

INT. DRAMA CLASSROOM – DAY

The bell rings. MADISON is hunched over, packing down her copy of Twelfth Night into her bag as the room is filled with a cacophony of idle chatter and laughter, drowning out MS. TRETHERWEY'S attempts at assigning homework.

MS. TRETHERWEY

(loud, commanding)

Year 8, I want you to have a monologue memorised by Monday next week!

(directed towards

Madison)

Madison, could I have a word with you after class?

Madison freezes. Her vision blurs up as she feels her classmates' eyes shift to her. She untucks her hair from behind her ear, hiding her face behind it, and shrinks into her shoulders slightly, burrowing her face in her forearms. She's avoiding looking at anyone else in the room as her classmates leave the two alone.

MADISON

(mumbling)

Am I in any trouble, miss?

Ms. Trethewey walks around her desk to face the girl. Madison continues to avoid making eye contact with her, looking down at the back of her nails with discontent.

MS. TRETHERWEY

(gently)

Madison, are you alright? Any worries at home, any issues with friends or family?

Madison tenses up.

MADISON

Me? No.

Ms. Trethewey crouches down to Madison's eye level, trying to get her attention. Madison looks up to meet her gaze. Ms. Trethewey's disappointed face juxtaposing her gentle voice.

MS. TRETHERWEY

Madison, this isn't the first time we've had this talk. If you won't talk to me or the school counsellor, we can't help you.

MS. TRETHERWEY (CONT'D)

We are rapidly approaching the end of the spring term, and you are currently on track to fail not just drama, but also P.E. and music.

MS. TRETHERWEY (CONT'D)

I know you don't want this but if your grades aren't up by the end of May, I fear you might need to resit year 8.

Madison looks back down at her nails in disbelief. He clenches her fists and presses her eyes closed, overcome with fear. She does not respond to Ms. Trethewey.

MS. TRETHERWEY

Madison? Are you okay?

Madison tries to collect herself, wiping away some tears from her eyes. She goes to speak, but as her voice cracks she stops herself.

MADISON

(trembling,
mumbling)

M-miss, please. I... I-I can't improve in...

MS. TRETHERWEY

Madison, speak from your diaphragm, like we learned in class. I can't hear you.

Madison takes a moment to gather herself fully, taking a deep breath, trying to ignore the shrill sounds she produces, and looks back at Ms. Trethewey.

MADISON

(soft-spoken but
intelligible)

I can't improve in all my failing classes. Isn't there something I can do to please not have to resit?

Ms. Trethewey thinks for a moment. She sighs, stands up and takes off her glasses, putting them on the desk behind her before pinching the bridge of her nose.

MS. TRETHERWEY

There is one thing I can have you do, and I'm willing to give you some drama credit for it.

MS. TRETHERWEY (CONT'D)

We are still in need of an actor for the leading role in this year's theatre production.

MS. TRETHERWEY (CONT'D)

I had hoped that someone from this class would have auditioned but none of you have.

MS. TRETHERWEY (CONT'D)

If you take on this role, I will give you a passing grade in Drama. Does that sound fair?

Madison's eyes glaze over, her vision blurring. She pictures herself on stage, wearing a costume highlighting her bulging and grotesque body, making horrific and shrill noises when reading her lines. She grows nauseous at the thought.

MADISON

T-There must be something else, anything else I can do instead of that, right?

Ms. Trethewey shakes her head and grabs her glasses.

MS. TRETHERWEY

Madison, I'm sorry but you either do this, or... This is your one chance. I would not be so quick to throw it away.

Ms. Trethewey puts her hand on his shoulder.

MS. TRETHERWEY

(gentle)

Please. At least consider it. I will give you until the end of Friday to decide.

Madison, still nauseous, gets her things together in a hurry. She rushes to the bathroom, feeling an urge to throw up.

Madison
Nirren