

## **Characters**

- |                        |   |                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Chris (M)</b>       | - | Middle-aged. Walks with a slight limp, wears glasses and uses a stick. Sensible, down to earth. A nice chap but a bit overbearing and pompous. |
| <b>Susan (F)</b>       | - | Chris' wife. Mostly on her own planet. Fanciful. Ready to believe the impossible. Sometimes speaks without thinking.                           |
| <b>Young Chris (M)</b> | - | 20s-30s. Younger version of Chris. Similar foibles.                                                                                            |
| <b>Young Susan (F)</b> | - | Young Chris' wife. 20s-30s. Younger version of Susan. Similar foibles.                                                                         |
| <b>Ben (M)</b>         | - | Susan's brother. In the same ball park as Young Susan. Cheerful, friendly. Somewhat flaky and careless.                                        |
| <b>Passer By (E)</b>   | - | Could be the same actor as Customer and/or Paramedic.                                                                                          |
| <b>Pete (M)</b>        | - | Boatyard owner. middle aged to elderly. Short sighted. Grumpy. Paranoid. Bit of a 'wide boy'.                                                  |
| <b>Customer (E)</b>    | - | Could be the same actor as Passer By and/or Paramedic.                                                                                         |
| <b>Angela (F)</b>      | - | Lead paramedic. In the same ball park as Ben. Attractive and efficient.                                                                        |
| <b>Tom (E)</b>         | - | Paramedic. Could be the same actor as Customer and/or Passer By.                                                                               |

## Scene 1 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The present

**(Lights up. There is a muffled yawn from within the cupboard, stage left, followed by a sound of something falling over and a mild expletive from Chris. Chris enters clumsily from within the cupboard and looks around.)**

**Chris:** Oh, so that’s how it works! **(He turns back into the cupboard to speak)** Susan? **(pause)** Susan? Guess she’s fine. She always did get up later than me. **(He moves out into the room, does a few stretching exercises then sits on the sofa.)**

**(SFX. telephone rings. Chris goes to get up to answer it, then yelps in pain and holds his knee.)**

**Chris:** Dammit! It’s back! **(SFX. the phone continues to ring)** All right, all right, I’m coming. **(He staggers to his feet and limps over to the phone and answers it.)** Hello. Chris Humber speaking. No I’m afraid she’s not available right now. Hospital? What’s happened? **(He listens for a while.)** Oh my God! When? Is he alright? I see. It’s okay, I’m the husband. I know Ben well. You can tell me. I think it would be better coming from me anyway. **(He listens a little longer.)** I see. Well that’s something, at least, I suppose. Yes. Yes. Thank you for informing us so promptly.

**(He hangs up. During this conversation Susan enters from the cupboard carrying a walking stick.)**

**Susan:** What happened? Oh. I see. How interesting! You left this behind, darling. You may need it. Who was that on the phone?

**(Chris takes the walking stick off Susan.)**

**Chris:** Hmm. I think you’d better sit down, dear.

**Susan:** **(not sitting down)** What is it?

**Chris:** That was the hospital. It’s Ben.

**Susan:** Ben? My brother, Ben?

**Chris:** He’s been in an accident.

**Susan:** An accident? Is he…?

**Chris:** **(quickly)** He’s fine. Well, I mean he’s alive. Something happened down at the boatyard. Something to do with a propeller on an outboard motor, as I understand it. He’s in Intensive Care and they think they’re going to have to amputate his left leg.

**(Now Susan sits down heavily.)**

**Susan:** Amputate!

**Chris:** Apparently he's stable and they don't think he's in any further danger, other than the obvious, of course.

**(Susan rises and moves across to the picture of Ben with the boat and speaks to it.)**

**Susan:** **(emotionally)** Oh Ben. You silly arse! I'll bet you were cutting corners again. **(She goes over to the sideboard and picks up a small booklet entitled "Ben's Boatyard" and waves it angrily.)** How many times did I warn him? People don't immediately think of boats as dangerous but all that machinery..."

**(She hurls the booklet onto the table. Chris picks it up during his next speech and thumbs through it absently.)**

**Chris:** I suppose he's going to have to sell up now then. There'll probably be some sort of inquest into the safety measures in the yard and I doubt he can afford to pay enough people to keep it running while he recovers. It would have been better all round if he'd never bought it in the first place.

**(Susan looks as though a thought has suddenly occurred to her.)**

**Chris:** Anyway, that's a whole other problem. We should be able to visit him in a day or two and I'm sure he'll give us the whole story.

**Susan:** **(standing purposefully)** No, no. We're not going to visit him!

**Chris:** Come again? Surely....

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**Susan:** We're not going to need to visit him.

**(Susan exits through the archway. Chris follows, confused and stands in the archway.)**

**Chris:** Susan?

**Susan:** **(offstage)** Come on. Stop dithering. I have an idea.

**(Chris shrugs and puts the booklet absent-mindedly into his jacket pocket as he Exits after Susan. It is important that the audience sees this and that it's obvious Chris is mainly unaware he has done so. Blackout.)**

## **Scene 2 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The present**

**(Lights up. Chris and Susan are standing around the table examining what looks like a vintage radio. There is a black rod about six inches long clipped (taped) onto it.)**

**Chris:** I’m sorry, darling, for a moment there I thought you said a time machine.

**Susan:** That’s right. That’s what it is.

**Chris:** **(after a pause in a slightly humouring manner)** No, love. This is an old radio. A time machine looks more like... well, I don’t know what it looks like because it doesn’t exist.

**Susan:** **(fiddling with the ‘radio’)** No. Look.

**(She turns on the radio. SFX. A popular modern song begins to play quietly. Ideally it should be something recognisable and recent.)**

**Susan:** When you twiddle the knob the numbers aren’t radio frequencies. See, the station doesn’t change. They’re years!

**(Chris peers at the dial.)**

**Chris:** Well, that’s certainly odd, I’ll warrant, but it’s a bit of a leap to assume it’s a time machine.

**Susan:** But the last number on the dial is **[current year]**. And it goes all the way back to **[twenty years ago]**. A twenty year stretch.

**Chris:** Where on earth did you get it?

**Susan:** Well, oddly enough, at Ben’s boatyard. Remember he used to do those charity Summer fêtes in aid of the RNLI? You were never able to take the time to go. Well about five years ago there was this stall. It was a junk stall really but there was this wrinkled old gypsy woman sitting behind the table. This radio caught my eye because I thought it might make a good Am Dram prop but as I was examining it the old woman pulled it away and told me I should be very careful with it. We got chatting, then, and she tells me, kind of conspiratorially, that it’s a time machine. She showed me the dial. The range was five years ago then. Seems like it’s always twenty years.

**Chris:** And the reason you didn’t immediately twig that she was spinning you a load of old hogwash?

**Susan:** Ah, well. I bought it anyway, but next year, weirdly, the old woman wasn’t there!

**(She pauses dramatically as though that explains everything.)**

**Chris:** Rii-ii-ght. So. She was only there one year, which obviously means she's some sort of demigod avatar with nothing better to do than hang around charity fêtes selling magic radios! How much did she want for it?

**Susan:** Four pound seventy five.

**Chris:** **(dryly)** A bargain. I don't suppose you considered she'd just given up selling junk, or maybe even died?

**(Susan isn't listening. She's playing with the radio and the rod comes loose in her hand.)**

**Susan:** Oh! Oh dear. It's come off.

**Chris:** What has?

**Susan:** This rod thing. I thought it was the aerial but it clearly doesn't need an aerial.

**(Chris takes the rod and inspects it closely.)**

**Chris:** Let me see? There's something engraved down the side. Looks like writing but it's so badly worn as to be illegible.

**Susan:** Better hold onto it anyway. We might need it.

**(She hands the rod to Chris who puts it in his jacket with the booklet.)**

**Chris:** Might we? Am I going to regret asking why?

**Susan:** We're going to go back in time and stop Ben buying that boatyard.

**Chris:** Yup. Thought I would. Darling, are you sure you're feeling quite alright?

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**Susan:** **(surprised)** Never better. Why wouldn't I?

**Chris:** Well, you do have a fanciful imagination; always have had. But this is just, well, a bit flaky, even for you, don't you think?

**Susan:** Are you trying to say that you think I've lost it?

**Chris:** No! Yes... no! Well, a bit. Maybe. I just think you might be suffering from some sort of shock, after Ben's accident.

**Susan:** Pfff. Ben can cut his legs off as often as he likes and it's not going to turn me into a nutcase.

**Chris:** Well, I imagine he's only going to be able to do so once more, at the most.

**Susan:** You ready? Ben bought the yard about, what, fifteen years ago? I'll ramp it back as far as it goes and we'll go back twenty.

**Chris:** What, right now? Can't we wait until after lunch?

**Susan:** Are you hungry?

**Chris:** No. I'm just trying to think of reasons to delay this.

**Susan:** You're scared!

**Chris:** I'm not scared of something that clearly isn't going to happen.

**Susan:** Here we go then. Look, there's a button here labelled 'Shift'. That's probably it.

**(Susan pushes a button on the radio. SFX. The music immediately changes to a popular song of twenty years ago. Again it should be as recognisable as possible. )**

**Chris:** See? Nothing.

**Susan:** Something happened. The station changed and the dial went blank.

**Chris:** For the love of God, Susan. Look.

**(Chris paces around in agitation and ends up over by the sofa. He pulls out the booklet from his jacket and flips through it, then waves it at her.)**

**Chris:** If we're in the past this booklet doesn't exist yet, so what's this about then, eh?

**Susan:** I suppose it travelled with us?

**(Chris throws the booklet onto the stage right sofa cushion in frustration.)**

**Chris:** Susan. It's just a bloody radio! Nothing happened!

**(Susan picks up the radio to inspect it. Enter Young Chris and Young Susan through the archway, laughing. Chris and Susan turn to look at them and both couples freeze in surprise.)**

**Young Chris:** Who the fuck are you?

## **BLACKOUT**

**(In the blackout the cast remain in place. Small changes can be made to the set to suggest the same room twenty years ago at the set designer's discretion. The sofa, however remains in place. A plastic carrier bag with some**

unspecified contents should be set. Leaning against the telephone table next to the sofa stage left. The photograph on the wall is removed.)

**Scene 3 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The past**

**(Lights up)**

**Young Chris:** Who are you and what are you doing in our house?

**Chris:** *Your house?*

**Susan:** Hush, darling. Hello. Um. I’m Susan and this is Chris.

**Young Chris:** **(struggling to get his head together)** What? But... those are our names.

**(Chris gives Susan a frustrated look.)**

**Chris:** Well, well. Fancy that.

**Young Susan:** That’s a coincidence!

**Susan:** **(grinning sheepishly)** Well actually, you see it’s not entirely because...

**Chris:** **(cutting in quickly)** Because it’s the other way round. This is Chris. **(indicating Susan).** As in Christine. And I am... **(realising what he’s said)** ..ah...

**Young Chris:** Susan?

**Chris:** Er, yes. That’s right. Susan. Short for Sue. My parents were Johnny Cash fans. **(Ploughing on in panic)** And...we’ve... come to view the house.

**Young Susan:** View the house? But we’re not selling it.

**Chris:** Are you not? Well, you were thinking about it, right? You went to Stockard and Sons in the high street?

**Susan:** Did we... er they?

**(The younger couple exchange glances.)**

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**Young Susan:** It was only for a speculative evaluation. We’ve barely thought any further about it.

**Chris:** Well, you know these estate agents. Very quick off the mark.

**Young Chris:** I’ll say. Bloody cheek. I think I need to have a word with Mister Stockard.

**Susan:** (the penny suddenly dropping) Oh yes! I remember now!

(Everyone looks at her.)

**Chris:** (trying to cover for her) That we went to the estate agents yesterday? Yes. Well done, dear!

**Young Chris:** But... but... how did you get in?

**Chris:** We, er, climbed through the window in the utility room. Seems the latch is broken.

**Young Chris:** (indicating Susan) And you brought a radio with you?

**Susan:** Never know when you might need a few tunes.

**Young Susan:** See, Chris, I told you that was a security thing! Even someone carrying a radio can easily get in.

**Young Chris:** Yes. Yes. We'll get around to fixing it soon.

**Chris:** Wouldn't bet on it.

**Young Chris:** What?

**Chris:** Nothing.

**Young Chris:** Anyway, that's not important right now. We just get back to find two strangers in our living room...

**Susan:** We're not troublemakers, honest. Just.. Visitors.

**Young Chris:** So glad to hear it. But, amazingly, you saying that doesn't suffice to put me entirely at ease. And I'm still confused. Why didn't you come to the front door?

**Chris:** We did. We rang the bell but nobody answered.

**Young Chris:** We don't have a bell.

**Chris:** (remembering) That's right! And that's why you didn't hear it. Anyway, we got here so that's the important thing. Nice to meet you!

(He hurriedly offers his hand, clearly as a distraction, and Young Chris takes it, automatically, somewhat bemused. SFX. An electrical popping sound. Lights flicker. Chris and Young Chris jump back a little and look at their fingers.)

**Both Men:** Oww!

**Young Chris:** Jesus! What the hell?

**Chris:** Static? From the carpet? **(looks down)** No carpet!

**(From this point onward Chris no longer moves with a limp. He still carries his stick for now, but doesn't need to use it. Both Susans step forward and hold out their hands as though going to greet each other then appear to have a thought and step back again.)**

**Both Women:** Hmm. Maybe not. Just in case.

**Young Chris:** **(nursing his fingers)** Not troublemakers, eh? Bloody hell, Sue. Why don't you kick me in the nads while you're at it?

**Chris:** Really sorry. It must be my new trousers.

**Young Chris:** Plugged into the National Grid are they?

**(Chris and Susan force a laugh.)**

**Chris:** National grid. Good one.

**Young Chris:** Look, even though I feel like I've just stepped into an episode of the Twilight Zone, I'll make you an offer. I will admit getting you out of here is becoming a priority but in order to not appear inhospitable, how about we give you a quick look at the house we're not selling, just in case we actually do and then you can go right back to old Stockard and tell him we'll decide when, not him.

**Chris:** Right you are.

**Young Susan:** We'll just go and clear a few things away first so you can see it properly.

**(She notices the booklet that Chris previously threw onto the sofa.)**

**Young Susan:** Oh. What's this? Does this belong to one of you?

**(Just as she is about to pick it up Chris hurriedly sits on the sofa, on top of the booklet.)**

**Chris:** Ah yes. It's mine. That's fine, I'll just sit on it for now so it's not in your way.

**(They give him a puzzled look.)**

**Young Chris:** **(humouring him)** Yes. Good idea. You just make yourselves comfortable. Don't set fire to anything will you? We'll be right back.

**(The next lines are stage whispers to each other as they leave.)**

**Young Chris:** What a bloody strange couple!

**Young Susan:** Yes, very. But they don't feel... bad. There's something about them that's weirdly familiar.

**\*\*\*\*\* Add this one line if the actors are physically similar enough \*\*\*\*\***  
And, it's odd but don't you think they look a bit like us too?

**Young Chris:** I didn't notice, I was way too busy being annoyed by them.

**(Exit Young Chris and Young Susan through upstage right door. Chris and Susan make sure they have gone before continuing.)**

**\*\*\* Add these three lines if the actors are not physically similar enough \*\*\*\***

**Chris:** Well, we've changed a bit in the last twenty years!

**Susan:** Yes, love, you have rather let yourself go

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**Chris:** I think you mean I've 'matured'.

**Susan:** So I get the bit about selling the house. I remember we thought about it once, then something happened and we never pursued it.

**Chris:** If I remember correctly, we were going to look into it and then the estate agent let a weird couple into our house without telling us....

**(They look at each other.)**

**Both:** **(realising)** Ahhh!

**Susan:** That makes sense.

**Chris:** No it really doesn't, but it's wandering somewhere in the vicinity of an explanation.

**Susan:** And... explain to me why we've swapped names?

**Chris:** I had to think fast. I thought you were going to tell them who we were. Why did you give them our real names?

**Susan:** Well, they probably recognise us anyway.

**Chris:** Oh you think so, do you? Look, Chris and Susan aren't uncommon names. Even if they think we look like them, most people wouldn't immediately assume it's themselves from the future.

**Susan:** (shrugs) *I might.*

**Chris:** Susan, darling, my love. You are not ‘most people’.

**Susan:** But she’s me, so she might too.

**Chris:** Look, never mind that now. We have other problems. **(He stands, picks up the booklet and starts to pace the room.)** This is one of them. If they get a glimpse of this with Ben’s mugshot in it there will be all kinds of questions raised.

**Susan:** Timeline corruption, you mean?

**Chris:** What?

**Susan:** You know, information from the future changing the present? Back to the Future, Doctor Who, Star Trek....

**Chris:** That’s fiction, Susan. We can’t base our situation on stuff from films and TV.

**Susan:** Well, I’m not sure what else we can base it on. Neither of us is a temporal physicist. Remember the zap?

**Chris:** Yes, that was odd. Don’t know where that static came from.

**Susan:** You touched yourself.

**Chris:** I beg your pardon?

**Susan:** You touched your younger self. I don’t think we’re supposed to do that.

**Chris:** (slightly irritated) Really? Do tell.

**Susan:** Time streams colliding. You know what happens when two levels of liquid come together? They try to equal out, don’t they. Like a stream running into a pond. **(With sudden realisation)** That’s why they call it the time stream!

**Chris:** I don’t think it is, but I see your argument. Crazy though it sounds.

**Susan:** Haven’t you noticed you don’t have a limp any more?

**Chris:** Good God. You’re right! I barely realised in all the confusion. I don’t need this any more!

**(He leans his walking stick against the stage left chair and stomps around gleefully.)**

**Susan:** See, you started to get your arthritis three or four years ago, so I think you’ve rebalanced with yourself from back then.

**(She looks him over briefly.)**

**Susan:** Clearly not all the way, but maybe just enough so that you're now young enough to not have developed it yet.

**Chris:** You do realise just how utterly insane that sounds, don't you?

**(Susan just shrugs.)**

**Chris:** So what happens if we 'balance' all the way?

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

**Chris:** No. I don't suppose anybody does. I'm not sure it's an experiment that we should pursue at this particular moment, though. Might be safer if we try to avoid contact with our younger selves.

**Susan:** We thought so, yes.

**Chris:** We?

**Susan:** Little Susan and I. I saw it in her eyes. My eyes. Whatever.

**Chris:** You did? How much do you think she knows?

**Susan:** About as much as me, but without the last twenty years.

**Chris:** Stunningly helpful!

**(From this point on, whenever the two couples are on stage together, whatever their other blocked moves, Chris and Susan will take obvious steps to stay apart from their younger selves. Chris sits back down on stage left of sofa next to the carrier bag.)**

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**Chris:** So, what's our actual plan, now that we're here, Ms. Timelord?

**Susan:** We need to talk to Ben and convince him not to buy the boatyard.

**(Door stage right opens suddenly and Young Chris and Young Susan return. Chris panics a little, looks around wildly and hurriedly slips the booklet into the carrier bag. The younger couple have not noticed.)**

**Young Chris:** Well, it's still not tidy, but we've done our best. If you'd like to come with us we'll show you around.

**Young Susan:** We thought we'd start in the kitchen, ok? If you'd like to come this way.

**(Young Chris heads back out the stage right door. If Susan has put down the radio she picks it up again now and takes it with her. Young Susan looks puzzled by the radio as she stands politely in the doorway to escort them. Chris and Susan make a big deal of maintaining a safe distance from her, squeezing past. When they have gone Young Susan still looks puzzled at first, then thoughtful and then follows them off. The stage is empty for a moment.)**

**Ben:** (offstage right) What-ho chaps.

**(Ben enters through archway upstage right. Putting some keys back in his pocket.)**

**Ben:** Hello?

**(The upstage right door opens and Young Susan leans in.)**

**Young Susan:** Back already?

**Ben:** Forgot the stuff. What am I like?

**(He goes over and picks up the carrier bag.)**

**Young Susan:** Doofus! See you later.

**Ben:** Ciao!

**(Young Susan exits through upstage right door again and Ben exits through archway upstage right.)**

#### **Scene 4 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The past**

**(Lights up. Enter Young Chris and Young Susan upstage right door. They are chatting sotto voce. Chris and Susan follow them at a safe distance. Susan no longer has the radio. The first bit of dialogue is done as stage whispers to each other.)**

**Chris:** It just vanished?

**Susan:** Right under my nose. It just kind of wibbled away.

**Chris:** **(with sudden realisation)** Because you haven’t bought it yet!

**Susan:** The timeline is adjusting?

**Chris:** Maybe so. And they didn’t notice because it doesn’t exist for them yet.

**Susan:** Makes sense!

**Chris:** No, it really doesn’t.

**Young Chris:** Well? What do you think?

**Susan:** Very nice place. Almost feels like home already! So we’ll be on our way, thanks.

**Young Chris:** Perhaps you’d like to use the door, this time?

**(Chris and Susan laugh politely. Young Chris and Young Susan turn toward the archway with Susan following at a distance. Chris moves over toward the telephone table.)**

**Chris:** Just check we haven’t...Aaargh!

**(They all jump and spin around.)**

**Chris:** It’s gone!

**Young Chris:** Sorry? What?

**Chris:** The bag has gone!

**Young Susan:** Yes. My brother popped back for it.

**Chris:** Aaargh!

**(They all jump again.)**

**Chris:** Ben was here?

**Young Susan:** How do you know my brother's name

**Chris:** Lucky guess. Where has he taken it?

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**Young Susan:** The charity shop, I think, but I don't see why that's any of your concern...

**Chris:** Never mind. We have to be away now. Come on darling!

**(Chris grabs Susan and drags her through the archway, again pointedly veering around the other two.)**

**Chris:** **(from offstage right, behind the archway)** We'll let ourselves out, thanks.

**(Young Chris and Young Susan look at each other in confusion.)**

**Young Susan:** **(noticing the walking stick)** Oh. He's left his stick.

**(She picks it up and heads toward the archway.)**

**Young Chris:** Where are you going?

**Young Susan:** Going after him.

**(Young Chris hastily takes the walking stick from her.)**

**Young Chris:** Crikey! Don't do that. We've got rid of them now. I'll just put it away in case they come back for it. But I rather hope they don't.

**(Young Chris puts the walking stick in the stage left cupboard.)**

**BLACKOUT**

## Scene 5 – The Street. The past

(The front few feet of the stage should be lit. The living room should be in darkness. Enter Ben downstage left wearing an outdoor jacket, he is not carrying the bag. He has the booklet tucked about his person, though this is not seen. He walks a few steps, realises his shoelace is undone stops to tie it, giving enough time for Chris and Susan's dialogue. Chris and Susan enter downstage right.)

**Susan:** There's Ben.

**Chris:** Right, so this is going to be tricky. We're going to have to improvise without letting on too much. We have to find out where he took that booklet.

**Susan:** And try to convince him not to get into boats.

**Chris:** Right! But one thing at a time, I think. We're going to have to be subtle about it.

(Ben finishes tying his lace and continues walking toward them. They meet centre stage.)

**Chris:** Ah. Excuse me, sir. We're new around here, would you happen to know where the charity shop is?

**Ben:** Sure. Just down there to the high street. But which one are you looking for?

**Chris:** Whichever one you've just been to.

**Ben:** Ah, Cancer Research, that'll be... **(suddenly realising what Chris just said)** Huh?

**Susan:** **(unable to contain herself)** Please don't buy the boatyard, Ben, or they'll have to cut your leg off!

**Chris:** **(stunned)** So much for subtlety.

**Ben:** Who are you? And how do you know my name? And, more to the point, I say again...huh?

**Chris:** She's talking metaphorically. Like when people say 'I can tell you but I'd have to kill you.' Or 'You can buy a boatyard but I'd have to cut your leg off.' Right. Now. Here's me trying to recover this conversation... **(then slowly, clearly making it up as he speaks)**... Your sister and brother in law have sent us to tell you not to buy the boatyard. Your brother-in-law has looked into it and it's a terrible operation. Financial disaster. That's why they're selling it.

**Ben:** What boatyard?

**Chris:** I don't know. The one on sale.

**Ben:** But, I haven't even thought about buying a boatyard. And I'm staying with my sister and I'm heading right back there now. Why so urgent? And, another thing.. who the hell are you?

**Susan:** Friends of the family. They were worried you might spontaneously buy it on the way home.

**Ben:** Really? Chris said that? Since when has he had any interest in boats, or any kind of business sense, for that matter?

**Chris:** I resent that! I mean. I resent the implication that I'm talking about Chris. It's your other brother-in law.

**Susan:** **(addressing Chris)** He's only got one sister, Chris. I mean Sue.

**Ben:** **(thinking she's referring to his sister)** That's right. Sue. . But she prefers 'Susan'.

**Susan:** **(pointing at Chris)** I was talking to him.

**(Ben looks baffled.)**

**Chris:** Darling, you're making this confusing. Ok, so it's the brother-in-law from the other side of the family?

**Ben:** I'm not married.

**Chris:** No that's right, you're not. Damn!

**Ben:** What's that to you?

**Chris:** Well, you need to find yourself a nice young lady.

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**Ben:** **(getting sidetracked by Chris' fast talk)** Easier said than done. I've always thought I'd get married eventually. I've tried dating, but it never seems to work out. It always seems to... Why am I telling you this?

**Chris:** I don't know. You were the one who started complaining about not being married. We were just asking the way to the shops and you dump your love life problems on us.

**Ben:** What? You asked...

**Chris:** I don't think we did. Why would we be interested in the private life of a complete stranger. Thank you for the directions, now I think we ought to be off before this conversation becomes even any more inappropriate. Come along, dear.

**(They hurry off downstage left leaving Ben gaping in confusion. After a while he shakes his head and heads downstage right.)**

**Ben:** (to himself) Boatyard? What the actual fuck?

**(Exit Ben downstage right. When he's gone Chris and Susan reappear downstage left.)**

**Susan:** He's gone. Do you think we got away with that?

**Chris:** Not even close. Look, I'll run down to the charity shop and buy that booklet back. You follow Ben and keep an eye on him. No knowing what he's going to do after that fiasco.

**Susan:** What do I do if he spots me?

**Chris:** How do I know? Improvise. You can't really screw it up any worse than I just did.

**(Exit Chris downstage left. Susan goes into 'I'm tailing someone' mode as she exits downstage right, after Ben.)**

**BLACKOUT**

## **Scene 6 – Outside the house. The past**

**(The front few feet of the stage should be lit. The living room should be in darkness. Ben enters stage right, swings around and approaches the downstage external door. He fumbles for his keys. Just as he finds them the door opens and Young Chris and Young Susan enter through the same downstage door.)**

**Young Susan:** Oh. Hi, Ben. Chris and I are just popping out for a while. We won't be long.

**Ben:** Ok. Say, Chris, I just had the weirdest conversation with a couple of your friends. They say you sent them to tell me I shouldn't consider buying the boatyard because it's a bad business venture?

**Young Chris:** What? Which friends?

**Ben:** A very strange middle aged couple, not unlike yourselves in a way.

**(Young Chris looks at Young Susan)**

**Young Chris:** Surely not those two again? **(to Ben)** And a boatyard? What boatyard?

**Ben:** I don't know. I never even considered investing in a boatyard, until they mentioned it. But look at this! **(He gets out the booklet.)** This is so strange. Here's an ad booklet about something called Ben's Boatyard, and how much does that guy in the picture look like me?

**(Young Chris takes the booklet and squints a bit at it as he flicks through. Then he hands it to Young Susan and rubs his eyes.)**

**Young Chris:** Well, it does look like you, I guess, but I'm having a bit of trouble reading the small typeface.

**Young Susan:** Really?

**Young Chris:** Yeah. I've noticed my eyes have been very tired for the last few hours. I'm beginning to think I might need glasses.

**Young Susan:** Probably about time you had an eye test, anyway.

**(She looks at the booklet.)**

**Young Susan:** Same address as Old Man Samson's, down by the weir. I saw he was selling up. Must be a printer's mix up, I suppose. Unless.... Nah. I don't know.

**(She hands it back to Ben. During this conversation they have moved slightly away from the door, which has been left ajar. Susan sneaks on downstage right and 'conceals herself' just at the edge of stage right.)**

**Ben:** (jocularly) Anyway, maybe it's a sign from somewhere or other. Can't ignore that can I? Those two friends of yours told me you'd done a financial analysis of Samson's, though.

**Young Chris:** What?

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**Ben:** Yeah. Said it was a bad venture to be getting into, but to be honest, what they said was so odd I got the feeling they were trying to put me off. Perhaps they want to buy it? Not sure why they thought I was interested, though.

**Young Chris:** What are those two up to? First, they want to buy the house. Now they want a boatyard?

**Ben:** The house? Are we selling? Do I need to look for other lodgings?

**Young Chris:** (Together) No!

**Young Susan:** (Together) No!

**Young Chris:** Not any time soon, anyway. The estate agent misled them.

**Young Susan:** Are you interested in a boatyard then, Ben? I know you've been looking for a new avenue of work.

**Ben:** Well, I've only thought about it in the last hour or so, but if it's on sale now it wouldn't hurt to at least look at it. I can't get down there today, though. I have a wodge of emails I need to send this afternoon.

**Young Susan:** Well, actually, we'll be driving quite close to Samson's shortly. I could pop in and pick up some information for you?

**Ben:** Ok. Why not? Thanks Sis. I'll give Old Samson a ring and tell him to expect you.

**Young Susan:** Ok. No problem. See you later.

**(Susan slips behind the group before they turn around and dodges through the door. Young Chris and Young Susan exit stage left. Ben exits into the house through downstage right door. Lights down on front stage. Lights up on living room.)**

## **Scene 7 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The past**

**(Susan enters stage right through archway looks around sneakily, moves over and hides behind the sofa. Ben enters stage right through archway. He moves centre stage and pulls out the booklet from wherever he was carrying it and begins to thumb through it quizzically. Susan is peeping over the top of the sofa and we see her expression when she sees what he’s got.)**

**Ben:** Amazing!

**(Ben sits on the sofa and reads for a few moments before pulling out his phone. He puts the booklet onto the telephone table beside the sofa and dials.)**

**Ben:** Samson’s boatyard? Great. Yeah. My name’s Ben Short. I’m interested in some details about your upcoming sale... Yeah. That’s right. My sister is coming round to you shortly to pick up some details... Her name’s Susan Humber... Sometime in the next hour or two, I think... Yeah. Sure. No worries. Thanks Mister Samson. **(He puts his phone away.)** Coffee, I think.

**(Ben exits stage left through the archway. Susan stands from behind the sofa and stealthily peers after him to make sure he’s gone. She should now convey the feeling that she’s out of her depth and doesn’t quite know what to do next. She dithers a bit then gets out her phone and dials.)**

**Susan:** Come on Chris. Pick up.

**(SFX. (phone): “the number you have dialled has not been recognised.”)**

**Susan:** Shit!

**(She looks at the booklet lying on the table and is about to make a decision when we hear Ben returning and she ducks back down behind the sofa. Ben enters the way he went out carrying a mug and a half full jug of coffee from a coffee maker. As he sits next to the table, Susan makes her desperate move. We see her around the side of the sofa reaching for the booklet. As her hand approaches, Ben, without really looking, reaches out, takes the booklet and puts the coffee pot in its place - on top of Susan’s hand. Ben reads for a few moments as Susan slowly realises how hot the pot is and we see the agony on her face. Ben, again absently, takes a drink, puts down the mug and reaches for the pot to refill it. Susan dances silently in relief behind the sofa cradling her hand. As Ben returns to the booklet, Chris appears at the window at the back. Susan and Chris notice each other and, after their initial surprise make frantic gestures to each other behind Ben’s back. SFX. Mobile phone rings. It’s Ben’s. He pulls it out and answers it.)**

**Ben:** Hi. George. Yes. I know. I’ve done it... Yeah. Sure, I can give you her number. It’s upstairs in my room. Bear with me.

**(Ben exits stage left through the archway, taking the booklet with him. As he**

**Swings round Chris and Susan quickly duck down behind the window ledge and the sofa respectively. SFX. Footsteps going up a flight of stairs. Susan moves over to the window after checking to see where Ben went, and opens it.)**

**Chris:** Why are you in there?

**Susan:** You asked me to monitor Ben.

**Chris:** You didn't have to sit on his lap!

**Susan:** I tried to call you.

**Chris:** Yes. So did I. Call you, I mean. I don't think my phone likes being twenty years adrift. I couldn't get through.

**Susan:** **(indicating where she had been hiding)** Probably just as well.

**Chris:** The booklet wasn't in the charity shop!

**Susan:** I know. He's still got it.

**Chris:** **(loudly)** What?

**Susan:** Sshh! He's only upstairs. He held onto it, evidently.

**Ben:** **(offstage)** Okay mate. Yeah, well, call her later, then.... Sure, I can do that. I've got some emails I need to get off but they can wait another hour or so. I'll meet you at Renalto's. Cool.

**(SFX. Footsteps coming down a flight of stairs. During Ben's dialogue, Chris and Susan have panicked a bit and Susan has clumsily climbed/been dragged through the window. She gets outside just as Ben enters and they both duck down. Ben is not carrying the booklet now. Ben double-takes as he goes past the window, noticing it is ajar. With a puzzled look he shuts it. This takes several attempts because Susan's hand (the burnt one) gets caught in it. Ben is focussed on the latch so we see Susan, once more dancing in agony as she finally retrieves her fingers and she and Chris exit upstage right behind the window. Ben gets his jacket and exits upstage right through the archway. SFX. A front door slams.)**

**BLACKOUT**

## Scene 8 – Outside the house. The past

(The front few feet of the stage should be lit. The living room should be in darkness. Chris and Susan are centre stage. Susan is nursing her twice injured hand.)

**Chris:** Does it hurt?

**Susan:** Let me see. Burned and crushed. What do you think?

**Chris:** You need to be careful with that.

**Susan:** Really? You think?

**Chris:** Where's the booklet?

**Susan:** Up in his room, I think. But look, we have another problem. Susan is heading down to the boatyard. Old Pete Samson's place. If I remember rightly Ben got it cheap because Old Pete was in danger of being done for tax dodging and needed to sell up fast. She's going to pick up some information for Ben.

**Chris:** Oh God, why is he suddenly so keen?

**Susan:** I think it's the booklet that's given him the idea.

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**Chris:** Yeah. And two weird strangers talking about boatyards may have had something to do with it, too.

**Susan:** Oh, really? Who are they? **(Chris gives her an old-fashioned look. Realising)**  
Oh. Right. I see.

**Chris:** I'll have to dash down to the yard and grab the details first and try to head Susan off somehow.

**Susan:** But Mister Samson is expecting a woman called Susan.

**Chris:** **(dryly)** Well, I'm half way there then aren't I?

**Susan:** Wouldn't it be better if I went?

**Chris:** No. You need to look after that hand and, anyway, the less chance you have to run into your old self the better. Do you remember whether we had the box of old am dram cossies in the shed back then?

**Susan:** I think so. They've been there for years.

**Chris:** I think so too. Good. I'll just have to do what I can.

**Susan:** What shall I do?

**Chris:** Stay here. I won't be long, I hope. And if you get a chance, grab that booklet.

**Susan:** How? The house is locked and they've all gone out. And anyway, I can't just....

**Chris:** I don't know, I'm making this up as I go. But I have get to Samson's before you.. her... you. Whatever!

**(Chris exits upstage right leaving Susan gazing at the house. She loiters a little while starts humming and eventually goes into a little dance. Enter Passer By downstage right. Susan doesn't notice them. Passer By stops and watches. Susan eventually realises she's being observed and stops.)**

**Susan:** **(brightly to cover her embarrassment)** Afternoon. Just.. um.. dancing in the street, you know.

**Passer By:** **(dryly)** A good day for it.

**Susan:** It's okay. I'm just practising my moves for a show.

**Passer By:** Good for you. So glad to hear it.

**(Exit Passer By downstage left.)**

**Susan:** Embarrassing! I can't just stand around here. **(She goes to stage left and peers upstage 'around the side of the house'.)** The utility room window! **(Susan exits downstage left with a sense of determination.)**

**BLACKOUT**

## **Scene 9 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The past**

**(Lights up. SFX. Clattering offstage left. A stepladder being constructed and used. Sounds of somebody trying to squeeze through a window. Susan’s actor can add vocal improvisation to this if needed. SFX. Front door opening)**

**Ben:** **(offstage right behind archway)** Sorry George. I’m running late. I got half way and realised I’d forgotten the sodding proposal document. Had to go back for it.

**(Ben enters on his phone. He gets as far as the middle of the archway. SFX. A ridiculously loud and long crashing cascade of sound from offstage left. Susan has fallen through the window and knocked over a huge amount of household items.)**

**Ben:** Jesus Christ! What the hell? George, I have to call you back.

**(Ben exits hurriedly upstage left. Young Chris enters upstage right behind archway.)**

**Young Chris:** Ben? Why is the front door open?

**(He moves into the living room and looks around.)**

**Young Chris:** Ben?

**(Ben enters upstage left through archway supporting a groggy looking Susan.)**

**Young Chris:** Good God! What happened?

**Ben:** I think she fell through the utility room window.

**Young Chris:** It’s her! Chris the house buyer! **(to Susan)** What are you doing here, again?

**Ben:** **(querying her name)** Chris?

**Young Chris:** **(thinks he's being addressed)** What?

**Ben:** No, I mean Chris is her name, too?

**(He struggles round and sits her on the sofa.)**

**Young Chris:** Apparently, yes. And she’s married to Sue.

**Ben:** I beg your pardon?

**Susan:** **(groggily looking at Ben)** Ben. My little brother!

**Young Chris:** And she seems to also have a brother called Ben!

**Susan:** And Chris. You both look so young!

**Young Chris:** I'm guessing she's also one of our boatyard obsessed friends?

**Ben:** Uh-huh!

**Susan:** Don't buy it Ben, or you'll lose your leg.

**Ben:** What the fuck is she talking about, Chris?

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**Susan:** Chris! That's me. I think.

**Young Chris:** Sounds like she banged her head. Could be a concussion. **(He pulls out his phone.)** I'll call an ambulance.

**Ben:** Why was she climbing through the window?

**Young Chris:** Don't ask. I think it's just something she and her husband do. **(into phone)** Hello. Yes ambulance please...

**BLACKOUT**

## Scene 10 – The boatyard. The past

(This scene takes place in the same lighting area as the street. A portable table covered in pieces of paper is set toward upstage left to Act as the boatyard reception desk. To the side of the desk is a magazine Stand containing a few publications. The front few feet of the stage should be lit. The living room should be in darkness. SFX. A boat horn. Pete Samson is standing behind the desk squinting at the papers through heavy glasses. )

(SFX. A small bell rings.)

(Pete looks up as Chris enters downstage right. Chris is wearing an old-fashioned dress, a bouffant wig and staggering inelegantly on a pair of high heel shoes. He is also slightly out of breath. He enters backwards looking behind him to see if Young Susan is anywhere in sight. During this scene Chris will attempt to affect a female voice. Pete Samson, fortunately, has noticeably bad eyesight.)

**Pete:** Afternoon.

(Chris spins around and attempts to regain his composure.)

**Chris:** Ah yes, indeed. I believe you're expecting me. Chris Humber.. *Susan* Humber? I mean I'm Susan Humber and Chris called to tell you I was coming. I think.

**Pete:** I got a call from somebody called Ben Short.

**Chris:** Yes. That's him! That's his other name. He said you'd have some documents for me?

(Pete stares myopically at Chris and then grunts.)

**Pete:** Wait here.

(Pete exits stage left. SFX. A small bell again. Chris jumps and quickly hides behind the magazine rack as the Customer enters downstage right. Customer doesn't notice Chris and goes across to the desk. He waits a moment and then moves over to the magazine. Chris moves round the other side as he does so to stay hidden. After a while Customer goes back to the desk.)

**Customer:** Hello? Anybody there? Hello? (Pause) Hello?

**Chris:** (from behind rack) He's not in.

(Customer starts in surprise.)

**Customer:** I'm sorry I didn't see you there. (Again the Customer moves to the rack, this time to try to see Chris who moves around to stay hidden.) Are you a member of staff?

**Chris:** No I'm just a customer. He told me he'd be about an hour. I should come back later if I were you.

**Customer:** An hour! Well, that's a nuisance. I wonder if it's worth waiting?

**Chris:** You've got better things to do. Just go away. Please.

**Customer:** I beg your pardon?

**Chris:** Go on. Off you go! Go! Go! Go!

**(Chris starts shooing Customer away who looks concerned and a little threatened and hurriedly exits downstage right. SFX. Small bell. Chris returns to the desk just as Pete re-enters downstage left with a sheaf of papers.)**

**Pete:** Here you go.

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**(Pete returns to perusing his desk having clearly dismissed Chris from his attention. Chris is about to leave and has an idea.)**

**Chris:** Mister Samson. A word of warning. There may be another woman who comes into your yard claiming to be Susan Humber. If she does you mustn't give her the information you gave me.

**Pete:** Really? And why would that be?

**Chris:** Well, she's an impostor. Pretending to be me. So, there you go.

**Pete:** And why is she doing that, then?

**Chris:** Because... she's.. **(struck with a sudden idea)**... A government agent! From the tax office. In disguise. Doing an undercover investigation into suspected tax evasion!

**(Pete is suddenly very interested and concerned.)**

**Pete:** No kidding! Well, that's interesting. I'm very grateful for that warning Mrs. Humber. Only because, you know, I don't approve of such fraud.

**(He starts gathering papers up from the desk.)**

**Chris:** Glad to help.

**(Chris exits hurriedly downstage right. SFX. Small bell. Pete exits, equally hurriedly downstage left. SFX. Small bell. Enter Young Susan downstage**

**right. SFX. A shredder offstage left. Young Susan goes over to the desk. SFX. More shredding offstage)**

**Young Susan:** Hello. Mister Samson?

**Pete:** **(offstage)** Busy. Sorry.

**Young Susan:** My name is Susan Humber. I believe you're expecting me?

**(Enter Pete downstage left.)**

**Pete:** Really? Susan Humber you say? Are you sure about that?

**Young Susan:** Er... yes.

**Pete:** Well, I don't approve of your tactics. Entrapment, that's what it is! I run an honest business here.

**Young Susan:** I'm sorry? I don't understand.

**Pete:** Oh right. So if you're Susan Humber, who was that woman who was here a moment ago then?

**(Young Susan goes across to a 'window', which can be the fourth wall, and looks out.)**

**Young Susan:** What, that ungainly woman who passed me on the way out? Running off down the street?

**Pete:** Yes. Susan Humber.

**Young Susan:** She said she was Susan Humber?

**Pete:** Bet you weren't expecting that, eh?

**Young Susan:** Er. No.

**Pete:** So you can just go right back to your 'department of persecutions' and stop bothering old men who are just trying to earn a living.

**Young Susan:** My what? Who, exactly, do you think I am?

**Pete:** As if you didn't know.

**Young Susan:** I *do* know. I'm Susan Humber.

**Pete:** Still sticking to that are you then?

**Young Susan:** Look. I only came here to...

**Pete:** I know exactly why you came here and you won't find anything! Now I would ask you to kindly leave my premises. You still have to do that if I ask, right?

**Young Susan:** Mister Samson, I really have no idea what you're talking about.

**Pete:** Closed! The boatyard is closed. Please leave now, '*Mrs. Humber*'.

**Young Susan:** Well. Alright. But I really don't know what this is all about.

**(Young Susan exits downstage right in a confused manner. SFX. Small bell.  
Pete exits upstage left. SFX. Shredding noises.)**

**BLACKOUT**

## **Scene 11 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The past**

**(Lights up. Susan is still sitting on the sofa. Ben and Young Chris are standing around nervously.)**

**Young Chris:** How are you feeling, Chris?

**Susan:** A bit better, I think. Thank you.

**(SFX. A knock on the door.)**

**Ben:** Ah. Here they are.

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**(He exits upstage right behind the archway. SFX. Door opening.)**

**Ben:** **(offstage)** Thank God. Please come in.

**(Enter Ben upstage right followed by Angela and Tom.)**

**Angela:** Hello, my name’s Angela this is Tom.

**Tom:** Alright **(meaning: ‘how do you do?’)**

**Angela:** Where’s the patient?

**(Ben indicates Susan. It’s clear that Ben is immediately taken with Angela. Angela moves over to Susan.)**

**Angela:** Good afternoon, ma’am. What’s your name?

**Susan:** Susan. No, Chris!

**(Angela is not fazed by this.)**

**Angela:** That’s fine, Chris. I’m Angela. I’m a paramedic. Do you mind if I check you over?

**Susan:** Not at all.

**(Angela does a few preliminary checks. Looking in Susan’s eyes, holding up fingers etc.)**

**Angela:** What happened to her?

**(Ben continues to stare at Angela. She looks around when there’s no answer.)**

**Young Chris:** Ben? You were there.

**Ben:** Oh. Sorry. Yes. She fell through the window in the utility room.

**Angela:** **(to Tom)** Looks like she's knocked her head. Go out to the ambulance and fetch the wheelchair will you? I don't think there's a concussion or any serious damage but we'll take her in for a quick check up, just to be sure.

**Tom:** Alright **(meaning: 'ok')**

**(Tom exits upstage right.)**

**Susan:** It's alright. I can walk. I don't want to be any trouble.

**(Susan stands and wobbles at little. Angela moves in to support her.)**

**Ben:** Let me help.

**(Ben moves in the other side of Susan as a second support and accidentally grabs Angela.)**

**Ben:** Oh. I'm so sorry.

**(Angela gives him a slightly coquettish smile. It's clear she's drawn to him.)**

**Angela:** Don't worry about it. Let's get her out to the vehicle.

**Ben:** Sure. Come on Chris. You'll be fine.

**Angela:** Would you like to ride with her, Mister er...

**Ben:** Ben! Please call me Ben.

**Angela:** Ben. It sometimes helps if there's someone familiar with the patient.

**Ben:** Yeah! I'd really love to go with you! I mean... with her.

**Angela:** Right. Good. I don't think we'll be away long.

**Ben:** I know this isn't exactly the right time, but would you like to go out for a drink later, Angela? Just while Susan is being seen to, of course. To... go over things... like... **(he trails off lamely).**

**(Angela gives him an amused and knowing look then they both exit supporting Susan upstage right through archway.)**

**Angela:** **(offstage)** Coming through, Tom.

**Tom:** **(offstage)** Alright. **(meaning: 'I'm ready')**

**Angela:** (offstage) Careful now. There you go.

**(SFX. Ambulance engine starting up. Young Chris gets out his phone and dials.)**

**Young Chris:** Hi. You'll never guess what's going on here. That woman Chris... yes her again! Well she fell through our window and they've taken her to A&E. No. I don't know, either....Uh-huh. What other Susan Humber? What do you mean? I don't understand what you're trying to say, love. Yeah. Explain when you get back.

**(SFX. Ambulance pulling away then a sudden squeal of brakes.)**

**Angela:** (distant) Christ almighty, woman! Mind where you're going or you'll end up inside one of these!

**Tom:** (distant) Alright? (meaning: 'do you understand?')

**(SFX. Ambulance driving away.)**

**Chris:** (offstage right, calling for his wife) Chris? Chris?

**Young Chris:** (thinking he's being addressed) Yes!

**(He moves toward the archway to see who's calling just as Chris runs in out of breath upstage right, still dressed in drag. They collide. SFX. An electrical popping sound. Lights flicker.)**

**Both Men:** Oww!

**Young Chris:** (angrily) What the fuck!? Who are you, lady?

**Chris:** I'm not a lady. It's me, Sue!

**(Young Chris peers closely at Chris. Chris takes a cautious step back.)**

**Chris:** Don't come too close I think I'm still live!

**Young Chris:** (indicating Chris' outfit) Well. This is new.

**Chris:** Never mind that, where is my wife, Chris? I need to speak to her urgently.

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**(Young Chris is flexing his knee (the same one Chris was having difficulties with earlier) and rubbing his eyes. From now on he should adopt the same slight limp that Chris had.)**

**Chris:** Er. Are you alright?

**Young Chris:** Yeah. Think so. Must have just twisted my knee, and my eyes are all blurred.

**Chris:** Oops. Ah. Here, borrow my glasses.

**(He takes off his specs and hands them carefully at arm's length.)**

**Young Chris:** What makes you think they'll work for me?

**Chris:** Just a hunch.

**(Young Chris takes the glasses and puts them on.)**

**Young Chris:** Well, what do you know? They're perfect. But what about you?

**Chris:** Don't worry. I don't seem to need them just at the moment. So where's my wife. I left her in the street and when I get back there's an ambulance.

**Young Chris:** Sit down, mate. It's alright. Chris has had a fall and banged herself up a bit. Looks like she hurt her hand too. But the paramedic says she's fine, they're just going to check her over...

**Chris:** Paramedic? That was her in the ambulance?

**Young Chris:** Yes. But take it easy. Ben's gone with her and....

**Chris:** What? No, she can't go to hospital! Do you realise how much confusion that will cause?

**Young Chris:** I'm sure it'll be quite routine. Why should it be confusing?

**Chris:** You have no idea!

**(Enter Young Susan upstage right through archway.)**

**Young Susan:** The door's wide open Chris, and what's all this about...

**(She points at Chris in astonishment.)**

**Young Susan:** That's her! The crazy woman from the boatyard.

**Chris:** Oh for the love of... **(He pulls off the wig.)** It's me... Sue.

**Young Susan:** Why are you dressed like that? Hey, I recognise that outfit. I wore it in Carousel. **(reference can be changed to fit the costume)**. Why are you wearing it? And why are you here?

**Chris:** Unimportant! I've just come to collect Chris.

**Young Susan:** Your Chris or my Chris?

**Chris:** My Chris, of course, why would I... never mind.

**Young Susan:** Why did you pretend to be me and tell Old Samson some story or other?

**Chris:** **(sighing)** Well, I'd like to give you a good explanation, but I'm pretty much clean out of them, now. So I'm going to go with the truth. It was to stop you getting hold of these **(he waves the papers from the boatyard)** and giving them to Ben.

**Young Chris:** Why? I don't know about you Susan, but I'm beginning to get a migraine!

**Young Susan:** **(just noticing)** Why are you wearing his glasses?

**Chris:** Never mind all this! If Chris, no dammit, *Susan. Susan Humber!* If Susan Humber arrives at the hospital they'll realise there's already a Susan Humber registered and they might do tests and find out... Look why don't you both sit down, I'm going to tell you something and it's going to be pretty sodding unbelievable.

**(Young Chris and Young Susan look at each other, shrug and sit on the sofa.)**

**Chris:** Let's start with who we are...

**Young Susan:** You're us from the future.

**(There is a long pause.)**

**Young Chris:** They're who from the what, now?

**Young Susan:** Seems to make sense to me.

**Chris:** Well, that was easier than I thought it would be!

**Young Chris:** Has everybody gone insane while I wasn't looking?

**Chris:** Right then. If that's clear, here's the easier bit. We are here because something less than ideal happens in our time that starts in your time so we used the radio to come back here to try to avoid it. I don't want to give any more specific details because it seems we might actually have caused it by being here and if I say too much I might be inviting further complications. Just suffice it to say that the boatyard is a bad idea.

**Young Chris:** Well, I'm glad that was the simple bit!

**Young Susan:** So do you remember all this happening then? When you were our age?

**Chris:** Oddly, no, but I think we're rewriting history so fast the timestream can't keep up.

**Young Chris:** I know how it feels!

**Chris:** And we're wasting time. Susan mustn't be allowed to get to the hospital. I'm going after the ambulance.

**Young Chris:** On foot?

**Chris:** Can I borrow your car?

**Young Chris:** Not a chance. I'll drive you.

**Chris:** No! We've already been too close to each other. You need to stay here. I'll take the bicycle in the yard.

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**(He exits hurriedly downstage right.)**

**Young Susan:** Wait. You'll never catch up....

**(SFX. Front door slamming.)**

**Young Susan:** **(looking where Chris exited)** I think you're going to have to cut down on the caffeine, dear!

**(Young Chris pulls out his phone.)**

**Young Chris:** Maybe they don't have phones in the future.

**(He dials.)**

**Young Chris:** Ben, mate. You still in the ambulance? Good. Look I'm going to say something a bit crazy. Put yourself on speaker so Susan, by whom I mean the lady you're calling Chris, can hear. This will no doubt confuse *you* but I think *she* might understand...

**BLACKOUT**

## **Scene 12 – Outside the house. The past**

**(The front few feet of the stage should be lit. The living room should be in darkness. SFX. An ambulance arriving. A blue light flashes off stage left. Young Chris and Young Susan are discovered on. Enter Susan being steadied by Tom and Angela downstage left. Ben tags along behind. Susan has a bandage on her injured hand.)**

**Angela:** Are you sure, Mrs Humber? As your injuries are not life threatening, we're not going to insist you go to hospital, but I would still recommend it.

**Susan:** No, no. It's fine. I feel much better now. I'd rather be home.

**Angela:** Well, it's your decision, of course. **(to Young Chris)** Just make sure she gets plenty of rest. Come on then Tom, let's be away.

**Tom:** Alright. **(meaning: 'ok')**

**(She and Tom exit downstage left. Ben moves to follow them.)**

**Young Susan:** Where are you going, Ben?

**(Ben looks a bit awkward.)**

**Ben:** Um. Well. Angela finishes her shift in an hour so we're going to go and have a drink, somewhere.

**Young Susan:** **(understanding)** Ahh! I see. Well, good for you. Have a nice time.

**Ben:** **(grinning)** Thanks sis.

**(Ben exits downstage left. SFX. During the following dialogue the ambulance departs. The blue light stops.)**

**Young Chris:** Well Chris, I mean Susan, you better come in and take it easy for a while, I suppose.

**Young Susan:** Of course!

**(Enter Chris downstage left, running and out of breath.)**

**Chris:** No! She mustn't.

**Young Susan:** Don't be stupid, of course she...

**Chris:** No. You two mustn't get close to each other.

**Young Susan:** Well, we aren't exactly going to hug each other.

**Susan:**           **(tiredly)** No, he's right. Thank you but it's best we part company here. The longer we stay here the more we'll contaminate our own past, and your present.

**Chris:**           We should probably get a hotel, and work out how to get back to our other home.

**Young Chris:**   Still not sure I'm buying this future hogwash, but if that's the way you want to play it there's the Premier Inn in town, just about half a mile away. They've always got space.

**Chris:**           That should do fine. Come on Susan, let's do that and figure out our next move.

**(Exit Chris downstage left.)**

**Susan:**           Well, goodbye then, and thank you both for your time and patience.

**(Exit Susan downstage left. The other two stand watching for a while.)**

**Young Susan:**   Hope they'll be alright.

**Young Chris:**   I'm just kind of glad they've gone.

**(They both exit downstage right through the front door.)**

**Susan:**           **(offstage)** Where are you going Chris?

**Chris:**           **(offstage)** Where do you think I'm going. Back to the shed to ditch these stupid clothes. I can't go to the Premier Inn dressed like this!

**BLACKOUT**

### **Scene 13 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The past**

**(Lights up. Enter Young Chris and Young Susan upstage right through archway.)**

**Young Chris:** So why are you so ready to believe that whole load of nonsense?

**Young Susan:** Well they were kind of like us, mannerisms and such, and Chris certainly reminded me of you.

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**Young Chris:** But the man is a hyperactive nutcase.

**Young Susan:** I make no comment.

**Young Chris:** What’s that supposed to mean?

**Young Susan:** Just saying. Then there was the fact that they knew all about the house, including the broken window in the utility room and, of course the zap when you touched each other. How’s your leg by the way?

**Young Chris:** Bloody sore. Don’t know what I’ve done to it.

**Young Susan:** It’s old age.

**Young Chris:** Huh?

**Young Susan:** *His* old age. Or rather your old age. Given to you by him. We can only hope it fades away again.

**Young Chris:** **(confused)** Whatever! I’m not following or endorsing any of this and it’s giving me a bit of a headache. I’m going to go for a little nap. My eyes are tired as well as anything else.

**(He moves toward the archway.)**

**Young Susan:** Well, don’t forget we’re going over to Wendy and Simon’s later.

**Young Chris:** Shit! Is that tonight? I’d completely forgotten in all the madness. Well, I’ll just be half an hour, then.

**(Young Chris exits upstage left through archway. Young Susan exits downstage right through door.)**

**BLACKOUT**



## **Scene 14 – The Street .The past**

**(The front few feet of the stage should be lit. The living room should be in darkness. Chris and Susan enter downstage right strolling slowly.)**

**Chris:** What, just go home and forget all about it? Firstly, how?

**Susan:** Probably got something to do with that rod that fell off the radio.

**Chris:** I guess.

**(He pulls it out.)**

**Chris:** But it doesn't say what, if anything, it does.

**(He checks it over again.)**

**Chris:** Hey. Wait a moment! Those faded letters are much clearer now. How can that be?

**Susan:** It's twenty years younger now?

**Chris:** **(doubtfully)** Does it work like that?

**Susan:** Maybe. How should I know? Can you read it now, then?

**Chris:** Still not entirely clear but it seems to call itself a stasis rod. And there's more. 'Warning: do not travel without this. Warning: use only in confined spaces. Warning: use only in emergency. Warning: do not eat or drink before use. Warning: keep away from children and pets.'

**Susan:** Sounds dangerous.

**Chris:** You think?

**Susan:** Told you we'd need it though!

**Chris:** **(sceptically)** Uh-huh? And if we do figure out what it's for do you really think we can just bugger off now and everything will be hunky-dory?

**Susan:** Well you were saying yourself that you reckon we caused all this by coming back here to try to prevent it. Maybe we're better off cutting our losses.

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**Chris:** Yes, Ben hadn't even got boatyards on his radar until we starting going on about it and he got hold of that booklet... AAARGH!

**(Susan jumps.)**

**Susan:** I wish you'd stop doing that!

**Chris:** We can't go yet. Ben's still got the booklet. It's probably got all sort of future stuff in it.

**Susan:** Temporal contamination!

**Chris:** Yes. That too! We've got to get it back.

**Susan:** How? We can't go back there. They won't be pleased to see us, and we can't risk any further interaction.

**Chris:** Think. What did we used to do in those days?

**Susan:** We went out quite a lot, I remember. What's the date? August the...

**(She snaps her fingers.)**

**Susan:** Wendy's birthday! Remember we used to go to restaurants with Wendy and Simon on our birthdays? Maybe tonight is one of those!

**Chris:** Worth a try. Come on!

**(They exit downstage right, hurriedly.)**

**BLACKOUT**

**Scene 15 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The past. Two hours later.**

**(Lights remain off. SFX. Crashes and bangs from offstage left.)**

**Chris:** **(offstage left)** Careful now. Take my hand. Don’t do what you did last time.

**Susan:** **(offstage left in a struggling tone)** Really? I was planning on doing just that. It was so much fun the first time!

**(SFX. More crashes and bangs. Enter Chris and Susan upstage left through archway after a short pause.)**

**Chris:** Certainly going to have to get around to fixing that broken window.

**(He goes over to the wall switch and turns on the lights. Lights up on the living room)**

**Chris:** Right. Where will it be?

**Susan:** I think I remember him taking it upstairs.

**Chris:** His bedroom. Right. I’ll go and check there while you have a scoot around in here, just in case. Might be wise to check the kitchen, too.

**(Chris exits upstage left through the archway. SFX. Footsteps on stairs. Susan starts rather vaguely looking around the room, immediately getting distracted by other things.)**

**Susan:** I can’t believe we’ve actually had all this stuff for twenty years. It’s about time we had a bit of a change. We haven’t even moved anything around much.

**Chris:** **(distantly)** Eureka! On his bed.

**(SFX. A car pulling up outside. Susan comes alert and a look of sudden horrified realisation comes over her face. SFX. Footsteps on stairs. Enter Chris upstage left through archway waving the booklet.)**

**Chris:** Ha ha! Right, let’s go.

**Susan:** Darling, do you remember one occasion when we went out with Wendy and Simon and Simon had booked the wrong day, so we all came back here... early?

**Chris:** **(laughing)** Why yes, Wendy was so cross, with it being her birthday and all. That was quite....

**(SFX. A car door slams outside. Chris freezes as he also suddenly realises.)**

**Chris:** No. Fucking. Way. It has to be that one time? Unbelievable!

**Susan:** They mustn't find us!

**Chris:** No shit!

**Susan:** The utility window!

**Chris:** Are you crazy? They'll be coming through the door in a matter of seconds. If we try to go through there that fast we'll *both* break our necks.

**(Susan runs across to the cupboard door.)**

**Susan:** In here, then?

**(SFX. Front door opening. Chris nods and they both go into the cupboard. They get the door closed just as Young Chris and Young Susan enter upstage right through the archway.)**

**Young Susan:** Oh, we must've left the light on!

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**Young Chris:** **(calling offstage in the direction they came)** Okay, Simon, you'll probably find a parking space a few doors down. **(to Young Susan)** Better crack a bottle then. Probably going to be a late one. You know what they're like.

**(Young Susan exits upstage right through door. Young Chris hangs around in the archway waiting for his guests. Lights fade to blackout. SFX. Ticking clock. Time passes. Young Susan rejoins young Chris in the blackout. They are holding empty wine glasses. Lights up. Young Chris and Young Susan are in the archway waving toward offstage right.)**

**Young Chris:** **(slightly tipsy)** Bye. See you next Sunday, then.

**Young Susan:** **(also slightly tipsy)** Bye. Great evening!

**(SFX. Front door closing.)**

**Young Chris:** **(chuckling)** Boy, can those two put it away! I'm swimming!

**Young Susan:** Bed time, I think. If I can make it up the stairs. Ha ha! The dishes can wait until tomorrow.

**Young Chris:** Oh, I think so, yes.

**(They both exit upstage left through the archway. SFX. Footsteps on stairs. There is a long pause. The next dialogue is delivered from inside the cupboard, possibly via the sound system.)**

**Susan:** Do you think they've gone?

**Chris:** I think so.

**Susan:** Shall we go out and see?

**Chris:** I would if I thought I could move. I think my vertebrae have fused!

**Susan:** Move over a bit and I'll try to crawl out.

**Chris:** Ouch!

**Susan:** What's that?

**Chris:** My leg.

**Susan:** Sorry. There's not much room.

**Chris:** Really? You don't say!

**(SFX. Scuffling and a small crash from inside the cupboard.)**

**Chris:** Shhh! You want to wake them?

**Susan:** Sorry. There's a lot of junk in here. But, anyway, if I remember rightly, I couldn't have been woken by a brass band setting off a firework display that evening. Oh, what's that?

**Chris:** The rod, I think.

**Susan:** Why is it starting to glow like that?

**Chris:** What did you do?

**Susan:** I don't know. I can't see a thing in here. I think I leaned on it.

**Chris:** Jesus, have we set it off? I think it's going to...

**(SFX. Stasis field activating. Then silence. A long pause. Blackout. In the blackout the photograph on the wall is replaced by a photo of Angela and ben dressed as bride and groom at a wedding)**

## **Scene 16 – Chris and Susan’s living room. The present.**

**(Lights up. The first bit of this scene should be played as far as possible exactly as in Scene One. There is a muffled yawn from within the cupboard, stage left, followed by a sound of something falling over and a mild expletive from Chris. Chris enters clumsily from within the cupboard and looks around.)**

**Chris:** Oh, so that’s how it works! **(He turns back into the cupboard to speak.)** Susan? **(pause)** Susan? Guess she’s fine. She always did get up later than me.

**(He moves out into the room, does a few stretching exercises then goes to sit on the sofa and pauses looking at the phone waiting for it to ring. It doesn’t. He huffs in puzzlement and sits on the sofa. Susan enters from the cupboard.)**

**Susan:** What happened? Oh. I see. How interesting!

**Chris:** It feels a bit different this time, somehow.

**Susan:** Really?

**(She crosses to the photograph on the wall.)**

**Susan:** Oh yes! This picture used to be different. It was Ben with his favourite boat. At his yard.

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**Chris:** You’re right! But that never happened did it? I think there was a time when he was interested in something like that, but then he married Angela and it turned out she gets seasick in a swimming pool!

**Susan:** And so he figured it wasn’t the best direction for him. Yes, I remember that, now.

**Chris:** And I remember their wedding too! Ha ha! The incident with your uncle Stan’s whippet and the bowl of gazpacho! How everybody laughed. Except Angela’s mum, of course!

**Susan:** Which made it even more hilarious, yes. Ha ha. *(after a pause)* Darling?

**Chris:** Mmm?

**Susan:** When we went back to change things, we actually caused the problem, right?

**Chris:** I think so, yes.

**Susan:** And then, by blind luck, us being there and me needing an ambulance introduced Ben to his future wife.

**Chris:** I think that's the way it happened. So?

**Susan:** So we actually caused it, and prevented it, and so now there's no reason for us to ever do what we did.

**Chris:** Hmm. And what's more, you never actually bought the radio, because the boatyard fête never happened. In fact the boatyard never happened.

**(The give each other a bemused, yet amazed look.)**

**Susan:** Messes with your head a bit, doesn't it?

**Chris:** Does rather.

**Susan:** So everything we did back then, when you think about it, didn't actually happen.

**(SFX. Ambient sound of the timestream readjusting throughout the next bit of dialogue.)**

**Chris:** What didn't happen, dear?

**Susan:** Any of it. The boatyard. The radio. My hand. You dressed as a woman. None of it happened!

**(Chris gives her a blank look. He's already forgotten it all.)**

**Chris:** Is this another of your flights of fancy? I swear sometimes you completely lose me. I have no idea what you're talking about, love.

**Susan:** **(vacantly, as if trying to hold onto a dream)** Nothing... happened!

**Chris:** Susan? Are you feeling alright?

**(Susan must now slip the bandage off her hand out of sight of the audience and conceal it in her costume, as though it has just vanished.)**

**Susan:** Nothing... hmm? Sorry. I just lost my train of thought.

**(She shakes her head as the dream dissipates.)**

**Susan:** **(brightly)** How about a cup of tea?

**Chris:** Excellent plan. I'll go and put the kettle on.

**(Chris starts to get up and his knee gives a twinge.)**

**Chris:** Aahh. Bloody knee! It seems to be a bit worse today. Think I'll be needing my stick.

**Susan:** Oh, I saw it in the cupboard.

**Chris:** What's it doing in there?

**Susan:** I don't know. Get it later, though. You just sit there for now and I'll go and make a pot.

**(She exits upstage right through the door. A pause.)**

**Chris:** And what the hell have I done with my glasses?

**CURTAIN**