

## THE NOTICE

### A One Act Play by Lucy Charleston

#### The set.

*A rural, run down village hall. An overall tone of brown and worn wood. Some faded posters pinned to an old board. Two doors upstage left with fire exit notices above them. These double doors swing inwards as the characters enter. Upstage right two doors which lead to a kitchen. There are four notices stuck on the double doors and the kitchen doors. They clearly say 'NOTICE' but they are ignored by the characters throughout. There is a window – high up centre stage left. The flats that make up the walls of the hall must be on trucks so they can be moved inwards conveying a sense that the walls are closing in on the characters.*

#### The stage furniture.

*The play requires a large number of typical hall chairs. They can be a variety of colours shapes and sizes. Stacks of chairs are neatly placed upstage to left and right. Down stage left there is a trestle table.*

#### The time.

*It is present day.*

#### The characters.

*CONNIE – A business start-up adviser, 58*

*MAX – A young gambler, 18*

*FI – A fitness instructor, 35*

*HENRY – An out of work actor and you tube vlogger, 27*

#### **THE CHAIR CHORUS – ghostly reflections of what used to be.**

- 1. An elderly lady - she is lonely would have been in the WI.*
- 2. A teenager – they are bored and isolated living in the countryside would have been in the youth club.*
- 3. A cleaner – takes pride in cleaning the hall, now out of work and out of pocket.*
- 4. A young Mum – she is inexperienced and scared would have come to the mother and baby group.*

*The chair chorus' costume should match the colours of the chairs in the hall. Their hair and make-up must also be cleverly designed to blend in with the stacked chairs and brown walls. See: Body Paint Artist Liu Bolin – Invisible Man for inspiration. They are literally a part of the furniture. They lean in or sit up behind the stacked chairs and should be in full camouflage as the audience enters. They should stay completely still and hidden until the lights come up.*

*During the play as the chairs are taken and placed on stage the chair chorus should move swiftly and re-position. The audience will see them now but they remain invisible to the other characters. The chair chorus should have fun with this, they can move props about, or watch the action in stillness. They are Ariel – like and should move with grace and mischief.*

*Lights change to a bright wash.*

*Music (an underscore) as the Chair chorus start to move.*

*They become visible to the audience for the first time. They look directly out to them as they speak.*

You didn't see us there did you?  
We're just a part of the furniture.  
We are the past; we are the future.  
(All) Faded, jaded, aged and cag-ed.  
Looks just like a village hall to you doesn't it?  
One like this down the road from you.  
Is there? (Pause) Did you ever go in?  
Or did you drive right past?  
Did you ever notice  
Or take any notice  
Of the Notice Board?  
You must take notice of the notices.  
Time?  
Eight Forty!  
She'll be here soon.  
It's Show Time!  
It's go-for-it-ability  
It's don't stop at anything –illity  
(All) Illity? Illity?  
Ill at ease ... Are you?  
What's your notion?  
What's your promotion?  
Want to vlog?  
Slog it out in a blog?  
Want to influence?  
Sell your story?  
Get all the glory?  
Without noticing what's on the step of your own front door.  
Don't listen to us  
We're just a part of the dust  
We're the rusting pile of junk at the back.  
You've walked past us  
Ignored us  
Left us out in the rain.  
You've passed out on us  
You've "little bit of wee'd "on us  
You got sick on us that time  
At your best mate's wedding.  
(All) Remember?

*(Off stage we hear a set of keys jangling and see the shadow of someone through glass door.)*

Time?  
Eight -Fifty!  
She's early!  
She's nifty  
Quick!  
Assume the position  
And let Connie take the floor.

*The Chair chorus hide themselves once more amongst the stacks of chairs.*

*We continue to hear keys jangling as the doors are unlocked then silence as the figure disappears.*

*Then a large bottom appears through the double doors as Connie walks in backwards awkwardly carrying a large flip chart on a stand. She also has a heavy laptop bag slung over her shoulder. As she turns we see she has the keys in her mouth. She looks around, flustered, hot and out of breath. She sees the table down stage left. She staggers over to the table and opens her mouth to drop the keys down on to it with a loud clatter. She then nosily and with some frustration, starts to set up the flip chart.*

*Once the flip chart is up after some struggle she takes a large cleansing breath and smoothes herself down with a sense of self-importance. She then takes her laptop out of the bag. We hear as the lap top chimes into life. Connie then takes pens out of her bag and carefully begins putting them out on the table in equal spaces. She adjusts them so they are straight and she then starts to put out booklets underneath the pens. Enough for six or so people. She gets a board pen out of her bag and in red writes WELCOME on the flipchart paper. She looks at it – and then underlines it.*

*She is wearing the Bank uniform. She adjusts her bright scarf, straightens her skirt, picks fluff off her jacket. A moment of expectation as she looks around the hall. With a sigh we see she is visibly disappointed by the venue. She realises she has forgotten chairs. As she turns to walk back towards the stacks the chair chorus scatter and hide under the table or behind the flipchart or sit up high on a different stack. As Connie walks back downstage with a chair the Chair chorus unstack another chair for her and place it on the floor ready as she turns back. This routine continues with four chairs much to the bemusement of Connie as the chairs seem to be appearing from nowhere ...*

*She has her back to the double doors as we see Max enter. He wears worn out jeans and scruffy trainers. He has his hood up and his hands in his pockets. He hangs back upstage looking shifty as Connie is busy with chairs. She turns and sees him lurking at the back.*

CONNIE: Oh hello!

MAX: Alright?

CONNIE: Well... come in.  
MAX: I can wait.  
CONNIE: You're early ... that's good  
MAX: I don't mind waiting.  
CONNIE: For what?  
MAX: 'til the others get here.  
CONNIE: Well I'm just sorting the chairs out you could give me a hand.  
MAX: Yeah sure.  
CONNIE: Great, thanks!

*Max starts un-stacking more chairs as Connie turns her back to him as she types into her laptop to bring her presentation notes up. This needs to be prolonged in terms of timing so Max can get a circle of chairs out behind her.*

CONNIE: Of course it's not what I'm used to. I usually have an interactive screen with speakers and what not. But it's back to basics here, no frothy coffee machine – just a kettle! ... *(She laughs)* We'll just have to make do. Now where's my presentation *(she is now lost in her laptop)* ... just need to find the right folder ... now where did I save it? Success connected with action ... no that's not it ... Failure as the beginning, middle but never the end ... that's a good one but not today ... Courage to pursue our dreams ... that's the one! Passion, creativity and resilience – if you've got those skills you're ready to embark on the journey. Jo Malone said that you know – ooooh I love Jo Malone – gorgeous. Mind you no wonder she's worth millions charging those prices! £300 for a candle!

*She turns around to look at Max.*

*While she has been looking at her laptop Max has been putting chairs out (with the help of the Chair Chorus) in a large circle.*

CONNIE: That's enough!  
MAX: Oh ... OK.  
CONNIE: That's more than enough ...

*There is an awkward pause as she feels she has hurt his feelings and she didn't intend to be critical.*

CONNIE: It's a nice idea though *(as if to try and cheer him up)* - Putting them in a circle I mean.

MAX: Well. It's how it looks when you see it on the telly – in films and that.

*(CONNIE looks really confused.)*

Pause.

MAX: I've never been to anything like this before. It's my first time.

CONNIE: Well, everyone has got to start somewhere! "A big business starts small" that's what Richard Branson says – and look at him!

*CONNIE goes over to her flip chart. She becomes really animated and excited as she flips the paper over to find the Go-for-it-ability chart.*

CONNIE: You see my "Go-for-it ability" is the perfect model to get you started.

You start small

*(She draws two small circles)*

then you start to realise your potential as your idea grows

*(she draws a long upwards graph line)*

It's all about having faith in yourself – if you don't believe in you then why would a bank give you a business loan?

MAX: *(Sits down in the circle of chairs)* Business loan?

CONNIE: We'll come on to writing your "knock-one-out-right-at-em" business plan in week 3.

Max: Knock one out? *(he sniggers)*

CONNIE: Yes. POW! Right at – em! You've got to aim high, get them right in their third eye. Believe it, want it, visualise it. Your new life! Your new you!

*(She has drawn a large cock and balls on the flip chart without realising it.)*

MAX: My new me?

CONNIE: Yes. Sorry... you didn't give me your name.

MAX: They said we wouldn't have to - we wouldn't have to say our name.

They just said I had to come for a few weeks like and I'd get some help and that.

They said there would be biscuits and fag breaks.

CONNIE: Oh ... did they?

MAX: I might have to pop out if I need to ... I'm not all that good at sitting still for all that long. I really hate talking to people and all that ... not my thing. I'm just here because...like... I have to be.

CONNIE: *(She produces a box of tea bags, instant coffee jar and a packet rich tea)*

Will these do then?

*(Brightly)* Come and help me put the urn on. This must be the kitchen out here ...

*Max follows Connie through the door upstage right.*

*The Chair chorus come to life and play with the pens laugh at the flip chart.*

CHAIR CHORUS:

A thief in the night

That's what he is

A smooth criminal

He'd nick a tenner off your Nan.

All to feed

His hungry habit

To buy another scratch card

To spin another wheel.

Time?

Nine!

She'll be here in a minute.

What a phoney.

Got her ticket in a flash

So she can collect the cash

Feeding the skinny lie how to stay slim and fit

Whilst they take a chair and simply sit?

*The double doors burst open and Fi comes in with four large fitness balls. She dumps them on the floor – then crashes back out again. The Chair Chorus have fun with these...*

*She crashes back in with a very large stereo, a large bag of assorted equipment, boxing gloves and a head mic. She puts them down on the floor as the Chair Chorus scatter and hide.*

*Fi wears a clingy lycra fitness top and very jazzy leggings and trainers.*

*Fi is nervy, she is very aware she has no qualifications what so ever to teach a fitness class, she has convinced herself that she has the latest trends to con people to lose weight but deep down she knows she is bluffing. She plugs her head mic in to her speaker system and a there is blast of rave music with the most awful feedback.*

*CONNIE and MAX poke their heads out of the kitchen door.*

FI: Oh God! Sorry! Sorry! I just need to get my levels right I always have it turned up too high I wanted to get everything sorted before... and here I am all behind as usual. Thanks so much for putting the chairs out for me ... these are just ... in the wrong ...

*She starts to re-position the chairs in rows.*

If you are looking for the changing room, you'll have to use the toilets – they're through there I think.

*She points back to the double doors. She puts the music back on and tests her mic.*

Mic test. Mic test. Hello! Hello! Welcome!

*(She's really feeble here over the loud music)*

Welcome to "Kick fit slim sit." Are you ready for the new you? *(Unconvincing)* Wooooh!! Let's get slim and fit while you sit! Wooooop! Yeah. OK!!

CONNIE: Let me just stop you there!

FI: *(Turns the music off.)* Sorry what did you say?

CONNIE: You had me at "Kick fit slim sit". It's brilliant!

FI: Thank you – it's just a little idea I came up with...low impact, high energy kick – yoga - box accessible to all by doing it ... in a chair. I've got sauna suits too – well actually they are just bin bags at the moment... but I aim to get the real thing soon as ... and I also have the vibrating seat pads so you burn off the fat cells for a smoother toned finish. I really want to build my nutrition side-line too – homemade high protein carb busting shakes to beat those pesky food cravings. We all have them don't we? *(she laughs nervously and looks over at Max who is making his way through a packet of biscuits)*

CONNIE: I'm so impressed, I really am. You've come along today with a really concrete, viable go-for-it-ability idea. I mean I didn't need you to bring all your equipment and props and what not but I can see you are a real people person, a go-getter, a pro. It's great – I hope they're all as up there on the wowsa scale as you are.

MAX: *(Stuffing his face with biscuits)* A Pro? Yeah right!

FI: *(Ignoring Max's comment)* What's a WOWSA scale?

*CONNIE takes FI over to the flip chart and turns the page to find the words WOWSA spelt vertically. She starts explaining this to Fi.*

W – Well researched

O – On trend

W – Website w.w.w

S – Social Media

A – Audience demographic.

*As CONNIE is going through this with FI they are both so engrossed they don't notice HENRY who enters with his phone clamped to his ear. He is well spoken and a sharp dresser.*

HENRY: *(to his phone)* Right, well I think I've finally found the place – in the middle of bloody nowhere! Sat nav sent me all round the houses. On my bloody doorstep too! I know. Ok. Good to talk. Yah. Yah. Yah. Bye for now. Bye. Bye. Bye.

*Henry is a vlogger – so he films himself a great deal on his selfie stick. He takes a great many photographs of himself for his “stories” and every opportunity is taken to upload a new clip.*

HENRY: So ... *(to his phone –earphones in)* Hi there! So it's day one and I've just arrived for my first session and I am so excited to be here. I really can't wait to get stuck in and to work with some real home-grown talent. I don't mind admitting I'm hoping for a main part I just want something I can really get my teeth into ... just got them whitened ... it's what they expect these days – Hollywood here I come!

*(He takes a series of selfies with very big smiles to show off his white teeth)*

*(to the others now)* Hi all! Good to finally be here! So sorry I'm late. Got a bit lost. Ridiculous really when I only live around the corner. I never knew this place existed.

*All three turn to look round at HENRY.*

Have I missed the warm up? I love the chair game we used to play it all the time in drama lessons at school. One person tries to get to a chair with their knees tied together and the rest of the group have to block them by running and sitting down before they do!

*He demonstrates by acting this out by himself and in the process he moves the chairs around so they are in random positions. The Chair Chorus help him with this and they join in the game with him moving quickly out of the way when he sits down. He films himself on his selfie stick and really looks ridiculous.*

Mind you we could get a bit agro – I remember one lad broke his leg...my poor drama teacher!

FI: Well, actually I call it “Kick fit slim sit”

HENRY: Oh right... well...yah ... all these techniques get called different names don't they? Still image for instance? A freeze frame, a frozen picture, a tableaux... it's all the same thing really...

*There is an awkward pause as everyone looks confused.*

*HENRY looks over to MAX with the biscuits – MAX offers him one.*

Oh good man! *(he walks over and takes a biscuit)*

CONNIE: It's always good to begin a session with a lively starter. “An active body means an active mind!”

FI: Well, we try to keep moving for the whole hour if we can ...

*During the next exchange CONNIE has gone back over to the table to re-order her pens and booklets which have been disarranged by the chair chorus and doodled on. FI is getting out her bin bags and vibrating seat pads.*

MAX: This your first time too?

HENRY: Me? No. I'm an old hand at this. Can't get enough of it. I love the risk taking, the feel of the lights on your face, the fear you're going to lose it, the buzz when it's all over. It's a mug's game really.

MAX: You're not wrong there mate. I wish I'd never got into it in the first place. Started with Lucky dip, but now I'm totally addicted to Mr Green.

HENRY: Oh don't know that one, is it Pinter?

*Max doesn't reply – there is a long pause.*

CONNIE: Shall we make a start?

*MAX and HENRY start organising the chairs back into a circle.*

HENRY: I've actually been the lead in several projects I'm just...in between jobs right now ... so I thought it would be good to get involved in something local.

MAX: Me too.

HENRY: Sorry?

MAX: No job. Universal credit. It's shite waiting for pay day so you have to like take a bit of a gamble yeah?

HENRY: Well this one certainly is...

CONNIE: Shall we get started?

FI: Are you going to get changed first?

MAX: Will there be a fag break?

HENRY: Does anyone have a copy of the script?

*A rather frantic scene emerges. The Chair chorus join in with all of this.*

*CONNIE goes over to her laptop to start it up again and gets her chart back to the start.*

*FI puts on her music – it's very loud*

*HENRY comes over to the table looking for a script.*

*HENRY goes over to MAX*

*MAX shrugs.*

*CONNIE looks flustered. She gives pens out to HENRY and MAX who both sit down*

*FI gives CONNIE a vibrating seat pad.*

*Fi starts counting and demonstrating the moves on the chair.*

*HENRY joins in taking it very seriously.*

*Fi gives Henry a bin bag with a hole cut into it for his head as a sauna suit.*

*MAX refuses a bin bag and starts to roll a fag.*

*CONNIE does not like losing control of the situation.*

*The walls appear to be moving in.*

*The chair chorus are moving the chairs so they are becoming more of a trap.*

*CONNIE is vibrating on her chair.*

*HENRY is taking the exercises very seriously and is getting quite sweaty in the bin bag.*

*CONNIE climbs over the chairs and pulls the plug out of the wall.*

CONNIE: Can we please just get on with it?

FI: *(Furious)* You can't just...

MAX: I'm going to smoke this.

CONNIE: What? We haven't even started yet.

MAX: This isn't really what I was expecting ... I didn't think we'd have to jump about and shit I thought it was just sitting and talking and that.

FI: Well it is sitting but really moving the upper body, the building blocks to strengthen our core.

HENRY: Sorry are we improvising or is there a script?

MAX: I thought I would have to like... talk and someone would like... listen and there would be biscuits a fag break and I could go home.

FI: Well I don't approve of that I mean biscuits and cigarettes are a sure fire way to clog your veins with cholesterol.

MAX: *(Forcefully)* Well I need a smoke.

CONNIE: *(Really turning on Max)*

Oh that's the problem with people like you. You've got no VISION. You need to have staying power. Starting this business is not going to be easy you know. "I knew that if I failed I wouldn't regret it but I knew the one thing I might regret is not trying" – Jeff Bezos said that – do you know who he is? CEO of Amazon – he's the richest man in modern history – he makes 150,000 dollars a minute...You can't fall at the first hurdle you need to have passion, you need guts. You need resilience, rigour – you're pathetic.

MAX: Is this part of it yeah? Like you abuse me and tear me down and it helps me to realise what a loser I am?

HENRY: Great ... this is great ...sorry I can't find the script is it over here? *(Goes over to Connie's papers)*

CONNIE: What script? What are you looking for?

HENRY: Good question – and one we all have to keep in mind as we continue on our creative journey. What are we looking for and how are we going to find it?

CONNIE: Precisely and this is why I created the Go-For –It-Ability Plan. We have to have direction, we need to stick to our goals and have a clear vision of what’s to come.

*(With this she flips the chart back to the cock and balls diagram and realises what it looks like. Embarrassed, she tears the page out and screws it up)*

*(MAX is laughing at this)*

FI: Sorry to interrupt ... but have any of you come to do some chair-obics this morning? I feel like I’m wasting time here and we’re all cooling down when we should be warming up. Shall we carry on with the routine?

CONNIE: Well I think we have got the general idea now and we perhaps should be focusing on the application form.

HENRY: Oh yah great – for RADA? Or Central? I’m really happy to consider both.

CONNIE: For the loan – the bank loan?

HENRY: Oh funding yep – really important yah. Last show I was in my old man chucked in a wedge to keep us going. He doesn’t half complain about me not joining the family business though. Blah blah blah ... you’ve let me down ... blah ... blah ... no son of mine is going to be a poofy actor ... blah blah ... waste of my education ... where do you see yourself in five years’ time ...

CONNIE: That’s a good question – your Dad makes an excellent point – where do any of us see ourselves in five years’ time?

MAX: This is crap – and I can’t find my lighter.

*(The Chair chorus have pinched it and are playing with it)*

FI: You’re so rude and you can’t smoke that in here.

MAX: I wasn’t going to I was going to nip out.

FI: I can’t believe you smoke – you’re so young you’ve got such fit and healthy lungs.

MAX: Thanks darling.

HENRY: Are we having a break now? I feel like it might be a good moment to pause the proceedings so you can find that spare script. I’m having a bit of trouble with the vision here. I’m loving the improvisation vibe but I think I need more of a synopsis, a premise, a summary ... anyone? Anything?

MAX: You what mate?

FI: *(Really frustrated now)* Look! What the hell is going on here?

*The Chair Chorus comes to life and with a click of their fingers all four characters’ phones start to ring.*

*They find them in their bags or pockets and start having conversations – they are all confused about what is going on and they are explaining this to the other person on the phone ...*

*The audience should hear snippets of the following information. The walls of the hall start to move in again.*

CONNIE: Well you tell me Shane, I got an email asking me to lead Go for it ability – yes the business start- up session – it’s all on the website. Nine for nine thirty start. There must be some sort of a mix up.

MAX: Yeah it was definitely Community service, they messaged me - I had to come. Gamblers anonymous. At Nine thirty. Total waste of time .. yeah...

FI: Didn’t you see it? I posted it last week I got an invite to try my new chairbics class – Keep fit slim sit – well it’s all over facebook. Yeah ... Nine thirty they said

HENRY: I got a tweet – told me I’d been headhunted for the lead in the local am dram production... rehearsals kick off at nine thirty. Yah...yah .. I know ... it’s all a bit odd.

*The Chair chorus click their fingers again and all the phones go dead.*

CONNIE: Hello? Hello? Oh no signal.

FI: *(To Max)* Hang on ... did you say Community Service?

MAX: Yeah, why?

FI: Why? I mean what did you do?

MAX: Well I’m not proud of it, like I shouldn’t have done it. I nicked some cash.

FI: *(Pulls his hood down)* I thought it was you. You’re the little shit who nicked the jar of money from my Mum’s kitchen.

MAX: It was just there – she’d left it out on the side.

FI: It was her Christmas money for her grandchildren – she’d been saving every week for months. Then you came along and ... she doesn’t sleep now you know, she’s got pills for her nerves... you did that. Why? Why did you do it?

MAX: I’m sorry! I didn’t really think ... I didn’t know it was her Christmas money I just saw it and helped myself.

FI: Yeah you helped yourself alright.

MAX: You don’t think about anybody else when you’re ... all you want is more cash and you find ways of getting it and so you... *(genuinely apologetic here)* My Nan used to give me scratch cards for Christmas and birthdays – I’m sorry – I’m really sorry alright?

CONNIE: Well there are other ways to get your business start-up funds you know ... You’re here now and that’s all that matters. The new you.

MAX: What are you on about? I’m not here to start a business or jump about like a prat. Who would give a loan to someone like me? I’m up to my neck in debt already ... and I can’t stop. Oh yeah I’d love to be like the “new me” and all but have you tried watching telly or going on your phone without another bloody jackpot winner story to hook you in? So you steal, you pinch it wherever you can. You rob. Until you win on a scratch card and then you put it all on the next one. Do you have any idea what it’s like being me?

HENRY: I think this would be a really good moment to try some hot-seating – I think our rehearsal needs just a tiny bit more focus. The question at stake here is “Do you have any idea what

it's like being me?" We need to understand each other's characters in depth, we need to ask about our hopes and dreams...

CONNIE: He could have a point you know. "All our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them" – Walt Disney said that.

HENRY: *(He sits Max down on a chair in the middle of a circle)* We need to find out what really drives us? What's our motivation? Why are we here? *(He starts to film Max on his phone and Max pulls his hood down)*

FI: I've got a question for him.

HENRY: Great yep go ahead...

FI: How does it feel to know you are going to prison?

*Another big row breaks out here again as Max stands up and shouts at Fi and Connie tries to defend Fi and Henry wants to keep the hot seating going and Fi has had enough of it all and wants to pack up her stuff and go and Henry puts his phone on the flip chart so he can film all of this from a wide shot and this should end with ...*

*Lights change. The stage falls still as the Chair chorus come to life. They climb out over the chairs.*

CHAIR CHORUS: Welcome to your community.  
But do any of you know each other's name?  
You're neighbours ... well go on...  
Introduce yourselves then.

*(The four characters do not move they are frozen to the spot)*

You liked each other on Facebook  
And Instagram  
But you don't really like each other  
Do you?  
I'm afraid it's too late.  
You've missed the boat  
Ship sailed when the planning permission went through  
And the deal has been sealed.  
All of you too busy promoting yourselves  
To notice  
The notice  
The notice to grant permission  
To knock down every wall

You closed your curtains  
And pulled down your blinds  
You max'd out your screen time  
And what did you find?  
You, the go getter  
The business starter upper  
With your wowsa scale  
And your knock one out plan  
Delivering false hopes  
Fake dreams  
Deep debt  
And bitter disappointment  
The lesson here today is  
Read the writing  
On the wall.

*(They take the notices down off the doors and thrust them into the hands of the four characters.)*

You, the keep fitter,  
The lose the weight quicker  
The starve yourself slicker  
With your eating plan  
Kick and sit  
Makes you slim and fit  
Got her certificate on line  
A fake diploma – she paid for it.  
You the sad chancer  
The just one last time joker  
The better luck next time toker  
Reminding us all  
How easily we can get lost  
In a world of shiny, shiny

In a land of grand designy  
Where next month's pay cheque  
May never come at all.  
You the failing actor  
Who fancies himself on x-factor  
You didn't know this place existed  
'til you found it on google maps  
Well here's the play for today  
You can't make this one go away  
This is the final curtain for your village hall.

*The four characters come to life and they are all holding a demolition notice in their hand.*

CONNIE: There's something really weird going on here.

MAX: *(Reading the notice)* A demolition notice? Who gives a shit? This place is a dump anyway.

CONNIE: No, no. ... I mean well yes, but why are we all here? How did we all get the same message about being here at the same time today?

FI: You mean somebody set this up?

*The chair chorus come back to life and tip a high stack of chairs across the stage. This results in a loud clatter.*

*The four characters are visibly shaken by this.*

Remember us?  
Faded velvet and dust?  
We brought you here  
We thought we'd made that clear  
Our intention is plain  
No need to explain  
Take a moment to discuss  
Without any fuss.  
Read the small print  
On the printed paper here  
The company who will destroy us all  
Is Bench - Thorn Ltd. my dears.

FI: *(Reading the notice)* It says Bench-Thorn Ltd – they’re the property developers who built on the fields around my Mum’s place. They’re building everywhere round here.

CONNIE: Well they can’t – I mean I know it’s seen better days but they can’t just flatten this place – think how it could be if people used it more often!

FI: You’re right – we should try and put a stop to this.

MAX: *(Notices Henry sat with his head in his hands)* You’re very quiet mate.

HENRY: Bench-Thorn Ltd. It’s my Dad’s company – he’s the chairman.  
*The Chair chorus throw another stack of chairs across the stage.*  
*(Henry is obviously spooked)* Bloody hell ...Why does that keep happening?

MAX: Look this is getting really strange – it’s been nice and all – really helpful, but I’m going to head off. It’s been great to meet you all, I honestly mean that and I’m really sorry about your Mum - I really am. I will pay the money back – I totally promise.

FI: She’d like that you know – she would like to meet you – it might help.

MAX: Yeah ... that sounds good actually.  
*During this the Chair Chorus have run to get the keys off the table and they have locked the hall doors from the inside.*

CONNIE: *(To Henry)* So you knew all along that this was happening – you knew this place was being demolished?

HENRY: It’s just another old, neglected run down place in the countryside that nobody uses any more. I’d never heard of it. Let’s face it – neither had you – any of you. We just build on waste ground and places that have fallen into disrepair. People move on, they forget, they just get used to the new, improved landscape. It’s a pointless, old, shabby shed. No one comes here anymore. If my Dad wasn’t knocking it down it would probably just fall down anyway.

CONNIE: Well I feel a bit sorry for it.

HENRY: For a village hall?

CONNIE: Yes, just because it’s old or is a bit out of shape and has been a bit neglected doesn’t mean it should be destroyed.

FI: But we were going to use it – all four of us. The business start -up, my fitness class, his self – help group and you came for a rehearsal ... we were all going to use it.

CONNIE: The date on the notice – it says they’re planning to knock it down today. We have to go and tell them to stop - we have to try and fight this.

MAX: *(Struggling to open the doors)* These doors are locked mate – you got the keys?  
*As he says this there is a loud sound effect of bulldozers and the walls start to shudder and move in on them.*  
*Chairs are being pushed up against the characters as they become trapped and squashed centre stage.*

*The four characters are trapped and are very panicked. The Chair Chorus are laughing at them and enjoying their frightened faces. Then one of the Chair chorus points Max's face up to the window.*

MAX: (He sees the window high up stage right). We can get out up there look!

Fi: How? How can we get up there?

HENRY: The chairs – quick use the chairs, stack them up.

*The Chair Chorus help them to stack the chairs up into a high stair formation.*

CONNIE: I won't be able to get up there.

MAX: Yeah you will – we'll help you.

*They start to climb up the high stack of chairs. They help each other to climb out the window.*

CONNIE: (As she gets to the top of the stair of chairs) I need my lap top...

MAX: Just leave it – leave it all behind. Come on!

*Lights are fading. The stage is engulfed in smoke and we hear the sound of bricks falling.*

*Henry is the last to climb up out of the window.*

*Off stage we hear repeated shouts over the sound of the bulldozers – "Stop!" (Connie) "Oi mate!" (Max) and "Turn it off" (Fi). There is a pause as the sound of the bulldozers stops for a moment.*

*In the dim light Henry's phone is illuminated as it starts to ring on the flip chart where he's left it – he thinks about going back for it but decides against it and turns to jump out of the window. Silence.*

CHAIR CHORUS: Do you ever go in?  
Or do you drive right past?  
Do you ever notice  
Or take any notice  
Of the notices  
On the notice board?  
You listened to our story  
So we can take some of the glory  
Our tale ends here  
For now  
So we'll say thank you  
And we'll take our bow.

*The chair chorus take a bow then they resume their hidden positions with contented smiles.*

*Blackout.*

