Hard Yards

Matt Williamson | Act One, Scene 3 - selected passage

Martin meets Alex, Lucas and Jodi for his first class at the school.

CASTING NOTE

Hard Yards is set in a culturally diverse public school. Casting should reflect this.

READING THIS SAMPLE

Stage directions appear in italics. ... indicates speech trailing off or being drowned out. (CONT'D) means the same character continues speaking. (CONTINUED) means the scene continues on the next page.

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A RUNDOWN CLASSROOM

Martin stands, arms crossed, in the doorway.

MARTIN

(To self.)

Arms down at sides. Open.

(Puts his hands in his pockets, then quickly withdraws them.)

Not in pockets. Firm, fair, consistent.

The growing thunder of teenagers running, shouting.

An IMPOSING STUDENT makes his way toward Martin. He stands very close. He stares directly at Martin.

Martin steps back.

This is ALEX (16).

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hey Matey! I'm Mr Hindmarsh. You are Alex, right?

Martin puts out his fist for a pump.

It is not reciprocated.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Well, we have a seating plan. Let's wait for the others.

Alex pushes past Martin.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Let's wait hey? Alex mate?

Alex ignores him.

Another student arrives at the door and pushes straight past Martin.

This is LUCAS(16), he glides in.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Okay. Let's line up.

(Beat.)

Hey. Mate! Back here please.

The students ignore him.

Another student arrives, JODI (16).

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hello. I'm Mr Hindmarsh.

(CONTINUED)

JODI

Hey.

MARTIN

Can we line up, please?

Jodi looks in at the seated students, but "lines up".

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Okay... great.

The other students watch on. Jodi waits.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Just here, please. We'll wait for everyone to line up.

ALEX

What are you waiting for Matey?

MARTIN

We'll just wait. Follow the school procedures.

(To Jodi.)

And thanks for doing the right thing.

Jodi moves around Martin into the room.

LUCAS

No one does that shit, matey!

Martin waits. But it's ridiculous. Looks at his watch, cranes his neck. He enters the classroom.

MARTIN

Careful with the language mate, Lucas, okay? We line up in my classroom. Because it's the school policy. And because it gets "you ready to learn".

ALEX

I haven't been ready to learn in eleven years, it's not gonna start because of you, matey!

Beat.

MARTIN

It's Mr Hindmarsh, or "Sir."

Head shakes.

ALEX

I'll go with Orsir.

MARTIN

No, Sir.

Alex shakes his head.

ALEX

Okay. Nosir. So this is your first-ever class, Nosir?

MARTIN

No, actually.

(CONTINUED)

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ALEX

(cajoling.)

Yeeessss?

JODI

I think it is!

MARTIN

Please.

JODI

Don't beg buddy!

MARTIN

Look. I am here to teach you literacy. Vocational literacy.

LUCAS

Jesus fuck! Thank god! Right? Life was shit, but now!

The students laugh.

MARTIN

(Sharp.)

Mate. Language. Not acceptable.

LUCAS

(Mimicking.)

Not acceptable.

ALEX

Not acceptable...

MARTIN

Do we mock people here? Do we? It's not funny.

LUCAS

It's fuckin' funny watching you nosir!

The students laugh.

MARTIN

Look.

LUCAS

Nosir? Why do you think they gave you this class?

ALEX

This guy's got no bloody idea...

LUCAS

Because they know we will drop out, then, you will leave. And then they do it all again!

ALEX

Did you think they were gunna destroy a real teacher on us?

Martin is rattled.

LUCAS

Where do you live?

(CONTINUED)

MARTIN

West of the city.

JODI

Mista! Don't tell them where you live!

ALEX

You vote greens?

MARTIN

It's not important how I vote... it is important what I do...

ALEX

You drive the Tesla? Shit cars mate, but Elon! Legend!

Beat.

MARTIN

Yes... I...

JODI

DON'T! Don't tell them what you drive...

ALEX

How long does it take you to get here?

MARTIN

I don't know. Fifty minutes.

ALEX

You drive fifty minutes. To come here. To teach the "deadshit, burden on the community" class... why the fuck!

(Wags his finger at Martin.)

Wait, I know!

(Beat.)

Bad. Life. Choices.

LUCAS

That's it Bro..!

Beat.

MARTIN

Don't say that.

Alex shrugs.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Why would you say that?

ALEX

Bad life choices?

MARTIN

No... about the burden...? Deadshits?

LUCAS

Language!

(CONTINUED)

JODI

He was quoting.

MARTIN

Someone called you deadshits?

Alex taps his nose, and smiles secretively.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

But really?

LUCAS

The P.E. Teacher, drives a Pajero...

MARTIN

He said... that?

LUCAS

Says it how it is bro!

Laughs.

ALEX

He said. "Never have, never will do a scrap of work in or out of school... Will be a burden out in the community like they are in school. Absolute deadshits."

MARTIN

And you believe that?

ALEX

Do you Bro?

Beat.

MARTIN

No. I don't. At all. But I do know something. I can't force you to learn. I don't have a magic wand.

LUCAS

A magic wand?

MARTIN

Or a pole to beat you with.

JODI

Steady Grandad!

ALEX

You got a pole somewhere, for sure matey.

The students lose it.

Martin is starting to seriously struggle.

JODI

(Composing herself.)

Don't worry so much! Look at you!

(To the class.)

Look at him! It's cute!

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

He's like...

Alex stands and mimics Martin.

LUCAS

Look his legs are shaking!

ALEX

What's it called, that donkey from Shrek?

JODI

Donkey.

ALEX

He's Donkey! That's his name!

LUCAS

Hee-Haw!

MARTIN

No!

LUCAS

Hee-Haw!

ALEX

Mista Donkey!

Beat.

LUCAS

Hee-Haw!

Beat. Jodi considers Martin.

JODI

Not "donkey"?

MARTIN

(Near pleading.)

No... No.

Beat.

JODI

Okay. Nosir then?

Martin nods despite himself. The boys accept the judgement.

End of selected excerpt. Original script pages 8-15.

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