

1. Everything Follows From Here

Lights up.

Either side of the stage are chairs. These are for the cast. The changes in this play should be fast, so it's going to be helpful to have your actors on hand at the drop of a hat.

On stage are six blocks arranged in a V-shape, with the pointy bit at the back.

Behind each of these blocks is a child, with a backpack next to them – AMBER, BERNIE, HESTER, JASMINE and SHEARA. These are the contestants. They are all frozen, focused on something in front of them. Something we can't see.

And on the final block is a large phone – maybe an old-fashioned one.

Behind that phone stands a man – this is ROCHELLE'S DAD. He stares at the phone, twitchy.

SHEARA. Do you remember the moment just before everything changed?

ROCHELLE, *early teens, enters.*

ROCHELLE. Dad?

JASMINE. **A door opens.**

AMBER. **A storm breaks.**

HESTER. **A phone rings.**

BERNIE. **And everything, your whole life as you now know it, follows from there.**

ROCHELLE. Dad?

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Oh hello, love.

ROCHELLE. What you doing?

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Nothing much.

ROCHELLE. I've been shouting you.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. In my own world.

ROCHELLE. You coming down for breakfast?

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Yeah.

ROCHELLE. I did eggs.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Lovely.

ROCHELLE. We can decide what we want to do today. Museum? Film?

Beat.

Next door have just painted their front wall. We could watch it dry if you like?

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Sounds good.

ROCHELLE. Dad!

ROCHELLE'S DAD. What?

ROCHELLE. You're doing that thing again. That 'not listening' thing.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Sorry, love.

ROCHELLE. Your eggs are getting cold.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Yes. Right.

The PRODUCERS enter, holding a mobile phone.

(A word on the PRODUCERS: they should feel – breathe, move – like one person, even if there's twenty of them. They are strange and slightly other-worldly. Their props could be oversized or they might wear bits of the same costume – like different components of a matching suit. Shirt, tie, jacket, etc. You can split their lines as you see fit – they can speak separately or together or a mixture of both. It might help to think of them as a single, many-headed beast.)

ROCHELLE. You know staring at it won't make it ring.

Then the sound of a phone ringing. It's not in ROCHELLE's world. ROCHELLE and her DAD freeze.

JASMINE, SHEARA, AMBER, HESTER *and* BERNIE *all answer their phones.*

JASMINE, SHEARA, AMBER, HESTER *and* BERNIE. Hello?

PRODUCERS. It's the producers calling.

From the studio.

We're phoning with the result of your application.

A light drum rolls.

We were overwhelmed by this year's applicants.

The competition was very tough.

I'm afraid it's not good news...

The drum stops.

Beat.

It's great news!

You made the show. Congratulations.

The CONTESTANTS celebrate, punch the air. Squeal with happiness. The actors at the side of the stage cheer too!

At the same time FRANKIE enters with a cup of coffee.

FRANKIE hands the PRODUCERS the cup (or cups – maybe she hands one to each of them). The cup(s) get dropped with a clatter.

PRODUCERS. DRAT!

Everyone stops cheering.

Oh. I wasn't talking to you.

Everyone makes a loud sigh of relief.

FRANKIE *scrabbles around, picking up cups.*

Be at the studio for eleven. And remember this moment. Everything you've ever wanted...

JASMINE, SHEARA, AMBER, HESTER *and* BERNIE.
Everything?

ALL PRODUCERS. Everything follows from here.

The line goes dead.

The CHILDREN pick up their backpacks and turn upstage.

All except ROCHELLE and her DAD – who keep staring at the phone.

ROCHELLE. Come on, Dad.

Her DAD turns and walks away.

The phone rings.

ROCHELLE'S DAD *grabs it.*

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Elaine?

PRODUCERS. Not the last time I checked.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Oh. Sorry, boss. I thought you were someone else.

PRODUCERS. We need you to come in today.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Today?

PRODUCERS. We wouldn't ask but it's urgent.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. As in *today*, today?

PRODUCERS. Is there a problem?

ROCHELLE'S DAD. No.

PRODUCERS. Good. Then I'll see you –

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Actually, yes. My daughter. We were supposed to be spending the day together.

PRODUCERS. We totally understand.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. You do?

PRODUCERS. Absolutely.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. I really appreciate it.

PRODUCERS. It will be no trouble, just bring her with you.

ROCHELLE'S DAD (*disappointed*). Bring her...

PRODUCERS. No need to thank us.

ROCHELLE'S DAD. Right. Yes. Thank you, I'll see you.

The line goes dead.

(*To ROCHELLE.*) Change of plan.

Theme music plays.

The PRODUCERS exit and at the same time two people enter. They're holding microphones. These are the PRESENTERS.

2. The Presenters

PRESENTER 1. I'm going to throw a word into the room and I want everyone to think about what it means to them. Okay?

PRESENTER 2. Okay.

PRESENTER 1. AJ, are we ready?

PRESENTER 2. I'm ready, SJ.

PRESENTER 1. Studio audience, are you ready?

Silence.

Then here we go...

Beat.

'Genius.'

A MAKE-UP ARTIST *enters and touches up their faces as they speak.*

PRESENTER 2. You just threw it out there.

PRESENTER 1. Dropped the G-bomb.