

Digging to Australia

By

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Cast: Tony, early 30s.

Prudence, Tony's wife, early 30s.

Lucy, Tony's sister, early 30s.

Notes:

A / indicates the cue for the next line in overlapping dialogue.

' . . .' in the middle of a sentence indicates hesitation, searching for the right words, at the end of a sentence indicates trailing off.

} indicates lines begin at the same time.

– at the end of a sentence indicates words cut off by next speaker.

The set consists of three locations: The Beach. The kitchen (with bedrooms upstairs above it). The Garden.

Act 1. Friday evening.

Set in darkness. Faint rippling light on the Beach area. The stars revolve above the set. Sound of waves rolling in on the shore as the audience take their seats.

Lights up on the Kitchen. The cast are already on set. Tony and Lucy sit at opposite ends of the kitchen table. Pru is busy at the sink, washing up some cups. Silence except for the noise of clattering crockery.

Pru moves to the table and puts down cups. She makes tea, brings the pot to the table. Sits. Silence. Everyone feels awkward. Lucy is in a nervous state.

Pru. Well.

[Pause. Waiting for someone to speak.]

This is a surprise.

Lucy. [Pause.]

Yes.

Pru. Yes.

[Pause.]

Tea?

Lucy Thanks.

[Pru. Pours tea for everyone. They sit and drink it in silence.]

I should've phoned.

Pru. No, no. No need. None at all.

Lucy Let you know I was coming.

Pru. It really doesn't matter.

Lucy [Pause.]
Thanks.

Pru. Tony's always asking people to drop in, aren't you, Tony.

Tony. Yes.

Pru. Open house. And if his own sister can't drop in, well, who can?

Lucy. I just . . . I didn't know where to go . . . you see I . . . what I mean to say is . . . when I set out I didn't realise I was coming here.

Tony. All roads lead to Frinton.

Pru. [Nervous laugh.]

Lucy I just found myself heading in this direction. I don't seem to know what I'm doing half the time these days.

Pru. You probably need a rest.

Lucy. Yes, yes, I think you're right.

Pru. Stay as long as you like.

Lucy. Thanks.

Pru. That's right, isn't it, Tony.

Tony. Yes, yes, stay . . . any time.
[Tony gets up and looks out the window.]

Lucy. Thanks.

Tony. Still got the Astra I see.

Lucy. Yes, I like it.

Tony. Bit boring.

Lucy. I like boring, anonymous. I want boring, it's safe.

Pru. Tony always drives a Jaguar, don't you. He likes a car that sounds like a predator.

Tony. Don't be stupid.

Pru. Something fast - and vicious.

Tony. What was the traffic like?

Lucy. Okay.

Tony. It's usually not too bad, round here.

Lucy. Yes. It was quite light, really. Didn't take long.

Tony. It makes a world of difference, traffic.

Lucy. When I got in the car I didn't know where I was going. I just wanted to [a *beat*] drive. I wanted to feel I was going somewhere. I didn't know where, but... just the feeling of going.

Pru. I get that feeling sometimes.

Lucy. Do you?

Pru. Yes, yes I do.

Tony. I find driving relaxing.

Lucy. Really.

Tony. Yes. It's like you're . . . it's self-contained, isn't it, in the car.

Lucy. I just wanted to get away. I suppose -

Tony. Something nice on the CD player?

Lucy. I wanted to put some distance between myself and – what?

Tony. Have you got a CD player in your car?

Lucy. No.

Tony. You should get one.

Lucy. I've got tapes.

Tony. Makes the world of difference, a CD player.

Lucy. I like my tapes.

Tony. There's no comparison in quality.

Lucy. I didn't play anything. I drove in silence.

Tony. I always like to play something.

Lucy. In the silence you can think.

Tony. Too boring otherwise. I've got one of those CD changers. You can play hours of music and never lift a finger.

Lucy. Get away . . . think.

Tony. They're not very expensive now.

Lucy. I just got scared.

[Nervous laugh.]

I don't know why.

Pru. Well, you're here.

[Pause.]

You're safe here, with family.

Lucy. Yes.

Tony. Yes.

Lucy. Thanks. I'm sorry . . . I know it's . . .

Pru. Don't worry. No trouble. I'm afraid the room isn't aired. But this time of year it should be all right.

Lucy. I'd better go and freshen up.

Pru. Yes, of course, you must be exhausted after your trip. It's the first on the left.

[Exit Lucy upstairs. Pause as they wait for Lucy to be out of earshot.]

Tony. Open house, huh.

Pru. Well I had to say something. You're not much help.

[Pause.]

What d'you think's wrong?

Tony. I don't know.

Pru. What does she want?

Tony. Don't ask me.

Pru. Why is she here?

Tony. How should I know?

Pru. She's your sister.

Tony. We're not close, anymore.

Pru. When was the last time she visited? It must've been after your Father's funeral.

Tony. Yes, I suppose so.

Pru. So why now?

Tony. Search me. She's always acting odd. She's been acting odd for years.

Pru. Really.

Tony. Yes, really.

Pru. Do you think she's odd?

Tony. Don't know. Mum and Dad thought she was. They even took her to a psychiatrist once.

Pru. Really?

Tony. Yes, really.

Pru. Why was that?

Tony. There were a few problems.

Pru. What kind of problems?

Tony. Oh, you know, just growing up type problems.

Pru. What did he say?

Tony. Didn't say anything. They don't say anything, psychiatrists. They're like that.

Pru. Confidentiality, I suppose.

Tony. Yes. I suppose.

Pru. Still, with a child you have to tell someone, don't you. With children. The parents. I suppose he told them.

Tony. It was a she.

Pru. Oh, was it?

Tony. Yes. The psychiatrist was a she. I didn't like the look of her. Neither did Lucy.

Pru. That was unfortunate.

Tony. Yes, I remember Lucy said: 'Don't worry, I won't tell her anything'.

Pru. That's a funny thing to say.

Tony. Not really.

Pru. It sounds very conspiratorial.

Tony. Does it?

Pru. Yes. Yes, it does.

Tony. I don't think so. It's what these psychiatrists try and get you to do, isn't it. Talk. Spill the beans. Fat lot of good talking ever did anyone.

Pru. You should talk more. It'd do you good.

Tony. You think so, do you.

Pru. Yes. Yes, I do.

Tony. I suppose you're an expert.

Pru. You don't talk enough.

Tony. I only talk when I've got something to say. Unlike most / people.

Pru. Oh God, d'you think she saw the sink!

Tony. What?

Pru. The sink. Look at the state of things.

Tony. I shouldn't think so.

Pru. I bet she did. Women notice these things.

Tony. What does it matter if she saw the sink?

Pru. She'll think we're dirty.

Tony. No she won't, relax.

Pru. It's all right for you to relax. You're not the one who'll get the blame for

the sink.

Tony. No one's blaming anyone for anything. Calm down. Besides, if people just turn up they have to take you as they find you.

Pru. I knew I should've done it last night, I was going to.

Tony. Lucy's not house-proud; you should see the state of her place.

Pru. Look at that kettle. You left it like that. What a state. Oh God, suddenly I'm looking at everything with different eyes.

Tony. Don't panic. Lucy doesn't care. She's got more important things to worry about.

Pru. What has she got to worry about?

Tony. I don't know.

Pru. But you said: she has more important things to worry about.

Tony. It's just a figure of speech. Anyhow, she wouldn't be here, would she, if there wasn't something wrong.

Pru. You should ask her.

Tony. What?

Pru. Ask her what's troubling her.

Tony. That would be prying.

Pru. She's your sister.

Tony. It would still be prying. She'll tell me if she wants to.

Pru. Perhaps she's waiting for someone to ask, pay her some attention.

Tony. Then you ask her.

Pru. I will.

Tony. Good.

Pru. I will ask her.

Tony. Great.

[Pause.]

Is there any more tea?

Pru. All you think about is tea.

Tony. The world has to go on.

Pru. D'you think she's all right?

Tony. Uh?

Pru. Up there, on her own.

Tony. Yes.

Pru. She could be sobbing her eyes out, all alone, up there.

Tony. She's all right.

Pru. You don't think she'd do anything silly, do you?

Tony. She's been doing stupid things for years. [Enter Lucy.] It hasn't killed her yet.

Pru. Oh, hello, Lucy.

Lucy. That's better.

Pru. Good, good.

Tony. Hi.

Lucy. Funny how a wash can make you feel so much better.

Pru. Yes, there's nothing like a good wash.

Tony. More tea? Pru. was going to make some more, I think.

Pru. Yes. Would you like some?

Lucy. No thanks.

Tony. Well, I think I'll just pop out to the garden.

Pru. D'you have to go now?

Tony. I just want to check my alignment.

Lucy. What?

Pru. He's talking about his telescope.

Lucy. I didn't know you were interested in astronomy. When did this happen?

Tony. You needn't make it sound like a traffic accident.

Lucy. I didn't mean -

Pru. He's very sensitive about it; it's a touchy subject.

Lucy. Astronomy?

Pru. In this household, yes.

Tony. I won't be long. Just take a quick look, see if it's cleared up. Doubt it has.

Pru. Ever since he got it he's been obsessed. Popping in and out at all times.

Lucy. What sort of telescope?

Tony. It's quite good. I got it second-hand. It was a bargain.

Lucy. Oh.

Pru. Don't encourage him, you'll never hear the end of it.

Tony. It's a 6" Newtonian reflector with a German equatorial mount.

Lucy. Oh.

Pru. Here we go.

Tony. Yes. All for a hundred and fifty pounds.

Lucy. Is it difficult to set up?

Pru. Oh don't.

Tony. It can be a bit tricky. You have to know what you're doing.

Lucy. I wouldn't know where to start.

Pru. [Sighs.]

Tony. She wants to know.

Pru. Okay, okay, you asked for it.

Lucy. Go on, I'm interested, really.

Tony. Well, first you make sure it's all level, makes life a lot easier, then you have to know your location, what degree of latitude from the equator.

Lucy. Really, I'd never've thought of that.

Pru. Don't encourage him.

Lucy. But it's fascinating.

Tony. When you're setting up the mount you have to get your right ascension and declination correct.

Lucy. The what?

Tony. It's important because when stars rise and when they set you also have a thing called a transit.

Lucy. What's that?

Pru. A white van.

[Pru and Lucy laugh.]

Tony. Yes, dear, a white van. Ha ha. But apart, as Pru. kindly pointed out, from being a white van, it is also the passage of a heavenly body across the meridian, because, and you need to know this, because you want to see the star when it's in the middle of the sky, not when it's rising or setting, you want to get a clear view of it.

Lucy. Oh, I see.

Tony. In order to get the right ascension axis correct what I did was, I made this. [Tony pulls out his 'device' and holds it in front of himself, at crotch level.] This [pointing at the device.] is a right angled triangle and this angle is fifty one degrees. [To Pru.] The angle's about right, isn't it darling.

Pru. I really can't remember.

Tony. Anyway, when the plumb line is aligned with this line, this is at fifty one degrees.

Lucy. How clever.

Tony. Simple but functional. Then you have to adjust the azimuth of the telescope to the celestial pole.

Lucy. Uh?

Tony. Point it roughly in the right direction, which is due north, not the magnetic

north, then look through the eye piece, kick the stand until you can see the pole star in the middle of your field of view.

Lucy. Fascinating.

Tony. It's as simple as that. Anyway, I'll just pop out and have a little look. If I see anything spectacular I'll give you a shout.

[Exits to Garden area.]

Lucy. Okay.

Pru. [To Tony.] Don't be too long.

Tony [Tony stands in garden brooding; he is looking inward rather than at the sky.]

Pru [To Lucy.] Sometimes I think he cares more for that telescope than me. Are you sure there isn't anything I can get you?

Lucy. No. I'm fine. In fact, I think I'll go for a walk, get some air, before turning in.

Pru. D'you want me to come with you?

Lucy. No, no, I'd rather be alone.

Pru. Are you sure you'll be all right?

Lucy. Yes, fine. I could do with some air. I find walking helps me think.

Pru. Don't get lost.

Lucy. I'll try not to.

Pru. I'll leave the light on for you.

Lucy. Thanks.

[Exit Lucy to the Beach area. Pru. sits alone for a few moments. A forlorn figure in the kitchen area. Lights down on kitchen and garden areas, faint light on Lucy in the beach area, cue sound of waves. Lucy stares out into the gloom in the direction of the sea.]

When I got outside it was a lot darker than I expected. I'm used to the city

and I'd forgotten how dark it gets in the country. I'd forgotten a lot of things. It was cloudy and there wasn't much of a moon. I stumbled around a bit, getting my footings. I couldn't see where I was putting my feet and the ground, it seemed farther away than I expected. I kept tripping up, over roots and things. I couldn't help wondering if I was stepping into anything. I could smell the earth, hear rustling all around, all around there were things living, and things dying, cries. Sometimes almost human, but sharper. Then I heard it. I couldn't see it, it was just a continuation of the darkness, but I could smell it and hear it: the sea. It was coming in and going away, all the time. I stood still and listened to it. It was approaching and retreating, as if it wanted to tell me something, but kept changing its mind. I listened to it, coming in and going out, hypnotic, remorseless, it wouldn't let me go. I don't know how long I stood there.

Tony [Faint light on Tony in the garden. He peers into the telescope.]

There she is. Stars never let you down. They're always where you expect to find them, if you know where to look. Hard to believe how immense it all is. All that. All that . . . immensity. Growing, forever reaching outwards, expanding the edge of the universe. We're riding the shock-wave of an explosion bigger than we can imagine, a cosmic tsunami. We're looking into the sky and we see the past unfolding, written in the language of the stars. And here we are, so tiny, so small, so . . . insignificant. And yet, it's we who watch. It's amazing what we know. All that knowledge, built up over the years, all those geniuses, standing on their shoulders, looking out.

Lucy. At first it was just an idea. A crazy idea. One of those things you talk about, you know, just to . . . just to . . . turn the heat up. Peter liked doing that. He always wanted to turn up the flame. And it turned me on too. I

had to admit it. As an idea. Just an idea. Something to play with, in your mind, you know.

[Pause. Lucy walks from the Beach area to the Garden.]

Then it changed. It changed from fluid to solid. Idea to action, and here I am, and everything is like in slow motion, with the inevitability of a car crash; and you're in it and you don't believe it's happening, even now.

[Lucy enters the garden.]

Still up?

Tony. Oh, hello Lucy.

Lucy. Show me something interesting.

Tony. Well . . . I'm not sure there's much to see tonight.

Lucy. There must be something.

[Looking at the telescope.]

Wow. It's big isn't it.

Tony. Not bad. The wider the diameter the more light you capture.

Lucy. How d'you find things?

Tony. Well, I've got charts so I know where things are supposed to be, roughly, then I point it in the right direction, sort of, and home in on it through this finderscope, here. It's just a little telescope really. And then, when I've got it lined up with the cross wires then, assuming this is correctly aligned with the telescope, it should be in the middle of your field of view.

Lucy. I see.

Tony. Here's something, take a look at that.

Lucy. Wow. That's great.

Tony. Can you notice anything about it?

Lucy. Oh, it's got rings around it.

Tony. Which is?

Lucy. Er, um, Saturn? No Jupiter, er Saturn? I can't remember which.

Tony. Saturn.

Lucy. Wow.

Tony. A few days ago, it was a beautifully clear night, I could actually see the Cassini Division. There's a gap in the rings and that's what it's called.

That was interesting.

Lucy. It's amazing.

Tony. It's good to see things for yourself.

Lucy. Absolutely. [Pause.] It's good to see you.

Tony. Thanks. It's been a while.

Lucy. Yes.

Tony. I sometimes wondered -

Lucy. Me too.

Tony. Yes.

Lucy. It wasn't . . . I didn't . . . it didn't mean anything.

Tony. No?

Lucy. No.

Tony. Good.

Lucy. I just . . . got preoccupied, you know how it is. Never was very good at keeping in touch with people.

Tony. I'm glad you came.

Lucy. Really?

Tony. Yes, really.

Lucy. I almost didn't come in. When I first got here I parked the car outside and just sat there for the longest time, looking across at the house, thinking of you inside. The house looked so cosy and warm, I didn't want to break in. It took a lot of courage to knock on that door.

Tony. I'm glad you did.

Lucy. Thanks. I just . . . I don't know . . . I just wanted to see you.

Tony. Good. I often think of you. Wonder how you're getting on, stuff like that, and I keep meaning to phone but I never seem to get round to it.

Lucy. No need for explanations.

Tony. No?

Lucy. No.

[Pause.]

It's uncanny, isn't it?

Tony. What is?

Lucy. Us, here, by the sea -

Tony. It's like old times.

Lucy. Yes, old times.

Tony. Are you . . . are things . . .

Lucy. Yes, yes, it's all right

Tony. Really?

Lucy. Really. Yes, really.

Tony. Only, when you just turned up, I thought, Oh God, something must've happened, something -

Lucy. Yes, well I suppose something has happened. I just . . . I just need to think, get away, think, be with people I know, family, you know, family, people I don't have to, don't need to [*a beat*] pretend, just be me.

Tony. Of course.

Lucy. I needed to take a break from things. I'm sure that's how you feel sometimes. Sometimes feel that you need to just get away, get away from all the familiar things, the things that oh -

Tony. Sometimes.

Lucy. Before I left I looked at my things, all my “stuff”, in my place, it felt like it was weighing me down. I couldn’t breathe. It was like suffocating me, all the things we gather around us, you know, to make us feel better, like we’ve got something.

Tony. Panic attack.

Lucy. What?

Tony. It was probably a panic attack, that feeling, not being able to breathe, I expect that’s what it was.

Lucy. You think so?

Tony. Yes, sounds like it to me.

Lucy. Maybe. I just knew I had to get away from all that “stuff”.
[Pause.]
Oh well, enough about me. How are you?

Tony. Well, you know, okay.

Lucy. Pru’s looking good.

Tony. Yes. She’s started going to the gym.

Lucy. Really.

Tony. Yes. She likes to “work out”.

Lucy. Keep fit, eh.

Tony. Yes.

Lucy. Do you –

Tony. No. [A beat.] Not my scene.

Lucy. No, s’pose not.

Tony. I’d rather stick to the astronomy.

Lucy. Really getting into it, eh.

Tony. Yes. It’s fascinating.

Lucy. [Looking up at the sky.]

Lots of stars, eh.

Tony. Yes.

Lucy. I could never, you know, get into it myself.

Tony. Somehow I find it oddly comforting that we are so insignificant in the great scheme of things. It helps keep things in proportion.

Lucy. I suppose so.

Tony. Another thing I like about astronomy is how predictable it is.

Lucy. Really, is it?

Tony. Oh yes. You can calculate the exact position of all the stars years, even centuries, ahead. You know exactly where they're going to be.

Lucy. Like keeping an appointment.

Tony. Yes, except they always turn up.

Lucy. Unlike people, eh. Never know where they're going to be from one day to the next.

Tony. Exactly, not like people, predictable, orderly . . .

Lucy. Oh well, thanks for the lesson in astronomy.

Tony. Better turn in, I suppose.

Lucy. Yes, me too.

Tony. If it's a nice day tomorrow we could, maybe, go to the beach?

Lucy. Yes, that would be nice.

Tony. Lucy.

Lucy. Yes?

Tony. I am glad you're here.

Lucy. Thanks.

Tony. You will tell me if . . .

Lucy. Of course. Course I will.

Tony. Night.

Lucy. Night.

[Tony goes inside, Lucy stays behind in the garden. Tony walks up the stairs and gets into bed beside Pru. They lie there. Pause while they try to sleep. Sound of the sea. The stars revolve above their heads.]

Lucy. [Standing in the garden. Thinking to herself.]

Imagine a world with no electric light. How bright the stars must have been. Why's he so obsessed with the sky? It's just the sky. Some people believe their destiny is written in the stars. But the stars don't use language, we impose it on them. The stars don't give a fuck.

Pru. [Tony and Pru lie in bed, unable to sleep.]

Are you awake?

Tony. No.

Pru. What d'you mean 'no'.

Tony. I'm trying to sleep.

Pru. I can't sleep.

Tony. Nor me.

Pru. Can't stop thinking.

Tony. Hmm.

Pru. Can't switch off my brain.

Tony. Hmm.

Pru. Why's she here?

Tony. Don't know.

Pru. There must be a reason.

Tony. She said she needed to get away, think about things.

Pru. But why come to us?

Tony. We're family, where else should she go? You don't mind, do you?

Pru. No. It's just, well, normally we don't see her from one year to the next.

Tony. We used to be very close. As kids. Her and me.

Pru. But that was a long time ago.

Tony. Sometimes it doesn't feel like long at all. Sometimes it feels like yesterday.

Pru. Did she tell you anything?

Tony. No. Not really.

Pru. Me neither.

Tony. She was always secretive.

Pru. Did she say how long she's staying?

Tony. No. Just relax. Look, let's try and get some sleep.

Lucy. [In the garden. Thinking to herself.]
What is a day for? We have all these days, and what do we do with them?
Half the time we're glad they're over. But we won't have them again.
[Pause.]
There are some things that never end. You keep playing them again,
over and over, in your mind. Over and over. You can never get free.
Always there. Always waiting. I can't stop thinking about it. I'm thinking
about it even when I don't know I'm thinking about it. I'm stuck. Stuck
there, in the past, standing there, watching, frozen, watching.

Pru. [*Pru can't sleep, gets up and looks out of the window at the sky Talks to herself..*]
I'd like to smash that fucking telescope. He talks to me of his sister. He
says, 'We used to be close.' I wonder, is that what he will say of me?
'We used to be close.'
[Pause.]
How close it feels; this end of closeness. He looks at the sky. He sees
far off planets, the great vastness of space between things, but he doesn't

see the space opening up between us.

[Pause.]

I smile.

[Pru. assumes a fake smile.]

That's what I do. That's what I'm good at. They expect a smile so I give them one. People always say how happy I am. That's my [*a beaf*]

persona, you see. Happy. That's me. Happy. Reliable. Dependable.

Pru. 'I wish I could be like you,' they say. Fools. They don't know what they're wishing for. They don't know what being me's like.

Lucy [Lucy walks through to the kitchen. She goes to the sink and drinks a glass of water. She stands at the sink tapping her foot to the rhythm of a song playing in her head. Pru. Walks down stairs and into the kitchen.]

Pru. Oh!

Lucy. Sorry.

Pru. No, no, it's all right. I just wasn't expecting –

Lucy. No, sorry, can't sleep, need a drink.

Pru. Me too.

Lucy. Must be the . . . unfamiliar . . .

Pru. Yes, I expect so. I find it hard to sleep at the best of times, let alone in a strange place.

Lucy. Poor you. It's horrible, isn't it, not the place, I don't mean the place, I mean insomnia.

Pru. Yes. Gets a bit boring lying there counting sheep, listening to Tony snore.

Lucy. Oh dear, does he?

Pru. Sometimes.

Lucy. There's something you can clip to a snorer's nose to stop it.

Pru. I don't think he'd like that.

Lucy. No, I suppose not.

Pru. I've always had difficulty sleeping.

Lucy. Insomnia. Yuk. Horrible.

Pru. Yes, that about sums it up.

Lucy. That's me. Always ready with the bon mot.

Pru. [Laughs.]
Yes.
[Pause.]
D'you mind if I say something?

Lucy. No.

Pru. I was always rather in awe of you.

Lucy. What?

Pru. Yes. Yes, I was. I remember the first time I saw you. Tony and I were going out to the cinema and you were getting ready for a party. I remember thinking how glamorous you looked.

Lucy. Really? Me?

Pru. Yes, yes, you.

Lucy. Long time ago now.

Pru. You still look glamorous.

Lucy. Thanks. Not too good at this time of night.

Pru. Any time.

Lucy. Well thank you. I was only telling Tony how good you look.

Pru. Thanks.

Lucy. Toned.

Pru. I've been going to the gym. Part of my campaign to . . . oh I don't know.
Do you still go to lots of parties?

Lucy. Not any more.

Pru. I always remember you going to lots of parties.

Lucy. Yes, but, you know, I never really enjoyed it that much. I was always [*a beat*] pretending, playing a part. So busy convincing everyone else I was having a great time I forgot to enjoy it myself.

Pru. You always looked like you were.

Lucy. Yes, that was the point. The whole point. To convince people. Look right, but I never felt right, not inside. What I really liked was the dancing. I loved to dance but it always got complicated by the boys. They always wanted to get in on the act. And I always said yes because I didn't want to [*a beat*] disappoint them, but really I just wanted to dance.

Pru. That's boys for you, always spoiling things.

Lucy. Yeah. I had lots of boyfriends in those days, but I never felt they cared much about me. Oh they were fun, some of the time, but they never really cared. Not the way Tony cares [*a beat.*] for you.

[Pause.]

I feel so tired. You'd think I'd be out like a light but as soon as my head touches the pillow it fills with thoughts, all kinds of thoughts, can't get rid of them.

Pru. I've got some sleeping pills, if you'd like one.

Lucy. No thanks. I don't like taking pills.

Pru. Are you sure? I'm going to have one.

Lucy. Sure.

Pru. Oh well, better have another try.

Lucy. Yeah.

Pru. Night.

Lucy. Night.

[Lucy and Pru go back upstairs. They all sleep. Video projection of the

sleeping adults onto the back wall. The sound of the sea and the stars
revolve and gradually transform into:]

Act 2. Lights up. Tony and Lucy are children playing in the garden area. The adult actors play themselves as children, while the video projection shows them as adults sleeping.

Lucy [Lighting shift and music to herald dream/memory of childhood. Tony and
Lucy are now children again.]

[Lucy is searching for Tony, who is hiding.]

Ton – e-e.

[Lucy hunts.]

Ton – e-e, where are you?

[Lucy hunts, Tony shifts his hiding place.]

Come out, come out, wherever you are.

[Lucy pounces on the vacated hiding place.]

[Angry.] Tony! Where are you?

[Lucy continues hunting.]

Ton - ee – e. I've got a surprise for you.

Ton – e-e. I know you're there. You can't hide forever.

[Lucy pounces on Tony's hiding place.]

Got you! Got / you!

Tony. Got me!

Lucy. You're bad.

Tony. Couldn't find me, couldn't find me!

Lucy. Yes I could.

Tony. Couldn't.

Lucy. Could.

Tony. Couldn't.

Lucy. Could. It isn't a game unless you make it last. Now I've found you you have to be my slave.

Tony. Why?

Lucy. That's the game. You can be my horse if you like.

Tony. Okay.

Lucy. Here horsey, good horsey.

[Lucy pats Tony like a horse, he snorts and neighs.]

Here boy, steady, steady.

[Lucy mimes getting onto the horse. Puts a belt through Tony's mouth and holds it like reins.]

Giddy up horsey.

[Tony and Lucy prance like horse and rider.]

Good horse. You're a good horse. And I'm the only one who can tame you. You won't let anyone else ride you.

[Tony whinnys.]

Faster, faster.

[They prance more frenetically, Lucy mimes whipping the horse along.]

Faster, faster.

[Suddenly Tony/horse rears up and throws Lucy to the ground.]

Bad horse!

[Tony laughs.]

Bad, bad horse.

[Lucy whips him with the belt.]

Bad horses get tied up!

Tony. Have to catch me first!

Lucy. [Chasing Tony.]
Bad, bad horse.
[Tony laughs.]
Wait till I get you.
[Lucy catches up with Tony.]
You're my slave now. You have to do everything I say.
[Lucy starts binding Tony with the belt.]
You're a bad slave. A bad slave. A very bad slave, and you know what happens to bad slaves.
[Lucy suddenly stops midway through tying Tony.]
What's that?

Tony. What?

Lucy. Someone's coming.

Tony. Mum?

Lucy. Quick.
[They run off. Lights fade. The sound of waves rolling in as the stars fade in the sky.]

Lucy [The children reappear in the Beach area. Tony is digging a hole in the beach with a plastic spade. Lucy stands watching him, looking down.]
What are you doing?

Tony I'm digging.

Lucy I can see that.
[Pause. Lucy watches Tony dig.]
Why?

Tony I'm digging to Australia.

Lucy You can't dig to Australia.

Tony Yes I can.

Lucy No you can't.

Tony Can.

Lucy Can't.

Tony Can.

Lucy No you can't. In the middle it's all hot. You'll get burnt to a crisp.

Tony No I won't.

Lucy Yes you will.

Tony Won't.

Lucy Will.

Tony Won't

Lucy Will will will.

Tony [Looks up from his digging for the first time.]
Leave me alone.

Lucy [Doesn't move. Watches Tony. Tony ignores her, starts digging again.]
Fade to black.]

Act 3. Lights up. Saturday mid-morning. The Beach. Pru., Tony and Lucy (adults again) sit gazing out to sea. Silence. Lucy looks up at the sky.

Lucy. I'm sure that seagull is planning to crap on my head.

Tony. Don't be paranoid.

Lucy. Look, it's circling, taking aim.

Tony. Anyway, it's meant to be good luck.

Lucy. Being crapped on?

Tony. Yes.

Lucy. How can getting crapped on be good luck?

Pru. I never did understand that.

Tony. That's what they say.

Lucy. What rubbish people talk.

Pru. D'you think it's supposed to be some kind of consolation, for being covered in crap.

Lucy. [Shouting at the seagull.] Fuck off!

Pru. Oh I think it heard you, it's going.

Tony. So did half the beach. Do remember you're in Frinton.

Pru. Dear Tony, always worrying about appearances.

Tony. Huh, look who's talking.

Lucy. [Bored pause.]
This reminds me of childhood holidays.

Tony. Except it was always raining.

Lucy. It was not always raining. It just felt like it was always raining.

Tony. Every time it rained we had to take refuge in some flea-pit cinema and watch a second rate film until it was safe to return to the B. & B.

Lucy. I could never relax on holiday. I always thought I was doing something wrong. Every time I looked up Mum seemed to be glaring at me or Dad was signalling me to stop.

Tony. That's because you were always getting into trouble.

Lucy. I was not. I was always 'in trouble', with Mum and Dad, but I wasn't doing anything different to everyone else. I'd be playing with the other kids and I'd always be the only one to be called away.

Tony. Mum and Dad had exacting standards.

Pru. Oh dear.

Lucy. I could never understand what I'd done wrong. There were so many rules; I could never go long without breaking one of them.

Tony. Our family always had to be better than anyone else; do the right thing.

Lucy. Yeah.

Pru. Oh you make your holidays sound like so much fun. They couldn't've been as bad as all that.

Lucy. But it was.

Tony. D'you remember how Mum and Dad always used to find fault with how other people behaved? Other peoples' table manners were never as good as ours. We always had to do everything the right way. It was awful if we did it wrong.

Lucy. I could never get it right.

Tony. It's hard trying to be right all the time. It means you're always failing, feeling guilty, feeling bad about yourself.

Lucy. Yes! Always pretending, covering up mistakes, as if it's shameful to be less than perfect. You know I never can own up to things I've done wrong at work.

Tony. Yes, me too.

Pru. You should treat your mistakes as learning opportunities.

[Awkward pause.]

Tony. Do you remember those flasks.

Lucy. What?

Tony. Those plastic flasks, mother always used them. After a while they went all flaky. The plastic use to come off, all along the rim.

Lucy. Yes, I remember now. They were revolting.

Tony. And those sandwiches.

Lucy. Wrapped up in baco-foil.

Tony. Yes.

Lucy. They always got mixed up.

Tony. Who had who's. With or without mustard.

Lucy. Pass the parcel.

Tony. Mine always had sand in it.

Lucy. And mine.

Pru. You go to the beach, you've got to expect sand.

Tony. That doesn't mean you want to eat it.

Pru. We used to go to Brighton; they don't have sand at Brighton.

Lucy. We always went to Margate.

Tony. For the sand.

Lucy. Yes, the sand.

Tony. Do you remember that café along the front? The one we always used to eat in. What was it called?

Lucy. I don't remember.

Tony. Someone's name: George's, or something like that.

Lucy. Hmm.

Tony. You must remember. We went there all the time. They used to play a recording through speakers, announcing the specials: Bangers 'n' Mash; Plaice 'n' Chips; Egg, Sausage and Beans; you must remember that.

Lucy. I remember the megaphone. I remember the Egg, Sausage and Beans but I don't remember the name.

Pru. Every year I used to eat candy floss and every year it made me feel sick; I never learned.

Tony. There used to be a place nearby where you could watch them making rock. They made quite a performance of it; they used to swing it around and around, and roll it on a long long table.

Lucy. It never tasted as good as it looked.

Tony. No. And I never did find out how they got the name to go through the middle.

Pru. Oh I know that! It starts out as a big thick flat cake and they have moulds with the letters in a different colour pressed into the cake. And when they roll it it gets stretched out longer and longer, so the coloured lettering goes all the way through.

Lucy. } Oh.

Tony. } Oh.

Tony [Awkward pause.] It's going to be another fine day.

Pru. Yes. What a lovely clear sky.

Lucy. You'd think there'd be more people.

Pru. It'll fill up later.

Tony. It never gets too crowded. Frinton isn't like that.

Lucy. I'm surprised, it's a lovely beach.

Tony. They don't encourage tourists in Frinton.

Pru. It's early yet. Most people don't get down to the beach until lunchtime at the earliest.

Tony. Ice-cream selling is banned.

Lucy. Really?

Tony. Yes. Don't want to make the tourists feel at home.

Pru. He's joking.

Lucy. What are they eating?

Tony. Lollies.

Lucy. So lollies are okay?

Tony. No, they're banned too. But some crafty bastard is selling those little plastic windmills and you get a free lolly with every one.

Lucy. Cunning.

Pru. Did you sleep okay, in the end?

Lucy. Yes, thanks. Okay, you know.

Pru. I hope the room's all right.

Lucy. Fine. Lovely.

Pru. I know it's a bit small.

Lucy. It's fine, really.

Pru. Good.

Lucy. Thanks for putting me up.

Pru. No trouble. No trouble at all. It's nice to have company.

Lucy. I didn't realise you were so close to the sea.

Pru. Yes. Just a short walk.

Lucy. I didn't expect that.

Pru. Tony likes being near the sea.

[Pause.]

He likes looking at it. He can sit for hours, just looking at the sea. Can't you.

Tony. Yes.

Pru. I sometimes wonder what can be going through that mind of his when he's gazing out to sea. Tony doesn't go in. He prefers to watch. I like to go in. Feel my body being tossed around by the waves. It feels . . . oh it feels, somehow . . . elemental. I might go in later. What about you?

Lucy. Is it safe to swim around here?

Pru. Oh yes, it's great. Occasionally they put the flag up and you're not supposed to go in; but I think they make a fuss about nothing.

Tony. You can't be too careful; there are some strong currents around here; especially if you go out too far.

Pru. It's not a problem if you're a strong swimmer. I like to float. Do you like to float?

Lucy. I can't float.

Pru. Of course you can. Everyone can float. When they know how. It's a question of confidence. Letting yourself go.

Lucy. I could never let go.

Pru. Surrendering your body to the waves.

Lucy. I sink.

Pru. It's just a question of practice.

Lucy. I have to keep moving or else I go under.

Pru. Anything can be mastered with practice. My old school teacher, she used to say that; it irritated me at the time but now I can see she was right.

Tony. Why don't you fly?

Pru. What?

Tony. You said you can do anything with practice. Then fly, jump off a cliff and fly.

Pru. I didn't mean the impossible.

Tony. Flap your wings.

Pru. Really, she didn't say, I didn't say, one could do the impossible.

Tony. But you don't know until you try.

Pru. We all know flying is impossible.

Tony. People do it every day.

[Tony starts searching in a bag.]

Pru. In planes!

Lucy. Things feel impossible. More things feel impossible every day.

Pru. That's confidence. That's what I was talking about. It's a question of confidence.

Tony. [Searching in a bag.]
Where's the binoculars?

Pru. I thought you had them.

Tony. No. [Sighs.] I'll have to go back for them.

Pru. D'you have to get them now?

Tony. I won't be long. [Exit Tony.]

Pru. [Pause.]

Don't take any notice of Tony. He's in a bad mood this morning.

Lucy. It's okay.

Pru. Probably didn't sleep well. That always makes him grumpy.

[Pause.]

You look very thoughtful. What are you thinking about?

Lucy [Pause.]

The other day I was walking in the park and I saw this beetle. This black beetle. It was lying on the path, on its back, and all its legs were frantically scrabbling around in the air. It was stuck on its back and it couldn't get right side up. It was stranded by its own shell. The toughest thing about it was going to destroy it. So I picked up a twig and I offered the beetle the twig. And it grabbed it with its legs. As I lifted the twig it hung on, as if it knew, and I lowered it down in some grass, and it climbed off the twig onto the grass.

[Pause.]

I bet it said to itself, phew! But, of course, beetles don't say phew; but you know what I mean.

[Pause.]

It reminded me of those newsreels, when you see someone being airlifted to safety. I was the hand of God.

[Pause.]

I feel just like that beetle. Stuck on my back. Legs waving in the air. Useless. Carapace. There's a word. We all grow our own 'carapace',

don't we, even if we don't know it, even if it's crushing us under its weight.

Pru Lucy?

Lucy Yes?

Pru If something is wrong you, you can tell me about it.

Lucy. Good.

Pru. I mean. I don't want to pry. It's just, if there's anything you want to talk about. You know.

Lucy. Thanks.

Pru. I'm a good listener.

Lucy. Thanks.

Pru. All kinds of people tell me that.

[Pause.]

Anyway, it's good to get away occasionally, just to . . . get away, isn't it.

Lucy. Yes.

Pru. A change of scene.

Lucy. Yes.

Pru. I'm prying, I can tell.

Lucy. No, no, it's all right.

Pru. Sorry.

Lucy. I just need time to –

Pru. Of course.

Lucy. To . . .

Pru. Yes.

Lucy. Yesterday I thought, if I don't do something, anything, something, I'm going to be so annoyed with myself.

Pru. Uh-huh.

Lucy. Do you ever feel like that?

Pru. Sorry. What?

Lucy. Annoyed with yourself.

Pru. All the time.

Lucy. Really.

Pru. Yes. All the time. Too frequently, in fact.

Lucy. It's hard isn't it.

Pru. Yes.

Lucy. You either feel annoyed with yourself for something you've done, or something you haven't done. You can't win.

Pru. True.

Lucy. Still, you did the right thing.

Pru. What d'you mean?

Lucy. Marrying Tony, moving here, all this. You've got things sorted out, you and Tony.

Pru. Oh, I wouldn't go so far as to say that.

Lucy. Oh, don't spoil my illusions, you mustn't, I want you to be happy, you must be happy.

Pru. We'll try.

Lucy. I suppose other peoples' lives always seem better, more [a beaf] sorted. I suppose things always look better from a distance.

Pru. From a distance you can't see the flaws. It's like those stars Tony looks at. They all look pretty from a distance, glinting in the sky, but if you were standing on one you'd be vaporised in seconds. It wouldn't be pretty after all. I don't know what he sees in it myself. The stars. It's all pretty boring as far as I'm concerned. It's not like he's going to discover anything.

Lucy. I suppose it's about looking for yourself, finding things out for yourself.

Pru. I suppose so.

Lucy. I was looking at Saturn last night. I got quite excited.

Pru. By Saturn?

Lucy. Yes. Seeing it for myself. It was different.

Pru. That must be it. Still, I wish it didn't take up so much time. Since he got that telescope he hasn't done a thing around the house. Not that he ever did much anyway. I sometimes think it's an excuse, to get away from me. And he's started smoking again. He thinks I don't know but I can see the fucking thing glowing in the dark like a beacon.

[Pause.]

You look tired. I bet you didn't get much sleep?

Lucy. Some. I had funny dreams.

Pru. I never remember my dreams. Sometimes I wonder if I have any at all. But they say everyone dreams, don't they.

Lucy. Yes.

Pru. What was yours like?

Lucy. Oh, I can't remember it very well. It was just . . . just a bit strange. It woke me up and then I couldn't get back to sleep. I just lay there listening to the birds.

Pru. Noisy bastards, aren't they.

Lucy. Yes, especially at four in the morning.

Pru. No wonder you look tired. Perhaps you should take a pill tonight, give you a head start.

Lucy. I don't like taking pills.

Pru. See how you get on.

Lucy. They don't solve anything, pills.

[Pause.]

Pointing into the distance, i.e. at the audience.]

Look at them.

Pru. Hmm.

Lucy. They look happy. Don't you think? Don't you think they look, happy?

Pru. Yes. Yes, I suppose they do.

Lucy. Do you ever find yourself looking at people and thinking: I wish I had their life. Their life would suit me fine.

Pru. No. Never.

Lucy. I do.

Pru. But you mustn't, it wouldn't. It'd be their life, not yours. Don't wish your life away in favour of someone else's. Make your life the one you want.

Lucy. [Bitter laugh.] Oh yes –

Pru. I know it's –

Lucy. By this stage all the foundations are laid, the walls are up, aren't they. Can't rebuild, not properly, not now, have to make do, add a bit here, pull down a bit there.

Pru. Better than not trying.

Lucy. But I have tried. I keep on trying. And I keep getting it wrong. I've got the reverse Midas touch, everything I touch turns to shit.

Pru. You expect too much. You want everything to be perfect. But the world's not like that. Nothing's perfect.

Lucy. But you and Tony.

Pru. [Laughs.] If you think that's perfect you've got a funny idea of perfection.

Lucy. I always envied you. I always thought you had it made.

Pru. Huh. Let me tell you something – we make do. That's all. We just make do. Sometimes I feel I could scream. Thank God for work, that's what I say.

Lucy. Work?

Pru. Somewhere I can be me. And people appreciate me. Not be taken for granted. But that's making do too, isn't it.

[Pause.]

I've often thought about getting out, making a new start, myself.

Lucy. Really?

Pru. Yes.

Lucy. You don't mean . . . don't mean leave Tony?

Pru. Well, it crosses my mind, from time to time, but it never stays long enough for me to actually do anything about it.

Lucy. I always thought you and Tony went together so well. When I saw you at your wedding, you looked so happy, I thought, Oh yes, I can see them together for a long long time. I remember, I felt quite jealous.

Pru. Thank you. Well, yes, it was a lovely day. But, Oh I don't know, people change. It happens so gradually you don't notice until one day, oh I don't know, one day you look across at them and you think to yourself: I don't think this is the person I married.

Lucy. He hasn't changed all that much, surely.

Pru. You don't think so?

Lucy. No.

Pru. Well, maybe it's me. Perhaps it's me who's changed.

[Pause.]

Don't worry. I don't suppose I'll do anything drastic, like leave him.

Lucy. Have you spoken to him?

Pru. I've tried but . . . you know . . . it doesn't do a lot of good.

Lucy. I wonder what he thinks.

Pru. Who knows. Tony never tells anyone what he thinks. It's all locked up inside. I don't suppose he knows how to find the key anymore. If it

wasn't for other people I couldn't go on.

Lucy. What d'you mean?

Pru. Friends. People at work. They're fun. They make things fun.

Lucy. And Tony doesn't.

Pru. Not if he can help it.

Lucy. [Laughs.]

Pru. I nearly had an affair, once, well more than once. It was very tempting, is very tempting. But I can never bring myself to do it. I don't know what it is. Perhaps I think I'd be betraying myself as much as Tony, if I did that. But then I think, not doing it, that's betraying myself too. So I keep having, nearly affairs, flirtations, liaisons, but never the whole thing, never the complete deception.

Lucy. Perhaps you should do it.

Pru. Yes. I wonder. Sometimes I say to myself: it would be fun, like trying on new clothes, something you wouldn't normally wear. But then I think: I don't want to get stuck with a load of clothes I don't want to wear again.

Lucy. I believe it's the things you don't do, rather than the things you do, that get you in the end.

Pru. Surely it depends on what it is you do or don't do?

[Pause.]

Tony's had an affair.

Lucy. No.

Pru. Yes, I caught him out, no, I tell a lie, I didn't, he confessed. I didn't even ask, he just came in one day and confessed. I've been having an affair, he said. I can't bear the guilt any longer, I have to tell you. He wanted absolution. Hah. I forgave him. At the time I didn't much care myself. I'd got past caring what he might or might not be up to. Have you noticed

how people can't keep secrets, not even their own? He said he couldn't bear the secret, it was gnawing away at him, inside. He said it was over and he wouldn't do it again. And I thought, well, that's one to you, one nil, I'm free to even the score.

Lucy. And that was it.

Pru. Yes. No point in making a drama out of it. I thought about it, and I caught myself trying to decide if I should be upset. And then I realised half the time people are upset about things like that because you're supposed to be upset, they're just doing what's expected of them, but I wasn't upset, not really. Fucking isn't everything. But I have it tucked away in my mind, one nil.

[Pause.]

I know there's something wrong. I wish you'd tell me what it is. Is it a man?

Lucy. [Laughs.] If only it was a man. Sorry. Yes, it is a man, I mean, not just a man.

Pru. The Man.

Lucy. I don't know. No. Not 'The Man', Oh I don't know. I'm scared, you see, I'm scared of what I, we, I, might do.

Pru. I'm afraid I don't follow.

Lucy. No, sorry, it's hard to explain.

Pru. Have a go.

Lucy. It's something. It's hard to tell people.

Pru. Try me.

Lucy. It's not something one tells anyone. Especially sisters-in-laws.

Pru. Oh, I feel disappointed. You've left me high and dry now.

Lucy. Sorry.

Pru. I don't feel like a sister-in-law.

Lucy. Sorry. I didn't mean it to sound, insulting.

Pru. Sometimes it's easier. To tell things to people you don't . . . you know.

Lucy. [Sigh.] Yes.
[Silence.]
Do you promise not to judge?

Pru. Of course.

Lucy. You're broad minded, aren't you?

Pru. I like to think so.

Lucy. You don't run screaming from the room at the least sign of something, different.

Pru. Come on, the suspense is killing me. [Enter Tony.]

Tony. Took me ages to find them. I thought we'd agreed to keep them in the top drawer.

Pru. Oh Tony.

Tony. It'd be better if you didn't put them away at all than put them in the wrong place.

Pru. If you didn't just dump them on the table I wouldn't need to put them away.

Tony. Just remember it's the top drawer. That way I can find them when I need them.

Pru. Yes, sir!
[Pause.]
I'm going for a swim. Anyone coming?

Tony. No thanks.

Pru. Lucy?

Lucy. Later, maybe.

Pru. I'll let you know what the water's like. [Exit Pru.]

Tony. [Pause to make sure she can't hear.]
Oh goody.
[Looking through the binoculars.]
Let's see what we've got. Hmm. Hmm. Surfboarder. Fell in. There's a surprise. Hmm. There's another freighter.

Lucy. Oh, let me look.

Tony. Okay.
[Tony continues to look through the binoculars.]

Lucy. Come on.
[Tony hands Lucy the binoculars.]
Where is it?

Tony. Over there.

Lucy. I can't see it.

Tony. There.

Lucy. Where?

Tony. There! To the left.
[Lucy moves the binoculars to the right.]
No left!

Lucy. Oh yes, got it.
[Pause, looking through the binoculars.]
Ugly looking thing.

Tony. It's a container ship.

Lucy. It looks like a floating match box.

Tony. More efficient that way.
[Lucy hands back the binoculars.]

Lucy. I prefer the old ships.

Tony. You don't know anything about ships.

Lucy. I know what I like.

Tony. It's all economics. Efficiency, in the –

Lucy. Pru. told me you've had an affair.

Tony. What?

Lucy. I said, Pru. says you had an affair.

Tony. Did she.

Lucy. Yes.

Tony. Fancy that.

Lucy. Is it true?

Tony. What do you think?

Lucy. I think you'd be mad to say you were having an affair –

Tony. 'Had' an affair.

Lucy. If you hadn't.

Tony. Yes, probably.

Lucy. But I never thought you were the affair type. Mum would be shocked.

Tony. Well, she wouldn't know, would she. What you don't know doesn't hurt you.

Lucy. She'd be so disappointed. Her darling Tony behaving in what can only be, yes can only be, described in a less than perfect way.

Tony. The world isn't perfect.

Lucy. Oh, you noticed.

[Pause.]

What I can't understand is, having got away with it, why you told her.

Tony. It made me feel better.

Lucy. Telling her?

Tony. Yes, telling her. It eased the guilt.

Lucy. Why feel guilty doing what comes naturally?

Tony. It's not something you're supposed to do.

Lucy. Who says?

Tony. Everybody.

Lucy. Huh.

Tony. If it happened to you you'd understand. It's not just the one deception, it turns into a lifetime of deception, never mentioning it, it poisons everything. Pru would look at me and tell me she loves me and I'd think, but would she still love me if she knew? I had to find out. You feel like your life is built on a false premiss – could fall away any moment if the secret got out.

Lucy. Seems to me she was more angry you told than did it.

Tony. Pru. likes to know everything. She likes to be the person who tells people things.

Lucy. Do you like her, Pru?

Tony. Of course I like her. I love her.

Lucy. Why don't you show it?

Tony. I do.

Lucy. Pru. doesn't think so.

Tony. When women feel they have enough attention there's something very wrong with the world.

Lucy. Don't retreat into misogyny. I know it's just a smoke screen.

[They sit in silence.]

She seems very capable, Pru. Level headed.

Tony. Yes, I suppose she is. She likes to give advice.

Lucy. Oh.

Tony. No doubt she'll be giving you advice soon.

Lucy. Too late she already has.
[Pause.]
It was funny talking about our childhood holidays. Brought lots of memories back.

Tony. Yes.

Lucy. D'you remember the dunes?

Tony. What?

Lucy. The dunes.

Tony. Dunes?

Lucy. Yes, you know, where was it they had those dunes? When we were kids we used to go there and play. Play among the dunes.

Tony. Oh you mean *those* dunes.

Lucy. It wasn't Margate, I know that.

Tony. No. It wouldn't be Margate.

Lucy. No. It was probably somewhere in Devon.

Tony. Or Wales.

Lucy. Maybe. You remember then?

Tony. Sort of.

Lucy. We had a wonderful time scrambling up and down the dunes. You were charging about like a mad thing.

Tony. Was I?

Lucy. Yes. Yes you were. D'you remember when we came across that couple?

Tony. What?

Lucy. You must remember. They were lying down among the dunes. On one another.

Tony. Oh that.

Lucy. We saw them.

Tony. Mmmm.

Lucy. We watched them do it.

Tony. Ha, ha. Yes.

Lucy. Then we tried it.

Tony. [Astonished pause.]
No we did not.

Lucy. Surely you remember.

Tony. But we didn't –

Lucy. Not really, of course, we just –

Tony. We were just mucking about. We mimed it.

Lucy. Yes. Imitating the adults.

Tony. It was just a game; play acting adults.

Lucy. Yes we were play acting all right. You used to like play acting.

Tony. It was nothing.

Lucy. It was fun.

Tony. I suppose, at the time.

Lucy. Until Becky found us and said she'd tell mum.

Tony. She was always telling on me.

Lucy. And me.

Tony. A right little sneak.

Lucy. Yes. I suppose she felt left out. You know, being younger.

Tony. She always used to follow us around, spy on us.

Lucy. She always wanted to join in.

Tony. Still, it was, nothing, just, experimentation.

Lucy. Yes. D'you remember we used to practise kissing? Like they did in the films.

Tony. And in the dunes.

Lucy. And on the telly.

Tony. Yes.

Lucy. Becky wanted to practise too.

Tony. She was too young to practise.

Lucy. She saw us doing it so she wanted to do it too. She made me show her how.

Tony. You never told me.

Lucy. She was jealous, of you and me, practising, so I showed her. She said if I wouldn't show her she'd tell mum.

Tony. Typical. [*a beat.*] D'you think she ever did?

Lucy. What?

Tony. Tell Mother.

Lucy. No. We'd've known, wouldn't we, if she had.

Tony. Yes, I suppose so. She always looked up to you.

Lucy. Did she?

Tony. Oh yes. I'm amazed you didn't notice. I'm sure you did at the time. She idolised you.

Lucy. Really?

Tony. Oh yes. Her big sister. She thought you were wonderful.

Lucy. Well I am.

Tony. Of course.

Lucy. Still wonderful after all these years.

Tony. Of course.

Lucy. I am aren't I?

Tony. Of . . . yes, yes.

Lucy. Yes. [*Starts giggling.*]

Tony. What?

Lucy. [Giggling.]

Tony. What is it?

Lucy. [Giggles subsiding.] We were naughty.

Tony. Yes. [Chuckles.]

Lucy. We were so naughty in those dunes. Watching those people.

Tony. It was just a bit of fun.

Lucy. Yes, naughty fun.

Tony. No other kind.

Lucy. } [Giggling.]

Tony. } [Giggling.]

Pru. [Enter Pru. wet from her swim.]

Ah that was good.

[She starts to dry herself with a towel. Pauses watching them.]

Well, this is a change of mood. What's the joke?

Tony. You wouldn't get it.

Lucy. [Snorting laughter.]

Pru. Hmm.

Lucy. Sorry. It's a family joke.

Pru. Oh, one of those. In that case it probably isn't very funny.

Tony. No.

Lucy. [Sniggers.]

Tony. [Trying to suppress laughter.]

Pru. God, you two are acting like a couple of school kids.

Tony. Sorry, Miss.

Lucy. [Snorting with laughter again.]

Pru. Oh I give up.

[Tony and Lucy both roaring with laughter.]

Can't do, or say, anything when you're in this mood.

Tony. Sorry.

Pru. The water's not bad. You should go in.

Lucy. I haven't got a costume.

Pru. I could lend you one.

Lucy. No, don't bother.

Pru. Does anybody want a drink?

Lucy. Thanks. I could do with something.

Pru. Tony?

Tony. Thanks.

[Pru. serves up drinks.]

It's good to be together.

Lucy. [Faintly.] Yes.

Tony. All together.

Pru. Hmm.

Tony. Like the old days.

[Pause.]

You should visit more often.

Lucy. Thanks.

Pru. Yes. That would be nice.

Lucy. Thanks.

Pru. Was Tony like this as a boy?

Lucy. Like what?

Tony. Yes, like what?

Pru. Enclosed. Withdrawn.

Lucy. I don't remember.

Tony. I'm not 'withdrawn'.

Pru. Shut up Tony, I'm talking to Lucy. I don't know, you and Tony, what a pair. You both say you don't remember anything.

Lucy. You can't be sure, can you.

Pru. What?

Lucy. You can't be sure if you really remember or not. Ask half a dozen people about something and you get half a dozen different versions. Not reliable, is it, memory. It's not like a recording, it doesn't play back the same every time, it keeps changing, inventing itself, new stuff, old stuff, stuff you never knew was there.

Pru. Oh. Well, you're getting a bit too deep for me now. I was just wondering if Tony was outgoing, as a boy.

Lucy. Yes. I suppose he was. Tony was Mum's favourite. Her little man. Her favourite blue-eyed boy.

Tony Oh, I don't know about that. Mum and Dad didn't have favourites.

Lucy. Huh!

Pru. Parents often do.

Tony Not ours.

Pru. They try not to, they even think they don't, but often they do, yes, others can see it, the favourites.

Lucy. Yes. Tony was Mum's favourite and Becky was Dad's favourite.

Pru. Becky?

Lucy. Yes, not me, Becky.

Pru. Who's Becky?

Lucy. Our sister.

Pru. I didn't realise you had a sister. I thought there was just the two of you.

Lucy. No. Three. Three of us.

Pru. Well I never. That's amazing. [To Tony.] You didn't tell me you had

another sister.

Tony. Didn't I?

Pru. No. All these years. All these years and you haven't mentioned it.

Tony. It didn't come up.

Pru. What else is there I don't know about?

Tony. Nothing.

Pru. [To Lucy.] Don't you think it's incredible he hasn't mentioned her?

Lucy. We don't talk about Becky.

Pru. Well this is extraordinary. How come I've never met her? There's never been any mention –

Lucy. She's dead.

Pru. Oh.

Lucy. That's why you haven't met her. She died a long time ago.

Pru. Oh, I'm so sorry.

Lucy. Don't be sorry, not your fault.

Pru. No. Of course not. Just a phrase.

Lucy. Yes. Just a phrase.

Pru. I'm still surprised Tony never mentioned her.

Tony. For God's sake don't go on about it.

Pru. I was only –

Tony. I'm going for a walk.

[Exit Tony.]

Pru. Well. That certainly put him in a bad mood.

Lucy. He doesn't like talking about her.

Pru. [Calling after Tony.] Tony, come back.

[Pause.]

He's so moody at the moment. What was Becky like?

Lucy. She was Dad's favourite.

Pru. Yes, and?

Lucy. I don't remember much about her. She was very young when she died.

Pru. How young?

Lucy. Six. I think. Yes. Six.

Pru. Oh, dear. Was she very ill?

Lucy. She drowned.

Pru. Oh dear.

Lucy. She was paddling, along the shore, laughing and splashing. She looked so happy before she died. And then she disappeared. One minute she was there, the next gone.

Pru. How awful.

Lucy. We looked for her. And the longer we looked the more . . . frantic everybody got. And then we found her. And they did that. You know. All that, breathing and pounding, and all that stuff. And they seemed to do it forever, on and on, like someone playing the same tune, over and over, until you want to scream at them to stop. But it didn't do any good. She stayed just the way they'd found her, limp, wet, limp.

Pru. But how did it happen?

Lucy. There was a big hole, in the sand, someone had dug a great big hole; and the sea came in, the tide, it was coming in, and it covered the hole, filled it up and covered it over. Looked just like the rest of the beach.

Pru. But wasn't anyone with her? Couldn't they have pulled her out?

Lucy. I was supposed to be with her. But I got bored so I went to get an ice-cream.

Pru. Oh you poor thing.

Lucy. I was the oldest, I was in charge, I should've looked after her. Things

were never the same after Becky died. Mum and Dad, they . . .
everything was different.

Pru. You shouldn't feel guilty, it wasn't your fault.

Lucy. No?

Pru. No.

Lucy. I suppose – oh I don't know.

[Pause.]

You never know, though, do you? Mum said not to feel bad. That it wasn't my fault. But I knew she was lying. I could see the accusation in her eyes, even as she spoke. Dad didn't talk to me for a long time, and then, when he did, he never mentioned it, but his voice was different.

Pru. You poor thing.

Lucy. Why did it have to be me? That's what I kept asking myself. Then, I thought, I know, I won't let her die, I'll keep her alive, inside me. I'll tell Becky everything that happens, all the time. She'll know, she'll continue to live, but in me, in me. So that's what I did. And I didn't tell anyone. It was a secret between Becky and me. They all thought she was gone but I knew better. I shared everything with her, better than when she was alive, it was easier, of course. I told her everything. And when something nasty happened, like I had to go to the dentist or that time I fell off my bike and broke my arm, I'd say to her, there, see, lucky you, you didn't have to go through that. You missed that. And then, after a while, I stopped telling her about the good things or the ordinary things, and I just moaned to her about the bad things. Like when my first boyfriend dumped me and told the whole school I was a slag. I told her, there, you see, lucky you, you didn't have to go through that. Lucky old you. And I felt jealous. I felt so jealous that she was dead and I was alive.

The sound of the waves rolling in as the light fades to black.

Act 4. Saturday evening.

The Kitchen. Tony, Pru. and Lucy sit around the table, it is the end of dinner. They have all drunk a lot of wine.

Tony. So a man walks into a bar – oof – an iron bar!

[They all laugh, but Pru. less than the other two.]

Lucy. Oh Tony where do you get them from?

Tony. There's lots of jokes on the internet.

Pru. One of Tony's friends keeps sending him these old Tommy Cooper jokes.

Tony. Here's another, here's another: I slept like a log last night. I woke up in the fireplace.

[Lucy and Tony laugh.]

Pru. He likes to practise them on people.

Lucy. You're mad Tony.

Tony. Here's a Margate joke: A friend of mine said, 'You want to go to Margate, it's good for rheumatism.' So I did, and I got it.

[Lucy and Tony laugh.]

Lucy. Oh God Margate. We never did have much of a laugh there did we. That joke's the most fun I've ever had from Margate.

Tony. Oh I don't know, there were moments . . .

[Tony and Lucy smile conspiratorially.]

Pru. More cheese anyone? Tony?

Tony. Oh yes, I'll have some of that gorgeous Brie.

Pru. I'm afraid there isn't any left.

Lucy. I've still got some, have some of mine Tony.

Tony. No, you keep it.

Lucy. Don't argue, just open your mouth.
[Lucy picks up a piece of Brie and pops it into Tony's mouth then licks her fingers.]

Tony. [Struggling to talk with his mouth full.]
Mmm, thanks Lucy.
[Pause. Pru. feels awkward and starts clearing away the dinner things.]

Lucy. Let me help you with that.

Pru. No need, you just finish your meal.

Lucy. No I insist, I've finished anyway.

Tony. I'll just have a quick check.

Pru. Surely you're not still concerned about your alignment?

Tony. I'm keeping an eye on Cassiopeia.
[Exit Tony to the garden.]

Pru. Hmm, anything to get out of the washing up.
[Pru. and Lucy clear away the dinner things.]

Lucy. [Lucy drinks some wine.]
Umm. This is good stuff.

Pru. Yes, it is isn't it. It was on special offer at Tesco. It's Chilean.

Lucy. You can't beat Chilean. It's got so much, you know, flavour.

Pru. Yes.

Lucy. I guess I don't cut it as a wine expert.

Pru. No, you're right, it has got lots of flavour.

Lucy. I haven't got the vocabulary, you see. I can feel it on my tongue but I don't have the words to describe what I'm feeling.

Pru. Oh, you mean all that stuff like 'plummy, peppery, a hint of gooseberry' etcetera.

Lucy. Exactly! I can never remember all that stuff. I just know what I like. And this I like.

[Pours herself another drink.]

Pru. Good.

Lucy. And the meal. That was a great meal.

Pru. Oh, it was nothing. Just something I threw together.

Lucy. You could've fooled me. I wish I could 'throw things together' like that. I've never been much of a cook. If I try doing that I just end up with a mess.

Pru. One just needs to bear in mind the kind of things that go together and stick to that.

Lucy. I suppose so.

Pru. It's quite simple, really. Just follow a few basic rules.

Lucy. I never was very good at following rules. Didn't like rules. They always made me want to do the opposite, rules.

Pru. Well, they can be useful.

Lucy. S'ppose so.

Pru. Lucy?

Lucy. Yeah?

Pru. I know there's something wrong, something bothering you, I do wish you'd confide in me. Maybe I can help.

Lucy. I'm all right. Really, I'm all right.

[Holds up glass.]

And this makes things better.

Pru. You can tell me. I'm your friend. This morning, what was it?

Lucy. What?

Pru. On the beach, you were going to tell me something.

Lucy. I don't think so.

Pru. Before Tony came back, you were going to tell me something.

Lucy. Oh that.

Pru. Come on, what was it?

Lucy. You don't want to know.

Pru. Yes, I do, of course I do.

Lucy. I don't think I should say.

Pru. Go on, I'm the soul of discretion.

Lucy. But are you broad minded?

Pru. I like to think so.

Lucy. Uh-huh. 'Like to think so' isn't good enough.

Pru. What?

Lucy. 'Like to think so' means you're not sure.

Pru. Of course I am. For God's sake I'm as broad minded as the next person.

Lucy. Well, that doesn't -

Pru. Oh come on. Spit it out.

Lucy. [Sigh] Oh, well, it's nothing really.

Pru. Lucy. I thought we were friends.

Lucy. I suppose so.

Pru. Top up?

Lucy. Thanks.

Pru. Well? Come on then.

Lucy. It's nothing really. You know how, you know, you meet a man, and you can feel something click.

Pru. Yeah.

Lucy. It feels different, doesn't it.

Pru. I suppose so.

Lucy. Like when you met Tony.

Pru. It's hard to remember.

Lucy. Anyway, you feel a connection, you can sense that he isn't just going through the motions, saying things just so he can get some sex, but that he's really interested in you. As a person, interested in you, not just your body, but of course he *has* to appreciate your body, but more.

Pru. Yes, it's great when it's like that.

Lucy. Well, that's how I felt about Peter.

Pru. He's The Man.

Lucy. Yes, Peter.

Pru. What's he like?

Lucy. Well, he's very, you know, complex. Hard to sum up.

Pru. What's he look like?

Lucy. He's pretty average, really. He has strong arms. You know, sometimes he'd stand behind me, while I was getting ready to go out, and he'd wrap his arms around me, and I'd look at us in the mirror. Me there, and just his arms around me, and they'd look so, oh so 'sculptural', his arms, so strong, wrapped around, like I could never get out of that embrace, unless he let me go, but I didn't want him to let me go. I wanted him to just keep holding me, in his strong arms. And I'd kind of sink back into his body, and lean against his chest and thighs.

Pru. Sounds great.

Lucy. Yes, yes it is.

Pru. So, what's the problem?

Lucy. There isn't a 'problem'.

Pru. Oh yes there is. I can tell. I can see a problem coming up. He sounds too good to be true. What's the hitch? Is he married?

Lucy. No! It isn't him. Not, I mean, not just him . . . oh, it's something about the two of us, together.

Pru. Yes?

Lucy. Well, he wasn't like the others. He didn't want to rush –

Pru. Oh no, he's gay.

Lucy. No, of course he's not. I'm trying to explain.

Pru. Sorry.

Lucy. Anyway, with the others, usually, I was the one slowing things down, but this time it was him. It surprised me. I wasn't expecting that. He slowed things down, and he looked at me like, like special. When he looked into my eyes he went right through. Down. Inside. Inside me. I could feel him looking inside me. He said: I'm going to take you to a hidden place. It sounds corny now, but at the time . . .

Pru. So where is this hidden place?

Lucy. Inside. He likes to play these games. Master and Slave, that sort of thing. He'd tie me up. Or not even tie me up. And do things. Am I shocking you?

Pru. No, no, of course not.

Lucy. It all happened gradually. He'd come over at weekends and we'd play. We'd spend the whole weekend playing. And he'd call me names. And when he called me names, slut, whore, cunt. I flinched, I did flinch, but also I knew it got me turned-on. It upset me, but I knew, because it y'know, it was what I wanted to hear. I wanted to be called those things. I wanted him to beat me. I kept wanting more. When we started we just did a little. He used a strap and it stung, and he'd beat me, and then he'd

stop and he'd hold me, and we'd fuck and I'd feel, hurt and good, all at the same time. But the next time we'd do more, harder, longer. I wanted more, he wanted more, each time, I'd give more, he'd take more. And at the end I'd feel so exhausted. My body all wracked. But my mind was clear, clearer than it had ever been, I'd feel cleansed, my mind free, like it was floating off, away from me. And I'd be tied down, shackled, and I'd feel freer than I'd ever felt before. I'd feel the rawness of my body, the hurt, but from a distance, from some place else. Sometimes, the following day, I could barely move, everything ached. I'd look in the mirror and admire the bruises and the welts. I'd touch them, run my finger, softly, over the little ridges, and it turned me on, just remembering. I had the memory written all over my body. And I was proud of those marks. I'd earned them. They proved I'd done it, I'd been through it, and come out the other side. And I'd watch them fade and feel a little sad, but I knew I could get more. Sometimes I wanted it so much it scared me. Sometimes, when it got so intense, and I could feel my mind break away, float off, I got scared, I worried that I wouldn't be able to get back.

Pru. God.

Lucy. I told you you wouldn't want to know.

Pru. No. No, it's just . . . it's a bit of a surprise. I mean. It's not something –

Lucy. You talk about.

Pru. No. I didn't mean that. I mean. Well, it's not exactly what I'd . . . but anyway, if you . . . if you [*a beat*] like it, what's the problem?

Lucy. Perhaps I enjoy it too much.

Pru. [Laughs.]

Lucy. And, that's not all we do.

Pru. What else?

Lucy. He gives me these tasks. Things I have to do. He calls them my slave assignments. When I get back from an assignment I have to tell him all about it, and we have the most fabulous sex.

Pru. What kind of things does he ask you to do?

Lucy. It could be anything. Going to work wearing no knickers, stuff like that.

Pru. And do you do that?

Lucy. Only if he asks me.

Pru. What else does he ask?

Lucy. It varies.

Pru. Give me an example.

Lucy. Well, once he told me to go to a singles bar and sleep with the first man who spoke to me.

Pru. You're joking!

Lucy. No.

Pru. You didn't -

Lucy. What d'you think?

Pru. D'you always do what he asks?

Lucy. No, of course not. I've got a will of my own. I just like to 'lend it out' sometimes. I like to please him. It pleases me, knowing I'm pleasing him, / giving pleasure.

Pru. What if he asked you to do something you couldn't do?

Lucy. I don't know. I don't know what I'd do then. He hasn't asked me to do anything I couldn't do. That's the skill, isn't it, knowing, knowing to order someone to do something, something you know they want to do anyway but need to be ordered, to give themselves permission to do it.

Pru. Oh this is all beyond me. I don't understand it. I wish I did. I really do,

Lucy. But it worries me. It sounds risky. What if that man in the bar had

turned out to be dangerous? You can't just go picking up strangers because someone told you to. He could've had a disease.

Lucy. We used a condom.

Pru. He could've been dangerous!

Lucy. He wasn't dangerous. He was quite sweet, really. He was grateful.

Pru. I bet he was! I want you to promise me you won't do this sort of thing again.

Lucy. Now you're sounding like my Mother.

Pru. I'm sorry Lucy, I'm just thinking about what's good for you.

Lucy. That's what she used to say.

Pru. Has he asked you to do anything else?

Lucy. What's Tony up to? He keeps disappearing. Really it's very rude, after all I don't see him that often.

Pru. Don't change the subject.

Lucy. You don't understand. I knew you wouldn't. There's no point in talking.

Pru. Lucy -

Lucy. I wish I hadn't told you. We'll never see eye to eye.

Pru. Don't you think you should see someone?

Lucy. I am, seeing "someone".

Pru. You know what I mean, someone professional, some -

Lucy. [Exiting to beach area.] I knew it was stupid telling you; I knew you wouldn't understand!

Pru. [To herself.] Oh fuck. [Sighs.]

[Pru. tidies the kitchen fretfully then goes out to the Garden. Tony is absorbed looking through his telescope. Pru. enters the garden.]

Tony, I need to have a word with you.

Tony. Okay.

Pru. I'm worried about Lucy.

Tony. I thought she seemed more cheerful.

Pru. There's something -

Tony. [Still looking through the telescope.]
Look at this, you can just make out –

Pru. Tony, we have to talk.

Tony. What?

Pru. Talk. Talk, you know, what people do.

Tony. Yes, all right.

Pru. I just know there's something wrong.

Tony. What d'you mean?

Pru. With Lucy . . . and you . . . something . . . there's something, not right.

Tony. Whatever makes you think that?

Pru. Ever since she arrived. Ever since . . . I've had this feeling –

Tony. It must be your imagination.

Pru. Don't dismiss my feelings!

Tony. I was just –

Pru. I hate it when you do that. As if I wasn't entitled . . . wasn't even –

Tony. I'm sorry.

Pru. Oh shut up! I don't want 'sorry'. Sorry doesn't mean anything. Sorry just means shut up, stop bothering me, go away.

[Pause.]

Well, is that what you want? Do you want me to go away? Because I will.

Tony. This is silly.

Pru. No [*a beat*] it's [*a beat*] not. Why do you always have to deny everything?
Why can't we be honest? Why don't you talk to me?

[Pause. Referring to the sky.]

There's no answers up there. No answers, no one, *nothing*. The answers are all in here, [gestures at heart] in here, that's where you should look. Look inside for once.

Tony. I can't.

Pru. Can't? huh!

Tony. I'm scared, Pru.

Pru. We're all scared, Tony. Scared is not an excuse. Just . . . do what you have to. Take a look. Surprise yourself.

[About to exit.]

Let me know if you find anything.

Tony. Pru! Don't go. I'm sorry.

Pru. I feel so left out.

Tony. Oh Pru.

Pru. I feel like a stranger in my own house.

[Pause.]

Why didn't you tell me about Becky?

Tony. It never came up.

Pru. It never 'came up' because I didn't know she existed!

Tony. It's not something we talk about. It's too painful. I don't know why Lucy had to bring it up.

Pru. You have to confront these things.

Tony. Oh please, spare me the amateur psychology.

Pru. And what about me?

Tony. What?

Pru. It makes me feel like such an outsider. All these secrets. Things I don't know anything about. Things I should know. It makes me wonder what

other secrets there are.

Tony. There are no 'secrets'.

Pru. Well, I wonder, I do. All these years and I've only just found out, and thanks to Lucy, not you, that you had another sister. It's hardly minor. It's hardly 'sharing'.

Tony. Look, I'm sorry. It's something I try to forget. I didn't mean . . . it wasn't . . . I didn't mean to cut you out.

Pru. I want you to confide in me. I want us to share.

Tony. I know -

Pru. These things . . . it helps to share them. I want you to let me in.

Tony. No you don't.

Pru. Of course I do.

Tony. I wouldn't. I wouldn't want to be 'let in'; there are some places you don't want to be "let in".

Pru. Tell me. Look. If there's something bothering you, and I know there is, just tell me. The sky isn't going to fall in.

Tony. [Pause.] I dug the hole.

Pru. What?

Tony. On the beach. The hole, on the beach. I dug it.

Pru. The one that Becky -

Tony. Yes. / I dug it.

Pru. Oh dear.

Tony. I wanted to see how deep I could make it. There were some other boys on the beach and we had a competition. See who could get to Australia first.

Pru. Oh God.

Tony. I got into a rhythm, a digging rhythm. I dug well that day. It was too hot

for digging, really, but I dug anyway. You could feel the heat beating down on you. It was like a weight on your shoulders, pressing down. I remember I got burnt. But nobody was interested.

Pru. It wasn't your fault. You weren't to know.

Tony. No?

Pru. No.

Tony. But I saw, you see.

Pru. What?

Tony. I let her drown.

Pru. What?

Tony. I saw what happened. I saw it, and I did nothing. I ran away. Instead of going to help her I ran in the opposite direction. I was scared of getting the blame, you see, so I ran. I ran and ran. I didn't think, I just ran. My feet felt so light. But it was Lucy who got the blame. Not me, Lucy, but it was me who ran, I dug the hole. I did everything but push her in and hold her down.

Pru. You just panicked. You mustn't heap all this blame on yourself.

Tony. But I killed her. If I'd gone to help she'd still be here today.

Pru. Who knows what would've happened.

Tony. But the worst thing was, I didn't even like her. She was my sister, but I didn't like her. She was always spying on us, telling on me and Lucy, getting us into trouble.

Pru. Tony, I think you're taking things to extremes.

Tony. And even after she was dead she still spoiled things for us. At the end of the summer Lucy was sent away, to boarding school. I missed her so much. We were very close in those days. Perhaps Mum and Dad thought we were too close. But when she came back, in the holidays, it

wasn't the same. She seemed so much more grown up. It was as if, apart, we'd grown at different rates and she was way ahead of me. After that we weren't so close. Even then we started drifting apart.

Pru. You're reading too much into things. You're relating everything to Becky's death, but things like that happen anyway. Girls develop quicker at that age, it was bound to happen.

Tony. I sometimes ask myself, what would life have been like if Becky had lived? Would everything be different? Would we be different people? Would Lucy still have been sent away?

Pru. Oh, poor Tony. You poor, poor thing.

Tony. Nothing was ever the same again, after that summer.

Pru. There, there. [Pause.] Tony?

Tony. Yes?

Pru. About running away. About seeing it happen?

Tony. What?

Pru. Does Lucy know?

Lucy.. [Enter Lucy.]
What does Lucy know?

Pru. Oh, hello Lucy.

Lucy. So, what do I or don't I know?

Pru. We were talking about Becky.

Lucy. Oh her. She won't leave me alone. Little cow. Always following me around. Around and around and around.

Pru. About the accident.

Lucy. Accidents will happen. Even in the best regulated households.

Tony. Lucy –

Lucy. Come on, there's something I want to show you, give you. Come on.

[They all go in to the Kitchen.]

I brought you a present.

[Lucy hands Tony a CD covered in gift wrap.]

Tony. Oh, thanks. What is it?

Lucy. Open it and see.

Tony. Right.

Lucy. I hope you like it.

Pru. What is it? Well open it then.

[Tony unwraps the CD.]

Let me see. Oh, Latin American dances.

Lucy. It's great stuff. It's sooooo sensual. Makes you feel alive.

Pru. We could do with that.

Lucy. You can play it in the car.

Tony. Yes, thanks.

Lucy. I feel like a party.

Tony. You can't have a party with just three people.

Lucy. Of course you can. [To Pru.] You can, can't you.

Pru. Yes, I suppose / so.

Lucy. There you are! Pru. agrees with me. We should have a party. Music, dancing, booze. I know!

[Grabs the CD and puts it on.]

I'll teach you how to dance the Merengue.

Pru. What's that?

Lucy. It's a fabulous dance from Dominica. Oh, it's very good. Look, I'll show you.

Tony. I'm not very good at dancing.

Lucy. Nonsense. [To Pru.] We know don't we. He's just being shy. [To Tony.]

You're very good. You always used to dance wonderfully.

Tony. I haven't been dancing for ages.

Lucy. Then it's time you took it up again.

[Lucy and Tony dance the Merengue, a very sexy dance.]

Come on. Now hold me. Follow the rhythm. Closer. Come on. That's more like it. That's it. That's it, you're getting it. [To Pru.] Isn't he a lovely mover. [To Tony.] Now, don't forget to move your hips. Slower. Slower. Put your thigh between my legs. That's it. Now, keep moving those hips. Now, back off, I'm going to turn, and step back, that's it, great! And again, closer, closer. See, you're getting it. [To Pru.] What d'you think?

Pru. It's a very interesting dance.

Lucy. Yeah, it's my favourite. Fun, isn't it. Look happy Tony, you're having fun.

Tony. [Tony breaks away; Lucy continues dancing on her own.]

That's enough.

Lucy. But you were just getting into it.

Tony. I've had enough dancing.

Lucy. You're out of condition. You should look after yourself better. [To Pru.]

Shouldn't he.

Pru. I keep telling him.

Lucy. See! Pru. keeps telling you, but do you pay any attention? No.

Tony. Lucy.

Lucy. No, no, no, no, no. [To Pru.] He was always like that as a boy. Head like a sieve. Never remembered anything from one moment to the next.

Tony. I need a drink.

Lucy. I had to remember for both of us.

Tony. Lucy, I think –

Lucy. Get me another drink Tony.

Pru. I think I'll have one too.

Lucy. [Lucy dances sensuously around Tony.]
Tony's forgotten how to have a party, but I'll remind him.

Tony. Lucy, what are you on?

Lucy. I'm high on life, Tony. High on life. Uncut, unadulterated, pure, 'life', street value impossible to calculate.

Pru. This has gone on long enough.

Lucy. What?

Pru. Why are you doing this?

Lucy. What?

Pru. Don't play ignorant with me. What game are you playing? He's your brother, your brother, leave him alone.

Tony. Pru. –

Lucy. What are you implying.

Pru. It's obscene.

Lucy. No it's not, it's beautiful. It's a beautiful dance.

Tony. Lucy's only playing -

Pru. I know the kind of playing Lucy does.

Tony. What are you talking about?

Pru. It's disgusting. You can do what you like, playing your perverted games with this, this Peter, but here in my house, I won't have it.

Tony. Calm down Pru. –

Pru. Don't tell me to calm down.

Lucy. Up tight –

Pru. Oh I'm up tight am I? Just because I don't want you bringing your . . . it's disgusting. You're sick. You need help.

Tony. What's going on?

Lucy. Don't patronise me. [Imitating.] 'You need help'.

Pru. I feel sorry for you. I really do. I know you've been through a lot. I expect it's left some emotional scars. But I can't –

Lucy. Want to see an emotional scar?
[Lucy smashes her wine glass, Pru. recoils as if being attacked but Lucy holds the broken glass against her own arm.]

Pru. } No.

Tony. } Lucy. Now then Lucy, put it down.

Lucy. You can't talk to me like that.

Pru. I'm sorry.

Tony. Everything's okay.

Lucy. It's not what you think. Nothing's what you think.
[Lucy throws the broken glass into the sink and heads off to the beach area.]

Tony. [Calling after her.] Lucy!

Pru. Let her go.

Tony. I can't leave her alone in that state.

Pru. She's only doing it to get attention.

Tony. I'd better see if I can find her.

Pru. Go on, run after her, like you always do. She's got you exactly where she wants you –

Tony. [Tony runs after Lucy.]
Lucy! Come back. Lucy!

Pru. [Without much conviction.] Don't expect me to be here when you get back. [Sighs and turns to look in the sink.] Would be the best fucking glass.

Tony. [Lucy sits on the beach, her arms around her knees, rocking, staring out to sea. Tony enters the beach area searching for her.]

Lu – cy. Lu – cy. Where are you Lucy? Come back. Lu – cy.

[In the dark Tony almost stumbles over Lucy.]

Oh, there you are.

[Tony sits beside Lucy.]

What're you doing?

Lucy. I'm waiting for the sea to come in and take me away.

Tony. Don't be silly.

Lucy. I'm not being silly; I'm waiting.

Tony. Come back to the house.

Lucy. I can't go back.

Tony. Of course you can. Come with me.

Lucy. Pru thinks I'm sick.

Tony. She didn't mean it.

Lucy. Do you think I'm sick?

Tony. Of course I don't.

Lucy. Hold me Tony.

[Tony hesitates, then holds her, awkwardly.]

I so want to be held. I don't want to be alone. Don't want to be a freak.

Tony. Nobody's calling you a freak.

Lucy. [As Lucy speaks Tony holds her in a more relaxed way.]

I can see it in Pru's eyes. It's a mistake to tell people things. They don't understand. Nobody understands. They judge. They sit in their life.

Cosy. And they look out. And they judge. But they don't know. How can they? They don't know how things feel. You can tell them but they still don't know. Like that woman they made me see. She didn't know a

thing. Called herself a psychotherapist - didn't know a thing. Nothing. I could've told her. Twelve and I knew more than her. Why is it that people who know nothing are so confident they know everything?

Tony. Come back. Come on. Everything's all right. You'll get cold sitting here.

Lucy. I've had enough. I want to do a swap with Becky. It's not fair.

Tony. [Rocking Lucy in his arms.]

No swaps Lucy. No swaps. It wasn't your fault. It . . . really, it wasn't.

Never was. Never was. Never was.

Fade to black as we hear the sound of the waves coming in, and the stars revolve above them.

Act 5. Sunday morning. A red flag flies over the beach area. Pru. is alone in the kitchen, preparing some breakfast for herself. She is full of pent-up anger. She hears Tony coming down to the kitchen and tenses. Enter Tony. They do not speak. Pru. bangs things around as she prepares her breakfast. Tony sits at the kitchen table feeling awkward and not knowing what to say.

Tony. Windy day.

Pru. [She doesn't answer but bangs around even more.]

Tony. It's really blowing up out there.

Pru. What!

Tony. I just meant -

Pru. Is that it?

Tony. What?

Pru. Is that all you've got to say?

Tony. Well, I er -

Pru. Tony.

Tony. I realise -

Pru. This is serious Tony.

Tony. Yes, well -

Pru. She's got to go.

Tony. Yes, I expect -

Pru. I don't want her in this house, our house.

Tony. She's not -

Pru. I don't care. This is our place. Ours. She can't just turn up and . . . and .
..

Tony. Look, Pru., I know it's a bit awkward but -

Pru. Awkward!

Tony. Well it's -

Pru. It's simple Tony, it's her or me.

Tony. Pru, just calm down.

Pru. What!

Tony. What?

Pru. What? Are you thick or something?

Tony. Pru.

Pru. Look, I want her out.

Tony. Well, she's going any-

Pru. Good. I'm going for a swim and I don't want her to be here when I get
back. Is that clear?

Tony. Oh come on Pru.

Pru. No, I mean it, I'm going now.

Tony. The flags up.

Pru. Fuck the flag. [Exit Pru. to the beach.]

Tony. [Tony rises to prevent her but thinks better of it and sits down again. He sits alone in the kitchen brooding on the situation.]

Lucy. [Pause. Enter Lucy.]

Morning.

Tony. Morning.

Lucy. Tony?

Tony. Yes?

Lucy. Look. Sorry about last night.

Tony. That's all right.

Lucy. Don't know what got into me.

Tony. Don't worry.

Lucy. I hope I didn't piss off Pru. too much.

Tony. She'll be all right. It'll blow over. These things always do.

Lucy. Where is she?

Tony. She's gone for an early morning swim.

Lucy. Oh.

[Pause.]

I thought the flag was up.

Tony. Yes, I did remind her, but when she wants to swim –

Lucy. I thought you weren't supposed to swim when the flag's up.

Tony. Pru's a very strong swimmer.

Lucy. Yes, I noticed.

Tony. Says it relaxes her.

Lucy. It's nice to relax.

[Lucy rests her hands on Tony's shoulders.]

You feel tense.

Tony. Mmm, yes.

Lucy. God you're so tight. Here, let me give you a massage. You're all knotted up.

Tony. Oh yes.

Lucy. That better?

Tony. Mmm.

Lucy. Poor thing.

Tony. Mmmm, yes.

Lucy. You're so tight.

Tony. Ugh.

Lucy. You need looking after.

Tony. Mmmm, oh.

Lucy. That hit the spot didn't it.

Tony. Mmmm.

Lucy. [Leaning down and whispering in Tony's ear as she massages.]
I like being here.

Tony. I'm glad.

Lucy. I feel safe when I'm with you. With you I feel that everything can be
[beat] simple again.

Tony. I don't know, Lucy.

Lucy. Like the past. Simple, like the past.

Tony. I don't know.

Lucy. Come on.

Tony. I don't know that the past was ever simple.

Lucy. Let's just pretend. Eh? Pretend. Like we did in the past.

Tony. Mmmm.

Lucy. There's no one here. No one at all.

Tony. Mmmm.

Lucy. It's all right.

[Lucy kisses Tony on the lips. They linger. It is not a brother-sister kiss.]

Remember.

Tony. I always remember.

Lucy. Me too.

Tony. Lucy [*a beat*] we're not kids any more.

Lucy. Pity.

Tony. Uh?

Lucy. Pity. I always wanted to be a kid forever. I never wanted to grow up.

Being grown up is so dull. Don't you think it's dull?

Tony. When I was a kid I thought, When I'm grown up all my problems will be over. I'll be able to do exactly what I like. But it's not like that.

Lucy. Tony?

Tony. What?

Lucy. Do you love Pru.?

Tony. What a strange question. Of course I do.

Lucy. And what about me?

Tony. What?

Lucy. I wish. Oh what is it I wish? You know those stories, the ones where people get to make three wishes?

Tony. Um.

Lucy. Why is it they always go wrong? They never get what they want. They always get something bad. There's always some trick so their wish goes wrong. Like the story-tellers want to tell people don't wish, never wish, you'll never get what you want, there'll always be a twist.

Tony. Moralising.

Lucy. Yes, moralising tales. They think it's bad if you get something too easy.

But why should easy be bad? Why does everything have to be so hard?

That's what I'd like to know.

Tony. It usually is.

Lucy. That doesn't make it right. Doesn't make it virtuous. I want wishes to come true. Not like in the stories. Let's make a wish together.

Tony I've run out of wishes.

Lucy I'll give you one of mine.

Tony. How did we get here?

Lucy. I took a wrong turning and ended up at Frinton.

Tony. [Laughs.]

Me too.

Lucy. But it isn't a wrong turning. It's the turning I had to take.

Tony. It's a dead end Lucy. A dead end. You know that.

Lucy. No, no, no. Don't say that. There are no dead ends, only -

Tony. But Lucy -

Lucy Endless possibilities.

Tony But it's not -

Lucy. Don't, don't, don't speak -

Tony. Lu – [Lucy covers Tony's mouth with her hand.]

Lucy. Shhh. Shhhhhhh. I told you. No speaking.

[Lucy releases her hand.]

Who needs words? They just get in the way. One more thing to trip us up. It's like naming things. Giving something a name makes people think they've understood it when they haven't. Forget names. We don't need words; we just need each other. Don't you love me?

Tony. Of course I love / you.

Lucy. Shhh. No words. Show me.

[Pause.]

Go on. Make a wish come true.

Tony and Lucy stare intently, longingly, at one another. The phone starts ringing, they ignore it, it keeps ringing as the light gradually fades to black and the sound of the waves pounding on the shore gets louder and louder.

THE END.