

# The Contingency Plan -Play 1 On the Beach

- WILL a glaciologist, thirty-seven
- SARIKA a senior Civil Servant, thirty-three
- ROBIN an ex-glaciologist, sixty-seven
- JENNY his wife, sixty

## On the Beach, Act 1, Scene 1

Near **Robin** and **Jenny**'s house looking out to sea. Mid-morning.

**Robin**'s looking through a telescope of considerable power on a tripod.

*He's in shabby yet attractive cut-off jeans; a plaid shirt, ripped; glasses on a chain around his neck; on his feet, battered trainers. He's wiry and weather-beaten and he moves fast. On a wind-up, battery-free stereo, a tape plays almost inaudibly Neil Young's 'On the Beach'. **Robin** checks the telescope, humming.*

*He notes something in a notepad.*

**Robin** Jen. It's back.

**Jenny** (off) What?

**Robin** On the marsh. Jen!

**Jenny** (off) Where are you?

**Robin** Down here. It's clearly on the marsh.

**Jenny** appears, breathless. *She's a sixty-year-old; face devoid of make-up bar a little eyeliner; snowy long hair, dishevelled, piled up on top and held with a bandanna.*

**Jenny** What are you talking about?

**Robin** You see it? The cheek of it.

**Jenny** I have no idea what you're talking about.

**Robin** Way out of its range.

**Jenny** Why, why are you listening to this out here? Why are you out here listening to this old rubbish?

**Jenny** silences the stereo. *Immediately a wash of sound, the distant suck of surf, battling gulls, a dredger.*

**Robin** Look, look, out Brancaster way. Governor's Point.

**Jenny** I thought there was a trespasser or something.

**Robin** You can see it. On Governor's Point.

**Jenny** reluctantly looks through the eyepiece of the telescope.

You see it now?

**Jenny** No. Nothing.

**Robin** You must see something.

**Jenny** Nope.

**Robin** See it now?

**Jenny** No.

**Robin** refocuses it.

**Robin** You surely see something.

**Jenny** See my eyelashes.

**Robin** Here then.

*He adjusts the focus.*

Lift it a little, a little. You see Governor's Point, okay?

**Jenny** Hang on. Okay. I see Governor's Point.

**Robin** What do you notice about it?

**Jenny** I notice as usual that Governor's Point is a great big lump of sand in the North Sea.

**Robin** Ah. Maybe it's... maybe it's already – can I see?

*He moves her aside.*

Couldn't be a spoonbill.

**Jenny** Okay. This is about birds.

**Robin** Clearly not a grey heron.

**Jenny** Up since God knows when because of a bird.

**Robin** The phone woke me at five.

**Jenny** And you didn't answer it? Have you even had any breakfast?

**Robin** Little egret. They sense the warming. We know that. But also they come inland as the seas get more turbulent.

**Jenny** I don't have time for ornithology, Rob, I need to get to Lynn –

**Robin** Is he there already?

**Jenny** He left a garbled message from RAF Lyneham saying he 'might' be there mid-morning, it being Will, nothing more forthcoming than that.

**Robin** So he's finally here. Everything's converging.

**Jenny** Oh, Robin, Will's simply coming home for a refuel, it means nothing especially portentous, I doubt he'll stay longer than Monday.

**Robin** Jenny, there's an event coming; it's building in the Atlantic; probably be with us by the small hours.

**Jenny** The forecast's a cloudless day.

**Robin** That bird knows it. Blown several latitudes north looking for landfall. When it leaves again, it'll be time.

**Jenny** Robin, any storm tonight'll be the accidental meeting of hot and cold air fronts, and if a little egret decides to patronise our marsh, a little egret patronises our marsh and those two matters are entirely unrelated. I'd better get off. Could you get his bedroom ready? I've laid out something for lunch and, please please, when he comes, please, no talk of storms and birds and phases.

*She looks at Robin.*

God, it'll be good to see him.

**Robin** Mmm.

**Jenny** We're incomplete. Without him. And I worry about him. Stuck on that base in the middle of that nothingness. Never meeting anyone, never travelling anywhere. A man in his thirties.

**Robin** He has his work.

**Jenny** Oh, he's got that all right.

**Robin** Work of that urgency is pitiless. God, when I was at that pitch...

**Jenny** Were you really the best of role models?

**Robin** What?

**Jenny** I sometimes wonder whether we harmed him, bringing him up that way?

**Robin** Oh, Jenny, don't be daft. He's a magnificent specimen.

**Jenny** Given he was always so bloody biddable. If he'd had a sibling at least.

**Robin** He's just focused. Full of purpose. From the start it was clear what he was. This is the lad who classified his toys into organic and inorganic matter – right?

**Jenny** Oh God. Fossils set out in the correct chronology. The egg museum.

**Robin** Shaking me awake to look at the meteor shower.

**Jenny** Had to take that telescope out of his bedroom, he barely slept.

**Robin** If I said such things were God-given, I'd say he was God-given.

**Jenny** I just feel his whole life, our whole life has been a preparation for an event that never arrives.

*Pause.*

**Robin** Well. Okay. Maybe if I'd had half his tenacity, his application, letting nothing stand in the way of the work, nothing, we'd not be where we are now.

**Jenny** Oh. Sorry. Did I... stand in your way?

**Robin** Oh, Jen. Come on.

**Jenny** I hope I didn't. Stand in your way.

**Robin** You know you –

**Jenny** Because if I ever thought – do you actually think that?

**Robin** You don't need me to answer that.

**Jenny** Don't I?

**Robin** Jenny, he's coming home. It can only mean one thing. His work's complete. And if his work's complete, then my work's complete.

**Jenny** Right. What work is that, Rob?

**Robin** *'s back at the telescope.*

**Robin** No, that's no spoonbill, the beak's all wrong. Look at him, mincing across the tidal mud.

**Jenny** *looks at him.*

**Jenny** Okay. Fine .I'll drive to Lynn. Pick up a few things. You get his room ready.

*She looks at him; then goes.*

**Robin** Yes, the forecast's clear. Ridge of high pressure. We can eat out here. Watch the weather come in.

**Robin** *puts on his glasses, picks up his notepad. He waits.*

**Jenny's car starts off; Robin heads into the house.**

*A moment. From the other side of the stage, Will enters with Sarika; they're both spattered with mud; Sarika's not dressed for the country, she's in a suit; Will is in informal gear but is dealing with a wet shoulder bag with equipment in it, and also a rucksack.*

**Sarika** Look at these shoes.

**Will** Technically, you should wear wellies here.

**Sarika** You imagine I own a pair of wellies?

**Will** I'll get you some.

**Sarika** You will never see me in wellies. The day you see me in wellies –

**Will** You could make wellies cool!

**Sarika** Oh, look at these shoes, they are – fucked.

*She sits and takes them off.*

Ugh – stink of eggs.

**Will** So. This is my... home.

**Sarika** Well... it's... lovely.

**Will** On a fine day, yes.

**Sarika** Gorgeous house.

**Will** Just a wreck when they came.

**Sarika** Could just sleep. Right here.

*She lies back.*

**Will** God!

**Sarika** What?

**Will** Sorry. You know it's just – your feet.

**Sarika** What?

**Will** It's just their... shape –

**Sarika** What?

**Will** They have a wonderful shape. I never noticed before.

*She laughs.*

**Sarika** So you have a thing about feet?

**Will** Not feet in general, just your particular feet.

**Sarika** You freak, Will!

**Will** I take a purely scientific interest.

**Sarika** Kiss them then. My athlete's foot. My verucas. No. Kiss me. Kiss my mouth.

*Pause. They kiss but he gets the giggles.*

Is that so funny? What? What is it?

**Will** Sorry.

**Sarika** What?

**Will** Nothing.

**Sarika** Tell me.

**Will** When I come back I kind of – I sort of get double vision – can't explain it. Like, just now, how many times, God, I fantasised about being with a girl – here. Like this.

**Sarika** Just fantasies?

**Will** Oh, shit, yeah. No girls in my childhood. Too busy measuring, I dunno, worm casts. So thanks. For bringing me back.

**Sarika** Still think I should have taken you to my flat and ravished you .But this is nice too.

**Will** Sshh!

**Sarika** What?

**Will** It's him.

**Sarika** God. They're in?

**Will** He never leaves this place.

**Sarika** Did he see – us?

**Will** Nah. Ranting away on the telephone. Jesus.

**Sarika** What's he so angry about? God, listen to him.

**Will** Ranting away. Oblivious.

**Sarika** Why's he never leave here? He's an explorer, isn't he?

**Will** Yeah. Dad's a sort of human subglacial lake.

**Sarika** Sorry?

**Will** Unreachable, unsoundable, trapped between the seabed and the ice. Who knows what life forms swim in there?

**Sarika** Maybe you mystify him too much. Are people really so mysterious?

**Will** Compared with people, ice is a cinch. Dad!

**Sarika** Leave him, leave him to it. Let's have a dip. In that fabulous sea. Look at it, turquoise, positively Caribbean.

**Will** Won't feel Caribbean when you're in it. Not in April.

**Sarika** You can get down from here?

**Will** The path goes down from there, through the dunes.

**Sarika** Man, your own path to the sea.

**Will** We let the odd birder in. Can't fence off the beach. But given it's a kind of promontory, marsh on each side, when the tide's in you have to come through the copse back there, right through the garden, which is not encouraged.

**Sarika** Let's go paddle.

*She grabs her bag.*

Shit, Will, look, this is absolutely bloody drenched.

**Will** Get the stuff out of it.

**Sarika** Everything's – totally – soaked.

*She decants bits of equipment.*

Fuck – the BlackBerry. That's the Ministry's property!

**Will** Bad call. 'Government BlackBerry found in salt marsh.'

**Sarika** Whose idea was it to walk it!

**Will** Wasn't that particular idea yours? Reckon the circuitry's wet. Could probably get the back off and dry it.

**Sarika** Course you wouldn't have one .No networks in Antarctica.

*He fiddles with it with a little Philips screwdriver he pulls from his pocket.*

We should've gone to my flat.

**Will** I'm sorry, I can get it dry –

**Sarika** I cannot be out of contact. Fuck!

**Will** Didn't your minister encourage you to take a break?

**Sarika** Sure, he insists on a mandatory twenty-four-hours' family time but he still expects me to mind the shop. Oh, and I was going to e-mail the review and circulate the – shit. Sorry, stressing

–

**Will** It's okay – I shouldn't have –

**Sarika** No, sorry – kick the crackberry habit, kick it. Sorry.

**Will** 'Government BlackBerry in salt marsh.'

**Sarika** Okay. Very witty.

*Pause.*

**Will** You told him about me yet?

**Sarika** God, no. Of course not. You're my WMD. To be deployed strategically. On Monday.

**Will** Monday! Of course.

**Sarika** I said we'd move fast. Chris claims he's easing his way into the post but we're doodling, bottom of the agenda at Cabinet, everything's banks and capitalisation and social policy and that's nastier than I thought. Climate change is clearly sorted. You're going to change that. Bring home the bad news.

**Will** Yeah. I mean, I hope I can, okay, help.

**Sarika** It's the event you predicted that will clinch it, the massive event? That's what we need now, that kind of focusing threat. Monday'll define the broad thrust of policy. Jenks'll give the keynote and if we don't watch out he'll set the tone for the day. God, I really cannot wait to see his face when you walk in. All set to jump on his Stability Theory.

**Will** Stability Hypothesis. Sorry.

**Sarika** Yes, yes.

*She laughs.*

Never forget I'm broad brush. I'll offer context, sketch in the stuff about Jenks and your dad, measuring ice streams and glacier motion on the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. You elucidate what that means.

**Will** Well, they confirmed the ice sheet stable, that it tended to stability and that any warming, and they noted some, was just the long melt of the last ice age.

**Sarika** Hence the infamous Stability Hypothesis?

**Will** Yep: stubborn as a drumlin, you can't go over it, you can't go under it, it's irrefutable, and it's beautiful actually.

**Sarika** And just to get this clear in my muddy mind, it says, in effect, no rise in global temperature within any conceivable range can melt the largest mass of ice in the world – words to that...

**Will** Basically it claims the West Antarctic is impregnable.

**Sarika** But now (fanfare, drum roll), here's the man who's proved the exact opposite – that in fact the Western Antarctic Ice Sheet is on the verge of collapse; that in fact sea-level rises of minimum five metres are imminent; and that in fact we are on the brink of a catastrophic event.

**Will** Wait, wait – Sarika –

**Sarika** What? I was just bigging you up –

**Will** Just because the Hypothesis flies in the face of current ice behaviour doesn't mean we can actually disprove the fucker.

**Sarika** But that's what you've done?

**Will** That's what I set out to do. And thus far have failed. To do.

**Sarika** Right. Sorry, did I misunderstand the imminence... of the breakthrough?

**Will** I don't think I ever suggested I was Nostradamus. Did I? I mean, I'm here to talk about my work, yes, about science, yes. But there's no way I can offer the kind of certainty you seem to be asking for. On Monday.

**Sarika** But you know the ice sheet's in a critical state, right?

**Will** The melt's exponential.

**Sarika** Okay, so even if you can't prove it, you know it so you have to say it –

**Will** Sarika, do you have, like, rules in your family? Unspoken rules?

**Sarika** Sorry?

**Will** No one ever actually lays them down, no one ever explicitly says, you know, these are the rules; but you learn them. Like here the rules are: Birds are more important than humans. Never believe anything said by a politician. Never ask about the past. Never discuss anything without the data.

**Sarika** Will, if I bided by my family rules I'd be a GP in Lutterworth with a husband who smells of cumin. You break your rules, don't you?

**Will** I could break one, maybe two. If I say what you want with what I know I'll break the whole fucking lot.

*Pause.*

**Sarika** There's this thing I was going to show you. Promise not to take it the wrong way. Do you promise? Not to take it the wrong way?

**Will** Okay. I mean, I don't know.

*She reaches into her bag, rifles through to find an envelope.*

**Sarika** Crap, this is wet too. Got a colleague in the archives to look up stuff. On Colin. About his work, his past.

**Will** Right. Why?

**Sarika** Why? Because he's a deadweight.

**Will** Is that ethical?

**Sarika** Did I say I was ethical? Okay, and also, also about – your father.

**Will** What?

**Sarika** Can I be frank? The story you tell, this story about your father, it doesn't make sense. Robin and Jenks prove the Stability Hypothesis, but for some reason your dad doesn't publish, doesn't sign the paper, isn't mentioned in Jenks's acknowledgements even. That's pretty weird, isn't it? Leaving aside the fact that your father then exits altogether from science, quits his job, steps out of – well, out of life. So I know this is presumptuous of me and if I were you I would be, would feel – pissed off – Will. But I don't like mysteries, you know, I like stories to have a clear resolution. And here's a mystery. Look.

*He opens the envelope, to look at the document within.*

**Will** This is what – classified – what?

**Sarika** Declassified now.

**Will** What's the relevance of this?

**Sarika** It's the only record of a meeting between a polar scientist and the then Minister for Science and Education, one Margaret Thatcher. Subject: 'The Contingency Plan.' Which is incredibly interesting. I mean, with reference to what, why would a polar scientist be granted an audience with a minister back then?

**Will** Names blacked out. Contents blacked out. Dad wouldn't be seen dead talking to a politician, any politician.

**Sarika** When exactly did your father come back from Antarctica?

**Will** 1974.

**Sarika** You're sure about that?

**Will** This is, what, '73. Couldn't be him. Or Jenks. Jenks came back, published '74.

**Sarika** You're completely sure about that?

*Pause.*

I'm really handling this well. Some Machiavel I am. Shall I take that – ?

**Will** *folds up the document, puts it in his pocket.*

**Will** See that ash tree – by the lagoon? There? Dead one? Used to climb it, built myself a house, ‘the lab’ I called it. Flowered, annually. Used to be festooned with nests. One night of not especially fierce winds it split, it broke off from its base. Couldn’t work it out. Everything else survived the night, but my tree went down. Made no sense at all. Checked it out, the fallen trunk, peeled back the bark, looked inside and where there should have been layer on layer of wood, layering up the years of growth, there was nothing, nothing but dust, powder, parasites, shit. Must have been dead for years, dead from within.

*He looks at her.*

Do you see what I’m saying?

**Sarika** Will, you scared me, you dazzled me, you shook me awake and now, now you’re going to dazzle Jenks, scare the crap out of Chris, get ‘Climate Change’ written in neon on every policy and every statement and every Bill – and, forgive me, I happen to think that’s more important now than dotting the ‘i’s on some data. And okay, if I’m wrong tell me to fuck off and I will, I’ll just –

*He kisses her almost breathlessly.*

Phew! Shit.

**Will** Yeah. Sorry.

**Sarika** No. Do it again.

**Will** I think I better go in.

**Sarika** Okay.

**Will** On my own. Don’t want to induce a coronary.

**Sarika** No. Okay, I’ll go and... paddle. Or something.

**Will** Right. It’ll be cold.

**Sarika** Maybe I want to feel that cold.

**Will** Can you swim?

**Sarika** Can I swim? What do you think?

**Will** I don’t know.

**Sarika** You think Asian girls don’t swim?

**Will** No, don’t be –

**Sarika** You are looking at the breaststroke champion of Rugby High School for Girls here, three years running.

**Will** I’d like to see your breaststroke.

**Sarika** Oh, you will see it. You’re going to see all kinds of stuff.

*She kisses him, gathers her shoes, and wanders off.*

**Will** *alone. He looks at the document, sits. Rubs his face.*

*Notices the stereo, switches it on, listens to the music.*

**Robin** *enters from the house, looking thunderous; the sight of his son disarms him; he watches him for a moment.*

**Robin** Am I dreaming?

**Will** What is this? Let me guess: singer-songwriter, lonely wheedling voice, self-pitying – in this case, Canadian self-pity...Let’s see. ’75?

**Robin** ’74.

**Will** ’74. What is it about you and 1974?

**Robin** Vintage year. For music.

**Will** Yeah. And for me.

**Robin** Where’s Jen?

**Will** Neil Young!

**Robin** Correct.

**Will** After the Goldrush’?

**Robin** ‘On the Beach’.

**Will** Why are you listening to that?

**Robin** Neglected masterpiece.

**Will** Justly neglected.

*He switches it off.*

**Robin** Jen was picking you up.

**Will** Well, we got a cab.

**Robin** 'We'?

**Will** Walked the last bit through the marsh. What happened to the raised path?

**Robin** Yeah, I need to get to that.

**Will** Do I stink as bad as I think I stink?

**Robin** Smell like a diver's jockstrap.

*They laugh.*

**Will** Well. Come here, then.

*They embrace, belatedly.*

**Robin** Oh, look at you. Entirely real!

**Will** Don't feel very real right now.

**Robin** Pale. Got that wintered-out look.

**Will** Yeah – rapid re-entry and that.

**Robin** Back with the earthlings, eh?

**Will** It's weird. Good.

**Robin** Just to smell stuff again.

**Will** Hear stuff.

**Robin** Yeah. Remember all that.

*Pause.*

**Will** Practically had to shut my eyes and ears on the train – too bright, too loud, too much colour, too many people.

**Robin** Yeah, well, you've been in the world as it should be and now you're back in the world as it is. Nice though, for us earthlings to see you, y'know.

**Will** Likewise, you Neanderthal old fuck.

**Robin** Ah, where's his deference these days?

**Will** All gone, mate, all of it.

**Robin** And did you get taller? Is that possible?

**Will** You're just shorter. Shrinkage.

**Robin** Don't talk to me about shrinkage. You lose your hair, your height, your libido, your pension's value, your standing in life. Not good being old.

*He lets Will go; looks at him.*

I was surprised. When you said you were coming.

**Will** That was the idea.

**Robin** You were doing the winter.

**Will** Well, yeah, I was.

**Robin** That's why I was surprised. Being as it's April.

**Will** I know it's April, Dad.

**Robin** Forgive me, Will, you're not short-changing the research?

**Will** I think I know how to do my own research.

**Robin** Yeah. Course. So you did the instrument drop – on the Bellingshausen Sea?

**Will** Okay. Right. Janey's seeing that through. The team, I have a team of five, the team are seeing it through.

**Robin** Okay. So Janey's what, a – ?

**Will** Janey's a highly regarded meteorologist.

**Robin** Good, good, 'cos you really need those temperature measurements.

**Will** It's covered, Dad.

**Robin** Sure, sure. Sorry. And how's the Brunt doing?

**Will** The Brunt. Okay. The Brunt is thinning. But still pretty thick.



**Robin** The Brunt has always been particularly vulnerable.

**Will** You found that, did you?

**Robin** And, yes, you'll get thinning. But thinning is perfectly compatible with stability.

**Will** Right. The ice flows are exponentially faster on the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. It's mental.

**Robin** You have hard data for that?

**Will** A huge body of data.

**Robin** Presumably it varies regionally?

**Will** Pine Island Glacier's at forty per cent increased motion; ice shelves are weakening everywhere; overall temperatures are up a full degree since '57.

**Robin** But I suppose that'll be balanced out by the longer-term cooling data. On Pine Island.

**Will** That data doesn't make sense. To me.

**Robin** You're not challenging our data collection?

**Will** Did you do Pine Island, or Colin?

**Robin** I forget. I mean – both of us.

**Will** Those three years of cooling cut right across the pattern.

**Robin** A pattern you're imposing on the data. A pattern you'd like to see in the data.

**Will** We know it experienced warming in the sixties, the eighties. The Stability Hypothesis rests heavily on Pine Island. If that data didn't exist I could smash it to bits.

**Robin** Did I teach you to rely on wishful thinking? That cooling data was arrived at through meticulous study. No computing shortcuts, no modelling, no mooning over ice cores.

**Will** Right. Right...Dad, do you think you could run to a welcoming hot drink, HobNob, cup of nettle tea?

**Robin** You don't like nettle tea.

**Will** I was being sarcastic. Forget it.

**Robin** What?

**Will** Forget the welcoming hot drink.

**Robin** Have you written your findings in a paper?

**Will** How could I if I don't have the conclusive data?

**Robin** If you don't have the fucking data, what on earth are you doing here talking to me?

*Pause.*

**Will** Might have had other reasons to come back.

**Robin** No, Will, no, you absolutely have to complete the research before you speak to anyone. Anyone. You have to be note perfect.

**Will** Like you were?

**Robin** What?

**Will** What do you want from me? Do you want me to vindicate you or to fail to vindicate you or what?

**Robin** What I want is immaterial.

**Will** You still stand by the Hypothesis?

**Robin** Where's the evidence not to?

**Will** But you never claimed it, never published on it.

**Robin** Authorship is irrelevant. Nobody owns the truth. Your task is to make sure it's robust and if it's not, fine, demolish it, demolish it, nothing would please me more than to be proved, utterly proved wrong.

**Will** Well, that seems to be beyond me, Dad, sorry.

**Robin** Nothing's beyond you, Will, believe me.

**Will** All I know is that bastard is melting. Melting fast, faster than you ever said, well, Jenks ever said and pretty soon we're going to feel the effects right here.

**Robin** But that's just not good enough, is it, Will?

**Will** *glares at Robin; then through the telescope.*

**Will** Yeah, thought I saw an egret in the marsh. Lovely bird. In its habitat. Looks a bit of a twat here. Is it me or is the sea closer? Governor's Point's smaller. Don't have the data, of course, so...

**Robin** Shot to shit in the last storm. Another one due tonight.

**Will** Nah. Something nasty in the Atlantic maybe. Should be fine here.

**Robin** Oh, it'll come here too. Over the marsh.

**Will** Over the marsh? What about the groins there. The dyke.

**Robin** *gives a low laugh.*

Don't be all spooky, Dad. You don't suit spooky.

**Robin** Tonight will a big one. Tonight could be another '53.

**Will** It'll happen. But not tonight. The Environment Agency would have had you out of here.

**Robin** They said that too, when I called them. I talk to them every day. They have a girl they put on me.

**Will** And what do they say?

**Robin** Always the same thing. Only so many ways of saying you've thrown in the towel.

*He laughs darkly.*

They call it managed retreat, but if I was the sea I'd see it more as an undignified rout.

**Will** Dad, come on.

**Robin** Done one of those, what are they, cost-benefit analyses and they said, well, there's only a couple of old tossers and birders and widowed ladies on that stretch of land (course never mention our bittern, the bearded tits, the Brent geese, couldn't fit that on the spreadsheet) –

**Will** They don't do it on a spreadsheet, Dad.

**Robin** Brave talk about managing the human cost, which presumably'll mean the offer of a council house in Heacham currently occupied by Lithuanians.

**Will** Well, I'm sorry.

**Robin** No need to be sorry, lad. It's for the best. The sea will prevail. It's Phase Four as anticipated.

**Will** The thing is the logic, the logic is infallible, this is going to happen all over – what do you mean, 'Phase Four'?

**Robin** Let's go in, have some coffee, a nip of something, I think we've got carrot cake or ginger cake or –

**Will** Dad, there's stuff I need to tell you, I need to ask you –

**Robin** Yes?

**Sarika** *comes back on, her feet wet, her trousers rolled up.*

**Sarika** I trod on something sharp –

**Robin** Who's this? Hey, what are you –

**Will** Sar, this is Sarika, Sar, this is –

**Sarika** Oh, I am so sorry, I didn't – I trod on –

**Will** Might be a weaver fish.

**Sarika** Really painful.

**Robin** You don't have a permit to –

**Will** No, Dad, no, this, this is –

**Robin** You're aware this is a site of scientific –

**Sarika** No, sorry, it's okay, I'm with –

**Will** Dad, the thing is I know –

**Robin** No, this is private, protected –

**Sarika** I'm sorry, has Will not yet –?

**Will** We haven't had a chance –

**Robin** Wait, wait, you know her – Will?

**Will** Dad, yeah, if you just shut up for a –

**Robin** You, you know Will?

**Sarika** I'm his, well, he's my – this really hurts!

**Robin** You know her?

**Jenny** *comes in from the house.*

**Jenny** There's no bloody petrol in the Volvo, it ran out, on the track and I cannot find the key for the – camper – what's –

**Will** Mum. Hey. Sorry, I didn't – you got something for a weaver-fish sting?

**Jenny** Sorry, you – what's this – ?

**Sarika** Ow ow – sorry, my foot's gone numb!

**Robin** He – he came home. I don't know – she –

**Will** Early. Yeah. Sorry. Let me see it, stand still –

**Jenny** Will, you're –

**Will** Have we got some ice or Salvesen –

**Jenny** Sorry, who's this?

**Will** Yeah. And this is –

**Sarika** Are you Jenny? Hello, Jenny. I hurt my foot on the beach. Sorry. I've heard a lot about you. And you, of course, Robin .I thought maybe, Will, maybe he'd – but clearly he hasn't had the opportunity. Look, I'm sorry, I've been in the sea and I am actually really very cold and my foot is really hurting. Will!

**Will** Sorry, Sar, I should have –Sarika – hang on – hang on. I'll show you – sorry, Mum, I –  
*He kisses Jenny, takes Sarika into the house.*

**Jenny** Will!

**Robin** He saw it. Will. He saw the egret.

*Blackout.*