

NUMBERS

by Kieron Barry

from Scene 1

Isabel People aren't going to remember your speech, Katherine –

Katherine / Glad I'm making the effort.

Isabel / – they'll just remember the announcement that you're the new Head Girl.

Katherine No no; don't jinx it. Don't jinx it.

Isabel *Jinx* it? Come on, Katherine; it's a... what's the word?

Jennifer Inevitability?

Isabel No...

Jennifer Inexorability?

Isabel No...

Jennifer Shoo-in?

Isabel It's a shoo-in.

Katherine But let's not be grabby.

Jennifer Consider the considerable evidence.

Isabel Katherine; just relax. Every lacrosse captain in twenty years has gone on to be Head Girl. That's just the rule.

Jennifer It's tradition.

Isabel You're lacrosse captain; you're Head Girl.

Jennifer That's just the rule.

Isabel That's how it works. Sally Wilson, Amy Glaston –

Jennifer Ruth Davis.

Isabel Alison Gray.

Jennifer Exactly.

Isabel And it's not just that. Everyone knows you're going to be Head Girl. It's just something that everyone knows.

Jennifer Everyone *knows* it.

Isabel Look at the career path. Netball vice-captain in Upper Fourth –

Jennifer / Hockey captain.

Isabel / Hockey captain in Fifth, Netball captain in Fifth, *Caiaphas* editor in Fifth –

Jennifer A year early –

Isabel 10 A-stars, Gold D of E, Five A-levels, Latin a year early, Community Shield, Crossley Cup –

Jennifer Diction Cup, Frenburg Shield.

Isabel And above all you're Katherine Judah. More specifically Katherine Judah daughter of Anthony Judah.

Jennifer Sir Anthony Judah.

Isabel Do you really think after everything he's done for the school they could give it to someone else?

Katherine I sometimes think that's why he's doing it.

Isabel So what? He'll get what he wants and you'll get what you want.

Jennifer You're not going to let him down.

Isabel Worry about *something* if you like –

Jennifer Tonight's oration, for example.

Isabel But don't worry about *that*. Everything's going to be fine.

Katherine Well that's very kind of you to say so.

Jennifer Once the small matter of the speech –

Isabel And the announcement –

Jennifer – is out of the way then from here on it's fun and games till September.

Isabel Just two more weeks of this place –

Jennifer The quad concert tomorrow –

Isabel The garden party –

Jennifer Howett's Pimm's reception, Lower v. Upper croquet match –

Isabel Choosing rooms for next term, last night party –

Jennifer Antibes –

Isabel Gloucestershire –

Jennifer Quiet country pubs –

Isabel Watching cricket on the green –

Jennifer Simon –

Isabel First driving lesson –

Jennifer Simon –

Isabel Work experience at Reuters –

Jennifer Simon –

Isabel Yes, alright.

Jennifer Brilliant sunshine both day and night –

Isabel Glorious weeks gliding by –

Jennifer Hang on, haven't done our assignment yet –

Isabel Haven't made it through the reading list –

Jennifer Can it really be September?

Isabel Oh how dreadful the final few days of freedom –

Jennifer Suddenly here we are again –

Isabel Where's it all gone?

Jennifer What's the bloody point?

A pause.

Katherine Now. Girls. Listen. Obviously Dr Howett appoints the Head Girl –

Isabel Fingers crossed.

Jennifer Done deal.

Katherine – but it's the Head Girl herself who appoints the Deputy Head Girl.

Isabel Correct.

Jennifer Absolutely.

Katherine And there's only one Deputy Head Girl.

Isabel / Of course.

Jennifer / Of course.

Katherine Which is slightly difficult, given that there's four of us in the gang.

Jennifer Well... there's us three and there's Hetty.

Isabel But Hetty isn't interested in all that. I mean, she's realistic.

Katherine Do we know that?

Jennifer I mean Hetty is lovely –

Isabel Really lovely.

Katherine Of course.

Jennifer Of course she is.

Isabel She's lovely.

Jennifer She's so lovely.

Isabel But she's just not...

Katherine (*beat*) Here?

Isabel No...

Jennifer We all like Hetty.

Isabel That's why she's one of us.

Jennifer She's one of us, but at the same time –

Isabel But at the same time she's still not quite / one of us. (*in surprise at their synchronicity*) Hymn sheets!

Jennifer / One of us. (*in surprise at their synchronicity*) Hymn sheets! Don't get me wrong – Hetty is lovely and as good a friend to us as any of us to any of us but she's not quite...

Isabel First rate.

Jennifer Exactly. She's not captain of anything, she doesn't do as well as us in exams –

Isabel She's just an honest tryer, / basically.

Jennifer / Exactly. An honest tryer. On a scholarship.

Isabel And that's not to say anything unpleasant about her.

Jennifer Of course not.

Isabel Although she did refuse to go to Val d'Iserre with us.

Katherine She didn't refuse; she couldn't afford it.

Jennifer Yeah, but she was really funny about it.

Katherine Fine, but that still leaves the two of you. For only one position.

A pause.

Isabel Yeah, but Jennifer is...

Jennifer What?

Isabel Nothing.

Jennifer What?

Isabel Nothing, except that...

Jennifer No, come on; / what?

Isabel / No, nothing, I was just going to say that I'm obviously a bit more of a sort of a... sort of a *leader* / than you are, so –

Jennifer / A *leader*? I wouldn't have / said so, Izzy.

Isabel
mean.

/ Just in some ways, I

Jennifer Well I can't accept that.

Isabel OK. I've just... noticed people really respecting me lately.

Jennifer Well so have I. People respect me too –

Isabel I'm sure they do.

Jennifer – but with me it's more a sort of... *admiration* rather than the very ordinary, unremarkable sort of respect that you quite rightly say is all that *you've* ever / inspired.

Isabel / No, no;
when I say respect I really mean... more sort of...*worship*, really. I've noticed an awful lot of that lately.

Katherine We shouldn't discuss it unless Hetty's here anyway.

Isabel Come on, Katherine; Hetty knows she's not in the running for deputy.

Katherine I do feel a bit bad there's nothing for her.

Jennifer She wouldn't want anything.

Isabel How about librarian? Head Girl picks that, doesn't she?

Jennifer Yeah.

Isabel Why not give that to Hetty? She'd like it.

Katherine I'm not so sure she would.

Jennifer These positions aren't a right, you know.

Isabel She should be grateful she's getting anything.

Katherine Although would *you* be happy to be librarian?

Isabel What do you mean?

Jennifer I've always thought that Isabel would make a *brilliant* librarian.

Isabel What are you talking about? I've barely read a word since *Stig of the Dump*.

Jennifer Nonsense. You love books.

Isabel Yeah, but it's not about the books, though, is it; it's about the organisational skills – which you've always had in abundance.

Jennifer You seem to know an awful lot about what the role requires.

Isabel No; I'm just saying you've always struck me as a great potential librarian.

Jennifer I can't retort, I'm afraid; I know so little about the subject.

Isabel Perhaps Hetty *would* be better.

Jennifer Oh she'd be *so* good, wouldn't she.

Isabel She'd probably be the best librarian the school's ever had.

Jennifer Seriously, Katherine – give *Hetty* a go as librarian; I don't think she'll let you down.

Isabel You ought to give her something, if you don't mind my suggesting.

Katherine No; I agree.

Isabel I mean she's still one of us.

Katherine Correct.

Isabel But Katherine, our real message is:

Jennifer Appoint who you like.

Isabel Exactly. As you see fit.

Jennifer And we're realistic.

Isabel And once this little hurdle has been cleared –

Jennifer We have the rest of our lives spread out before us.

Isabel Packed with opportunity and success.

Jennifer Picture this: *(she prompts)*

Katherine Well... Head Girl...

Jennifer Of course.

Isabel Of course.

Katherine 5 A's at A-level, PPE at Oxford –

Isabel College?

Katherine Corpus / Christi.

Isabel / Corpus Christi.

Jennifer The body of Christ.

Katherine Star First / with Dissertation Prize, PhD at the LSE –

Jennifer / And how about you, Isabel?

Isabel Oh, clearly a leading barrister / at a top Chambers –

Katherine / And you, Jens?

Jennifer Oh, editor of the Times –

Isabel QC –

Jennifer Sunday Times –

Katherine MP –

Jennifer New York Times –

Katherine Minister –

Isabel Judge –

Jennifer Booker Prize –

Isabel Law Lord –

Katherine Cabinet minister –

Jennifer Poet laureate –

Isabel Married to a painter –

Jennifer Doyenne of London society –

Isabel Head of a publishing house –

Katherine City analyst –

Isabel PR guru –

Jennifer War correspondent –

Katherine Governor of the Bank of England –

Isabel Ambassador to Washington –

Jennifer Arms dealer –

Katherine Chairwoman of the Royal Opera House –

Isabel Dubai –

Jennifer Brunei –

Isabel United Nations –

Katherine World Bank –

Isabel House of Lords.

Jennifer Well, girls, until then we'll have to make do with this.

She holds up a slim, ambiguous volume.