



Skunk

Zawe Ashton



Characters

OTTO

EAGOR, *Otto's father*

BABETTE, *Otto's mother*

AALINE, *Otto's sister*

JAANA, *cleaner*

MR WEISS, *teacher*

DR KELLER

GREGOR

CHORUS

SLINKY, *narrator*

LADYBIRD

BEAR

DEER

SWAN

The set is sparse. Milk crates, building blocks, random bits of furniture make up the set. A door frame marks the entrance to OTTO's room.

The set should look as much like a rehearsal space as possible. The actors should all remain on stage at all times in different capacities. Watching the action as themselves or living in the worlds of their characters.

While SLINKY sings, the CHORUS splits in two; one half sings LEAD, responding to SLINKY's prompt; the other half sings HARMONY.

SLINKY (*sings*). When Otto woke up in the morning from uneasy dreams
He found himself transformed
In his bed

SLINKY. His bilaterel face?

HARMONY. Ooooooh (*During verse.*)

LEAD. That's in the past.

SLINKY. His simianness?

LEAD. That's in the past.

SLINKY. His quirky dress sense?

LEAD. That's in the past.

SLINKY. He'd been transmorgified into something so far less nice.

LEAD. Black and white mammalian,
American,
striped stinking weasel.
Black and white mammalian,
American,
striped stinking weasel
When Otto woke up in the morning

HARMONY. A... A... A... (*During verse.*)

He found himself
Transformed into...
In... to...

ALL. A skunk.
A skunk?
A skunk!

*This first bit of narration should be full company.
Everyone splinters off as they play their roles.*

SLINKY. When Otto woke in the morning from uneasy dreams
He found that things weren't quite what they seemed.

DR KELLER. Thick black fur sprouted from under the cover.

MR WEISS. From just downstairs he heard the voice of his mother.

CHORUS. She was rising to wake him, shake him out of his bed.

GREGOR. But all he could think of was the hair on his head,

EAGOR. On his arms,

BABETTE. On his belly.

ALL. He watched himself like he was watching the telly.

SLINKY. The palm of his hand was raised like dry tar.

He asked himself,

OTTO. 'I wonder where my hands are?'

AALINE. In place of his fingers were shiny, white claws.

BABETTE. They glinted like blades attached to his paws.

ALL. All of a sudden

MR WEISS. A burning,

CHORUS. A shooting-like pain

SLINKY. Went up from his lower back and up to his brain.

BABETTE *and* EAGOR. A tingling sensation took over his spine.

JAANA. If only he could move then all would be fine.

SLINKY. But all he could do was lie stuck to his bedclothes,

Until his shoulders, both at once, suddenly just rose.

DR KELLER. An invisible force pushed him to the floor

GREGOR. But he managed to land on his feet.

SLINKY. Yes.

ALL. All four!

BABETTE *and* EAGOR. He crashed with a bang that rang in his ears.

AALINE *and* JAANA. He looked in the mirror and was filled up with fear.

MR WEISS *and* CHORUS. A huge white tail hung high up above.

DR KELLER *and* GREGOR. It was big, fat and bushy and white as a dove.

SLINKY. Startled with fear, and dread and confusion Otto told himself that

OTTO. 'This was just an illusion.'

SLINKY. He tried to get dressed in his cap and his Nikes,

Tried to bite the laces that had come loose in places

ALL. But the clothes and the shoes both put up a fight.

BABETTE *and* MR WEISS. Dressed in thick fur and starting to sweat,

CHORUS. Otto felt tangled, caught up in a net

ALL. Of questions, and answers

His feet moved like dancers,

Scratching out a beat on the floor of his room,
Walking too soon
With his tail over head he looked up at his bed and
SLINKY. Wondered if this was his doom.

*

Day One

BABETTE *enters and knocks on the door.*

BABETTE. Otto?

Otto?

It's Mummy.

Time to get up Mr Sleepy Head.

Your bacon sandwich is going soggy...

Silence.

Otto?

Otto, dearest heart, it's past seven.

Beat.

Mr Weiss will be here soon.

Get ready and come for breakfast.

Beat.

Time to get up, Otto.

We don't want to be late now, do we?

Mr Weiss is a very busy man.

We don't want to keep people waiting.

Silence.

BABETTE *knocks.*

Otto?

She tries the door

Otto, sweetheart, the door's locked.

Why have you locked the door?

Are you awake?

Mummy can't get in.

EAGOR *enters.*

EAGOR. There she is! My Babette!

EAGOR *smacks BABETTE's bottom.*

BABETTE. Eagor!

EAGOR. Is that breakfast I can smell?

BABETTE. I've made bacon sandwiches.

EAGOR. Breakfast of kings!

He kisses her on the cheek.

BABETTE. Otto's not up yet.

EAGOR. Probably still tired from the match.

EAGOR *bangs on OTTO's door.*

(*Chants.*) Who the hell are Man United!

Who the hell are Man United!

BABETTE. I knew I shouldn't have let you take him to that game.

EAGOR. How's he going to grow up to be the next Arsenal striker if he doesn't train?

He needs to practise.

BABETTE. He needs to be revising.

Bangs again.

EAGOR (*chants*). Ooh – ta!

Ooh – ta – be!

Ooh – to – be – a – Gooner!

BABETTE. He needs to get up, Mr Weiss will be here any minute.

EAGOR. Who's this, your fancy man?

BABETTE. Otto's head of year. I told you about it last week.

EAGOR. ?

BABETTE. He thinks your son has amazing potential...

He says his passion for English literature is unlike anyone he's seen of his age...

He thinks our son is Cambridge-material...

And... he thinks the fact that he plays football could get him a scholarship.

EAGOR (*chants*). Scholarship! Scholarship!

It's all coming back to me.

He's gonna get in with his legs not his brain, Babette.

BABETTE. Eagor! Can we please not send mixed messages?

Otto won't be getting in anywhere if he doesn't wake up.

EAGOR *bangs on the door.*

EAGOR. Otto.

It's your dad.

Wake up, little Gooner.

BABETTE. Weiss. Weiss.

EAGOR. Mr Weiss is coming to talk about potential... and things... and the scholarship!

OTTO *scrambles around, bumps into things.*

OTTO. I'm coming!

I'm just getting my books together.

EAGOR. What did he say?

BABETTE. What's that noise?

OTTO *bumps into books and piles of papers sending them flying.*

AALINE (*smiling*). Is Otto in trouble?

BABETTE. Your brother's overslept, that's all.

EAGOR. Come on, son, come out or I'm coming in.

He tries the door.

Why is the door locked?

Otto?

AALINE. He's probably looking at porn!

BABETTE. Aaline!

Honestly, your mouth sometimes, you should wash it out with soap.

AALINE. Stop perving, you filthy animal!

BABETTE. Aaline!

*

SLINKY. Otto was scared what his dad would say,
If he came to the door looking this way.

MR WEISS. Paralysed with fear Otto's tail started to sway,

CHORUS. Then out of his arse came a foul-smelling spray.

DR KELLER. With no warning at all the fumes shot from under his tail,

STINKY. He tried to squeeze them back in but to no avail.

It wafted out of him and across the floor,

Over his bed and out under the door.

EAGOR. What is that *smell*?

BABETTE. What *is* that smell?

AALINE. *What* is that smell?

They sniff.

They cough.

BABETTE. My God, that stinks!

It smells like... my God is that... marijuana?

AALINE. No one calls it marijuana any more.

EAGOR. But, it's seven in the morning!

AALINE. You're so embarrassing.

BABETTE. I've smelt it before.

I thought it was the cleaner having a joint out the window.

AALINE. They're not called joints any more.

EAGOR. I don't think that's the joint – *point* – your mother is trying to make.
Anyway, Otto's not in to all that crap.
He's a sportsman.

AALINE. God, you're so out of touch.

BABETTE. Whatever you call it! It's giving me a headache.

EAGOR. Otto, come out here right now! You're giving your mother a headache!

AALINE. They're called spliffs.

EAGOR. Otto!

AALINE. Get with the times.

EAGOR. Get out of bed!

OTTO. I'm –
I'm just getting dressed!

EAGOR. What is he saying?
Is it some kind of slang?

BABETTE. Otto, darling, we're raising our voices but we aren't ganging up on you, we just don't want you to be late for Mr Weiss.

OTTO. Coming!

EAGOR. WHAT is he saying?

BABETTE. Otto, Mummy and Daddy can't understand you.

AALINE. Mummy and Daddy? You guys are SO out of touch.

EAGOR. I can hear something.
Otto, *what* is going on in there?

AALINE. If he doesn't want to chat to this guy, he shouldn't have to.

BABETTE. Sorry, young lady, that's not an option. Mr Weiss is coming all the way here to talk to us because he thinks your brother has a rare talent.
Potential.
He thinks he's Cambridge material.

AALINE. He doesn't want to go to Cambridge. He wants to play football.

BABETTE. He can play football at Cambridge!

EAGOR. Otto!

Beat.

BABETTE. That smell. It's making me feel peculiar.

EAGOR (*banging*). Otto! God help me! Come out here now and explain yourself!

A door bell sounds.

BABETTE. Oh God, that's him!

EAGOR. Aaline, get the door.

AALINE. No, I'm worried about Otto.
Otto?

EAGOR. Babette, get the door.

BABETTE. I'm not ready – my hair!

She tries to fix herself up.

EAGOR. Otto! Your teacher's here!

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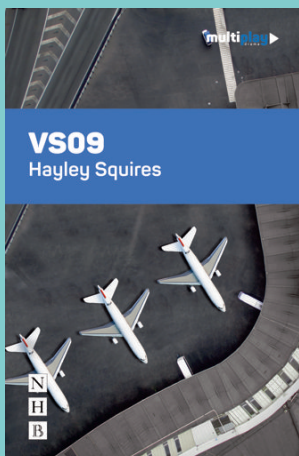
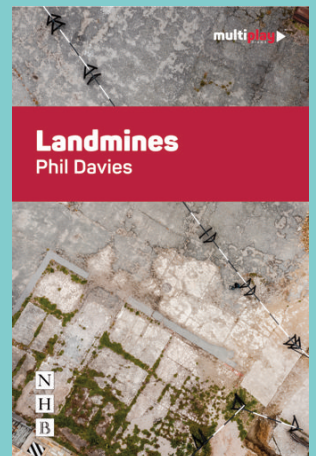
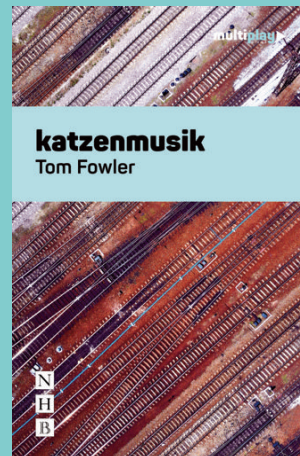
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