

Scene 5

(The spirit of School-Christmas-Present exits. Mr Humbug slumps back in his chair.)

Narrator 1 Mr Humbug's mind was racing with everything he'd seen. He'd watched his past and present and what he saw had shocked him. He sat silently reflecting, thinking long and hard.

*(The **erie music** plays (CD 26) again. The hooded figure of the Spirit of School-Christmas-Yet-To-Come quietly appears behind Mr Humbug's chair. Sensing its presence Mr Humbug curls into a ball on the chair and hides his face.)*

Narrator 2 The Christmas ghosts who'd already been to St Ebenezer's were scary, yes, but turned out to be quite friendly characters. But this final one had Mr Humbug crying like a baby – the Spirit of School-Christmas-Yet-To-Come.

Mr Humbug Spirit, I fear you far more than the two that came before you.

Spirit So you should! I'm here to show you the consequences of living life the way you do. You will see exactly what the future holds for everybody in this school if you continue as you are.

*(To the **erie music** (CD 27) the two cross over and stand to the side of the main stage. The lights come up. Occupying most of the space is another classroom scene, but with a difference. The children are in identical futuristic outfits, wearing headphones connected to personal computer consoles, sitting upright and still, but with vacant expressions. In a smaller section of the stage, standing huddled round a fire, is a group of down-and-out ex-teachers, in balaclavas, big coats and fingerless gloves.)*

Narrator 3 This time there was nothing Mr Humbug recognised. It was a class of children working, without a teacher there? At least that's what he thought, but then a curious robotic creature hovered into view.

*(To **ominous music** (CD 28) a robot-teacher enters and stands in front of the class. It gives instructions in a robotic voice. The children respond by typing on keyboards.)*

Robot Students, please enter your personal ID. Thank you. Register complete. Now log on to 'lesson 24' of 'Maths fast-track'. Thank you. Download complete. Begin the task. No talking!

(The children obediently type as the robot moves round their tables. When it is out of earshot, certain children sneakily talk to each other.)

Child 1 Psst! I'm really stuck. What did you get for number four?

Robot SILENCE! Talking is forbidden until ten to eleven. Then you will have five minutes for some brief communication, five more to relieve yourselves, then back to your work!

Child 2 So when exactly do we get to do PE or art? And as it's Christmas, what about making cards?

Child 3 And Christmas carols? Christmas lunch? Christmas trees? Are we going to get the chance to enjoy any of those things!

Robot We forbid discussion of that topic. Christmas is a thing that schools no longer celebrate. It’s the law. You have to study fifteen hours a day. Relaxation is distraction. It prevents you from learning.

Child 4 I can’t take this anymore. I’m going mad! I need a break!

Robot CALL SECURITY!

*(To more **ominous music (CD 29)** two security-bots enter.)*

Bot 1 Another student that is short-circuiting.

Bot 2 She will be no trouble once we change her hard-wiring.

*(To more **ominous music (CD 30)** they drag the child away. The action freezes.)*

Narrator 1 Mr Humbug begged the spirit to do something to help the child.

Spirit But this is all your doing, Humbug. You’ve caused all this. If you don’t believe me then just take a look over there.

(The spirit points to the group of ex-teachers standing round the fire.)

Song Horribly Wrong *(CD 6 & 31)*

(The down-and-out teachers sing round their fire. They tell us in the song how this situation came about.)

Verse 1 Listen, good people, we’ll tell you about
How we came to be down and out,
And why our lives have sunk this low,
It began about ten years ago.
Mr Humbug, already well-known
As a headteacher, had frequently shown
A lust for power which didn’t stop there.
Within six months the town made him mayor!

Verse 2 Then to Westminster he was sent
As a member of parliament.
In no time at all, which seemed quite sinister,
Mr Humbug became Prime Minister.
He embarked on his ultimate quest
To make his country’s schools the best.
He began by replacing all teachers
With super efficient mechanical creatures!

Verse 3 Now fifteen hours each day at school's the norm.
Anything to make the kids perform!
Robotic teachers are so cheap,
We've all ended up on the scrap-heap,
And now it's hard just keeping warm.
We should have seen it all along.
How could everything go so horribly wrong?

Verse 4 We remember how things used to be,
Lots of art and music and PE.
But now they've knocked that on the head
Now we're doing 'proper' work instead 'cause
That's what our PM has decreed.
We should have seen it all along.
How could everything go so horribly wrong?
How could everything go so horribly wrong?

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