

## ALL ABOUT JENNY by JO HARDY

### CHARACTERS

MUM

JENNY

JAMES - Jenny's boyfriend

TIM - Jenny's brother, about 13

CARLA - Jenny's friend

GAMESHOW HOST

GAMESHOW ASSISTANT

GLAMOROUS GIRL

NURSE

This can be done by a cast of five, by doubling in the following way:

JENNY

JAMES

TIM + GAMESHOW HOST

CARLA + NURSE

MUM + GAMESHOW ASSISTANT, GLAMOROUS GIRL - the last two played as one character

For a cast of six, doubling could be:

JENNY

JAMES

MUM

CARLA + GLAMOROUS GIRL

TIM + GAMESHOW ASSISTANT

GAMESHOW HOST + NURSE

Apart from the more naturalistic scenes, which develop the characters, there are many ensemble scenes in which the whole cast are involved.

This is an ideal examination script, running at about 25 minutes.

It is summer time. Jenny and Carla are first year sixth girls, studying A levels. James, Jenny's boyfriend, is in the second year sixth, and is about to leave school. Unfortunately, Jenny is going through a crisis about her weight and general self-image. She starts to withdraw from James, imagining he prefers Carla. In fact, James really loves Jenny. Sadly, before they can resolve their differences, James goes up to London for a couple of days, organised by the college he is going onto in the Autumn. Whilst he is there, he is blown up by a bomb on the Underground. Meanwhile, Jenny has been hospitalised, to get over her anorexia. Though desperately sad at the news of James' death, with the help of her family and friend, Carla, she starts on the road to recovery. She is also convinced that James is still with her, in her head, encouraging her to tackle her life healthily and with courage. His spirit is part of her recovery.

### EXTRACT 1

### PROLOGUE

*During this, Jenny is addressing the audience, alone on stage.*

**JENNY** It started a long time ago - over ten years.

It was sudden. As if, overnight, I let go of childhood, and all the insecurities and responsibilities of growing-up made me re-think almost every aspect of my life.

I looked in the mirror and didn't like what I saw. So I started to do something about it - tentative at first - just a few changes. But soon it spiralled out of control.

I was seventeen and I had everything going for me. A lovely family - and I do include my brother Tim in that description, though I didn't at the time - the very best of best friends - Carla - and a lovely boyfriend.

**Pause**

He was kind, funny and clever. His name was James.

**Jenny sits down at the table and her Mum and brother, Tim, enter. They are drinking tea and eating biscuits.**

**MUM** Hi, Jenny, good day? I'll get you some tea.

**JENNY** Hi, Mum. Yeah, it was all right. Don't bother with the tea. I'm going out.

**MUM** No homework?

**JENNY** Done it.

**MUM** Take a biscuit.

**Tim sighs and pulls the plate nearer to himself.**

**JENNY** It's all right. I wouldn't like to deprive the little piglet. I'm going for a shower.

**MUM** Jenny, that's not ...

**JENNY** Just teasing. [**She gets to the exit then turns back.**] Ta-ra, Porky. [**She runs out laughing.**]

**MUM** Don't take any notice of her.

**TIM** I don't. She never eats anything anyway. She's skinny.

**MUM** She's just naturally slim. Not skinny. And how many times have I told you to be careful what you say to her. She's sensitive.

**TIM** She's sappy.

**MUM** No, she isn't. [**Tim takes another biscuit.**] And that's the last one of those. You've had enough. Don't forget, football at six. Your kit's in the bag.

**She removes the plate, but not before Tim has jumped behind her and taken a last one.**

**TIM making for the door** See ya, Mum.

**MUM** Be back by eight.

**TIM** Half past.

**MUM** I said eight.

**TIM** But it's Friday! And you wouldn't want me to totally lose face with my mates, would you? [**They exchange the sort of glance that you feel has been exchanged before.**] Would you, Mummy dearest?

**MUM wearily** OK, but don't be late! [**Jenny enters.**] That was a quick shower.

**TIM** There's not much to wash.

**She lashes out and he ducks, then exits laughing.**

**JENNY** He's a pain.

**MUM** He's your brother.

**JENNY** Worse luck. Anyway, I'm off out.

**MUM** You seeing James tonight?

**JENNY** Yeah, suppose.

**MUM** He seems like a nice boy...

**JENNY** Mum don't. You're embarrassing me. I'm off.

**MUM** I'm worried that you haven't had any ...

**JENNY** I'll get something. See ya! [**She exits.**]

**MUM shouting after her** Make sure you do!

EXTRACT 2

**SCENE 2 Jenny and Carla are sitting on a bench together. Carla is eating chips.**

**CARLA** You sure you don't want one?

**JENNY** No. I mean yes, I'm sure.

**CARLA** Well, I'm starving. [**A pause.**] Why did you stand James up tonight? What's he done?

**JENNY** Nothing. And I didn't stand him up. I told him ...

**CARLA** What?

**JENNY** I told him I had a lot of homework and I needed the time.

**CARLA** Right. So here you are, sitting doing it right now.

**JENNY** Well, I should be really.

**CARLA** But you don't feel like it.

**JENNY** No.

**CARLA** You, me and the rest of the human race. Who in their right mind would ever enjoy doing homework? Or revision for that matter. It's just a pain. [**Finishes the chips and throws away the packaging.**] That's better.

**JENNY** You're so thin. You eat what you like and never get fat.

**CARLA** I know. We're all like this in my family. It's in the genes.

**JENNY** Yeah. I couldn't get in your jeans.

**CARLA** Very funny.

**JENNY** I wish I could.

**CARLA** Well, you're not exactly massive, are you? We're all different sizes, which is good or we'd look boring. Shall we go window shopping?

**JENNY** No.

**CARLA** Oh. What shall we do then?

**JENNY** I wish I could get thin. I wish there could be a miracle and I could just get thin.

**CARLA** Like you win this big prize. And instead of it being a million pounds it's instant thin-ness?

**JENNY** Yeah, something like that.

**SCENE 3. *The gameshow - with appropriate glitz and music. Contestant A is Jenny and Contestant B is Carla.***

**GAMESHOW HOST** Ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to tonight's edition of *How Thin Can You Get?* And we have two contestants who both have the same goal, which is to be the winner in this head-to-head *I'm Thinner Than You* contest.

**GAMESHOW ASSISTANT** We already know that Contestant A has eaten two segments of an orange for breakfast, but Contestant B has not eaten for four days.

**GAMESHOW HOST** Contestant A, is this a regular occurrence, or was eating breakfast on such an important day simply a moment of weakness? [**Jenny begins to speak.**] Don't answer that. The size-ometer will tell the truth - whether or not your lack of willpower will result in failure to win our star prize, which is a year's worth of flesh-banishing body wraps and fat-munching slimming pills, a five year gym membership with the assistance of our very own personal trainer, Slim Lean, and a photographic session at our *Beautiful Bones* studio.

**GAMESHOW ASSISTANT** By the way, our spies have been out and have reported seeing Victoria Beckham shopping for a Size 6 dress. Size 6! What happened to size zero? And is our cover girl becoming obese? It looks like it! Watch this space!

**GAMESHOW HOST** But back to the competition and Contestant A. Step forward please. Let's have a look at you. Are you trim-in-your-skin or has the decadent breakfast left you with the dreaded bloat-till-you-float, and will you be mistaken for the QE2?

**Fake piped laughter, which suddenly stops.**

**GLAMOROUS GIRL holding up cards which show matchstick people in various stages of thinness and fatness, as she reads each one out.** And here are our categories, folks! Is she...

> Thin.

> Average

> Fat

> Obese

>Humungous

> Ginormous

Or -

> Gross?  
Fingers on buttons....

### EXTRACT 3

**Darkness. Voices come from the shadows. Jenny is sitting on the floor to the left of the stage. Textured vocal montage, divided amongst the members of the cast except Jenny.**

I bet you feel silly now.  
I think she feels selfish.  
She feels sad.  
Bad.  
Are you sad, Jenny?  
Are you bad, Jenny?  
He loved her, you know.  
He loved you, Jenny.  
What did you see?  
In the mirror?  
What was so bad -?  
You pushed him away.  
Didn't you, Jenny?  
And when he was on that tube train, he was thinking of you.

***Enter James, watching.***

**JENNY** And I was thinking of him too. I was waiting for him to come back so that I could tell him.

**JAMES** And I was hurrying to get the train, so I would be at the station in time to come home and see you. [***He begins to push past the others in the group who have formed a crowd.***] Excuse me! [***They all hang on to a strap as if they are on a tube train.***] I'd just changed trains and it was less crowded. One of those rare times when there was a seat. [***Create the seats or bring them on.***] And he sat opposite me.

**JENNY** If only...

**JAMES** Yes. If only. But I was on that train, Jenny, and so was he. And there was nowhere to go.

**JENNY** But I wanted to tell you ...

**JAMES** I know.

***In slow motion and, hopefully, with lighting effects, we see the cord being pulled and the passengers twisting and falling - watched by Jenny and James.***

**JENNY** I'm sorry. I'm so sorry ... I was going to call you.

**JAMES** And I was going to call you. You see I was lonely. In London there are people everywhere but I was lonely without you.

**JENNY** I was stupid.

**JAMES** You couldn't help it.

**JENNY** I didn't have to do what I did. Forgive me?

**JAMES** Nothing to forgive. [***Pause.***] I thought about you.

**JENNY** When?

**JAMES** At the end. I was thinking about you...

**JENNY** ... when ...?

**JAMES** When I knew what was going to happen.

**JENNY** I wish I was with you.

**JAMES** You don't. You have to get better. You've got A levels to do...

**JENNY** As if they matter.

**JAMES** They matter. Life matters. *Your* life matters. I won't forget you, Jenny.