
LINKED

**Extracts from the play
by Sharon Williams**

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MORNING

Mum, dad and Sophie: Morning!

Mum's phone buzzes

Mum: Sophie, your friend's here

Dad: I'll let him in. *(Keys phone)* ... Done

Zac: Morning Sophie's mum and dad.

M&D: Morning Zac

Mum: Right – shopping.

Sophie: Crisps

Mum: *(Keys phone)* Done

Dad: Jam

Mum: *(Keys phone)* Done

Zac: I forgot my money today – Alexa – transfer. Done

Mum: OK – targets steps for the day. Simon?

Dad: 11,000

Mum: *(Keys phone)* Sophie?

Sophie: 6,000

Mum: Sophie?

Sophie: 10,000

Mum: *(Keys phone)* Zac?

Zac: 12,000

Mum keys his answer into her phone

Dad: *(Phone beeps)* Sophie – missed homework club yesterday

Sophie: What?

Dad: Tracker

Zac: I've exceeded my calorie count for 3 weeks running!

The actors break from the scene to present an abstract advert as follows

A4: Pile up your plate, Put on weight.
Count steps each day – It's the healthy way

All: Ding

Mum's phone buzzes which takes them back into the previous scene.

Mum: Mortgage Si

Dad: *(Keys phone)* Sorted.

Zac: *(Phone buzzes)* Oh no - I forgot homework due!

All: *(all their phones buzz)* Sophie – detention!

Sophie: What?

Dad: *(Phone buzzes)* Oh, got a dentist appointment tonight.

Mum and dad break away from the automation of the scene and play this realistically

Mum: So, I'll have to collect Sophie again, am I?

Dad: Sorry

Mum: Simon – this is not what I wanted.

Dad: Well, we don't all get given exactly what we want in life, do we!

Various messages now come through the various phones and watches. Each time a message alert sounds. The sounds get more frenetic as the scene goes on.

Dad: My life is organised for me

Sophie: Everybody knows what I'm doing!

Zac: Can't cheat the system!

Silence. Mum is left on stage.

Mum: No-one talks to each other anymore

Phone beeps

Mum: Time to go.

PIZZA

Scene – ordering takeaway by phone. The other actors represent the information popping up onto the computer screen through physical theatre, as the scene progresses.

Pizza Guy: Hi – welcome to 21st century pizza.

Maria: Oh, hello. I've not used you before but I've just had a look at your menu...

Pizza Guy: That's alright, Maria. We know who you are, thank you for calling.

Maria: Oh, OK –I'd like to order a pizza please, er, with mushrooms, and er – no ...

Pizza Guy: No tomatoes, no that's right – we don't want another trip to the doctors, like before!

Maria: Right. Thank you! An extra-large pizza please

Pizza Guy: Ah – now you can't really afford that, can you. Your bank activity shows your dad transferred £50 for your birthday last week, but you have already spent most of it!

Maria: Yes, yes – well actually my friends are going to be paying for this ...

Pizza Guy: Are you ordering for all three of you – I can see the taxi dropped someone off at your house an hour ago. If it is Sue, remember she prefers the thin and crusty. At least that is what she had when she ordered from us two weeks ago.

Maria: *tries to interrupt* Well, I...er

Pizza Guy: We will push it to the top of the queue otherwise you might miss the start of the film at the Odeon – you booked the tickets yesterday; lucky as you seem to have got the last ones!

Maria: *tries again to interrupt* What ... I

Pizza Guy: Paul's already seen it – must be good for him to want to go again!

Maria: What? How do you know these things?

Pizza Guy: He went when you were on holiday in France. Nice pictures by the way.... Should be careful though. Hello Mr Burglar...!

Maria: I'm sorry ...?

Pizza Guy: Hello Mr Burglar – we're all on holiday in France – our house is empty – you can come and break in now!

Maria: *(flustered)* He wouldn't know my address!

Pizza Guy: How about that photo of your son on his first day of school – new school uniform outside the front of the house – number 22. And I can see you – in your house - right now!

Maria: Right. I'm feeling really uncomfortable now... *As M starts to take her scarf off* –

Pizza Guy: Oh – and keep that scarf on – it's a bit chilly out – and red does suit you.....

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I'M SARAH

Sarah: I'm Sarah. I'm 13, I've got a cat, I go to dance classes. I have 75 friends....

A3 physically represents 'stealing' Sarah's identity, repeating each of the four statements, with the number of friends increasing each time - 87 friends; 128 friends; 182 friends During this Sarah becomes quieter and fades into the background.

LINKS DAY

Big music, big audience response, big lead-up, big event.

Presenter 1 & Presenter 2 continue the countdown to zero.

P1: And Welcome to Links Day

P2: A very exciting and important day for those of you who have reached your 16th birthdays this month!

P1: In amongst our audience we have 250 16-year-olds getting their *Links* today to take them through the rest of their lives. Remember this is all worked out very carefully by our computer –based on your internet choices

P2: Your parents' choices

P1: Your friends' choices

Both: Your likes, your swipes, your posts!

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To understand this fully, read the following extract taken from the performance script where Sophie and Zac explain what Links Day is all about...

Sophie: Links Day. The most important day in our lives over for last 20 odd years. We never even saw it coming.

Zac: The Leaders tell us it is the single most successful initiative since the early 2030s.

Sophie: This is when every sixteen-year-old is gifted their life plan. That is, they're told exactly what their future will be. The personality of their life partner, what their job will be, what their hobbies will be ... and what type of life home they will have!

Zac: The Leaders have controlled our lives for ever. I remember when our parents were younger there used to be this Voting Day to choose the next Government.

Sophie: That was when people would actually walk to a polling station ...

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Old lady walks across the stage

S & Z: Morning

Lady: Morning

Zac: Off to vote?

Lady: That's right dear.

Zac: ...or vote by post ...

Sophie: ... to choose the next party who would be The Government.

Zac: But many people stopped voting. It was said that they were all too tired of what was happening.

Sophie: I learned in History ...

Zac: I thought you bunked history!

Sophie: Catchup App! ...that it was because the people were too busy – or too lazy – to go and vote. So, The Government of the day made it so much easier for us to vote – and put it all online.

Lady: *(who has reached the opposite side of the stage – looks questioningly at them)*

Sophie: Voting's on line. On line!

Lady: On line? *Turns around and walks slowly back*

Sophie: On line

Zac: It was really easy then – it was just like voting for who you wanted to win Strictly, or X-Factor. Or who you wanted to vote out of Big Brother. Yes – they are all still on TV!

Sophie: As soon as it was just down to the press of a button, apparently the number of voters each Voting Day went up from an average of 50% of people who voted to 98%! And then a new government was elected – they called themselves The Leaders. And they have been in control every year since then. They tell us that online voting is all perfectly safe... perfectly reliable...very honest

Zac: You alright?

Sophie: Yeah – can I ask you a question?

Zac: Yeah – course you can. Anything.

Sophie: Even if it's a really weird question?

Zac: Yup – go for it.

Sophie: You can stop me if it seems too weird, but I want to talk about the online voting.

Zac: What? ...

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Sophie: Well, I don't know if I actually get it. Like – how do they know that everything's all safe and reliable and honest?

Zac: Well they just do

Sophie: But – how do I know that what I voted for is really counted? How do I know that my vote doesn't just disappear?

Zac: Look – I really don't think we should be talking about this.

Sophie: I mean – if it's just like X-Factor – like last week – I really liked Gary and I wanted him to win, so I voted for Gary. But – all of the votes that came in apparently were for Liana – and Liana was absolutely rubbish! But I'm just pressing a button online. How do I know that my vote didn't actually go to Liana without me knowing? And then Gary got kicked off.

Zac: Sophie – I don't think that we should change anything. I think we should leave it the way that it is ...

Sophie: What if it's bigger than that?

Zac: Really, Sophie – we need to stop talking now.

Sophie: But I don't know if you're getting it. What if - voting for The Leaders and The Opposition – what if it's the same as The X-Factor. What if only 10 people actually wanted The Leaders, and everyone in the whole country wanted The Opposition – but that wasn't in their plan – so they made sure The Leaders won?

Zac: You told me to stop you if you got weird. You've got weird! Let's talk about Links Day instead

Sophie: It will be our turn next month ... *(not a happy reflection)*

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Are you interested in the complete play that we perform to schools? Here is a little taster ...

Linked

Synopsis:

‘Linked’ is set in our future – 2043. The young people in the audience would be adults, and have children of their own.

The world has changed as a direct result of people not taking care of the internet. The internet has taken control of the people. It knows everything there is to know about everyone. The people in charge are called ‘Leaders’. They know everything there is to know about everyone!

One of the greatest changes is what happens on one’s 16th birthday. There is a big ceremony called Links Day – when people receive their *Links for Life*. These include the entirety of how people will live their lives: they are allocated their lifetime home; their hobbies; fun and pass-times; the personality of their partner; how many children they will have and what their personalities will be. There is no choice. It is based on what the internet believes their choices would be – similar to the current online shopping prediction – based on your purchase, here are some other things we think you might like!

The play surrounds the lives of two people – Zac and Sophie – who find that they are in agreement that this is not how they wish to live their lives. But they discover that it is too late – there is no way back. If only their parents had cared more when they were young...

Original cast – first performed with N-Act Theatre in Schools in September 2017

Matthew Burcombe:	Actor 1; Zac
Sharon Williams:	Actor 2; Presenter 1
Richard Foster:	Actor 3; Presenter 2
Alice Ryan:	Actor 4; Sophie

Notes for performance

The 4 actors also play the other parts. They are numbered here as A1, A2, A3 and A4 for ease of directing, but any other combinations can work. When A1 or A2, for example, is written within the text, please swap for the actor’s actual name. If you prefer, you can cast more people to cover all of the parts, but as it is, it is a great exercise in multi-role play!

There are several opportunities for the audience to become involved in the play. Certainly, the Links Day breaks the fourth wall, and it is suggested that you ask for the names of three confident people who you can call up on stage for this scene. Another opportunity for getting involved is the internet safety quiz – ‘Beat The Audience’. We have provided this as part of the Digital Package, and it is correct at the time of printing, but as things change so quickly, it is just as good for you to come up with your own questions. If you are working on this script as an educational activity, a useful task would be for the students to research their own questions for this quiz.