

The last lesson of the day was drama with Ms Whitfield. I liked Ms Whitfield a lot. We always played really fun games in her lessons — stuff like Zip, Zap, Boing and Zombie Tag and Splat! — and she never shouted or got stressed like lots of the other teachers did if we got noisy and excited. She wasn't a pushover or anything; she just didn't scream her head off to get us to do what she wanted. It probably helped that she didn't look like a teacher. Her long wavy hair was candyfloss pink, she had lots of piercings in both ears (plus a sparkly stud in her nose) and always wore T-shirts with cool designs on them under her blazer — today's was canary yellow and had a picture of a dog wearing sunglasses printed on it.

At the end of the lesson, Ms Whitfield asked me to stay behind.

'I won't keep you long, Daniel,' she said, once the classroom had emptied out. 'I just wanted to check if you were planning on auditioning for the school play on Friday?'

'What school play?' I asked.

She laughed. 'The Wizard of Oz, of course! Haven't you seen the posters? They've been stuck up all over school for weeks now.'

I shook my head. 'Sorry, miss.'

'Well, not to worry, it isn't too late.'

'For what?' I asked.

'To sign up for an audition slot, of course! We were full up, but a Year Nine just dropped out so it turns out I can squeeze you in.'

'Hang on a second, miss,' I said. 'Are you saying that you want me to audition for the school play?'

'That's exactly what I'm saying, Daniel,' Ms Whitfield said, her eyes twinkling. 'Don't look so surprised! You're a very capable young actor.'

This was news to me. Drama has always been my favourite lesson, but I've never thought of myself as a 'capable' one.

'What would I have to do?' I asked.

'Nothing complicated,' Ms Whitfield replied breezily. 'We'll just have a bit of a chat, then I'll ask you to read from the script.'

'And do you really think I might get a part, miss?'

'Well, I can't make any guarantees obviously, but if your performance in class this term is anything to go by, I think you've got a very decent chance.' She smiled another twinkly smile.

'Of course, Daniel, there's only really one way to find out, and that's to audition...'

When I left the drama studio, Ollie was sitting on the radiator waiting for me.

'What was that all about?' he asked.

'Parents' evening,' I said quickly. 'Ms Whitfield needed to change my appointment time.'

I had a feeling auditioning for the school play wasn't something Ollie would find very cool.

Luckily, he totally fell for my fib.

'Maybe I was a 'capable young actor' after all...!

We met the others at the school gates.

'Who fancies heading to Kick'n Chick'n?' Ollie asked.

Kick'n Chick'n is a chicken shop on the high street. If I could only eat one thing for the rest of my life, it would be their spicy chicken wing burger.

Everyone said yes apart from Lloyd who had to go straight home.

As usual, I didn't have any money on me, so I just had to sit and watch while the others feasted on their burgers and chicken strips and chips. I distracted myself from all the delicious smells by thinking about what Ms Whitfield had said. Knowing that she'd picked me out specially made me feel sort of warm and gooey inside, like the centre of the chocolate sponge pudding we had at lunch in the canteen today.

The more I thought about it, the more I really liked the idea of being an actor. When I was little, my favourite game was Let's Pretend, and that's basically what acting was, wasn't it? Pretending. Plus, if it turned out I was actually really good at it, I might get to be in films one day and make heaps of money and afford to live in a massive mansion and drive a fancy car and buy as many Xboxes as I want, just like in my daydreams.

I must have been daydreaming pretty hard, because the next thing I knew, Rohan was waving his hand in front of my face.

'Earth to Daniel,' he said, rapping on my forehead with his knuckle. 'Is anybody in there?'

'Sorry,' I said, blinking. 'I was just, er, thinking about something else. What's up?'

'Do you want the rest of my chips? I put too much ketchup on them, and they've gone all soggy.'

I didn't need asking twice, grabbing a big messy handful and shoving them in my mouth.

'If you were that hungry, why didn't you just buy something?' Josh asked, as I licked ketchup off my fingers.

'Haven't you noticed yet?' Rohan said. 'Daniel *never* buys his own food.'

'Yeah, he just scrounges off everyone else,' Alex added, nudging me with his elbow.

'You should have seen him round at my house the other day,' Ollie chimed in. 'I told him to help himself to anything in the cupboards, not empty them!'

Everyone laughed. I joined in so they wouldn't think I was embarrassed or bothered. I think it worked.