

THE END OF THE LINE

A play

by

PATRICK MARLOWE

© Patrick Marlowe
55 Canterbury Road,
Colchester,
Essex CO2 7RX

ACT I

SCENE 1

TWO BEACH HUTS, WITH MAYBE THE SUGGESTION OF A THIRD, IN A ROW, ALL BRIGHTLY PAINTED, AND ALL PADLOCKED SHUT. AS WELL AS DOORS THEY HAVE SHUTTERED WINDOWS. THE SOUND OF THE SEA.

ENTER ROGER; SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 45 AND 50, QUITE GOOD-LOOKING, THOUGH BEGINNING TO LOSE HIS BATTLE WITH THE AGEING PROCESS. FAIRLY EXPENSIVELY DRESSED IN NICE LINEN SHORTS AND SHIRT, SANDALS, GOOD PANAMA HAT. HE WEARS GLASSES WITH CLIP-ON SHADES. HE LOOKS OUT TO SEA.

ROGER: Ah, just look at that!

ENTER DENISE; POSSIBLY A BIT YOUNGER THAN ROGER, VERY PRETTY. WEARING A FLOATY SUMMER DRESS, LIGHT CARDIGAN, SANDALS AND A BIG FLOPPY STRAW HAT. SHE CARRIES A RUCKSACK, TWO COLD BOXES AND A COUPLE OF VERY FULL CLOTH SHOPPING BAGS.

ROGER: Wonderful. Just seeing the sea, I can feel a great weight lifting from my shoulders.

DENISE LOOKS AT HIM BALEFULLY. HE DELVES INTO HIS POCKET.

ROGER: Right. Grand opening. Ready?

HE UNDOES THE PADLOCK ON THE HUT FURTHEST FROM WHERE THEY ENTERED.

ROGER: (IN A SQUEAKY POSH VOICE, LIKE THE QUEEN.) I now declare this beach-hut open for the summer.

HE TAKES THE PADLOCK OFF AND OPENS THE DOORS. HE TAKES THE SHUTTERS OFF. WHATEVER THE WINDOWS ARE GLAZED WITH IT NEEDS TO BE OPAQUE. HE GOES IN. A BIT OF CLATTERING. COMES OUT HOLDING A KETTLE.

ROGER: Right. First things first. Get that filled. I'll hook up the gas and get things ship-shape in here.

HE HOLDS THE KETTLE OUT TO DENISE. SHE
HASN'T GOT A HAND FREE.

ROGER: Well, don't just stand there, woman. Spit spot. I'm gasping. May I remind you that I did do all the driving?

SHE PUTS DOWN A COLD BOX AND A SHOPPING BAG. HE PUTS THE KETTLE IN HER HAND AND GOES BACK INTO THE HUT. SHE PUTS THE KETTLE DOWN AND MOVING CLOSER TO THE FRONT OF THE HUT, SHE PUTS THE REST OF THE STUFF DOWN. SHE EXITS THE WAY THEY CAME ON. CLATTERING FROM INSIDE THE HUT. ROGER COMES OUT WITH TWO RATHER POSH FOLDING CHAIRS AND NEARLY FALLS OVER THE BAGS.

ROGER: (SHOUTS.) For God's sake, woman, don't..where am I supposed to put these? Do I have to do everything myself?

HE STEPS OVER THE BAGS WITH THE CHAIRS, PUTS THEM DOWN AND LUGS THE BAGS INTO THE HUT. HE COMES BACK OUT AND UNFOLDS THE CHAIRS. HE SITS ON ONE CONTENTEDLY, TAKES OFF HIS GLASSES AND SHUTS HIS EYES. WHENEVER ROGER SITS, HE LETS OUT A LOUD 'AAAH' NOISE, AS IF HE'S A MUCH OLDER MAN. DENISE ENTERS, SEES HIM AND STOPS. SHE WALKS OVER AND POURS A LITTLE OF THE WATER FROM THE KETTLE ONTO HIS TROUSERS. HE JUMPS UP.

ROGER: What the..? What the hell do you think you're playing at? These are new.

DENISE: You're lucky I didn't wait until it'd boiled.

SHE GOES INTO THE HUT.

DENISE: (OFF.) You haven't unpacked anything.

ROGER: I've done the gas and put up the chairs.

DENISE: (OFF.) Big deal.

ROGER: Am I not permitted a short breather?

DENISE: (OFF.) What do you want to be sitting down for?
You've been sitting down all morning.

ROGER: I have been driving all morning. Rather different.

SHE POKES HER HEAD OUT.

DENISE: You were sitting down.

ROGER: Denise. Can you drive?

DENISE: You know I can't.

ROGER: Precisely.

DENISE: You won't let me learn.

ROGER: It's an unnecessary expense. You have me to do the driving.

DENISE: Aren't I lucky?

ROGER: And because you can't drive, you have no idea how tiring it is. It takes intense concentration. It's alright for you. You slept in the car.

DENISE: I did not!

ROGER: Then you must be the only woman who snores when she's awake. I could hardly hear Desert Island Discs.

DENISE: You're a pig.

HE SITS AGAIN.

DENISE: Well, don't sit back down.

ROGER: I'll come when I'm ready. Don't nag. This is supposed to be a holiday.

SHE ROLLS HER EYES AND GOES BACK INSIDE.
HE CLOSES HIS EYES AND TRIES TO RELAX. SHE
CRASHES ABOUT AND EVENTUALLY COMES BACK
OUT AND SITS.

DENISE: It is alright, is it? If I sit down.

ROGER: (OPENS HIS EYES AND LOOKS AT HIS TROUSERS.) I look as if I've had an accident.

DENISE: It'll dry off in a minute.

ROGER: What if someone comes by? They'll think I'm incontinent.

DENISE: Who's going to come by?

ROGER: I don't know. People.

DENISE: And you think that with a view like that to look at, (POINTS TO SEA.) anyone's going notice that? It's not exactly one of the seven wonders.

ROGER: Stupid, childish thing to do.

DENISE: Anyway, no one ever comes by here. Why would they? Our beach hut marks the end of the civilised world.

ROGER: We haven't been here ten minutes and you've already started. I think that's a record.

DENISE: Have you ever looked at a map, to see what's out there?

ROGER: I know what's out there.

DENISE: It's just a big white space with the words 'Here Be Dragons.'

ROGER: Very amusing.

DENISE: I mean it. It's ridiculous. We're about three quarters of a mile from town.

ROGER: That's an exaggeration.

DENISE: That's why I always have to shlep all this bloody stuff up here.

ROGER: We're nicely provisioned for the week.

DENISE: We wouldn't need to be if we were somewhere near town.

ROGER: Do we have to go through this every time?

DENISE: Apparently we do, yes.

ROGER: The huts up this end are highly sought after. Away from the oiks with their ghastly dogs and children and chips and barbecues.

DENISE: You promised. At the end of last summer you promised that if one came up nearer town you'd consider selling this one.

ROGER: I like the peace and quiet. Although you're doing a pretty bang-up job of ruining that.

DENISE: You promised.

ROGER: I promised to consider it.

DENISE: If they're so desirable, you'd probably make a socking great profit.

ROGER: Denise.

DENISE: Then you could pay for me to have driving lessons.

ROGER: Please stop going on about it. I've said I'll consider it. Anyway, one did come up nearer town, and it wasn't good enough for you.

DENISE: (POINTS TO THE HUT NEXT DOOR.) It was that one!

HE SHRUGS. THE KETTLE BEGINS TO WHISTLE.
THEY BOTH SIT MOTIONLESS.

ROGER: Kettle.

DENISE: Is that what it is?

PAUSE.

ROGER/ DENISE: Tea please./Coffee please.

PAUSE.

ROGER: I would go, obviously, but I don't know where you'll have put the tea-bags.

DENISE GETS UP.

DENISE: No wonder your wife left you.

ROGER: What?

DENISE: It's what everyone'll say when I do.

SHE GOES IN.

ROGER: I think I'm about ready for a biscuit.

DENISE: (OFF.) I live only to serve, oh great master.

HE LOOKS AT HIS TROUSERS AND SIGHS. DENISE BRINGS OUT A LITTLE TRAY WITH TWO MUGS AND TWO BISCUITS. SHE TAKES A MUG OFF IT AND HANDS THE TRAY TO ROGER.

DENISE: There you go. Two biscuits. One for each love handle.

ROGER: I do not..well, you have one then.

DENISE: Oh no. I want to stay slim and attractive for when I leave you. Keep my options open.

ROGER: You're not being very funny, you know.

DENISE: What makes you think I'm trying to be? I think I'll have an apple.

SHE PUTS HER CUP DOWN AND GOES IN TO THE HUT. PAUSE. THERE IS AN ENORMOUS CRASH. SHE COMES OUT WITH AN APPLE AND SITS.

ROGER: What the hell..?

DENISE: You know that shelf you put up last summer?

ROGER: What have you done to it?

DENISE: I haven't done anything. I just breathed near it and it fell off the wall.

ROGER: Well, you obviously put something on it that was too heavy. It's a good job I brought my drill.

DENISE: I wish you'd stop tinkering with the hut.

ROGER: Excuse me. I do not tinker. I'm making some necessary improvements.

DENISE: I don't want to go in there if your shelves are going to start flying off the walls.

ROGER: You're just being silly now.

DENISE: I appreciate your efforts. Really. But your trouble is, you have no idea what you're doing. I bet the only way one of your shelves would stay up is if you designed it to fall down.

ROGER: Did you bring the drill from the car?

DENISE: Any time you do DIY, it's a disaster.

ROGER: Did you?

DENISE: The whole hut'll fall to bits if you keep improving it.

ROGER: Where is the drill?

DENISE: In the car, I expect. Where you left it.

ROGER: In the car?

DENISE: I'm so sorry, Roger. I had my hands full. Would you like me to go now?

ROGER: Well, finish your tea. There's no hurry.

DENISE: Too bloody right there isn't.

ROGER: After we've had our tea will be fine.

DENISE: Don't be ridiculous. I'm not going anywhere. And neither are you.

ROGER: I beg your pardon?

DENISE: I forbid you to come within fifty feet of the hut with a power tool. Even if you manage not to destroy it, you'll do yourself a mischief. This is supposed to be a holiday, as you so rightly point out. And I refuse to spend any of this one in A and E.

A HUFFY PAUSE. THEY DRINK AND GAZE OUT TO SEA. THEY BEGIN TO RELAX.

DENISE: This is nice, I must admit. Even with you here.

ROGER: Well, that's not a very pleasant thing to say.

DENISE: It was a joke.

ROGER: Was it? Ha ha.

DENISE: You used to laugh at my jokes.

ROGER: They used to be funny.

DENISE: Oh, don't be so touchy.

ROGER: I fail to see the humour in telling your husband of..x-many years that you'd be happier if he was elsewhere.

DENISE: X-many years?

ROGER: Don't change the subject.

DENISE: Seventeen.

ROGER: Seventeen?

DENISE: This year. In September. On the 14th.

ROGER: Yes, yes. Thank you. I know the date.

DENISE: You'd better.

ROGER: Presumably then, I must be doing something right.

PAUSE.

ROGER: I said, presumably, if we're still together after seventeen years, I must be doing something right.

DENISE: Presumably. Do you think that one's been bought?

ROGER: Pardon?

DENISE: Next door.

ROGER: I would have thought so. These ones don't stay on the market for very long. That's why we were so lucky to bag ours.

DENISE: Yes, dear, I know. Don't be smug.

ROGER: It'll have been snapped up. I'd be fascinated to know what it went for.

DENISE: I wonder what they'll be like.

ROGER: Oh, very much our sort of people, I should think. Up this end of the beach.

DENISE: Yes.

ROGER: No worries on that score.

DENISE: Hmm.

ROGER: What?

DENISE: You know, I'm slowly coming to realize that I'm not all that keen on our sort of people.

ROGER: Oh, really, Denise.

DENISE: I'm not even sure if I'm our sort of people.

ROGER: What are you talking about?

DENISE: Everywhere we go. Everyone we meet. Same old conversations. Same old opinions being expressed about the same old subjects.

ROGER: Are you sure you're ok?

DENISE: I expect you're right. They'll be perfectly nice, perfectly decent, well-behaved people, who read the right books and like the right films and listen to the right kind of music and don't really watch television anymore, 'because it's got so infantile, don't you think, and as for the internet, well, I don't know how anybody finds the time.'

ROGER: You really are being quite odd, love.

DENISE: No. It's just..I sometimes think that if our circle of friends all moved round one and swapped partners, none of them would notice the difference. I wish one of them would do something.

ROGER: Like what?

DENISE: I don't know. Something. Anything. Get arrested. Have a love affair with someone totally unsuitable. Have their tongue pierced. Maybe I should get the ball

rolling. Have a nervous breakdown. Just a little one. Ring the changes. What do you think?

ROGER: I think you've already started. Is this all because a shelf fell down?

DENISE: I'll be alright in a bit. Maybe I'll have a glass of wine.

ROGER: What?

DENISE: What?

ROGER: It's not even midday.

DENISE: So what? I think you should have one as well.

ROGER: It's far too early.

DENISE: It might stop you looking at me like that.

ROGER: I'm not looking at you like anything.

DENISE: You look like a Mother Superior who's just heard that one of her novices is pregnant.

SHE GETS UP AND GOES INTO THE HUT.

ROGER: I don't want a glass of wine.

WE HEAR A CORK POPPING.

ROGER: I'm going to get the drill.

HE GETS UP AND EXITS. DENISE COMES OUT CARRYING TWO GLASSES OF WINE.

DENISE: Roger! Oh well.

SHE NECKS ONE GLASS AND PUTS IT BACK IN THE HUT. SHE COMES OUT WITH THE SECOND GLASS, SITS AND DRINKS. SHE STARTS TO RELAX AGAIN, AND IT'S OBVIOUS THAT SHE DOES LOVE BEING THERE. WE HEAR THE ENGINE OF A BIG CAR COMING CLOSER AND GETTING LOUDER. THE CAR STOPS BUT THE ENGINE IS LEFT RUNNING. A CAR DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS. ENTER DON. ABOUT THE SAME AGE AS ROGER, BIG BRASH AND LOUD. HE LOOKS AT THE HUTS, PARTICULARLY THE MIDDLE ONE. IGNORES DENISE COMPLETELY.

DON: (LOOKS BACK OFF AND BELLOWS.) 'Chelle! Oi! 'Chelle! It's here. 'Chelle! (TO HIMSELF.) Bloody hell. (SHOUTS.) 'Chelle!

HE GOES. DENISE WATCHES HIM AND THEN GOES INTO THE HUT. SHE COMES OUT STRAIGHT AWAY, CARRYING THE BOTTLE. SHE SITS, POURS AND DRINKS. UNDER THIS, WE HEAR THE SOUNDS OF A CAR BEING UNPACKED. DON RE-ENTERS, WITH VARIOUS BAGS. HE DROPS THEM ON THE FLOOR AND UNLOCKS THE HUT AND REMOVES THE SHUTTERS. HE GOES IN WITH THE BAGS. COMES OUT.

DON: (SHOUTS.) 'Chelle!

DENISE: If you switch the engine off, you might find you don't need to shout.

DON: What?

DENISE: I said perhaps 'Chelle might have a better chance of hearing you if you hadn't left the engine running.

HE STARES AT HER.

DENISE: Just a thought.

HE STARES.

DENISE: None of my business. Cheers.

DON: She wants the heater on.

DENISE: I see.

DON: She feels the cold.

DENISE: She must do.

DON: Heater doesn't work without the engine on.

DENISE: It wouldn't

DON: No engine, no heater.

DENISE: No.

DON: She likes to have it on full blast. Makes a hell of a racket.

DENISE: It would.

DON: And she's got all the windows shut.

DENISE: No point having them open if she's cold.

DON: Heater doesn't work if the windows are open. It's all connected up.

DENISE: It sounds like she's got very little chance of hearing you.

DON: (SHOUTS.) 'Chelle!

DENISE: I must say, I admire your persistence. Given the odds.

DON: What?

DENISE: Is it a big car? It sounds it.

DON: Audi. Four wheel drive.

DENISE: How lovely.

DON: I'm wasting my time.

DENISE: Are you?

DON: Shouting.

DENISE: I tend to agree.

DON: I thought she might be able to see me. But she's not looking.

DENISE: Tricky. You could go to her.

DON: She's got the hump with me a bit. Teenager.

DENISE: Oh.

DON: I think I'll leave it. She'll come when she's ready.

DENISE: And in the meantime, we can listen to your lovely engine purring away.

PAUSE.

DENISE: I can hardly hear it now I'm used to it.

ENTER MICHELLE. SHE'S NINETEEN. PRETTY AND SHY. DRESSED FOR WINTER. SHE STANDS SILENTLY BEHIND DON. DENISE NOTICES HER AND INDICATES WITH HER EYES THAT SHE'S THERE. DON TURNS.

DON: Well, don't just leave it on its own with the keys in. Silly little cow.

HE DASHES OFF. MICHELLE DOESN'T REACT. SHE SITS IN ROGER'S SEAT AND STARES OUT TO SEA.

DENISE: You're welcome.

THE CAR ENGINE IS SWITCHED OFF. PAUSE.

DENISE: You know one forgets how quiet it can be down here. When you haven't been for a while. (NO REACTION.) My name's Denise. Can I assume that you're 'Chelle? (PAUSE.) I take it that's short for something. Shelley? Michelle? (NO REACTION.) Well, now you're here I shall always think of you as sea-'Chelle. (PAUSE.) No? Never mind.

DON ENTERS.

DON: Don't do that again. You might as well leave a sign on it saying, 'Please nick me.' Silly little cow.

DENISE: My husband and I were just speculating about who the new owner might be. And now we know. Denise.

DON: Don.

DENISE: Very pleased to meet you. As, I'm sure, my husband will be.

DON: It's a long way from town. Didn't know it'd be so far.

DENISE: Ah well. What you lose in convenience, you gain in exclusivity, I'm told. You just need to remember to bring all your supplies with you. (SHE LOOKS OVER TOWARDS THE CAR.) Which ought not to be too much of a problem for you. Mind you, you could always pop the hut in the back of your car and move it further up the beach. Just about fit, I should think.

DON: (STILL NOT SURE.) I'm having a coffee. 'Chelle?

NO REACTION. HE SHRUGS AND GOES IN.

DENISE: The people next door on the other side. They come down here quite a bit. They tend to keep themselves to themselves. Which takes a bit of doing in a beach hut, let me tell you.

DON COMES BACK.

DON: Bloody gas bottle's empty.

DENISE: Rotten luck. Why don't you use ours? Kettle boiled not so long ago.

DON: Ta.

DENISE: Help yourself.

DON GOES INTO THEIR HUT. SOME CLATTERING. HE COMES OUT WITH THEIR GAS BOTTLE AND GOES BACK INTO HIS HUT.

DENISE: That isn't actually (BUT HE'S GONE.) what I meant. (PAUSE.) Oh well. Never mind. I'm sure you'd do the same for us. (PAUSE.) One must be neighbourly. (PAUSE.) The other lot, I mean the people who owned your hut before you, lovely people. Absolutely

lovely. Very generous. Couldn't do enough for you. (PAUSE.) Of course, we didn't know anything about them. Never got on to jobs or houses or any of that stuff. Maybe I wouldn't have liked them so much if I'd known anything about them. (PAUSE.) I always think you can tell a lot about a person from their car. But we never even saw that. They'd always park it up on the road, you see, and walk down. (PAUSE.) Anyway, I hope you enjoy your time down here. The peace and quiet ought to suit you at any rate.

DON COMES OUT.

DON: Don't you want to come and see inside? It's nice.

NOTHING.

DON: I'll make you a coffee then, yeah? Coffee? 'Chelle?

HE STOMPS BACK INSIDE.

DON: I don't know why I'm bothering.

PAUSE.

DENISE: You're right, of course. Inside, one beach hut looks very much like another. Except ours. My husband has recently designed a new and exciting range of shelves that go on the floor.

THE KETTLE STARTS WHISTLING IN DON'S HUT.
MICHELLE LOOKS SLIGHTLY ALARMED.

DENISE: Don't worry, dear. It's just the kettle telling us it's boiled. Bless. I don't suppose you've ever heard one of those before. God, I feel old.

SHE POURS MORE WINE, AND TAKES A LARGE SWIG. SHE LOOKS AT THE BOTTLE.

DENISE: Dear God. I'll have done a whole bottle before lunchtime.

SHE SHRUGS, POURS AND DRINKS. ENTER ROGER CARRYING A CORDLESS DRILL, A SMALL TOOLBOX AND TWO SMALL SHELVES WITH THE BRACKETS PRE-ATTACHED.

ROGER: Some idiot has driven his dirty great car right up the footpath. I mean, it's clearly signposted, 'Footpath'. Not 'Dirty Great Car Path'. Irresponsible. Just you wait till I get my hands on him. (HOLDS UP DRILL.) He's lucky I didn't have a go at his paintwork. (SEES MICHELLE.) Who's she? What's she doing in my seat?

DENISE: This is our new neighbour. 'Chelle meet Roger.

SHE DOESN'T REACT.

ROGER: What's she doing there?

DENISE: Just sitting, really. That's been pretty much it, so far.

PAUSE.

ROGER: Well, doesn't she talk?

DENISE: Not as yet.

ROGER: (TO MICHELLE.) Did you come in that monstrosity?

DENISE NODS AND POINTS TO DON'S HUT. ROGER POINTS AS IF TO SAY 'IS HE IN THERE?'. DENISE NODS. ROGER NODS SLOWLY AS IF TO SAY, 'RIGHT'. HE STOMPS UP TO THE HUT, STANDS BESIDE THE DOOR AND KNOCKS LOUDLY WITH THE BUTT OF HIS DRILL.

ROGER: Excuse me. May I have a word, please?

DON COMES OUT WITH TWO CUPS OF COFFEE. HE TOWERS ABOVE ROGER.

DON: Yeah. What?

ROGER: Is that thing yours?

DON: What thing?

ROGER: That thing.

DON: What about it?

ROGER: Will you move it, please?

DON WALKS PAST HIM AND GIVES A CUP TO
MICHELLE. ROGER FOLLOWS HIM.

ROGER: That is a footpath. For feet. As the name implies. We
park up on the road there, and walk down.

DON: Your car probably wouldn't get down here.

ROGER: What's that got to do with anything?

DON: Mine can.

ROGER: You're not supposed to bring cars down here.

DON: There's no signs.

ROGER: There shouldn't need to be. It's obvious to everyone
else. What would happen if everyone brought their
cars down here?

DON: Everybody doesn't.

ROGER: That's not the point. What makes you special?

DON: D'you know what I reckon? I reckon you're jealous.

ROGER: Jealous?

DON: Yeah. I can just imagine what car you've got.
Probably fall off its axles if you brought it down
here. I bet you would if you could.

ROGER: I most certainly would not.

DON: I bet you would.

ROGER INVOLUNTARILY PRESSES THE TRIGGER ON
HIS DRILL.

DON: You want to take this up a notch?

ROGER: What? No. No. I didn't..that was an accident.

DON: You want to be more careful.

ROGER: Yes.

DON: That's how misunderstandings happen. We wouldn't want
that, would we?

ROGER: No. Quite.

DON: So. (PAUSE.) Bit of DIY, is it?

ROGER: What? Oh! Yes. Couple of shelves.

DON: Good idea. Can't have too many shelves.

DENISE: You can.

DON: Might get you to shove a couple up in here.

DENISE LAUGHS. PAUSE.

ROGER: I suppose this is your hut?

DON: (SUDDENLY VERY HOSTILE.) You what?

DENISE: What he means is, you've bought it, have you? You're not renting it? Lots of people do. Rent.

DON: It's mine.

ROGER: Good, good.

DON: Looks like we're stuck with each other.

ROGER: Doesn't it just?

DON: You'd better start being nice.

ROGER: Me be nice?

DON: Not my idea of a warm welcome.

ROGER: Look. Are you going to move that car, or not?

DON: Yes, I am.

ROGER: (STARTLED.) Oh. Good. Well. Good. (PAUSE.) I'll just go and stick these up then.

HE MOVES TOWARDS THE HUT.

DENISE: You might want to move, 'Chelle. I'd hate you to get hit when the front of the hut falls off.

ROGER: Yes. Ha ha. Very funny.

HE GOES IN. PAUSE.

DON: Anybody know who he is?

DENISE: He's my husband.

DON: Thank God for that. I thought he was just some nutter.

DENISE: Oh, he is.

ROGER POKES HIS HEAD OUT.

ROGER: I can hear every word, you know. (PAUSE.) I thought you were going to move that car.

DON: Yeah, I am. I'm sure 'Chelle and me are going to go back to the hotel eventually.

ROGER COMES OUT.

ROGER: Now, you listen to me.

DON: No, you listen to me..

MICHELLE: Oh, for God's sake, move the bloody car. What's the matter with you?

THEY ALL LOOK AT HER, STARTLED. PAUSE.

DON: Alright, 'Chelle. Simmer down.

MICHELLE: You're doing my bloody head in.

DON: Alright, alright. I'm going.

HE DOES. WE HEAR THE CAR START AND DRIVE AWAY.

MICHELLE: He does my bloody head in.

SHE FISHES OUT SOME EARPHONES, SHOVES THEM IN AND TURNS HER MUSIC ON LOUD.

ROGER: You must be over the moon.

DENISE: Pardon?

ROGER: Thank God they're not our sort of people, eh?

HE STOMPS BACK INTO THE HUT. UNDER THE FOLLOWING, WE HEAR SOUNDS OF DIY. DENISE DRINKS AND LOOKS AT MICHELLE CURIOUSLY. AT LENGTH, MICHELLE BECOMES AWARE SHE'S BEING LOOKED AT, AND STARES BACK. SHE TAKES OUT HER EARPHONES.

MICHELLE: What?

DENISE: Nothing.

MICHELLE: It's rude to stare.

DENISE: Yes.

MICHELLE: People are always going on about how rude young people are. It's rubbish. It's old people you've got to watch out for.

DENISE: I've learned my lesson. Thank you. I was wondering if you wanted a glass of wine.

MICHELLE: What?

DENISE: That's assuming, of course, that you're..

MICHELLE: What?

DENISE: Well, I don't want to be accused of encouraging underage drinking.

MICHELLE: What, you want to see my ID, do you?

DENISE: Not especially.

MICHELLE: 'Cause I've got it. If you want to see it.

DENISE: I don't.

MICHELLE: You want to see my ID?

DENISE: No.

MICHELLE: Who do you think you are? Demanding to see my ID?

DENISE: I'm not.

MICHELLE: Good.

DENISE: It's none of my business.

MICHELLE: No. It isn't.

SHE PUTS HER EARPHONES BACK IN. PAUSE.

MICHELLE: Disagrees with my guts anyway.

PAUSE. AN ALMIGHTY CRASH FROM INSIDE THE HUT.

ROGER: (OFF.) I'm alright.

DENISE: Oh God.

SHE POURS MORE WINE AND DRINKS.

DENISE: First time?

MICHELLE: (EARPHONES OFF AGAIN.) What?

DENISE: Is this your first time down here?

MICHELLE: Yeah.

DENISE: How are you finding it down here?

MICHELLE: And my last.

DENISE: Oh.

MICHELLE: There's nothing to do.

DENISE: I always feel like that, first couple of days. Takes a little while to relax, let yourself slow down.

MICHELLE: I don't want to slow down.

DENISE: No. How long are you here for?

MICHELLE: Ten years.

DENISE: Pardon?

MICHELLE: That's what it'll seem like. With him.

A LOUD BANG FROM THE HUT.

ROGER: (OFF.) Ow. Bugger.

DENISE: I know what you mean. Still, you'll find something to do, I'm sure. Is your mother here, as well?

MICHELLE: Who?

DENISE: Er..your Mum.

MICHELLE: What time is it?

DENISE: Twenty to twelve.

MICHELLE: I haven't spoken to her for six years.

DENISE: Right.

MICHELLE: She was a right old cow.

DENISE: Was she?

MICHELLE: She might as well be dead for all I know. Or care.

DENISE: OK.

MICHELLE: I hope she's not dead.

DENISE: Oh good.

MICHELLE: I hope she's dying slowly. Of something horrible.

DENISE: Oh.

MICHELLE: What she deserves, way she treated my Dad.

DENISE: I see.

MICHELLE: He's never got over it.

DENISE: Oh dear.

MICHELLE: Sleep with anything that moves.

DENISE: Your Dad?

MICHELLE: Her. Even used to bring them into the house sometimes. Right under his nose.

DENISE: Thank you for telling me all this, but..

MICHELLE: If only she'd had the brains to charge for it, we'd be millionaires.

DENISE: Please don't feel that you have to tell me any more..

MICHELLE: You asked.

DENISE: True.

MICHELLE: Anyway, she went off in the end, with a bloke who owned a burger van. But my Dad, he's stayed true to her. Thinks she'll still come back and it'll be like it was before. I have to go along with it. It's pathetic. Does my head in.

DENISE: Oh dear.

PAUSE.

DENISE: Well, perhaps being here will help.

MICHELLE: How?

DENISE: I don't know.

MICHELLE: No. You don't.

DENISE: (PAUSE.) Dear, dear. All this wine. It's been lovely chatting, but I'm afraid you're going to have to excuse me.

SHE GOES. MICHELLE PUTS HER EARPHONES BACK IN.

ROGER: (OFF, WHILE THE ABOVE IS HAPPENING.) There. Done. Perhaps you can try not to wrench these off the wall. Right. Cup of tea? (CLATTERING.) Where the bloody hell..?

AS HE COMES OUT.

ROGER: What have you done with the gas bottle? (HE NOTICES SHE'S GONE.) Oh. Bloody woman. (TO MICHELLE.) Excuse me. Do you happen to know where my wife has gone? She seems to have gone wandering off with the gas bottle. God alone knows why. Hello?

HE NOTICES HER EARPHONES.

ROGER: Hello? I think you're very rude, you know. (PAUSE.) I don't understand why you'd want to listen to some God-awful tinny pop-music on that thing when you've got the sea and the birds to listen to. (PAUSE.) You know, in about twenty years time, there's going to be a whole generation of middle-aged people who've gone prematurely deaf as a consequence of having those things wedged in their ears all day every day, you mark my words. (NOTHING.) I'm wearing women's underwear, you know. A matching bra and knickers set of my wife's. Floral silk. Very comfy. If I wasn't wearing shorts, I'd probably have her stockings and suspenders on as well. You won't tell her, will you?

MICHELLE: (HOLDS UP HER I-POD WITHOUT TAKING THE EARPHONES OUT.) This isn't switched on you, know.

ROGER: (GOING.) Now, where can she have got to?

HE NEARLY COLLIDES WITH DON COMING ON.

DON: I hope you're happy now. Took me bloody ages to find a space. Bloody miles away.

BUT ROGER HAS GONE.

DON: Oh. Bye. Stuck up berk. That took forever. I'd have been better off leaving it here.

MICHELLE: Shut up about it! I don't care. You've parked it now. Stop going on about it. Men and their poxy cars.

DON: 'Chelle.

MICHELLE: Why do you always have to be like that?

DON: Like what?

MICHELLE: All aggressive. Why can't you ever just let it go?

DON: You want me to just lie back and let some toffee-nosed git give me lip?

MICHELLE: You don't always have to make it worse. It's embarrassing.

DON SITS ON DENISE'S SEAT AND PUTS HIS HAND OUT TO HER.

DON: 'Chelle.

SHE MOVES HER SEAT AWAY.

MICHELLE: Get off.

DON: Don't.

HE TRIES AGAIN. SHE MOVES AWAY AGAIN.

MICHELLE: No.

DON: Come on.

SAME AGAIN. THE SEATS ARE NOW OUTSIDE
DON'S HUT.

MICHELLE: I don't like you when you're like that.

DON: I'm sorry, alright? He was winding me up.

MICHELLE: Everything winds you up.

DON: I'm sorry. I'm just..I'm nervous.

PAUSE.

DON: 'Chelle?

MICHELLE: Me too. (PAUSE.) Do you think this was a good idea? I don't. Now that we're here.

DON: It was. It is. It's just what we need.

MICHELLE: I don't know.

DON: 'Chelle. 'Chelle. Look at me.

SHE DOES. HE KNEELS BESIDE HER. THEY KISS.

MICHELLE: Dad'll kill me if he finds out.

DON: He won't.

MICHELLE: No. He'll kill you.

DON: He won't find out, I mean. Who'll tell him?

MICHELLE: I don't know.

THEY KISS AGAIN. ROGER ENTERS AND SEES THEM.

ROGER: I've absolutely no sympathy.

THEY SPRING APART.

ROGER: You've brought it on yourself.

ROGER: I said it was too early. (HE SEES THE BOTTLE ON ITS OWN OUTSIDE THEIR HUT, AND PICKS IT UP.) Bloody hell, woman. You've done three-quarters of a bottle on an empty stomach.

ENTER DENISE, LOOKING VERY GREEN.

DENISE: Can you please stop bellowing? And do hurry up.

ROGER NOTICES THAT DON AND MICHELLE ARE SITTING IN THEIR SEATS.

ROGER: My wife is feeling a little unwell, so we are forced to go back to our guest house for a rest. I shall be locking up our beach hut.

HE LOOKS AT THEM MEANINGFULLY.

ROGER: I very much doubt that we'll be coming back today.

DON: Probably see you tomorrow then.

ROGER: I need to lock everything safely away.

DON: Yeah. You can't be too careful.

ROGER: So if you wouldn't mind..

DON: You do whatever you want, mate. Nobody's stopping you.

ROGER: Well, as a point of fact, you are.

DENISE: Roger, please hurry up.

ROGER: Yes, I'm just dealing with this..

DON: Don't keep her waiting, mate. She looks a bit dicky.

ROGER: I'll thank you not to talk about my wife..

DENISE: Roger, just leave them.

ROGER: But they're on our..

DENISE: I need to go now! Just lock up and come on.

ROGER: Right. Fine.

HE SHUTS THE DOOR AND MOVES TOWARDS HER.
THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

ROGER: Great holiday this is turning out to be.

HE GOES TO LOCK IT AND REALIZES IT'S OPEN.
HE PUSHES IT SHUT AND AS HE FIDDLES WITH
THE LOCK IT SWINGS OPEN AGAIN.

ROGER: Bloody thing.

HE GETS IT SHUT AND LOCKED.

ROGER: I hope you're thoroughly ashamed of yourself.

PAUSE. DON GETS UP AND MOVE HIS SEAT
CLOSER TO MICHELLE'S. HE SITS AND THEY
HOLD HANDS AND GAZE OUT TO SEA.

MICHELLE: Isn't it lovely and quiet? I love the sound of the
sea.

THEY GAZE OUT HAND IN HAND, AS THE LIGHTS
FADE.