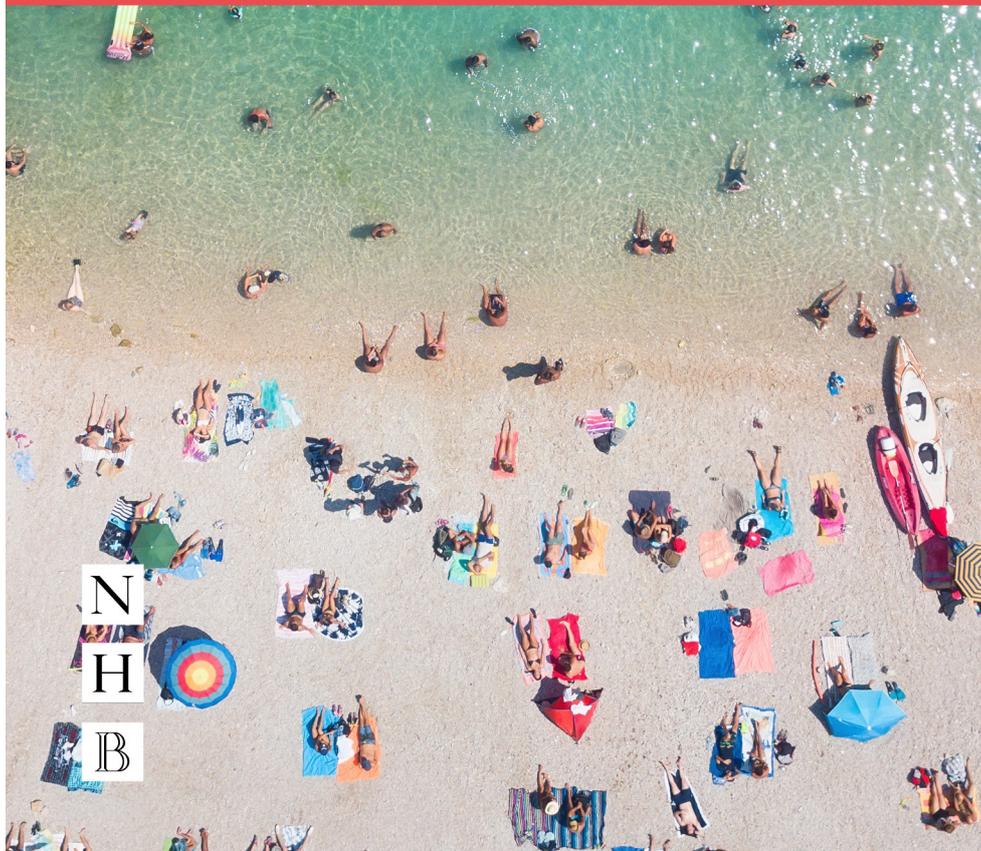


multiplay
drama

As We Face the Sun

Kit Withington



N
H
B

Characters

The play can be performed by any number of actors. These character names were used for the initial performance of the play. Please feel free to use, remove, add to, or ignore them.

SAM
JAMIE
BRIAR-ROSE
JASMINE
MICHAEL
CHERRY
TASH
LORRY
SHANNON
JACOB
EVIE
COLE
TAYANI
WHITNEY
CHILLI

Notes

The lines should be allocated by the company.

All pronouns can be changed according to line allocation and/or the company's preferences.

Dates and times can be changed but characters jumps from past to present should occur ten years apart.

References to local places can be altered according to the company.

Local slang can be altered according to the chosen setting.

References to music can be altered according to the chosen time and/or place.

Notes on the Text

A blank space (____) is where character's names can be added.

A forward slash (/) means a small shift in time.

A dash (–) at the end of a line means the next line comes in quickly.

When a dash (–) occurs alone on a line it indicates that a character is waiting for a response.

Any lines in 'quotation marks' are when characters mimic the voices of other people.

All actors on stage.

One

Two thousand and twelve.

Fourteen.

About to turn fifteen.

We're in school.

Year 10.

St Winifred's.

In Shepherd's Bush.

It's massive.

People say it looks like a bit like a space ship.

'This is our school. Let peace dwell here.'

We're getting ready for our GCSE mocks.

Maths, English, Spanish.

French.

German.

Drama.

P.E.

Music.

History.

Geography.

Art.

Computer Science.

Double Science.

Triple Science.

Urgh.

People keep saying things like

'You've got your whole lives ahead of you'

And we laugh and think what are you even on about?

What does that even mean?

Cos everything is happening right here –

In this very moment.

At weekends we stomp around White City

Hammersmith –

Acton –

Ladbroke Grove and Shepherd's Bush.

We move in groups and –

Can be easily divided into:

The ones who make up dances –

The ones who ride around on bikes –

The ones who watch *Twilight* –

The ones who love football –

The ones who listen to Fall Out Boy and –

The ones who listen to R&B –

The ones who wear make up –

The ones who want to be on the *X Factor* –

The ones who draw –

The ones who skate –

The ones who play video games –

The ones who don't talk very much and –

The ones who never stop

Talking, arguing, shouting, screaming, fighting, messing –

Us lot are Us Lot. We walk in step together. And our arms slip through each other's arms like they were made to fit there.

We find ourselves in parks

In churchyards –

Hanging off cinema seats –

Climbing onto buses –

Clinging to glass doors in chip shops.

We tell each other stories.

We tell each other secrets.

We tell each other everything.

We are Year 10.

And everyone at St Winnie's knows that the best thing about being in Year 10 is –

The Trips.

Natural History Museum.

Science and Industry Museum.

West End Theatre.

And best of all.

The Big Trips.

The Summer Trip.

Where we get to go to the seaside.

But first up.

The Winter Trip.

Where we get to see the countryside.

Something about being fourteen or fifteen means you're ready to see ENGLAND.

It's actually meant to be about having a nice time before the pressure, reality and impending doom of your GCSEs comes round to smack you in the –

I wake up bone-tired.

Winter tired.

When the cold's got deep inside.

My mum, as usual, has left my school socks hanging on the radiator to get warm.

Mum's knuckles on the bedroom door.

'You're gonna miss the winter trip.'

And I'm flying out of bed like I'm not gonna miss The Winter Trip. No *way* am I missing The Winter Trip. It's all we've talked about for months. And I'm out of my pyjamas and into my uniform.

Toast dripping with butter.

Chocolate biscuit dipped in tea.

Weetabix goes round in the microwave to turn mushy.

Hands slide in the fridge then I'm kicking my big brother cos he's eaten my packed lunch.

Mum's packing my overnight bag. She's folding my fleecy pyjamas nicely at the top.

Mum's car. Heating on.

School car park.

Kiss Mum goodbye.

I'm being extra nice to her cos I want Air Max for Christmas.

You in your baby-blue beanie. Hair sticking out at the back. Your arm bends into my arm and we move towards the class. You telling me you're tired cos you stayed up listening to tunes on your iPod all night.

You asking me:

‘Have you heard the new Jessie J song?’

‘No. I’ve not heard it.’ I tell you, feeling annoyed at myself for not listening to it yet.

You pull out a tangle of headphones and stuff them into my hands.

‘It’s sick’

you’re telling me.

‘You’re gonna love it.’

Then I’m listening and Jessie J is killing it and I’m absolutely loving it.

‘I knew it.’ You’re saying, ‘I knew it.’

‘Come on you lot.’

Miss in a sheepskin coat carrying a clipboard in folded arms.

And there it is.

Wow.

The best thing about a school trip.

The best thing about being in Year 10.

The coach.

The coach!

The coach!!!

It’s sits there parked at angle –

Waiting for us like a black and red monster.

Big growling engine spits into action.

‘Ready to hit the road!’

The Winter Trip!!!

Us lot on the back row.

Yeah YOU lot on the back row.

Yeah swapping with YOU LOT every half an hour.

Us with our pockets full of sweets

Pockets burstin’.

Hands jugglin’.

Passing our stuff down the aisle to everyone else.

Capri Suns in blazer pockets.

Orange straws to the left.

Sip, sip, sip.

Miss at the front shouting something at the boys about stopping swearing.

‘You’ve a mind like a gutter.’

She shouts to the back and they roll about laughing.

‘A what, Miss?’

‘I said you’ve a – ahhhh’

She’s smiling though.

Yeah, Miss is cool.

Sir’s next to her in a bright red anorak. He looks so young next to Miss.

Sir is our Teaching Assistant.

Fresh out of uni.

Wants to be our friend.

Wants to be an actor.

No he doesn’t.

He does. He said.

Yeah, he does, I’ve seen him in Holby.

He played a man who fell off a roof.

The driver in a shirt and tie sits behind the wheel.

‘Say thank you to Gary,’ Miss says as we turn out of the car park. ‘He’s missing the football for this.’

Thaaaaaaaank youuuuuuu, Garrrrry!

Gary puts the radio on.

I *swear* Miss fancies him, you know.

He lets us play Kisstory and we shout –

TURN IT UP!

TURN IT UP!

TURN IT UP!

And it turns into

GARY, GARY, TURN IT UP!!!

Miss says ‘don’t be cheeky’ but Gary’s laughing

GARY, GARY, TURN IT UP!!!

and he’s cranking it right up –

Calvin Harris plays and even Miss is wiggling in her seat.

I bet Miss gets smashed at the weekend.

Nah, Miss is well old.

Miss likes this one, don't you, Miss?

We're screaming ARE WE THERE YET?

But really really really hoping we're not there yet cos we're HAVING SO MUCH FUN.

Screaming

Shouting

Wailing

Biting into sweets

Sipping Capri –

'SIT DOWN!' Miss goes

As Us Lot swap with YOU LOT for the SECOND time.

'Sorry, Miss'

Calvin Harris plays five times as we make our way to the north of England.

Sailing down motorways then charging past the edge of cities we've hardly heard of.

Chugging through towns with funny names.

Squeezing through villages with tiny lanes.

Calvin Harris pipes up again and a fire lights inside us and we're screaming again –

Screaming, shouting, wailing, biting into sweets –

We get tired when the coach slows and hits the sharp end of the the northern weather.

Rain slices against the windows.

Windscreen wipers are giving it plenty and

Rain bounces up off the road like needles.

You say the weather is always like this in the north.

The roads are smaller now.

And the cars are less.

The mountains start looking fierce around us.

And a flurry of snow starts falling.

And we keep on singing.

Singing and shouting –

And pointing at the mountains.

Are we gonna climb one of these, Miss?

And Miss is like –

‘Not in this weather.’

What *will* we do, Miss?

Yeah, Miss, what *will* we do?

‘Not sure yet.’

I hope there’s a caff, Miss.

‘Oh me too.’

I’d love a hot chocolate, Miss. Wouldn’t you?

‘Oh yeah’

And Jason Derulo comes on now –

Jason Derulo –

And whoa we’re slipping, slipping, sliding slightly on the road. I hear miss shout

‘Wooh!’

as if she’s sliding doing the cha cha slide like it’s funny but she’s looking worried a bit.

And some of us start holding onto the seats in front of us. And you’re by the window and I catch a glimpse of you and you’re sipping on your Capri still. And you’re looking right out the window at the snow, loads of it now, white sheets rolling out as far as we can see. And there’s this light bouncing right off it all. We’ve not seen other cars for ages. We’ve not seen anyone else for ages. And there’s this light still bouncing, bouncing and Miss is saying –

‘WHOA’

now not

‘WOOH.’

And we’re –

‘WHOA.

WHOA.’

The black and red monster cuts through ice and rain and snow.

The Green English hills are white as far as the eye can see.

The monster lurches forward –

Sliding down wet roads –

Us St Winnie’s kids cling to the seats.

The monster slips

And Miss is at it

'FUCKING HELL.'

Miss swore!!!

Flip. Slide. Crunch.

Smashed glass.

Hot metal.

And the –

Screaming, shouting, wailing, biting –

St Winnie's blazers line the wet road.

There's Miss in her sheepskin coat and

And Sir his bright red anorak.

And Gary in his shirt and tie.

Us lot press fingers on cuts and bruises

I've broken my arm.

My ankle is twisted.

I've lost my shoe.

Miss does a count.

Thirty-five.

Should be thirty-six.

Thirty-six that's everyone including her, sir and the driver.

Miss does the count again.

Sir joins in.

Should be thirty-six.

Should be.

Then there's you.

A creature in the snow.

Why are you lying there perfectly like that?

Like you were made to fit on top of it.

Why are you?

Miss is crying and shaking her head like it's really really bad.

The creature. Flung from her window and into the snow.

She had her belt on.

She can't have done.

She did.

Are you sure?

I think she did.

Might not have done.

We were doing dances in our seat –

We kept swapping.

Miss takes her sheepskin coat and puts it over you like a warm duvet.

Can't be.

Not one of –

Us lot.

Not you.

Layla.

A little bird floats over then, stops, watches.

It pokes it's black beak against Miss's sheepskin coat.

Nobody stops it. Just let it poke a couple of times before Miss comes and starts panicking and shooing and –

On it goes, little grey-white thing, hops away and flies back over the water like it hasn't just seen everything shattered by the roadside.

Our parents come and pick us up.

Mum's car.

Heating on.

I listen to the Jessie J song the whole way home.

Two

Twenty Twenty Three.

Twenty-five.

About to turn twenty-six.

July.

Early morning.

And the light is like honey over Hammersmith Bridge.

We're twenty-five!!!

Twenty-six.

Some of us still see each other.

Yeah, some of us do.

Some of us moved to different parts of the country.

Some of us stayed right where we are.

Some of us don't feel different at all.

Some of us wish we felt the same as we used to.

We keep coming back.

Shepherd's Bush.

St Winnie's gates.

'This is our school. Let peace dwell here.'

Chip shop front.

Shopping centre.

Churchyard tree.

Cinema doors.

Park bench.

Block of flats.

Back into the grooves of our childhood.

Old beats.

Old rhythms.

Mum's house.

Little brother's bedroom.

Mum's knuckles on my bedroom door.

Morning stretches in my rented living room are interrupted by my old school friend telling me I should really think about having a cold shower before getting into all of that.

Early train cutting through the country like an arrow.

That it has multiple health benefits and will set me up for that day. I say don't you have some chicken to marinate?

Dad's asking me if I want sausage and egg for breakfast? I'm getting up in a minute!

'Course you are' he says and gets back to the telly.

AirPods are plugged in and I'm thumbing through Spotify for the right playlist.

Morning Beats Playlist.

Classical Garden Beats playlist.

Hot Gym Girl playlist.

Songs to Make You Feel Alive playlist.

And it's all James Blake and Cleo Sol and Daniel Caesar and FKA Twigs and I listen and I melt into my seat.

Red Velvet Cake. Homemade. Makeshift cake box on my knee.

My mum tells me she thinks it's lovely when you see people carrying cakes on trains or buses because it makes her wonder who they're for or what they're celebrating. I try to remember this as lumps of cream cheese frosting go sliding down my thigh.

Gunnersbury Park. Watching the runners turn around the water. I lift the baby. My baby. I lift *my baby* out of the pram and hold her up so she can see everything. The trees, the grass, another baby, a bird, a swan, et cetera. I hold her so her head is up here and she can look right out. Sometimes her eyes will find something, a worm or a robin and I wonder what she's thinking, glaring at a new thing in front of her like that. When the baby cries I whisper stories to her and tell her what her mummy was like when she was little. How she'd come to this park with her friends to gossip and make up dances and talk to boys. I'm a mum. A whole mother. A family. A flat. A baby girl. A life partner. A credit card. Maternity leave. A very expensive pram. A machine that rocks the baby so I don't have to. A small car. A baby seat. A savings account. A name down on a nursery school. A. I can't remember when I last did anything to my hair. I can't. I never ever do anything with it. Snatch it back. Leave it. I can't remember when I last saw one of my friends. Properly Saw Them. Not bumped into them on the High Street. Not said: 'Yeah the baby is fine thanks, she's really coming on.' But properly saw them? I can't remember. Last year. Probably. Yes it will have been. I look at pictures of my friends on Instagram and wonder what I'd be like on their nights out. Would I be the last up? Would I be throwing up and ruining things? Would I be... enjoying myself? Sometimes I imagine what I might wear to that stripped back Scandinavian place they seem to find themselves in. Would it be loose? Would it be casual and loose and thrown together? Should Mummy go shopping? Should she? Should she? I think she might be nodding? Is this baby nodding her head? Are you? The baby's eyes fall on a squirrel. She laughs. She laughs and she looks back at me as if it might be the first time I've ever seen a squirrel too.

_____ irons his party shirt in the kitchen of his childhood home.

_____ scans shops for last minute new shoes.

_____ finds a bright, expensive dress.

_____ sticks hot feet into heeled sandals and clip clops round shop to test them out.

_____ makes a coleslaw. Big massive bowlfuls of mayonnaise-drenched coleslaw.

_____ is going through her old stuff.

_____ is taking an early morning swim.

Backstroke.

Breaststroke.

Backstroke again.

_____ finds a black dress.

A Nick Hern Book

As We Face the Sun first published in Great Britain in 2023 as a digital exclusive by Nick Hern Books Limited, The Glasshouse, 49a Goldhawk Road, London W12 8QP

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Cover image: [biletskiyevgeniy.com/Shutterstock](https://www.biletskiyevgeniy.com/Shutterstock)

Designed and typeset by Nick Hern Books, London

ISBN 978 1 78850 735 6

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