



This Student Life

Two successes and one failure

SCENE 1

Donna and Ted's house

Donna:

Where are you off to?

Ted:

Running shoes, running kit, um, let's think? Oh yes, I'm going for a run. You know I've entered for this half marathon?

Donna:

You never said anything about a half marathon.

Ted:

I told you last week. Some of the boys from work are entering, as a team. You just don't listen.

Donna:

But, Ted, you haven't run that sort of distance before. Do you think it's sensible?

Ted:

Look, I wasn't asking you for your advice on whether I could run it. Anyway, that smarmy young kid they've brought into accounts is running. I'm not about to be shown up by him.

Donna:

Well, just take it easy, that's all.

Ted:

Of course, I'll take it easy. Was there something else?

Donna:

No, it's nothing.

Ted:

It is something. I can tell.

Donna:

Okay. I'm getting my TMA back today.

Ted:

That's all?

Donna:

No, there is something else. Louise phoned.

Ted:

You never said.

Donna:

She says she's getting a divorce, Ted.

Ted:

A divorce? Really?

Donna:

Mike has taken up with a younger woman!

Ted: (laughs)

Lucky him!

Donna:

It's not funny, Ted! That's your daughter he's dumping.

Ted:

Oh, Louise will be fine. She and Mike are always splitting up. Didn't she run off with her Pilates instructor a couple of years ago. That all worked out fine.

Donna:

That was different. Mike had been totally ignoring her. And, what about the children? I wish I was there. Could we go, do you think?

Ted:

Are you mad, woman? Go all the way to Australia. Not a chance.

Donna:

Oh, Ted, I'm so worried about her.

Ted:

Why don't you concentrate on your TMA, eh? I'm off for a run.

Donna:

I'm nervous about that as well.

Ted:

For goodness sake, it's just a first assignment, Donna. It's not as if it's anything important.

Donna:

That's easy for you to say. Why do you have to be so dismissive all the time.

Ted:

I'm not being dismissive. But this is just 'what I did in the school holidays', isn't it?

Donna:

No, it's not! This is my first assignment on my degree programme. I haven't done anything like this for, well, a long time.

Ted:

Look Donna I haven't got time to talk about this now. I'll talk after I've had a run if you want.

Donna:

Well don't put yourself out.

Ted:

I'll see you in half an hour.

Sound:

Door opens and closes

Donna:

You are such a selfish so and so.

SCENE 2

Katie's flat

Sound:

A knock at the door. Door opens.

Cheryl:

Your doorbell isn't working.

Katie:

Oh, the battery must have run out. Come in then.

Cheryl:

I wish I got this much post.

Katie:

No you don't! They're all bills.

Cheryl:

All of these? You must owe a fortune.

Katie:

It's not as bad as it looks. I'm just leaving it to the end of the month, that's all.

Cheryl:

Okay, so what's up?

Katie:

Nothing really.

Cheryl:

Nothing! I thought it was a crisis. I came as soon as I got your text. Is Jade okay?

Katie:

Yeah, of course. She's sleeping. The health visitor thinks she's had a bit of colic.

Cheryl:

So, what's up? Why the 'come over asap'?

Katie:

Oh that.

Cheryl:

Yes, that.

Katie:

Sorry. I was just getting a bit panicky.

Cheryl:

About what?

Katie:

It's the first one.

Cheryl:

Oh! You mean your PMA? It's due back today?

Katie:

TMA – Tutor-marked assignment, but they said you get it back within 10 working days.

The tutor sent an email to say we should have them today.

Cheryl:

Don't worry, you'll be fine.

Katie:

I'm not so sure, Cher. I thought it was okay, but I'm really worried now. I think not knowing is rather comforting.

Cheryl:

If it was me, I'd want to know. What's the worst that can happen?

Sound:

baby crying

Katie:

That's Jade. I better go and get her up. She probably wants changing.

Cheryl:

Do you want me to do anything?

Katie:

No. You're okay. Just keep your fingers crossed for me.

SCENE 3

A building site, noises of construction.

Neil:

How long do you want me to hold this up for?

Dave:

Until I get this bleeding nail through this wall.

Sound:

A hammer

Dave:

Ow!

Neil:

What you done now!

Dave:

That hurt. I hit my thumb.

Neil:

Well, don't hit it then.

Dave:

I wasn't aiming at it was I?

Neil:

I know, what about you hold up this huge plank of wood and I put nails in the wall?

Dave:

Can't mate. It's a demarcation issue. Skilled worker, you see?

Neil:

Yeah, hitting your thumb. I bet it took you years to learn how to do that.

Sound:

More hammering

Dave:

That's it. That should hold it. Go on let go.

Neil:

Are you sure?

Dave:

This is as safe as houses. Go on, let go.

Sound:

something crashing

Neil:

I'm glad there was nothing living in them houses, Dave. You'd be on a murder charge.

Dave:

I knew them nails wouldn't hold it. I'm gonna get a power drill and screw it in.

Neil:

Ah, come on Dave, can't we do it tomorrow?

Dave:

You heard what Rachman said, we've gotta finish this today.

Neil:

But I don't wanna be late tonight.

Dave:

You got a date?

Neil:

No. Well, with the ETMA system.

Dave:

Oh, your assignment? It's due back today is it?

Neil:

Well, my tutor, Martin, emailed me a couple of days back and he said it should be back by today at the latest.

Dave:

Can't you get it on your phone?

Neil:

No, I need to be on a decent wifi to download it. Can't we just leave this until tomorrow.

Dave:

No, we can't Neil. Look, I'll see if Bob'll give me a hand and you can shoot off. But don't let Rachman see you leaving.

Neil:

Dave, his name's Bachman. You're not even close to being funny.

Dave:

Never mind what his name is, if he turns up, just cover for me. Okay?

Neil:

Yeah? Because he won't notice this mess, will he?

SCENE 4

Outside Ted's house. Background traffic. Somebody stops running.

Ted: (breathlessly)

Breathe, Ted, breathe.

Sound:

Door opens

Donna:

Are you alright?

Ted:

Just a bit puffed out, that's all.

Donna:

Well come inside. It's chilly out here.

Sound:

Door closing

Ted:

That was good. I enjoyed that.

Donna:

How far did you go?

Ted:

About three and a half miles.

Donna:

How far's a half marathon?

Ted:

Thirteen miles.

Donna:

And when are you doing it?

Ted:

In six weeks.

Donna:

And you think you'll be ready by then?

Ted:

Of course I will. I think I'll have a shower.

Donna:

By the way, I passed.

Ted:

Passed what?

Donna:

My assignment. I passed. I got 60 per cent.

Ted:

You passed? Well done! 60 per cent, that's a very good mark.

Donna:

Oh Ted, I'm so pleased. I know it's only the first one. But I thought I'd lose marks because I hadn't done the self-reflection, but Martin said it was a very good start. A very good start. I can't believe it.

Ted:

No, that is good. Let me have a shower, and I tell you what, I'll take you out for lunch tomorrow to celebrate.

Donna:

Thanks Ted. But I don't really feel like celebrating.

Ted:

Why ever not?

Donna:

It doesn't seem right when Louise's life is falling apart.

Ted:

Oh that! Look Louise is a big girl, she can look after herself. She was always the most sensible of the lot, it's Luke I worry about. So cheer up, she'll be fine, and so will we.

SCENE 5

Katie's flat

Katie:

I can't do it Cher.

Cheryl:

Just point at it and click download.

Katie:

I can do that. Jeez, I'm so nervous. What if I've failed?

Cheryl:

You won't fail. Go on. Let's open it.

Katie:

Okay, here goes nothing.

Cheryl:

Well?

Katie:

Give me a chance. I'm just opening the PT3.

Cheryl:

The what?

Katie:

The PT3. It's the top sheet.

Cheryl:

What's it say?

Sound:

Katie screams with delight

Katie:

I passed. I really did it. I passed.

Cheryl:

Let me see. What did you get?

Katie:

55 bloody per cent. That's a clear pass! Can you believe that?

Action:

Katie and Cheryl are hugging one another.

Cheryl:

We should celebrate.

Sound:

Baby starts crying

Katie:

Damn! We've woken her.

Cheryl:

Well go and tell her that her Mum's a genius.

Katie:

I just can't believe it. That is so brilliant.

SCENE 6

Door opens and closes in the background. Neil is in his room.

Dave:

Neil! Neil! Where are you mate? Finally got that woodwork to stay up. You here? Neil?

Sound:

Dave knocks on Neil's door

Dave:

You in there?

Neil:

Clear off will you. I'm not in the mood.

Dave:

What's the matter?

Neil:

Nothing. Now leave me alone will you?

Dave:

You got a woman in there?

Neil:

No!

Dave:

A bloke then. I'm not prejudiced, you know?

Sound:

The door opens

Neil:

Actually, I'm on my own. Happy?

Dave:

Well you're obviously not, what's up?

Neil:

I'm a failure, that's what's up.

Dave:

Oh, your essay. It failed?

Neil:

Yes, it failed. Go on then, let's have the jokes.

Dave:

Well Neil, one cloud on your horizon mate. Come on, it's your first essay. When I was at Uni, loads of people failed essays.

Neil:

Yeah but ... well I bet their tutors didn't tell them they were illiterate, did they?

Dave:

Is that what he said, can I see?

Neil:

Oh, you're loving this aren't you? Go on then, it's on my laptop. Waste of money that turned out to be.

Dave:

Is this it?

Neil:

Yeah.

Dave:

Well, this don't look so bad. "A good start, Neil". That's a nice touch, using your name.

"You have got some good ideas, but it's important to make sure you read the assignment guidelines before submitting your work." What's wrong with that?

Neil:

Well, for starters, I did read the guidelines, so he doesn't know what he's talking about there. But go on, carry on.

Dave:

"My main concern here is your spelling and grammar. This may be a case of not checking your work properly."

Neil:

He's a right knowall, ain't he?

Dave:

Well, did you check it? You were a bit close to the wire finishing it, weren't you?

Neil:

It's hard to check the spelling when the words keep changing.

Dave:

"The words keep changing". What's that mean?

Neil:

Nothing, nothing, nothing. Just, look just read on.

Dave:

Okay. ".. Or you may have a more serious problem with your spelling, for which you might need help. If you would like to discuss this, give me a ring, or contact ..."

Neil:

See, see! Look, straight away he thinks I've got a problem. That's what they said when I was at school. 'You've got a problem concentrating' and then they put me in the special class. There was nothing special about having a label with 'thick' hung round your neck, I can tell you.

Dave:

Neil, I'll be honest with you mate. I think your tutor might have a point.

Neil:

Oh that's right. Side with him. Thanks mate.

Dave:

Neil, you can be a right pain sometimes. Do you know that? What he's saying is you might have a problem. And if you do there's something you can do about it.

Neil:

Well, I am doing something about it. I'm dropping out.

Dave:

Is that what you really want to do?

Neil:

Don't try and talk me out of it. I was stupid to think I could ever be anything more than a labourer. Folk like me don't get the good jobs. I'm gonna pack it in.

Dave:

Well it's up to you Neil. It's none of my business. But if I were you, I'd at least see what the problem was.

Neil:

The problem is I'm thick. That's it. Simple. Now I'm going to bed. See you in the morning.