***THE SPY GAME***

**By Alex Bryant and Hal Miller**

***THE SPY GAME***

Runtime: 45 mins

Cast: 9F, 5M, 25X, plus or minus 10

**Introduction**

The Spy Game is a classic new-girl-in-school story with a twist: this school is for spies-in-training, a world where gossip and rivalry quickly descend into subterfuge and violence. Classic tropes from high school dramas and spy movies are thrown together in as many fun ways as possible. The characters are divided between the eccentric teachers and cliquey students of Cheshire Island Academy, and the slapstick and inept SPADE organization, intent on bring it down. The SPADE roles in particular are very flexible and cross-castable. The play is written with an American high school location in mind, but with a little adjustment could be given a British boarding school feel.

 The play offers lots of opportunity for action sequences, where simple technical effects can be brought to life by a backstage team, and unarmed or blunt-weapon fight sequences. The play works well in conjunction with stage fighting workshops; you could use single scenes to give fight sequences a bit more character, or encourage students to work on their own simple fight sequences which are then built into the complete play. The play will most appeal to an age range of 6-14. The parts vary in size, but are as evenly spread as possible, with multiple ‘main’ roles, to ease line learning pressure, and even the smallest roles are written to allow those actors a moment of glory!

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But if you don’t get around to doing anything, PLEASE let me know that you’re staging this script, because it’d make me happy to know that it’s getting put to good use!

**Synopsis**

*This isn’t the end. This is just the beginning…*

Cheshire Island Academy is no ordinary school. It is a top-secret school for spies, to which only the most talented students are admitted, so it’s understandable that new girl Lacie Kingsley feels a little out of place. But it soon becomes clear that she was admitted for a reason. A secret enemy is trying to bring down the Academy from the inside, and Lacie is caught in the middle of a game with hidden opponents and ever-higher stakes.

**Character list**

**CHESHIRE ISLAND ACADEMY**

Lacie Kingsley (Main, F): The put-upon and average-achieving new girl to the school. Nobody can understand what Lacie’s doing there, least of all Lacie herself.

Jamey Bishopswood (Main, F): Hyper-intelligent inventor who takes Lacie under her wing.

Becca Knight (Main, F): Computer whizz and Jamey’s faithful friend.

Head (Big, F): Rose McQueen, academy headmistress and illustrious former spy.

Ace (Medium, X): Rose McQueen’s mollycoddled dog, never far from her lap.

Ms Milliner (Medium, X): Unhinged combat teacher. The price of failing her classes can be painful.

Mr March x 9 (Small, X): Eccentric disguise teacher who most of the students don’t have time for. *Mr March changes his facial appearance every time he appears; sometimes mid-scene. 9 different actors are scripted to play him, all requiring the same easy-to-recognize costume, or at least a costume part that can be swapped between them. For smaller casts, 2 actors could play Mr March, alternating appearances.*

Lily McQueen (Big, F): The conceited and high-achieving daughter of the headmistress.

Ashley (Medium, F): An iron-fisted friend of Lily’s.

Kate (Medium, F): A quick-thinking friend of Lily’s.

Chloe (Medium, F): A sharp-shooting friend of Lily’s.

Jack Diamond (Big, M): A debonair and charismatic James Bond-in-waiting.

Tray (Small, M): A charming friend of Jack’s.

Brent (Small, M): A smooth-talking friend of Jack’s.

Trent (Small, M): A preening friend of Jack’s.

Emily (Small, X): A novice nightmare.

Freddie (Small, X): A silent but deadly student.

Helen (Small, X): A terror-in-waiting.

Jim (Small, X): A cool and collected student.

 *Number of small student parts can be increased by dividing lines*

Mother (Medium, F): Lacie’s mother loves to tell anecdotes that use her daughter as the punchline.

Father (Medium, M): Lacie’s jocular father is always in high spirits.

Guard x 2 (Non-speaking, X): Faithful but dim-witted keepers of the peace.

*Security systems can be created by backstage crew, or treated as non-speaking acting parts*

Walrus (Small, X): Gung-ho CIA agent.

Carpenter (Small, X): Rough and ready CIA agent.

**SPADES**

Two (Big, X): The de facto leader of the SPADEs

Three (Medium, X): Highly strung SPADE

Four (Medium, X): Romantic and ditzy SPADE

Five (Medium, X): Pompous, rule enforcing SPADE

Six (Medium, X): Violent-minded SPADE

Seven (Medium, X): Suave but pedantic SPADE

Eight (Small, X): Disorganized SPADE

Nine (Small, X): Mealy-mouthed SPADE

Ten (Small, X): Petulant and suspicious-minded SPADE

 *SPADEs all wear identical black costumes with masks. SPADE parts can be split for larger casts, or different SPADEs feature in different scenes, except for Two. For smaller casts, the lines of Eight, Nine, and Ten can be given to other SPADEs or cut.*

***THE SPY GAME***

**Scene 1**

*A sinister interrogation chamber. TWO is sitting behind a table, stroking ACE. THREE and FIVE enter, holding HEAD between them, and force her into a chair opposite TWO.*

TWO Rose McQueen. It’s been too long.

HEAD *(sarcastically)* Thank you for being so gentle with me. Now, can someone tell me what the big idea is?

TWO You’ve been a hard woman to find, Mrs McQueen. Your organization has done their best to keep your identity a secret.

HEAD I’m sure I have no idea what you’re talking about. I’m just the headmistress of a private school out of town.

TWO Ah, yes. The Cheshire Island Academy.

HEAD That’s right. Now, I must insist that you let me go at once before I call the police.

TWO I’m afraid you can’t play dumb with me, Mrs McQueen. You see, I know all about the Cheshire Island Academy and what it really teaches. After all, it’s only been a few years since I went there myself.

*TWO removes mask. HEAD gasps.*

TWO That’s right, it’s me. Louise Montoya “Moonface” Sanchez.

HEAD I remember you when you were this high. You used to be such a good kid! What’s happened to you?

TWO You expelled me, that’s what happened. You expelled me from your snotty school for spies because I didn’t live up to your expectations. Remember how I told you I’d be back? Well, I’m back. And now I go by the name *(dramatically)* Number Two.

*HEAD stifles a laugh.*

TWO What? What’s so funny?

HEAD Nothing, nothing, Number Two.

TWO Laugh while you still can. I’m going to take your school down. I’m going to tell the world what it really is.

HEAD You’re making a mistake, Louise. Can’t we talk about this over a nice cup of tea? Guard!

*FIVE exits.*

TWO This is an interrogation, not teatime!

HEAD Calm down, there’s no harm in enjoying a caffeinated beverage while we catch up.

*FIVE places tea on table. TWO obliges HEAD and pours them some tea. She puts sugar in her own tea.*

TWO Would you like anything in your tea?

HEAD I’m good, thank you. *(Cunningly)* Say, it looks like you’ll need a spoon. Luckily, I always carry around a spoon in my front right pocket just for this purpose. I’d offer it to you myself, but I’m a little tied up at the moment.

*TWO takes the spoon.*

TWO Wait. If your hands are tied up why did you want tea? You can’t drink…My spoon just disappeared. Why did my spoon just disappear?

*HEAD smiles slyly.*

HEAD That was no ordinary spoon. That spoon was made of a metal called gallium that melts at temperatures slightly above room temperature. It melted the instant you placed it in your teacup, sending a signal to the CIA with my exact location.

TWO You tricked me!

HEAD Louise, my dear, you once had the potential to be a great spy, but it looks like you need a little more training.

*HEAD escapes her ties, overpowers THREE and FIVE, and captures ACE.*

HEAD You’re dealing with a desperate lady, Louise. One false move and the poochie gets it.

*HEAD escapes.*

TWO Oh, this isn’t the end, Mrs McQueen. Do you hear me? This isn’t the end. This is just the beginning.

*Blackout.*

*Optional scene: a musical spy movie-style title sequence to introduce The Spy Game.*

**Scene 2a**

*HEAD, MOTHER, FATHER, AND LACIE walk into a Spanish Classroom, where other STUDENTS are pretending to be partaking in a Spanish lesson, led by MARCH (1).*

MOTHER We were so surprised when we got your letter of acceptance. I mean, Lacie hadn’t even applied to this school. Right, darling?

*LACIE shakes her head.*

HEAD Well, you see, this school’s recruitment procedure is different from most. We don’t accept applications. We search for only the best students to invite.

FATHER Is that so? Between you and me *(stage whisper)* are you sure there hasn’t been some kind of mistake? I mean, Lacie’s never been the strictly academic type.

HEAD That’s just as well. We’re not a strictly academic school.

FATHER Well, she’s never excelled in…well, anything, really. You did say that the, er, Cheshire Island Academy was for gifted students, right?

HEAD That’s right. But we look for a very…special set of gifts here. Now, I understand your daughter had some personal issues at her old school, specifically some issues with bullying?

MOTHER That’s right. The poor dear.

FATHER We told her to stand up to those mean old bullies, didn’t we, sweetums? But somehow, they always got the better of her.

MOTHER Although I have to admit, some of their lines were pretty good. Like Miss Average.

*MOTHER and FATHER start laughing.*

FATHER Yeah, sweetie, you really had that one coming.

HEAD Right. Well, you’ll find that here, our attitude to bullying is very different. The kids that go to the Cheshire Island Academy are all...unique in one way or another. We strive to build a special learning environment that allows students to develop their strengths in their own way. Tell me, Lacie, what’s your favourite subject?

LACIE *(Shrugging)* I don’t know. Anything but P.E., I guess.

HEAD *(Giggling)* Then you’ll be pleased to hear that we don’t offer P.E. here. We encourage our pupils to get their physical exercise in a more natural way, by spending time outside, surrounded by nature. You’ll find that you have a lot more freedom here than you’re used to; why, the 200 acre property is yours to roam as you wish!

LACIE What about sports?

HEAD Oh, we don’t play team sports of any kind here.

MOTHER No more being knocked out by the ball for you, then, eh?

FATHER You remember that time? Oh, it was hysterical. Lacie was on the fielding team in softball, with her head in the clouds as usual, not even looking the right way, when BAM! Out of the sky comes the softball, right into the back of her head!

MOTHER Oh, the whole school fell about laughing, of course. The batter was laughing so hard that she forgot to run! Our Lacie really was the star of the school that day.

FATHER Of course, when she didn’t get up after about five minutes, we thought we should probably fetch the school nurse to make sure she was OK.

MOTHER But my, we were telling that story for weeks. Luckily, someone was videotaping the whole thing and uploaded it to YouTube.

FATHER *(proudly)* Five million views our daughter got! It was the high point of her school career.

HEAD If you don’t mind, I would prefer to escort Lacie through the final stage of the tour myself. I’ll come and find you when we’re done.

*MOTHER and FATHER exit.*

**Scene 2b**

*HEAD leads LACIE away.*

HEAD Lacie, where on my invitation did it say you could bring your parents?

LACIE Nowhere. But I thought…

HEAD You thought wrong. You will not get far in this place if you can’t understand simple messages. Next time, it might be a life or death situation. That invitation was for you, and you alone. You see, this is no ordinary school.

LACIE Yes, it’s a school for kids who can’t fit in.

HEAD Can’t, or won’t. We spend a great deal of time travelling up and down the country selecting only very special pupils to invite to this school.

*HEAD claps hands.*

HEAD The coast is clear!

*With the help of all pupils, the classroom quickly transforms from a Spanish lesson into a Deep Cover lesson.*

LILY Thank God for that. If we’d had to continue any longer, I’d have actually started learning Spanish.

HEAD There you are, darling! Look, we have a new girl joining us! Isn’t that exciting?

*LILY looks suspiciously at LACIE.*

LILY A new girl? Since when did we let new girls join in second year?

HEAD *(smiling violently)* Since just now, sweetie! Why don’t you take the new girl and give her a tour while I talk about the boring stuff with her parents?

LILY Whatever you say, Mum.

*LILY leads LACIE away, gesturing as she walks. HEAD, MARCH (1), and other STUDENTS exit.*

**Scene 3**

LILY Welcome to the Cheshire Island Academy, I guess. This place is kind of hard to find your way around at first, but you’ll get used to it. This is the entrance hall. Most of the classrooms and dojos are somewhere in this building. Through that door is the dormitories. It looks like you’ll be sharing with…*(checks sheet)* Oh, bad luck. Jamey Bishopswood and Becca Knight. Well, have fun with that, I guess.

*JACK, TRAY, BRENT, and TRENT enter, miming conversation. TRENT and BRENT are shadowboxing.*

LILY If you keep walking that way, you reach…OMG, that’s Jack Diamond! He’s the only junior ever to score 100% in a charisma exam.

*LILY mimes excitedly while focus shifts to JACK, TRENT, TRAY, and BRENT.*

JACK Oh, I didn’t do much over the summer. Just chilled on the beach in Qatar.

TRAY Sounds real chill.

JACK Course, it got less chill when I busted open an oil price fixing cartel by mistake.

TRAY Heavy, man. What did they do?

JACK Nothing, really. Just sent over a couple of assassins to try and silence me. But let’s just say it’s the two of them who won’t be doing much talking for a while. You know what they say: Diamonds are forever.

*Other BOYS roll their eyes.*

JACK What’s the matter? Didn’t you hear me? I said: Diamonds are –

TRENT Yeah, we heard you. We hear you every time you make that joke.

LILY Jack! Hey! Jack! Over here!

*JACK looks around, confused.*

LILY *(to LACIE)* Stop staring, you dork! Just act casual, like you don’t even see him.

*LILY turns away from JACK. JACK looks at them briefly, shrugs, then turns back to his friends and continues miming.*

LILY Jeez, they obvi didn’t teach you the art of subtlety at your old school.

*An air raid siren goes off. LACIE ducks, scared.*

LACIE Wh-what’s that?

LILY Oh, that’s just the school bell. Lessons must be over.

*KATE, CHLOE, and ASHLEY enter.*

KATE I know it was only a long weekend, but I just didn’t know what to pack…the nunchucks or the throwing stars?

ASHLEY Tell me about it, sister.

KATE So in the end I just had to take both. I ended up taking two enormous suitcases with me. You should have seen the looks my parents gave me – after all, the first rule of covert overseas missions is to travel light, right? You can imagine the scene when we got to airport security.

CHLOE OMG, we’ve all been there.

KATE First of all, the guard said –

ASHLEY *(spotting LACIE)* Enemy agent!

*KATE, CHLOE, and ASHLEY all jump on LACIE and pin her to the ground.*

LILY Stand down, girls.

ASHLEY But Lily, the threat hasn’t been neutralized!

LILY I said stand down.

*KATE, CHLOE, and ASHLEY stand up, leaving LACIE to dust herself off on the ground.*

LILY This is the new girl. Lacie…

LACIE Kingsley. Lacie Kingsley.

CHLOE A new girl? We don’t get –

LILY I know, but whatevs, that’s what my mom said. So…here she is, I guess.

ASHLEY *(to LACIE)* So what did you do to get here?

LACIE What do you mean? I didn’t do anything.

CHLOE Dang, girl, it’s not just anyone that gets admitted to the Cheshire Island Academy, you know.

KATE I’ve never heard of anyone joining the school as a second year. You must have some real impressive spy skills to have gotten in here.

LACIE I don’t really…have any skills.

ASHLEY Playing dumb, eh? Classic. But that trick won’t last for ever. Come on, tell us what your USP is.

LACIE USP?

LILY Unique Selling Point. The thing that got you noticed by the Academy. Whatever it is that makes you a great spy.

CHLOE Like Ashley, for example. She might look small to you, but she’s been learning martial arts practically from birth. And Kate once took out a couple of burglars armed with nothing but a roll of Saran wrap.

KATE Oh, Chloe, you’re so modest. *(To LACIE)* This girl’s the sharpest shooter in the school. Throwing stars, javelins, playing cards, you name it. Chloe could probably take you out before you even saw her coming.

LACIE I can’t really do anything like that.

LILY OK, let’s get one thing straight. The Academy’s program isn’t like any other school in the world. It’s very intensive, and only the best students in the country are able to keep up with it. It’s pretty much impossible to catch up late. That’s why no-one gets admitted after the first year. Except you, apparently.

LACIE I’m not cut out for fighting. There must have been a mistake.

LILY My mom’s a veteran spy. She doesn’t make mistakes.

ASHLEY You can play hardball all you want. But we’ll see what you’re really made of in class.

*Blackout.*

**Scene 4**

*A dojo-style gym. The STUDENTS are standing around Ms MILLINER.*

MILLINER Welcome back, class. For those of you that are new, my name is Ms Milliner. I’m glad to see that so many of you survived the summer without losing significant amounts of blood, although how you did so is a mystery, given last year’s shoddy exam results. This term, we will begin by studying ballistics. I’m afraid, Chloe, that means you won’t be needing your katana in this lesson.

LACIE *(whispered to LILY)* A katana? What’s a katana?

EMILY Oh my God! Did someone really just ask that?

FREDDIE Oh look, it’s the new kid. Big surprise.

MILLINER Perhaps one of the class would like to inform the ‘new kid’ what a katana is?

*ALL students except LACIE put their hands up eagerly. MILLINER picks HELEN.*

HELEN It’s a samurai sword! Duh!

ASHLEY Still playing dumb? How predictable.

LACIE I’m not playing dumb! I really am dumb!

JIM At least you’ve got something right.

*All STUDENTS laugh.*

MILLINER Class! Stop muttering amongst yourself and pay attention. The life of a spy is defined by constant danger! An attack can come at any time, from any direction. You must always be vigilant. Like this!

*With a war cry, MILLINER hurls a knife at LILY, who holds up her textbook to block it. The knife becomes embedded in the book. MILLINER takes the book from LILY.*

MILLINER As Lily has just demonstrated so well, there is only one use for books in my lessons, and that is as objects for combat. You will not be receiving any homework reading from me. Instead, your homework is to remain alert to the possibility of attack at all times. You have been warned! But before we begin, I’d like to review basic disarming techniques.

*Students split off into pairs and practice combat manoeuvres on each other. LACIE is left standing alone without a partner.*

KATE Hey Lacie! I’ll be your partner.

LACIE Thanks!

*As LACIE and KATE walk over to an area where no other students are, KATE turns to LILY, ASHLEY, and KATE and winks at them.*

LACIE So I kind of don’t know any disarming techniques, not even the basic ones.

KATE (*coldly*) Don’t worry, I’ll go easy on you.

*Within a few seconds, KATE has violently flipped LACIE onto her back.*

CHLOE Seriously Kate, you call that going gentle? Here Lacie, let me help you up.

LACIE Thank you.

*Half way through helping LACIE up, CHLOE drops her again.*

CHLOE Ooooppsss, sorry!

LILY Wow. I’ve seen bottles of baby powder that are more dangerous than you.

*The air raid siren sounds. LILY, ASHLEY, KATE, and CHLOE exit with smirks on their faces, with the rest of the students. LACIE stays on her back, sighs, and then gets up and exits.*

*Blackout.*

**Scene 5**

*The common room. BECCA is on her laptop. LACIE is reading. JAMEY enters.*

JAMEY So you’re the new kid, right?

LACIE *(bitterly)* How’d ya guess?

JAMEY We heard about what happened in your first class. The Academy girls can be a little…icy when you first meet them. But don’t worry, some of them are really nice once you get to know them.

LACIE Like who?

JAMEY *(Thinking, then pointing at BECCA)* Well…there’s…uh…Becca. She’s really nice. Uh…can you think of anyone else, Becca?

BECCA *(looking up from laptop and thinking)* Um…well, there’s you. And…that’s about it.

JAMEY Yeah, I guess so. Still, *we’re* really nice.

LACIE The girl who gave me the tour said –

BECCA Oh, just ignore Lily McQueen. She was the top of our class last year, and she’ll never let you forget it.

JAMEY She’s also the daughter of the headmistress, conveniently enough.

BECCA Everyone knows that she gets special instruction on the side. There’s no way she could be as good as she is otherwise.

JAMEY They call themselves the Alpha Club. When we first got here, they gave us a really hard time too. Kept playing pranks on us. You know, bear traps under the bedsheets, shock-triggered plastic explosive over the door. The usual stuff.

BECCA *(chuckling)* Remember those genetically modified scorpion eggs they hid under the sink?

JAMEY *(chuckling)* Yep, neither of us saw *that* coming!

*JAMEY and BECCA’s laughter turns to fear for a moment as they catch their breath.*

JAMEY But seriously, once you’ve been here a while, they’ll get bored of teasing you.

LACIE How long will that be?

JAMEY Well, we’ve been here a year now and they’re definitely showing signs that they’ll slow down soon.

LACIE I thought they said bullying wasn’t allowed at the Cheshire Island Academy!

JAMEY Is that really what they told you?

LACIE Well, not exactly. They said…uh…that their attitude to bullying was different.

JAMEY Yeah, they got that right. Bullying here is positively encouraged. They say we’ve got to learn self-reliance. Out in the field, a teacher’s not going to help us, so why should they when we’re in here?

LACIE But I’m not cut out for fighting.

BECCA Hey, fighting’s not what real spying is about. After all, look at the two of us. Do you think *we* managed to get in for our fieldwork skills? Nope. Jamey’s one of the top chemists in the country. She got in for trying to enrich uranium using a perfume making kit.

JAMEY Hey, I didn’t *try*. I succeeded.

BECCA And I got in for hacking into the CIA database and putting a $10,000,000 bounty on Justin Bieber’s head.

JAMEY It’s true. Becca has an IQ so big they had to invent a new number for it.

BECCA But you must have done something if the Academy found you, right?

LACIE That’s what everyone keeps saying. But I swear I’m nothing special. I’ve spent most of my life trying to go unnoticed.

JAMEY But that’s what being a spy’s all about! You spend most of the time going unnoticed and then, right when they least expect it – bam! *(Punching hand)* You open up a can of whoopee pie. I can just tell you’re going to be a natural.

*The air raid siren goes off. LACIE jumps again.*

BECCA Ten minutes until lights out. We should probably get ready for bed. Did you figure out where your bedroom is?

LACIE Just down the hall.

JAMEY All right, see you tomorrow.

*LACIE walks down the hall, past a series of portraits, before she finds her room.*

**Scene 6**

*LACIE enters her bedroom to find THREE waiting for her.*

THREE *(with a syrupy voice)* Hi there! You must be Lacie Kingsley. My name’s Mrs Konya. I’m the school nurse. Do you mind if I ask you a few simple health questions?

LACIE (*noticeably alarmed to find a stranger in her bedroom)* I was just about to go to bed, but sure, I guess.

THREE Good. First, do you have any noticeable scars? You know, burns, bullet wounds, or anything else you may have picked up in the field?

LACIE Er, I have a scar on my knee from lacrosse.

THREE Hmm. Probably nothing to worry about. Second, have you had any recent wasp stings, mosquito bites, shark bites…?

LACIE I don’t think so.

THREE Good, good. Finally, are you up-to-date with all your injections?

LACIE As far as I know. It should say in my medical file.

THREE Yes, yes, I had a little trouble finding it. So just to be on the safe side I’d better give you one teensy extra vaccination. Just to make sure you’re up-to-date.

*THREE takes out a huge syringe.*

LACIE Do we have to do this right now? I’m a little scared of needles…

THREE *(advancing on LACIE)* My darling girl, there’s no reason to be afraid of this. Just think of it as a tiny, tiny sword that I’m going to stab you with, OK?

*LACIE picks up a can of baby powder and waves it threateningly.*

LACIE Don’t come any closer!

THREE *(with a slightly scared tone)* Why don’t you put the baby powder down? Nobody needs to get hurt. Except you, a little bit. Oh, who am I kidding? This is going to hurt a lot.

*LACIE sprays baby powder at THREE.*

THREE Do you really think a girl like you has a chance against a SPADE agent like me?

*THREE starts laughing harder and harder, until she’s inhaling so much of the baby powder that she starts choking.*

THREE Asthma! I have…asthma…

*THREE takes an inhaler out of her pocket and starts using it. LACIE throws her bedsheets over her and runs away.*

THREE Where do you think you’re going? Come back!

*THREE tries to chase LACIE back towards the common room, but soon stumbles and falls.*

**Scene 7**

*Scene shifts to the common room.*

LACIE Someone help! There’s an assassin in my room! She tried to kill me! *(continues ad libbing)*

*LILY, CHLOE, KATE, and ASHLEY enter, looking tired and grumpy.*

CHLOE What’s all the noise out here?

KATE (*seeing LACIE)* I*s* *someone* having a bad dream?

LACIE I wasn’t dreaming! An assassin broke into my room and attacked me!

*JAMEY and BECCA enter, looking concerned.*

LILY No way could someone have broken into this place from the outside. This is the most secure facility in the world outside of D.C.

CHLOE Go back to bed and try not to think about it, OK?

LACIE I didn’t make the whole thing up, you know! They said something about being a SPADE…

ASHLEY You got attacked by a talking spade?

JAMEY *(passionately)* I believe you, Lacie!

*HEAD and MARCH (2) enter.*

HEAD Experiencing a little homesickness, are we? Don’t worry, every new girl gets it sooner or later.

LACIE I’m not homesick. I was attacked by a demented nurse.

HEAD Homesickness can feel very different to different people, sweetie.

*ACE squeals offstage.*

HEAD What was that? Ace? He never barks unless… Don’t worry, Acey-wacey! I’m coming!

*HEAD exits frantically.*

CHLOE Nice job, new girl. Looks like your nightmare woke up half the school.

ASHLEY And it’s the day before the school dance! I’m going to have the biggest bags under my eyes tomorrow. Looks like I spent three hours exfoliating for nothing.

LACIE Oh, big deal, guys. I nearly got killed just now.

LILY It is a big deal, actually. This isn’t just any school dance. We get examined on our dress, dancing, and smooth talking skills. You know, skills that any *real* spy would know all about.

*HEAD re-enters carrying ACE, who’s tied up and squealing.*

HEAD I found him like this in my office! All tied up! Lacie, I hate to be the one to tell you this, but we may be dealing with more than just homesickness. Let’s investigate without delay.

*HEAD enters LACIE’s room, to find THREE gone.*

HEAD There’s certainly been quite a commotion in here…but no rogue assassins as far as I can see. Never mind. I’ve alerted the guards. Now, girls, back to bed, all of you.

*HEAD and all GIRLS but LACIE exit.*

MARCH (2) Lacie Kingsley! We meet again.

LACIE Erm, I’m not sure we’ve met before.

MARCH (2) My name’s Mr March. I teach disguise. It’s a subtle art, which many of the girls here overlook. But I find it lets me go unnoticed just when it matters most.

*MARCH (2) hands LACIE a watch.*

MARCH (2) Here, I have a gift for you. Wear it always, and you will be safe. *(Turns to leave.)* Oh, and Lacie?

LACIE Yes?

*MARCH changes guise.*

MARCH (3) Don’t let yourself be fooled by appearances.

*Blackout.*

**Scene 8**

*The SPADE HQ: a sinister boardroom. All SPADE members but EIGHT are seated in a circle, in number order from central. Their chairs may also be of decreasing size and grandeur. The central, grandest chair is empty; TWO is sitting next to it.*

TWO We all know why we’re here.

*EIGHT bursts in, out of breath, and sits down noisily at the table.*

EIGHT Hi guys. Hey, Number Two. Sorry I’m late.

TWO *(sarcastically)* Why, hello, Number Eight. Glad you could join us.

EIGHT So why are we here?

TWO Would it kill you to check Facebook every now and again? As I posted on the group thread two days ago, we’re here to discuss the recent hitch that’s developed in Operation Teatime. Number Three?

THREE As planned, our inside man caused a distraction that allowed me to infiltrate the Academy and locate the target’s room. But once inside, I encountered a slight – ah – obstacle –

*THREE is having difficulty speaking.*

FOUR It’s OK. Just let it all out.

THREE The target was somehow alerted to my presence. She was able to overpower me and alert the authorities before I could stop her. Thankfully, our inside man created a disturbance just long enough for me to escape before they caught me.

SEVEN But how could the target possibly known about Three’s childhood baby powder incident?

*THREE lets out a loud sob.*

FOUR Number Seven, there’s no need to bring up the baby powder incident. Number Three’s clearly had a very stressful day, without you reminding him of the time he was viciously bullied during grade school. I mean, having baby powder shoved down your pants every day would scar anyone.

*THREE lets out another loud sob.*

TWO Exactly. There’s clearly more to the target than meets the eye. She must have received training that we didn’t know about.

FIVE With all due respect, Number Two, that’s impossible. There was nothing in her file.

SEVEN It’s clear that we’re dealing with an advanced operative here.

*SIX puts up his hand.*

TWO We made the mistake of underestimating her this time. But all is not lost. We can still proceed as planned. What is it, Number Six?

SIX I have an alternative plan. A plan so simple, so ingenious, that it can’t be foiled. I’ve codenamed it Operation Kill Lacie And Her Immediate Family.

*Other SPADES all groan silently.*

SIX Step one is to kill Lacie. Step two is to –

TWO Number Six, this sounds suspiciously like all your other ideas. Nobody is killing anybody’s immediate family on *my* watch. However, the girl is probably sniffing out the trail back to us as we speak. It won’t be long before this girl discovers the truth about her enrolment in the Academy. We must act swiftly, before we lose our chance.

EIGHT But we’re not ready!

TWO We shall have to be. Have you forgotten everything our great leader sacrificed to make this happen?

*All briefly turn to bow to the empty chair.*

TWO If we don’t carry through our final stage of the plan, his noble work will have been for nothing! In two weeks’ time, the Academy is planning to hold a presentation for their students. With the help of our inside source we have been able to convince the school Number Five and me will be their presenters.

SEVEN And I.

TWO Excuse me?

SEVEN You’re the subject of the sentence. If you want to be grammatically correct you would say Seven and I, not Seven and me.

TWO (angrily) Number Seven!

SEVEN Sorry Boss.

TWO Regardless of whether it’s grammatically correct or not, this presentation will provide us with the perfect opportunity to carry out Operation Teatime. Not only will we have complete access to the school, but also all teacher and students will be distracted by the lecture. Any questions?

*Pause. Then TEN nervously puts up his hand.*

TWO Yes, Number Ten?

TEN Do we HAVE to call it Operation Teatime?

TWO For the last time, Number Eight, we’re not changing the name of the operation. We went over this last week.

TEN I just think it sounds sissy, Number Two! We’re supposed to be striking fear into the hearts of our enemies!

FIVE Of course it’s going to sound sissy if you say it like that. Try a more sinister voice. Something like…*(deep, sinister voice)* Operation Teatime.

TEN *(Sarcastically)* Oh, I’m petrified. If I were Lacie, I’d be quaking in my boots. What was wrong with my suggestion, Operation Royal Flush?

SIX Oh, please. Operation Royal Flush doesn’t sounds scary, it just sounds unhygienic. Now, I personally was always in favour of Operation Kill Lacie And Her Immediate –

TWO *(banging fist on table)* Silence! We settled this debate a long time ago. Before he left us, our leader decided that this operation would be called Operation Teatime and we’re not discussing it further. Operation Teatime will fall swiftly on all who lurk in the Cheshire Island Academy. There will be no more mistakes.

*Blackout.*

**Scene 9**

*The common room. LACIE, JAMEY, and BECCA are in conversation.*

JAMEY Disguised as a nurse, eh? That’s a classic. Hasn’t been seen since the 1962 Monte Carlo assassination. I’ll bet that syringe was filled with snake venom.

BECCA She sounds like a trained assassin. You must have been quick on your feet to escape her.

LACIE I got lucky, that’s all.

JAMEY Sure, whatever you say.

BECCA Face it, Lacie, you’re a natural.

JAMEY I’ll bet it wasn’t a can of baby powder you opened. It was a can of pure whoopee pie. Wasn’t it? Wasn’t it?

BECCA I hacked into the CCTV network and downloaded the night’s footage. At first, I thought there was nothing there. But then, I spotted something strange. Look. There.

*BECCA points at her laptop screen. LACIE and JAMEY stare, confused.*

JAMEY I don’t see anything. All those shots are empty.

BECCA There! And there!

*Pause.*

BECCA The time signatures of each camera jump backwards and repeat, one after the other. Like someone’s made the video repeat itself. It’s only a few seconds from each one, not enough for anyone to notice. But enough time for someone to sneak right past.

JAMEY So whoever did this must have hacked into our mainframe!

BECCA Nope. The CCTV network is off the grid. Impossible to access from outside the building.

JAMEY That means Kate was right about one thing, at least. Someone on the inside must have helped the assassin get in.

BECCA It’s worse. This footage is being constantly monitored. That means someone inside the school must have been watching the assassin last night, to stop anyone else from seeing her.

*With a war cry, MILLINER jumps out from hiding, wielding a bow. LACIE, JAMEY, and BECCA cry out. MILLINER aims the bow around the whole room before firing it at LACIE. JAMEY dives in front of LACIE, holding up her satchel to block the arrow. The arrow becomes embedded in the satchel.*

MILLINER Very good, Jamey. Your quick thinking has won the day as always. As for you, Lacie, you will not always have such loyal friends close by. If you do not learn to defend yourself, you will finding yourself failing my class. *(Ominously)* Until the next time, girls.

*MILLINER exits furtively, keeping her bow raised. LACIE continues to look shaken, while JAMEY and BECCA carry on talking as if nothing’s happened.*

JAMEY I’ll bet whoever that person was used Mrs McQueen’s computer to access the CCTV footage.

BECCA Because they had to tie up her dog to keep him quiet! Just what I was thinking.

JAMEY But the Head’s office has more security than any other room in this building!

LACIE So whoever did this must either have a high security clearance, or be able to walk through walls.

JAMEY Or must have been paying attention during Mr March’s special lesson on security systems and how to infiltrate them.

BECCA That’s impossible. Nobody could listen to Mr March for more than three minutes without tearing their eyeballs out.

*MILLINER lets out a warcry offstage. Offstage students scream. There is a sound of an arrow firing and hitting something.*

MILLINER *(offstage)* That will teach you to walk around with your eyes glued to a phone all day. Don’t worry, it’ll grow back.

JAMEY So it’s settled. I’ll analyse the security systems in the headmistress’s office for signs of manual override.

BECCA I’ll see if I can trace the electronic signature of the hacker using a W4D query protocol.

LACIE Um, for those of us who don’t speak technology, what are we doing?

JAMEY I’m going to see if someone forced the doors of the headmistress’s office to open.

BECCA And I’m going to find out who that was.

*Pause. JAMEY and BECCA look at LACIE expectantly.*

LACIE And I’ll…I’ll go make us some hot cocoa.

JAMEY Thanks, Lacie. You’re such a star.

*Lights down.*

**Scene 10a**

*The school disco, in a decorated school hall. Away from the main scene, CHLOE is holding two dresses up to her body, with LILY, ASHLEY, and KATE watching.*

CHLOE I don’t know, chicas. Which one should I go for, the red or the black?

KATE Is Jack coming?

CHLOE Obvi he’s coming. Anyone who’s anyone is going to turn up to the dance. It’s the highlight of the social calendar.

KATE Go for the red dress. The black dress only has room for two concealed guns, max.

CHLOE Good point. Gee, Kate, you always remember the most important things.

ASHLEY Whoa, you haven’t got time for this, they’re coming now!

*ASHLEY pushes CHLOE offstage. JACK, TRENT, TRAY, and BRENT enter.*

TRAY Trent, go get us some drinks.

JACK Make mine a glass of milk. Whole, not skimmed.

TRENT You got it, Jack. *(Exits.)*

TRAY I love dances. They’re a perfect time to show off our good looks.

BRENT Not to mention our sweet moves on the dance floor.

JACK Personally I find these sort of social gatherings boring, at least until…Well, hello, ladies!

*JACK walks over to LILY*

JACK May I have the first dance, stranger?

*LILY giggles*

LILY If you insist, Mr Diamond.

*Spy movie-style dance music starts up. JACK, TRAY, and BRENT dance with LILY, ASHLEY, and KATE. CHLOE and TRENT enter. LACIE, JAMEY, BECCA walk in and cross the stage, catching JACK’S eye.*

JACK Who is that with Jamey and Becca?

LILY It’s the new girl in our year. Lacie Kingsley.

JACK Lacie Kingsley, huh? Can’t say we’ve met.

LILY There’s something not quite right about her. She must be hiding something.

JACK So she plays her cards close to her chest. She’s mysterious. I kinda like that.

LILY *(fuming)* She’s not mysterious, she’s just…dense. She’s arrived a year late, and doesn’t seem to have a clue about spying. But Mom must have let her in for a reason. I want you to find out what it is.

JACK Why do you want my help?

LILY Because everyone knows you’re the most talented spy in the Academy.

*JACK looks smug.*

JACK There’s more to being a talented spy than sharp wits and an even sharper jawline. But not a lot more. OK, Miss McQueen, you’re on. Give me one week and I’ll give you everything there is to know about Lacie Kingsley.

*They all talk silently among themselves, while LACIE, JAMEY, and BECCA start talking audibly.*

**Scene 10b**

BECCA I still can’t believe I was unable to find out the identity of the hacker. I feel like a disgrace.

JAMEY It’s not like I did any better. There was no evidence to suggest that the security system to the Head’s office was manually overridden. Whoever was in the office was had security clearance to be there.

BECCA So we learned nothing.

LACIE Well, at least we can learn from the fact we learned nothing, that it appears there was nothing to learn.

JAMEY Yah, that totally makes sense.

LACIE Give me a chance to finish. How many people could there be in the world that are smart enough to get past the school’s security and into Mrs McQueen’s office, all without getting caught by Becca?

JAMEY Only one. Mrs McQueen.

BECCA But you can’t mean…

LACIE You think Mrs McQueen did it?

*The girls are about to freak out when JACK walks over.*

**Scene 10c**

JACK *(to LACIE)* Hello, I’m not sure we’re met. The name’s Diamond. Jack Diamond. You’ve probably heard of me.

LACIE I think so.

JACK What a fine watch you have.

LACIE It was a…gift.

JACK Well it’s quite marvellous. May I look at it? I promise I won’t take it.

LACIE Actually I’d prefer not to take it off, if that’s OK.

*Pause.*

JACK What brings a girl like you to a place like this?

LACIE I ask myself the same question every day.

JACK *(laughing)* You seem pretty sharp to me. You know, Miss Kingsley, I’m beginning to think you’re a real *diamond* in the rough.

*Confused pause.*

JACK Get it? Because my name’s Jack Diamond. I told you that, right?

LACIE *(nonplussed)* Yeah, you told me.

JACK Never mind. So, Miss Kingsley, what brings a girl like you to a place like this?

*JACK and LACIE continue their conversation silently. Focus shifts to LILY, ASHLEY, CHLOE, and KATE.*

KATE Hey, what’s Jack doing talking to the new girl?

LILY What? I told him to get information for me but not here, not when he is supposed to be spending the night with me. This is SO humiliating.

*LILY storms over to LACIE just as JACK and LACIE finish their conversation.*

LILY *(to LACIE)* What do you think you’re doing?

LACIE Talking to Jack?

LILY Well you shouldn’t be, he’s here with me!

*LILY forcibly grabs JACK’s arm*

JACK Whoa there, babe. I was just making small talk with Lacie, there’s nothing to get upset about.

LACIE Lily, this is ridiculous.

LILY Don’t talk to me about ridiculous. You know what’s ridiculous. The fact that you stroll in here as a second year, act as if you have no idea what’s going on and then have the guts to try to take Jack from me.

LACIE Well it’s not like we all have our mummies to guarantee us a spot.

LILY That’s it!

*LILY attacks LACIE. They fight.*

**Scene 10d**

*MARCH (4) enters.*

MARCH (4) Girls! That’s quite enough!

*LACIE and LILY split up.*

LILY Mr March! Uh…

MARCH (4) Never in all my years as a spy teacher have I seen such disappointing behaviour from two Academy girls.

LILY Sir, she said that –

MARCH (4) *(Holding up hand)* I don’t want to hear any tall tales... Just what do you think you’re doing, yelling at each other like a couple of street cats, when there’s a whole rack of perfectly sharp swords right behind you? Hmm?

*LACIE and LILY look at each other, then dive towards the rack, pick up swords, and start fighting. MARCH looks on, smiling. LILY quickly disarms and overpowers LACIE.*

MARCH (4) That’s more like it. You see, girls, why resort to using your words when physical violence will suffice? Now, Lacie, is there anything you’d like to say?

LACIE What? Lily was the one who –

MARCH (4) *(holding up hand)* I don’t care who started it. What matters is that Lily has finished it, so you should thank her courteously for sparing your life on this occasion.

KATE That’s right. She won’t be so forgiving next time.

ASHLEY Count yourself lucky.

*LILY, ASHLEY, CHLOE, and KATE storm off. MARCH moves away. LACIE looks miserable.*

LACIE Mr March, I thought you were supposed to be protecting me!

*MARCH turns back to LACIE in a different guise.*

MARCH (5) I am protecting you. You just don’t realize it yet.

*Blackout.*

**Scene 11**

*The SPADE HQ. FOUR and NINE are standing casually at the side of the boardroom.*

FOUR Hey, Number Nine, you’re looking really nice today. Have you done something with your hair?

NINE Nope.

FOUR Wait, don’t tell me…It’s your eyebrows. You’ve had them plucked.

NINE Nope.

FOUR New cologne?

NINE Nope.

FOUR New toothpaste?

NINE Nope.

FOUR *(smacking himself on the head with realization)* Of course! It’s the mask. You’ve got a new mask.

NINE Yep, you got it. Brand new from Target. *(Pulling at mask)* It’s made of extra breathable cotton. It’s so comfortable I bought three spares.

*TWO enters, followed by other SPADES.*

TWO Number Four, what’s the next item on the agenda today?

FOUR It’s the toilet paper issue, sir.

TWO Ah, yes. The toilet paper. Number Five?

FIVE Someone in this room has seen fit, many times now, to use up the entire roll without replacing it. This is unacceptable! You all know where the supply cupboard is.

*Guilty silence.*

TWO Good. I think that message has sunk in. Number Four, what’s next?

FOUR Operation Teatime, sir.

TWO Ah, yes. Operation Teatime. Our plan is rapidly drawing to a head. By the end of the week, we will have what is rightfully ours.

TEN What about the girl?

SIX Could someone remind me why we haven’t killed her and her immediate family yet?

TWO Because, Six, killing everyone isn’t always the solution to your problems.

SIX Yes, it is.

TWO Well, clearly your problems are different from the group’s problems. We need to move quickly, quietly, and above all non-murderously, if Operation Teatime is to be a success.

TEN We underestimated her the first time. We don’t want to make that mistake again.

TWO We won’t. Our inside man has been watching her closely. There’s no chance she knows what’s coming. Besides, even if she has, it’s too late to stop us now. The final stage in the plan is so foolproof that even Number Nine could pull it off.

*NINE looks miffed.*

TWO Here’s what we’re going to do.

*TWO gathers everyone into a tight huddle and whispers inaudibly. Other SPADEs nod their heads or whisper and gesture back.*

EIGHT Hey, boss, could you speak up a little? I can’t hear a word you’re saying.

TWO Oh. Sorry. Basically, we storm the school and teach the Cheshire Island Academy a lesson of our own. Got it?

*SPADEs nod.*

TWO Good. Now, let’s get a move on.

*SPADEs exit purposefully. Blackout.*

**Scene 12**

*Mr MARCH (6) is standing at the front. STUDENTS are hidden around the stage.*

MARCH (6) OK, your time’s up, and…*(looking around room)* I can still see every single one of you. Remember, an undetected spy is an undefeated spy. Class dismissed.

*MARCH (6) and STUDENTS start to leave the room.*

JAMEY *(turning to LACIE)* Look, just forget about last night. We’ve got more important things to worry about.

LACIE It has to be the headmistress. There’s no way someone else would have time to sneak in, without ever being noticed by her.

JAMEY That’s crazy. Why would Mrs McQueen want to destroy her own school?

LACIE I don’t know. But think about it. She has top security clearance. She can access any file and hand it to people on the outside. She could disable the security systems whenever she wants. She’s the one who no one would ever expect.

BECCA There’s a perfectly easy way to settle this, you know.

*Pause.*

JAMEY What?

BECCA Just break into her office and copy her files. I’ve been meaning to test my IT project out anyway. It’s this USB stick that writes itself onto a hard drive and generates a cached copy without leaving a trace.

LACIE Becca, are you nuts? Her office is smack in the middle of a school for spies! Do you have any idea how much security there is around that place?

BECCA According to the system blueprints I stole last year, not much. Just a few laser tripwires, motion-activated detonators, and maybe the occasional lava pit. The rest, I can take offline with a two-pronged Trojan donkey.

LACIE Whoa, I was just brainstorming here, I wasn’t saying we should go riding donkeys…

JAMEY Come to think of it, we do have those guest speakers coming next week, and Mrs McQueen always gives a tour of the school to visitors in the morning. So she’ll be away from her office.

LACIE Perhaps we should think about this –

JAMEY Of course, we’d better not go in without equipping ourselves properly. *(Holding up hair straightener)* I modified this hair straightener to generate a powerful localized electromagnetic field between its two plates. Should be enough to knock out any electronic panels you come across, at least for a little while. *(Holding up key)* This is a skeleton key. I made it out of a real skeleton. It uses marrow morphing technology to imitate the shape of any lock it’s placed in. Should be able to open the office door for you. *(holding up four-colour pen; in astonishment)* This is a four colour pen. It can write in black, blue, red, *or* green! Mind…*blown!*

LACIE Wait, isn’t that mine?

JAMEY Yeah, but we’d better not go in without it. I mean, look at it! Four colours!

BECCA Perfect. It shouldn’t be hard to work out just what secrets Mrs McQueen is keeping from us.

*Blackout*

**Scene 13**

*The boys’ common room. There’s a large boy band poster on the wall. TRENT is filing BRENT’s nails. TRAY is JACK is reading a magazine.*

BRENT Oh my God, Trent, did you use my exfoliating moisturiser *again?* After what I specifically told you?

TRENT No way, Brent. Like I’d touch your moisturizer after what it did last time. My pores were clogged up for weeks.

BRENT Don’t go blaming my moisturizer for your disaster of a T-zone.

TRENT At least my face isn’t as dry as the Sahara desert.

*LILY, ASHLEY, CHLOE, and KATE enter.*

JACK Guys, cut it out. You both have fantastic skin – *(sees that girls have entered)* I mean…skinning knives...which is what you need when you’re trapped in the wilderness for days at a time. How’s it going, ladies?

*BRENT, TRAY, and TRENT scramble around the room, hiding their lotions, magazines, posters etc. and strike casual poses.*

LILY Terrible. It’s been almost two weeks and we’ve gotten nowhere. We’re supposed to be the experienced spies here.

ASHLEY Seriously, all we know about her is that she was accepted to Cheshire Island Academy as a second year, which NEVER happens, which means that she’s special enough to make an exception for.

KATE However, she has no skills whatsoever and appears to know nothing about the world of espionage, suggesting that she’s hiding her talents or she’s a complete imbecile and really shouldn’t be here.

CHLOE The second seems more likely.

LILY She only hangs out with those losers, Becca and Jamey, and they never really talk about anything interesting.

BRENT Didn’t you say she was wearing some kind of diamond watch as well?

TRAY Yes, the “gift.” But who could it have been from? She wasn’t wearing it when she got here.

JACK Y’know, I’m growing quite fond of the kid. Headstrong, intelligent, never backs down from danger. She reminds me of someone. Oh, yeah…me.

LILY But you’re still going to help us, right?

JACK Of course I’m going to help you. You know what they say: Diamonds are a girl’s best friend.

*GIRLS laugh hysterically. BOYS roll their eyes.*

**Scene 14**

*An empty corridor outside the HEAD’s office, patrolled by GUARDS. LACIE, JAMEY, and BECCA are hidden onstage, BECCA separate. JAMEY makes a bird call, waits, makes the call again, waits again.*

JAMEY Psst! Can’t you hear me?

BECCA Hear what?

JAMEY The barn owl call! I made it like six times just now!

BECCA *That* was supposed to be a barn owl? Sounded more like a snowy owl to me.

JAMEY Just get into position so we can move into comms.

*BECCA comes out of hiding, wearing a headset, using her laptop.*

JAMEY Barn Owl to Eagle. Barn Owl to Eagle. The Barn Owl has roosted. Over.

*Confused pause.*

LACIE Who’s Eagle?

JAMEY *You’re* Eagle!

BECCA Wait, what? I thought I was Eagle.

JAMEY No, Becca, you’re Hawk, remember?

BECCA Why does Lacie get to be Eagle?

JAMEY Because that’s what we decided at the start of the mission. I’m Barn Owl. Lacie is Eagle. And *you’re* Hawk. That way, we don’t have to use each other’s real names over the radio.

LACIE Got it, Jamey. I mean…Barn Owl.

JAMEY Hawk, are we clear?

BECCA Clear. You have ten minutes and counting.

JAMEY 10-4.

*Spy movie music plays. LACIE and JAMEY come out of hiding, and sneak their way past various security systems in the corridor, and the GUARDS. For example, they could dodge past laser tripwires, jump over pressure pads. Whenever the GUARDS sweep past, they could impersonate paintings or statues, or BECCA could make a noise to distract them. JAMEY leads with panache, while LACIE stumbles along less elegantly.*

*They reach the door to the office. JAMEY holds the hair straightener over a mounted eye scanner. It makes a noisy signal.*

JAMEY OK. The eye scanner should be offline.

BECCA Hawk to Barn Owl. According to my security analysis, the eye scanner is primed to activate motion detectors inside the room.

JAMEY 10-4, Hawk. Eagle, I’ll have to stay here to make sure you don’t trigger the motion activated alarm system. But you’ve got it from here, right?

LACIE Sure thing, I guess.

*LACIE uses the skeleton key on the office door. It opens.*

LACIE I’m in. *(Crosses to computer and turns it on.)* The computer is locked with a password. Becca, help me out!

BECCA The encryption analysis is telling me that the password is only three characters long. But I’d need longer to figure out which three and in what order.

LACIE Only three characters?

**Scene 14b**

*ACE wakes up, sees LACIE, and begins growling.*

LACIE Oh, Ace, not now! Go back to bed, please Ace?

JAMEY That’s it! Ace! Try Ace!

*LACIE types A-C-E.*

LACIE Yes! I’m in!

BECCA OK. Now put the USB stick in. The program should run itself.

*LACIE puts the USB stick in. ACE starts yapping. LACIE tries to soothe and quieten ACE.*

BECCA Perfect. I’ve secured the connection. Now all I need is thirty more seconds.

LACIE Wait a minute. There’s a file here with my name on it.

JAMEY Open it!

*LACIE starts reading silently. Her face becomes ashen. She ignores all of the following.*

BECCA Wait a minute. I’m picking up heat fluctuations on the infrared cameras! Abort, Lacie, abort!

HEAD *(offstage)* Acey-Wacey, what’s the matter? Are we having bad dreams again?

JAMEY *(tapping her mic)* She’s gone dark. Something must have happened.

BECCA She’s almost through the door, Lacie! Get out before it’s too late!

*BECCA exits. JAMEY freezes.*

**Scene 14c**

*HEAD enters behind LACIE, consoles ACE, then stands for a while saying nothing.*

HEAD So it’s too late. You’ve already seen it. Well, I suppose you were bound to find out sooner or later.

LACIE I don’t understand.

HEAD That’s because there’s nothing to understand. We brought you here because we had no choice. The Academy has many enemies who’d like to expose us to the world. For a long time, we’ve known that the security of the Academy has been compromised by someone working on the inside. A mole. It was only a matter of time before this mole would have enough information to destroy us completely. That was when Mr March hit on an ingenious plan to force the mole out of hiding. Make them think we had found a new student, brilliant enough to expose the mole before they had a chance.

LACIE So you’re saying you never thought I belonged here. You just wanted to use me as bait.

HEAD Surely you’re not surprised by the first part? You’re an average student with an average academic record. But for the plan to work, we couldn’t tell anyone in the school who you really were. You see, there was no-one in the school who we could trust with this secret, in case they were the mole. Now be a good girl, go back to bed, and try to keep your head down until we find the mole. It won’t be long now before you can return to your old school, where you belong. Now, as you know, we have a guest speaker who’s going to start his presentation to the whole school any minute now, so I suggest you make your way to the hall as fast as possible.

*HEAD waits for LACIE to leave her office, then mills around tidying up. LACIE walks sullenly past JAMEY.*

JAMEY What happened in there? All I could hear was Mrs McQueen. *(Pause.)* Where are you going?

LACIE I don’t belong in this place, Jamey. I’m not spy material. I never was. I’m going home.

JAMEY You can’t go home now! Didn’t you hear what she said? You’re already involved whether you like it or not. They’re going to come looking for you wherever you go.

LACIE Anything’s better than staying in this place.

*LACIE pushes past JAMEY and exits. HEAD crosses to JAMEY.*

HEAD Jamey Bishopswood! What a pleasant surprise. What brings you to the corridor of my office on such a fine day? Run along, or you’ll be late for the presentation.

*JAMEY, torn, exits with HEAD. LACIE runs off.*

**Scene 15**

*As LACIE runs away, we transition to a wooded area, optionally containing the school assault course, outside the school building. LILY enters, watching after LACIE.*

LILY Hey, squirt! Where do you think you’re going?

*JACK enters.*

LILY Jack, guess what I just saw?

JACK What?

LILY Lacie Kingsley, running as fast as she can away from the presentation.

JACK I can’t say I blame her. I’d be running myself, if I weren’t wearing a $600 suit.

LILY Don’t you get it? This is it! This is our moment to catch her red-handed. Come with me.

*LILY grabs JACK by the wrist and pulls him away.*

JACK Whoa there, Miss McQueen, don’t you think we’re moving a bit too fast right now?

LILY Shhhh, we don’t tip her off that we’re following her.

*LACIE turns around, visibly upset.*

LACIE Too late. What do you guys want?

LILY We want to know where you’re going and what you’re doing so we can finally put to rest all these rumours.

LACIE You could have just asked – there was no need to follow me. I’d be more than happy to tell you that I’m a nobody. I don’t have any spy skills or training. All the times I’ve had what you guys have called “field experience,” I’ve gotten away because of pure luck. I’m your average, good for nothing, student.

LILY Then why are you running away from the presentation? Don’t you know that Mom’s spent ages planning this guest speaker? He’s from somewhere very high up in Government. He runs the Society for the Promotion of Arts in the Department of Education.

LACIE Wait, what did you say they were called?

LILY You, know, the S.P.A.D.E. The Society for the Promotion…

LACIE That’s it! SPADE!

LILY Yeah, SPADE. So what?

JACK Sorry, ladies, did I miss something? Last time I checked –

LACIE The person who attacked me said they were a SPADE agent. They must be the ones trying to expose the school. And they’re in there right now! Can’t you see? This is what they’ve been planning! We’ve got to tell someone!

LILY What, that a top-secret CIA school which nobody knows about is under attack by a terrorist organization that doesn’t exist?

LACIE What choice do we have?

JACK Even if they believed us, what could anyone do? A regular police squad wouldn’t stand a chance against operatives like these. The only people who could stand a chance of fighting them are all inside that building.

LACIE Well, they’re not *all* inside, are they? Three of them are right here.

*JACK and LILY look round, confused.*

LACIE I mean us. We haven’t been captured yet.

LILY You’re not seriously suggesting *we* do something?

LACIE You said it yourself. Who else is going to help, if not us?

LILY The CIA special forces? There’s a panic button in Mom’s office that links straight to the CIA. If someone could reach it, there’d be a special forces unit here in no time.

LACIE Perfect. So all we have to do is sneak into the building and reach the office without being seen. This is going to be child’s play for you guys. Right?

*Pause.*

LACIE I mean, if it were just me out here, I’d be worried. But you two are the best of the best.

LILY This isn’t some exam or assessment, this is real life. There are real enemies in there.

LACIE But you’re Mrs McQueen’s daughter! If anyone can do it, you can.

LILY That’s the only thing I’ve heard my whole life. Do you have any idea what it’s like having a mum who’s a CIA hero? Everyone expects me to be incredible, another Wonder Kid like she was. But I’m not, I’m just an average student who works all day so she can live up to her mom, even though I’m never going to be able to.

LACIE Of course you do.

LILY That’s easy for you to say. You’ve only been here a term and you’ve seen more action than most of us will ever see, and you always come out on top. You know, when I started at this place, everyone said I was only let in because of Mom. And secretly, I’ve always thought they were right. I’m not cut out for this. Not like you, Jack.

LACIE Fine. We can wait here. Only one of us needs to get inside, and Jack, I guess you’re the best spy out of the three of us.

JACK I can’t.

*Pause.*

LILY Hey, this can’t be any harder than that time you rescued One Direction from the British Embassy, armed with nothing but a cocktail umbrella. Remember?

*Pause.*

LILY I mean, the school can’t be better defended than those Aztec ruins that you had to fight your way out of, and this time the Mexican army won’t even show up halfway through. Right?

JACK But this isn’t like all those other times. This is…well, it’s happening right now! I mean, this is…this is real.

*Pause.*

LILY But can’t you just –

JACK Fine, I admit it. I’m useless, OK? I made up all those stories. I didn’t have a choice. Everyone else here was so talented, and I just wanted to fit in. You know the only reason I was allowed in this place? Because I was caught cheating at my old school and expelled. My dad had to pull a few strings to get me in. He told me this was a special remedial school, and then it turned out that everyone here was ten times cleverer than back home. So I had no choice but to lie and cheat even more. That’s the only thing I’ve ever been good at.

*Pause.*

LILY All this time, I thought I was the only one who felt like she didn’t belong here.

JACK So did I.

LACIE Of course you guys belong here. Don’t you see? The Academy brought each of us here for a reason. We just didn’t know what it was.

**Scene 15b**

*A rustling is heard on one side of the stage. LACIE, LILY, and JACK turn toward the sound.*

LILY (*stage whisper)* SPADE agent.

MARCH (7) *(appearing from hiding)* I’m afraid not.

*LACIE, LILY, and JACK gasp.*

LILY Mr March? What are you doing out here?

MARCH (7) You didn’t think I would let you run into trouble, did you? Although in this case, you’ve done a remarkably good job running away from it. You see, the core of that watch you’re wearing is made out of gallium, being kept in a semi-liquid state by your body heat. Thanks to it, I was able to detect a spike in your body temperature that suggested you’d found yourself in hot water.

LACIE So I’m right?

MARCH (7) I’m afraid so. We’ve allowed SPADE to win our trust, and now it may be too late to save the school from attack. But all is not lost, for you see, SPADE won’t be able to find what they’ve looking for in there.

LACIE What’s that?

MARCH (7) Why, you, of course! Thanks to all the rumours we’ve put about, our enemies think you’re our secret weapon! They won’t be willing to make a move until they’ve captured you.

LILY Wait a minute. What do you mean about Lacie being a secret weapon?

MARCH (7) We hoped that bringing Lacie to this school would flush out the mole. We never imagined it would bring the enemy to our gates. But now, I suppose I have no choice but to deal with the problem myself.

JACK You? Seriously? I mean, no offence, but you’re hardly the deadliest agent this school has to offer.

MARCH (7) I’m afraid that’s where you’re wrong, Mr Diamond. You see, the deadliest threat…

*MARCH changes guise.*

MARCH (8) …is the one you don’t see coming. If we’re to have any chance of winning, we’ll need to play SPADE at their own game. But we’ll have to be careful. If I know SPADE, they’ll have an ace up their sleeve.

*Blackout.*

**Scene 16a**

*The HEAD’s office. HEAD is sitting with ACE, speaking to TWO. FOUR is standing behind HEAD.*

HEAD That was such a fascinating lecture you gave. I could tell the whole school was captured.

TWO I do believe they were, Mrs McQueen. And they’re going to remain captured until you hand over your prize asset to us.

*FOUR seizes HEAD.*

HEAD What do you mean by this?

TWO *(through mic)* Bring them in.

*THREE and FIVE enter, holding JAMEY and BECCA.*

THREE Number Two, these are the target’s roommates.

TWO Perfect. You see, Mrs McQueen, I’m afraid you’re not quite who we think we are.

*TWO removes glasses. HEAD gasps.*

TWO That’s right. I warned you I’d be back. Public Enemy Number 376, Louise Montoya “Moonface” Sanchez. Although nowadays, I’m better known as Number Two.

*JAMEY and BECCA laugh involuntarily.*

TWO What? What’s so funny? The SPADEs use a perfectly rational system. We number ourselves hierarchically. Number Three is the next most senior Spade, followed by Number Four. As Vice President of the Spades, I am naturally referred to as Number Two.

*JAMEY and BECCA laugh again.*

TWO Why does this keep happening? Now, the two of you are going to tell me the whereabouts of Miss Kingsley or suffer the consequences.

JAMEY We’d rather die than tell you anything!

TWO *(grabbing laptop from BECCA)* Tell me before I do something I regret. Like, I don’t know, remove this USB stick without ejecting it first?

BECCA Noo! OK, fine, I’ll talk.

JAMEY Becca!

BECCA She’s not here. But…wait, I’m not feeling so well.

TWO Seriously?

BECCA I skipped breakfast, okay? If I don’t eat or drink something soon, I think I might faint.

*BECCA acts as if she is about to pass out.*

TWO Fine. *(to THREE)* Untie her hands. *(To BECCA)* Don’t try and be a hero now.

*Over the next conversation, JAMEY and BECCA speak carefully, through gritted teeth, using exaggerated face and body language to try and communicate.*

BECCA Thanks. Hey, Jamey, didn’t you have that soda with you?

JAMEY What? No.

BECCA I swear you did. You were just about to drink it when we got found. Remember?

JAMEY Yeah, but that wasn’t for you, that was for me!

BECCA Just let me have a sip –

JAMEY It’s my only one –

BECCA I don’t think now’s the time to –

JAMEY I haven’t even had a chance to try it –

TWO As much as I’d love to stand here and listen to you two arguing all night, I have a job to do. Why don’t the two of you share it?

*Furtive pause. BECCA takes can out of JAMEY’s pocket.*

JAMEY Fine. Just don’t blame me if this all goes horribly wrong.

BECCA I don’t see what choice we have.

TWO What are you two even talking about? Was it not quite good enough for you?

THREE Wait, that doesn’t look like a normal soda can.

JAMEY That’s because it’s *not* a normal soda can. It’s a little coursework project I’ve been working on. I finally managed to find a way to synthesize huge amounts of whoopee pie and then inject it into a can under pressurized conditions.

THREE Oh, dear Lord, no.

FIVE *(same time)* So that means…

TWO Don’t let them open it! Stop them! Stop them now!

*THREE and FIVE fight JAMEY and BECCA. THREE and FIVE can be unarmed or wield blunt melee weapons; JAMEY and BECCA are either unarmed or use found objects to block and dodge attacks. HEAD escapes FOUR and fights FOUR and TWO. The can is seized and juggled back and forth between sides multiple times. BECCA and JAMEY, dodging most of the attacks, eventually regain the can and open it, as the other SPADES all dive towards them in a desperate attempt to take it.*

*Brief blackout.*

**Scene 16b**

*When lights come back up, TWO, THREE, FOUR, and FIVE are lying unconscious in awkward positions around the room. HEAD is sitting unconscious in a corner with ACE still on her lap. JAMEY and BECCA are standing, looking around dazedly, without can.*

JAMEY What just…happened?

BECCA I can’t remember the last five minutes.

*HEAD groans. JAMEY and BECCA run over to her*

JAMEY Come on, Headmistress, let’s get you out of here, and then we’ll alert the CIA.

ACE *(standing up)* Not so fast.

*Collective gasp.*

HEAD *(still a little discombobulated)* Ace! No!

ACE Haven’t you ever wondered where I got my name? It’s because I’m the leader of the Spades. And I’ve been working against you from under your very nose!

HEAD All this time?
ACE That’s right. How else did you think SPADE were able to stay one step ahead of you at every turn? *(to JAMEY and BECCA)* Your pathetic attempt at rebellion was admirable, but ill-conceived. This building is swarming with SPADE agents. You never had a hope of overcoming our might. *(Into mic)* All forces, to the Head’s office! Now!

*SIX and SEVEN enter and approach HEAD menacingly. LACIE, LILY, and JACK enter with them, in SPADE disguises. LACIE quickly crosses to HEAD’s computer.*

ACE You see? Mrs McQueen, you should be able to recognize when you’re in checkmate. Now hand over Kingsley and nobody else need get hurt.

LACIE *(with false voice)* I think I’ve located her, Ace. All I have to do is press this button and…whoops, I think I just sent out a red alert to the CIA instead. My bad.

ACE What’s the meaning of this?

*LACIE, LILY, and JACK remove disguises triumphantly. ACE, SIX, and SEVEN attack them, either unarmed or with blunt melee weapons. HEAD, JAMEY, and BECCA are still too dazed to do anything but watch and cheer from the sidelines. LACIE, LILY, and JACK block and dodge attacks, either unarmed or with found objects. SIX and SEVEN are overpowered; they could, for example, knock each other out by mistake, or be boobytrapped by the STUDENTS. LACIE, LILY, and JACK surround ACE, who drops weapons and raises hands.*

JACK Didn’t you realize? When you’re playing poker, diamonds always trump spades.

*Pause.*

LACIE That’s not how poker works, Jack.

LILY Do you even know how to play?

JACK *(with a sob)* No.

ACE You haven’t seen the last of me!

*ALL attempt to capture ACE, who nimbly eludes everyone and exits, optionally in a cloud of smoke.*

**Scene 16c**

*MARCH (9) bursts in.*

MARCH (9) I just saw your dog fleeing the school. Does this mean what I think it means?

HEAD I don’t know. Perhaps these students can explain what’s just happened?

*LACIE, LILY, JACK, JAMEY, and BECCA look from one to the other helplessly.*

LACIE Well…

HEAD *(agitatedly)* Let me see if I understand, Lacie. You broke into my office and accessed my personal files. You snuck out of the school while everyone was distracted. You flagrantly bypassed every one of the school’s security measures. In my thirty years of espionage, I’ve never seen anything like it.

LACIE I can explain…

HEAD You don’t need to. You, Lacie, are far and away the most accomplished second year spy I’ve ever seen, and you’ve only been here a term! A truly dazzling performance. Congratulations! How did you manage to hack into the school system? Break into the restricted area? Take out all those guards?

LACIE Well, none of that was me. You’re only as good a spy as the people willing to have your back.

*LACIE looks back at JAMEY, BECCA, LILY, and JACK and smiles. They smile back at her.*

LILY Hey Mom, now that the enemy has been neutralized, what was this all about?

*During the below, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, and EIGHT wake up, look around, and with lots of furtive hand signals, exit surreptitiously, unnoticed by anyone.*

HEAD Mr March and I enrolled Lacie into the Academy in order to flush out a mole. You see, we knew someone was working against us from the inside, but we never imagined it could have been…my little Acey… *(breaks off into crying)*

MARCH (9) Mrs McQueen’s trying to say that SPADE’s been one step ahead of us since the beginning. We tried to use Lacie as a pawn against them, but in the end it was Lacie that won the game for us. I can’t tell you how thankful I am, Lacie. You’ve more than earned your place in the Cheshire Island Academy. We may have let their leader, Ace, get away, but with the rest of SPADE captured he’ll be powerless, and we can all look forward to a long and prosperous year –

*CIA special team bursts in.*

WALRUS CIA Special forces, at your service.

CARPENTER Don’t worry, civilians, we’ll soon have the threat under control. Where are they?

*ALL look around at where SPADE agents had been.*

MARCH (9) Er...that’s a good point. Mrs McQueen, who’s keeping an eye on them?

HEAD How should I know? I’ve had my hands full enough as it is.

MARCH (9) They were right there, last time I checked.

CARPENTER It seems they’ve gone dark.

WALRUS Don’t worry, we’ll set up a perimeter and find them in no time. Nothing can get past us.

*CIA special team exits.*

HEAD *(anxiously)* I’m sure there’s nothing to worry about. After all, how far could they have got?

MARCH (9) Oh, who are we kidding? We’re already too late.

*Blackout.*

**Scene 17**

*The SPADE HQ. All SPADES seated around, including ACE, sitting in the central chair.*

ACE Can someone explain to me what happened back there?

TWO I just can’t understand it, sir. Our plan was foolproof. They had no idea what hit them.

ACE But somehow, we let them get the better of us. Do you have any idea how much I went through in that school? The sacrifices I made?

SIX Guys, I hate to say I told you so, but none of this would have happened if we’d just killed Lacie and her immediate family.

ACE Number Six, I did not ask for your opinion!

FOUR OK, I’m sensing a lot of hostility in the room right now. Why don’t we try doing some bonding exercises? Remember, there’s no ‘I’ in SPADE.

EIGHT Ooh, I know some great team building games! How about –

ACE Or how about this – I talk and you listen? We knew Lacie Kingsley was dangerous. We knew she’d been brought to the school for a reason. But still, we underestimated her, and now she’s got the better of us. But does SPADE let itself get beaten by a bunch of schoolgirls?

*Pause. ACE looks around the room.*

ACE That was a not a rhetorical question, and the answer was no! We’re going to make Miss Kinglsey rue the day she ever crossed SPADE.

FIVE That sounds like a superb plan, Ace. But if you don’t mind me asking…how?

ACE Simple. At the end of her first year, Lacie will be sitting her exams along with the rest of her class. But as it just so happens, the syllabus will be changing slightly, and Lacie will need to sit a rather special exam. To be precise, the Security, Protection, And Defence Examination.

*ACE looks around expectantly.*

ACE Get it?

*Pause.*

ACE Anyone?

*Pause.*

ACE Security, Protection, And Defence Examination. S.P.A.D.E. SPADE.

*ALL groan with understanding.*

EIGHT Ace, you’re a genius!

ACE But this is one exam that Lacie won’t be passing. Make no mistake, Lacie Kingsley, you haven’t heard the last of us.

*SPADEs start to laugh evilly, gradually building up until the blackout.*

*Curtain call.*

**The End**

**Thanks for reading!**

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About me: I live in Oxford, UK, where I’m currently working on the *God Machine* series. *God Machine* is an epic urban fantasy for teenagers and up, set in an alternative London where magic exists, but is illegal and doesn’t work anyway. I’m also an improv comedian with Hivemind: [www.hivemindimprov.com](http://www.hivemindimprov.com). Take a look around my site to find out more!

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