

BILLY. Go yourself.

MRS CASPER *swipes at him, and misses. BILLY moves behind the table.*

MRS CASPER. You cheeky young bugger.

BILLY. Give over now, mum, I'll be late for school.

MRS CASPER. You'll be more than late, unless you do as you're told.

BILLY. Gryce said I'd get stick next time I'm late.

MRS CASPER. That's nowt to what you'll get if I catch you. And I'll catch you, my lad. Don't you believe it.

BILLY *pretends to go one way, MRS CASPER grabs at him as he goes the other way and out of the door into the garden, over the fence and into the fields.*

Just you wait 'til tonight. And you'd better place that bet. Jud'll kill you if you forget. Just you wait, you'll see.

BILLY *takes out the carton of eggs and throws them at the side of the house one by one.*

And don't think I've forgotten lad 'cos I haven't. Just you wait, lad, 'til I get home tonight.

BILLY *gives her the V sign and runs to . . .*

Scene 2

School Assembly, 9.00 am

The school bell rings. MR CROSSLEY is marking his class register as everyone groups for assembly in the school hall. There is a raised area with a lectern and microphone. Extend the register as required until the stage is filled with PUPILS.

MR CROSSLEY. Abbott.

PUPIL. Sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Anderson.

PUPIL. Sir.

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MR CROSSLEY Arkwright.

PUPIL. Sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Bath.

PUPIL. Away, Sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Bennett.

PUPIL. Sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Bridges.

PUPIL. Yes, Sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Brinkman.

PUPIL. Sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Casper.

PUPIL. Sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Daintry.

PUPIL. Sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Ellis.

PUPIL. Sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Fisher.

BILLY. German Bight.

MR CROSSLEY (*has marked his register before he realises what BILLY has said*). What was that?

PUPILS. It was Casper, sir / Mr Crossley / He's crackers, sir / He can't help it.

MR CROSSLEY. Did you say something, Casper?

BILLY. Yes, sir, I didn't . . .

MR CROSSLEY. Now then Casper. What did you say?

BILLY. German Bight, sir.

The PUPILS laugh.

MR CROSSLEY. Silence. Is this your feeble idea of a joke, Casper?

BILLY. No, sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Well what was the idea then?

BILLY. I don't know, sir. It was when you said Fisher. It just came out: Fisher – German Bight. It's the shipping forecast, sir. German Bight comes after Fisher. Fisher, German Bight, Cromarty. I know 'em all. I listen to it every night. I like to hear t' names.

MR CROSSLEY. And you thought you'd enlighten me and the school with your idiotic information?

BILLY. No, sir.

MR CROSSLEY. Blurting out and making a mess of my register.

BILLY. It just come out, sir.

MR CROSSLEY. And so did you, Casper. Just come out from under a stone.

The PUPILS laugh.

Quiet!

The Headmaster, MR GRyce, comes onto the platform and the PUPILS immediately go quiet. He commands absolute respect from everyone. The school music group with their assorted instruments, led by MISS FENTON position themselves to one side.

MR GRyce. God's in his Heaven. All's right with the world.
Hymn number 175. 'New Every Morning is the Love'.

The music strikes up. It is accurate but unmusical and the choice of instruments inappropriate. The song is punctuated with much fidgeting, passing of notes and behaviour unseen by the teachers. This Hymn should be cut to fit the action.

ALL (*sing*).

New every morning is the love.
Our wakening and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought.

New mercies, each returning day,
Hover around us while we pray;
New perils past, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

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