Freddie – young, American

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HELEN OF TROY OR EVERYTHING WILL BE DIFFERENT

MARK SCHULTZ

Originally produced in the US by the Soho Repertory Theatre and first performed in the UK at the Drum Theatre, Plymouth in 2005.

Charlotte is grief-stricken by the death of her beautiful mother. She is obsessed by Helen of Troy and her fantasies of becoming an object of desire start to spill over into normal life.

Freddie is every young girl's ideal lover. Tall and handsome, he has no time for Charlotte and tells her to stop pestering him.

In this fantasy scene, Charlotte is lying on her bed as **Freddie** enters her bedroom. He is bare-chested and is carrying a football. He has come to confess his love for her.

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Freddie

Um. Hi.

Charlotte.

Um.

Okay I know this is awkward and everything. Me just coming here and all. Like this. I mean I know I just really met you and everything. But I've seen you. Really. And I just gotta. I had to come and tell you. You know. And.

This is embarrassing, I know. And I don't mean it to be. It's not supposed to be. I mean. But. Jesus, it's cold out, right? Anyway there's like a million things I wanna tell you right now, Charlotte. And I just. I don't know. Like. You have such a cool room. I really like your bedspread.

Um.

This is usually the other way around.

Okay I've seen you. And. You are so. Pretty. I think. I mean. I think you're pretty. Right. Um. So I'll just come out and say it. Okay. I think I love you. Charlotte. I really do. And. It's not like this happens every day. You know. For me. I don't just like fall in love with people. It's hard. And I've really fallen for you. And I know it's stupid and like. Stupid and everything. But. I wanna know if maybe we can go out and be like boyfriend girlfriend or something I don't know. 'Cause I'm really. I'm. In love. With you. And it's hard. Keeping it inside. All the time. And I came here to say that. And ask you. You know. If we can maybe. Go out sometime. And. Eat something. Or. Watch a movie. Or I don't know. I got a great entertainment system at home. I could show you. DVD. Surround sound and everything. It's really cool. But. You know.

We could go out and. Maybe I could touch you. And. Maybe you'd let me kiss you. I mean if that's okay. Is that okay? 'Cause I really love you. I really wanna be with you. It's so important to me right now. I really. Just had to come and tell you. I couldn't wait. Um.

Shit I gotta get back to practice. Um.

Okay. I love you. Please love me.

Oh. And. I'm really sorry. About your mom. Being dead and all. That sucks.

I gotta go.

Steve – aged 20

FLATMATES ELLEN DRYDEN

First workshopped and performed by the Chiswick Youth Theatre and published in 2000, the action takes place in a student flat in the 1990s.

Steve, a law student whose wealthy parents own the flat, lets out two rooms to Lynn and Tom, who are studying English.

In this opening scene, **Steve** is sitting at an old wooden dining table loaded with milk bottles, cartons and cornflake packets consuming a large breakfast. Lynn sits opposite him removing her nail varnish. They are both in a disagreeable mood. Tom joins them. He has been sitting up most of the night writing an essay and is not at his best. **Steve** has taken his milk and poured it into his coffee – they quarrel and Tom finally rushes out of the room. **Steve** comments that Tom is getting tiresome. Lynn starts to collect up her things. This is worse than sharing with her girlfriends Kate and Abbey: at least they only rowed about fellas. 'Wheels within undercurrents' are more than she can take.

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Steve

What a command of metaphor you do have, my dear Lynn. Strikes me all you English lot have got too much time on your hands and not enough intellectual meat . . .What was that you wrote – when you last wrote an essay that is – all that junk about the 'closely woven texture' of George Eliot's prose? Closely woven cerrap! It's unhealthy, all this poring over literature. Makes you think you've got feelings. You all need a dose of nice, detached, unemotional law . . . *(Pushing away his plate)* Now. What shall I have for lunch? There's a rather piquant little terrine of crab I've had my eye on for a while. But do I feel fishy today? And would Tom cast it in my face in a rage thinking I'd been at his tinned pilchards? . . . If he must work so hard to please that rancid little mouse of a mother of his, that's his problem . . . She believes Tom is the sun, the moon and the stars . . . A bloodsucker. Keeping poor old Tom scribbling little pictures labelled 'Mummy' and writing pathetic letters from 'your loving little son'. It's time he shoved her under a bus and went out and did something outrageous like going on the Tube without paying! Much better to have a mother like mine. She can just about remember who I am when I'm actually there. She lost interest in me when I stopped being a curly headed little accessory to her fashion photos . . . Tom's wound up so tight there'll be bits found all over the Home Counties when he finally splits! . . . Get out of the way! Don't be self-indulgent, Lynn. All you're really bothered about is a good time – so don't pretend to be all caring and compassionate about Tom. It's nauseating. Mummy'll come and pick up the pieces and put them in a plastic bag and take them home and stick them all together again. *(Pause)* I'm thinking of asking Tom to leave, actually . . . He's only paying me half of what you do, you know. Why should I subsidise Tom because I've had the forethought to have a rich Mummy and Daddy who look after me instead of a whinging little apology of a female who managed to get herself pregnant at fifteen and didn't do anything about it. I think it's unhealthy to have a mother who's only a few years older than you. And who was his Dad? Some visually handicapped passer-by? . . . never promise to keep secrets, Lynn dear. Much too exhausting.

Moses – young

MONSIEUR IBRAHIM AND THE FLOWERS OF THE QUR'AN

ERIC-EMMANUEL SCHMITT

TRANSLATED BY PATRICK DRIVER AND PATRICIA BENECKE

First produced at the Bush Theatre in 2006; set in Paris in 1960.

The two main characters are **Moses**, a 13-year-old Jewish boy, and Monsieur Ibrahim, a 70-year-old Muslim. (These two actors also play all the other parts mentioned in the script.)

Moses lives with a dour, unloving father who is forever criticising and comparing him unfavourably with his older brother, Popol – whom **Moses** has never seen. Every day after school he has to prepare and cook dinner for his father. He always buys tinned food from the local grocery and becomes friendly with the owner, Monsieur Ibrahim.

In this scene **Moses** returns home to find a note from his father saying he is leaving.

Published by Methuen Publishing, London

Moses

The following day, when I came back from school, I found a note on the floor of our dark hall. *(He looks at the paper. Recognises worriedly:)* That's my father's handwriting.

'Moses,
I am sorry, but I'm leaving. I simply don't have it in me to be a father.
Popo . . .'

That's crossed out. He probably wanted to say something about Popol like, 'With Popol, I could have made it, with you, I can't,' or, 'Popol would have given me the strength and energy to be a father, you don't,' or something of that ilk he didn't dare to write down in the end. Well, you didn't have to write it. I got the message, thanks very much.

'Maybe we'll meet again someday, when you're grown up. When I don't feel quite so ashamed and when you've found it in you to forgive me. Farewell.'

Farewell, exactly!

'P.S. What money I have left is on the table. Here is a list of people who need to know I'm gone. They'll take care of you.'

And then a list of four names I'd never heard.

I took a decision. I had to pretend.

No way would I admit to being abandoned, that was out of the question. Abandoned twice: once by my mother when I was born; a second time by my father when I was a teenager. If word got around, no one would give me the time of day. What was so repulsive about me? What did I have that made it impossible to love me?

My decision was irrevocable: I'd fake my father's presence. I'd make everyone think he still lived here, ate here, shared his long, tedious evenings with me . . . The money my father left me lasted a month. I learned to forge his signature to fill in the necessary forms, to answer letters from school. I kept cooking for both of us, served dinner for two each night; only that I threw his portion into the bin.

A few nights a week, for the benefit of the neighbours across the street, I sat in his chair with his pullover, his shoes, flour in my hair, and tried to read my beautiful, brand new Qur'an.

I had to prove to myself that I was lovable, I told myself that at school there was no time to lose: I had to fall in love. There wasn't much of a choice given that it was a boys' school; everyone was in love with the caretaker's daughter, Myriam. Although she was only thirteen, she had twigged she was ruling over three hundred panting pubescent boys. I started courting her with the ardour of a drowning man . . . Someone had to love me before the whole world discovered that even my parents, the only ones who had a duty to love me, had cleared off.

Lee – aged 15

SCHOOL PLAY SUZY ALMOND

First produced at the Soho Theatre, London, in 2001.

Charlie Silver is bad news in her South London comprehensive school: a problem to teachers and a bad influence on the rest of the class. Her ambitions are to front a gang, ride a motorbike and to 'mess with teachers' heads'. She boasts a long list of teachers who have given up on her account. Then Miss Fry, the new music teacher, arrives and things begin to change. Charlie is given countless detentions, but unknown to her 'gang' – **Lee Coulson** who has recently been suspended from school, and his friend Paul – is using these detention periods to develop her suppressed musical talents.

In this scene, Charlie is at the piano waiting for Miss Fry to arrive when **Lee** comes bursting in. He accuses her of letting him down. She was supposed to meet him and Paul in the car park earlier that afternoon with her customised Hollister bike on which he was to ride 'a lap of honour' against his rival, Danny Chapel. Charlie says she has a music exam the next day and needed to practise. She tries to explain to him what playing the piano means to her and how Miss Fry has changed her way of thinking – not only about the music, but also about herself. **Lee** pulls out a piece of paper from his pocket. It is an internal report with confidential information about the students. He reads out the report that Miss Fry has written about Charlie.

Published by Oberon Books, London

Lee

Charlie . . . *(Pulling out a piece of paper from his pocket)* Look at this . . . I used to have a white bike and I applied excellence in keeping it clean. I fought for it, I was up against the weather. Some of these teachers, they don't apply so much excellence in their day to day business, they leave things lying around. Confidential information about students. Just cos you don't have to be the best – don't mean you're allowed to be the worst . . . And another internal report. It was left on the desk in the Physics room with a load of others. Paul's sister got hold of it a few days ago . . . I won't read both pages, just the Miss Fry one . . . Profile. Charlie Silver. Charlie is fifteen years old. Charlie's er . . . Charlie's brother was killed in a motorbike accident twelve months ago . . . Charlie's behaviour in class is consistently aggressive. She finds it difficult to socialise with other children, particularly girls. She cannot concentrate and an incident with a fire extinguisher last year confirmed that she is . . . confirmed that she is a disruptive force, to the detriment of the other children's progress . . . *(Turning to next page)* Blah blah blah . . . Music Report from Miss Fry . . . I am worried about how Charlie will react to my leaving. She has become very attached to me and I think she will find it very hard to settle into working with a new teacher. She is impatient with her practice and can be clumsy – but when her wilfulness translates into enthusiasm she tries very hard and she has recently warmed as a personality, even giving me chocolates after lessons as a thank you. *(Charlie snatches it from him)* Are you okay? . . . I tried to tell you. I'm sorry. I mean it . . . I shouldn't have brought it. But she shouldn't have left it lying around. It's not just you, there's a load flying around school, they were found a few days ago, got photocopied. Charlie, she was taking you for a ride. She's a half-arsed supply teacher, making out she was a permanent. That's what they all do – they think we're stupid . . . *(Pause)* I could of told you at the start that you don't learn music from a teacher. It comes from the street: Learning what joins one beat to the next. Running lyrical rings around people who think that reading and writing makes them the big I am. Classroom knocks the stuffing out of you.

Spencer (*still facing the wall*) And erm . . . course in the Second World War, I think . . . I think a lot of people forget that we were the first ones to declare war. On Germany. Not America or anyone. Or France. Or . . . which, you know, I think . . . well, that's quite brave. Isn't it? Really. We didn't want a war, says here, we were still a bit buggered from the last one. But we saw someone doing something wrong to people. Invading countries that didn't belong to them and doing bad things to the people that lived there. And we thought . . . 'No, that . . . that's not right.' And so we did something about it. And Hitler made us an offer to stay out of it, which would have meant a lot of our grandads and grandmas wouldn't have died and we'd be really powerful, but we still said no. And by the time they got to us, we were like completely alone. And everyone thought we would lose. But we didn't. And then it looks like America came along, and finished it up, and then we owed them a lot of money because we'd been fighting for so long on our own. And that meant we lost our empire and have been shrinking and struggling a bit ever since, never quite the same, but we knew that might happen and yet we still did it. Because we thought we had a responsibility. And I think that . . . you know. That's something that we should be, like, proud of. A bit more. And something that we forget, when all this other stuff is happening. Even when we get things wrong, and make mistakes. That if it wasn't for us. On this island. Then, like, the world and all that, it would be really quite bad right now. Worse than it is. And so . . . you know . . . that's what I've learnt, anyway. That we're better than we think we are. And that we can do better, most of the time. If only we remembered that. So I think we'll be all right, actually . . . you know, in the . . . in the, like, long run. I do. I actually do . . .

Silence.

Leo *lowers his bat slowly. Quivering. Tired . . .*

From the other side of the door, the sound of keys.

The door is unlocked. It starts to open . . .

Blackout.