE: I'm not going anywhere. I've just arrived.

CHLOE and MARGARET stare at each other for a moment.

Eventually, CHLOE heads back to her Gran's room, leaving MARGARET staring after her.

After a moment, REBECCA re-enters. She looks nervous.

REBECCA: Margaret. Are you okay?

MARGARET doesn't say anything.

REBECCA: Margaret....?

MARGARET: You walked off! How do you think that looked!?

REBECCA: I felt awkward... I... I didn't know what to...

MARGARET: Well it was the worst thing you could have done!

REBECCA: To be honest, I didn't agree with ... I... I've never found Miss Hobbs difficult, so I thought it best to –

MARGARET: Best to turn your back?

REBECCA: I know it didn't happen the way you were saying.

A pause.

MARGARET: It sounds like maybe you don't like the way things are here? Maybe you want to be somewhere else?

REBECCA: That's not what I'm saying...

MARGARET: Think very carefully what you *are* saying! We do a great job here and I will not have the likes of her (*points toward Chloe*) questioning the way we do things!

REBECCA: I don't want to cause trouble, I just...

MARGARET: Then don't! I have been in this building for seventeen years. I know it like the back of my hand –

REBECCA: I don't doubt that –

MARGARET: What do you think our boss would say if we told her some child came in here and insulted the way we do things?!

REBECCA: I think Susan would want to know what's happening...

MARGARET: "What's happening?" What do you think *is* happening, Rebecca?

A moment. REBECCA looks down, defeated.

REBECCA: Nothing. Of course.

MARGARET: Well then. Keep to your own business in future!

MARGARET exits, leaving REBECCA there alone.

SCENE FOUR

Chloe's Bedroom.

CHLOE paces around her bedroom, her brain is going a million miles a minute.

There is a knock at her door.

CHLOE: Yep?

Her best friend, MEGAN, enters.

She's fun and light-hearted, with her phone in hand. It's like an extension of her and she checks it regularly.

They hug.

CHLOE: Thank you so much for coming!

MEGAN: Anything to get me out of (*Does an impression of her mother*) 'you've got to learn the family scone recipe sometime!'

CHLOE: I thought you already did that?

MEGAN: I've forgotten it. She was furious. Your text couldn't have come at a better time.

CHLOE: Ha! Good.

MEGAN: So, come on, what's the emergency? Please tell me it's to do with Jake Samuels?

CHLOE: What? Ew! Megan. This is much more important than Jake Samuels!

MEGAN: *More* important than... ?

CHLOE: Get serious. Are you ready?

MEGAN: Ready!

MEGAN sits and looks up at CHLOE, expectantly.

CHLOE: Okay, so, you know how I've been really struggling to come up with my story for the paper ...

MEGAN: Especially after last

CHLOE: Yes. Thank you! I don't need reminding. Well, yesterday, I went to visit my Gran for the first time in months. I'm so bad. I never go....

MEGAN: Oh, Chlo, I don't visit *my* Gran. No one does.

CHLOE: That's exactly why I feel bad. She... anyway... Megan, I went yesterday and she's... like... covered in bruises.

A beat between the two of them.

MEGAN: What?

CHLOE: Yeah. I couldn't believe it. Her forearms and, even her face. It was horrible. I went and spoke to the nurses and they were so weird about it. They made me feel stupid for asking! For wanting to know ...

MEGAN: That's crazy.

CHLOE: I know.

MEGAN: Have you spoken to your Dad?

CHLOE: Not yet...

MEGAN: Why?

CHLOE: I don't know... I don't know if I'm right or not.

MEGAN: What?

CHLOE: They made me feel stupid! These two nurses, they made it sound like it was a totally normal thing! When I saw her, I felt guilty and sad and angry. But once I spoke to them, I thought 'maybe this *is* normal'. Do you know what I mean?

MEGAN: That's why you have to tell your Dad.

CHLOE: Not yet. I have to figure it out.

MEGAN: What do you mean?

CHLOE: I'm going to figure it out. I'm going to find out what's going on. And if it's all fine and my Gran is happy, then, great. But if I'm right, and if they're not looking after her, then I'm going to tell everyone.

MEGAN: Chlo...

CHLOE: Yeah?

MEGAN: That's amazing and everything, but don't you think it's a bit... like.... grown-up? What can you... do, you know?

CHLOE: I've already done more than the staff, or my Dad! I've seen her. I've seen *it* with my own eyes.

MEGAN: Yeah, I get that....

CHLOE: I'm just going to spend more time there. See what's up.

MEGAN: Just promise me you'll tell your Dad soon, yeah?

CHLOE: I promise.

MEGAN: You swear!

CHLOE: I swear!

MEGAN spins CHLOE around to check her fingers aren't crossed. They laugh.

A moment's silence.

MEGAN: I never visit *my* Gran.

CHLOE: Where is she?

MEGAN: It's about an hour away. Mum and Dad are always going on about it.

CHLOE: Dad's always talking about Gran too.... It's weird isn't it?

MEGAN: Yeah. (*A bit defensive*) I did go last year...

CHLOE: Ooof, want a medal?

MEGAN: Like you can talk!

They laugh again.

CHLOE: How was it? When you saw her?

MEGAN checks her phone while she talks.

MEGAN: Alright. Nice. All big windows and cups of tea...

CHLOE: How was your Gran?

MEGAN: She seemed alright. Just wanted to know all about me.

CHLOE: So, nothing seemed weird?

MEGAN: Don't think so, no.

CHLOE: Meg, can I ask you a favour?

MEGAN: What?

CHLOE: I want to document everything about this. I don't know what I'm going to find... can I start recording you? Our conversation? For research?

MEGAN: Research?!

CHLOE: Well yeah, your Gran is in a different home. It's research isn't it?

MEGAN puts her phone down.

MEGAN: Go on then! How's my hair?

CHLOE: Er ... yeah, perfect.

MEGAN: You got a mirror?

CHLOE: Use your phone camera!

CHLOE jumps up, grabs her own phone and turns it to MEGAN.

The projection screen animates, showing us MEGAN'S interview.

MEGAN immediately 'turns on' for the camera; wanting to come off as well as possible.

CHLOE goes into full professional interview-style.

MEGAN: I need some gloss!

CHLOE: Meg, this is just for me! No one's gonna see it.

MEGAN: Oh, right, right.

A pause. Chloe begins.

CHLOE: Hello Megan Winter.

MEGAN: Hello!

CHLOE: Can you tell us more about your Gran. How long has she lived in a home?

MEGAN: My Gran is Carole. Carole Winter. Erm, for a while now. Maybe 3 years....?

CHLOE: And how often do you visit?

MEGAN: Maybe... once a year.

CHLOE: What would you say are the main reasons for that? Where it is, travelling costs...?

MEGAN: Erm... I think it's just... busy. My parents are dentists. They don't get out much. So, I think when they're not workin' they want to ... like... relax?

CHLOE: Do you know if your Gran has friends?

MEGAN: I don't know. That's bad innit? I know there was a woman there she was chatting with when we were last there

The audio and visual slowly fades down with the lights ...

SCENE FIVE

North Pines Care Home

Lights up and CHLOE enters, with a few bags.

She looks around and sees REBECCA, consulting a notice-board. REBECCA sees her.

REBECCA: Chloe, morning.

CHLOE: Morning. Rebecca, yeah?

REBECCA: Yeah. But feel free to call me Becky. That's what I ask the residents to call me. And visitors.

CHLOE: Becky.

REBECCA: You here for your Gran?

CHLOE: I've found some more of her stuff. Books, more jewellery, and some photos from our last holiday... things like that.

REBECCA: She'll love that.

A pause.

REBECCA: Chloe.

CHLOE: Mmm?

REBECCA: I want to apologise for yesterday. It wasn't an ideal conversation. I hope you weren't too uncomfortable.

CHLOE: All I care about is that my Gran is safe.

REBECCA: I know.

REBECCA seems a bit lost for words.

A MAN crosses the stage walking next to MARGARET.

She is speaking with him as he looks around, taking notes.

CHLOE: Who's that?

REBECCA: His name is Marcus. I haven't met him yet.

CHLOE: He looks a bit... out of place.

REBECCA: He's come to make some suggestions to management, I think. We'll see what happens.

CHLOE looks after him interested. Then remembers why she's here.

CHLOE: I'm gonna go check on her ...

REBECCA: See you in a bit.

CHLOE exits into her Gran's room.

REBECCA continues consulting her notes.

After a moment, MARGARET enters highly antagonised.

MARGARET: The nerve! The absolute nerve of that man!

REBECCA: What's wrong, Margaret?

MARGARET: Thinks the place can be improved! Wants to test us....

REBECCA: Test us?

MARGARET: It's unbelievable. I know Susan won't stand for it. She'll show him the door. What madness.

REBECCA: Maybe he's got something worthwhile to say?

MARGARET: Don't you have any respect, Rebecca? You'll let strangers test you and peer over your shoulder, checking you know how to make a bed?!

REBECCA: We do a lot more than...

MARGARET: Of course, I know that! I do more than anyone around here!

REBECCA: Then you should want it to run as well as possible, surely?

MARGARET: Are you saying something is wrong here?

REBECCA: I... no... I...

CHLOE enters Stage Left and we enter a 'split stage'. Half GRAN'S room and half the

hallway.

Stage Left: CHLOE stands over an empty chair, holding some jewellery and a closed jewellery box.

Stage Right" MARGARET and REBECCA speak unheard and REBECCA is feeling increasingly intimidated.

(Gran is never seen)

CHLOE: These are beautiful, Gran. I thought that blue necklace yesterday was the most amazing thing I've seen, but check out these earrings! Maybe it is worth getting my ears pierced after all, hey?

She opens the box.

CHLOE: Gran. Where is it? Where's the necklace?

She looks up, concerned.

CHLOE: Gran, please tell me! Where is it? You can talk to me. Did you put it on and lose it? *(Beat)* Did someone take it? Gran?

CHLOE is furious. She exits.

Back to the hallway (Gran's empty chair stays Stage Left) CHLOE approaches the two carers.

CHLOE: Hey!

REBECCA: Chloe. Are... what's wrong?

CHLOE: Yesterday I bought some things... jewellery. I put them in Gran's jewellery box and something's not there anymore.

MARGARET: I am not dealing with this right now....

REBECCA: Margaret! Chloe, what do you mean? What's missing?

CHLOE: A green necklace. Really old and definitely valuable!

REBECCA: Are you sure it's not in the room somewhere?

CHLOE: I'm positive.

REBECCA: Okay, what do you think has happened?

CHLOE: Isn't it obvious? It's been taken!

MARGARET: Right, that's enough!

REBECCA: That is a bold claim, Chloe.

CHLOE: This place is full of people! And Gran isn't comfortable ... she's... she's hiding something from me.

MARGARET: This is ridiculous! Rebecca – go back on your rounds, now!

REBECCA: I've finished my rounds and you're stressed right now, which is not this girls' fault! Chloe, what do you mean?

CHLOE: Yes. She's... quiet. Really quiet. She seems afraid to *say* anything! *(Beat)* I don't know why I'm talking to *you* about it...

MARGARET: Because you're a troublemaker. Do you have any idea what we deal with on a day to day basis?!

CHLOE: Looking after people? That's what you have to "deal with"?

REBECCA: Chloe, I promise you I will report this and investigate...

MARGARET: Rebecca! Get into the staff room. Now!

A moment.

REBECCA leaves to go to the Staff Room.

CHLOE goes to head back to her Gran's room.

MARGARET stops her with a call.

MARGARET: Hey! Wait a moment.

CHLOE: What?

MARGARET: I want you to stop this right now. Do you hear me? You come in here and assume you understand what's going on! People lose things all the time! They bruise all the time! It doesn't mean anything is wrong!

CHLOE: Losing things? Bruising? If that means nothing is wrong than I want my Gran out of here now.

MARGARET: We'll see about that.

CHLOE: It's like you don't hear what you're saying? It's normal for people to lose things and be bruised!? You don't have to be an adult to know that's wrong.

MARGARET: There's not many of us here! We do our best!

CHLOE: Then something definitely has to change.

MARGARET is lost for words.

CHLOE exits.

The lights go down.

SCENE SIX

Chloe's Bedroom.

CHLOE lifts up her camera to face her.

The projection screen lights up. She is struggling to understand her thoughts, working her way through.

CHLOE: Fourth visit.... And things are weirder than ever. This woman, Margaret, is like She's so angry. All the time. I'd almost be sorry for her if she wasn't so rude. I think more and more that something is seriously wrong. It's so weird. I mean, we trust these people to do the right thing and if we're never there, if we're never visiting, then.... We don't know. And the more I think about it the more I feel like it's not even their fault. It's mine. Dad's. I've not been there. I've left her and never even wondered if she's okay... Never even thought about it...

A knock at the door. Lights come up full and CHLOE is in her bedroom.

She quickly turns the camera off, still deep in thought.

CHLOE: Yeah?

TIM enters.

TIM: Hey. Is this a good time?

CHLOE: Yeah, sure.

TIM: I just want to talk to you about something.... And check in...

CHLOE: You're scaring me.

TIM: No, it's fine, it's fine.

TIM sits down.

CHLOE looks at him, apprehensively. Her guilt is weighing on her.

TIM: Your Principal rang today and said you've missed a couple of classes.

CHLOE: What? Oh... Dad...

TIM: I want you to know you can talk to me. Yeah? I'm here, whatever is going on.

CHLOE: Honestly, Dad, it's not what you think.

TIM: What do you think I think?

They smile at each other. Neither very good at 'deep' conversations.

CHLOE: I dunno... maybe you think I'm like ... mixed up with a bad lot or something?

TIM: A 'bad lot'? Nah, I know you.

CHLOE: Yeah?

TIM: I was imagining like... stuck in the library and loosing track of time?
Something more like that?

CHLOE: You're not far off.

TIM: Well? Hit me.

CHLOE: I... I'm a bit nervous...

TIM: Chlo... whatever it is, you can tell me.

CHLOE: Well it's.... it's about Gran.

TIM immediately shifts in his seat. This is not what he was expecting.

TIM: Gran? What do you mean?

CHLOE: Well... God, Dad, I'm so sorry I didn't say anything sooner. I just, I didn't want to worry you.

TIM: Just tell me, Chlo.

CHLOE: Well, when I went to see Gran... last week? I just... things were weird. I didn't like it.

TIM: You said you had a nice time!

CHLOE: Yeah. I did! I mean... it was nice to see Gran, and I did have a good time, in a way, because I got really inspired for what to write for my story! That sounds bad now. I just didn't want to worry you, but now it's just gotten worse. I wasn't sure if there was anything to *be* worried about but ... -

TIM: Wait, slow down, Chlo. Are you saying that's where you've been? At the care home?

CHLOE: Yeah. I've been with Gran.

TIM tries not to get emotional. He's touched.

TIM: Well that's.... Unexpected.

CHLOE: I don't think she's okay, Dad. She's different. And, well, it gets worse.

TIM: Tell me. Tell me everything?

CHLOE: Okay...

TIM takes her hand.

TIM: We never really talked about your Mum. I'm sorry about that. It's my fault you don't feel you can talk to me about serious stuff. I want to get better at that.

CHLOE: Wow. Yeah. I mean... I'd like that too.

TIM: Tell me about your Gran. Let's sort this out.

TIM takes a deep breath and puts his arm around CHLOE'S shoulders.

TIM: And maybe when we're done, we can talk about your Mum a bit?

CHLOE: Please. Can we?

TIM: One thing at a time. What's been going on with your Gran?

CHLOE gets out her camera and sits down with her Dad.

Lights down.

SCENE SEVEN

North Pines Care Home

MARCUS sits centre stage with a presentation on the PowerPoint screen. He is a perky, intelligent, pleasant man, clearly proud to be there. He sits centre, facing the audience.

MARGARET and REBECCA sit ready to listen to his presentation, part of the audience with the students.

In this scene, students are encouraged to raise their hand and ask questions, along with the show's characters.

MARCUS Hello everyone. Thank you for welcoming me here today. I know it's a bit strange, seeing a man like me pop up without much of an explanation, wandering the halls and chatting to people, unannounced! Your manager Susan has welcomed me here with open arms, which I hope can make you all confident that we are in this together. I understand what this facility means to each of you. I hope that today can get on the same page, answer all of your questions, and, most importantly, get you excited for what we have planned for North Pines.

MARGARET raises her hand.

MARCUS Oh, a question already! Yes, Miss...?

MARGARET: Harper. I actually was hoping you might introduce *yourself*. Seems a logical place to start.

MARCUS surveys her, knowingly.

MARCUS: Of course. I'm Marcus Phillips. How rude of me to not start off with that important detail. I hope that over the course of the next few visits I'll get to learn all of your names too. After all, this process is equally about all of you, as it is the residents of North Pines.

A pause. He has won over most of the room.

MARCUS: The reason I'm here is because a 2018 survey, conducted by researchers of the University College London, found that there is abuse taking place in 9 out of every 10 care facilities in the UK. And this statistic, as I'm sure you would all agree, is not good enough. We all love what we do. We care about people. Why else would we be in 'care'? But sadly, the statistics do speak for themselves, so rather than ignore it, we have to own up, face them head on, and say 'how do we change'. How do we put the 'Care' back in 'Care Home'?

MARGARET: How about time off? That would be a start....

MARCUS: An interesting point, Ms Harper. Thank you. Would you say you feel overworked?

MARGARET: Absolutely! But the place wouldn't function otherwise. So, solve that one.

MARCUS: Without offending anyone, no individual staff member can be imperative to the operations of any facility. It is not be healthy for the staff member, or an effective way of operating. I am here to, hopefully make everyone's lives easier. Make the facility safer. Make the residents happier.

REBECCA: How?

MARCUS: A simple, simple change.

He leans forward dramatically. He loves his job and his passion is contagious.

MARCUS: The rota system.

MARGARET: Excuse me?

MARCUS: The rota! We will do simple surveys regularly with every member of staff and based off these, an automated rota system will be generated.

MARGARET: You're testing us? Like children?

MARCUS: Not at all. The surveys will help your employers know how you're feeling at work. If you're stressed, if you're thriving, if you're enjoying your day-to-day; all of which can change regularly. For example, an argument with a loved one can effect one's mood at work, no? So, when you work with people, especially

those in need of care, patience and stability, these things all count. They all matter.

REBECCA: It's brilliant.

MARCUS: It is, if I do say so myself. We build what I like to call "supportive rotas". Rotas that ensure if you're feeling any tendency towards stress or anxiety, or, dare I say, aggression, you will always be surrounded by those who do not feel this way. You'll be on a shift with co-workers who are not in a stressful mindset, and can support you. The real goal of course, being that the residents you care for, will receive the best service we have to offer.

MARGARET raises her hand again.

MARGARET: What about nights? You can't be supported if your slogging your guts out at 3am all on your own, can you?

MARCUS: Again, an excellent point, Ms Harper. You won't be on your own. Not anymore. And, if you're feeling stressed, you probably won't even be on the shift.

MARGARET: What? So now jobs are at risk!

MARCUS: Apologies, you misunderstand. My fault completely. I simply mean, the new system would avoid rota-ing on someone who was experiencing stress on a particularly difficult shift. Night times are a great example.

MARGARET: This is ridiculous....

MARCUS: You're welcome to come and speak to me after this session if you would like to speak privately. Susan, your manager is also operating an 'open door' policy throughout the whole transition. We are interested in everyone's thoughts. What I would say is, please have faith. This system has been implemented now in four homes with a very high success rate. Staff are reporting feeling happier, more supported. Enjoying their work again. I would love to do that for you all here....

REBECCA is beaming. MARGARET sits firmly with her arms folded.

Lights down

SCENE EIGHT
North Pines Care Home

MARGARET sits in front of a computer, incredibly tense. She is not happy.

REBECCA sits at one a small distance away, looking ready.

MARCUS paces the back of the room.

The projection screen lights up with questions (typed) for the workers to respond to. The two actors cannot hear each other and they both have pens and paper, as if this is a written test.

For the purpose of performance, they speak their answers aloud.

Production notes: Director may choose to have Marcus hand out surveys to each student for them to fill out with Margaret and Rebecca?

Director may also choose to have the Screen Questions read by voiceover.

SCREEN: Name?

MARGARET: Margaret Harper.

REBECCA: Rebecca Stanton.

SCREEN: Employer?

BOTH: North Pines Care Home.

SCREEN: When completing this exercise, think of yourself at work. If you are not presently in work, think of yourself in your last job. If you have not worked before, think of yourself at home. Each question contains four descriptive words. Your first spontaneous answer is the best one for this exercise.

MARGARET rolls her eyes, getting increasingly agitated.

SCREEN: Which most describes you at work? Moderate. Receptive. Adventurous. Cordial.

REBECCA: Receptive.

A beat.

MARGARET: Cordial.

SCREEN: At work, which least describes you? Moderate. Receptive. Adventurous. Cordial.

REBECCA: Adventurous....

MARGARET: I don't know, um.... Receptive!

SCREEN: Which most describes you at work? Generous. Animated. Well disciplined. Persistent.

MARGARET: This is ridiculous.

REBECCA: Generous.

MARGARET: Well disciplined!

SCREEN: At work, which least describes you? Generous. Animated. Well disciplined.
Persistent.

REBECCA: Persistent?

MARGARET: *(Pause)* Generous?

SCREEN: Which most describes you at work? Accommodating. Optimistic. Respectful.
Pioneering.

REBECCA: Respectful.

MARGARET: Pioneering.

SCREEN: At work, which least describes you? Accommodating. Optimistic. Respectful.
Pioneering.

REBECCA: Pioneering.

MARGARET: Accommodating.

SCREEN: Which most describes you at work? Soft touch. Life of the party. Aggressive.
Fearful.

REBECCA: Soft touch....

MARGARET: A... this is ridiculous! I'm none of these things!

She looks around.

REBECCA: Margaret, just say the one you feel most. Don't worry, it's a survey. Go with
your instinct.

MARGARET is livid. She looks down, almost ashamed of herself and mutters...

MARGARET: Aggressive....

SCREEN: At work, which least describes you? Soft touch. Life of the party. Aggressive.
Fearful.

MARGARET: Didn't see that coming.

REBECCA: Aggressive.

MARGARET: Soft touch.

SCREEN: Which most describes you at work? Courageous. Jovial. Even tempered.
Precise.

REBECCA: Precise.

MARGARET: I....

MARGARET stands up.

MARGARET: I want to speak to Susan. This is ridiculous!

MARCUS: Of course. See you in a bit. Shall I save your answers so far or do you want to start again when you come back?

MARGARET: Throw it in the bin.

She exits.

SCREEN: At work, which least describes you? Courageous. Jovial. Even tempered.
Precise.

REBECCA: Courageous.

MARCUS resumes pacing.

Lights down.

SCENE EIGHT

North Pines Care Home.

TIM and CHLOE enter the home.

REBECCA seems in a very perky mood and welcomes them warmly.

REBECCA: Chloe! How lovely to see you! This must be your father?

She holds out her hand.

REBECCA: My name is Rebecca.

TIM: Tim.

REBECCA: Chloe, I must apologise, since you were here yesterday so much has happened. I haven't actually been able to speak to my Manager yet about your concerns.

CHLOE: What? What's more important?

REBECCA: I shouldn't talk about it with you, but it's positive. All positive things.

CHLOE: Please I'm...

TIM: I think it might be time we spoke to your Manager?

REBECCA: I understand. Do you want to see Catherine first?

TIM: Oh. I... yes. Yes, I'd love to.

TIM seems a bit nervous.

CHLOE takes his hand and leads him down the hall towards Room 7. But rather than go in with him, she lets him go in alone.

CHLOE: Rebecca?

REBECCA: Mm?

CHLOE: I probably shouldn't tell you this, but I'm writing about this for my school paper.

REBECCA: "This"?

CHLOE: What's happening with my Gran. Mainly about how everyone in my class is kind of the same as me. If their Gran lives somewhere else, they never visit them. Or almost never. Then, what's happening to my Gran here, with her missing stuff and the way... well... sorry.... But, she's obviously not being treated very well....

REBECCA looks down.

REBECCA: Chloe, I'm sorry. I really am. I've been trying to do my best. But you're right, it isn't good enough.

She gestures for them to sit down together. They do.

REBECCA: It's very complicated. But things are changing now. I really believe your Gran will be safe here soon.

CHLOE: What's changing? Please tell me.... Becky? It sounds like it could be the perfect ending for my story.

REBECCA: Perhaps But I can't speak about it with you, Chloe. It wouldn't be professional.

She points down the hallway.

REBECCA: When your father is finished (yes, *when*, make sure you go together!) go knock on the door at the end of the hallway and ask for 'Marcus'. He's good. I'm sure he'll answer as many of your questions as he can.

CHLOE: Okay, thank you!

REBECCA: Now, I think the most important thing you could do right now is go hang out with your Gran. Yeah?

CHLOE: Yeah.

CHLOE heads off to Room 7.

MARGARET enters and sits on a next to REBECCA. She looks beaten, weary.

REBECCA: Are you okay, Margaret?

MARGARET: Not really, no.

REBECCA: I know it's hard....

MARGARET: I've given my life to this place. You've been here a few months. You *don't* know Rebecca. You don't.

REBECCA: (*Patiently*) Explain to me then.

Silence.

MARGARET: What... colour did you get? Did they give you some sort of stupid colour after that test thing?

REBECCA: Green.

MARGARET grunts loudly.

MARGARET: 'Course!

REBECCA: You?

MARGARET doesn't answer. The answer is obvious to them both.

A moments' silence.

REBECCA: When I started here, I thought you were the one to impress. I looked up to you so much, Margaret. A woman who has worked in care so long is absolutely to be admired. Looked up to. I wanted you to like me so much. But it's funny, over time I realised more and more how unhappy you seemed. And, I think it's important you should know that because you're so respected by everyone, it really rubs off on us. When you're in a bad mood, I feel it. It makes me feel almost like... I need to take on your mood or something....

MARGARET: Well that's just ridiculous.

REBECCA: (*Patiently*) It may be ridiculous, but I think that's kind of how human beings work. We take on our surroundings, don't we? So, if there's something in your life that's making you stressed, or sad... I want you to know you can talk to me. I'd rather *that* than you...

MARGARET: What?

REBECCA takes a deep breath. This is taking all of her courage.

REBECCA: Than you take it out on the residents.

MARGARET: How dare you!?

REBECCA: I saw you. I saw you with Miss Hobbs. I'm ashamed that I've not been able to say anything before now. But I think you know deep down that it's wrong. I know you do. Watching you in the survey today, I could see you know you're too stressed to be in this environment right now.

A pause.

MARGARET: Susan told me to take some time....

REBECCA: That sounds good?

MARGARET: She didn't say how much...

REBECCA: I'm sure when you're ready, they'll just ask you to fill out one of those surveys? No? And see if you're ready.

MARGARET: She said she would want me to do them while I'm off too. And she said I don't have to take time. Just recommends it. A holiday, like.

REBECCA: That's nice. It's all your choice.

MARGARET: I guess.

MARGARET hangs her head in her hands.

MARGARET: I just don't know what I'll do....

REBECCA: Take some time! Go to the warmth? Read a book? Watch a series?

MARGARET: My Mum... she's.... not well.

REBECCA stays quiet.

This is the most MARGARET has ever opened up.

MARGARET: I live with her y'see. She's... not been well for a long time. Can be violent. Lashes out. So, when I'm not here, I'm... dealing with that. I can't go anywhere....

REBECCA: Bring her here. Surely? Or another home?

MARGARET: No. I couldn't.

REBECCA: Why?

MARGARET: She begged me. "Never a home. Don't let me end up in a home!" She'd hate me forever.

REBECCA: But Margaret, what about you? You have to look after yourself. That sounds like too much for any one person to cope with.

MARGARET: I'll think on it.

MARGARET stands.

REBECCA watches her, wishing they could talk for longer.

REBECCA: Margaret. I'm here for you. Anytime.

MARGARET gives a stiff nod and almost exits. Then she turns back.

MARGARET: Working with folks like you gives me hope my Mum could be happy somewhere like this. Being around people like yourself....

She pauses another moment. And then goes.

SCENE NINE

North Pines Care Home

MARCUS sits at a desk. There is a knock at the door.

MARCUS Yep?

CHLOE and TIM enter.

MARCUS looks surprised and stands.

MARCUS: Hello there! What can I do for you?

CHLOE: Hello, are you Marcus?

MARCUS: That would be me.

CHLOE: My name is Chloe. I've been coming the last few weeks to visit my Gran. Catherine Hobbs in Room 7.

MARCUS: How can I help, Chloe?

CHLOE: Well... I'd like to know what you're doing to make sure my Gran is safe.

A pause.

TIM looks down at his daughter, so proud of her.

MARCUS: Sit down, Chloe. What a pleasure it is to meet you.

MARCUS holds out his hand to TIM, they shake.

MARCUS: A firecracker on your hands here?

TIM: Couldn't be prouder.

MARCUS: I bet. Chloe, I'm glad you've come to speak to me. Effective care isn't just about a me, or the staff here. It's all of us, working together to make sure that our loved ones are looked after and cared for.

TIM: With all due respect, we do pay for my Mother to be safe within this facility. For my daughter to walk in on her Gran with a black eye is traumatic. That shouldn't happen.

MARCUS: Absolutely it shouldn't. My work is about taking something that appears incredibly complicated and helping us all see how simple it is. Any company, business or system comes down to one thing: people. The staff. If staff are unhappy, sad, bitter, overworked, stressed, tired... that will affect their work. It's quite simple. The good ones overcome personal emotions. They can put their feelings aside and still provide the best care. But the ones who are vulnerable? Whose reserves are low. Who are dealing with a stressful home life? These are the ones we need to be aware of. We can help them, we can put a very simple system in place to ensure they are never left alone with a resident.

He goes to pick up a folded leaflet from his desk.

MARCUS: Take one of these with you...

At this point, a cast member may hand out leaflets to all students in the audience.

MARCUS: I am confident that within a few months, you will barely recognise this place. Judging by our collaborations with other homes, change happens quite quickly. Once staff feel listened to, and are surrounded by positive influences, their work ethic changes dramatically. There are, of course, staff who cannot change – and our surveys will identify that. They may then be asked to leave, but more likely, they make the decision themselves to step aside, knowing any bad behaviour will no longer be tolerated. Or possible.

CHLOE: You're starting this now?

MARCUS: As of today. The staff of North Pines did their first survey this morning.

CHLOE: Wow.

MARCUS: I want you to feel confident. Susan, the Manager here, is very excited for change. She is working closely with us to integrate the new system.

TIM: Do you think you'll be able to identify the staff who hurt my Mum?

MARCUS: I do. I am very confident. If we can prove anything, they will be terminated immediately. But if nothing can be proven, the survey will immediately identify workers who are showing aggressive tendencies and they will never be allowed around a resident alone. It's a simple solution, but highly effective.

TIM: Okay.... Okay...

It's a lot to process.

TIM begins flipping through the leaflet.

CHLOE: Um... Mr...?

MARCUS: You can call me Marcus.

CHLOE: Okay. Marcus. I've been recording some interviews and documenting my visits to write something for my school paper. Could I interview you? It's more about encouraging people in my class to visit their Gran's more. That sort of thing....

MARCUS: I'd love that. Absolutely. Maybe there are some future carers out there who can read your article too.

CHLOE: Actually yeah. I hadn't thought about that.

MARCUS: The future of care, is getting the right people who really want to look after others. Compassionate, trustworthy, strong-minded.

TIM: Well, I'll head back to my Mum and let you two crack on.

MARCUS and TIM both stand.

MARCUS: Pleasure to meet you.

TIM: You too. Thank you. We look forward to seeing how things progress.

MARCUS: As do I.

TIM exits.

CHLOE gets out her camera.

TIM: Oh gosh, I am a bit camera shy!

CHLOE: Nothing to worry about, this is just for me. Easier than taking notes.

TIM: I understand.

CHLOE: So, tell me, when did you start working in care?

Light down.

Projection screen lights up – video plays of a real testimonial.

Care worker discussing how life has improved with new system? Manager?

SCENE TEN
Chloe's Bedroom

CHLOE, MEGAN and TIM stand in Chloe's bedroom, celebrating.

MEGAN holds a copy of the school paper and is pouring over it.

MEGAN: It's so good, Chlo! So good!

CHLOE: Thank you.

MEGAN: *Everyone* is talking about it.

CHLOE: I don't know about that....

MEGAN: They are! Erm.... Jake Samuels even said...

CHLOE: Meg!

TIM looks over suspiciously.

MEGAN: Jake Samuels ... our.... Math teacher.... Said it was better than anything in the proper paper

CHLOE: *(Trying not to laugh)* I don't like him anyway. Stop stirring.

MEGAN: I'm just saying....

CHLOE: The best thing is how good the school has been. It's amazing...

TIM: *(Proudly)* Mr Chaperone over here!

MEGAN: Wait, do I know about this?

CHLOE: The school want to organise a monthly reading group to go to local care homes and read to residents. It's perfect.

MEGAN: Wow – I haven't heard about this!

CHLOE: They're going to announce it in assembly next week. Miss Clements wants me to do a speech and everything....

MEGAN: You'll smash it!

CHLOE: I'm excited. I can't believe something's actually happening.

TIM: But it never would have happened without this! *(He gestures to the paper)*. You proud of yourself, kiddo? You should be.

CHLOE: Yeah, I think so. But honestly, all I care about is Gran. Just knowing she's okay.

TIM: But also knowing what you do matters, yeah. You've made lots of lives better, Chlo. Mine included.

CHLOE: Thanks Dad.

They hug.

MEGAN: Well, thanks for inviting me to celebrate.

CHLOE: Thanks for all your help, Meg.

MEGAN: Anytime!

She hugs CHLOE and holds onto her tightly.

MEGAN: I'm so, so proud of you. On to the next one!

CHLOE: Ha. It's hard to imagine thinking about anything else.

MEGAN: You'll get there. Bye Mr Gavin!

TIM: See you soon, Meg.

MEGAN exits.

TIM sits down on CHLOE's bedroom floor.

TIM: Sit with me.

CHLOE: Okay....

She joins him. TIM puts his arm around her.

TIM: Do you feel ready to have a chat about your Mum?

CHLOE is quiet for a moment, thinking.

CHLOE: I think so. But maybe we can go get like... some pizza or something, chill out on the sofa and then chat? I'm pretty hungry.

TIM: I'd love that. Delivery? Or eat in?

CHLOE: Hmmmm.... Delivery!

TIM: Okay, race you downstairs!

They both exit.

THE END

Suggested Workshops / Integration for Schools:

- 1) What are the unanswered questions in the play? Students discuss unanswered questions and can act out a scene.
 - Chloe's 'failure' with last months' article. What happened?
 - Chloe's Mum and Tim's wife. What happened? Where did she go?
 - Rebecca's home life
 - More about Margaret's home life.
 - We can meet Susan, the care home Manager. What is she like?

- 2) 'Hot Seating'. A drama exercise where students put one character in a chair (Margaret would be a great example) and ask them questions.
 - Why did you get into care?
 - Did you used to love your job?
 - Etc