

## Characters

- Ian (M)** - Maker of handcrafted furniture.
- Alison (F)** - Married to Ian. Home oriented, generous.
- Tony (M)** - Failed organic market gardener.
- Hazel (F)** - Ex eco-warrior.
- Derek (M)** - An ex long-distance lorry driver.
- Gina (F)** - A divorcee on the scent of a new man.
- Turgut (M)** - Young man, Nana's unofficial boyfriend.
- Nana (F)** - Turgut's unofficial Girlfriend.
- Rob (M)** - Musician stuck in the groove.
- Georgiou (M)** - Nana's father on the warpath
- Graham (M)** - Ranger for country park.
- Ambulance/Police (M/F)** - 2 extras, or only 1 if Derek doubles up.

## Act 1

### Scene 1 – Bridge over a river

(Tabs open. Lights up. SFX. Sound of van drawing up. Short period of quiet before doors creak open. Sounds of several people coughing, one retching, one peeing. Rob enters, stumbling onto stage with guitar. He sits down drunkenly, looks up at moon, hiccoughs, plays a chord, then falls backwards obscured from sight. SFX. Van doors close and it is driven away. Short while later SFX. a car is heard spluttering up; the engine coughs and stops. After short period, SFX. a car door is opened and slammed hard. Enter shadowy figure of Nana. Then SFX. another car door is opened and shut more quietly. Turgut enters hurrying to catch her up; she pushes him away and heads to stand against a far tree or bush. Turgut approaches her and she tries to kick him. Shrugging his shoulders, he goes to sit at a different tree, then lies down. Nana after looking at the moon/sky for a short time also lies down. Short silence. Dawn approaches and it becomes lighter.)

**Tony:** (Enters jogging, goes a little way along 'bridge'. He is dishevelled and overwrought.) Here I am then, the bridge, end of the line; goodbye world. God that sounds clichéd, well why not, why bloody not? It's what everybody says isn't it, goodbye world? You should be able to think up something more original than that Tone, something more.. Mind you death's not exactly original. God I hope it's deep enough. (Peers into water) The water's bloody filthy again. Never mind Tone, if you don't break your neck, if you don't drown, the pollution will get you. (Rests arms on bridge – sobs) Christ every time they clean it up it happens again, every bloody time. They should let it clog up, who cares? Who bloody cares? Consumer society; I've finished with this one, there's a better model, I'll chuck this one in the river. Nothing's special any more, two a bloody penny; buy one, get one free. They don't deserve good home-grown food. Won't pay two-pence more. Go on then, buy your ready made, genetically modified.. cheap food. They say bodies don't deteriorate like they used to, so many bloody preservatives. Well not yours Tone. (Sobs) I'll be gone in a week or two; I'll be you river, I'll be you reeds; I might even be you polystyrene tray.. no, not that, never! You'd think somebody would fetch that shopping trolley. (Shouts) Even you're expendable, shopping trolley. (Looks around worriedly) You are what you eat, dog eat dog; bitch. I was born too late. I'm not cut out for this cut and thrust of modern life.

(SFX. Faint crowing of cockerel.)

**Tony:** I tried to be a good husband, father.. so busy with the bloody soil.. well good luck to them. Good luck to you Claire, you're a good mother at least. They'll be alright, he's got money.. the bastard .

(SFX. Birdsong)

**Tony:** Won't they blackie? (Looks into trees). There's a star blackie, can you see, a bright shining star? (Quotes.) 'Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight'.. last star, morning star. The moon's still out; God it's beautiful. You're always the first blackie, always the fir..

(SFX. Cockerel crows louder.)

**Tony:** (laughs) it's no good singing that song, someone's already spoken, didn't you hear? (Starts walking to centre of bridge.) Someone's beaten you to it. (Looks once more at sky, trees; dithers; stands behind rail.) The bleedin' cockerel, he's

(Tony is interrupted by Bert, the dog, SFX. barking nearby offstage.)

**Tony:** ..shit..

(Tony leaves bridge by best route, to sit in shadow on shelf – see production notes. Hazel enters.)

**Hazel:** (Trailing a sleeping bag, she lets it fall. She is carrying a dog's lead. Approaching river she stares into it, then sits stiffly. Looks round for dog and speaks as if addressing him). It's pretty here isn't it Bert. Look there's a star in the water, see how it glints, and there's the moon, the watery moon. It's like another world down there and they're the windows. Just look at all the bloody rubbish, you can't bloody win. You spend the best years of your life cleaning canals, populating ponds, but they're still rubbish tips as far as some people are concerned. I'm so bloody tired, I feel like I've been chewed and spat out; all the flavour's gone. They say we came from the seas; I'll be at one with nature, .. ebb and flow, lub dub, the river's pulse. Don't be gloomy Bert; I might come back as a nymph; I'd collect all the rubbish, cake the shopping trolleys with mud and stick mussel shells on so they look like old wrecks. I'd have my hair long; you need a washbasin to call your own for long hair; it will be green, like the reeds. I'm sick of my clothes; I'll have scales next time, turquoise, tough. Oh and down there my bones won't ache with laying in damp fields, and security won't come and drag me away. This will be my stretch of river; if I see anyone sneaking up with a black rubbish sack, or dragging an old mattress with bedsprings sticking out like eyeballs, I'll wrap my tail around them, do nymphs have tails? And drag them to the bottom until their eyeballs stick out like bed springs. On the other hand maybe I'll just rot, turn into fish soup...oh God and I'm vegetarian. (Looks towards trees.) Bert I can't go home; eco warriors don't just give up; they die in battle of pneumonia, or trenchfoot. Listen to those birds; I can't bear to hear them, they're so willing to start again, like soldiers; no matter how many go down at the front. They don't know how pointless, how pointless. You'll find someone else to love Bert. You know, nobody loves a fairy when she's forty, except you, dear Bert. (Sobs) God, you spend a year in a burrow with the person you thought was your soul mate, and then have to watch him go off with a bimbo from Swift Save; (Sniffs) the thought of them eating white sliced bread together kills me. (Standing up awkwardly, she sings, tap dancing in her boots in an agitated fashion.) "Nobody loves a fairy when she's forty, nobody loves a fairy when she's old, nobody hmm hmm hmm hm hm hm hm, hm hm hm hm"

(Hazel approaches water, but is interrupted by the entry of Ian and Alison.)

**Hazel:** Sod.

(Hazel exits into woods. Ian enters. He leads and stops some distance from bridge; looks through binoculars into audience.)

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**Ian:** (Somewhat flat) Yellow Hammer.

**Alison:** (A little excitable) How do you know that?

**Ian:** Way it flew.

**Alison:** (**Moving about feverishly, listening.**) There's a jenny wren.

**Ian:** Robin.

**Alison:** I thought it was a jenny wren. There's a star still out, morning star, morning star; it's so beautiful, like a new star for a brand new day.

**Ian:** There's a cuckoo.

**Alison:** It's too early for a cuckoo.

**Ian:** Someone's got to be the first to hear it.

**Alison:** You'll have to write to the Times... Look at the moon, look at the silvery moon.  
(**Sings**) 'I'm being followed by a moon shadow, moon shadow, moon shadow  
(**Sadder**) I'm being followed by a..'

**Ian:** (**Interrupts**) Ssssssh., you'll scare the birds.

**Alison:** That's right, I'll be quiet.  
  
(**They stand silently for a short while.**)

**Ian:** Willow Warbler.

**Alison:** You wouldn't know a willow warbler if you sat on one; it's a sparrow.

**Ian:** Sparrows are town birds, I know that.

**Alison:** Can I borrow your binoculars?

**Ian:** (**Lowers them from eyes.**) It's too dark, there's nothing to see Alison.

**Ian:** (**Together**) Owl.  
**Alison:** (**Together**) Owl.

**Alison:** Must be on its way home.

**Ian:** There it is again, cuckoo.

**Alison:** It's a wood pigeon, they go coo coo. The Passenger pigeon is an extinct bird.

**Ian:** Don't be stupid, old chap on the next road has got a loft full.

**Alison:** You're wrong, the last Passenger Pigeon died in a New York zoo years ago. They shot so many they forgot to leave some.

**Ian:** Perhaps we're Passenger Pigeons?

**Alison:** I'm not, I'm (**Listening to birdsong**) a mistlethrush. Ian, why didn't we come and listen to the dawn chorus before?

**Ian:** Don't get carried away Alison.

**Alison:** (**Sadly**) We should have done, everybody should listen to the dawn chorus more than once.. The moon looks like he's smiling. (**Quotes**) 'The moon has a face like a clock in the hall'. I say that to the children (**Sniffs**) I can't remember anymore, can you remember?

**Ian:** I can't say I can.

**Alison:** (**Looks around wildly – points to trees.**) Ian, these would be good for your furniture, you could come in here and..

**Ian:** (**Interrupts**) These would be no good at all. Have you any idea how much moisture is in unseasoned timber? As it dried it would twist and turn. You couldn't make a table out of that. Imagine a jigsaw, the way it would curl out of shape, a doll's house..

**Alison:** (**Interrupts with a cry**) You're right, I know that, you need seasoned timber, I was just..

**Ian:** (**Interrupts**) The furniture I made will last generations, walnut, oak, ash, You know how long it took to make something out of wood. It was impossible to make a living, people wanting it for the same price as the mass produced stuff.

**Alison:** You knew that when you started Ian. When you were made redundant you said you could make it pay.

**Ian:** Not for four.

**Alison:** We had the children when you started, you know we did.

**Ian:** They get expensive as they get older.

**Alison:** You can't put the blame on the children.

**Ian:** I'm not, it's just impossible for a craftsman to make a living with a family.

**Alison:** My job helped, you know it did. How could I take a full time job and still look after the children with you gone all hours? If I got a full time job now, why couldn't I help you pay back the arrears?

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**Ian:** Alison, what good do you think your two-pence halfpenny would do? I don't think you've been listening to me all this time. We're finished, the house was re-mortgaged on the business. When the bailiffs come, they'll be taking everything, lock, stock and barrel. Whatever we did, we would never be free of it, a dead weight round our necks; all our necks.

**Alison:** You posted the letter didn't you?

**Ian:** My parents will be there. (**Gets pair of gloves from pocket and puts on.**)

**Alison:** You've got some new gloves.

**Ian:** (**Somewhat embarrassed.**) I can't drive in those you knitted, the wheel slips.

Christmas sales - hat too. I do like yours, you know I wear it.

**Alison:** In the garden. I don't know why I tried to be economical. Ian when did you re-mortgage the house?

**Ian:** Alison, I told you, ages ago. There was no choice.

**Alison:** I can't remember you telling me, didn't I have to sign as well?

**Ian:** You know perfectly well the house is in my name.

**Alison:** I didn't know it was just in your name.

**Ian:** I'm the wage earner Alison, you don't pay the mortgage do you? What would be the point in your name being on it?

**Alison:** But it's our house.

**Ian:** Well now it belongs to the bank. Everything I paid was gobbled up in interest. **(Lifts binoculars to eyes, raises as if something flying overhead.)** Mallard.

**Alison:** Mallards don't have long necks like that, it's a goose, maybe a swan.

**Ian:** Swans they're the ones, if one dies, the other dies.

**Alison:** No, no, the other pines, they never mate again. Ian, why didn't you ever take the children to see Sapphire?

**Ian:** What the hell's that got to do with anything?

**Alison:** I'm just trying to understand things.. I feel muddled, I mean, here we are; when you've been looking after a horse; stabling must be expensive.

**Ian:** My stabling costs nothing, well very little. The woman who keeps the yard, her daughter rides him sometimes, I just pay food and vet's bills. Anyhow he's temperamental, thoroughbreds often are. Anything else while you're at it? God do you think we'd be here now if I hadn't thought of everything. We agreed we mustn't let the children suffer.

**Alison:** **(A little hysterically)** More are joining in now, listen.

**Ian:** **(Lifts binoculars.)** I can't see them.

**Alison:** Let me have a look.

**Ian:** I told you, there's nothing to see.

**Alison:** There's a blackbird, at the top of that tree, they say he's the first **(Sings)** 'Blackbird singing in the dead of the night, only waiting for the moment... **(Voice trails off)** to'. I'm cold.

**Ian:** Alison -

**Alison:** **(Interrupts)** The post won't be delivered for ages. I want to listen. I want it to drown us out, intoxicate us, anaesthetise us. Somebody said birdsong, Coleridge, no Keats,

Ode to a Nightingale, what time is it, I didn't bring my watch, I thought Amy might like it when she's.. **(Babbling)** I can't do this Ian, I don't mind living in a hostel; at least we'd be together.

**Ian:** Shut up, do you want people to hear, the woods are probably crawling with twitchers. **(Walks away from her nearer to bridge, she follows.)** We wouldn't be together.

**Alison:** Oh why wouldn't we be Ian, why wouldn't we?

**Ian:** Because I'd probably go to jail that's why, I've told you. I had to pay out a lot of cheques to get us by. You always switch off when I talk about money, and knit, knit, knit, knit, knit, as if you can knit some.

**Alison:** I did knit some. What about an overdraft?

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**Ian:** It's more than a draft Alison; we've got a force 10 gale.

**Alison:** Call me thick Ian, but I can't understand all this *we* business.

**Ian:** Did you ever check? Did you ever go into the bank?

**Alison:** You know very well the account is in your name.

**Ian:** Well you had precious little going in.

**Alison:** That's not fair. I looked after the home and the children. I expected you to deal with the financial side, I didn't bother you with domestic matters. Oh don't let's argue, not now, I'm so tired, what time is it?

**Ian:** **(Peers at watch.)** Quarter past four.

**Alison:** **(Goes over to river, looks into it.)** There's a coot, I wonder why they have green legs?

**Ian:** I haven't a clue.

**Alison:** The water's filthy, someone's dumped a shopping trolley.

**Ian:** **(Follows her to water's edge.)** Twenty ways to - forty ways to...

**Alison:** **(Interrupts)** Why did you say that?

**Ian:** What?

**Alison:** Twenty ways, forty ways to kill your lover.

**Ian:** In the song Alison, it's leave your lover. I was referring to the different ways; about the condition of the water, if one thing doesn't get you, something else will.

**Alison:** Ian.

**Ian:** What?

**Alison:** You know you say it has to look like an accident?

**Ian:** – or the insurance won't pay.

**Alison:** What if, if the police press your parents?

**Ian:** Why should they press them? It will be perfectly clear it was nothing more than a tragic accident. I've asked my parents to destroy the letter. They're hardly going to create an obstacle for their own grandchildren for God's sake.

**Alison:** It wouldn't have hurt them to help us out a bit.

**Ian:** Don't be ungrateful; they haven't got those sorts of assets.

**Alison:** Ian if my name isn't even on the mortgage, how can anyone pay anything on me?

**Ian:** Because we're both insured of course. **(Looks into trees and listens.)** If you could can birdsong, wouldn't that be wonderful?

**Alison:** What for?

**Ian:** Sell it of course. **(Takes mint out of pocket & pops into mouth.)** Starlings, over there, leaving that big tree, like a dust cloud; must be thousands of the things.

**Alison:** I don't think so.

**Ian:** What?

**Alison:** I don't think it would be wonderful, reminds me of the little caged birds we saw on our honeymoon in Italy.

**Ian:** They sang beautifully. I've never liked starlings though, greedy things. I remember mum saying once how they'd pooped all over my school uniform when she'd left it on the line.

**Alison:** **(laughs)**

**Ian:** Shhhhhhh -  
**(Alison laughs hysterically.)**

**Ian:** Shut up someone will hear.  
**(Alison continues laughing.)**

**Ian:** **(Looks at her in desperation; then looks keenly at her shoulder.)** Oh, keep still, don't move. **(Goes closer, looking at her shoulder.)**

**Alison:** **(Stops laughing.)** What is it - it's not a spider? Oh God.

**Ian:** Stand still while I get a twig.

**Alison:** **(Squeals)** Get it off, get it off, Oh God, oh God, I can't stand it. **(Jumps up and**

**down, shaking jumper vigorously.)**

**Ian:** It's gone now, **(Points to floor)** there it goes.

**Alison:** **(Looks nervously.)** I can't see it.

**Ian:** I wouldn't look too closely if I were you.

**Alison:** **(Moves rapidly away from spot.)** I laughed because I couldn't imagine your mother saying poo. It doesn't seem to go with her perm.

**Ian:** How very strange.

**Alison:** Is that a mint you've got, my mouth's that dry.

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**Ian:** It was only a grubby end one, come out of its packet covered in fluff. **(Takes a hair out of mouth to demonstrate)** Yuk.

**Alison:** What time is it?

**Ian:** It's five minutes since you last asked me, we should..

**Alison:** **(Interrupts)** Not yet, the birds are all joining in listen; how joyful they sound. It's like a booming, a throbbing, the forest's heartbeat; it makes me feel, it just makes me feel nothing else is important. Let's sit down and listen, we came to listen.

**Ian:** Ostensibly, we came to listen.

**Alison:** It's like a promise, a renewal, a brand new day, and look the sun's getting up.

**Ian:** Yes, the sun's getting up; if we don't make a move, every dammed jogger, cyclist, walker and his bloody dog will be along this path.

**Alison:** Not yet, they won't be along yet. Sit down, **(Indicates fallen trunk.)** just for a minute; let's sit together. We've haven't sat together for a long time – you always seem to be out.

**Ian:** Out working Alison. **(He reluctantly sits beside her, facing audience, and woods beyond. He looks through binoculars.)** Can't see any birds.

**Alison:** It's funny isn't it, they must all be singing in bed. Imagine being so happy that you sing and sing in bed before you get up.**(Quiet for moment.)**Laura does that, she sings in bed before.. **(Bursts into tears.)**

**Ian:** I knew it was a mistake to sit down. **(Grabs hand.)** Come on, you're making it worse for yourself.

**Alison:** I can't do it yet, I can't do it when the birds are singing like this.

**Ian:** They're promising things you can't have. **(Stands up and tugs.)** Come on.

**Alison:** I want to listen to them. Why can't we have those things? There's got to be another way, on a morning like this.

**Ian:** Yes, you're right, there is another way.

**Alison:** There always is; what is it?

**Ian:** We go home, we wake the children and tell them to get dressed, then we bring them down here...

**Alison:** **(Interrupts, shouts)** No, no. **(Punches him.)** Don't be so stupid, don't be so wicked.

**Ian:** You don't like that choice, well here's another. We go home, we wait for the bailiffs to come and throw us out. They'll probably have a warrant and they'll probably bring a policeman with them. You go to a hostel for the homeless with the children. I'll go to jail.

**Alison:** There must be someone we can stay with till we're over it.

**Ian:** For God's sake Alison, how many times? There's never going to be an over it. We're up to our necks. Who's going to put up the four of us forever. Don't drag the children down with us please Alison. Is that what you want, to ruin their childhood because of your selfishness?

**Alison:** I'm confused, I can't think. Everything's going round in circles.

**Ian:** It's alright Alison trust me. **(Pulls her up. Places hand on her face.)** You love me don't you?

**Alison:** I can't think about love now Ian, I feel exhausted.

**Ian:** Soon you can sleep. I know you haven't been sleeping well either.

**(Ian pulls Alison's hand.)**

**Ian:** Let's go to the bridge, there's a lot of currents round the footings; imagine we're a pair of swans floating off together - you and me forever.

**Alison:** In a minute.

**Ian:** Now Alison, you're not being strong.

**(Ian drags Alison towards bridge.)**

**Alison:** I don't want pulling, let go.

**Ian:** Come on.

**(Ian resists, they struggle together.)**

**Alison:** Stop it, stop it, I've thought of something.

**Ian:** **(Still dragging.)** I'm not listening any..

**(Alison kicks him hard on shin.)**

**Ian:** (Yells) You.. you... Why the hell did you do that?

**Alison:** Listen to me, listen to me for once.

**Ian:** What the hell do you think I've been doing woman?

**Alison:** Don't talk to me like that.

**Ian:** Are you trying to ruin everything, because if you're not, you're making a...

**Alison:** (Interrupts) Why...

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**Ian:** (Interrupts) Why why why, why what for God's sake?

**Alison:** - does it have to be both of us?

**Ian:** What?

**Alison:** If we're insured separately, why can't it just be me, or you, that does it?

**Ian:** I can't believe this.

**Alison:** It doesn't seem logical to leave the children orphans when..

**Ian:** (Interrupts) Now I know why you didn't answer when I asked if you loved me.

**Alison:** Don't be so stupid. It's our lives we're throwing away, not some sacks of rubbish or a shopping trolley. I've got to feel sure there's no other way.

**Ian:** I thought it was obvious; there wouldn't be enough to clear the debts with just one.

**Alison:** Well, if it was just you, they wouldn't come after me and the children surely?

**Ian:** Any particular reason why not?

**Alison:** I'm sorry, this, this..(Stops abruptly, then says sotto) Ian there's a man, on the bridge, on the ledge. He's looking at us; no don't look at him

**(Ray of sunlight falls on Tony.)**

**Ian:** (Grabs her hand - sotto) Walk away, come away, (They backtrack.) God, I told you this would happen. This is your fault, dilly dallying, procrastinating until.. we can't put it off, the letter.

**Alison:** Do you think he heard?

**Ian:** Of course he heard unless he's bloody stone deaf. What's the bugger doing sitting there eavesdropping on other peoples conversations? Any decent person would have coughed to let us know they were there. We'll have to take him with us, there's no alternative, he'll ruin everything, everything.

**Alison:** What do you mean take him with us?

**Ian:** What do you think I mean? The insurance won't pay anything if he blabs, we'll have gone through all this, all this..

**Alison:** **(Interrupts)** Ian what are you talking about, what on earth are you talking about? Have you gone mad? Don't be so ridiculous. Just because we've come to kill ourselves, doesn't turn us into madmen, madwomen, mass murderers. We're ordinary people. We don't do this sort of thing, it's it's, I can't listen to this, I can't... .

**(Alison turns and runs offstage into woods.)**

**Ian:** Bugger. **(Sneaks a worried look at Tony, then chases off in pursuit of Alison.)**

**(Nana sits up, yawns, gets up and walks to middle of bridge. Turgut follows a short while later.)**

**Turgut:** What's going on?

**Nana:** Someone else having a tiff.

**Turgut:** I'm sorry.

**Nana:** It was a stupid trick Turgut.

**Turgut:** Nana, I really have run out of petrol, stupid yes, but trick no. Look in the tank if you don't believe me.

**Nana:** You might have really run out of petrol, but I wonder how you really managed to do that? A taxi driver running out of petrol?

**Turgut:** I'm only a taxi driver at night.

**Nana:** I think you deliberately ran out of petrol Turgut.

**Turgut:** I wanted to look for a call box. It was you that stopped me.

**Nana:** There's no footpath. You hear about people being run over six times in the dark and the cars not even stopping.

**Turgut:** You care if I'm run over.

**Nana:** I just can't stand the sight of spilled guts.

**Turgut:** Some doctor you're going to make.

**Nana:** Some engineer you're going to make. Perhaps you'll invent a machine that goes without fuel.

**Turgut:** Maybe I will. Don't worry so much, when it gets a bit lighter we'll find a call box and you can ask your father to collect you; tell him the truth.

**Nana:** Collect me from the woods? Turgut, are you crazy? If I did that you'd have to hide because if my father thought..

**Turgut:** **(Interrupts)** Thought what, that it was an evil plan to molest you?

**Nana:** Is that bad?

**Turgut:** Nana, this is what pisses me off; your father, your father. You'll be going to university soon; you'll be an undergraduate. Are you going to report in to them every night? They're going to have to learn to let you live your own life.

**Nana:** Well I'm not there yet. I'm still living at home and they were expecting me back from the wedding last night. It's only natural they'd be worried. Why didn't you bring your phone, you always carry your phone.

**Turgut:** I didn't think I'd need it. You always carry your phone. I wasn't even working last night, I was only driving you home after the wedding.

**Nana:** It's getting later and later. The later it gets the worse it will be.

**Turgut:** Nana, ten months we've been going out and ten months you've not told them about us. I'm sick of being treated like a taxi driver. They're not stupid, one day they're going to say, it's a bit of a coincidence that girl always gets the same driver. We don't all have parents who can support us through university you know. I'd have thought they would have appreciated some personal initiative. It's the taxi isn't it? I keep forgetting, the aspiring middle classes don't go driving taxis do they?

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**Nana:** Turgut I've told you, I've told you. Give me time. They can't help the way they are; and you know marriage has always been arranged in our family. It still is in lots of families, you know that. Anyway I want to make something of myself before I become any man's wife. Don't make things more difficult for me Turgut. Anyway I might not marry at all, I might dedicate myself to science, **(Sniffs)** unless they make me stay at home.

**Turgut:** Nana, how can they make you stay at home, you're eighteen.

**Nana:** I don't want a rift with them Turgut, they're my family. They, they might, I don't know, say they want me to live at home instead of going away, but I'll throw myself in the river if they make me stay at home.

**Turgut:** Well I'll throw myself in the river if I can't see you anymore. You'll have to rescue me because I can't swim.

**Nana:** Maybe I will and maybe I won't.

**Turgut:** **(Puts arms around her.)** You know you would - I'll go and phone Gary, he'll come and..

**Nana:** **(Interrupts)** No, everyone will know then. It's like a, a big spinal cord out there. Somebody trips and before you know it, nerves carry the news all over the place.

**Turgut:** I'll just ask him to bring petrol; you stay out of sight until he's gone.

**(They begin walking off bridge towards riverbank.)**

**Nana:** Where can I say I've been all this time? I can't stay out all night without getting a load of hassle. I've got to have a damned good reason for not going straight home.

**Turgut:** I've got it, I've thought of something.

**Nana:** What?

**Turgut:** Eaten by bears.

(Derek enters and heads towards the bridge.)

**Derek:** **(Appearing surprised to see them.)** It is today then? I thought it was sometime around now.

**Turgut:** Pardon?

**(Turgut and Nana stare.)**

**Derek:** You must be bloody keen. I'd have thought 4.30 start was early enough for most folk. Me, I'm used to getting up at all hours. I used to drive long distance. That's the reason I can't sleep now it does your body clock in, you cross so many time zones half the time you don't know if you're coming, going or bloody been. Sometimes, I go to sleep at night and then wake two hours later thinking it's breakfast time. The other one's waking in the morning and thinking it's still last night. Bugger for trying to get to work on time. I've got clocks all over the house. I used to bring them back for the wife; cuckoo clocks from Switzerland; one from Italy where a little chap comes out and then his wife comes out and whops him one with a rolling pin. **(Sighs)** Nuthatch, hear it? Somebody said to me last year, I bet you heard lots of birds while you were away, all different species of different birds, but I hardly heard any. Italy, Germany, France, all you get is the same rumble of traffic on the motorways, like a storm always brewing. Coot. I can hear traffic now, it's like something gets into your ears that you can never be rid of. I hear it when I lay down at night, unless it's my arteries. **(Listens.)** Linnet. After my heart do the doctor said get more exercise, do something soothing. Mind you giving up work wasn't exactly soothing. They should all start rolling up soon. Most people haven't a clue about timekeeping. If it says half four they think it's alright to roll up at five; the ranger has to go through it all over again. I'm usually the first, though you've beaten me to it today. Cuckoo.

**Nana:** What?

**Derek:** Cuckoo, hear it? **(Listens.)** There it goes again, no it's a wood pigeon. It was a cuckoo before though wasn't it?

**Turgut:** I couldn't really tell you, does it matter?

**Derek:** **(Indignant)** Does it matter? What's the point of coming to listen to the dawn chorus if it doesn't matter! If you don't care which birds are making what sounds you might as well have stopped in bed!

**Nana:** He's only joking, I think it was a pigeon, that second time.

**Derek:** It would be like going to a concert and not knowing what instruments were making

all the different sounds. You'd hear a piano and you wouldn't know if it were a, a cello or a, a xylophone and you'd hear a, a guitar and you wouldn't know if it were a, a saxophone or a bloody, bloody triangle. You wouldn't know your backside from your earhole mate. Does it matter!

**Turgut:** It was only a joke. It's just my sense of humour this time of the morning. Yes, we are waiting, 4:30 you say; well we weren't sure of the time were we Nana? You don't have to have a ticket or anything for it do you? Er, cuckoo.

**Derek:** **(Strains to hear something.)** Only if you want breakfast later; you have to book that or they don't know how many for. You won't be able to get breakfast if you haven't booked in for it. I had one afterwards last year; sausage, eggs, tomatoes, er mushroom, um fried bread.

**Nana:** We didn't exactly know it was today.

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**Derek:** Tomatoes; I've said that. Fried bacon, sausage. I'm supposed to be knocking back on the fat, doctor's orders. It's hard though; by the time you've given up the ciggies and the booze, not that I used to drink excessively, you feel you need something just to bloody cheer yourself up. Not a lot left is there?

**Turgut:** Sex and drugs and rock n'roll?

**(Derek stares at Turgut.)**

**Turgut:** Only joking.

**Nana:** We were just on our way back from a wedding. If we'd gone home and got changed, and then come back all over again it...

**Derek:** And some of that potato stuff, that's about it, hash er..

**Turgut:** Browns.

**Derek:** Yes. I thought you were a bit dolled up for bird-watching. You can tell most people have just rolled out of bed. Robin. It's calmed me down coming here. Sometimes I just come on my own, sit by the river and listen a bit. It's nice to hear something cheery in the mornings. I'm not a twitcher though, they're just collectors. They don't really care about the birds. They just want to get them down in their little book. Been there, seen it, done it. The little buggers can fall off their branches stone dead afterwards for all they care, as long as they've got them in their little books. I'll tell you something funny, one of these twitchers, they've all got mobiles you know, called all these other twitchers up, all over England. Buzz went round that there was this, what the hell was it, marsh eagle? Flatfooted pinner? I'll think of it in a minute, anyway thousands of the buggers arrived and they watched it perched in a field for about four hours before someone cottoned on what they were all watching with their binoculars was a pile of cow shit.

**Nana:** We were really late as we were going past and so I said to Turgut - you don't have a mobile on you do you? You see his car's broken down. I want to let my father know I'm O.K. They worry.

**Derek:** What the hell was that bird called?

**Nana:** Do you have a mobile? Er, I'm sorry, what's your name?

**Derek:** Derek. I wasn't going to bring it today; one year it went off and three people marked it down as a, what the hell are those that sound like xylophones, I call them xylophone birds; completely gone out of my head. I carry it about in case a job comes up, parcel needs collecting urgent or something. I just do relief these days. They said why don't I re-train for something, but once you're over the hill what's the point? Nobody wants you anyway, waste of bloody time.

**(Turgut gets change out of pocket.)**

**Nana:** I wouldn't be long, just let my parents know, ask Daddy to pick me up after the bird watching, dawn chorus thing.

**(Derek accepts money from Turgut and reluctantly hands over phone. Nana wanders out of sight with it, behind tree.)**

**Derek:** She'd better let her people know. Funny things happen round here.

**Turgut:** Funny things?

**Derek:** Read about them. It's the bridge. People come from all over for the bridge

**Turgut:** It's a fine bridge.

**Derek:** To jump from, top themselves. Chap last week, did away with himself; jumped in right there.

**Turgut:** Drowned?

**Derek:** Broke his ruddy neck; if the bugger had looked where he was going he might have noticed there was only two inches of water. Some only do it for attention; get social services to sort out whatever mess they've got themselves in. They're not the real suicidals. The real suicidals just get on with it; they're not that easy to sort out. He'd have been alright today though there's been a decent amount of rain. You could make a decent job of drowning yourself today. Came from where the hell was it, miles away? Came all this way to drown himself, and then he broke his neck; same difference I suppose. He might as well have stayed in and cut his ruddy throat.

**Turgut:** I suppose it hasn't got the same, er symbolism.

**Nana:** **(Re-appears around tree, calls)** Derek, um what time does it finish, **(louder)** the dawn chorus? When will everyone be gone?

**Derek:** Usually done by about six.

**Nana:** **(Now speaking from front of tree)** Six o'clock daddy. It er really wasn't worth coming back; the er car, it was playing up a bit, and we didn't want to disturb anyone. Well we've just been waiting daddy; listen, listen, all the birds are waking up now. Um, who? Oh Turgut, oh you know Turgut daddy, you've seen him around. He's just a friend ... oh ages, er well he only drives his taxi at night; well you'll see him when you.. there was no reason daddy.. What? No, no of course it's not ominous, he's an

absolute gentleman. It started so early it wasn't worth.. listen, cuckoo, cuckoo. Oh I do like birds daddy.. Turgut? Oh he's mad on them. **(Enthusiastically)** Listen, listen it's a bald green finch. **(Holds phone away from ear towards wood.)** Oh no daddy, it's really not necessary, **(Hangs down arm holding phone)** to come right away.

**(Nana returns mobile to Derek. They move away from the bridge.)**

**Derek:** I'd have thought there'd be more people than this by now. Hordes last year, mind you there were too many; spoilt it for everyone; kids, dogs, cats the lot; like a bun fight. Hardly heard any birds, scared the buggers right off.

**Gina:** **(Offstage)** Coooooooooooo

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**(Gina enters)**

**Gina:** Thank the lord you're all still here. I had visions of being on my own. **(Addressing Derek)** I couldn't remember if you said this Saturday or next. It was creepy walking from the car park. I kept thinking I could hear all these screams; I was watching this scary video last night, 'Guess what we did last summer' or something, frightened the socks off me. I kept thinking I wish I knew more bird sounds, then at least I'd know if it was feather or fiend. If I'm going to be murdered I'd like to have a bit of notice!

**Derek:** You didn't tell me you were coming.

**Gina:** Well I woke up early and thought, what am I going to do today? Then I remembered you saying about the dawn chorus. I hope it's Graham that's leading it, he makes everything sound so interesting.

**Derek:** They all do, it's their job.

**Gina:** Well it's Graham that does it for me, perhaps it's his profile.

**Derek:** He can't have many worries to crease it up.

**Gina:** Some people think he's a bit sarky, but I think he's just got a dry sense of humour.

**Derek:** It's funny there's not more here.

**Gina:** There's four of us. There wouldn't be any if it wasn't today. I expect Graham will be along in a minute or two. **(To Derek)** Are you feeling any better today duck?

**Derek:** About the same, not much they can do.

**Gina:** You just have to do what you can; avoid sudden shocks.

**(Rob, with a twang of his guitar, he sits up from where he has been lying obscured from view. He looks around as if he's been abducted to another planet.)**

**Gina:** Like that!

**Rob:** What the bloody hell am I doing here?

**(They all stare.)**

**Rob:** What the hell am I doing here?

**Turgut:** I don't know.

**Rob:** Leicester last night; Abergavenny tonight; somewhere I can't pronounce tomorrow night

**Derek:** Snettiswood Forest today mate.

**Rob:** **(Stands up stiffly; strums a few chords; strikes a few poses to trees; strikes forehead.)**Shit. It's all come back to me, I've been abandoned; they'll be in bloody Abergavenny before they do a head count. Pee pee stop last night, they've gone off without me - buggers. **(Walks over to group.)** Anyone got a mobile?

**(Turgut and Nana look at Derek.)**

**Derek:** There's a call box on the main road.

**Rob:** **(Looks at watch.)** Bloody Hell! It's nearly five o'clock! I'm on in four hours. Four hours to get to Abergavenny. Bloody hell, it sounds like a song. God it's not funny. I've slept all day. I can't believe it. No wonder I can't move, I've slept...

**Nana:** **(Interrupts)** It's morning.

**Rob:** Morning? It's a bloody noisy morning! What the hell are you all doing? It's not even five o'clock! I've had these weird dreams, they felt so real; people coming and going and shouting and, this bridge, this bridge in my dream. But it was moonlight, and these, these people kept saying they were going to do themselves in.. drown themselves or shoot themselves or strangle themselves or.. like when you're staying in a hotel room and people keep disappearing through doors off a long corridor and the sounds are all disjointed.. was it you? You're not an amateur theatre group; or a suicide support group?

**Nana:** We're listening to the birds. We've come for the dawn chorus.

**Derek:** I'm beginning to wonder if we have got the right day.

**Nana:** **(Listens)** Robin, listen, it's magical. When we arrived there were just one or two singing, now they're all joining in.

**Rob:** Can anyone give me a lift to the station, there is a station?

**Gina:** I can give you a lift when we've finished.

**Derek:** I can give you a lift when we've finished. **(Sotto to Gina)** You should be careful who you're offering lifts to.

**Gina:** **(Sotto to Derek)** You don't know what I've got inside my handbag.

**Rob:** I'll never know what you've got in your handbag madam. I am a travelling musician. I make merry music, not murder and mayhem. **(To Derek)** How long will you be?

**Derek:** An hour or two.

**Rob:** An hour or two - listening to birds! Wake me up when you've got your engine running; I feel like shit.

**Derek:** **(To Gina.)** I said I wasn't sure it was today.

**Gina:** Are you telling me you think you've got the wrong day, now I've got myself up at this ungodly hour?

**Derek:** I only said it was roundabout this time; that I had the idea it was today.

**Gina:** Why have you come if you're not sure? It's like thinking it's the January sales and getting up at some God forsaken time just in case.

**Nana:** **(Worried)** I really really hope it's today.

**Rob:** I don't think it's today.

**Nana:** If it's not today – please could you wait, just for a little while, until my father's been. You see, as I was explaining to Derek, Turgut's car has run out of petrol, it really has, and we should have been back last night, but he, my father thinks we've just been waiting for the birds, dawn chorus. If there's no-one else here, it will look, a bit, suspicious. He shouldn't be long. We can just pretend we've all been listening; otherwise..

**Turgut:** He'll kill us.

**Nana:** He'll kill you!

**Gina:** Before I commit myself to anything, can we get this absolutely straight. Who will your father kill?

**Nana:** Turgut.

**Gina:** I'm beginning to get a funny feeling about this morning.

**Derek:** Chaffinch, squeaky gate.

**Rob:** Blackbird, he starts; bloody hell, how did I know that? Oh yes **(Sings and strums)** 'Blackbird singing in the dead of the night, only waiting for the moment to' - to what?

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**Turgut:** Arrive, for the moment to arrive.

**Rob:** What moment? What's it waiting for?

**Gina:** It's the early bird that gets the worm?

**Rob:** A worm? Bloody hell, that spoils it a bit doesn't it, **(Sings)** 'only waiting for the

moment to arrive when the early bird gets the worm.’ **(Listens)** Clever little buggers, way they synchronize and harmonize; no rehearsals. Imagine them all - blackbird, I’ll pitch a key; thrush, give me an A, sparrow, give me a b; crow, I’ll take the tenor; albatross, give me a C.

**Derek:** Cuckoo, hear it now?

**Rob:** It would be handy if they all said it like that wouldn’t it

**Derek:** Cuckoo?

**Gina:** It would sound a bit boring if they all said cuckoo.

**Rob:** Announced themselves like the cuckoo. You know, if the - bloody hell, name another bird, my brain’s gone.

**Turgut:** Eagle.

**Rob:** If eagles just said ea-gle ea-gle and..

**Nana:** Budgie

**Rob:** Budgie? - If budgies chirped bud-gie, bud-gie - you could all stay in bed couldn’t you? Listen to the buggers through the window. I mean we introduce ourselves by name. We don’t give this funny sound and expect everyone to guess who we are.

**Gina:** I’m Gina.

**Rob:** Oh hi I’m Rob, or perhaps I should say **(Makes a weird sound.)**

**(A few moments of silence, everyone looking around, waiting to see if others turn up. Rob strums and sings a morning or bird oriented song, e.g. up-tempo version of ‘Morning has broken, like the first morning, Blackbird has spoken, like the first word’ etc. Nana dances an Eastern dance – Gina keeps time by clapping – Turgut joins in the dance – Derek stands apart.)**

**Nana:** **(Claps hands together.)** I’ve just had this great idea. Perhaps, if one of you could lead us; like be telling us what the different birds are, then when my father comes, it will look more er official.

**Gina:** Well it’s no good asking me; I can’t tell a blue-tit from a buzzard. Derek will do it won’t you Derek.. He knows lots about birds; not like Graham of course, but enough to rub by.

**Derek:** I’m not doing it, you have to be led through it properly by a ranger; it’s no good just having a stab at it.

**Gina:** Go on, you could try. You come every year, you must know the sort of thing they do, and you’ve got beige on like the rangers. You wouldn’t want, er Nana, Nana to get it in the neck would you?

**Derek:** **(Indignant)**I’m not going to impersonate an official for anybody. You start one thing and it leads to another, and then before you know it.. Some of the other drivers used to mess with the mileage on their way home so they didn’t have to stop, but they usually came a cropper in the..

**Rob:** **(Interrupts)** I'll have a go. In for a penny in for a pigeon. Anything to get back on the road.

**Derek:** There's not a lot of point doing it if you can't even tell a.. turkey from a....

**Gina:** **(Interrupts)** Well at least he's willing to have a go.

**Derek:** **(Outraged.)** You can't just go around impersonating rangers.

**Gina:** Actually, that's a good point; you don't look a bit like a ranger. Derek give him your mac duck, he'll look more the part.

**Derek:** Not bloody likely.

**Gina:** Oh come on. **(Goes up to him, strokes his beige mac.)** Rob will swap with you, won't you Rob; you can wear his jacket.

**Derek:** Denim. I haven't worn denim for for, God I can't remember.

**Gina:** Go on Derek, it'll only be for half an hour.

**Derek:** I'm not taking part in any stupid bloody exercise for the sake of anybody's bloody father. **(To Nana)** Excuse my French. **(To Gina)** You're just trying to make me look a..

**Nana:** **(Interrupts)** Don't make him Gina, it's OK.

**Gina:** **(Interrupts)** Derek! I'm ordering you to get that off. I've been dying to get that off your back for bloody years, just..

**(Gina struggles to get Derek's mac off and Derek grudgingly allows her. Rob throws his denim jacket over and she bullies Derek into putting it on. Rob puts on Derek's mac.)**

**Gina:** **(To Derek)** There, it suits you. You look younger already.

**Derek:** I can't move.

**Gina:** It's called fitting you, instead of following you.

**Rob:** Does it suit me?

**Gina:** It isn't supposed to suit you, just get on with it.

**Derek:** This is bloody stupid; anybody with a grain of common sense is going to smell a rat. There wouldn't be much point having rangers if anyone could bloody ponce around impersonating them.

**Rob:** This isn't exactly the sort of gear for pouncing in; quick flash maybe. **(Goes behind a tree and leaps out, making flashing movements with coat.)**

**Derek:** What's he insinuating? **(To Gina)** Is he being funny or something; is he trying to say something?

**Gina:** Don't be daft, he's just fooling.

**Derek:** You're right there, fool, fooling; I'll be back for my coat when you've finished.  
(Stomps off into woods.)

**Gina:** He's been a tetchy since his wife went; poor bugger, she couldn't stand him around the place after he'd given up long distance. She'd got her own life going if you know what I mean. Mind you I felt a bit sorry for her as well. You get into a routine don't you? And there's a hell of a lot of difference between a husband you're used to packing up for once a week or so, and one that's there for everything that's going. I keep saying, next time I'm going to get a dog, or maybe a long distance lorry driver.  
(To Rob) Are you ever going to start?

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**Rob:** Right then; God I feel a complete pillock in this. If the groupies could see me now.  
(Strums and sings a few lines from 'If my Friends could See me Now' adapting words, e.g. If they could see me know, Dressed in this old beige mac, If they could see me now, They'd go and not come back...')

**Nana:** (Listening to birds) They sound like beautiful souls singing, people that have died and come back as birds. Are you going to start Rob?

**Rob:** Start yes, right, well, oh there's so many sounds it's overwhelming isn't it. Can you hear that one that calling yippee? (Laughs) It is listen it's saying yippee. (Strums, singing) 'Yip I adee ay aye ay aye, Yip I adee I aye.'

**Nana:** Get on with it Rob.

(SFX. Dog barks)

**Rob:** (Listens) And another that sounds like barking

(They listen and a few seconds later, Derek re-appears looking flustered..)

**Derek:** I found a dog in the wood, there's a note on his collar; it's a suicide.

**Rob:** I didn't know dogs committed suicide.

**Derek:** (Turns on him angrily.) That's because you're an ignorant lout. You you wouldn't know a suicide if one was staring you in the face. (To rest of group.) It say's to look after him; it's got a bank account number. I've tied him to a tree.

(SFX. Few more barks.)

**Gina:** Oh my God. (Goes to have a look in direction of barking.)

**Turgut:** Perhaps they haven't done it yet. They could be sitting thinking about it.

**Nana:** If we all look we might catch them in time.

**Turgut:** She's going to be a doctor, perhaps she can do something.

**Nana:** I don't know if A level biology is really going to help.

**Gina:** **(Returns from looking at dog.)** It'll help more than business studies duck.

**Turgut:** You did business studies?

**Gina:** Diploma. It's a lovely little dog; fancy leaving a lovely little dog like that.

**Derek:** When people feel desperate they leave everything behind.

**Rob:** We don't know who it is. Who the hell are we supposed to be looking for?

**Turgut:** I don't suppose there can be many people here this time of the morning.

**Gina:** God I've got the goosebumps, but I suppose we ought to try and do something.

**Rob:** Perhaps if we all take a different direction. I could go east, the way the sun's rising. It's the only bloody way I know.

**Gina:** I'll go with you if you don't know the area.

**Derek:** I didn't think you knew the area Gina. I could go with him.

**Gina:** And leave me staggering about on my own, thanks. I'll go with him.

**Turgut:** Shall we take west?

**Derek:** Well I can't do north and south. I'll take the dog and do north. When you've driven long distance, you get a feel for direction.

**Nana:** What about south though?

**Rob:** Bit of bloody bad luck he's having if he does it in the south.

**Turgut:** We'll come back south. What do you say we meet back here in say, twenty minutes? Shall we synchronize our watches?

**Gina:** I thought they only said that in war films.

**Rob:** Escape from Devil's Wood.

**Turgut:** **(Checks time.)** Twenty five past five. OK see you all later.

**Nana:** When my father comes we were listening to birds.

**Turgut:** What else would all these people be doing in the woods at this time?

**(They all exit in their various directions.)**

**(Hazel enters and approaches water, dithers; a light similar to a sunbeam appears. She breathes deeply, raises her arms in the air, and starts doing her exercises.)**

**Hazel:** Oh my God. My God! What am I doing? What the hell am I doing? Just how fit do you have to be to drown yourself Hazel. Oh it's those birds; those bloody birds; they

make me feel, oh that gold and yellow bird; the way the sun catches it's feathers, it's like a, like a; the way the sun catches its feathers.. The sun.. Why do I always feel better when the sun shines? I always do. I always feel down when it's dark, and up when it's light, and down when it's dark and, oh my God I've done it again; bloody hell, it always catches me unawares. Oh Bert, what a bloody fool you've got for a mistress. We'll migrate like the birds, south for the winter, follow the sun, oh yes; oh God but it's been such a long winter. That bird, it's like, it's like a a..

**Alison:** (Enters quietly and stands behind Hazel.) Phoenix

(Hazel yells in surprise.)

**Alison:** I'm sorry, I didn't mean to frighten you, I saw the bird too.

**Hazel:** Oh God, it's OK, it's OK. I didn't think anyone.. Weren't you here before? Aren't you with the birdwatchers?

**Alison:** How many are there?

**Hazel:** The place is crawling with them. To tell you the truth it's quite heartening, such enthusiasm. You know, people caring about them. You er haven't seen a black dog around have you?

**Alison:** A black dog, no. That's what they call depression isn't it, back dog? Sorry, that's really nothing to do with it.

**Hazel:** Yes they do call it that, funny. To be honest I've been pretty down; I'm stupid, I get very low in the winter, very low, especially if oh, other things go wrong. I forget how much better I feel when the spring comes. It's to do with the sunlight.

**Alison:** It can't solve real problems though can it?

**Hazel:** Well it makes you feel more like dealing with them.

**Alison:** There's not always an answer though.. not a...

**Hazel:** Um..

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**Alison:** Excuse me, I've seen this interesting duck on the far bank. My husband and I are bird-watching and I said I'd try and get a closer look before we go; I can never resist babies.

**Hazel:** Babies?

**Alison:** Baby ducks. My shoes are a bit slippy, but there's a tree or two I can hang onto.. Be careful not to drown myself.

**Hazel:** Are you OK?

**Alison:** Oh yes, I'm fine. What time is it?

**Hazel:** **(Looks at sky)** After five I guess. I just love your jumper, it looks so warm; it's wool isn't it?

**Alison:** Yes, it's wool; it's getting a bit old now, bobbly. They get bobbly if you wear a coat over them.

**Hazel:** Oh I think it's really lovely; do you mind if I ask where you bought it from? **(Looks at own jumper.)** Sometimes you wear a thing so long it feels like your own skin. Gets you down; makes you want to slough it off, like a snake.

**Alison:** Actually I knitted it; I, used to do a lot of knitting - for the family; but I think yours is lovely; South American isn't it?

**Hazel:** Incas, well their ancestors, or is it their descendants? It could have been any of them, I've had it that damned long. Sometimes you can't find what you want in the shops can you?

**Alison:** Why don't you have it? I wasn't going to keep it much longer anyhow.

**Hazel:** Oh no, I didn't mean that! God you must think I'm so cheeky.

**Alison:** We could swap; I could have yours. I'm sick of mine too.

**Hazel:** Are you sure?

**Alison:** I'm quite sure.

**Hazel:** Well I suppose fair exchange, you must think I'm so..

**Alison:** **(Interrupts)** Not at all; have the hat it matches, I insist.

**(They exchange jumpers. Hazel slips Alison's woolly hat on; it covers her hair.)**

**Alison:** It suits you.

**Hazel:** It's a bit like charity shops isn't it. You take something in you're sick of and get something someone else is sick of.

**Ian:** **(Offstage shouts.)** Alison.

**Alison:** **(Agitated)** I have to go, the ducks will be gone; oh dear, oh dear.

**Hazel:** Are you - sure you're alright?

**Alison:** Oh yes; I've delayed too long already. My husband, doesn't like to be kept waiting.

**Hazel:** I'd better get going and find my dog.

**(Alison walks over bridge to other side and Hazel exits. Alison dithers near edge, then carries on upstream, dithers at another point in the river, looks around as if dissatisfied with spot, then exits.)**

**Hazel:** **(Offstage shouts)** Bert.

**(Hazel enters**

**Hazel:** (shouts.) Bert.

**(Hazel exits in opposite direction and on opposite bank to Alison. Ian enters a short while later.)**

**Ian:** **(Looking hot and bothered; calls)** Alison. **(He sneaks a glance at Tony, still seated on lip of bridge; calls)** Alison - the children will be waking if we don't hurry. I'm going to take a last look at the swans. I'll meet you there; take care - the bank's slippery.

**(Ian exits in the same direction as Hazel. Short while later Rob returns with Gina tottering after.)**

**Gina:** Not a sausage. It's probably a hoax; I bet some kids tried it on, tied it on for a laugh.

**Rob:** **(Slumps down on grass.)**You haven't got a ciggy?

**Gina:** **(Sits beside Rob)** I didn't put them in my bag today; Graham's dead against smokers.

**Rob:** He's got x-ray eyes this Graham?

**Gina:** If I've got them, I'm tempted. Gum?

**(Gina fishes in bag and hands Rob a piece)**

**Rob:** Cheers.

**Gina:** Low nicotine.

**Rob:** Any port in a storm. I'll be bloody glad to be out of here.

**Gina:** It's a beautiful spot; God what a morning though. I'll never get up at this time again, nothing but trouble. That's what comes of getting out of your routine. The birds sound absolutely gorgeous though don't they. I've never heard them sing like this before, a twitter here and there, but not a full blown choir.

**Rob:** There's undercurrents here, I can feel them; its not just the river. It's as if, if you peeled away the birds and the scenery and.. there'd be something else underneath; beauty and death. God what have I said that for?; I've got this feeling. I mean what the hell am I doing here for a start? What the bloody hell am I doing here? I should be miles away.

**Gina:** We've been through that.

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**Rob:** Something shed me here, as if I was on a fairground roundabout and I flew off, here, why?

**Gina:** Perhaps it was to meet someone? Someone special?

**Rob:** I'm very sensitive to atmosphere; that's why I write songs; that note on the dog, I don't know, it makes me feel as if anything, absolutely anything could happen here; anything between heaven and hell. If someone told me briars were shooting up all around us, locking us in for an hundred years, I'd believe them.

**Gina:** And I'd just about given up on Prince Charming.

**Rob:** Have you Gina?

**Gina:** Very nearly.

**Rob:** Tell me about you Gina. What do you do for a living?

**Gina:** What makes you think I'm not a housewife?

**Rob:** If you were a housewife you wouldn't be in a wood on your own, with a load of nutters at God knows what time in the morning.

**Gina:** I might have come for the birds.

**Rob:** You look as much into birds as nuclear physics.

**Gina:** That's discrimination. I couldn't sleep, then I remembered what Derek had said about the dawn chorus; and thought of Graham's manly profile. I work in insurance, claims department. I'll sort you out if you put your leg through the ceiling.

**Rob:** Will you sort me out if I don't put my leg through the ceiling?

**Gina:** You look older in that coat. How old are you?

**Rob:** How old do you think?

**Gina:** Forty?

**Rob:** Bloody hell, that's what comes of sleeping rough.

**Gina:** How old are you then?

**Rob:** Thirty nine.

**Gina:** Well you don't look as old as Derek, he's forty five. Have you got someone at home?

**Rob:** I've been in relationships; but it's difficult. We don't make a lot of money, but we keep rolling; and you know what they say about rolling stones; lots of birds though.

**Gina:** A special bird?

**Rob:** After so long birds seem the same everywhere. Same sorts; you know, the noisy starling types that flock into the clubs; ones that fly about on their own, golden eagles or whatever. Some you'd like to encourage on your lawn, the pretty little ones, chaffinches. People don't feed ugly birds do they? You don't see anybody chucking bread out for - crows or - vultures. Sometimes I think the best relationships are formed when you're young, only you're too young to know it. There used to be someone, but we went our own ways. She was into saving the earth, living in burrows and up trees; probably got her own nest by now. You?

**Gina:** I'm still waiting for Mr. Right. I've been through so many lefts, I must be nearing the back of the wardrobe.

**Rob:** What about what's his face, Derek?

**Gina:** Derek? He's just a neighbour; I jolly him along. He's been really down what with one thing and another.

**Rob:** He seems to like you.

**Gina:** He's alright, reliable, apart from this morning. Tell you something, **(Moves closer)** I bet the girls fling themselves at you like metal filings don't they Rob. I mean girls go mad for singers.

**Rob:** Well, **(Moves closer)** yes Gina they do; they come flying through the air like paper clips and staples and –

**(Rob and Gina kiss)**

**Rob:** – filing cabinets and –

**(They kiss again)**

**Rob:** – mmm, and hole punchers, and, and in trays and, and – It's these birds, there's something, something

**(Still kissing, rolling around.)**

**Rob:** – orgiastic.

**(They stop kissing)**

**Gina:** Don't be cheeky.

**Rob:** Procreation. It's all about procreation, mating.

**Gina:** Finding a husband?

**Rob:** It's their mating calls, all this dawn chorus business. That's what it's all about isn't it. It's a come on, a wink, a nod, a lonely hearts column... **(He sits up.)**

**Gina:** Like a ritual. My gran told me that when she was young, every Saturday evening all the girls used to walk up one side of the road, hordes of them, and all the blokes down the other. When they got to the top of the hill, they'd all go round this tree and start off again.

**Rob:** Sounds as good a method of birth control as any.

**Gina:** **(Gives Rob a playful shove.)** If a couple of chaps saw two girls they fancied, they'd cross the road and walk with them.

**Rob:** **(Scrambles to feet.)** I'm a silly old sod.

**Gina:** **(Sits up.)** I must say you blow very hot and cold.

**Rob:** (Goes over to river. Gina gets up and totters after him.) God you're right Gina.

**Gina:** I am?

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**Rob:** When you said you never know what might happen if you step out of your routine. I've been going round and round the same track so long, it's worn so deep, I've been unable to climb out. **(Stares into water.)** I'm growing old Gina, one day I shall die. I want some chicks; I want something of myself to leave behind.

**Gina:** Is this a proposal or a proposition?

**Rob:** That's why I've been brought here, to make me stop and take stock. Do you believe in Karma Gina?

**Gina:** God I wish I'd got my ciggies. I thought Derek was wet, but at least he makes no pretence. I'm going to look for somebody with a cigarette.

**Rob:** Perhaps I'm just having withdrawal symptoms; who's most likely to have a cigarette on them?

**(Rob and Gina exit. Turgut Enters.)**

**Turgut:** We're first. It was probably a trick.

**(Nana enters)**

**Nana:** I hope so.

**(Turgut takes Nana in his arms.)**

**Nana:** Turgut.

**Turgut:** Mmm.

**Nana:** You understand how it is with my family don't you? I know it's a bit funny, but yours have been here longer. We're not quite so, so...

**Turgut:** It's OK, I understand.

**Nana:** That's not all though.

**Turgut:** What's not all?

**Nana:** Oh nothing.

**Turgut:** Tell me.

**Nana:** You know I said that oh for generations we've had marriages arranged in our family.

**Turgut:** Some friends of mine are in that situation, but they go away to university, they make

friends, and you know, they take their friends home and they just keep saying they don't want to get married yet, and don't arrange anything; and they keep putting it off until in the end the parents are just glad when they bring any nice girl home they'd like to marry.

**Nana:** What about fiancé's though?

**(SFX. Ear splitting scream from river bank somewhere. Turgut and Nana leap apart.)**

**Turgut:** That probably means they've found something!

**Nana:** We'd better go and see if we can help.

**(Gina enters with Rob)**

**Gina:** What the hell was that?

**Nana:** **(To Gina)** I thought it might have been you who screamed.

**Turgut:** Where's Derek?

**Gina:** Derek? But he couldn't have made a noise like that.

**Nana:** Do you think it's someone fooling?

**Gina:** I wouldn't like to hear them when they're serious.

**Turgut:** Which way did the sound come from?

**Rob:** Don't start all that again. Let's stick together this time. This place, it reminds me of that old Agatha Christie film, you know, then there were 10.

**Gina:** It was politically incorrect.

**Turgut:** What was?

**Gina:** Ten.

**Rob:** What?

**Nana:** I wonder where Derek's got to?

**Turgut:** We'll be able to see better from the bridge.

**(Turgut leads the group onto the bridge. Gina and Rob are looking towards back of stage)**

**Gina:** There's so many leaves and rushes at the sides it's hard to see.

**Turgut:** **(Looking towards audience)** The river winds out of sight this way. The water's rushing along, there must be strong currents; there's a lot of rubbish around the sides.

**Nana:** There's a shopping trolley.

**(Ian enters and walks towards bridge.)**

**Turgut:** **(To Nana)** What did you mean just then, when you said fiancé?

**Nana:** I'll tell you later, it's private.

**Turgut:** A private fiancé?

**Nana:** Turgut, it's not official.

**Turgut:** An unofficial fiancé? That's why you never introduced me to them.

**Nana:** It's not what you think. It was arranged when we were babies, we've never met. I don't even know what he looks like.

**Turgut:** But he's your fiancé, your family expect you to marry him one day!

**Nana:** You said yourself, parents get weary. I don't have to marry him, but they'll be upset if I marry anyone else first.

**Turgut:** First?

**Ian:** **(Reaches bridge.)** You haven't seen my wife have you, big woolly jumper, matching hat? We were bird-watching and she went off to look at something.

**Gina:** Did you hear that scream, about five minutes ago?

**Ian:** God, no I didn't.

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**Turgut:** We found a suicide note.

**Ian:** What!

**Turgut:** A dog, there was a note on its collar.

**Ian:** A dog?

**Gina:** Well I expect it was a person who wrote it. When we heard this terrible scream we thought ..

**Ian:** **(Interrupts)** A suicide note? Was it signed?

**Gina:** You don't think it was your wife?

**Ian:** Why should it be? We haven't got a dog

**Rob:** Well, that's it then. No reason for her to have caught a stray dog and put a note on its collar is there?

**Nana:** Perhaps your wife screamed because she found something.

**Ian:** I do hope not.

**Turgut:** There's Derek gone, and the dog; there's the note. There's that terrible scream; there's your wife missing. **(To Nana)** There's your fiancé.

**Nana:** **(leaning over to look into the water)** There's a man.

**Rob:** Where?

**Nana:** He's sitting on a ledge outside the bridge.

**(Group all clutter around spot and peer over top of panel. Tony looks up.)**

**Turgut:** **(To Tony.)** Are you alright mate?

**Tony:** Back off, back away, or I'll jump!

**(Lights off. Tabs close.)**

**INTERVAL**

**Act 2**

**Scene 1 – Bridge over a river**

**(Tabs open. Lights up. Group are on bridge as we left them.)**

**Turgut:** We don't mean you any harm, can we help?

**Tony:** Just back off and leave me be.

**Turgut:** If we back off, do you promise you won't jump? **(No reply.)** Do you promise you won't jump if we back off?

**Tony:** I'll do what I like, go away and mind your own bloody business.

**Gina:** **(Sotto.)** We're agitating him, has anyone got a mobile?

**Nana:** Derek's got a mobile.

**Rob:** Great.

**Turgut:** We have to keep him calm.

**Ian:** I'll go and talk to him. You telephone for help.

**Turgut:** He said to let him be.

**Ian:** Let him be to what, jump? .

**Gina:** It's too dangerous on the ledge. If you slip, you'll go straight in the river. Talk to him from here.

**Turgut:** Don't excite him.

**Ian:** You all go.

**Tony:** **(Shouts)** I'm giving you one minute to get off this bridge. If you're still here then, I'll jump!

**Ian:** See he'll jump; he won't miss one. When he's quietened, I'll talk him down – up.

**Gina:** But what about your wife?

**Tony:** What are you gossiping about? Bugger off, now.

**Turgut:** Alright mate, OK we're going, but remember there's always hope, there has to be.

**Nana:** Listen to the birds, listen to the birds.

**Tony:** Just bugger off will you.

**Gina:** Calm down, we all feel like finishing it sometimes, but it lifts; the mornings are always the worst, I know. **(To others)** Come on.

**Rob:** **(Sotto)** He won't miss me, I'll stay with you. I must have been spewed up here for some bloody purpose.

**Ian:** (Sotto) He might not notice one missing, but he's bound to notice two. Mingle as you go off; if you see my wife, tell her what's happened.

**Gina:** (Talking about Ian as she goes.) He deserves a medal.

(They exit except Ian.)

**Tony:** Is anybody there? I know there's someone there, bugger off, leave me alone.

(Ian thumps bridge floor with foot.)

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**Tony:** I've warned you, clear off or I'll jump now.

(Ian stamps floor again.)

**Tony:** I'm going to count to five; if you've not gone then I'll jump, do you hear; one, two, three.

(Ian again stamps on floor.)

**Tony:** You bastard, you bloody bastard; you don't care do you? Well I'm not performing for you or anybody else. If I want to end it, I'll end it in my own time.

**Ian:** (Calls through whatever gap exists – they cannot see each other.) If you're going, why don't you go, one way or another?

**Tony:** What's it to you? Is there a bloody queue?

**Ian:** Either jump, or stand up and I'll try and help you back.

**Tony:** (Sobs) I was going to do it. It was dark when I got here, and the moon and the stars were out, and the blackbird was singing, and then the cockerel crowed, and I was going to do it. God I would have done it.

**Ian:** (Reassuringly) Stand up so I can reach you.

**Tony:** I'm not ready yet, I've got to think, I've got to think. God I would have done it then, I was really going to do it.

**Ian:** You've changed your mind again?

**Tony:** I don't know, I don't know; the heat's gone out of the moment.

**Ian:** It might come back.

**Tony:** It's there; the problem hasn't gone away; it's not just the one thing. God it's like a pile of dominoes, one goes and the bloody lot goes.

**Ian:** It's hard to start again with nothing. (Tony is silent.) You've been sitting there a long time.

**Tony:** You were here before?

**Ian:** I, we were bird-watching. We thought you were, fishing.

**Tony:** I've been waiting. I came here to end it, but as soon as I arrived, people kept coming.

**Ian:** But they've all gone now.

**Tony:** You're here.

**Ian:** Yes, I'm here. The people that were here earlier, could you hear them? I mean, did you hear them talking?

**Tony:** The bridge attracts people for the wrong reasons.

**Ian:** What wrong reasons?

**Tony:** There's undercurrents, not the water.

**Ian:** Why do you say that? What did you hear?

**Tony:** It's more body language.

**Ian:** What body language?

**Tony:** It doesn't matter.

**Ian:** Tell me.

**Tony:** I think I'd better get up, I don't want my photo in the bloody local rag.

**(Ian moves away from gap he has been speaking through, and goes to panel that Tony is in front of. Tony tries to move.)**

**Tony:** I've seized up, I'm stuck; what a farce.

**(Ian looks over side and Tony looks up.)**

**Tony:** You were here before.

**Ian:** I told you, my wife and I were bird-watching.

**Tony:** Bloody funny bird-watching

**Ian:** What do you mean by that?

**Tony:** You told them she was missing. You were arguing, you were trying to pull her in.

**Ian:** We were fooling around.

**Tony:** I know you.

**Ian:** We've been through that.

**Tony:** No, I know you from somewhere else. What's your name?

**Ian:** Never mind my name, I'm a friend. I can't reach you from here, I'll get a branch. **(Ian leaves bridge, and returns with a branch, which he lowers.)** Grab it and steady yourself.

**(Tony tries to grab the branch, but Ian starts waving it around, banging it into him.)**

**Tony:** Careful! You're going to have me off; ouch, aagh, stop it. What are you trying to do?

**(Ian jabs at Tony who wobbles.)**

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**Tony:** What the hell are you doing? You're not helping at - my God! I know who you are now! You bastard, what have you done with your wife?

**Ian:** You want to know where my wife is? Well I'll satisfy your curiosity. I've killed her; I drowned her, for purely personal reasons, and now I'm going to kill you, because you're a wimp; because you've been sitting there vacillating for hours listening to things that don't concern you. Well you came here to die and you won't be disappointed. Why don't you save me the trouble? Go on jump - do yourself a favour, you know things can never work out; be a man.

**Tony:** Don't say that, you bastard **(Shouts)** Help.

**(Alison enters. Ian drops branch when he sees her.)**

**Alison:** What on earth are you doing?

**Ian:** **(Stands staring at her.)** You've changed. Where did you get that jumper?

**Alison:** It's a long story.

**Tony:** Help me!

**(Alison looks over side.)**

**Ian:** I was helping him up.

**Tony:** He's trying to kill me. He's already killed his wife.

**Ian:** I prevented him jumping off the bridge and now he's turned on me.

**Tony:** I'm going to fall.

**Ian:** He's sat so long he can't move. I was trying to help him; you're right Alison, we are ordinary people.

**Alison:** Thank God you've come to your senses. I'll go and sit with him, I'm nimbler than you. You

get help.

**Ian:** Some birdwatchers have gone for help. Be careful, he's unstable.

**Alison:** **(Clambers via most suitable route, maybe via bent rail, and sits beside Tony. To Tony)** It's alright. You're safe now.

**Tony:** He's the one who's unstable; ask him where his wife is.

**Alison:** It's OK, sit still, let's all stay calm.

**Tony:** Did you hear what I said?

**Alison:** Sshhh, listen, listen to the birds. You can only hear them if you listen, it's very calming. Sometimes you just can't hear what's all around. We saw you earlier, when we were, bird-watching, we wondered what you were doing but it's alright.

**Tony:** He's just told me he's killed his wife, don't you care?

**Alison:** I think you misunderstand. Things aren't always what they seem. Lean on me and wiggle your toes.

**Tony:** Are you mad too? He's just said he's killed his wife, he...

**Alison:** **(Interrupts)** Well I'm his wife and here I am, so he can't have done. Take nice deep breaths, listen to the music of the forest.

**Tony:** You look different –

**Alison:** I feel different.

**Ian:** I think you should get him to try and come up, he'll have you both off.

**Tony:** I'm not going anywhere.

**Alison:** That's good, we'll stay and listen to the birds.

**Tony:** You're his wife – you were here before?

**Alison:** That's right.

**Ian:** Help him up Alison. Let's get you both back onto the bridge. I'm going to pass the branch down, grab it, grab hold of it.

**(Ian passes branch over top, but when Alison takes hold, it wobbles.)**

**Alison:** Keep it steady Ian, keep it still.

**Tony:** I warned you about him.

**Ian:** For God's sake, I'm trying to make it easy for you, grab it

**(Ian droops it over side, but it again gives way when Alison tries to use it to get up.)**

**Alison:** Ian stop, it's not working.

**(Enter Turgut, Nana, Gina and Rob. They hurry to join Ian.)**

**Ian:** My wife's gone down to try and help him, he's rambling. I'm afraid he might pull her in with him.

**Gina:** Oh God.

**Turgut:** Let's be calm, try and keep him calm, we've sent for assistance.

**Gina:** Bloody call box was out of action. I had to show a leg to get a car to stop; way they hurtle past there.

**Ian:** I hope they're quick, I'm scared he'll harm my wife.

**Tony:** **(Shouts)** It's him that's trying to kill his wife.

**Ian:** He's totally paranoid; care in the community, they've got a thing or two to answer for.

**Nana:** The police shouldn't be long, we said it was an emergency.

**Gina:** That driver, I hope he remembers where he was when we stopped him.

**Rob:** The police will know where the bridge is.

**Alison:** Please, will everyone stop chattering, shshhhh, just listen to that thrush; I bet he's sitting in a tree top somewhere thinking he owns the whole world. **(Starts to sing e.g.)** 'If I ruled the world, every day would be the first day of spring, every hmm would have a new song to sing, hmm hmm hmm'

**(Gina joins in here and there.)**

**Ian:** **(Goes to squeeze through gap to join Alison and Tony)** I'm going to support my wife. I can't just stand here powerless.

**Nana:** Oh no, no-one else please.

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**Ian:** **(Edges up to Alison on ledge)** Help will be here soon.

**Gina:** **(Calls to Tony)** Your dog's been found. He's safe with Derek.

**Nana:** Dog's can be like family.

**Gina:** **(To Tony)** Yes, he's fit as a flea, so you've got no worries there.

**Tony:** Are you talking to me?

**Gina:** Yes, sorry I don't know your name.

**Tony:** Tony, it's Tony.

**Gina:** Well er Derek will look after your dog until you're feeling a bit better.

**Tony:** What are you talking about?

**Gina:** About your dog.

**Tony:** I haven't got a dog.

**Gina:** - Well, if you did have a dog, I'm telling you that he's alright.

**Tony:** You're all mad.

**Nana:** Shall we have a sing-song while we wait?; we should try and keep our spirits up.

**Rob:** I don't know if I'll ever sing again.

**Gina:** Why do you say that?

**Rob:** I'm getting too old for this lark. I've been thinking, God I'm forty.

**Gina:** You told me you were 39.

**Rob:** Well I'm 42, and I'm sore all over with lying in the grass, and the band's bugged off and left me. That's how important I am to them. If I were the lead singer they'd have been back like a shot. But no, it's only old Rob, we can manage without him; it's about time I packed up on the road

**Gina:** You've seemed despondent ever since you put Derek's mac on. Take it off, it's not you.

**Rob:** I think it might very well be me. Derek's gone, I'll step into his coat; step into his worries and cares.

**Gina:** **(Sotto)** For God's sake, someone's trying to kill themselves down there, don't you start.

**Rob:** I'm sorry; I'm beginning to understand how he feels.

**Gina:** Come on Nana, lets have that sing song before we all start topping ourselves **(Puts hand to mouth.)**

**Nana:** What shall we sing?

**Gina:** Anything at all duck.

**Nana:** It was better when Rob started us off.

**Gina:** Something happy.

**(Nana: bursts into a song, e.g. 'The sun has got his hat on - hip, hip, hip hooray; The sun has got his hat on and he's coming out today; Never seen the grass so greener; never seen the sky serener; What a lot of fun for everyone, sitting in--'. Group stare at her in horror.)**

**Turgut:** (Interrupts) Nana! No! no!

**Tony:** (To Alison) What's his name?

**Alison:** Whose name?

**Tony:** Your husband.

**Ian:** Don't tell him! He'll make something of it. He makes something of everything.

**Tony:** It's Ian isn't it.

**Alison:** How did you know that?

**Ian:** Don't encourage him Alison. He's taken against me, the same way he's taken against his dog.

**Tony:** How many times? I haven't got a bloody dog.

**Ian:** There, I told you.

(Georgiou enters.)

**Nana:** (On spotting him) Here's daddy everyone; act normally.

**Georgiou:** (To Nana) I've been looking for you everywhere. You didn't tell me there were three car parks. I've run into the police twice. What's all this nonsense about bird-watching?

**Nana:** Dawn chorus daddy, Gina will tell you.

(Georgiou makes a little bow to Gina.)

**Gina:** Rob's our er leader. (Indicates Rob.)

**Georgiou:** (Shakes Rob's hand and introduces self) Georgiou. (Now Addressing Turgut) Turgut - the young man responsible for keeping my daughter out all night, I've already met.

**Turgut:** I'm pleased to meet you again sir

(Turgut offers hand and Georgiou tentatively clasps it.)

**Georgiou:** Nana tells me you're very keen on birds?

**Turgut:** They're trailing off a bit now, but they were magnificent. One feels like giving them a round of applause.

**Georgiou:** You have been waiting here all night; where, where have you been waiting? Is this a respectable place to bring a young girl?

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**Nana:** It wasn't..

**Georgiou:** **(Interrupts)** I am talking to Turgut.

**Turgut:** The birds start very early. Nana sat by that tree **(Indicates)** and I sat by the other **(Indicates.)** People have been arriving all the time, it's like a railway terminus.

**Georgiou:** Separate trees.

**Nana:** I was annoyed with Turgut Daddy; his car was playing up. I wanted to go home and get changed into my jeans first.

**Georgiou:** What's wrong with your car?

**Turgut:** The fuel gauge; it looks like I've got fuel when actually.

**Georgiou:** **(Interrupts)** Well, you'd better get it fixed damn quick.

**Turgut:** Yes sir. I apologise sincerely.

**Georgiou:** Hmm - three car parks, three walks.

**Turgut:** I'm very sorry.

**Georgiou:** **(Starts somewhat gruffly, warming to theme.)** I haven't walked in the country so much in years. It brought my childhood flooding back. I'd forgotten how I used to be woken in the mornings by birdsong. Every morning they greeted the day. I thought nothing of it; they were part of my world and I was part of theirs. I've just realised how far I've come since I was a boy. I was born in a little village. You'd have to go back to the last century to understand what it was like; but the life was, it was colourful and bright, but that was probably because death was a constant visitor. Beauty and death, the natural world. It wasn't enough for me though, I left. There were things outside that I wanted.

**Turgut:** I have a great uncle, when he was young he used to get up in the mornings to fetch water from the well.

**Georgiou:** A well! He had it easy if their village had a well! We had to walk miles to the river and back for water! Even if we went at the crack of dawn, the sun was a blazing ball of fire in the sky by the time we'd collected...

**Nana:** **(Interrupts sotto)** Daddy, excuse me; something strange has happened. We were all bird-listening when a man on the bridge said he was going to jump; that's why we're all gathered around here.

**(Georgiou looks around at group.)**

**Rob:** **(He has been listening nearby)** Beauty and death, that's what I said about this place. I wonder if I've been brought here to die; you know, like elephants know their time and make their way to their ancestral graveyard?

**Georgiou:** Only if it's your time, or if you've chosen to. You shouldn't choose death, choose life. Death is just an unknowing. You stay alive, look at you, still young; you haven't worked through your Karma . Die now and you'll return as a chicken.

**Nana:** Not him Daddy! The man outside the bridge; he's sitting on the ledge. Two of the bird-watching group have gone to sit with him. We're waiting for the police.

**Georgiou:** We should go home. This isn't a good place for a girl.

**Gina:** **(To Georgiou)** If you've seen the police twice on your travels Georgiou – then they must have gone to the wrong place. We said the bridge.

**Turgut:** I should have thought of it before. There's possibly more than one bridge over the river.

**Nana:** Turgut's training to be an engineer Daddy.

**Rob:** I'll go and look for them. I'm not doing anything worth writing home about.

**Gina:** Derek would have known. I hope he's OK; he's been gone a long time. **(Calls below)** Are you alright down there; anyone want a peppermint – extra strong?

**Alison:** **(To Tony)** Would you like a peppermint?

**Tony:** No. Thank you.

**Alison:** Ian?

**Ian:** I've got my own.

**Alison:** You told me they'd all gone.

**Ian:** Bits and ends I said.

**Alison:** I could have done with a bit or an end. **(Calls)** Yes please, for one. No, it's not worth it for one.

**Gina:** Of course it's worth it. If every woman took that view the economy would collapse. I'll get it down to you **(Fishes in handbag.)** I'm short of nothing in here. **(Attaches polo to reel of floss and lowers down on end like fishing reel.)**

**Alison:** Thank you.

**Georgiou:** **(To Gina)** Do you need us to stay? Too many people can be a hindrance.

**Gina:** Well it would be nice to feel I wasn't alone with three people teetering on the edge.

**Georgiou:** **(Turns to Turgut)** So Turgut, whose taxi breaks down bringing my daughter home from a wedding, and who keeps her out all night listening to birds – what do you say now?

**Turgut:** I think it's perhaps not the best morning for it.

**Georgiou:** Hmmmm.

**(Rob enters.)**

**Gina:** The police aren't with him.

**(Rob approaches group.)**

**Rob:** They're the wrong ones.

**Nana:** Wrong ones?

**Rob:** I told the police we were waiting for them here; then I noticed there was an area cordoned off.

**Turgut:** Why was it cordoned off?

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**Rob:** There was a body

**Gina:** Oh my God!

**Alison:** **(Calls)** What did you say?

**Georgiou:** **(To Alison)** Help's coming.

**Alison:** Someone said, they said.....

**Tony:** **(Interrupts)** Poor bastard.

**Rob:** **(To group)** It' was a separate incident.

**Alison:** I don't think it was a separate incident.

**(Group is clustered along top.)**

**Tony:** What do you mean?

**Alison:** **(To Ian)** You pushed her in didn't you?

**Ian:** What!

**Alison:** I swapped jumpers with a woman by the river to cheer her up, because she'd been feeling down and you thought it was me didn't you?

**Ian:** Don't be absurd! You're going as cuckoo as he is!

**Alison:** That's why you looked so surprised to see me again.

**Tony:** I told you.

**Alison:** That poor defenceless woman; it's all my fault!

**Gina:** Somebody please tell me I'm having a nightmare. Why is it your fault?

**Alison:** Oh God, we'd come to drown ourselves!

**Gina:** What is it about this place?

**Ian:** **(To Alison)** Shut up you stupid - she's overwrought, don't pay any attention to her.

**Alison:** Ian, I came back to tell you I wasn't going through with it. I'm going home to the children. Whatever bad happens, I know there'll be a brand new day waiting. When you go to court I'll tell them how worried you were. We've got such terrible financial problems; but I was afraid, and the birds were singing so beautifully. I didn't want to die, I kept putting it off, then I ran away and met, I don't even know her name.

**Rob:** **(Staring at Alison's jumper)** I know that jumper. Oh God I know that jumper! I thought of Hazel the minute I saw it. She always wore it in the winter because she used to get depressed; she liked its bright colours. Oh green Hazel!

**Alison:** I killed her. Oh I killed her. **(weeps)** But - you told me we'd go together Ian, like swans - together, forever.

**Tony:** He wasn't going to kill himself. Don't you realize, you'd have gone alone girl?

**Ian:** You don't know what you're talking about.

**Tony:** **(To Ian)** You still don't recognise me do you? You don't recognise me, because I was always working around the farm; and you only had eyes for my wife, my wife, Claire!

**Ian:** He's mad!

**Alison:** What?

**Ian:** He's mad.

**Tony:** He's got a horse, Sapphire.

**Alison:** Ian?

**Georgiou:** **(Sternly)** This is enough talking. This is not the place to be having long and convoluted conversations. Wait until you come up to settle this can't you?

**Gina:** Mint anyone?

**Nana:** Let's sing. They always sing in lifeboats on the telly, after the ship goes down. Come on Rob. **(Sings another cheery song, e.g. 'When the rob rob robin comes bob bob bobbin along, along, there'll be no more bobbin when.. when..')**

**Gina:** **(Interrupts)** Where the hell do you get these, bloody cheery old songs from?

**Georgiou:** Old time music hall, we love them, the great British songs.

**Rob:** Oh it couldn't be Hazel, after all these years. Not that same jumper. I'm trying to remember if she came from round here.

**Tony:** **(To Alison)** My wife runs the stables. Sapphire is her horse.

**Ian:** I told you he's paranoid.

**Tony:** Where were you going to get money from, if you're so bloody broke?

**Ian:** Don't worry - the police will be here soon.

**Gina:** Oh my God, what if it's Derek instead? It could be Derek's body!

**Nana:** Why should it be Derek?

**Gina:** Because he hasn't come back has he? I told you he's been very down lately - or perhaps it was his heart.

**Turgut:** I liked Derek. He was down to earth.

**Gina:** **(To Rob)** The body - was it a man or a woman?

**Rob:** It was covered up. I suppose it's more likely to be Derek, than some woman I knew years ago and was reminded of by a jumper. Daft, fancy me thinking that. Poor old Derek, miserable old sod.

**Gina:** You'd be a miserable old sod if you'd had the problems he's had; **(Sniffs)** and you shouldn't speak ill of the dead. At least Derek had no side to him.

**Alison:** **(To Tony)** Money, what money, for what?

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**Tony:** To extend the stables, buy good bloodstock. My business is - was, vegetables, organic; they'll come into their own one day. Claire had the stables and a mortgage. She was under the impression he had a bob or two when she told me she wanted to divorce me, so they could get married.

**Alison:** But we're broke. A divorce?

**Ian:** That's right, we're broke. Don't listen Alison.

**Alison:** It's light. The birds are flying away; they've finished singing for the day, they're going about their business. The world will be waking up, the post delivered.

**Gina:** You're fortunate if you get your post this early, 10.30 if you're lucky our street.

**Georgiou:** Don't talk to me about the post. My brother sent a package first class from Huddersfield. You know how long it took, first class mind you; it should have been next day but it took..

**Alison:** **(Interrupts – to Ian)** What stamp did you put on the letter?

**Ian:** What?

**Alison:** The letter, to your parents?

**Ian:** First – obviously!

**Alison:** You haven't got any first class stamps!

**Ian:** I bought one!

**Alison:** When did you buy one? You send all our bills second class. Let them wait you say. The post office was shut yesterday, it was Sunday!

**Ian:** For God's sake! Does it matter when I bought the bloody stamp? You're letting him put ideas into your head. They find a woman's body and you think I had something to do with it! He's a stranger, you know nothing about him. He says he's come here to kill himself, perhaps he pushed her in? Who can say he's been sitting here all the time? Why does he really want to kill himself? He's dangerous. He'll take anyone with him that gets in his way.

**Alison:** - You just said it's a woman's body. How do you know that?

**Ian:** You said it was a woman for God's sake!

**Rob:** I said I thought it was probably Derek's.

**Gina:** I wish you'd stop saying that!

**Alison:** You put a second class stamp on the most important letter you've ever had to send. You, you bastard! The children would have been on their own when the police came.

**Tony:** I doubt he posted a letter any class. With you out of the way, he'd have picked up the insurance and carried on without you.

**Ian:** He's making it up and he goes along. **(Thumps Ian.)** Keep still Alison, you'll have us all off.

**Alison:** How could you!

**Tony:** **(Tries to support Alison.)** Alison don't let go with you hands!

**Ian:** Control yourself Alison, you'll fall. **(She is still thumping Ian.)** You're unbalancing yourself. **(To Tony)** Get your hands off her. Look, look everyone, he's trying to push her like he pushed the other one. I warned you all..

**(Alison with a scream, falls into supposed river.)**

**Ian:** **(Shouts)** Alison!

**(Tony looks at Ian, then jumps in after Alison. Read suggestions how this can be best realised.)**

**Ian:** He pushed her, he pushed her, did you see that?

**(Group looking in horror from above.)**

**Gina:** They've gone; God they've...

**Turgut:** **(Interrupts)** I'll help them

**(Turgut exits to river in most suitable way.)**

**Nana:** (Shouts) No, no, you can't swim - he can't swim!

(All except Gina go down from bridge to river. After short while Ian clambers up from shelf. Gina confronts him with small gun she has taken from her handbag.)

**Gina:** Stay where you are duck.

**Ian:** I have to go and help my wife.

**Gina:** You weren't helping her much before. I've got good eyesight.

**Ian:** He pushed her.

**Gina:** Not from where I was standing duck.

**Ian:** What are you doing with that gun. That's against the law.

**Gina:** I've got allsorts in my handbag. A woman needs to protect herself. That's why your wife came a cropper, she forgot her handbag.

**Ian:** (Turns to retrace his steps.) Excuse me, you're talking absolute rubbish. I have to go and save my wife. He'll have her under.

**Gina:** Keep still!

(Ian ignores her and goes back onto shelf. Exits into river.)

**Gina:** Shit.

(Enter 2 Ambulance crew – Derek can double as one. Gina kicks off her high heels and runs after them. They go to the part of river where casualties are. The casualties might have sorted themselves out to come to bank, e.g. Tony will have rescued Alison, and Turgut will have been pulled to side and hauled ashore. If crew can wet the casualties hair, do so. Ambulance crew exit supporting Alison, with Tony walking alongside. Enter 1 ambulance crew and 1 police crew – can be same 2 as previously with simple swapping of hat for policeman – they go to bank. Next Georgiou and Nana with Turgut, supported by ambulance person exit.)

**Turgut:** I'm really fine. I don't need to be checked. I swallowed half the river but I'm OK.

**Paramedic 1:** That's more likely to injure you permanently than drowning these days.

**Nana:** You know you can't swim, you idiot!

**Turgut:** I can float. I'm very good at floating.

**Georgiou:** (Gently admonishing as they exits) Foolish, foolish; that's what comes of your uncle never visiting the river; anyone that visits..

(The police officer remains at bank. He is handcuffing Ian, and waiting for back-up. Rob returns from the bank.)

**Gina:** (To Rob) I'm still shaking. (Dangling gun.) It's a pop gun my nephew got out of a

cracker. I've got a can of C.S. gas in my bag, but a gun looks more menacing doesn't it? If he'd come any nearer I'd have sprayed him.

**(From out of woods comes Hazel dripping wet. A police officer is with her – doubling. He goes to assist other police officer with Ian on bank.)**

**Rob:** Hazel - green Hazel?

**Hazel:** - Rob?

**Rob:** **(Goes up and gives her a hug.)** I thought you were dead. I remembered that jumper you used to wear and - I can't believe how long you've had that jumper!

**Gina:** **(Flatly)** It must have been Derek then.

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**(Ian passes handcuffed between police.)**

**Hazel:** It was him. I don't even know him. I was just looking at my reflection, in the jumper and hat I'd swapped for, when he crept up and pushed me in. I knew I couldn't get out while he was there, so I kept down in the rubbish at the sides. There was a shopping trolley, so I clung onto it like an anchor. If the river had been cleaned up I'd have been a gonner.

**Ian:** I really don't know what she's talking about. She's mad.

**(Ian and police exit.)**

**Gina:** I'm going to find out if it was Derek. We can't just all bugger off and leave him.

**(SFX. Dog is heard barking.)**

**Hazel:** It's Bert. I know my Bert's bark!

**(Derek enters.)**

**Gina:** Where the hell have you been?

**Derek:** I went home and gave the dog some breakfast.

**Gina:** What! You've been home, giving breakfast to a dog!

**Derek:** Why not? I had a look round and didn't find anything. He looked hungry, so we went home and er, had some breakfast.

**Gina:** Fine, there was I thinking you were dead.

**Hazel:** **(To Derek)** Thank you so very much for looking after him.

**Derek:** He's yours? Oh I was thinking of keeping it.

**Hazel:** I've been so stupid this morning.

**Derek:** (To Gina) You - cared?

**Rob:** If this was a story, you'd embrace and cavort off into the sunset.

**Hazel:** Ends nicely tidied up.

**Rob:** Problems resolved.

**Hazel:** We would too - cavort that is.

**Rob:** Oh yes, we would too.

**Hazel:** In fact, everyone would.

**Gina:** Well I don't bloody feel like cavorting. (To Derek) I was just wondering whether to close my curtains or not when I got home.

**Rob:** I wonder whose it was then, the body?

**Derek:** I overheard someone saying it was a chap jumped a month or so back, it was him they found.

(All of a sudden Graham the ranger enters.)

**Derek:** It's Graham – it *was* today then!

(Graham walks up to them and they all stare at each other.)

**Graham:** (With irony) What's going on? What's all this then - a picnic?

**THE END**