



Lisa Evans

Letter to my Teachers

THE NAME OF MY FIRST TEACHER is gone but she had ten dogs and a hearty curriculum involving long muddy dog walks and writing our letters, in my case the letter R, the wrong way round. Courtesy of my grandmother, who insisted I was too wilful, my education suddenly took a cruel swerve into a hats-with-painful-elastic-type private school where I learned how spiteful little rich girls could be. Teachers, you really should have done something about Josephine H, she of the red face and blonde plaits. She is probably a registered psychopath or Chair of the local Conservative Party by now. Either way, she should have been stopped. Eventually, realising they were raising a child who'd make herself ill rather than go to school, coupled with my threats to run away on the number 73 bus, my parents moved me to the village C of E primary school and the 'Sirs'. Sir Philpott gave me essays for misbehaviour, and Sir Truscott, with his false hand, leopardskin-coated wife and his lunchtime driving lessons with Miss Pink from infants, gave me plots. Thank you, Sirs. Look what you started.

I have *nothing* to say to my teachers at grammar school except that thanks to you, Mr N, I hated geography for ever because of the chalk you sent whistling round the room; once, even a board rubber. Moving on, next on my list is dear little Mrs Machin. Do you remember? You made me a bed on the floor by the radiator, on a blanket fetched from your car, and let me sleep off my feverish homesickness for the whole two-hour art class. I wrote to you later and thanked you for making boarding school bearable



and you replied telling me you had at last managed to escape from your husband who used to beat you.

Thanks too to – equally little – Mr Randy, who wasn't at all; but who responded to my departing look of fury after a cattle casting for a school production of Beckett, by giving me the part of the Queen Mother. And yes, I did know exactly what I was doing over my shoulder as I left that room. Carol, if you're reading this, I hope you had a happier life than when we sixth formers used to come round to your house to drink and smoke – and be terrified by your parents' evil dachshunds circling our ankles. Thank you for coaching me into Drama School and giving me alibis when I went up to Earl's Court to see my first love, an entirely unsuitable older man who taught m- — well we don't need to go there. He went back to Australia and gave me – no, not a communicable disease – but a broken seventeen-year-old heart. You, Carol, gave me the start of my career and a silver thimble, both of which I still have fifty years on.