**They said it was meant to help – with audio notes**

SFX: As if he’s in a large classroom, perhaps with playground noises outside...generic ‘school’ atmos in the background

They’ve told me to record this because I refused to write a journal. “My thoughts and feelings.” They said it was meant to help. They said it’d help me ‘process my emotions.’ To understand my actions. Well, fuck that.

So let’s be clear. I’m only doing this to shut them up.

What can I tell you? I’m 13. I go to boarding school. I hate it. Well, I don’t hate it. I just wish I didn’t have to. But I mean, it’s normal now. I don’t get homesick. I just get on with it. I’ve got friends. They hate it. And I laugh at them because they hate it. I laugh when they get homesick. They need to grow up.

SFX: large classroom and school atmos out

SFX: ‘busy’ noises – office, airport etc under the lines below

I have to go to boarding school because my mum and her husband are ‘extremely busy people.’ That’s what they told me when they said I had to go away to school. ‘We’re very busy,’ they said. And they are. Well, my mum is. She’s away on business a lot so she can afford to pay my school fees so she doesn’t have to see me. Glen - that’s his name - says he’s really busy.

SFX: ‘busy’ noises out

SFX: large classroom noise in. School atmos isn’t present – he’s alone

They’re too busy to be arsed with me anyway. So that’s why I’m here.

My mum and dad are divorced. Most of the kids in my year have parents who are divorced.

SFX: wedding music, wedding crowd noises

My mum got remarried and I was a pageboy and had to carry the rings up the aisle on a shitty little cushion.

SFX: wedding noises and music out

SFX: large classroom atmos in

She’s married to an actual arsehole. Well, he’s not an arsehole but he does support Manchester United. She’s something big in a chemical company. I think it’s pharmaceuticals and I don’t mean the good kind. Know what I mean?? I have no idea what he does. I don’t think he even knows. He’s got a massive porn stash.

SFX: (as if it’s a memory) unlocking a drawer/cupboard

SFX: (as if it’s a memory) the boy giggles – already recorded

Don’t ask me how I know that. I just know.

Music in – this piece represents his dad. Maybe a bit spacey, sort of poignant but not OTT

My actual dad is an astronaut. He’s an actual astronaut. Everybody laughs when I say that and they laugh when I check online when the international space station’s going overhead and I wave at it out of the window like a complete fucking dick.

My dad’s mega clever - but seriously, how can you have a conversation with a man who pisses in his uniform? I’ve not seen him for ages but he used to send me emails but they stopped a couple of years ago. I bet the wifi’s really bad in space. He’s really busy as well, but genuinely busy.

Dad music out

SFX: Large classroom atmos in

I don’t talk about him to mum. She said it upset her too much and then that really used to upset me and I’d swear or throw something or run away for a bit.

SFX: (under the above line) door slam, something crashing – maybe a vase, footsteps down/up stairs

Music – tiny bit of dad music in – a thread of its theme anyway

I don’t really talk about my dad to anyone any more. But I really miss him. When I was younger, I think I thought he was ace.

Music out

SFX: Large classroom atmos in

So my mum is now married to an idiot. He hates me. Well, he doesn’t hate me. He sighs and shakes his head and buys me Match Attack cards like I’m like fucking SIX and then tells me I shouldn’t watch YouTube because it’s messing with my neurons.

SFX: Smartphone/YouTube notification sounds

I hardly speak to him. When I see them I just stay in my room in their house with the curtains closed and tell them I’m scared of daylight. I fake PTSD just so they’ll leave me alone.

SFX: Boy laughs – already recorded as sfx

They think I’m seriously disturbed. That’s what they emailed school about. ‘We’re concerned my son is seriously disturbed’ but honestly, they just don’t understand me. They can’t be bothered trying.

SFX: School atmos in under the line below, as if he’s remembering being with his mates

Everything started to go tits up when Joshua started daring me to do stuff at school.

It started quite low key when I suggested that everyone in Year 9 should try convincing our geography teacher that she’s got Alzheimer’s. We’d change seats when she wasn’t looking and tell her we were working on a completely different topic, and that she’d got all our names wrong.

SFX: teen kids laughing indoors

She looked so freaked out. I suppose it was quite a cruel thing to do, especially as she’s recently bereaved. But school’s meant to be fun, right?

The next one was when I told everyone to hum during maths. We were meant to be doing trigonometry and everyone’s there humming Jerusalem. It was hilarious.

SFX: humming Jerusalem – already recorded as sfx – under the above

It really sent the teacher mental. I thought he was going to shout at me. He looked furious which was totally not the reaction I was going for. I really liked him as well. He used to smile at me and say ‘well done’ when I got good marks.

The next few dares were fairly standard. Saluting the Head of Year whenever we saw her. But not just saluting, actually stopping, standing to attention...

SFX: “TenSHUN!” already recorded

...clicking our heels together and doing the whole elaborate wavy hand arm thing like the Americans do, then marching off - left, right, left, right…

SFX: “Left, right, left, right” - already recorded

SFX: Kids marching

SFX: As if he’s in a sports hall

On the new parents’ Open Day I was showing some people round - they were actually stupid enough to suggest I should be a guide - and I walked past the Head in the corridor and asked her if she was on her period.

SFX: Kids laughing

SFX: Sports hall atmos out

SFX: Large classroom atmos in

After that I don’t think the parents I was showing around selected our school as a viable option. And I was sent to the school counsellor for ‘a chat.’ Please.

SFX: Kids giggling in under the lines below

Somebody suggested - I can’t remember who it was - it might have been Poppy - that I should put laxatives in the House Parent’s cocoa and I’m in no way saying I did but if I did, it wouldn’t be a surprise to find out that Miss Gregson is seeing a gastroenterologist. Which she isn’t because I totally didn’t do it.

The next one was a massive fail which is a shame because it had so much potential. I got this one off the internet. I thought it’d be funny to put a viagra in the water fountain in the sports hall.

SFX: Water fountain

SFX: Kids giggling

That would’ve caused mayhem at the gymnastics display. But I don’t think the tablet was actual viagra.

SFX: Water fountain, kids giggling out

I have a feeling that Kyle gave me a Tic Tac, the weasly little fucking coward.

But the seventh dare was when I excelled myself. And to be fair, it’s the one that really put the metaphorical cat up the arse of a metaphorical pigeon.

SFX: Dare music in – something sounding mischievous and slightly dangerous

The boys’ dorms are nowhere near the girls’ dorms, for obvious reasons. But the dare was that I would creep into the Year 11 girls’ dorm and get Alyssa - who is at least a 36D - to tell me a bedtime story. Sergei (his English isn’t great) said that I should make her hold me as though I was the baby Jesus until dawn.

SFX: Kids giggling

What’s not to love? Even if I do tend towards Buddhism.

Anyway. That’s irrelevant.

SFX: Creaking floorboards

I crept out of the Year 9 boys’ dorm after lights out wearing black mufti so I’d blend into the dark, ran across the quad and into the girls’ block.

SFX: Sound of a single person running outdoors

SFX: Door opening and closing

SFX: Quiet internal, carpeted room atmos

My God, the stink of body spray in there almost made me puke.

It was super quiet and everyone was in bed - even the house parents. I wasn’t entirely sure where I was going but I just used common sense and ninja darer’s instinct. I figured the Year 7’s would be on the ground floor and just made my way up, hoping there’d be a handy poster or a sign or something to give me some clues.

SFX: Stairs creaking, footsteps climbing upstairs

I went up the stairs and listened at a few doors. There was a lot of breathing. I could hear a couple of whispers outside Year 8 - I think it was weird Simone and stinky Trudi - and went up another floor.

SFX: Kids whispering

Fortunately there was a sign saying ‘Year 11 Girls Rock’ which is a totally dumb-ass thing to put on a sign but who am I to criticise? Now all I had to do was find Alyssa. The names of the occupants are stuck outside on the wall next to the doors so it was actually pretty easy once I’d got there. In year 11 they’re in pairs, so I just had to find Alyssa’s door and go in. And then, obviously, ask her to hold me as if I was the baby Jesus until dawn. Without laughing, obv.

But regrettably, that’s when I was discovered. A dick-brained Year 8 (she rejoices in the name Sloane) had been following me, and she screamed, the silly cow.

SFX: A girl screams

All the lights go on.

SFX: Lights switching on, doors opening, people shouting

Doors start opening. People start shouting and within minutes I’m in front of the head admiring her Marks and Spencer loungewear.

SFX: Large classroom atmos in – he needs to sound alone

I don’t know why I did it, I said. I just wanted a woman’s touch. I realised that sounded so so wrong as soon as I’d said it so I pretended to cry and said I needed a hug.

Rik, if you think it needs anything under this next section go for it.

Miss Gregson said ‘oh you poor poor boy’ and looked like she was about to cry. And then I burst into tears. I think originally I meant to pretend to cry but suddenly there were actual tears and I was properly sobbing and then I was saying I hadn’t meant to upset anyone and that I just wanted a cuddle.

Miss Gregson asked me how I was feeling and I told her I was depressed. I wasn’t. I just didn’t want to get into trouble and wanted them to feel sorry for me. But I kept crying and there was snot all over my face.

I miss my mum, I said. And my dad’s in space.

But I think I misspoke and said ‘my dad’s in heaven’ and Miss Gregson put her arm around me and left it there for a long time then and the Head asked me if I wanted a biscuit.

Eventually they sent me back to bed and said they’d talk to me in the morning about ‘ways forward’ to ‘help me cope.’

I mean, I’m perfectly fine and in the cold light of day it was hilarious. I think the rest of the year think I’m a bit of a legend. And Poppy said she’d buy me a cake at the weekend to cheer me up which everyone 100% knows is code for something else completely. I don’t need cheering up, I said. Everything’s fine.

Anyway. I’ve done it now, haven’t I. Recording completed. Feelings processed.

Music: Dad music in, gently, then swelling

And he is in space. I know he is.

End credits

Theme music