

GORDON lowers his sparker.

OK. I'll do the next look-out. You all get some sleep, yes?

GORDON looks down at the cold wet ground.

Right. Roy, where are the binoculars?

ROY I...back...there, dropped them, I think, when I was...

ANGUS I'll get them. Don't worry, Roy. I'll go.

ANGUS makes a point of passing GORDON and disappears into the trees.

NEVILLE Good. That's better. Let's just keep calm about this. It's the oldest law of the jungle. The first bison to panic when the leopard appears is the one who gets it. It's the calm ones who survive. Calm...is survival. OK.

ROY nods and smiles, lopingly. NEVILLE looks at GORDON. GORDON grunts.

OK.

There is a whinging scream from the trees and ANGUS staggers back, in a state of trauma. His hand is in the air and it is dripping with blood.

ANGUS Blood! Blood! (He is seriously shaking with fear and can hardly get the words out.) I put my hand in it! On a tree! It's warm! (He holds out his hand and looks like a frightened child at NEVILLE.) There's something here, Neville! There's something else on the island!

This tableau is held for a moment.

We hear the wood pigeons go up.

Blackout.

## ACT II

### Scene One

The peninsula. Saturday.

Whoosh. The wood pigeons settle.

The peninsula is as we left it last night, but it's now the murky half-light of a foggy daybreak. Not only that, but as the birds go up, it starts to drizzle; half-hearted spits of rain.

We soak ourselves in this atmosphere for a few moments. Then a rather extraordinary sight appears. Up from the shingle, a four-sided creature emerges, singing "KUMBAVA", with headlights on.

It is NEVILLE in front, GORDON (not singing) and ANGUS to the flanks and ROY at the rear in a loose phalanx formation. At least, that's who we think they are. It's difficult to tell, because in the intervening hours they have made ham-fisted attempts to camouflage themselves. All have blackened their faces with soil. NEVILLE has his glasses on over the top. ROY has only a small circle of blackened face visible under his tightly drawn anorak hood, and ANGUS has his balaclava on. They all have pot-holing helmets on, and all are brandishing weapons. ANGUS has the Cobra, GORDON a pointed stick crafted crudely into a spear, NEVILLE has a smaller pointy stick and ROY is clutching the kitchen spatula.

What is certain is that they have had no sleep and are very, very nervous. Even GORDON is twitchy.

ALL (except GORDON)

KUMMBAYY-RRRR-MY LORRD

KURRMBAY-ARRRR

KUMMBAY-ARRRRR-MLORDDDD

KUMBAY-RR

KUMBAY-ARR-MLORRD

KUMBAY-ARR

O LORRD, KUMBAY-ARR...

*Silence. A moment of vague morning birdsong.*

ANGUS (*half-whispering*) Roy? What if he doesn't know that "Kumbaya" is an internationally recognized sign of peace?

GORDON Just forget all that. Keep in this formation. He could be behind any one of those bushes.

ANGUS (*whimpering*) Oh God. Sorry, Roy. I didn't mean God.

GORDON If we stay together, we're OK. We're armed, we can take him on. Well, *we* can. Roy has a spatula. He can rustle him up a quick omelette.

ROY I don't believe in offensive weapons, Gordon, I said that six hours ago.

NEVILLE Shall I do it now?

ANGUS Yes, go on Neville.

NEVILLE *breathes in, summoning up courage.*

GORDON Go on.

NEVILLE Right. (*He calls into the trees.*) We come - in peace. We do not want to hurt you. We are businessmen. (*He pauses.*) From Salford. (*He pauses.*) The Pennine Mineral Water Company...

GORDON Oh, give him the flaming email address / why don't you?

NEVILLE Well, you do it then, Gordon.

GORDON Here, I think I've got some business cards...

ANGUS You're doing fine, Nev.

GORDON Look, if he thinks we're four out-of-condition businessmen who spent all night hiding in a bush, what's that mean, eh?

ANGUS Means he must have a good view of us.

GORDON No, Angus, it... (*The words hit home.*) I'm not out of condition.

NEVILLE Oh for God's sake.

GORDON You think I'm out of condition?

NEVILLE Sorry, Roy.

ANGUS You're out of condition.

ROY It's all right.

GORDON I'm not.

ANGUS We all are.

NEVILLE I didn't mean God.

ROY Yes, yes, don't worry.

GORDON I swam round the buoy at Zakynthos. Don't lump me in the same bucket as you, mate.

NEVILLE What, Gordon? Does it mean?

GORDON It means, Neville, he'll think about us exactly what those fishes thought about our duck pâté vol-au-vents. Easy meat.

NEVILLE OK. OK. (*He coughs, then calls.*) Now, we are armed, all right? There are a considerable number of us here, we all have weapons and Angus in particular has got a tremendously long knife.

GORDON (*closing his eyes*) Ohhhh.

*The others stare into the hollow void that is the look-out tree. All their headlights shine down into the void.*

ANGUS (*whispering*) Not saying anything. We ought to check. He might have gone.

GORDON OK, Angus. After you, mate. Self-confessed Mister Out-Of-Condition. You know what they say. Survival of the fittest.

ANGUS Me?

ROY I'll do it.

NEVILLE No, don't be daft.

ROY I'll go in.

NEVILLE No, look, I'm team leader.

ROY No, but I missed the ferry.

NEVILLE Roy. I got us stuck here in the first / place...

GORDON Oh girls, girls, please.

ROY I'm going in. (*He starts to walk in.*)

ANGUS (*not moving*) Are you sure, Roy?

GORDON (*turning to ANGUS and smirking*) "Are you sure, Roy?" A little less half-hearted, please.

ROY *vanishes into the trees.*

NEVILLE He can't...we can't let him go, Gordon.

GORDON He'll be all right. We've sung "Kumbaya". It's an internationally recognized sign of peace.

NEVILLE (*calling*) Roy!

GORDON It also happens he's carrying a spatula, which is the internationally recognized sign of being a fruitcake.

NEVILLE Gordon.

GORDON Nutters never eat their own kind. They're like mongeese.

NEVILLE Gordon.

*They watch and listen. Silence.*

ANGUS Do mongeese not eat each other?

GORDON *stares at ANGUS.*

*Suddenly "Whoosh!" The wood pigeons go up. It makes all three jump and stare upwards.*

NEVILLE Argh!

ANGUS Yah!

GORDON What the hell is that?

NEVILLE It's the birds. It's all right, just the birds in the trees.

ANGUS D'you think that means he's in trouble?

GORDON What, from the birds?

ANGUS You know what happens in the film *The Birds*.

GORDON You don't, mate. You missed the last twenty minutes.

*There is the sound of a piece of wood cracking.*

NEVILLE Whasssat?

ANGUS Oh God. (*He poises his knife.*)

NEVILLE What's that?

*There is a pause.*

ROY? Are you there?

*ROY appears, silently, in a cloud of fog. He walks forward a few paces. Then a huge smile breaks over his face, and he holds his arms up.*

ROY Pigeons! It was a wood pigeon!

ANGUS See. Told you they were dangerous.

ROY The remains! That's what you put your hand in.

NEVILLE (*a relieved smile starting*) And that's all it was?

ANGUS Hold on, hold on. That still means someone was on here last night killing pigeons.

ROY Yes. And I know who. (*He smiles and nods up to the crag.*) It was him.

*They turn.*

The gyrfalcon. I should have known. He's off his territory. The poor old thing can't find his normal food up here, so he's having to go after the wood pigeons.

ANGUS Ahhh.

GORDON (*turning to ANGUS*) Well *thank you*, Angus.

ANGUS Eh?

GORDON Thank you so much for your little bedtime story.

ANGUS What did I do?

GORDON If you hadn't put the communal willies up everyone with the "Angus House of Horror".

NEVILLE Gordon—

GORDON —we'd've probably thought rationally about the wood pigeon option instead of spending all night imagining flaming wildmen roaming round, distended corpses strung up from trees.

NEVILLE Let's / not point blame—

GORDON Lolling out tongues and staring eyes—

NEVILLE Well, any / way, it's all right—

GORDON —whittling away pointed sticks, digging out ridiculous lights to strap on...

ANGUS Look—

NEVILLE (*referring to the helmets*) I have to admit, Angus, it would've been helpful to know you had these, mate.

ANGUS It's an emergency pack, isn't it? I forgot. I only remembered when I got a splinter. One of the organizers gave it to me after breakfast.

GORDON After *what* was that, Angus?

NEVILLE Listen, let's just have a business-like organized review / of—

GORDON The situation? OK. Well, can I table a motion, Captain? (*like a pirate*) "Search ye in the locker of old sea-dog Angus."

ANGUS What?

GORDON "There may ye find great treasure."

ANGUS (*panicking suddenly and moving to protect his rucksack*) No / you...

GORDON First it's just clothes. Suddenly there's a stove. Suddenly there's a sausage. Suddenly there's an emergency pack. What else be there — "suddenly"?

ANGUS You leave it, Gordon, please.

GORDON I know everything that's in my rucksack. Was in it, God rest its soul.

ANGUS Well you packed your own.

GORDON Oh, I know. God, it must be fantastic to have someone else packing your — argh — rucksack, it must be a bloody journey of—

ANGUS Argh! It's private—

GORDON —bloody discovery to find out what Julie's put in here—

ANGUS It's my private—

GORDON *develops a more erratic, desperate air about his movements. He snatches the rucksack.*

GORDON Nothing's private now, Angus. It's survival, mate. Life or — *(He wrests the rucksack from ANGUS.)*

ANGUS Gordon—argh!

GORDON —death!

NEVILLE *(his head in his hands; quietly)* Please, please, come on.

GORDON *(peering into the rucksack)* Hallo! Shop! Anyone at the Angus General Store? Good God.

NEVILLE *(quietly)* Sorry, Roy.

GORDON It's like bloody Tutankhamun's tomb in here.

ANGUS There is no food. So give it back.

GORDON Shut. Up. *(pulling out an unopened blister pack, still with its price tag)* An altimeter. What the hell d'you want an altimeter for?

ANGUS *(sighing)* It measures altitude.

GORDON I know what *climbers* want it for. *(He reads the price tag)* One hundred and thirty quid! *(He whistles.)* And unopened. Yes, apparently Ranulph Fiennes says his works best still in the packet. *(He throws it down, and pulls out a coil of yellow cable.)* Oh ho. *(He reads)* "Kanchenjunga climbing cable. Woven nylon steel, tensile strength of four hundred and eighty pounds. For climbing vertical rock faces." *(He holds the cable up.)* Going to do a lot of that were you?

ANGUS The assistant at / the—

GORDON Yeh, yeh, yeh. Indispensable. Like the combat frying pan. You know when you left, he must have shut the blinds for ten minutes and skipped around the shop, clapping. *(He reaches in and pulls out more unopened climbing gear.)* Let's see. All-weather compass, for telling you exactly which direction you've gone wrong in...pedometer, for telling you how far in the wrong direction you've come, mobile phone for telling you if your wife's buggered off at home...

ANGUS *(lurching forward and snatching the rucksack back)* Just leave off. That's joke — over.

GORDON *(throwing the phone up and catching it)* Right. This'll do. See you.

NEVILLE Where are you going?

GORDON Breakfast.

ROY What's the phone for?

GORDON Well. Two options. I could either call out for a couple of onion bhajis, or I could cut something's head off with it. *(He slaps the phone into his palm.)*

ANGUS Not with that you're not.

GORDON Oh yes.

ANGUS That's the Moshito ZX—

GORDON K Retina Venturer with the infinite number memory, which in the office is a very important feature. Whereas out here, Angus, the most important feature is that one edge is quite sharp. *(He sets off as if about to exit.)*

ANGUS *(trying to block GORDON'S exit)* The phone, please.

GORDON Ah-ah. Not "phone" now, Angus. *(He holds it up proudly.)* "Trout-decapitator".

ANGUS Neville, tell him. Any water will damage the microchips.

GORDON *(putting his arm round ANGUS)* Ahhh. You know, Angus, I love you. I always secretly wondered why you skipped so effortlessly in at Department Manager, mate, but being out here with you now, I can see why. 'Cos you're a stickler for peripheral detail. If you went in now and caught your Julie having sex on the bread shelf in Sainsbury's, you'd be in there quick as a flash saying, "But Julie — who's looking after the trolley?"

ANGUS *(recoiling)* Take that back.

GORDON smiles.

NEVILLE Gordon!

ANGUS That's joke over. He takes - you take that back now.

GORDON Look, Angus, I don't want to tell nasty stories before bedtime, mate. But have we been rescued?

ANGUS He - what?

GORDON So either Julie did come home and wants you to remain stuck on here, or she stays out of the house a little more than you think.

ANGUS *is quietened.*

In which case, whose house does she "stay" in, Angus?

*There is a pause.*

In which case, this (*the phone*) isn't that important suddenly.

Is it?

GORDON *smiles and walks off, throwing up the phone and catching it.*

ANGUS *stands, his mind obviously reeling. One by one, demons are starting to crawl out of the cupboards in his mind.*

*We hear the wood pigeons go up.*

*Blackout.*

## Scene Two

*The peninsula.*

*We hear the wood pigeons settle.*

*The lights come up. The peninsula is empty.*

ROY (*offstage*) OK, I have it, I think I have it at my end!

NEVILLE (*offstage*) Are you round the tree?

ROY (*offstage*) I'm round, I am now round the tree.

NEVILLE (*offstage*) Right, can you help, Angus?

*There is a pause.*

Angus, can you help?

*There is a pause.*

Never mind, never mind. I've got it. Right off we go, Roy.

ROY (*offstage*) Right you are.

ROY and NEVILLE *walk on to the peninsula from the tree carrying a roughly hacked-off branch of tree about seven or eight feet long. ROY has a nosebleed, and his whole nose is rather red.*

Here?

NEVILLE It's a clear view from the road, is it?

ROY Apart from the fog.

NEVILLE Theoretically.

ROY Oh, theoretically it's a great view.

NEVILLE Right, we'll stick it up here then.

*They drop the branch.*

How's the nose?

ROY Oh, fine. My fault. Suppose it was a bit optimistic trying to make an axe.

NEVILLE Birch is a bit springy anyway. I'll get the emergency... Angus?

Angus?

Nothing.

(calling) Angus, can we have the emergency box?

ANGUS, Cobra drooping lamely out of his hands, shuffles out of the trees, his rucksack on his back. He looks like someone has sucked all the life out of him.

ANGUS (quietly) Sorry?

NEVILLE Come on, mate. Plaster for Roy's nose.

ANGUS Sorry. (He takes the rucksack off and fishes the emergency box out half-heartedly.)

NEVILLE Right. Now what's the most colourful thing we've got?

ROY Rucksack?

NEVILLE Too dark. Rescue team wouldn't see it. Got to be bright, bright, bright. Remember what Gordon said, "Bright attracts attention."

ANGUS stops rummaging mid-way and stares ahead fixedly. There is a pause.

ROY I've got an orange side plate.

NEVILLE Flag. Roy. We need to make a... (He turns to see the catatonic ANGUS.) Angus?

ANGUS (quietly) Sorry. (He holds a plaster up.)

NEVILLE takes the plaster.

ROY (quietly) Is this still the Sainsbury-bread thing?

NEVILLE shrugs. ANGUS sits on the shore during the following.

(putting the plaster on) You know when I found him earlier he was just sitting on a rock slicing the soil with his Cobra.

NEVILLE It'll be...you know. Not eating. Soon as I get this flag up and we're off, everything will be fine.

ROY D'you want this side plate then?

NEVILLE Does it billow much?

ROY Not really.

NEVILLE Well that's what we're after. There's bound to be some plastic bag washed up somewhere. Hang on here.

He strides off.

ROY smiles across at the comatose ANGUS.

ROY (awkwardly) Wish I was him now, don't you?

ANGUS doesn't respond.

Just swoop down, pick a pigeon out of the sky, take him back up to the rock and get stuck in.

ANGUS stares out.

Mind you, thinking about it, if I was him, I'd just fly back to the hotel and call room service.

There is a pause.

Then again, if I was a falcon they probably wouldn't understand what I was ordering. So it's kind of swings and erm...you know. Ha.

ANGUS throws a stone into the water.

Eh, you don't want to do that. You want to skin them. See how many bounces... (He scouts around for suitable stones during the following.) World record's fifteen, Lucy got once, high tide, Parkgate on the Wirral. We'd gone to find

this avocet but he wasn't showing so we skimmed stones across / the—

ANGUS (*quietly*) He's a bastard.

ROY ...estuary (*gulping*) Pardon?

ANGUS (*mimicking GORDON*) "Oh Angus, well done, sonny. You have done well, coming over here straight into middle management." "Eh, Angus, mate, look down! That's a shop floor. You won't recognize that. Ah ha hargh!" I used to think it was being from Chester, you know? Because I came from Chester. But it's not. I know that now. It's because I'm married.

ROY OK, and count the splashes.

ANGUS (*grabbing ROY's arm*) And he's not. He's got a cold horrid lonely flat and he has to buy single tins of baked beans and heat-and-serve meals. He's got nothing in him.

ROY Well I—

ANGUS If you cut his heart open it'd be like Salford Business Park on a Sunday, all howling wind and chip papers. And I love Julie, and he hates that.

ROY Oh I don't think / he—

ANGUS (*pointing out across the lake*) There, Roy. What d'you see out there?

ROY (*looking*) Fog.

ANGUS I don't. I see Julie.

ROY Well that's good.

ANGUS On the bread shelf at Sainsbury's.

ROY (*instantly occupied*) Let's find a nice flat one.

ANGUS Checking her watch over someone's shoulder. Kicking Hovis Multigrain on to the floor.

ROY Now the trick is to keep / low—

ANGUS I can even picture the assistant manager she's doing it with. It's Mark. The one with the earring who hangs around the meat freezer.

ROY I'm sure she—

NEVILLE *enters and strides across to the others.*

NEVILLE (*smiling*) Still searching. There'll be something this side.

ROY ...sure she...

ROY *tries to attract NEVILLE's attention to ANGUS via a short series of worried nods, but NEVILLE merely responds with some "Get stuck in there" nods.*

ANGUS But she didn't ring.

NEVILLE *disappears across the shingle.*

He's right. That's the ghost. The one trampolining up and down shouting, "She didn't ring, she didn't ring..."

ROY (*showing ANGUS a suitable stone*) Aha, now that is a super flat one. Now watch. You put your back straight, arm loose, flick the wrist and off it goes. OK. Count the splashes. (*He throws.*) One... (*He waits for the second. It doesn't come.*) OK, not a very good one, that one. Let's try / another—

ANGUS Did you tell Lucy you loved her?

ROY *freezes, stone in hand, he has not heard anyone else say the word Lucy for three years. There is a pause.*

Actually say those three words. I - love - you. (*He pauses; looks up*) Do men say that?

*We hear the waves splat against the shore.*

Do men really say that? Or do they just put it in films to make you feel you ought to be saying it? Because I don't, Roy. I've said, "That's nice" and "You too", but the moment



I think of trying those three it's like I've suddenly got a mouthful of holly.

*We hear the waves splat against the shore.*

And she wants me to say it. I know she does and I'm lying there with all this holly in my mouth thinking, "Is it genetic? Is it something God didn't want men to do?" Or is it just something put on earth purely so women can tell men they never say it?

*There is a pause.*

ROY (*finally, haltingly*) I don't think God / intended—

ANGUS Not God! Forget God! You Roy: Did you say it? Standing there. Face to face. Did you tell Lucy: "Lucy, I love you"?

ROY (*letting his skimming stone fall to the shingle*) I think (*He swallows.*) ...probably... I probably did. I did. I told her. I told her a lot.

ANGUS looks at ROY, and ROY back at ANGUS, for quite a long time. Two men with two very different trains of thought. The water laps.

NEVILLE strides in, rubbing his hands.

NEVILLE Right. (*rub, rub*) Roy: How big is this side plate?

ROY looks down, and starts to break away.

Typical, isn't it? Where's pollution when you need it? If this had been Morecambe you wouldn't be able to move for plastic bags. Right. Roy: Give us a hand, yes?

ROY quietly hands over the side plate.

(*quietly, nodding at ANGUS*) How's laughing-boy? Still miles away?

ROY (*miles away himself*) May just go for a walk, Neville.

*And he goes.*

NEVILLE (*watching ROY go, slightly surprised*) Oh. Right. OK. OK. Angus. (*keeping things going.*) Can you hold this for me?

ANGUS doesn't move.

We just need a hammer (*He picks up a rock.*) and a nail of some description. (*He looks round*) Got anything sharp at all? *On automatic pilot, ANGUS hands over a kitchen fork with two prongs.*

Fantastic! Might've known, eh? Things are looking up. Right. Hold that.

NEVILLE starts to try to attach the plate to the branch using the kitchen fork as a nail and the stone as a hammer.

ANGUS Neville, will you do something for me?

NEVILLE Sure. Keep it steady.

ANGUS Will you say, "I love you"?

NEVILLE stops dead.

Can you say that? As a man?

NEVILLE can't think of words.

You're married, aren't you?

NEVILLE (*blurring out*) Happily. Very happily. To Deborah. (*He ploughs on quickly.*) Well, usually very happily. Hal! Y'can imagine what it's like, her and the twins, three women in the house. Gets a bit like, "Dad's holding the tigers apart" at times. Hal / Just hold—

ANGUS D'you go shopping together?

NEVILLE Well, the girls are back-packing round Nepal now, but / Deborah—

ANGUS When you're walking round and she wants to hold your hand and she slips it into yours, is it like holly?

NEVILLE (*looking worriedly at ANGUS, then resuming his efforts with the plate*) Come on, Angus, mate. Not long now.

ANGUS Is it, Neville?

NEVILLE Is my wife like holly? No, not really. But then again, if she'd been like holly, I wouldn't have married her, I'd've planted her, wouldn't I? Hold still.

ANGUS But her hands...

NEVILLE No, no, I think all-round Deborah is pretty non-herbaceous.

ANGUS So you *do* say you love her?

NEVILLE I - Yes, fairly sure I say I do. / Hold—

ANGUS No, not "I do", not "You too", not any of the volleys, the actual service. "I love you."

NEVILLE Angus...

ANGUS Roy said he did with Lucy, but I don't.

NEVILLE The thing about Gordon / is—

ANGUS On the answerphone I said, "Take care." But I meant, "I love you." / So why—

NEVILLE Hold on. Roy said what? You asked Roy about Lucy?

*We hear the wood pigeons rise.*

*We cross-fade to:*

### Scene Three

*The look-out tree.*

*The lights come up.*

*In the mist, ROY is praying. He is not as confident as before. In fact he seems to be having some difficulty finding the right words.*

ROY Lord...er... (*He swallows.*) Lord... (*He coughs.*) Right. Lord—

*Suddenly from behind him comes a crude singing voice. It is GORDON, singing ROY's little tune like a rugby song.*

GORDON (*offstage; singing*)

I SEE THE MEAL UPON ME TABLE LORD  
ALREADY I'M AGLOW. HOI!

FOR THOUGH I MAY BE ALL ALONE  
THERE'S SOMETHING THAT I KNOW, HOW'S YER FATHER?

GORDON *emerges holding a bit of paper.*

ROY *starts slapping his pockets.*

YOU'RE IN ME BREAD AND IN ME WINE, LORD  
EA-HE-EACH FRUIT IN THE DISH  
YOU'RE IN MY HONEY AND MY MILK  
AND EVEN - IN MY FISH.

ROY *smiles.*

GORDON (*looking up*) Hallo, Roy! He tends to base himself in y'r kitchen, I take it?

ROY Did I drop it?

GORDON God. I take it from this he's in y'r fridge or something?

ROY Can I have it back?

GORDON Great stuff. So do all fridges come with God in them, or is it just selected models? You know. Like some have got drinks dispensers.

ROY Thanks for picking it up, Gord—

GORDON Bit of a comedown, isn't it, after rising from the dead?  
Lurking in a Zanussi?

ROY Ha, no it's just an image really, we / had to compose—

GORDON Oh that's a shame. Must be fantastic to have God in  
y'r fridge. Y'know? Just leave a couple of mackerel in there,  
next time you open it there's five thousand—

ROY Ha. That *would* be...be— No, it's an image. Everyone in  
the worship group had to compose one.

GORDON Oh, you wrote it. Ahh. I thought it didn't have the  
twang of John Wesley.

ROY No, / well...

GORDON Even so. (*He holds up the paper.*) This is loose. It's...  
it's...*free*. It's the work of a visionary mind, mate. Will. No  
boundaries of reason, nothing to hold it back. It can just  
go - pooshh! (*He makes a gesture indicating spillage*) And  
that's very rare. Oh yes. Shelley had it. (*He counts on his  
fingers.*) Byron. Van Gogh. And now Roy from Finance.

ROY goes quiet.

(*handing ROY the poem*) That hymn is a work of genius,  
mate. Twenty years from now, they'll be singing that at  
royal weddings.

GORDON walks off.

ROY looks at the paper. *He gulps almost imperceptibly. We  
sense that something in the paper has unsettled him even  
further. He puts his hands together and closes his eyes.*

ROY (*shakily*) Right. Lord...

*But before he can get any more words out, there comes  
the sound of the wood pigeons rising. The sound makes  
ROY jump. His eyes open.*

*Blackout.*

### Scene Four

*The peninsula.*

*The wood pigeons settle.*

ANGUS and NEVILLE are still there, battling with the  
*flagpole.*

NEVILLE (*suddenly standing bolt upright, tense*) What was  
that? (*He sniffs up at the sky like a meerkat.*)

*There is a pause.*

ANGUS D'you think it's being middle class?

NEVILLE Did you hear something? ... (*He listens.*)

*Slight pause.*

ANGUS Not being able to say it?

NEVILLE (*straining to listen*) Shhh!

*Slight pause.*

ANGUS "I love / you"—

NEVILLE Oh God. Look, Angus. Gordon - he jokes. You know  
he jokes. (*quieter*) We all know Gordon jokes.

NEVILLE gives up aerial surveillance and resumes  
*hammering operations.*

There's nothing wrong with you. You're absolutely— (*gestures  
at "fine"*)

ANGUS I'm fine. I'm doing well.

NEVILLE You are.

ANGUS I've got a car-park space.

NEVILLE You have.

ANGUS With my name on it.

NEVILLE Near reception.

ANGUS And a Passat.

NEVILLE New Passat.

ANGUS And a Retina Venturer.

NEVILLE Yes.

ANGUS And he's right. So what?

NEVILLE Oh, right, now, just stop it. You love that phone. You know you do.

ANGUS I love that phone. I do. I love a mobile phone.

NEVILLE (*stopping*) Angus. You have done very well, very quickly in your life. It's people who move up that fast who tend to keep on (*waves, loosely*) ...y'know? Directorships. (*quieter*) Gordon joined as a pallet stacker. It took him eighteen years to get to middle management.

ANGUS When I got this job, do you know what I said?

NEVILLE Er...

ANGUS "That's lovely". Inside here (*He indicates his stomach.*) I was running round throwing my satchel in the air. But I said, "That's lovely".

NEVILLE Yes, I do remember / now you come to mention—

ANGUS Because *you* don't, do you? You don't run round.

NEVILLE I do. Mainly after the twins! / Can you—?

ANGUS You never get to nine or ten on the meter. You always hover around a safe five.

NEVILLE (*gestures for help in his mission*) Could you / just—? Angus. (*He gestures.*) That is the path of my life. Safe five. Down the middle. I like middle of the road music. I'm middle-aged. Middle management. Middle income. I live in the middle of a mid-priced avenue and if there's a row

of empty cubicles in the Gents I automatically go for the middle one.

*Suddenly there is a series of dramatic short splashes in the water. Each one is accompanied by an expletive.*

GORDON (*offstage*) Damn! Damn! Damn!

GORDON emerges up the shore on all fours, slumping the shallow water with the mobile phone as though trying to render the water unconscious. He looks ravaged. His, or rather ANGUS's, trousers are sopping, and he has obviously fallen sideways into a mud bank, because roughly half his face and jumper are black. His teeth are gritted.

Blast-bloody...bugger. (*splash*) Bugger! (*splash*) BUGGER! (*a very big splash*)

*The other two stare at him.*

*(catching his breath, then glowering up at the others)* What did you do this weekend, Charles? I washed the car. What did you do, Peter? I played golf. How about you, Gordon? Oh I fell sideways into a mud bank whilst trying to cut a trout's head off with a mobile phone. (*He throws the remains of the phone up the bank at ANGUS.*)

*The phone clatters to a stop. ANGUS stares at it. We're not sure about his reaction yet.*

NEVILLE You fell over?

GORDON No, Nev. I was ambushed, mate. These two fish jumped me up round the headland, said they were after more vol-au-vents. And I was pleading, "I haven't any", so they snatched the phone. I'm sorry, Angus. The bastards reprogrammed all your numbers. (*He swivels to sit down.*)

ANGUS picks up the phone, markedly silent, staring at the exploded wires.

Dial memory seven on that now and you get through to a shoal of cod near Stavanger.

ANGUS (*summoning up strength; quietly*) It's more likely to be cuttlefish near Stavanger.

*There is a pause. GORDON turns to him.*

I'm sorry. Have I spoiled the joke?

*There is a hung pause, then ANGUS lets the phone drop on the ground and walks into the trees.*

NEVILLE (*trying to compensate*) It's just that he's hungry.

GORDON (*smarting a little, wiping the mud off and advancing on ANGUS's rucksack*) You know what he is, don't you? You know what all this is? (*He hits the rucksack.*) The rucksack of a man who spent his entire school life fishing his pencil case out of the bog. (*He begins to rummage for clothes in the rucksack. His arm seems to be painful.*)

NEVILLE Hold on, is that arm all right?

GORDON We ought to do that, you know. Next department meeting, shove his expenditure forecast down the bog.

NEVILLE Have you hurt that, Gordon?

GORDON What the hell is this? (*He pulls a dinner suit out of its freezer bag.*)

NEVILLE It'll be his dinner suit for tonight.

GORDON Oh yes. Of course. He couldn't leave it in the hotel room like everyone else could he? Anguses don't do that.

NEVILLE You're sure that arm / is—

GORDON *I fell on it.* OK. It's fine. You don't need to get a hankie out and lick it, Neville, for God's / sake—

*A distant turbo-prop aircraft can just about be heard.*

NEVILLE Shhh! (*He looks up.*)

GORDON *looks up too.*

It's there again. Up there.

GORDON What is it?

*They look.*

It's not Roy's bloody Arctic parrot or whatever it is—

NEVILLE Listen—

GORDON 'Cos if it is, far as I'm concerned / it...

NEVILLE It's a plane. (*He turns to GORDON.*) They've sent a plane out!

GORDON Shit. They have as well. Quick, where is it?

NEVILLE I think it's above the fog.

GORDON Who's got the binoculars?

NEVILLE (*calling*) Roy!

GORDON Roy! Now! Binoculars!

NEVILLE It's OK, we've got time. I think he's circling.

GORDON (*calling*) Now!

NEVILLE Let's get the flag up.

GORDON The what? The flag? We've got a flag?

NEVILLE Yes.

GORDON Since when?

NEVILLE This morning. I made one.

GORDON (*a real desperate flicker of admiration passing over his face*) You made it? You made a...bloody hell, Nev! Well done!

NEVILLE Thanks. Yes, I was quite pleased.

GORDON "Quite"? It's brilliant. That's the first decent thing— (*calling down to the tree*) Roy! Oi! Get a move on! Neville's

actually come up trumps. We have got a flag. *(He turns, rubbing his hands.)* Right, OK. Where is it?

NEVILLE *hoists his flag - the pole and the side plate held on by the kitchen fork - like the Independence flag.*

NEVILLE And - up - she - goes!

*It stands like a nude totem pole. GORDON turns and stops dead. We drink in his reaction for a while as he looks at it. Then at NEVILLE. Then back at it.*

GORDON *(finally)* It's funny. I can't remember seeing that one up outside the United Nations.

NEVILLE *(his smile dropping a shade)* Well no, obviously, I had to make do a bit.

GORDON I think a "do" is exactly what you've made, Neville.

NEVILLE It's the only bright thing / we had.

GORDON Or sorry, maybe it's a flag that works on a different principle, by making pilots think, "I must get a closer look at that postmodernist sculpture."

NEVILLE *(quietly)* Look, it's orange, it's bright...

ROY *appears.*

ROY What's the matter? Did somebody -

GORDON Roy! Roy! Come here, Roy! *(He grabs ROY.)* This is the new British flag, Roy. This is what's going up when we win a medal at the next Olympics.

NEVILLE *(slightly grittily)* We think there's a plane. *(He scrabbles the binoculars off ROY.)*

GORDON Angus'll have won the Celebrity French Cricket Gold, they'll crank up a load of Tupperware while the band plays "God's in Me Fridge".

NEVILLE They're signalling!

GORDON *(stopping dead)* What?

NEVILLE It's got a signal. I can't read it, my eyes...

*The plane noise increases. ROY takes the binoculars from NEVILLE.*

GORDON What signal?

NEVILLE Yes, I know this. I know this. It's an alert. To let us know they know we're missing. They send them out on the hills.

GORDON Do they?

NEVILLE It was on the Discovery Channel / about -

GORDON Really?

NEVILLE It's an advance. Then they send a helicopter.

GORDON Why don't they send a helicopter now?

NEVILLE They will! This is to keep morale up! To show us there's light at the end of the tunnel, the end's in sight! Can you read it, Roy?

ROY Yes.

NEVILLE What's it say?

ROY *(reading)* Firework Display, Keswick Car Park, seven-thirty.

*Their reaction is held for a few beats.*

*We hear the wood pigeons rise.*

*Blackout.*

## Scene Five

*The look-out tree.*

*The lights come up slowly.*

*We hear cooing as the wood pigeons descend. The shadows of bird wings flap over ANGUS's face as he sits there. He is stoking up the inner fires.*

ANGUS I watched you do that, you know. You think no one's watching you. I saw you right up there. You thought, "That's the one, that's the pigeon I'm having", and you fell on him like a dagger. See, if you'd been a middle-class falcon, you would've stopped half-way, then flown after him and tapped him on the shoulder, "Excuse me, what's your availability re. having your throat torn open and your giblets pecked out?" and he would have said, "Not ideal", and you would have flown away saying, "Not to worry". *(He pauses.)* But you don't do that, do you? Because that's why all the middle-class falcons died out. You just go in and kill. *(He is flooded with resolve.)* You get your big fat sarcastic pigeon in your sights and you go in there and you slash him to pieces. *(His face becomes set for action.)*

*We hear the wood pigeons rise, as a crack of rain rips round the sky.*

*Blackout.*

## Scene Six

*The peninsula.*

*The lights come up. It's cold and horrible.*

GORDON *is wearing ANGUS's dinner suit and his arm is in a sling. He is too comatose and beaten even to look.*

NEVILLE *stands suddenly, like Columbus discovering a continent.*

NEVILLE *It's a pizza. (He stands and points down the lake) It's a slice of pizza. Floating in to shore. (He takes the flag from GORDON, wades out and collects the floating piece of pizza on the plate, as on a pizza oven-tray. His speech not quite as sparkling as before) Pizza. (He prods it) It's got pepperoni on it.*

ROY *Perhaps the other food is coming up. Out of the rucksack.*

*They both look at the pizza slice as if it is a fossil.*

NEVILLE *(peering) I think it might be all right.*

ROY *To eat?*

NEVILLE *It's a clean lake.*

ROY *Oh I'm not saying it's a bad idea, Nev...*

NEVILLE *passes ROY the pizza slice; they handle it as gently as they would high-grade plutonium.*

NEVILLE *Don't lose the pepperoni. That's where the goodness is.*

ROY *(looks at the pizza) What do you...er...?*

NEVILLE *Well, you'll need a flat, dry surface. Has Angus got a chopping board or something?*

ROY *goes to look in ANGUS's rucksack. NEVILLE tries to gee-up the comatose GORDON.*

(*shivering, forcing a smile*) That's a turn-up, eh, Gordon? Manna from heaven! Perhaps the rest of the food'll come up.

ROY (*from inside the rucksack*) What size chopping board, Nev? (*He produces two.*)

NEVILLE Doesn't matter.

ROY goes to put one back.

No, actually get both. We'd better squeeze the excess water out. Not try and heat it. Prob'ly increases the risk of bacteria. Doesn't it, eh Gordon? You'll know about that. Bacteria in water?

ROY squeezes the pizza between the chopping boards. Water dribbles to the floor.

I did this with the twins, Gordon. In Abergele. Went for a walk. Bit of a row over the ownership of a thing that came in the Weetabix packet. Lid came off the Tupperware and the custard creams went into the River Elwy. Turned out fine. Dried them out on a rock in a couple of hours.

ROY Hours?

They all look at the pizza.

NEVILLE (*quieter*) How hungry are we?

GORDON (*muttering*) Painfully.

NEVILLE Right. (*He calls.*) Angus! Food! (*He offers the platter to ROY.*) Take a bit.

ROY takes a piece of pizza.

Get some pepperoni. (*He offers pizza to GORDON*) Gordon?

GORDON, his face riddled with distaste, pinches a bit of dough off with his fingers.

Right.

ROY holds the mulch in his fingers. GORDON views his with disdain, but with conflicting urges.

S a start, eh? S what I said. Bit of food. It'll be all right now.

GORDON looks at NEVILLE. None is willing to be the first to eat. But GORDON is painfully hungry and forces the pinched morsel into his mouth.

ROY Oh, I know where this came from. This is the one that woman trod in when she was getting up to do karaoke on the ferry.

GORDON's mouth suddenly abandons all thought of chewing.

D'you remember? The DJ told her to pull it off and throw it overboard. (*He holds up a bit of pizza with a hole in it*) Yes, it is. Look. There's the stiletto hole.

GORDON suddenly and violently spits out his wet pizza. He sits there twitching for a few seconds. He closes his eyes, breathes in and lets out a primordial howl.

GORDON Argh-hhhhhh...

Silence. The other two are rigid.

(*grabbing the remaining pizza off the chopping board and squeezing it to pulp in front of his face; calling*) I - am - better - than - this! (*He takes a huge breath*) I am better than eating what the Highways Officer of Keswick Town Council has scraped off her shoe! (*The white pulp squidges out of his fingers.*)

NEVILLE Yeh, OK Gordon, look. We're all at the end of our tether.

GORDON (*calling on one tone*) My tether is miles back. I passed it hours ago. It's so far back there now you can hardly see it, and it was a pretty big tether. In fact it was the biggest tether they had in the "bloody huge tether" box at the tether shop.



*There is a sudden slow clapping, and a pointedly unamused laugh from ANGUS, off.*

ANGUS (*offstage*) Ah ha ha ha. Ho ho ho.

GORDON *freezes like a bull in between targets again.*

ANGUS *walks in through the trees, clapping.*

That's tremendously funny. I mean technically it's slightly convoluted because of course a tether is a rope, so actually it would be length rather than size which predicated the image, making it a bloody "long" tether rather than a "big" one. (*He leaves a slight pause.*) I mean it's still funny, Gordon.

*There is a pause. We sense doom. NEVILLE and ROY's heads swivel to the imminently erupting GORDON.*

NEVILLE So Angus, Gordon's wearing your dinner suit / because...

ANGUS Oh it doesn't matter, Nev. Suits. Phones. Like Gordon said. Not really important.

NEVILLE Er...

GORDON (*quietly*) Not for you it isn't, mate.

ANGUS Not for me, mate. Because of course my wife is possibly *in flagrante*, isn't she, Gordon? Possibly, as we speak, on the bread shelf at Sainsbury's, writhing and bucking in ecstasy with her head in the Allinson's Stoneground shouting, "Yes, more, that's it, let's do it on the kibbled grain picnic buns..."

ROY There was a pizza, Angus.

ANGUS And d'you know why Julie might be on that shelf now doing that in Sainsbury's? Roy?

ROY (*on the spot; he has no idea*) Er...is it late opening on Saturday?

ANGUS No.

ROY No.

ANGUS Because, possibly, I didn't open up.

GORDON (*realizing the score*) Oh-ho...

ANGUS Which is bad, isn't it, Gordon? It's a bad thing.

GORDON My God almighty, I do believe Angus's wild man is coming out. You'd better get some towels.

ANGUS and ROY *begin to twitch like dogs over a dinner bowl.*

NEVILLE Come on lads, please—

ANGUS (*checking his watch*) They'd be doing the End Of Exercise debrief about now.

NEVILLE Please lads, I can't stand this kind / of—

ANGUS You and me. Right now.

GORDON Oh ho ho ho...

ANGUS Clean out the fridge.

GORDON That's what you want, is it?

ANGUS (*slight pause*) Who starts?

GORDON (*to the others*) Have you heard this?

ANGUS Who / starts—?

GORDON (*to ANGUS*) You think you've got the balls for something like that?

ANGUS (*talking out a coin*) Call.

GORDON Oh stop...

ANGUS Heads or tails?

GORDON Seriously? Here and now?

ANGUS Call.

GORDON You and me? Here and now? It's fine, but just be dead sure that's what you want.

*There is a pause.*

Just be dead, dead sure that's what you want.

ANGUS *flicks the coin and catches it on the back of one hand. He covers the coin with his other hand and holds both hands out to GORDON.*

ANGUS Call.

*High noon. GORDON looks at the hands. Then at ANGUS. His mouth twitches after words. But for the first time in history, he can't find any. The atmosphere is horrible. The clock ticks. The atmosphere tightens. Suddenly ROY's bottle goes.*

ROY Righto. I'll be back / in...

GORDON *(twisting on to him like a snake)* Oh no, Roy. You stay. You're in this debriefing too.

ROY *(smiling)* No thanks, I don't want to be...thanks, I have to go.

GORDON Where? McDonalds?

ROY No, to the look-out tr—

NEVILLE *tries not to look, by fiddling with his mulched pizza.*

GORDON Oh yes, to pray, that's right. To God. For us being stuck on here. Tell you what— *(He snatches the coin.)* I'll start. *(He points at ANGUS and ROY.)* I think you and you are the same.

ANGUS What?

GORDON Religion-wise.

NEVILLE *(quietly)* Leave him / please.

GORDON Oh no, no, no, no, you can't say, "Leave him", Nev. You can't protect anyone in a debriefing.

ROY *is still politely trying to get away.*

*(blacking ROY)* See, you weren't religious before you had your time off - a-pl - *(He slaps his hand.)* - proper words, *breakdown.* Were you, Roy? So what, did this angel come down? *(He sings.)* "AH-AHH-AHHH, ROY - JESUS WANTS YOU FOR A SUNBEAM."

ROY Ha, I had a car called a Sunbeam once—

GORDON Bang! Puff of smoke, loads of glitter? Does it happen that quickly, eh? *(He leaves a slight pause.)* See, I have to nail my side plate to the mast here, Roy. *(He screws his nose up.)* Don't think so.

ANGUS Hold on—

ROY *(smiling)* It's OK, Angus. I know Gordon doesn't believe—

GORDON No, you see, no, no, no, Roy. That's not it. The thing is... I don't believe you believe either.

ROY *(pausing; this is a hit on target; quieter)* D'you have the binoculars?

GORDON 'Cos you can tell. Some Christians are one hundred per cent gone, and that's sad, but you're a bit wavery, aren't you, Roy? You're like him. *(He points to ANGUS.)* Doing the sign of the cross with his sausage. Religion, far as he's concerned, it's all crosses and waving smoke and bowing to Mecca all mushed together in the blender and bunged in the "Religion" bucket. But I reckon, bottom line, that's as deep as it goes with you. Isn't it? *(mock-chummy)* Hang on to your rucksack, Angus, we've started. How am I doing? This what you wanted?

ANGUS No, I / want—

ROY *(unable to leave on this note)* The thing / is...

NEVILLE Just go, Roy.

ROY If you believe / in...

GORDON (*almost sadly*) Oh, Roy, my poor little chunky egg.

No one believes.

ROY (*forcing a laugh*) Ha. So my worship group—?

GORDON *Hobby.*

NEVILLE Roy, will you just go?

GORDON Club. Christians are like trainspotters. No one talks to them so they find each other in the end. The ultimate proof there's no God, is that if there was, he would've zapped all the bloody Christians.

ANGUS Gordon—

GORDON I mean come on, if you were God, would it justify creating the earth and sky and firmament to have a church full of Roys wave one hand in the air and sing about you being in their dishwasher?

NEVILLE Right, where's the binoc / ulars—?

ANGUS Gordon—

GORDON No disrespect. (*to ANGUS*) *Knew* you wouldn't have the balls for this! (*back to ROY*) You've only got to look check the stats – why's it so many old people go to church?

NEVILLE I'll do look/out—

GORDON Being factual?

ROY The... (*He can't find the words.*)

ANGUS Gordon!

GORDON Totally factually honest.

ROY No—

GORDON Fear.

NEVILLE Gordon, mate—

ANGUS I want you and me / to—!

GORDON They've seen something nasty at the end of the slide!

ROY (*still having difficulty getting words out*) The brrr...

NEVILLE (*seeing ROY in difficulties and trying to step in*) This isn't a good time / to—

GORDON But they're on it, and they're shooting down it and church is like suddenly someone's dangling rescue ropes and they're grabbing, grabbing...

ROY (*shaking his head*) The brrr...

NEVILLE This isn't a good time, OK?

GORDON (*loving this moment, waving his arms in the air and calling*) But there's no one holding the other end, is there, Roy?

NEVILLE Angus asked him about Lucy / and—

GORDON Come on, mate! You're a mathematician!

ROY Brrrr... I—

GORDON You're a logical bloody mathematician!

ANGUS (*sotto voce*) Oh god.

ROY I - I—

GORDON You know the ropes are all loose! You know everyone just goes, (*He gestures.*) "Whheeee!" into this massive completely black empty bloody—!

ROY (*singing, suddenly, out of nowhere*)

"THERE'S A BRIGHT GOLDEN HAZE ON THE MEADOW!"

*Everyone stops dead and stares, understandably.*

*The same tune again.*

THERE'S A BRIGHT GOLDEN HAZE ON THE MEADOW.

*There is a pause.*

*The same tune again.*

THERE'S A BRRRRR... (*He winces*) GOLDDD... NNNN... HAZE!

*This unsettling scene is held for a moment. Then rocketing us out of our seats, a bomb explodes in the sky overhead. It is a huge green firework. The light flickers over the tableau as it re-explodes several times with accompanying crashes. Blackout.*

*In the darkness, ANGUS's rucksack is repositioned.*

### Scene Seven

*The peninsula.*

*Darkness. Then fireworks illuminate the sky in different degrees of intensity and in different colours. Some bang, some whirr, some "whewee", some bang-fizz, and so on. In the breaks between the distant incendiaries, we are aware of a disturbing howling sound - made by ROY, of course - roaming round the island. It would be more disturbing if the words for that howl weren't all taken from the first line of "OKLAHOMA!"*

*Over the darkness, the beams from the helmet lights flicker around.*

NEVILLE (offstage) I can't handle this. Anything else. Anything else...

GORDON (offstage) Neville?

*Finally, GORDON and NEVILLE troop in from the shingle and water, their helmet lights on. They meet, forming a little knot of light. ANGUS sits at a distance.*

NEVILLE No sign of him up the east shore. How about you?

GORDON There was something in the trees. Something moved up in a tree.

NEVILLE You think he's climbed a tree?

GORDON Well if he has he can bloody stay there. Climbing up spruces to rescue doo-lally Christians, not my idea of a night out.

ANGUS sits, lost, at a distance from the other two.

ROY (offstage; howling) "There's a bright gooo-o-ld..." (The howl echoes)

GORDON (jumping, then twitching, angry because the howl made him jump) He's in there! (He shouts up to the trees.)

Shut up! Shut... That's four hours. One bloody line. *(He calls.)* Don't you know anything from *Hello Dolly?*

*This valley thunders down into the wood. Silence, apart from a note being held softly somewhere far off.*

ROY *(offstage; howling)* "There's a bright gooo-o-lden haze on the meadow—ww..."

ANGUS *stares out over the lake.*

NEVILLE *(quietly and sadly)* I hate this. I hate madness.

GORDON He's not mad. That's not madness in there. He knows what he's doing. *(He calls.)* Don't you?

NEVILLE I saw a mad woman in Thomas Cook's once. She wandered round and round saying, "How much is the stewing steak? How much is the stewing steak?"

ROY *(offstage; howling)* "There's a bright gooooo-lden haze on the meadow—ww..."

GORDON *(shouting)* We're not scared, Roy. We'll join in. *(He tries to sing)*

"THERE'S A BRIGHT GOLDEN HAZE ON THE MEADOW, AND

THE ELEPHANT'S HIGH AS..."

*(He turns to NEVILLE.)* What's the words?

*A firework goes off.*

NEVILLE That's moved.

GORDON *(swinging round)* What?

NEVILLE Angus's rucksack. It's moved.

*There is a pause.*

GORDON *(quieter)* Don't be soft.

NEVILLE It was here when we went on the last search. It's been moved. *(He looks up.)* He's been back here. While we've been away. Look. *(He holds up a grey sock.)* It's his sock.

It's his undersock. He must have taken the woolly one off to get to that.

GORDON *(suddenly dropping into the rucksack and rummaging a round)* Oh no. *(His voice drops to a whisper.)* Oh my God. Oh bloody God.

NEVILLE What?

GORDON *(looking up from the rucksack)* The Cobra. He's taken the Cobra.

*This is serious. They all reel. There is a pause.*

*(suddenly turning to the silent ANGUS)* You had to bring it, didn't you? Penknife would've done, but no. Angus had to bring a bloody Ninja scimitar.

NEVILLE OK.

GORDON *(shouting)* You happy now? Mr "Get things out in the open", eh?

ANGUS *makes no attempt to come back, but just sits, lost.*

NEVILLE *(breathing steadily)* Right. This is now, I think, a state of crisis.

GORDON Oh possibly, yes. Nutter plus knife equals crisis, possibly.

NEVILLE *(hatingly)* It appears Roy is in some state of undress... he's sitting in a tree, he's got an eighteen-inch knife and he's singing the first line from *Oklahoma!*

ANGUS *puts his head in his hands.*

Which means we can say with some certainty that there is now a wild man on the island with us.

*A firework goes off. NEVILLE looks down to the tree where the noise is now coming from. His headlight vanishes away into nothing.*

And...one of us is going to have to go in there and get him.

ROY (*offstage; howling*) "There's a bright gooooo-o-Iden haze on the meadow-<sup>www</sup>..."

GORDON Why? Can't we just... The police always say, if you see a nutter with a knife...

NEVILLE (*turning*) Because, Gordon, as you probably would have heard if you'd stayed to talk to Roy's psychiatrist when he came in, Roy had quite an...*active* breakdown.

GORDON (*suddenly realizing*) In what—? How?

NEVILLE Put it this way. He didn't die. But it wasn't for lack of effort on his part.

GORDON Oh great. Oh just... (*He stomps around.*) ...that's just... (*He stops.*) "Pennine Mineral Water Team A - reached target. Team B - reached target. Team C - one comatose, one dead. Please send body bag."

*Silence.*

NEVILLE (*staring into the cavernous mouth of the trees*) One of us has to go in.

*There is a pause. The wind can be heard.*

(*not looking round*) Not volunteering then, Gordon?

GORDON averts his gaze over the water.

(*half-smiling, nodding*) No. No. I'm the leader, aren't I? My responsibility. (*He pauses, then puts his headlight on.*) My island.

ROY's howl sounds again.

*A green firework blazes the peninsula, and drops us into a deep.*

*Blackout.*

### Scene Eight

*The island and look-out tree.*

*Music.*

*There is pitch blackness at first, then weird shadows flick over the ground. We are somewhere in the dark heart of the island. There are the sounds of rustling leaves and wind. One lone headlight flicks into view. It walks hesitantly across the blackness. Underneath it is NEVILLE.*

NEVILLE (*nervously*) Roy? Ro-y?

*The beam flicks round the auditorium. He edges onwards. Strange sounds fill the night. This exploration is held for as long as we can bear. Then suddenly the sky is sundered by a huge white firework and an almighty crash. With the sudden impact of a horror film, a figure is illuminated on the look-out tree. Crouched there like a demonic gargoye is ROY. He is backlit by the moon, with shadows of branches across him. He is dressed in a pair of MESS Y-fronts. And he is indeed clutching the Cobra.*

NEVILLE Ah-argh!

ROY (*quite cheerfully*) Hi, Nev.

NEVILLE (*walking forward, controlling his abject terror quite well*) Yes. Ha. (*He pauses.*) How - er - are...you?

ROY Oh, I'm fine, Nev.

*ROY keeps staring straight out into the dark as if looking for something. His tone is absolutely logical, calm and factual as though in a board meeting. NEVILLE is slightly surprised by this demeanour.*

NEVILLE Good. Good. Well. Ha. I suppose we all have different meanings for words, eh? *(He pauses.)* You know, "fine" with me is sitting with a Chianti in a restaurant...

ROY Used to sit on Lucy's window like this. Pyjamas. Staring out.

NEVILLE Right. Did she mind?

ROY *smiles and shakes his head, remembering that she didn't.*

Must've been a draught. Didn't she say, "Roy, get down and come back to bed?"

ROY *(shaking his head)* She said, "Roy, your father didn't put that window in for you to fall out of. I don't want to lose both of you, do I eh?" *(He smiles.)*

*There is a pause.*

NEVILLE *(gingerly)* Your mother?

ROY It was fields, so there were no lights. That's the thing. The dark just went... *(gestures)* rolling. I used to sing the brightest daylightest song I knew to attack it. To make it light. Kill it. *(He starts to sing quietly)* There's a bright gooo-o-lden haze on the meadow--ww...

NEVILLE Roy, was Lucy...your mother?

ROY *(factually)* I had to kill her, Nev. I had no choice, you see, and then when I did it, it all came back. All this blackness.

NEVILLE *(quietly)* Oh my God.

ROY Blackness that can't end. Like that. *(He nods up the lake.)*

NEVILLE Why d—? How did you kill her, Roy?

ROY *(distantly)* Machine.

NEVILLE *(quietly)* Bloody hell-l. *(gently)* What...machine?

ROY I turned it off. *(He pauses slightly.)* And they told me, "You have to say turn it off, we can't say turn it off", and I said, you know, "I can't". But then I had to.

NEVILLE *(somewhat relieved)* Well that's not "killing", Roy. You didn't / kill—

ROY Oh the killing doesn't matter. It's what comes after.

NEVILLE Right—

ROY It can't end, Neville.

ROY *waves out with the Cobra at the darkness.* NEVILLE *looks with ROY into the interminable darkness over the lake.*

Can't ever...ever end.

NEVILLE OK.

ROY And it's the only thing that's definite. The one thing that's certain is that at the end of all this is something that will just go on and on forever. *(He pauses.)* I couldn't send her into that, Nev. We always had the landing light on.

NEVILLE *(having a go)* But you er...there's all the er...heaven side of things, isn't there?

ROY *(smiling; lovingly)* It's a kingdom, Nev. Bright. Big walls.

NEVILLE Good. Like er, York.

ROY I thought I was losing it, you know. I really... I know Gordon doesn't...but it all kind of... *(gestures at what words can't describe)*

NEVILLE But you're not.

ROY I'm not.

NEVILLE You're fine.

ROY He sent me a sign, Nev.

NEVILLE Did He?

ROY *nods. Smiles.*

ROY An angel.

NEVILLE (*after a slight pause*) Great. What, just now?

ROY (*He nods.*) Where you are. An angel was just there.

NEVILLE Well...flipping heck, eh? That's super. (*He pauses.*) I must have just missed him.

*There is a pause.*

Roy, are you fine enough to give me the knife?

ROY (*immediately*) Oh sorry, yes, of course. Bit dangerous to be holding this up here. (*He lowers it without any problem at all, still staring straight ahead.*)

NEVILLE (*taking the knife; looking quite pleased at this handover*) Right. And are you...coming back?

ROY (*nodding*) Oh yes, course.

NEVILLE Good. Because we were worried. You know. We were very— (*He gives up.*) Are you coming?

ROY Just have to wait for when he comes back.

NEVILLE Yes, yes, of course. Well. You don't want to miss him. (*He doesn't know what else to say, so he starts to back away.*) Long as you're fine?

*He waits for a reply. There isn't one. So he disappears.*

ROY (*with a happy heart; closing his eyes*) Ohhh. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (*He produces the Kanchenyunga climbing cable which he has made it into a noose. He shuts his eyes again.*) Forgive us, and thank you Lord, and help me to do this because I know it's going to hurt a bit but then it'll be fine, for thine is the kingdom. The power. And the glory. (*He stops, opens his eyes and smiles*)

*There is a pause.*

*A firework.*

*The lights cross-fade to...*



## Scene Nine

*The peninsula.*

CRASH! GORDON dumps the innards of ANGUS's rucksack out in a huge cascade. ANGUS has not moved from his silence.

GORDON Gn-argh!

NEVILLE suddenly appears out of the woods holding the Cobra like King Arthur with Excalibur.

NEVILLE I did it.

GORDON Nev! Help me do this. Get down here.

NEVILLE He's fine!

GORDON (*bolting round*) What...where is he?

NEVILLE I went in and (*He holds up the Cobra.*) I got the knife!

GORDON But where is he?

NEVILLE I did it!

GORDON Where is he?

NEVILLE He's fine.

GORDON (*looking round NEVILLE*) He's come back?

NEVILLE No, but he's fine. He told me, "I'm fine."

GORDON Well what was he doing?

NEVILLE He was sitting in the look-out tree in his underwear.

GORDON Oh well he's fine.

NEVILLE He can't do anything. We've got the Cobra haven't we?

GORDON (*rummaging again*) But we don't know what else he's taken, do we? (*He finds the inventory.*) I'll check the inventory. You check the emergency box. (*He pushes the medical box across to NEVILLE.*)

NEVILLE Why?

GORDON Go on! (*He throws the box open and points inside.*)

NEVILLE I've told you, I did it! I went in / and—

GORDON (*nodding*) Look in there.

NEVILLE You can't kill yourself with a Lemsip.

GORDON (*rummaging, shouting*) Check everything!

NEVILLE (*perfunctorily rummaging over the top layer*) It's pointless. Look, full. OK?

GORDON Every single item—

NEVILLE But everything's there. (*He throws out the following items.*) Plasters, Lemsip. Insect cream. Bandages, Antihisan, tourniquet, warning flares, antiseptic, it's all...

*There is a pause.*

GORDON Pardon?

NEVILLE recovers the second-from-last item.

Warning what?

NEVILLE reverentially holds up a flare-shaped flare. It is a flare. Oh yes. A real-life flare.

NEVILLE (*reading*) "In case of injury, dispatch flare and immediately Lakes rescue will be sent."

GORDON (*slowly*) There's - been - a - flare? In that box? All the time?

NEVILLE (*quietly*) We're free.

GORDON The whole bloody time...

NEVILLE (*quietly*) We can get off. It's the end.

*There is a pause.*

GORDON (*shaking his head*) No, it isn't, Nev.

NEVILLE It is! *(He holds the flare up.)* It's the end!

GORDON *(snatching the flare)* Yesterday, yes. Any other day. Yes. But what use, Neville. Is a flare, Neville. On bonfire night.

*Obligingly a couple of real crackers go off in the sky. They pick out our three with their now rather lame-looking flare.*

Send this off yesterday, we'd've had police, helicopters, Lakes ambulance on full alert. Send it off tonight and two hundred people in Keswick car park go, "Whheeee".

NEVILLE OK. OK. We can wait till the fireworks have finished.

GORDON I can wait. You can wait. But Deathwish Roy is sitting in a tree...

NEVILLE Look, for the last time, he was like a lamb. He gave me the knife like *(He clicks his fingers.)* that. He is fine, all right?

ANGUS *(suddenly)* How did he do it?

*The others turn to him.*

The first time? He tried?

NEVILLE It - well, hanging I think the psychiatrist said, but it doesn't matt / er because—

GORDON Why?

ANGUS I've been checking the inventory in my head. You haven't mentioned number fifty-four.

GORDON *(reading the list)* Fifty-four, fifty-four... KCC. What's KCC?

ANGUS Kanchenjunga climbing cable.

*There is a slight pause.*

GORDON *(the truth dawning; quietly)* He took the knife because it was the only thing to cut the cable.

NEVILLE *(quietly)* He told me he was f / ine—

GORDON Course he gave it you like that. He'd finished with it!

NEVILLE He said he was f / ine—

GORDON If he has made a noose up there, it's round my neck, you do realize that? Neville? Dead body on island, that is it in terms of any career ladder. Board of Directors dead, mate! Eighteen years gone in one tug on a branch.

NEVILLE Don't say that.

GORDON In one lolling tongue—

NEVILLE Gordon, don't—

GORDON If he takes one step off that tree, every step I have taken in eighteen years will be—

*There is a sudden crack of a branch.*

ROY *(an enormous scream of anguish; offstage)* Arghhh! *(Then a fading, spluttering, horrifying groan)* Aiee-ee-ee...

*The scream echoes round and round the island, numbing all into immediate silence. No mistaking that that was ROY. There is a pause. Silence. Then a beautiful white silent firework goes off, flickering them all. It dies out of the sky.*

GORDON *(summoning up strength, slightly shaking; shouting into the trees)* You - selfish - bas - tardi! *(He swings round to NEVILLE, pointing into the trees.)* Well go on then! Go and pull him down - *(He turns to the trees again)* - you selfish blood— You're captain. Your team. Your island, you said. This - OK - you write in your report I said go and get him. Gordon said that, but the captain said he was "fine". *(He swings round to ANGUS.)* You heard, didn't you? I mean we know words mean different things out here. You know? Upstream - downstream, right - left, fine - about to commit suicide... Are you listening?

NEVILLE *turns to GORDON.*

Gordon is not to blame for that, for *any* part of that, right? Neville?

*All on his own, ANGUS is very quietly, did we but notice, starting to cry.*

NEVILLE (*looking down: quietly*) D'you want to hear the report, Gordon?

GORDON For any part of that.

NEVILLE (*quietly*) It's about time for it.

GORDON That *all* goes in, that I'm nothing to do with what's hanging in there. (*He points into the trees.*)

NEVILLE It's about time. (*He opens the report book and starts to "write"*)

GORDON Did you hear that?

NEVILLE (*quietly*) The captain's report—

GORDON —is that the captain cocked up. From the first bloody clue!

NEVILLE —is completing the course isn't important.

GORDON (*laughs*) He — really?

NEVILLE What *is* important is *how* each team completes the course.

GORDON Good, good. (*He looks round.*) One suicide, one breakdown. Good. Carry on.

NEVILLE And what we learn about our team-mates...

GORDON Office sociology. Good. *Lord of the Flies*. Go on.

NEVILLE And what I learned is Gordon is a desperately sad man.

GORDON (*He pauses.*) What?

NEVILLE He is a man who has nothing and who destroys what other people do have so they end up with nothing. And that

makes him feel better about having nothing. (*He closes the book.*) OK. Shall we go / and—?

GORDON Hold on.

NEVILLE —get Roy?

GORDON Sod Roy! (*He points.*) That makes it sound like it's my fault!

NEVILLE (*offering to shake hands*) Thank you, Gordon. It's made me so happy being here with you.

GORDON Th— What?

NEVILLE I am (*He closes his eyes.*) so happy I'm not you, Gordon. In fact, here... (*He gets some money out.*) here's five pounds, mate. Go and buy yourself something nice.

GORDON (*knocking the money out of NEVILLE'S hand*) You're not reading that out.

NEVILLE Thing is, Gordon. All the world's a sausage. Every time you get a big bit, it means someone else is having to have a little bit. (*He nods down into the trees.*) Roy ended up having a little bit.

GORDON What of? Sanity?

NEVILLE (*suddenly, loudly*) And there goes another one! Another little joke bomb. Actually not bomb. Grenade. That's the way you do it, isn't it? No nasty head-on battles. You snipe away from behind bushes, throwing out your little joke-grenades.

GORDON I / don't do—

NEVILLE "Sanity". Bang! "Christians like trainspotters". Bang!

GORDON No jokes there.

NEVILLE "Julie on the bread shelf". Bang!

GORDON Not one joke in that lot, that's—

NEVILLE Too many jokes, Gordon—

GORDON —the truth. Gordon right there every time. *(He points into the trees.)* He didn't believe in all that religion crap.

NEVILLE It was doing the job, though, Gordon. It was doing the job for him.

GORDON And — and — and us, here. We're still here, aren't we? Oh yes. I was a hundred per cent right about this *(He indicates ANGUS, moving closer to him.)* sad loser and his repressed housewife chucking herself around the neighbourhood.

ANGUS *hits GORDON, very hard. The blow sinks GORDON immediately to his knees, like a cow that's just had a bolt through its head at the abattoir.*

Ug.

ANGUS *(pausing a second, hitting GORDON again; then, falling on GORDON heavily, like a bison; shouting)* Thank you, Gordon! *(He screams like a banshee an inch away from GORDON's face.)* Thank you, Gordon-n!

GORDON *(clutching his sling)* Not the arm! Not th—

ANGUS I love her, Gordon-nnn... *(He flails his arms down on GORDON like a schoolboy in his first ever fight; it's clumsy, pathetic, but it's the most he can do.)* Are you hearing this?

GORDON *(clutching his sling)* Not the arm! Not th—

ANGUS *reaches for the orange side plate and starts smashing that down on GORDON's broken joint. The pain is excruciating. NEVILLE watches. Smash, smash, smash, the plate goes down.*

ANGUS I...ha-te you Gordon-n...

GORDON *(winning with the pain)* N-arghhhh! We can say he went down with — argh! — the boat — arghh!

ANGUS *(now really crying, possibly for the first time since childhood)* You did it! Say it! Say it now or I'll kill you, Gordon... I — will kill yo—uu!

GORDON Arg! *(He shouts.)* What, with a Tupperware side plate, Angus?

ANGUS No. *(He rears up like a sea monster, shaking and gulping back his tears. He grabs the Cobra.)* Not "with a side plate, Gordon."

GORDON *(suddenly realizing his maker is potentially waiting to meet him)* Oh no.

*Even NEVILLE stops.*

NEVILLE Angus!

GORDON No, no, no... PLEASE!

ANGUS *(raising the Cobra above his head like a Samurri warrior)* NOT — WITH — A — SIDE PLATE, GORDONNN!

GORDON *(screaming)* ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! I DID IT! I KILLED HIM!

ROY *enters. He is in his underwear, as before, but his arms and upper body are smeared with blood. Through the bank of fog behind him, he looks like a ghost. Indeed, as far as the other three are concerned, he is one. He is clutching one end of the Kancheriyunga climbing cable, the other end over his shoulder. A small pair of white wings can be seen bobbing on his back.*

ROY *(smiling lappingly)* Hi, lads.

*They others turn. The struggle is frozen absolutely dead.*  
We're all fine.

*If ROY is a ghost, he is a very happy one. He walks forward.*

*A red firework goes off.*

*During the following, ROY smiles very normally, seems very controlled, and, most unsettling, talks as lucidly as if addressing a board meeting on delivery forecast*

*statistics. He gives his loping smile, but has a very calm, considered, logical tone.*

I thought it wasn't. You know, when Gordon. *(He nods.)* I started thinking, you know, "Maybe it is just dark." I thought to be honest *(He laughs.)* I was in trouble again. *(He smiles and taps the side of his head.)* But it's all right. Because He sent a sign. That He is there and He is watching. So the kingdom's still there and it's all still light and Lucy's OK. *(He holds up what appears to be blooded raw red meat in his other hand.)* See, He knew we were starving. So He sent down food. Look.

*He hands a bloody gobbit out to each of them; they take it, unable to move or do anything else. It looks like a parody of the sacrament service.*

He has sent us an angel to eat.

*He swings the rope round to reveal the body of a once beautiful gyrfalcon. It has been snared with the Kanchenjunga Climbing Cable. There is no doubt from the bloody, open wound that this gyrfalcon has been the unwilling donor of the red meat.*

That's what it was here for all the time. Silly. Should have realized straight away, but you don't, do you? The most logical things in the world right in front of you.

*The other three stare at the gyrfalcon.*

I knew he'd come back, so I just snared his feeding post. Course, then I pulled that hard, I fell out of the blasted tree. Did you hear? *(He looks at the gyrfalcon.)* I mean, I didn't like doing all this with bare hands, but you'd taken the knife, y'see. *(He smiles.)* Anyway. *(He sighs.)* Let's say grace. I've got the words.

*He hands the others a rather bloodied piece of paper. The other three can't do anything but hold it like a bizarre songsheet.*

OK. *(He smiles.)* Right. Two, three. *(He sings slowly as if singing a hymn.)*

*The others just stare at ROY.*

I SEE THE MEAL UPON MY TABLE, LORD  
ALREADY I'M AGLOW

*(to the others; speaking)* Come on! Don't let it go cold! *(He continues singing.)*

FOR THOUGH I MAY BE ALL ALONE  
THERE'S SOMETHING THAT I KNOW...

*The other three begin to mumble the words, staring horrified at ROY. A sudden and increasing wind begins to pull the trees wildly. Waves start to pile on the shore. Helicopter blades thud, louder and louder. A flashing orange light increases in intensity. But no one notices.*

*They all sing, NEVILLE, GORDON and ANGUS with hesitation, ROY with tremendous gusto.*

ALL

YOU'RE IN MY BREAD AND IN MY WINE, LORD...  
EACH FRUIT IN THE DISH

YOU'RE IN MY HONEY AND MY MILK  
AND EVEN IN MY FISH.

*On the word 'fish' a bright white searchlight shines down directly over head. It scorches this rather strange tableau of three men pinned together with a sword and pieces of raw bird meat, and one man holding a dead bird of prey. All four look up, into the light.*

ROY *(arms resting on a couple of shoulders, pats their backs and smiles)* Told you, lads. We're all gonna be fine.

*This Annunciation tableau is held for a moment...then blackout.*

*Curtain.*