

Level 2 Acting: Grade 4 Solo

Titles in Level 2 Acting: Grade 4 Solo

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Opening Night

The Scarlet Pimpernel

A Citizen Captain and a group of Soldiers are gathered around a brazier. Before them stands a man in ragged clothes. The Citizen Captain is trying to decipher a document, when LAMBERT enters.

LAMBERT: Just a minute.

Have you passed anyone through in the last hour?

Well, who's this one then? (*LAMBERT studies the passport*)

(*Speaks amiably*) Hallo. You're a carpenter are you?

(*The man nods*)

Travelling to Dieppe, eh? Got a job lined up? You've got relations there? I'm right, aren't I?

(*The man nods again*)

Good... Good. (*Suddenly seizes the man by the wrist*) Show me your hands... Ah. I said show-me-your-hands.

(*The man holds out his hands and, grinning, LAMBERT examines them*)

But they're soft, they don't look like a carpenter's hands, not worker's hands. No, they're more like a gentleman's hands... aristocratic... (*Suddenly reaches forward and tears open the man's shirt, then reaches to his throat and produces a crucifix*) Ah! A priest, are we? Or something grander perhaps... An Abbe perhaps? By the belly on you you've enjoyed a rich, soft life. Take him away! (*Throws the passport into the brazier*)

(*Speaks to the Citizen Captain*) Just as well I turned up isn't it! I've got a nose for them, you know! That one reeked of incense and roast duck.

There's a bunch of Englishmen helping these damned aristocrats out of the country, headed by a devil, whose name nobody knows, but who goes by the title of the Scarlet Pimpernel. Only last week, we learned that he was in Paris, the guard was doubled at all the gates and still he got through.

How? Ha! It makes me spew to think of it! It was at Bibot's gate. His Captain of the Guard turns up with a troop of soldiers, and

asks Bibot has he passed a wine-vendor through with a cart load of empty barrels. 'Yes, I have,' said Bibot, 'but don't you worry because I sounded every one of them.' 'You idiot,' says the Captain, 'of course they were empty, but the wine-vendor was the Scarlet Pimpernel, and his boy was the woman Montrichard! Which way did they go?' 'On the Calais road,' says Bibot. 'Your head will pay for this treachery,' says the Captain, 'after them boys', and away they go through the gates.

But the wine-vendor wasn't the Scarlet Pimpernel!

No. The Captain of the Guard was the Scarlet Pimpernel, and every one of his soldiers a stinking aristocrat.

By Baroness Orczy

Adapted by Beverley Cross

Daddy-Long-Legs

MATRON LIPPETT runs an orphanage and has called an orphan, Jerusha, into the office. Matron Lippett is about to inform Jerusha that a Trustee of the orphanage, who wishes to remain anonymous, has offered to pay for her college education.

MATRON LIPPETT: Sit down, Jerusha, I have something to say to you.

(Jerusha sits in the nearest chair and waits)

Did you notice the gentleman who has just gone?

(Jerusha confirms she saw his back)

He is one of our most affluent Trustees, and has given large sums of money towards the orphanage's support. I am not at liberty to mention his name; he expressly stipulated that he was to remain unknown.

This gentleman has taken an interest in several of our boys. You remember Charles Benton and Henry Freize? They were both sent through college by Mr.—er—this Trustee, and both have repaid with hard work and success the money that was so generously expended. Other payment the gentleman does not wish. Heretofore his philanthropies have been directed solely towards the boys; I have never been able to interest him in the slightest degree in any of the girls in the institution, no matter how deserving. He does not, I may tell you, care for girls.

(Jerusha nods in acknowledgment)

To-day at the regular meeting, the question of your future was brought up.

(MATRON LIPPETT allows a moment of silence to fall, then resumes in a slow, placid manner, which is extremely trying to Jerusha's suddenly tightened nerves)

Usually, as you know, the children are not kept after they are sixteen, but an exception was made in your case. You had finished our school at fourteen, and having done so well in your studies—not always, I must say, in your conduct—it was determined to let you go on in the village high school. Now you are finishing that, and of course the orphanage cannot be responsible any longer for your support. As it is, you have had two years more than most.

GRADE 4 SOLO

LEVEL 2 ACTING

As I say, the question of your future was brought up and your record was discussed—thoroughly discussed.

(MATRON LIPPETT brings accusing eyes to bear upon Jerusha)

Of course the usual disposition of one in your place would be to put you in a position where you could begin to work, but you have done well in school in certain branches; it seems that your work in English has even been brilliant. Miss Pritchard, who is on our visiting committee, is also on the school board; she has been talking with your rhetoric teacher, and made a speech in your favour. She also read aloud an essay that you had written entitled, 'Blue Wednesday'.

It seemed to me that you showed little gratitude in holding up to ridicule the institution that has done so much for you. Had you not managed to be funny I doubt if you would have been forgiven. But fortunately for you, Mr.—, that is, the gentleman who has just gone—appears to have an immoderate sense of humour. On the strength of that impertinent paper, he has offered to send you to college.

By Jean Webster

The Power of the Dog

LISA, a brilliant but difficult sixth former, is being encouraged to stay on at school by Vivien, her English teacher. Vivien is waiting for Lisa to show up for an extra tutorial. Lisa turns up late, as usual, and Vivien asks if there is any chance of her mum coming to see her.

LISA: Nah! She doesn't like schools. Give her panic attacks.
(Pause) And I don't want you to come to my house...

(LISA turns her back. Then changes the subject with great energy)

Listen. I reckon you owe me ten quid. I went to see that 'Midsummer Night's Dream'. It was rubbish! Helena was about thirty-five, kept chucking herself all over the place – tossing her hair back and flinging her arms about. You know – just like young people always do when we're in love. Nearly ruptured herself. She was about six inches shorter than Hermia as well, so she'd got these gross high heels and Hermia had to bend at the knees all through the quarrel scene.

And the Mechanicals wandered about in the audience and talked to us. I hate that! And Peter Quince sat in the Stalls and shouted his lines from there. And the fairies all lived in cardboard boxes and had tattoos. And it went on for nearly four hours. I reckon ours was better. And I couldn't afford it!...

Hey and guess what! Theseus and Hippolyta played Oberon and Titania! Isn't that original? Everybody liked it except me. I wanted to get up and kill them all. Bunch of no-hopers!... It was everything you say was wrong... I really love that play... I don't think that this had any respect. And it wasn't – magic...

(She stops, lost in thought for a moment)

I know. 'the best in this kind are but shadows and the worst no worse if imagination amend them'... It must be your imagination then, not theirs.'

(She is very still. Her face becomes a mask)

(Very quietly) I like...magic. (Briskly) I suppose I'm talking rubbish – everybody else says it's brilliant. And they're paid to be in the imagination business, aren't they? And I've got no right to criticize them.

By Ellen Dryden

The Burnhill Pit Disaster

It is the late 1920s. WALTER lives in a mining cottage somewhere in the UK. He is alone in his home and is frantically searching for his cap and gloves.

WALTER: *(Talking to himself)* Awww Mum, where did you put them? I can't find them anywhere! It's freezing out there. I can hear you now, *(He mimics his Mum)* 'A place for everything and everything in its place.' A boy's got to have his cap and gloves when he's got three miles to walk to school in two feet of snow, you know? *(He finds them in the drawer)* Here they are! Now, just to grab my sandwich, put my boots on and I'm off.

(Betty, a young girl of 16 or 17 years old enters the room)

Hello Betty, what are you doing here? Nobody's at home, only me. I've just been doing my chores. Mum left me a note telling me to bring the washing in. I was trying to hide behind the sheets so no-one saw me. You're a bit early waiting for Kenny; he's on shift with Dad and won't be back for ages yet. Mum's gone there because my dopey brother Kenny forgot his sandwich, so she's hoping to give it to one of the men on the next shift, to be able to pass it on to him. Honestly, I don't know why you want to marry him, he'd forget his own head if it was loose. You must be getting soon to fixing a date for the wedding. Kenny's been doing loads of extra shifts and he says you've been able to save a bit, helping your mum out with her sewing orders. I can see you two living a life of luxury if this keeps going on.

No Betty, don't worry about him losing his job at the pit. I know him and Dad have been arguing about things but Dad's just worried. Kenny is really well in with Jacko the foreman so there's nothing to worry about there. Good job I don't have anything to worry about for a while, still at school for a year or two. Best thing about it is that it's warm in the classroom, well it would be with fifty of us crammed into it. Mustn't moan though. Did you hear about what happened to poor Arthur's mum on Fourth Street? Poor thing thought she'd fallen asleep and he couldn't wake her up. People are saying she died of starvation.

Brrrr, it's as cold in here as it is outside. I've been outside to bring in the coal, we're nearly running out, so is the whole street.

A gang of us are going to the beach tonight to see if we can get some sea coal. Oh well, see you later Betty.

(WALTER watches her leave and sits down to put on his boots. Betty comes running back in to the room)

Betty, what are you doing back?

What do you mean?

No Betty, no, no the pit is safe! What explosion, they must have heard something else!

(Pause as WALTER takes in what he has been told. He runs towards the door)

MUM! MUM!

By Deborah Meki

Almost

A TEENAGER is asking to take their parent's car out even though they haven't passed their driving test yet.

TEENAGER: Dad, you will let me take the car myself. I'm going to take my test in two weeks and I know I'll pass.

Yeah, technically you should be in the car with me... technically I have to wait two weeks to do my test, but I'll get my licence then... *(Interrupted as Dad says no)*

You know I can drive, you told me I'm better than Mum. I can three-point turn, parallel-park, and I observe the Highway Code like a religion. So it's not irresponsible to let me drive, because you know I'm good at it.

(Dad refuses to allow the TEENAGER to drive and asks why it is so important)

This is so unfair. You're going to ruin me socially. The coolest kids in the year, the ones whose parents are all probably making huge donations at Mum's charity do tonight, who live in the massive houses on the hill and won't talk to me. They started talking to me because they needed a lift to the dance. And I said I can take you. And they asked if I'd passed my driving test and I said 'yeah'. And then they said, 'cool'. And I've been hanging out with them every day this week, and they're all so excited.

(Dad refuses again)

(Wistfully) It was well thought out. You and Mum were supposed to be at her charity thing tonight... you weren't supposed to have a fever and be stuck at home.

(Becoming angry) If I let them down...

If I don't get in that car right now and go pick them up and take them to the dance...

(Becoming angrier) I'll be a social outcast. I'll hear about this till we leave school. I will be marked, mocked, and probably shunned. My entire high school experience will become hell.

(Dad tells the TEENAGER not to overreact)

I'm not being dramatic. I'm being accurate, Dad. This is how things go.

(Trying to be persuasive) So I'm begging you... just... just go to sleep. You have a fever you know. You need your rest. Just, go to sleep now and I'll... I'll still be here when you wake up in exactly three hours. Right before Mum gets back.

Please Dad. My life depends on it.

By Gabriel Davis

Blood, Sweat and Fears

Ben, Curtis and Ashley work in a fast food restaurant. HAYSE is their manager. Ben, Curtis and Ashley are playing football with a cardboard box when Hayse walks into the room.

HAYSE: *(Comes in carrying a small watering can)* Are you feeling quite well, Curtis?

(Seeing Ben) I can't believe this! Ben, what the hell are you doing here? You're meant to be cleaning out the freezer room. You had your break an hour ago. Get in there will you? I'm sick and tired of finding you sitting about. Sometimes I get the impression your whole heart isn't in this job. You haven't got anywhere near your personal target high for this week. No wonder that this branch is doing so abysmally in the ratings.

(Ben apologises) You'd better just buck your ideas up, and get on with the work in the freezer. You might just make up some of those lost points. You're going to remain at band one if you don't pull your socks up. Curtis pulled his socks up, and look he's on his second band already, aren't you Curtis?

(Curtis agrees)

This crew has got to pull more tightly together to make a more homogeneous unit. The sign that my crew has thrown itself, body and soul into their work and this branch, will only be evident when we reach that top position in the ratings.

(Ben exits)

And that number one spot is even more important now. I've just had news through from head office that whichever branch holds that top spot in the ratings in January, will be the branch privileged to send one of its crew members to New York, to represent London in the fifth International Fast Food Festival that is being held at Amalgamated Hamburger University.

(Unenthusiastic reply from staff)

Your powers of deception are convincing. If I didn't know my crew better, I'd swear you were showing a marked lack of interest.

(To Curtis) You weren't listening?

(Curtis says that he was and repeats what HAYSE has just said)

Good. You were taking it in.

(Nervous laugh) Well there are two initiative schemes that the omnipotent powers at head office have issued, and that I think can be used to better our position in the ratings. One is a new comment slip that the customers will be encouraged to fill out and this will request comments on such things as food, service and individual crew members etc. That will help me to see who, out of my crew, are sub-standard, and I will thus act accordingly. Now, the second thing is a sales gimmick. From Monday the 12th of this month, models of the Starship will be given away free with every Kirk Quarter Pounder sold, with cheese, that is. When ten of these Starships have been collected by a customer, and brought back to the store, they will be given a free Quarter Pounder, without cheese that is. But first they must recite the item's full title, and total ingredients which are...? Come on. Come on.

(Curtis and Ashley, bored and in unison, recite ingredients)

Excellent! And what does the Captain expect from the crew?

(Curtis and Ashley in unison say: Service with a smile)

Well I hope your enthusiasm will be as adept as your memory.

Good, good. *(HAYSE laughs and claps)* Right Ashely, it's back to the Bridge for you isn't it? And Curtis, litter patrol outside. *(Goes to leave)* Come on, come on. Get your skates on. *(HAYSE goes to the potted plant and waters it from a small watering can, as Ben comes in)* Finished Ben? Well you're on swab duty, aren't you? Get a move on.

(HAYSE leaves)

By Maria Oshodi

Journey to X

TARA has just jumped off a bus in a hurry with her friend Sarah. She is out of breath. They have joined their other friends, Penny and Louise, and she is telling them about her bus journey and how she almost stole a lady's bag.

TARA: (Tries to breathe) Does anyone have any water?
(Louise hands her a bottle. TARA drinks. Her friends are discussing what happened on the bus)

No, it wasn't. Shut up.

Her bag was open.

Her bag was open.

We were sitting on the bus, alright. As normal. Just chatting about the credit card and whether my mum would notice if we used hers or whether she'd just think it was my brother again. And she lets him off everything cos you know she's scared he'll try and – you know – again if she says a word. And we were saying that even if we could use her card and even if we had that sorted there's still the matter of the hostel and the bus into London and the five hundred and thirty-five. And we were just talking about that and what we were going to do – when I looked over and saw –

Sitting opposite. And she's reading a book...

...It wasn't the Bible, it was Marian Keyes. But she was reading it. Totally involved.

Yeah, she was clearly a bit weird cos I saw that she'd left her bag open. Like it was just sitting there wide open on the seat and all her stuff was falling out of it, tissues and mints, I...

(She's interrupted by Sarah recounting her version of events)

Shut up.

(Gives Sarah a look) And her purse was just lying there in the middle of it all and there was this big wedge of cash in it. Just there. Just – out in the open. Like anyone could've – you know.

There was a load of it. She must have just been to the bank or something. And I didn't plan it.

(Sarah agrees that the attempted robbery was not planned)

Like I didn't really think about it even. I just – did it. I reached over and I put my hand inside her bag. Like, really really quietly and no one was noticing. And I had my fingers round some of the notes and everything was totally fine –

(Sarah says the passenger started screaming)

Yeah, she just – grabs my hand out of nowhere and I tried to pull away but I had the money and I couldn't get her off.

And the bus had stopped and the doors were open, but because she was screaming so much the driver was trying to close them.

(Sarah explains how they jammed themselves into the door)

...And push ourselves through. And right up to the last second she was clinging on to my hand and trying to pull back the money.

I didn't push her. I just gave her a little – shove.

And by that time the bus had stopped properly and the driver had got out and he was shouting something after us but I didn't look back, cos if I looked back I would've panicked so we just legged it and legged it and the woman kept screaming and screaming but we just kept running and running and running until we got...here.

By Nancy Harris

RiseUp

CJ is in current-day England telling friends of the civil rights movement in America. While speaking, CJ realises how events of the past connect with the present.

CJ: In eighteen hundred and sixty five,
Slavery is abolished in the USA.

(Interruption)

Don't stop me now, I'm on a roll.

90 years later young Emmett Till

Is killed

For whistling at a white woman, So they say,

In Mississippi, southern USA.

This side of the line segregation doing fine,

In restaurants and rest rooms, schools, stores, buses.

(A friend mentions that CJ forgot Rosa Parks)

December 55 and the Montgomery Bus Boycott got started by

One black woman who refused to stand up.

She was tired from work going home on the bus. She was tired of giving way, of making no fuss. She don't cuss, Just Refuse To move.

1957 and nine black kids

Desegregate a high school in Little Rock. Takes troops and press and national guard. It's hard

To get to school in Little Rock.

If you're black, Back

In the day.

3 years on in North Carolina, Black students begin,

To sit in,

Sit down and refuse

To move

Till facilities are the same for all Who study there,

Whose brains are pink, Who think

For themselves, not in black or white,

Who think in colour about what's right.

May 61 and CORE decides

To challenge interstate travel with the Freedom Rides.

63, back in Birmingham

Is the Children's Crusade in Alabam

Assaulting kids with dogs and hosing them down

To the ground,

Locking them in jail downtown. Thousands of kids washed off the street,

Small feet

Marching for justice.

August, all races march on Washington DC.

And Martin Luther King he

Tells the world of his dream

That injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,

That what affects one directly, affects another indirectly.

His dream, his dream, we all could share.

In Selma 1965 comes Bloody Sunday where

Civil rights marchers are beaten by police.

Three years later, 1968,

The dream is shot

And Martin Luther King's brave soul flies free

From a balcony of the Lorraine Motel,

Memphis, Tennessee.

And the whole world is watching.

Wow. Now I get it! This stuff happening makes the next stuff happen.

By Lisa Evans

His Main Passion was Football

AUBREY is frantically searching for something in the bedroom and comes across a scarf. Aubrey would rather have not found the scarf.

AUBREY: (*Emptying out a cardboard box*) And that's when I found it. I wasn't really looking for it – Jonny's scarf. I stole it years ago.

Let's not get into this blame thing, I know it's wrong to steal. But all I intended at the start was to borrow it, just to show it to my friends, then I'd have put it back before Jonny even noticed it had gone.

(*Hugging the scarf*) It seems like ages ago, and I still blame myself to this day. If I'd not taken the scarf, none of this would have happened. Jonny was my hero. He was seven years older than me. I worshipped the ground he walked on. Jonny was already eight when mum met my dad. And he was bright. No I mean really bright. He did very well at school. But his main passion was football – Leeds United.

He was obsessed. What he didn't know about football wasn't worth knowing. He knew every player who'd ever played for Leeds United, all the managers, every game they'd ever played. He had all the kit. Shorts, socks, hat, gloves, water bottle, snack box, everything. But his most prized possession was this scarf. It was Cantona's – you know... Eric Cantona... from the 1980s. Dad bought it at auction for hundreds of pounds, and he wore it religiously to every game.

It was show and tell at school you see, and Peter Johnson had brought David Beckham's autograph in. He was such a show off. Then I thought of Jonny's scarf. I thought that'd wipe the smile off his face. But I knew Jonny wouldn't let me have it. The only way was to borrow it. I don't know how I managed to sneak it out that Friday morning without anyone noticing... Not even Mum. It was brilliant. I felt so important. I was buzzing all day. The only trouble is that I'd left it at school, so when it came to Leeds versus Manchester United the next day the scarf was nowhere to be seen.

I don't know much about what happened that day. I kept mostly out of the way. All I know is that Jonny went crazy looking for it everywhere. I've never seen him like that. And I knew they were late leaving – very late. Dad had gone off without him, so he'd arranged to get a lift with a friend who also had a season ticket.

It was the knock on the door that I remember most vividly. (*Becoming wistful*) Mum was in the kitchen making shepherd's pie.

The two policemen were waiting on the step outside. He never made it to the match. The driver that hit them was three times over the limit. He didn't stand a chance.

The scarf stayed at school for ages. I couldn't bear to look at it. One of the teachers just gave it to me one day.

'Oh isn't this yours', he said one break time and put it in my hand. I felt sick and hid it at the bottom of my bag. And I've not seen it since. Until today. I still can't face telling anyone. Not yet.

(*Folding the scarf*) I'm putting it back in the box. Where it belongs.

By Nicola Hipps

Opening Night

DYLAN is about to make a stage debut and is standing in the wings of the stage waiting.

DYLAN: This is it! Opening night! The moment I have been waiting for. The moment I have been working towards for months. My debut as a performer. I'm about to tread the boards! To become a thespian! It may only be a small role, but I'm beginning the journey of my dreams. And one day, who knows? I could be playing the lead!

Any minute now... wait for my cue line... wait for it... oh! I need the toilet. Is there time? No, of course there isn't. Just ignore it – it's only first night nerves. Okay, here it comes... cue line... entrance!

(Walks out onto the stage with a flourish. There is a pause. Opens mouth and then closes it again)

Oh no. I've gone blank. What's my first line? *My first line!* Oh, come on!... I know it, for goodness sake, I've been rehearsing it for long enough! It's... it's... *(Holds head and starts to panic)* nothing! Nothing! I can't remember a thing! Oh no, this can't be happening. Okay, just say something – anything – *(Getting cross)* anything at all from this scene! As long as I say something it will be alright – get things moving – give the other actors something to work with.

(Looks around the stage fearfully) They're all staring at me! Do they think that's going to help? Don't they realize that's just going to make it worse? Ooh, my head is starting to swim. Oh no, I might faint. No! I've got to hold it together! Breathe... Something will come to me in a minute. Just give it time...

Hey, what's happening? They're carrying on without me! They've skipped my lines and they're carrying on... as if I'm not even here. How dare they! They didn't even give me a chance! Don't they realize this is my big moment?

I have to take back control of this situation. It's not too late. I'll just have a quick look at my script – I left it just over there in the wings. All I have to do is casually move – over – to... *(Starts edging slowly sideways)* Hey! Who turned the lights out? Blackout? You mean it's all over? But I didn't even...

Wait a minute – the audience is clapping. They want to show their appreciation. Well, I'd better give them what they want. After all, it would be rude not to!

(Bows lavishly)

By Caroline Petherbridge