

ARE YOU IN A GANG?

A MOTHER is sitting comfortably at home. Her SON enters, and salutes.

SON

Mother, this is Lieutenant Charlie Kale, reporting from duty. For leave. Home leave. I'm home.

She jumps up and hugs him, then steps back and looks at him strangely.

MOTHER

Charlie. Is there something you want to tell me?

SON

I don't think so...

MOTHER

About where you've been?

SON

I'm not really allowed to say in any detail.

MOTHER

Well how did you get that bruise?

SON

I'm not really allowed to say in any detail.

MOTHER

I knew it! You're in a gang.

SON

I'm sorry?

MOTHER

The nice woman from the Home Office gave me a leaflet. Things to watch out for.

SON

I'm not in a gang.

MOTHER

It said... gang members lose interest in school.

SON

I left school. I'm 19.

MOTHER

That they're vague about where they spend their time. Unexplained injuries. Withdrawing from their families. That they wear... uniforms.

SON

When I left school I joined the Navy.

MOTHER

I found a knife in your closet!

SON

I'm now in the Marines.

MOTHER

And you never go to your theatre club any more.

SON

I've spent six months in Afghanistan!

MOTHER

Do you know how dangerous it is to be in a gang?

SON

Well I'd guess less dangerous than six months in Afghanistan.

MOTHER

Where did I go wrong? What drove you to it?

SON

Well, a lot of the guys were talking...

MOTHER

Peer pressure!

SON

Mother!

MOTHER

Are there... are you taking drugs?

SON

I shoot insurgents.

MOTHER

Are insurgents class A?

SON

Mother, are you on drugs?

MOTHER

(pause)

Yes.

SON

Are you... are you in a gang?

MOTHER

They call me La Campanella. Like the
pasta.

SON

Did you get a gun?

MOTHER

L96 sniper rifle.

SON

Cool.

KILLING US SLOWLY

KEITH is standing up, while EMILY and MATT are seated. ALICE walks in. The meeting has already started.

ALICE

Sorry I'm late. I didn't bother setting my alarm clock.

MATT

Why not?

ALICE

Oh, I just thought the Large Hadron Collider would have created a new black hole and we'd all have been sucked away into nothingness. Then I woke up, and it was Thursday.

KEITH

And Thursday is good?

ALICE

Well, no. Thursday is terrible - it's that midweek feeling. But there's no Thursday inside a black hole.

EMILY

Actually, that's not true.

ALICE

There are Thursdays in a black hole? God, maybe it's *all* Thursdays...

EMILY

No. The Collider doesn't make a black hole, it makes another Big Bang. So we wouldn't be sucked into it, it would just explode and push us further and further away.

KEITH

Well, the point is that it hasn't happened.

EMILY

There'd be another universe growing inside this one. Like... like the universe would be pregnant.

KEITH

But -

ALICE

What's the gestation period of a universe?

EMILY

That's an interesting question. It's probably quite a long time. I mean, universes get pretty big.

MATT

So it could be happening, and we wouldn't notice?

EMILY

Yes. In fact, the baby universe would probably grow so fast that time in the mummy universe would slow down. We could live out our entire lives not knowing that there was a baby universe inside our own. But from the baby's point of view, the whole process would only take a few seconds.

ALICE

God, so you mean it'd be Thursday forever?

KEITH

If we can live out the rest of our lives without noticing, then we should just get on with our jobs.

ALL

Yes, sorry. Good point.

KEITH

So on to important things.

He glares at them.

KEITH

We need our cover article for Marie Claire. The economy's a mess. Russia is at war. We've got a US election coming up. Am I crazy, or does this just scream celebrity make-over issue?

ONE LINERS / HEADLINES

Nuclear scientists have developed a way of telling if expensive wines are genuine vintage or not. This is an improvement over the previous technique of letting experts test the wine, says Dr Hervé Guégan, because scientists get pissed faster, and so don't drink the whole bottle.

Environmental news from Canada: the Markham Ice Shelf has split from Ellesmere Island after thousands of years. A spokesperson cited irreconcilable differences in temperature as the reason.

After the success of this week's Cabinet meeting in Birmingham, Gordon Brown is reported to be considering a full-scale national tour, with Alistair Darling on lead guitar, Jacqui Smith on keyboards, and David Blunkett on drums. Following Labour party tradition, they'll include a number from 90s pop-rockers D:Ream, although at the moment Gordon can't decide whether to go with Blame It On Me or Take Me Away.