

## Characters

- Gloria (F)** – late 20s/early 30s, bohemian
- Rita (F)** – Older, eccentric character, 60's
- Trevor (M)** – Posh, retirement age
- Beata (F)** – Eastern European, 35-45's
- Christine (F)** – Posh, 50's
- Various vandals (E)**

## Scene 1 – Allotment

### Opening Music

**(An allotment in the early 2000's. The acting area is divided up into four plots. There is a small shed centre stage at the back. Next to it is a compost heap containing a large wooden cross, gloves on the cross bar and a straw hat on the upright. All players except Gloria are on stage, doing something on their plot – or sharpening tools etc. All actors address the audience in this opening scene. Enter Gloria)**

- Gloria:** Ssshhhh – Can you hear it? Can you? I can hear them. Fighting, pushing, forcing, propelling themselves up, up, up and out, out. Up and out, Up and out. A life force, energy confined, about to burst forth into the world. Beautiful.
- Rita:** Of course, it's nothing like the old days. I blame the telly. That Adam Titmarch. Getting 'em all worked up. Time was, down here, when I was little, there'd be just my dad, Sid, old Jim – young Jim, Bernie Chambers and Colin Greenside. Them two had a plot together, down by the far fence. Kept themselves to themselves. Grew a lot of flowers. And even if they was here together – like, there wouldn't be no chatter. Save your breath for digging, like. Unspoken rule, like. It was all about the growing.
- Trevor:** It really is the most tremendous fun down here. I just love it: love it. And it's so cheap, I mean, my wife spends twice as much at the hairdressers in an hour than I do on this for a whole year. Plus of course, there's the cash I save her at the supermarket. "When I pop down to Waitrose, my trolley just whizzes straight past the fruit and veg aisle now, thanks to Trevor's efforts" she tells everyone. "I can't remember the last time I was in need of a courgette", she says. Tremendous fun.
- Beata:** We no have garden now. We live in apartment, flat. Back home we had big garden. Grow many things. Our children, they run round, play, laugh. Here, nowhere for them to go. To be safe. For us to work together. So we can teach them how to grow, how to, how do you say.... Be natural – to learn nature.
- Christine:** It is another world here, you know. I've had a plot now for, oh let me see, oh my goodness it must be five years. Yes, that's right because I lost my – my husband, Donald, in the January of the new millennium..... and that's when I applied. I decided to keep busy, you see. Best to keep active. Keep my mind off.....things.
- Rita:** And then there's that Monty Wotsit. Him and his ruddy dogs. I tell you, dogs and vegetables don't mix. Cock his leg on 'em soon as look at 'em. The dog, that is, not Monty. Although I wouldn't put it past him.
- Christine:** I just managed to get in before allotments became a craze. I had a phone call from the Council virtually straight away offering me a choice of plots! I rushed down here and chose this one. The opposite end is quite tucked away from the others. I like that. Most days it's just me, my vegetables and the birdsong. Oh,

and Donald, of course. Sometimes I do feel he is very close to me when I am here. Giving me plenty of his advice. Sharing his opinion, as always.... “You always plant them too close together, Christine”. “That trench is far too shallow.” “You haven’t puddled them in.” “Why don’t you ever remember to take off the side shoots!” That sort of thing. **(pause then through gritted teeth)** Bless him.

**Gloria:** Time passes so quickly here. In fact, it is almost as though time itself doesn’t exist. Here lies the complete Circle of Life. Seeds becoming plants, flowering, bearing fruit, dying down, giving seed, becoming plants, flowering, bearing fruit, dying down, giving seed.

**(Gloria wanders off stage, repeating this like a mantra as she exits. Beata speaks over her)**

**Beata:** So one day last year, I hear man at factory speak of “Jenner Road Allotments”. I ask him “What is allotment?”. He tells me, place where everyone can grow. So I ring Council. They say is waiting list. So we wait. And when we wait, I get up at 5.30 every day before shift, take my children to park, so they can run, breathe good air, stay safe.

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**Rita:** My old Dad went to a better place ten years ago. **(pause)** Lyme Regis. He went to live with his sister down there. Seemed a shame to let all this go, so I took it on. Well, it’s not as if there’s much else to do now he’s gone. Of course, he didn’t approve. He wasn’t a great believer in equality for women. Specially not in the garden. “Look what happened when the Good Lord put Eve in one” he’d say. **(Rita chuckles then turns serious)** Silly sod. He passed away last year. Ninety-nine he was. I’ve got his ashes up on the mantelpiece in an old Horlicks tin. That’s the closest he’s ever been to sweetness. I was thinking of sprinkling them on the compost heap. It’d be the first time he’d ever improved something an’ all.

**Trevor:** The savings at Waitrose aren’t the only reason I love it down here. It gets me out of the house – you know – something to get up for, since I retired. It’s taken me a while to settle down after forty years in the City, I can tell you. Not to mention the effect it’s had on Margaret! That’s my wife. Margaret. Life is strange isn’t it. I always imagined when I finally hung up my briefcase and waved a tearful farewell to the 7.15 to Waterloo that she and I would somehow start afresh. Begin a new exciting chapter in our lives. Maybe travel the Country or even the world together. Or take up golf or watercolours or .... something – anything, really. Or perhaps we’d just do nothing together like we did all those years ago when we met at university. Or “Uni” as they say now. Suits me. At my age, I haven’t really got time for five syllables.

**(Gloria enters “floats” over to Rita, presents her with an imaginary spring of Rosemary and says.....)**

**Gloria:** “There’s Rosemary, that’s for remembrance. Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, that’s for thoughts. There’s fennel for you, and columbines. There’s Rue for you, and here’s some for me”

**Rita:** Thank you dear, very kind.

**Gloria:** We may call it “herb of grace” o’ Sundays – oh, you must wear your rue with a difference – there’s a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died. They say he made a good end (**Gloria sings as she exits**) “For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy...”

**Rita:** (**confidentially to audience**) She’s gone off again. Barking! One of them arty-farty types. Not been here long. Actress or something. I can’t remember. Keeps breaking out in a nasty rash of Shakespeare, poor soul. Still, she’s harmless enough. She says she’s resting but I don’t get it. How can she be resting when she works in B&Q?

**(Rita exits)**

**Beata:** My kids, they do not come here so much now. The youngest, my baby, Dovile, she work hard at exams. All the time, read, study, read, study. Wants to be a doctor, like her grandfather back home. Her brother Andris, he sport crazy! Straight from school to play football, or swim – wonderful, powerful – he swim like, like, how you say? Frog! Sometime, at weekend, he come here for me and dig. He dig like two men. So strong. He is good boy.

**Trevor:** I don’t know what made me think we could go back to how we were, all those years ago. We have become different people – leading two virtually separate lives for forty years. Me up in the City and her playing Bridge, organising fetes and so on. She’s a big cheese in the W.I. We were just like two satellites circling around each other in a universe otherwise known as KT15. Maybe, if we had been able to have children.....oh, I don’t know. There are so many maybes. Margaret, Margaret, there are all those syllables again. I did try calling her Mags once. Just the once.... “Oh for goodness sake, get out from under my feet, Trevor” she says – “Why don’t you get up that allotment and prune your pumpkins: or whatever it is that you get up to down there” (**Trevor pauses and looks directly at audience**) Of course, she has absolutely no idea what I do get up to down here.

**Beata:** Then there is my golden boy. My Lukas. I call him that for his hair – it is like gold – so beautiful, so blonde. Just like his father’s before he go bald, like onion. He is oldest. At college now. Most of the time. He is not bad boy. But he fight always with my husband, Tavas. I try to calm, make peace. Makes me very tired. He is not bad boy but he is so, so .... er.....piktas, (**the English comes to Beata**) Angry! He is so angry. I do not understand what we have done to make him so angry. Just last night, he come home late, really late. He slam front door and my Tavas, it wake him up. He goes to window. He says he sees boys in street outside. Tavas, he knows them. He says they make trouble at garage where he works. Spray paint, break windows. Scratch cars for sale outside. I

say to him “Did you tell your boss? Call the Police?” He said “No”. I say, “Why not?” He say, “I think Lukas was one of them”.

**Christine:**

I have made so many friends down here now. We really are quite a little community. Most of us get along like a house on fire. Although there is a tiny amount of friction when the manure is delivered. People almost form a stampede – it’s like the goldrush, Trevor says! Rita Butler, plot 42 over there, she is the worst offender. I have to say, I swear she’d mow you down like a dog if you got in the way of her wheelbarrow. Trevor calls her Klondike Kate. Oh Trevor ! Dear Trevor – he does make me laugh. He’s so naughty! Rita can be a little outspoken sometimes. People just seems to let her get away with it. I suppose it’s because she’s been here for, well, forever ! She’s always down here. Of course, she has tremendous horticultural knowledge. So much so that she is one of the judges at the local annual garden show, as I learned to my cost last year. It was the first time I had ever plucked up the courage to enter any of my produce. Of course, I didn’t win anything. I didn’t expect to really. But I shall never forgive her for the completely uncalled-for remark she made about my Green Longpods.

**Beata:**

I try to stop Tavas from leaving bedroom. I say don’t speak to Lukas now. Be calm. Leave till morning. But he would not listen. He goes out, runs downstairs. He find Lukas in kitchen and he slams the door behind him. He shut me out. At first, no noise. I just hear them talking. Then it gets louder. I hear Tavas shout at Lukas. Call him liar! Then someone hit table, like with fist. There is noise of scuffle, then something break. I don’t know, plate? Mug? Lukas shout at his father. Call him filthy name. Then door slam. Then nothing.

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**Rita:**

**(speaking confidentially to audience, Rita enters pushing wheelbarrow with a flask, a hipflask, blanket, ground sheet, small cushion and a folding chair in it, covered with a bit of sacking)** When we get one of these really hot spells, like at the minute, I can’t stand it indoors at night time. Start climbing the walls, I do. So I come down here. I don’t tell no-one. Them in charge would have a fit. I don’t see as it does much harm but there’s bound to be some bleedin’ council byelaw against it, written when God was a boy. You’d be surprised what Mrs Linklater, Chair of the Allotment Committee can dig up when she needs to put the kibosh on something. Weybridge’s answer to Kim Jong-un she is. Same hairdo. **(Rita starts unpacking wheelbarrow)**. No point in doing this in my garden now. The noise never stops there. What with them next door having a set-to most nights and the main road at the bottom. **(Rita pours drink from flask into cup)**. There’s no peace to be had. But up here, well, that’s a different matter. I lies down, drinks me chocolate, looks up at the stars and before you know it, I’m off. Safe among the strawberries. A rose amongst the thorns ! **(Rita chuckles and adds a dash of brandy to the cup and winks at audience)**. Medicinal !

**(Enter Christine. She comes right up behind Christine)**

**Christine:** I'm off now Rita.

**(Rita jumps. She chokes and hastily tries to hide the flask whilst standing in front of her chair in an attempt to hide her "bed")**

**Rita:** Oh blimey Christine, you nearly gave me a heart attack !

**Christine:** I'm so sorry. Just saying I'm off home now. Are you staying much longer?

**Rita:** No, no – I'll be well away soon.

**Christine:** **(Christine indicates her plot)**

They've all had a good drink.

**Rita:** Yes ... good. I'll be doing the same in a bit. Watering, I mean.

**Christine:** Well, I just need to track Trevor down and give him some last minute instructions before I leave .... I have to go to my sister-in-law's in Frinton....family matters, you know .... He's offered to see to my plot for the next week.

**Rita:** Right you are then. Nightie Night

**(Christine exits.)**

**Rita:** **(speaks to audience)** She must think I came up with the daisies. It's not just her plot that he's giving a good seeing to !

**Gloria:** **(Gloria enters singing, carrying a large bag)** Where the bee sucks, there suck I

**Rita:** Oh my gawd!

**Gloria:** **(Gloria sings)** "On a cowslip's bed I lie, there to watch while owls do fly"

**Rita:** **(Rita shouts over Gloria singing)** Oi, Gloria! You alright?

**Gloria:** Am I – am I alright?? Well "Bella Margharita", I am better that alright. I am ecstatic. I am perfectamundo! I have an audition. I have had the call.

**Rita:** Well I never !

**Gloria:** Of course, it's not much really. Just a walk-on in a commercial but the great thing is, that it might just be the break I have been waiting for. The only tiny problem is that it rather goes against my vegetarianism.

**Rita:** What's it for then?

**Gloria:** McArthur's Hamburgers

**Rita:** I shouldn't worry about that – there's not much meat in them.

**Gloria:** Oh, do you think so? I've written it especially for the audition. It's very short, so I need to make it sensational. May I run it past you?

**(Gloria produces a cassette player which she uses as accompaniment and two large cabbages using them as pom-poms, like a cheerleader, and shouts to the accompaniment of a solo drum beat. SFX. solo drumbeat)**

**Gloria:** Give me an M, Give me a C,  
Give me an A, R, T,  
Give me an H  
Give me a U,  
Give me an R and S too.  
McArthurs! McArthurs! a Burger made for you!”

**(Gloria then sings this to the tune of Yellow Rose of Texas. SFX. “Yellow Rose of Texas”)**

**Gloria:** They’re the greatest tasting burgers  
They really can’t be beat  
They’re juicy and delicious  
If you like eating meat  
And if you are a vegan,  
No need to change your mind  
Just eat the bun and lettuce  
And leave all the meat behind !”  
**(yells)** Yee Haaa!

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**Rita:** That is.....that is..... Unforgettable. You go for it girl. Give it all you’ve got !

**Gloria:** I will, I will ! I think this wonderful thing has happened because Midsummer Night’s Eve is so magical.

**Rita:** Is it?

**Gloria:** Is it what?

**Rita:** Midsummer. You wouldn’t know it, would you? I only turned the heating off last week.

**Gloria:** It’s the summer solstice tomorrow. I will be presenting my offering to Viridios at dawn.

**Rita:** Will he be up?

**Gloria:** Silly ! Viridios is an ancient God, Rita. In accordance with Pagan beliefs, I will be laying before him a cornucopia of nature’s bounty. But first, I need to return home and perfect my piece.

**Rita:** You do that, Glo.

**Gloria:** Give me your hands, if we be friends, and Gloria shall restore amends.

**(Gloria exits)**

**Rita:** Good for you. **(Shoots a look at audience then continues to set up her camp)** I don't know what's going to happen to this place in the future. I don't think the young people get it, you know. There's no-one much under fifty down here. I saw on the telly the other day, that they are having to take city kids out to farms to show them where their food comes from. Whatever next?

**(SFX. Beata's mobile phone rings).**

**Beata:** **(Answers her phone)** Tavas? Kas vyksta? Kur yra Lukas?

**Rita:** She tries – over there. Beata, her name is. Means Blessed, she told me. She's from Lithuania. I wasn't sure at first. I've not met many people from overseas really. But she's alright. Used to bring her kids down here when she first come here. She tried to show them there was more to life than computer games and mobile phones. **(pause)** They used to run round screaming, mostly. Three of them, she's got. Andrex – no, that's not right – Andy .... Andris! That's it, Andris. He's alright he is. Comes down here a fair bit. Does a bit of digging for his mum when she can't manage it. He's full of questions. "What's that plant?", "How do you do this?" "Why do you do that?" **(Rita smiles to herself – pauses)** Gets on your tits in the end. But it's good he's keen to learn – always very polite. I like talking to him. Nice to find a youngster who hasn't got a phone in front of his face. **(Rita turns to Beata who waves to her frantically, trying to attract her attention. Rita thinks she's being friendly so returns the wave, cheerfully).** Trouble is, I can't hardly understand a word she says, so I nod and smile and hope for the best. Mind you, I do that a lot these days. Most of the time I haven't the faintest idea what's going on.

**Beata:** Miss Butler, Miss Butler !

**Rita:** Oh hello dear. You can call me Rita, you know.

**Beata:** Miss Butler, I have to go home. I have ..... problem. If my boy, my son Lukas he comes here, maybe to look for me, you tell him wait here, yes? Tell him no leave. Make him stay here.

**Rita:** Right you are.

**Beata:** Thank you. Thank you. You are good person.

**(Beata exits)**

**Rita:** That's alright dear. **(Rita turns to audience)** Well, that's done my bit for foreign relations. Not that I'll be able to keep him here if he don't want to stay. He's built like a brick shi.....

**(Trevor enters carrying a travel brochure)**

**Trevor:** Rita ! I have at last remembered to bring down that brochure we spoke about a couple of weeks ago ....

**Rita:** Brochure?

**Trevor:** Yes, that travel brochure. For rail holidays, you remember? We were talking and you said you quite fancied having a bit of a break, so I just thought ....

**Rita:** Ah yes, it's coming back to me now.

**Trevor:** You remember. "Finnish Lapland and the Kemi Snow Castle"

**Rita:** Yes, yes. That's it! And a chance to spot the Northern Lights. You know I've wanted to see them ever since I was a little girl. My dad promised he'd take me there one day. But then, he was always promising stuff....

**Trevor:** Aurora Borealis – unforgettable.

**Rita:** **(Rita doesn't understand)** Yes, yes. She certainly was. One of the greats. Thanks dear, I'll have a look at it later.

**Trevor:** Rita – Carpe Diem !! Carpe Diem !!

**Rita:** You having a stroke?

**Trevor:** No, no. Carpe Diem. It's Latin for "Seize the Day" Rita. Time waits for no man – or woman. Get on the phone and get it booked.

**Rita:** Yes, thanks Trevor.

**Trevor:** We all need to grab what happiness we can in this life. Take chances. Live for the moment. So much precious time passes whilst we allow ourselves to be satisfied with second best. Making do. Keeping safe. Clinging on to what is familiar, comfortable, steady.

**Rita:** **(Rita pauses)** I did grow some purple brussels last season.

**Trevor:** There is more to life than vegetables, Rita. There's a whole world out there ready to be explored. Start a new chapter in your book of life.

**Rita:** That's easy for you to say. My next chapter is quite likely to be the epilogue.

**Trevor:** It's never too later, Rita.

**Rita:** Yes, well, we'll see.

**Trevor:** You've got no ties now. Get on that train. Who knows what tomorrow may hold for you!

**Rita:** It's bin day.

**Trevor:** Alright Rita. I can see you're not going to take it seriously. I'll leave it with you.

**(Trevor starts to exit)**

**Rita:** Trevor.

**Trevor:** Yes?

**Rita:** Thank you. And carpet deal .... Er.... Carpe wotsit to you too, old son.

**(Trevor pauses, acknowledges remark and exits. Rita opens the brochure, puts on her glasses)**

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**Rita:** “6 days from .....” How much ??!! What’s that asterisk by the price? “Single room supplement applies”. As if it’s not bad enough being “Billy No Mates” they charge you extra for it.

**(Rita sniffs disapprovingly and throws the brochure in the wheelbarrow and exits. Lights dim to twilight. SFX. Music. Romeo and Juliet by Tchaikovsky runs under the following – see production notes for full directions)**

**Christine:** **(Christine enters carrying small suitcase – she calls out quietly) Trevor!**  
Trevor !

**(Trevor goes to her, wearing gardening gloves and carrying a hoe).**

**Trevor:** Christine !

**Christine:** I’ve made my decision, Trevor.

**Trevor:** Oh.....

**Christine:** I’ve made my decision. If you’re sure this is what you want, then it’s what I want. I can’t imagine my life without you in it, Trevor.

**Trevor:** Are you certain? I mean, there’s no going back. For me, I mean. What you do is, of course, up to you. I mean, you’re a free agent but I’m .... I mean it’s a hell of a thing to do, even if we....

**(Christine puts the case down, gives a quick glance around, grabs Trevor by the face and as she kisses him, guides him backwards off stage. The blade end of the hoe appears off stage from where they have exited which rises up).**

**{Christine re-enters stage straightening her blouse. Trevor enters stage after Christine, his hair ruffled. Trevor grabs Christine’s hand and Christine’s case and he pulls Christine determinedly into the shed.)**

**(Rita enters, looks around to make sure she is unobserved and settles down in her ‘bed’. See production notes for full lighting plot, stage directions and sound effects from this point)**

**(Gloria enters dressed in pagan dress and gardening gloves, carrying her trug of offerings. She is dumbstruck at what she sees. There is the sound of banging from inside the shed as Trevor tries to open the door which has been barred by a plank across it. Gloria puts the basket on the ground and**

**rushes to release the door. Trevor emerges from the shed, straightening his hair, smoothing clothes etc. They survey the chaos around them. They are both lost for words.)**

**Gloria:** What's happened Trevor? Have you been in there all night?

**Trevor:** Oh my God!

**Gloria:** Oh it's terrible. Horrific. What a storm.

**Trevor:** This was more than a storm, Gloria.

**(As they look around they see on a compost heap, the back of a scarecrow, arms outstretched, a lopsided flower pot on its head).**

**Trevor:** I don't remember that being here yesterday.....

**Gloria:** Oh no! Oh no! Oh my God!

**Trevor:** Christine ! Christine! Come and help us.

**(Enter Christine from shed. Christine surveys the scene and seeing the scarecrow, rushes over to it, followed by the others)**

**Christine:** Oh ! Oh ! Please no !

**(They each grab the scarecrow and turn it to face front. It is Rita, who is hanging Christ-like, totally disheveled – she looks asleep).**

**Gloria:** Is she breathing?

**Trevor:** She's so cold.

**Gloria:** I can't feel a pulse.

**Trevor:** You've still got your gloves on !

**Christine:** Rita?! Rita ?!

**(Christine rubs Rita's hands then she fetches a chair which has been overturned nearby. Christine gets Rita's blanket and puts it over Rita. Rita comes round, coughing and spluttering.)**

**Gloria:** Oh, thanks be to the spirits of the earth...

**Trevor:** Rita, Are you alright?

**Gloria:** What happened?

**Christine:** What did they do to you?

**Trevor:** Who did this to you?

**Gloria:** Were they vandals?

**Rita:** Well, it wasn't Oberon and his bleedin' fairies!

**Christine:** It seems she is quite unaffected.

**Trevor:** Do you want us to call for an ambulance?

**Christine:** Would you like a cup of sweet tea? Trevor has some in his shed.

**Trevor:** Christine !!! **(Trevor shoots Christine a warning glance)**

**Christine:** Sorry !

**Rita:** **(Rita takes swig from bottle)** Oh, what a night.

**Trevor:** Do you need an ambulance Rita?

**Christine:** Shall I call the Police?

**(Beata has entered to stand downstage, in view of Rita but unseen by the others. Rita and Beata look directly at each other.)**

**Beata:** Please, Miss Butler.

**Trevor:** Beata?

**Rita:** Well, what do you think, Beata?

**Christine:** I don't understand....

**Rita:** Will you tell them, or shall I?

**Beata:** My son, Lukas. He has been very troubled lately. Not like my Lukas. He fights with Tavas, my husband. The night before last, Lukas walks out of house and does not come back. Out all night. I beg Tavas to find him. Bring our boy home. Tavas goes to his college but he has not been there. None of the other students have seen him. His old friends, have not seen him, not for long time. Then I am down here yesterday to be quiet. Stop mind going round and round like rat in cage and Tavas he calls me. Tells me to come home - quick. So I run, and there is Police car outside flats. My heart it nearly stop. I think maybe Lukas is .... Dead. But when I go in they say they look for Lukas also. He has been seen with gang. Bad gang. They steal from shops, snatch handbags, break car windows. Two days ago they steal a car and the film.....err....

**Trevor:** CCTV?

**Beata:** CCTV. They say it shows Lukas. They think he is driver. I say it cannot be him, my Lukas, he cannot drive a car. Police, they leave and say we tell them when he is home.

**(Beata starts to feel giddy and sways – Trevor gives her a crate to sit on)**

**Beata:** Just now, Lukas, he comes home. He is covered in bruises: his face, it is cut here and here and his leg it is bleeding. Bleeding so much. My Tavas he puts his arms around him. And he is crying. And soon Lukas, he cry too, like baby. Tavas, he take him to hospital and I come here to see you are okay, Miss Butler. (She starts to break down) You tell them. Tell them what happened.

**Rita:** There was five or six of them. They come in over the fence down there, smashing pots and greenhouses, kicking stuff over, pulling stuff up and throwing it around. At first, they didn't see me. The biggest one, he was dragging a smaller boy by the collar. Threw him on the cabbages over there. He stood over the little one. Kept kicking him. Calling him Litvik scum. He kept screaming 'Where is it? Where is it? The others surrounded him and started punching and kicking him too. All but one big lad. I can still see his blonde hair shining in the moonlight. He was shouting at them to stop.

**Beata:** My Lukas

**Rita:** Lukas. He saw me, just about the same time as the big one who was doing the kicking. Then they all turned round and looked at me.

**Christine:** What did you do?

**Rita:** I wet meself – what do you think?!

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**Trevor:** Oh dear.

**Rita:** No, not really. I'd already been. On your strawberries, Christine. Lukas, he got between me and them. Told them to leave the old lady alone. I didn't know who he meant. The big one came right up to me, sneering, just like my father used to do, and he said, "What you starin' at, you sad old git? Have all the other veg-tossers left yer all on yer own?" and he spat right in my face. **(dim stage, spot on Rita)** And somehow, that brought... the whole miserable past in on me -not just my father but Michael, my darling Michael -how I had waited, prayed for him to leave his wife for me, for us. All those years, keeping our secret, our love, that kept me going. Made me feel alive: chance for a happy future, a real life. And I remembered him telling me about the cancer **(pause)**....And then, just like that, he'd gone. All that time- most of my life- wasted, lost. **(lights slowly up to full)** And then, something went click in my head and-you know how people say that they saw red -well, that's what happened to me with them yobbos. I spotted old Bill's spade-he always forgot to lock it away. Then I saw the knife in the big one's hand: I leapt for the spade but before I could get to it, Lukas jumped forward and punched him. Punched him hard in the head. His knees buckled and I thought he was finished but as he fell, I saw him stab Lukas in the leg. The others were stunned for a bit. Then they all turned round and started to walk towards me. I managed to grab the spade and all of a sudden it was like I was hacking through the brambles and the weeds. I took two down before the other two grabbed me and then, I must have passed out - that's all I remember.

**Trevor:** So what was it all about? I mean, was it a racist attack or...

**Gloria:** It was all about this.

**(Gloria holds up a marijuana plant which was in her basket)**

**Christine:** Tomatoes???

**Beata:** Marijuana?

**Gloria:** It's all my fault.

**Trevor:** You?

**Beata:** No, it was my son's fault.

**Christine:** Lukas?

**Gloria:** No, Andris.

**Rita:** Andris?

**Beata:** Andris was the little boy they beat up here last night. My youngest son. He is home now. I take him to hospital to check on bruises. Then when I get him home maybe I give him a few more.

**Rita:** I don't understand...

**Beata:** Andris is good boy, you know that. But he is still so young. Wants to be grown up. Wants to be big man. But most of all, he wants to look after his mother. I am sick. Andris, he thinks that this, this 'weed', as he calls it will help me. Ease pain. He shows boy at school, they tell someone in gang, and next thing they want Andris to say where he got it. He would not tell. So this gang, they force Lukas to do these things for them or they say they will tell Police about Andris. How he is drug dealer.

**Rita:** Never mind about telling the Police. What about if Mrs Linklater and her Committee find out about what you've been growing down here, Glo? You'll be stripped of your spade and fork and marched off the premises. I shouldn't be surprised if they don't shave your head too. Mrs Linklater's a devil when she's roused. Well, Gloria, I always thought you'd lost the plot and now I think you most certainly have.

**Gloria:** It was for transcendental purposes Rita. I find it creates a sense of calm and wellbeing.

**Rita:** That's what I tried to explain to PC 601 Crocker forty-five years ago when he found me running butt naked down Weybridge High Street.

**Trevor:** You were a streaker ?!

**Rita:** Yes! Hard to believe isn't it. I haven't always looked like this, you know. In those days I could run starkers without giving meself two black eyes.

**Christine:** So what's going to happen now?

**Beata:** Tavas and me – we will have to report stabbing to Police. It is law. But what about all this?

**Trevor:** I suppose it depends upon what we decide to do. What do we all think?  
Christine?

**Christine:** Well, there is a fair bit of damage. My brassicas have been completely squashed.  
But as long as no-one's hurt....

**Trevor:** And Margaret can kiss goodbye to my courgettes. But then again, she will need  
to get them from Waitrose from now on anyway. **(Trevor turns to Christine)**  
Won't she?

**Christine:** If you're sure, Trevor.

**Trevor:** I've never been more certain of anything in my life. I'll join you in Frinton  
tomorrow after I have explained everything to Margaret. Rita – are you sure  
you're going to be alright?

**Rita:** Yes, I think so. Thanks Trevor. You two get off and sort yourselves out, pronto!  
And you, Beata.

**Trevor:** Gloria?

**Gloria:** I will remove the offending plants and burn them. Immediately.

**Rita:** I'll come and help you get the incinerator going. Make sure there's lots of  
smoke, Glo, and I'll stay downwind of it. It'll be a trip down memory lane.

**Gloria:** I am so sorry to have caused all this trouble.

**Rita:** I have to say I am really surprised at you Gloria.

**Gloria:** Really?

**Rita:** Yes. I never knew you were such a good gardener. It's not easy to grow that stuff  
outside.....so I'm told.

**Gloria:** Oh well, thank you Rita. I believe I chose the right variety.

**Rita:** Which one?

**Gloria:** It's called "Northern Lights".

**Trevor:** The Aurora Borealis. Book that trip now, Rita. I think you've been sent a sign.  
**(Christine moves to Trevor and they exit)**

**Rita:** It's a sign we'll all be inside if we don't get rid of that weed! Come on Gloria,  
let's get at it. **(Gloria and Rita start to exit, slowly.)** Well, I've put it all out  
there now, haven't I? Fancy me spilling the beans after all these years.... Let's  
get that fire going.

**Gloria:** "Fire that's closest kept, burns most of all"

**Rita:** Eh?

**Gloria:** Shakespeare. "Two Gentlemen of Verona". It means secret loves are the most  
passionate.

**Rita:** Right... he knew his stuff didn't he.

**(Gloria nods and exits)**

**Rita:** **(Rita is alone on the stage – to audience)** Shame no-one understands a bleedin' word he says.

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**(She exits following Gloria - Curtain or fade to black-out)**