

THE COAST

PROLOGUE

In SEAL

SEAL: Hauled out on barnacled rocks
 I bask in the yellow sun
 Under the sea-bird flocks
 Grazing the blue ocean.
 I feed on a multitude
 Of benthic and demersal
 Fish, that provide me food
 In profound dispersal.
 I am *Halichoerus grypus atlantica!*
 The Grey Seal.

SEAL barks

In CHOUGH

CHOUGH: High on the cliffs, with red-legged hop
 I strut and caw, hunt in the turf
 For invertebrates where rabbits crop
 The thyme-rich slopes above the surf.
 I soar along the edge of dread
 Far from the world where in a cave
 I build a nest in which I thread
 Anything gathered from the wave.
 I am *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax!*
 The Red-billed Chough.

CHOUGH caws

SEAL: Morning, red-legged Chough.
 What's that hung from your beak?
 Plastic?

CHOUGH: Right enough.
 I found it in the creek.
 I'm taking it to my nest.

SEAL What? Instead of sticks?

CHOUGH: Why not? Having it dressed
 In colours for the chicks.

SEAL: Be careful Chough, my friends
 Met plastic and their ends.

Out SEAL

Out CHOUGH

CLARA: Welcome everyone. I am Clara, the storyteller. I earn my living travelling from place to place, festival to festival in the summer time telling stories. One particular festival I visited threw up a story of its own, and I'm here tonight to tell it to you - a tale of Dartmoor people visiting the coast, specifically the village of Atlantis. Atlantis has always been a mythical name, a place where they do things differently, and the village in this story is no exception. Let us go straight there, to the cove - a pristine stretch of golden sand, washed clean twice a day by the great tides of the Atlantic. Well, perhaps not so pristine ...

SCENE: ATLANTIS, A FISHING VILLAGE

In EDNA carrying plastic litter she has picked up. She has a placard with her: 'Be iconoclastic, don't use plastic'.

Out EDNA

CLARA: Plastic pollution of the ocean. Edna's very concerned about that. She's a student, back from uni for the holidays. Let's go to the village...

In WILL, with binoculars studying the cliffs

In DUNCAN crossing carrying a crate

In HECTOR, from the opposite way, carrying an easel. The two acknowledge each other and go out. WILL glances round at them and goes out

In Atlantis, bathed by a glittering summer sea, there are two worlds at this time of year. There is the world of the music festival in a local farmer's fields. And there is the harbour... From her appointed place, niched like a sentry on the harbour wall, a woman watches, knitting...

In MOTHER, she sits knitting

Day after day she sees the same boats go out and re-enter through the harbour entrance... She sees diesel taken on and crates of fish dis-embarked...

In JAKE carrying a jerry-can and a coil of rope

JAKE: Alright Mother?

CLARA: *(To the audience)* She's not Jake's mother. Everyone in the village calls her by the name 'Mother'.

MOTHER: Morning Jake. Off out again, I see.

JAKE: No rest for the wicked.

MOTHER: That Will fellow – marine biologist he calls 'imself – been asking questions again.

JAKE: The one who's studying the seals?

MOTHER: *(Nods)* Though why we need another biologist in this village beats me. Us 've already got that Bertholt chap up at the Bird Hospital.

JAKE: What sort of questions?

MOTHER: Seals and sea-birds is all very well, but what does they eat? Fish. The more of them grows up, the fewer fish there'll be for the likes of you and Duncan. Stands to reason.

JAKE: What sort of questions?

MOTHER: Oh... about how often the boats go out. He says ee wants to get a picture of how much disturbance seals be exposed to.

JAKE: *(Relieved)* Suppose that makes sense.

In MEGAN

MOTHER: Here comes that smart maid of yours.

MEGAN: Glad I've caught you. Morning Mother.

MOTHER: Morning my dear.

JAKE: Just in time. I'm about to head out in The Intrepid. What's up, Meg?

MOTHER puts her head down and continues with her knitting, sometimes noisily enough to make JAKE and MEGAN pause to look at her

MEGAN: Nothing – I just wondered if you'd like to go to the Festival next weekend. Carolyn was talking to me about it in the staff room. I was thinking of seeing if I could get some tickets from her...

JAKE: You know I don't like you doing business with that woman...

MEGAN: It's not business...

JAKE: Nevertheless, don't let Duncan get wind of it.

MEGAN: I still can't really understand why he and Carolyn have fallen out.

JAKE: She objected to his planning application to turn the old chapel into a small factory, didn't she. He says she scuppered the future of the village.

MEGAN: Maybe a factory in Atlantis wasn't such a good idea – think of the pollution it might have caused.

JAKE: Duncan had all that sorted – he was going to use hydro-electric generated from the stream backed up with batteries fed by solar panels, and he intended to recycle any waste. He showed me the plans once. Things have got to be made somewhere, Meg.

MEGAN: But wouldn't it be better to site a factory somewhere else – I mean this is a fishing village.

JAKE: A holiday resort more like. There's hardly any fishing boats left.

MEGAN: That's what I mean. People don't come on holiday to see a factory.

JAKE: So is that how we have to live, then? At the beck and call of people who come on holiday a few days in a year?

MEGAN: If people here want to make a living, I suppose, yes.

JAKE: Everyone knows the holiday trade is low-wage. It condemns us to permanent poverty.

MEGAN: But what's the alternative? If they won't give planning permission for industrial development.

JAKE: I'll talk to you about it when I get back.

Out JAKE

MEGAN calling after him

MEGAN: Jake! You didn't say if you wanted me to get you a ticket...

MEGAN sighs

MOTHER: Stubborn, that Taylor family. Restless people. Always wanting to do their own thing.

MEGAN: Tell me about it.

MOTHER: Not that I hold with this Music Festival, mind – what's wrong with a good dance and sing-along in the village hall?

MEGAN: Nothing's wrong with it. The Festival offers something new and different, that's all.

MOTHER: *(Leaning towards MEGAN and almost whispering)* What about the drugs though?

MEGAN: If people are going to do drugs, I don't think they need the excuse of a Music Festival.

MOTHER: S'pose youm right. Well, I must getting back for my dinner.

MEGAN: And I must be getting back to the school. They're short-staffed today – Year 5 and 6 have gone on an outing. Goodbye Mother.

MOTHER: Goodbye Megan my dear.

Out MEGAN and MOTHER

CLARA: Meanwhile many miles away up on the hills of Dartmoor...

SCENE: A GORGE ON DARTMOOR

In PETRA, ROMNEY with their mother DAPHNE and her friend EMMA

EMMA: I've lived on Dartmoor for twenty years and never been to this place. It's so secluded – why, you could rendezvous with someone here and never be seen.

ROMNEY: *(To PETRA)* Why would she say that?

EMMA: Amazing how much there is to discover on your own doorstep.

ROMNEY: *(To PETRA)*. Isn't it just. *(Sarcastically)*

DAPHNE looks askance at her

They take out a picnic rug and spread it

EMMA: I mean who needs to go to the seaside with limpid river pools like this?

ROMNEY: I do. *(Puts a hand up)*

DAPHNE: Romney, come over here a minute.

ROMNEY: Yes.

DAPHNE takes ROMNEY on one side

DAPHNE: What's got into you, young lady?

ROMNEY: Nothing.

DAPHNE: Then stop being so rude.

ROMNEY: Why does she have to be here?

DAPHNE: Because she's my friend.

ROMNEY: She says stupid things.

DAPHNE: She's actually very knowledgeable. She's a local historian. She used to work in the Library before they closed it. So just show some respect.

ROMNEY moves back to PETRA

ROMNEY: *(To PETRA)* Have you noticed how whenever Emma's with her, Mum's always short with us.

ROMNEY pulls PETRA across the stage away from the adults

EMMA: Daphne, when I said who needs the seaside – well actually, I'm so pleased you've asked me to go with you. I know that part of the coast very well – beautiful - a favourite haunt of mine... and the Atlantis Music Festival is always amazing...

DAPHNE: I thought you could be a sort of guide, as it's our first time there.

ROMNEY and PETRA are sitting apart from the adults

ROMNEY: Broadstones would be so much better if people just swam in it like otters, instead of talking.

PETRA: I would come here every day if we didn't have school. I wish every day was an Inset day. When I come here it reminds me....

ROMNEY: Don't say it, Petra!

PETRA: that... (loudly) I'm hungry...

ROMNEY: You were going to say something else, weren't you? What you always say when you're at Broadstones?

PETRA: No.

ROMNEY: Yes you were.

PETRA: Alright. I can't help it if this is the last place I spent time with... my friend.

ROMNEY: When you were about three? Too young to know what being friends really is.

PETRA: Seven actually.

ROMNEY: If she was really a friend she would have kept in touch with you.

PETRA: She couldn't help it if her family moved away to the coast. She said her mother wanted to be near her brother – she needed the support as a single parent.

DAPHNE: The food's in the basket, Petra. Help yourself.

PETRA: Pass me a sandwich, will you, Rom..

DAPHNE: Nut butter ones are in the foil...

ROMNEY: Is the nut butter ethically sourced?

DAPHNE: I should think so – it's organic.

ROMNEY: Here...

ROMNEY passes a foil-wrapped sandwich to PETRA

DAPHNE glares at ROMNEY

DAPHNE: Have a sandwich, Romney... who's this coming?

In HETTY and SAM

HETTY: Here looks good.

SAM: Sorry, you don't mind, do you? This rock's ideal for Jan to leap onto.

ROMNEY: Well actually we were using it for our picnic.

HETTY: We have to rehearse a scene from the myth of Jan Coo.

SAM: This is the place Jan Coo was lured into the river, according to Miss Evans.

DAPHNE: Who's Miss Evans?

HETTY: Teacher. She's with the rest of the class over beyond the trees – doing music for the story. We're on an outing to Dartmoor.

ROMNEY: Which school are you from?

HETTY: Atlantis.

ROMNEY: Where the Music Festival is?

HETTY: It's down on the coast.

ROMNEY: We're going there for our holiday.

HETTY: We came up by coach to Dartmeet this morning.

DAPHNE: River of Dart, River of Dart;
Every year it claims a heart.

ROMNEY: Agh! Mum, you're always saying that rhyme.

DAPHNE: It goes with the Jan Coo story.

ROMNEY: But the way you say it is like some witch's curse.

HETTY: Could we have quiet a moment?

DAPHNE: Exactly Romney.

SAM: You be the voice, you be the voice
You be the voice, you've got no choice.

HETTY: Alright, alright. Where are we starting from?

SAM: Jan has climbed over the wall from the farm because he was alone with no one to stop him when he heard the voice for the third time.

DAPHNE: (*Intrigued*) What about the first two times?

HETTY: The first time he heard the voice he was with all the other farm labourers pitchforking hay, and they stopped him, saying he was hearing things.

SAM: And the second time he heard it he was mending a wall with his fellow apprentice Jacob, who also told him he was hearing things.

HETTY: But the third time, out alone in the storm helping a new-born lamb to suck from its mother beside the blackthorn hedge, he was free to follow the sound. Jan Coo, Jan Coo, Jan Coo!

SAM: Where are you?

HETTY: Coo-ee!

SAM: Who are you?

HETTY: Coo-ee!

SAM: I'm coming after you.

HETTY: Coo-ee!

SAM: So you run off, and I hop from rock to rock in pursuit.

HETTY starts then stops

HETTY: So what actually happened to Jan, do you think?

SAM: Dunno. Drowned?

HETTY: They would have found his body.

SAM: Maybe it was washed out to sea...?

PETRA: *(Interrupting)* Mum says he was led to the land of the pixies by Jack o'Lanterns.

SAM: So... gone to join the fairies?

DAPHNE: That's what I've always understood - the pixies took pity on him and helped him to escape the abuse of child slavery on the farm.

HETTY: Jack o'Lanterns? *(Suddenly sharp)* What have lanterns got to do with it?

EMMA: Well, technically Jack of the Lantern is the King of the Pixies and Joan of the Wad (Wad means torch) is his pixy queen. Jack o'Lanterns are another name for will-o-the-wisps, or pixies carrying lights that lead lost travellers either astray or to safety on desolate heaths. In some of the earlier versions of the Jan Coo story, it's not the boy but the owner of the voice that is called Jan Coo, John Oo, perhaps Joan the Wad, a girl with a torch or lantern...

HETTY stares at her. EMMA stops suddenly, as she stares at HETTY

PETRA: Yes?

EMMA: I can see I'm boring you.

HETTY: Excuse me... but haven't I seen you in Atlantis?

EMMA: Very probably. I sometimes go there for my holidays.

PETRA: You were saying about Joan the Wad and the lantern...

EMMA: Oh...nothing.

ROMNEY: It's all nonsense anyway, isn't it.

In CAROLYN (Miss Evans)

CAROLYN: This is where you've got to. Are you ready to show us what you've worked on?

EMMA: Hello Carolyn. You're their teacher!?

CAROLYN: Emma... *(coldly)* of course... you live on Dartmoor don't you. Yes, this is my class. We're here on a daytrip, looking at the National Park. It's beautiful here. You're so lucky to live in such a protected landscape *(Edge to her voice)*. Come on Sam, Hetty. *(Coolly to EMMA)* See you in the holidays, I imagine.

EMMA: Yes...

Out CAROLYN with SAM and HETTY

ROMNEY: Well that was...

DAPHNE: Charming?!

ROMNEY: Wasn't quite what I was going to say... more like bizarre. My primary school never did anything like that.

DAPHNE: More's the pity. Are you alright, Emma?

EMMA: Yes, yes, quite alright.

DAPHNE: I sensed something slightly cool between you and that teacher.

EMMA: It's nothing. I have a friend she's fallen out with – that's all.

PETRA: Mum, can you hand me my water bottle? It's by the basket.

DAPHNE: Here!

DAPHNE reaches off where she put the picnic basket

PETRA: *(Knocking the water bottle out of her mother's hand so that it floats away)* Oh no, look what you've done, Mum. My water bottle's been swept away by the current.

ROMNEY: I'll see if I can fish it out...

Out ROMNEY

PETRA: Is that it, over there...no over there...Romney, I think it might be over that way...or is that a log?...

In ROMNEY

ROMNEY: It's no good. The current's too fast. I can't reach it.

PETRA: So now it'll disappear down the river forever – just like Jan Coo!

DAPHNE: We'll buy you another one before we set off for the Festival. By the way, Emma's coming with us. Isn't that great?

ROMNEY: What?!

EMMA: Squeezing it into my busy schedule...

ROMNEY: So says someone who's unemployed...

DAPHNE: Romney!!

PETRA: Do you think she might be able to help us find you know who...

DAPHNE: Who?

ROMNEY: Petra!

PETRA: Just saying...

ROMNEY: Shut up Petra! Mum, why is Emma coming with us? I thought it was supposed to be our family holiday.

DAPHNE: It is. You've had friends come with us in the past. Now it's my turn. Emma, we're off.

EMMA: I'll let you go on ahead I think. I don't want to interfere with a domestic. But I'll look forward to seeing you all on the coast.

They pick up the things

Out DAPHNE, PETRA and ROMNEY one way. Out EMMA another

In CLARA

CLARA: We return to Atlantis and the Bird Hospital - where in the time-honoured tradition of boss and employee it seems that manager Bertholt is putting his feet up while his young assistant Arianne does the work...

SCENE: A BIRD HOSPITAL IN ATLANTIS

In BERTHOLT

In ARIANNE

ARIANNE: I've put the comorant with the broken wing in the small enclosure.

BERTHOLD: Good. Arianne, can you do the Sunday shift for me this weekend?

ARIANNE: Not again, Bertholt!

BERTHOLD: I've got no one else and I've promised Eva that we'll go out for the day.

ARIANNE: Can't you just close the Sanctuary?

BERTHOLD: You can never tell when someone's going to bring in an injury. Anyway the birds need feeding.

ARIANNE: I suppose I wouldn't be doing anything else with my Sunday. I mean what is there to do in a place like this?

BERTHOLD: Surf?

ARIANNE: Oh yeah, I'm so stoked! That's alright if you're Rusalka. But where are the shops and the cinemas, and the sports grounds? It's all knick-knack shops and museums -

everything's for the tourists. We need to have our own industry producing modern things, not importing them from dubious sources in distant countries where we can't witness the side effects of producing them. Where's proper modern life? I'm bored – and this is the summer. In winter it's really deadly.

BERTHOLT: You've been listening to Hector by the sound of it.

ARIANNE: At least Hector can be interesting. Tell me something interesting about being at "the sea-side" Bertholt, *(She makes speech marks with her fingers)* or I swear I'm going to die – or take up doing drugs.

BERTHOLT: You're too imaginative to do drugs.

ARIANNE: Don't depend on it...

BERTHOLT: Let me think, something interesting...

ARIANNE: Ten seconds...

BERTHOLD: I don't know...

ARIANNE: Five seconds...

BERTHOLT: You haven't got any drugs on you... have you?

ARIANNE: It'll have to be death then. One second, or I'm heading for the cliff...

BERTHOLT: Did you know that women evolved to be like seals?

ARIANNE: How do you mean?

BERTHOLT: Ha ha! Now you're interested. Women stood in the shallows of estuaries for centuries harvesting shellfish and staying safe from predators while men were off hunting. So they evolved subcutaneous fat to keep their bodies warm in the cold sea, and tear and sweat glands to get rid of excess salt. Eventually they took to swimming and diving like seals to find the essential fatty acids for the development of the brain that can only be got from the marine food-chain. The breath control and diving response that this demanded of our airways can be seen as the adaptation that enabled the development of human speech...

ARIANNE: Okay, now you're losing me... really!?! Did you get that from the marine biologist?

BERTHOLT: *(Competitive)* Will?

ARIANNE: They say he's come to study the seals.

BERTHOLT: No I did not. I don't need some marine biologist to tell me that. It's an accepted theory, the Aquatic Ape Hypothesis – David Attenborough has mentioned it on the BBC.

ARIANNE: Has he? Well, thanks for that.

BERTHOLD: So can I take it you'll stay away from the cliff edge and do the shift on Sunday for me?

ARIANNE: Yes *(sighs)*.

BERHOLD: Great.

ARIANNE: Right, I'm off to have a surf with Rusalka.

BERTHOLT: I thought you said you didn't like...

ARIANNE: What?!

BERTHOLT: Oh, never mind.

Out ARIANNE

Out BERTHOLT

SCENE: A BEACH IN ATLANTIS

In SAM, HETTY, BESS, MAX

SAM Suddenly in the middle of the day
 The great question was 'Where's Maeve?'
 Nobody had seen her down at play.

In MAEVE

Then all at once she enters with a wave.

HETTY: Your rhymes are crimes, Sam!

MAX runs out

BESS: Where did Max go? Why did he run off?

MAEVE: His mum and my uncle are at war.

SAM: Oh yes, I heard about that.

MAEVE: This way.

HETTY: Where are we going?

MAEVE: To the sea-shell lands...

SAM: On printable sands...

MAEVE: What Sam?

SAM: Flotsam.

MAEVE: You're like one of Edna's placards – you always rhyme.

HETTY: What shall we play? What about leaping over the river that runs down the beach?

MAEVE: No.

BESS: Why not?

MAEVE: I don't like leaping over games. Let's go and look for shells.

Out all

SCENE: A STREET IN ATLANTIS

In DUNCAN with JAKE

JAKE: How?

DUNCAN: Sand in his outboard motor's petrol tank.

Out DUNCAN

Out JAKE

SCENE: A CAMPSITE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF ATLANTIS

In ROMNEY and PETRA

ROMNEY: Great, our tents are up, let's go to the village shop.

PETRA: Can't we explore first?

ROMNEY: Yes, the village.

In RUSALKA with a surfboard, unseen in the background

PETRA: I meant the beach and the cliff.

ROMNEY: Leave that till tomorrow. You need to buy a new water bottle remember.

PETRA: That was funny, losing the bottle in the river and watching it disappear boulder by boulder, like Jan Co.

ROMNEY: Funny?! Polluting is the word that springs to mind.

PETRA: It will have flowed right out of the river and into the sea, leaving The Dart as pure as mountain rain.

ROMNEY: Whatever. So, coming to the shop?

PETRA: Romney, what's the point of camping by the sea if you ignore it?

ROMNEY: I'm not ignoring it, it's just...

PETRA: You want to hang out with boys...

ROMNEY: I don't know what you mean, Petra? Alright, if it'll make you happy, let's walk down to the beach. Mum wants us back for the storytelling and the music though...

PETRA: Thanks Rom. You never know, she might...

ROMNEY: Mum might what?

PETRA: Not... Mum...

ROMNEY: No, Petra, no! no! no! You promised.

ROMNEY threatens PETRA

PETRA: Please listen. I thought I saw someone exactly like her on the walk from the station. I just know I'm going to meet her again one day.

ROMNEY: She'd be older now. She'd look very different. We probably wouldn't recognize her.

PETRA: I know. Only... this person had the same way she used to have of holding her arm in the crook of her elbow with a hand folded across behind her back.

ROMNEY: She'd have grown out of that by now.

PETRA: Not necessarily.

ROMNEY: Petra, do you want to end up sleeping in a tent on your own? Because I swear, if you bring her up one more time I'm going straight to the station and getting on the next train back to Dartmoor.

PETRA: You wouldn't dare. Mum wouldn't let you. You have to stay for the festival now you're here, or you'll ruin it for her.

ROMNEY: No I won't. Mum couldn't care less if I'm here or not, she's too busy getting smashed with Emma. Dad's at home to look after me.

PETRA: Dad's got the vegetable harvest to supervise. And he's painting the porch. He won't thank you for being under his feet.

ROMNEY: I can help him with the polytunnels. I've done it before. And the painting. I've gone on a train on my own before too, remember, at Easter when I went to visit Aunt Alice in Wales.

PETRA: Alright... sorry then. But please can we go down to the beach. I love the smell of the waves. We might see...

ROMNEY: Petra!

PETRA: Seals playing on the rocks.

ROMNEY: Seals? Okay. I'll walk down with you.

Out PETRA and ROMNEY

RUSALKA folds her hand across her back into the crook of her elbow

Out RUSALKA

SCENE: THE HARBOUR

In MOTHER, sits knitting

In DUNCAN with a crate

MOTHER: Alright Duncan.

DUNCAN: Evening Mother.

MOTHER: Always busy.

DUNCAN: Have to make ends meet. You knitting a Guernsey?

MOTHER: That I am.

In DAPHNE

DAPHNE: Excuse me, I gather you take people out fishing.

DUNCAN: Mackerel. Yes, on The Intrepid. £15 per person.

DAPHNE: I'd like to book a trip for myself and my two girls, Romney and Petra.

DUNCAN: When do you want to go?

DAPHNE: Tomorrow morning.

DUNCAN: Tide's no good then. How about the afternoon?

DAPHNE: Alright.

DUNCAN: Half two?

DAPHNE: Yes.

DUNCAN: Come to the quay on the south side of the harbour. Over there.
Just out of interest, where are you from?

DAPHNE: Dartmoor. Why do you ask?

DUNCAN: Oh, no particular reason. It's just I saw you with Emma. I know she lives on
Dartmoor. She's been coming here for years.

DAPHNE: Yes, I'm good friends with Emma. She's heading for the storytelling session with
my children right now.

DUNCAN: You're not with them?

DAPHNE: I prefer the music – I'll be heading to the main stage later.

DUNCAN: I wanted to say hello to Emma.

DAPHNE: You'll find her in the audience for the storytelling. I think that events free of charge.

DUNCAN: See you tomorrow then.

Out DAPHNE another way

MOTHER: Passing trade.

DUNCAN: They pay a pittance.

MOTHER: Tis something.

DUNCAN: Not enough, Mother. You know that.

MOTHER: And the fishing isn't so good?

DUNCAN: Too many seals I reckon.

MOTHER: You still at odds with that teacher?

DUNCAN: Yes.

MOTHER: It doesn't do the children any good you know. I's seen em – a feud runs right through down to the littlest playing on the beach. They split apart like a chestnut stake and suffer without understanding it.

DUNCAN: I can't help that, Mother. She's wrecked my future, and Jake's, and half the village's I shouldn't be surprised. Why can she have her Music Festival and I not have my factory?

MOTHER: Authority moves in a mysterious way.

DUNCAN: It's nothing to do with authority. I put it all down to Carolyn Evans. But I've got other fish to fry.

Out DUNCAN with the crate

MOTHER: Stubborn men, the Taylors. I need some more wool.

Out MOTHER

SCENE: A FESTIVAL FIELD IN ATLANTIS

In CLARA, ROMNEY, CAROLYN, MEGAN, JAKE, WILL, PETRA, ARIANNE, EMMA, EDNA, SAM, HETTY, MAX, BESS. MAEVE sits away from CAROLYN and MAX.

CLARA the Storyteller goes up on a rostrum

CLARA: Once upon a time, in a fishing village situated above a cove rather like this one at Atlantis, there lived a widow who was believed to be a witch. She spent her time spinning and weaving at her loom, occasionally looking out of her window at the sea below. *(She mimes weaving)* This widow had a son William who worked down the mines every day and on the weekends went out in his boat and caught fish for

them both. In this village there also lived a girl, Nancy, who was the daughter of the local vicar. The two young people fell in love...

Actually... I'm going to ask you to help me tell this story. So let's have two members of the audience to be the lovers: African storytelling, suitable for an ethnic festival. *(She approaches JAKE)* You sir? *(JAKE shakes his head vigorously)* No, I see. How about you? *(She approaches WILL)* Good. And you Madam? *(She approaches MEGAN, who gets up slightly sheepishly and joins WILL)* Well done! So if you'd like to illustrate the action as we go along...

In the middle of the cove was a rock, covered by the tide at high water, but at other times a platform on which the seals used to play. Here's our rock...

Shall we have a couple of seals? *(MAX and BESS shoot their hands up)* That's right, haul yourselves up onto the rock. *(MAX makes seal noises)*

Sometimes the lovers would swim out to this rock - out you swim. Off you slide, seals!

(MAX and BESS slip away back to their seats, while WILL and MEGAN climb on the rock).

When the Vicar... we need a Vicar... you Sir, how about being a Vicar? *(She looks again at JAKE, who reluctantly accepts)*

In DUNCAN at the back

When the Vicar discovered their liaison he disapproved mightily, because William came from a poor family, and though the Vicar preached 'love thy neighbour' from the pulpit...

JAKE mimes preaching

he did not practice it when it came to his own life...

JAKE wags his finger at WILL

He declared that it would be a stain on his family's honour if his daughter were to marry someone so far beneath her. So he contrived - through pulling strings with the authorities - to have William sent away as crew on a ship bound for the Caribbean.

She points to DUNCAN

You Sir, at the back, you look like a man of standing...

DUNCAN: Yes I'm standing...

CLARA: Just what we need. Come and help us out as the representative of the authorities...

DUNCAN comes into the centre, JAKE mimes a conversation with him

probably a plantation owner who needed a manager for his slaves! Shocking I know but I'm afraid most of the grand houses in England were built on the proceeds of that sort of thing.

DUNCAN: Have we been set up here, Jake?

CLARA: Not at all Sir, you're just helping to tell a good story...

The evening before he left, William met Nancy on the sands of the cove where joining hands they said a passionate goodbye to each other. Alright, I'm not going to ask you to do anything that might embarrass you, or us...

WILL and MEGAN meet awkwardly

That's nice. So off William went.

WILL goes off. MEGAN stands and mimes reading a letter

Months passed and letters came to Nancy from William... let's have a postman, no it's fine for a girl to do it... *(she gestures to HETTY)*

HETTY comes to MEGAN with a letter

... recounting his adventures, but above all telling her how much he missed her.

MEGAN holds the letter to her heart

Then abruptly the letters stopped.

HETTY mimes looking through her bag of letters and shakes her head as MEGAN stands over her expectant then disappointed

Nancy was distraught. She would go down to the sands of the cove and look forlornly out to sea. One evening a letter did finally arrive. Nancy was out, pacing the sands of the cove. So her mother... we need Nancy's mother, the Vicar's wife, how about you Madam *(she catches CAROLYN'S eye)*... so her mother placed it on the mantelpiece, waiting for her return.

HETTY comes in with imaginary letter in hand, looking for MEGAN, who is on the other side of the stage pacing. She gives it to CAROLYN instead. CAROLYN props the imaginary letter on the mantle piece

Meanwhile on the other side of the village the widow - that's me - had also gone out, leaving the wheel on which she spun the thread to weave the cloth with which she eked out a precarious living. Everyone avoided her gaze as she walked the lanes in case they should be given the evil eye. It was known that she was very angry with the world. As she went she muttered to herself - mutter, mutter, mutter - as though she were reciting spells or charms - perhaps indeed she was. She reached the cliff that overlooked the cove. Suddenly she noticed that the rock in the middle had an unusual shape to it.

Looking more closely, she could see Nancy sitting there. Up you get, Nancy. You must have swum.

MEGAN mimes swimming and climbs on the block

But suddenly there was someone beside her, with his arm around her. She knew instantly that it was her son William.

WILL: What?!

Up you get, William...you thought your part was over didn't you... have you swum all the way from the Caribbean then?....

WILL mimes swimming and climbs onto the rock beside MEGAN

The widow clapped her choppy hands with joy – could the spell she had cast be working?

Her happiness was short-lived however when she realised that the tide was rising and that the pair were about to be submerged. Moonlight flooded round them as the waves finally washed them off the rock into the waters of the bay.

WILL and MEGAN mime being washed off the rock by the rising waves

As they sank they turned their faces towards the shore and sang together: 'I am thine, thou art mine, beyond control. In the wave be the grave of heart and soul.' Then they vanished, never to be seen again.

When Nancy's parents finally opened the letter that stood propped on the mantelpiece of the vicarage front room... Vicar and his wife? Good... they found that it was from a shipmate of William's, announcing that William had been drowned in an accident at sea several months previously.

JAKE and EDNA mime opening the letter and reading it and their reaction

The widow was told the news...I am the widow again...but curiously it was remarked that she showed no surprise. She would go down to the cove and wander along the sands as if her son might somehow still be there in the waves, and she was expecting to see him hauling himself out once more on that black rock in the centre of the bay. But there were only the seals. Let's have you up there again, seals!

MAX and BESS climb onto the block, making seal noises

And that, ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys, is the end of the story. Did you like it?

SAM: Yes.

PETRA: *(To ROMNEY)* See, people do come back.

ROMNEY: *(To PETRA)* As a ghost, you mean!

HETTY: So what actually happened?

CLARA: Your guess is as good as mine, young lady.

ROMNEY: *(Pointing and whispering)* Aren't those the kids who were doing Jan Coo at Broadstones?

PETRA: *(Whispering)* Oh yes...

ARIANNE: Perhaps they were seal-people all along.

EDNA: What?!

CLARA: Well there's an interesting thought.

PETRA: I liked it, but now can I tell you a story?

CLARA: *(Slightly taken aback)* Alright.

PETRA: It's the story of a child on Dartmoor...

ROMNEY: Not Jan Coo again...

PETRA: Sh. Once upon a time there was a girl...

ROMNEY: Jan Coo was a boy...

PETRA: Stop interrupting... there was a girl, let's call her Nat, and she lived on a hill. And she had a friend who lived in the valley. And she really liked this friend – I'll call her Erma - they played together all the time, in all weathers, all across the hill and all down the valley. Then one day Erma told Nat that her family were leaving the area and going to the coast. Nat was heart-broken but Erma promised she would stay in touch. She sent a couple of text messages... and then... nothing. Nat never heard from her again.

CLARA: So what do you think happened to her?

PETRA: She was carried off by pirates...

ROMNEY: Or she made new friends and forgot all about Nat...

PETRA: I hate you! *(PETRA attacks ROMNEY)*

CLARA: Hey! Hey Hey! Girls. Break it up. Who would have thought storytelling could prove so divisive?

ROMNEY: It's because it's not a proper story – it's her own personal life in disguise. That's why.

DUNCAN: *(From the shadows)* I've got a proper story.

CLARA: Have you, Sir? Would you like to tell it to us? It might help to calm these two down.

DUNCAN: Alright, if everyone's listening carefully. Back in the days of the wreckers...

CLARA: The wreckers... so tell us about them?

DUNCAN: The wreckers were desperately poor people in coastal villages who eked out a living by salvaging items from wrecks. Often the best young men had been press-ganged one way or another into going away to sea – like William in the story – so those left behind found it hard to fend for themselves. But once a ship was wrecked on the coast it became common property.

CLARA: Go on.

DUNCAN: Back in those days in this very village there lived a girl called Tasmin. The wreckers – which included almost everyone in the village – used to get Tasmin, who was too young to join in the violence of the wrecking party, to carry a lantern out onto the headland in the darkness to confuse the passing ships – what they called a false light. The ships would lose their bearings, run aground, break up in the waves and the village would be rich again for a few months, with sales of fir timber, cases of white lead, barrels of tar, oak handspikes, deerskins, linseed oil, cotton yarn, casks of brandy, pipes of wine, and bales of wool.

CLARA: I've heard it said that after one shipwreck further along the coast the finger of a drowned captain was cut off to secure his ring, and a woman bit off the ears of a drowned female to get her earrings.

DUNCAN: Certainly the villagers didn't hold back. This continued for several years, until one night Tasmin was standing on a rock with her lantern shining when a huge white-topped wave rose up from nowhere and swept her into the sea. They never found her body, though there's a cross in the churchyard to commemorate her passing. The strange thing is that even today people claim to have seen the figure of a girl with a lantern moving along the headland – Tasmin's ghost perhaps, if you believe in that sort of thing, eager to lure unwitting souls over the edge of the cliff if they are unwise enough to follow her.

PETRA: That's spooky.

DUNCAN: So if you see a light out there, keep well away from it.

OUT CAROLYN

EDNA: It's just a legend. I've got a real contemporary story that applies to everyone.

CLARA: Really? Let's hear it then.

EDNA: It's the story of the Wasteland...

CLARA: By T.S. Eliot – the desert of post World War I London?

EDNA: No. The real Wasteland is a continent of plastic situated in the Pacific Ocean.

ROMNEY: How many times the size of Wales?

EDNA: About twenty times.

ROMNEY: Whoa.

PETRA: Twenty whales are hardly the size of a continent, not even blue ones.

ROMNEY: Wales the country, without an H.

PETRA: Okay. So what's the story of this continent?

EDNA: You and I, we are the story of the Wasteland. And you and you and you and you and you – we are all the story of the Wasteland!

PETRA: How do you mean?

EDNA: I mean which one amongst you does not use plastic? Who amongst you does not have a mobile phone? Who has never thrown plastic away? Bags? Bottles? Packaging?

MAEVE: This isn't a story – shall we go.

Out MAEVE, with SAM, MAX, and BESS

WILL: I must head off, get back to my research.

Out WILL

ROMNEY: Let's go Petra.

EDNA: Revolving round great whirlpools of current in the Pacific called the Gyres, the Plasticsphere has its own ecosystem, poisoning every bird, fish and mammal that enters it...

ROMNEY: Come on Petra.

EDNA: You're not walking out on the most important issue of our time, are you?

PETRA: I just got a text from Mum. Oh... I think she wants us to go and listen to the music...

EDNA: And that includes seals...

PETRA: No it's more rock...

ROMNEY: Haha Petra. *(Despairingly sarcastic)*

ARIANNE: Did you say birds? Most of the birds I work with seem perfectly healthy until someone shoots at them or spills oil over them.

EDNA: Yes. I said birds. They eat plastic, or they eat fish that have eaten plastic.

ARAIANNE: But how can we live without plastic? Our mobile phones are full of plastic.

EDNA: Yes, around 40%. So don't use them. Live the simple life in these beautiful surroundings. Go off grid.

ARAIANNE: I couldn't live without my phone. I can see yours in your back pocket.

EMMA: I am reminded of Richard Strode.

CLARA: Who was he?

EMMA: He was a tin miner and MP on Dartmoor during the reign of Henry the Eighth. There was so much waste being poured into the Dartmoor rivers from the tin-mining industry at the time that the ports of Dartmouth and Plymouth in particular were silting up and the ships couldn't get in to do their trade. Strode, even though he was a tinner himself, stood up in the national Parliament and brought in a bill to curtail the pollution. As a result he was thrown into Lydford Gaol by the local jurisdiction of the tanners.

EDNA: Typical.

EMMA: But only for three weeks. In the end his campaign was successful.

ROMNEY looks at her phone

ROMNEY: Petra we need to find our mother – *apparently* she needs her fluorescent headband from the tent.

DUNCAN: And we must go too.

Out ROMNEY and PETRA followed by DUNCAN with EMMA, MEGAN and JAKE

EDNA: The modern world is destroying the planet.

ARIANNE: But I want the modern world. I've had enough of the simple life in a coastal town where nothing happens except tourism. I want shops where things are smartly packaged in clean-smelling polythene. Doesn't everyone need an exciting modern world like that for their mental health? I want to be at the centre of things. I don't want to be provincial, on the sidelines. I want my voice to count as much as anyone else's.

EDNA: But you live in a beautiful place.

ARIANNE: I call beautiful having grand ambitious buildings around me... well-kept parks... shops with fashionable clothes glittering in their windows. Not the crooked lines of cliffs and the untidiness of dilapidated farms.

EDNA: Why don't you move?

ARIANNE: Why should I? I was born here. It's in my bones, it's what I know. I would be in exile anywhere else.

EDNA: My, you are complicated! Then why complain about the cliffs and the farms?

ARIANNE: Because there could be more. I want a good job – I want to be respected. I don't want to be feeding injured birds on Sundays at the Atlantis Sanctuary for the rest of my life as Bertholt's assistant. The scientists can sort out the plastic problem, that's what they're paid for.

EDNA: I give up. There's no arguing with you, Arianne.

ARIANNE: I'm off to ride some waves.

EDNA: *(Calling after)* Mind out for the plastic then. They found a seal with a plastic packing-box cable round its neck the other day. We wouldn't want to find you strangled.

Out ARIANNE

CLARA: So it's just you and me.

EDNA: Just you, I'm afraid I'm off too.

CLARA: Did you know that seals are actually fairies?

EDNA: Nonsense!

Out EDNA

CLARA: Suit yourself.

Out CLARA

SCENE: THE SEAWALL NEAR THE HARBOUR (written by Silas Welsh)

In WILL

WILL is sat on a sea-wall near the harbour but away from the main throng of people. He sits in concentration, one hand on head, pen in the other, stooped over a map next to him. He has binoculars around his neck.

In MEGAN

MEGAN: Hi Will.

WILL: Oh... *(pauses as if refocusing his attention)* um.. hi Megan... how are you?

MEGAN: Yeah fine thanks.

WILL: Going for a wander?

MEGAN: Yes. Off for a bit of casual escapism after that storytelling session.

WILL: Oh yeah! That was a bit intense. Talk about audience participation.

MEGAN: *(Laughs)* Exactly. You studying the coastline? *(she gestures at the map)*

WILL: Yeah.

MEGAN: You must be getting to know it all pretty well?

WILL: I'm trying to pinpoint the places where the seals haul out along the coast and er... trying to work out an estimate for population.

MEGAN: That sounds interesting. How many seals do we have?

WILL: Ha...uh... well I haven't got that far yet. A fair few though. They keep on popping up and following my boat wherever I go.

MEGAN sits the other side of the map. WILL adjusts his hand over the place on the map that he was looking at

MEGAN: *(Pause)* So, what are you doing this for? Are you writing a dissertation or something?

WILL: I've got a research grant from Falmouth University to study their behavior and population numbers.

MEGAN: Is this all to do with the push towards cleaning up our seas?

WILL: Partly.

MEGAN: How did you get into doing that?

WILL: *(Laughs as he tries to remain relaxed while hastily improvising on the spot)* I studied marine ecology at Falmouth and well... yeah that's about it really... now my best friends are seals.

MEGAN: *(Laughs)* You're kidding me.

WILL: No, no, I'm serious. I have to swim with them.

MEGAN: Wow... you know if you ever need an extra pair of hands I'd love to come out and help. I really would. I have a wet suit. You could introduce me to your aquatic friends. The other evening I watched for ages as two seals played together, rolling over and over and hitting the water with their flippers. I'd really like to get closer.

WILL: *(Looking into the audience/out to sea, not sure how to respond, but thinking fast)* Sure, well, oh hey look! Look! There's a seal there.

WILL jumps up and rises away from MEGAN, pointing

Can you see her? Right at the end of the harbour wall.

MEGAN: *(Also rising)* Blimey, you must have better eyes than me.

WILL: She's just dipping down again.

MEGAN: How'd you know it's a she?

WILL: ... The shape of the head.

MEGAN: Oh right, what's the difference between them?

WILL: ... Males are bigger.

MEGAN sits back down and looks at the map

MEGAN: Looks like there's a lot of them by the cove beyond the headland. What do all your lines mean?

WILL: *(Pause)* They're directional lines showing which way I see the seals leaving.

MEGAN: But some of these lines go right up the cliffs!

WILL steadily, but firmly picks up the map, turns away and folds it up. Smiles charmingly at her, appearing confident, moves conversation away from seals

WILL: Hey I was wondering...

MEGAN: Yes?

WILL: ... a couple of weeks ago I definitely saw a light moving along the cliff top. You haven't seen anyone up there on any of your walks, have you?

MEGAN: No I haven't.

WILL: Well it's baffling me.

MEGAN: You don't think it could be this ghost, do you? The spirit of the Girl with the Lantern?

WILL: I'm not a superstitious person Megan. I find it hard to believe in anything out of this world. And also, it's a very bright white light. It looks more like LEDs than a spirit with an oil lantern.

MEGAN: Why are you so interested in it, Will? It's possibly just some kids having a laugh.

WILL: The thing is, they're disturbing the seals

MEGAN: Really? But the light is way above them on the cliffs?

WILL: *(WILL considers MEGAN)* Cliffs? You have seen it then?

MEGAN: No... no... not for myself.

WILL: Well if it means the seals are going elsewhere it might be providing unrealistic data and throwing my analysis out. So, I really need to establish who's doing it so I can ask them not to.

MEGAN: If it's the ghost, she's dead. It's not like you can ask her.

WILL: Ah, well, we'll have to disagree about that.

MEGAN: Okay, well I'll keep a look out. Anyway, I'd probably best get off on this walk, Will, or I'll end up not doing it at all.

WILL: Have a nice time escaping from the madness of life.

MEGAN: *(Laughs)* Yeah, I will. See you.

WILL: Bye.

Out MEGAN

WILL remains in place thinking

I wonder...

Out WILL

SCENE: A BEACH CAFÉ

In RUSALKA serving

In EDNA flustered, sits

EDNA: Peppermint tea please, Rusalka.

RUSALKA: One mint tea coming up. How's things?

EDNA: Alright – apart from I’ve just had one big argument with Arianne...

RUSALKA looks at her quizzically

EDNA: About plastic.

RUSALKA: She hasn’t seen the light, has she.

EDNA: Telling me.

RUSALKA: Are you coming to the concert later?

EDNA: I’d like to but I haven’t got a ticket...

In BERTHOLT

BERTHOLT: Did I hear someone say they hadn’t got a ticket for the band tonight?

EDNA: Yeap... me.

BERTHOLT: Do you want to have mine?

EDNA: Why, Bertholt? I thought you liked them...

BERTHOLT: I do, but we’ve just had a guillemot brought into the bird hospital with plastic bags compacted in its gizzard. I’m going to have to operate. Here, have my ticket.

EDNA: Are you sure? Let me pay you for it.

BERTHOLT: No, no, I insist. Take it, just as long as it’s used. You haven’t seen Arianne, have you? I’m going to need her help.

EDNA: I saw her at the storytelling event about half an hour ago, over on the small stage.

Out BERTHOLT

RUSALKA: So you’ll be coming to the concert after all.

EDNA: Looks like it. I might take one of my ‘Choose to be Scholastic, Refuse the Plastic’ placards.

RUSALKA: Ever thought of having a slightly snappier slogan?

EDNA: Like what?

RUSALKA: How about ‘No to Plastic’?

EDNA: It doesn’t rhyme, does it!

RUSALKA: By the way, talking of plastic, I need to tell you about a conversation I overheard today...

In ARIANNE

ARIANNE: Hi Rusalka... oh... it's you Edna... (*To RUSALKA*) I suppose she's been telling you about our barney at the Storytelling session.

RUSALKA: Yes.

ARIANNE: By the way, Rusalka, you know you say you've been having dreams about being a seal, well Bertholt told me yesterday that some women are actually descended from seals...

EDNA: No they're not.

ARIANNE: David Attenborough says so.

EDNA: No, what he says is that women went through a phase of evolution where we were selected for various seal-like qualities because of feeding on marine food along the shore-line.

ARIANNE: Whatever, Rusalka's a seal.

RUSALKA: Talking of Bertholt, did you see him just now?

ARIANNE: No.

RUSALKA: You must have just missed him. He was looking for you.

ARIANNE: Why? I'm not supposed to be working today. He's got me working all tomorrow.

EDNA: He's had a guillemot brought in with plastic in its gizzard and he needs to operate tonight. I think he needs your help.

ARIANNE: But I'm going to the concert... I've been looking forward to this band all year.

EDNA: So has Bertholt, but he can't go either.

RUSALKA: What about the guillemot? It's the poor bird we should be worrying about, not if you're going to a concert or not.

ARIANNE: I'd better go and find him.

EDNA: I think he might have gone back to the small stage. That's where I told him I last saw you...

ARIANNE: Do either of you want to buy my ticket?

EDNA: Sorry, Bertholt gave me his.

RUSALKA: And I had one already.

ARIANNE: Who are the idiots who let plastic get into the sea?

EDNA: Who indeed?!

RUSALKA: Yes, who indeed?!

Out ARIANNE

RUSALKA: I'm closing up now.

EDNA: I'll give you a hand.

Out RUSALKA with EDNA

SCENE: THE VILLAGE PUB

In JAKE and MEGAN

MEGAN: I don't know how happy I am about doing this, Jake. Coming out here to meet up with Duncan for this kind of discussion feels... scary.

JAKE: It's only a conversation in a pub. Just think, we'll have enough for a deposit on a house soon, Meg.

MEGAN: I suppose so. Why does it have to be like this?

JAKE: It's just how the world is.

MEGAN: The world shouldn't be... Other people don't have to...

JAKE: Here comes my uncle.

In DUNCAN

DUNCAN: Ah Jake... I see you've brought Megan with you this time.

MEGAN: Hello Duncan.

DUNCAN: Megan.

DUNCAN looks around surreptitiously

So Jake, it should be ready for you to pick up from the usual place tomorrow night – 'the crux left of watershed'. Emma's been on the phone to Amsterdam to ask if 'About suffering they were never wrong', and she'll drive the 'snatches of tramline' up to 'Greenhearth' after the 'gracious street music'. Have you filled Megan in on the plan to 'control the passes?' And is she up for it?

JAKE: I think she can speak for herself.

MEGAN: Yes, apparently I'm going to be waiting on the beach at the entrance to the tunnel...

DUNCAN: Good. We don't want any losses this time. Last time, because there was only me in the boat, one of the boxes slipped out of my hands, and is on the bottom of the sea somewhere. If you're on the beach, Jake can help me in the boat.

JAKE: Will Maeve do the honours on the cliff again?...

DUNCAN: Sh... you mean 'the bogus guide'... looks like we've got company...

In HECTOR with CLARA

HECTOR: Evening Duncan.

DUNCAN: Evening Hector.

HECTOR: Meet Clara. She's a travelling storyteller. I came across her at the Festival and offered to show her around.

DUNCAN: We've met. I went to her session earlier.

CLARA: And ended up telling the best story yourself.

DUNCAN: Good of you to say so.

HECTOR: Duncan is a writer manqué. He could have been a great one.

DUNCAN: Nonsense. Just a fisherman.

HECTOR: He reads voraciously. And have you met Megan and Jake? Jake is Duncan's nephew – he's a fisherman too... and a builder. Megan works as a TA at the village school.

JAKE: Alright?

CLARA: Hello.

MEGAN: Hi.

HECTOR: What'll you have, Clara?

DUNCAN: Let me get them, usual Hector?

HECTOR: Please.

CLARA: And I'll have a vodka and lime.

Out DUNCAN

CLARA: So what sort of painter are you then, Hector?

HECTOR: Abstract. Perhaps I should have been a farmer or a miner, but I am what I am.

CLARA: Why do you say that?

HECTOR: I look around at the country I love, the land where I was born, and I see it dwindling away, because everyone is busy preserving it, and no one is thinking to produce the artifacts of modern life. The working landscape that inspired my paintings is gradually becoming a museum. The young people drift away because they can't find jobs well-enough paid to fulfill their ambitions. In turn they are replaced by others who just come here for the surf or the light. But a community can't live on surf - we're not seals; a community can't live on light - we're not trees. We need manufacturing, electronics, our own Silicon Valley.

In DUNCAN with drinks

DUNCAN: Is Hector bending your ear with his politics?

CLARA: Telling me his story, I suppose you would say.

In WILL looking harrassed

MEGAN: Hello Will. Something the matter?

WILL: Someone's put sand in my outboard tank.

DUNCAN: Really? Are you sure it hasn't got in there while you were filling it up with petrol?

WILL: No, it's clearly sabotage. This village is unbelievable. You would think they'd want to look after their visitors.

JAKE: We do our best.

WILL: Really?! Well, someone seems to have got it in for me. I had a research trip round to the cove planned for tomorrow.

JAKE: It's a dangerous bit of coast along there, mate.

WILL: It's where the grey seals haul out.

DUNCAN: The wreckers used to do their business on that headland in the old days.

HECTOR: So they say.

WILL: Well now it's the seals' turn. Which reminds me, there was something I wanted to ask. Does anyone know anything about a light on the cliffs?

JAKE: A light? No, Will. Sounds as if you've been seeing the Girl with the Lantern...

MEGAN: Jake, I really think we need to go.

JAKE: Do we?

MEGAN: I've got a headache.

JAKE: Alright.

DUNCAN: You off?

JAKE: Yes, sorry Duncan. I think it's the thudding bass from the Festival. It's given Megan a headache.

MEGAN gives JAKE a glaring look

See you at 'the crux left of the watershed'.

HECTOR: What? Why's Jake suddenly quoting the poetry of W.H Auden at us?

DUNCAN: Oh it's nothing – just a family nickname for the crossroads we walk to with the dog. As you say, I read a lot.

Out JAKE and MEGAN

WILL: If no one knows any more, I'd better get on and find someone to mend my engine.

HECTOR: I always think Auden's early poetry is the work of a spy – something conspiratorial going on - he was at Cambridge after all.

WILL looks over his shoulder at this, hesitates but goes on. Out WILL

DUNCAN: Really?

CLARA: So Duncan, what do you do? I've asked Hector, and got a potted CV from him.

DUNCAN: I'm a fisherman, sort of. I own a boat, take people on fishing trips in the season.

CLARA: And tell stories? That was quite a tale you reeled off back there.

HECTOR: Was it The Girl with the Lantern?

CLARA: It was.

HECTOR: Duncan loves that story.

DUNCAN: I wouldn't say I love it – but it's local.

HECTOR: My view is it's important to keep local folklore alive.

CLARA: I agree. That's why I told the Lovers of Porthgwarra.

DUNCAN: Not exactly local.

CLARA: Well, from the South West.

DUNCAN: Not quite the same thing.

HECTOR: Talking of the Girl with the Lantern, the strange thing is, several people - not just Will - claim to have seen a light on the cliffs recently.

CLARA: So Duncan told us.

HECTOR: Some say it's the ghost of Tasmin... but I don't believe in ghosts myself.

Awkward pause

HECTOR: Shall we see if we can catch the sunset on the point, Clara? I can show you my inspiration.

CLARA: Why not?

HECTOR: Goodnight Duncan.

CLARA: Goodnight.

DUNCAN: Goodnight Hector and...

CLARA: Clara.

Out HECTOR with CLARA who peels off and returns as DUNCAN goes out

Out DUNCAN

CLARA: And so I spent a pleasant evening on the cliffs with the painter Hector, listening to his views on why we need to keep the area as a working landscape, why the place loses its soul if it is merely a museum, while the music from the Festival field thudded away in the background. As we watched the sun going down over the headland, with the tranquil sea below, it was hard to think how such a peaceful setting could have been the scene of such communal outlawry in past centuries.

INTERVAL

PROLOGUE TO SECOND HALF

Song: Roll, swirl and swivel with the fluency of swallows
In waters of the Atlantic incessantly swaying;
Dart through white combers, and over green hollows,
To dive alone hunting, or splash others playing -

Seal sing your song
From deep in the waves
To echo along
The tunnels of the caves
The channels of the ear
To a mammal's heart
Till the human can hear
Their selchie part.

Glide, curl and ripple, supple as swallow's wing,
Piercing the currents with a tail's quiet swish:
A being born out of the sea's wild glistening,
Fluid as its panes, and streamlined like its fish -

Seal sing your song
From deep in the waves
To echo along
The tunnels of the caves
The channels of the ear
To a mammal's heart
Till the human can hear
Their selchie part.

In SEAL with plastic rope round neck

SEAL: Diving to find demersal prey
Through murky depths where I must grope
Among abyssal wrecks, one day
I snagged myself on plastic rope.

Deeper and deeper that rope cuts –
 I cannot free it from my neck –
 My blubber has infected ruts
 Whose itching pain I cannot check.
Halichoerus grypus atlantica -
 I am the Grey Seal!

In CHOUGH with a wooden stick

CHOUGH: Heeding the seal's word I eschew
 Anything plastic for my nest.
 Only a wooden stick will do
 To build my nursery, I attest.
 But now I see the seal has hung
 A plastic necklace round her throat,
 Changing the tune which she once sung
 To give my habits warning note.
Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax –
 I am the Red-billed Chough!

SEAL: Chough, you have the wrong end of the stick!

CHOUGH: Both ends are fine for a chough chick!

Out CHOUGH, showing off stick

In CLARA

CLARA: In the land of the seal and the chough, the next day was bright again, but a red sky in the morning hinted at the possibility of a change in the weather. The sea gleamed reddish in the dawn, as if the blood of ancient enmity were surfacing on it, streaming towards the horizon. But by mid-morning drills of sunshine were rising off the waves as brilliant as diamonds...

In RUSALKA

Rusalka was taking her morning swim before the café opened. She was aware that a seal was swimming near her, and looking more closely she realised the creature had a plastic rope tight round her neck, cutting into her blubber – for it was a she. The seal allowed her to remove the rope, using the wonder of human hands...

RUSALKA removes the rope from round SEAL's neck

Out SEAL

The seal swam away leaving Rusalka wondering at the experience...

Out RUSALKA

SCENE: A LANE LEADING TO THE BEACH

In SAM alongside BESS, dressed in a purple top, with a flip-flop dangling from her finger, alongside MAX

SAM: Purple Bess, Maeve's friend,
 Trailing down the hill

With a flip-flop on your finger.
Purple Bess, Maeve's friend,
Is she gone, or with us still,
Bess, and allowed to linger?

- BESS: What are you on about, Sam?
- SAM: I was just asking you if you knew where Maeve was.
- BESS: Why do you have to make up jingles about everything?
- SAM: Because I would get bored otherwise.
- MAX: Going to the party tonight then, Bess?
- BESS: Don't know.
- MAX: Why's that?
- BESS: Dunno.
- MAX: I wouldn't want to be seen dead there. All that loud music and flashing lights they've rigged up. It's enough to send anyone crazy.
- BESS: Don't worry. You aren't likely to be invited.
- MAX: Bess, shall us be friends?
- BESS: How can I be friends with you? My mum says I mustn't talk to you. We're supposed to be enemies.
- MAX: In secret, I mean. So Maeve doesn't know...

In MAEVE and HETTY

- MAEVE: Traitor Bess. Yah!
- HETTY: Traitor!

They drive MAX away

BESS runs off in the opposite direction, chased by HETTY

In DUNCAN

- DUNCAN: Hello Maeve.
- MAEVE: Hello Uncle Duncan.
- DUNCAN: I was looking for you. I want you to go up to the cliff tomorrow night with a light again.
- MAEVE: Do I have to? There's a party in the village hall...
- DUNCAN: We had a deal remember...I'm counting on you...

In CAROLYN

CAROLYN: Hello Maeve. Feeling better now?

MAEVE: Yes thanks, Miss Evans.

CAROLYN: Oh, Duncan, I didn't see you there....

DUNCAN snorts and slips away

CAROLYN: *(Sighs then turns back to MAEVE)* You look... recovered. It was such a shame that you were too ill to come on our trip to Dartmoor.

MAEVE: Yes. The others told me about it...

CAROLYN: I'm really sorry about this business between Duncan and me. Just because our politics are different doesn't mean I can't get along with you, but I'm afraid he doesn't see it like that.

MAEVE: No, he doesn't. He says I shouldn't talk to you or to Max.

CAROLYN: Why not Max?

MAEVE: Because he's your son.

CAROLYN: I see. But I'm your teacher, you have to talk to me.

MAEVE: That makes it awkward.

CAROLYN: I'm very sorry for that. You know you are a bright girl, you could be a high-achiever...

MAEVE: I don't want to be, Miss.

CAROLYN: Why not?

MAEVE: High achievers go away to uni, and never come back. There's nothing here for them. I want to stay here.

Pause

CAROLYN: I'll see you in class then.

Out CAROLYN

MAEVE looks tortured

Out MAEVE

SCENE: THE BEACH

In RUSALKA with EDNA

RUSALKA: They're coming this way. Look nonchalant.

EDNA: Are you sure in the cold light of day that this a such good idea? I know I said I'd go along with it last night but...

RUSALKA: She dropped her plastic bottle in the river - she needs to be taught a lesson. You heard what Bertholt said about that guillemot. And today I was taking my morning dip and suddenly there was a seal swimming alongside me that had a plastic rope cutting into her neck...

EDNA: Disgusting. What did you do?

RUSALKA I managed to untangle her.

EDNA: Really?...Amazing... but it shows you just how bad...

RUSALKA: Sh! Here they are. Now you take the older one off somewhere while I work some magic on the little one.

In PETRA and ROMNEY

EDNA: Hey.

PETRA: Hey.

ROMNEY: He-e-e-y?

RUSALKA: You're new here, aren't you.

ROMNEY: Yes.

RUSALKA: Do you like caves? Edna can show you a great one, where according to our friend Arianne a chough has been nesting.

ROMNEY: O...kay... a chough?

EDNA: Come on, I'll take you there.

EDNA takes ROMNEY across to the other side of the stage.

Pause

RUSALKA: There is someone in this village who puts her arm behind her back like this. Does that mean anything to you?

(RUSALKA crooks her arm behind her back)

PETRA: What?! Have you seen her? Do you know where she lives?

RUSALKA: Kind of.

PETRA: What do you mean kind of?

RUSALKA: I mean she lives in two places.

EDNA: *(From another place)* So here is the cave? You see that ledge, that where the chough's nest is?

ROMNEY: Oh yeah?

EDNA: Can you see the sticks?

ROMNEY: Sort of.

EDNA: You can tell a chough because it looks like a crow but with red legs and a red bill.

ROMNEY: Really? Is it likely to come back soon?

EDNA: Oh no, this nest is last year's. It's nesting somewhere else this year.

ROMNEY: I see.

EDNA: Don't you like birds?

ROMNEY: Yes, but I'm not that interested in a pile of sticks.

PETRA: Do you mean her mother has a second home??

RUSALKA: No... but she does...

PETRA: You've lost me...

RUSALKA: Sounds as if you lost her....

PETRA: You're talking in riddles.

RUSALKA: I don't know quite how to put this... but she might be...

PETRA: Yes...

RUSALKA: ...a seal-person...

PETRA: A seal-person? No, she's a girl.

RUSALKA: Suppose I told you that a certain water bottle which you lost and laughed about has floated down the River Dart and out to sea and eventually ended up stuck in this seal-person's throat.

PETRA: What?!

RUSALKA; She had to come ashore and cast off her seal skin so that she could stand upright as a human and fish the bottle out of her throat with her hand. She is now very, very angry.

PETRA: How do you know all this? How did you know I lost my water bottle?

RUSALKA: Because like your friend I too am a seal-person. We have special powers.

PETRA: Romney! (*Calling out*)

ROMNEY: What's up, Petra?

PETRA: There's a seal here and I don't like the look of it.

PETRA back towards ROMNEY

ROMNEY: A seal?

PETRA: It says it's seen her... it knows about my water bottle...Let's run.

RUSALKA: Run away then, but what do you want me to tell your friend?

RUSALKA makes a seal noise

PETRA: Run Romney!

Out PETRA and ROMNEY

EDNA: Well, what did that achieve, seal-person? You were so weird I reckon you really scared her.

RUSALKA: Maybe it made her think.

EDNA: Well I'm off to do something practical, pick up some more plastic litter. See you later.

Out EDNA

RUSALKA makes her hands into the shapes of fins and hops a little

In SAM and HETTY with a box, RUSALKA snaps out of imitating a seal

In MAEVE following, running after them

MAEVE: Sam, Hetty, where are you going with that? Come back!

SAM: Look what we found, Rusalka!

RUSALKA: What do you mean, found?

HETTY: It was buried in the sand.

SAM: We dug a hole to bury Maeve, and there it was.

When high on the sand
Beat the windy wave
With a calm command
The girl called Maeve
Summoned a band
To dig her a grave.

MAEVE: Shut it, Sam.

HETTY: Sam, sh!

RUSALKA: That's appalling.

SAM: Why, what's wrong with it? I thought it was rather good. It all rhymes.

RUSALKA: No, the plastic box.

RUSALKA snatches the box from SAM

SAM: It's full of...

RUSALKA: Oh my God!

RUSALKA'S eyes grow wide as she fingers what's inside

Shut it up quickly. Listen Maeve and Sam and Hetty, I think you need to re-bury that exactly where you found it. Don't mention this to anyone. If you do, you could be in danger.

Out SAM and HETTY looking at each other and MAEVE slightly apart, carrying the box

I need to tell someone. It's hard to know who to trust round here. People who know me find it hard to believe me sometimes. The only person I can think of is... Bertholt!

Out RUSALKA

SCENE: A STREET

In WILL and BERTHOLT

BERTHOLT: So Will, how is the research going?

WILL: Good thanks, Bertholt – apart from the fact that someone has put sand in my outboard motor petrol and I can't get it fixed at the moment.

BERTHOLT: Maybe it was children playing. But tell me about the seals?

WILL: Well - I've found a *Phoca* haul-out round the other side of the headland.

BERTHOLT: *Phoca* you say – but ...I thought you told me it was Grey Seals you were looking at – *Halichoerus grypus* – rather than *Phoca vitulina*, the harbour or common seal.

WILL: Sorry, yes, a slip of the tongue. *Halichoerus grypus* of course. How stupid of me.

BERTHOLT: So, I imagine you must be busy photographing any individual you observe to build up an identification catalogue.

WILL: Yes... exactly. That's exactly what I am doing, Bertholt.

BERTHOLT: It's much easier with birds, of course, because you can net and ring them, and then track their movements. I imagine that tagging a grey seal is not an easy matter, if you can do it at all.

WILL: No... not an easy matter.

BERTHOLT: I imagine the best time is when they are pups. Though I did read somewhere about a technique for capturing adults involving the deployment of nets from a rigid inflatable at high speed around a haul out...

WILL: Really?

BERTHOLT: Yes, I'm surprised you haven't come across it.

In RUSALKA

RUSALKA: Bertholt, I've found you at last.

BERTHOLT: What is it, Rusalka?

RUSALKA: I need to talk to you.

BERTHOLT: Well here I am.

RUSALKA: No, in private.

BERTHOLT: Shall we go back to the bird hospital then?

WILL: It's alright. I'm off to look at the haul out again. You can have a private conversation here once I'm gone.

BERTHOLT: I thought you said your outboard was still out of action.

WILL: I'm going to row round.

BERTHOLT: Are you sure that's wise? The wind's due to get up.

WILL: Absolutely. Better in fact, they might not hear me approaching. I'll see you around, Bertholt.

BERTHOLT: Remember, I've got that statistics package on my laptop if you want to use it.

WILL: What?

BERTHOLT: You know, the statistics package you might need in order to analyse the seal data.

WILL: Oh... yes. Of course. Maybe later. I'll let you know.

Out WILL, but he crouches in the background and eaves drops

BERTHOLT: For a marine biologist, I would say that chap Will's a bit on the woolly side. He doesn't seem to know a grey seal from a harbour seal.

RUSALKA: I wonder what sort of seal he thinks I am then. *(Trying to crack a joke)*

BERTHOLT: I beg your pardon.

RUSALKA: You know - Arianne says I'm a seal person.

BERTHOLT: *(Not amused)* Oh that – yes – does she? *(Looks witheringly at Rusalka and folds his arms)*
Is that what you wanted to tell me?

RUSALKA: No! Listen, Bertholt, I found something on the beach.

BERTHOLT: Not another sick bird? I hear someone saw a chough with plastic ribbon trailing from its beak recently.

RUSALKA: A plastic box.

BERTHOLT: Well, as long as it's not inside a bird.

RUSALKA: You don't understand. It was buried in the sand.

BERTHOLT: Plastic's getting everywhere...

RUSALKA: It had things in it.

BERTHOLT: What things?

RUSALKA: They looked like...

BERTHOLT: Yes?

RUSALKA: Well... diamonds.

BERTHOLT: Diamonds?!

RUSALKA: Yes.

BERTHOLT: You've certainly got a good imagination, Rusalka. First you're a seal, and now you've found diamonds. They'll be fake. I imagine they're just children's play-things. But don't get them near any birds – they're probably made of plastic. Which reminds me, I need to go and check on the guillemot.

Out BERTHOLT

RUSALKA stands lost in thought and confusion

In EDNA with her placard, which now says: 'Let's be drastic, get rid of plastic.'

EDNA: Rusalka, there you are. I wondered where you'd got to. They need you back in the café.

RUSALKA: Sorry Edna. Coming.

Out RUSALKA with EDNA

In MEGAN, she finds WILL crouching down, and he gets up sheepishly

MEGAN: Hi Will.

WILL: Oh... Megan. I didn't see you coming.

MEGAN: I'm not surprised if you were crouching down behind a bush.

WILL: Just ...doing up my shoelace.

MEGAN: You going to the Festival tonight? They say there's a good concert on.

WILL: No Megan. Are you?

MEGAN: I can't unfortunately.

WILL: And I've got work to do.

MEGAN: Really? Don't marine biologists get weekends off?

WILL: I'm going round the headland to the seal haul-out.

MEGAN: Wait! What? This evening? But you can't be...

WILL: What do you mean I can't be...

MEGAN: I mean your outboard motor is out of action, isn't it.

WILL: Yes, but I'm going to row.

MEGAN: Oh... I don't think that's a good idea.

WILL: Why don't you come with me? You say you like the seals.

MEGAN: Oh, I love them.. I adore them... just not tonight...and it's a long way to row... it would be... dangerous... Jake says the wind will get up later.

WILL: Is the whole village in this or something?

MEGAN: Sorry?

WILL: *(Quickly recovering himself)* I mean in telling me not to row round the headland.

MEGAN: Why, who else has said that?

WILL: Bertholt - that know-it-all ornithologist from the Bird Hospital.

WILL starts to go out

MEGAN: *(Calling after him)* You will take Bertholt's advice, won't you? He knows what he's talking about.

WILL: *(Mutters)* Yes, I'm sure he does.

Out MEGAN

SCENE: THE BEACH CAFÉ (by Helena Cronin)

In ARIANNE and EDNA

In RUSALKA. She is waitressing, but it's very informal.

RUSALKA: There you go! *(Smiles at EDNA and ARIANNE as she puts their drinks down on the table)*

EDNA: It's a bit quiet in here today, isn't it?

RUSALKA: Yeah it is. Most people have gone up to the Festival field.. I'm sure Mum can cope without me for a few minutes *(Sits down next next to the other two)*.

EDNA: You alright, Arianne?

RUSALKA: You're a bit quiet?

ARIANNE: Yeah...fine..... told you what happened with Bertholt, didn't I?

RUSALKA: No?

ARIANNE: Well, you know that guillemot that had plastic bags compacted in her gizzard! Bertholt was operating on her, and he fainted.

EDNA: Oh my god!

ARIANNE: I know, it was awful. I had to take over, I've never done anything like that before in my life...

RUSALKA: Did you get it all out?!

ARIANNE: Eventually! it was gross! Bertholt recovered in time to do the stitches. I don't think I could have done those.

EDNA: Well done, you shouldn't have to deal with that. If people just had a little more respect.

ARIANNE: Ummm I know, Horrendous!

In WILL

He sits a little way from the three girls

WILL: Hi guys.

RUSALKA: Hey Will, what can I get you? Coffee and cake?

WILL: Just coffee - cheers Rusalka.

RUSALKA gets up and leaves the stage to get WILL a coffee

EDNA: You alright, Will?

WILL: I'm good thanks, although someone has sabotaged my outboard motor.

ARIANNE: Oh no. What happened?

In RUSALKA with WILL's drink and sits down

WILL: Well... I went to take the boat out yesterday and it wouldn't start - it looks like someone has put sand in the petrol tank. Who would do such a thing? It's not like many people would have strong opinions about someone going out and harmlessly watching seals!

ARIANNE: It could always be the seals...

WILL: What do you mean?

ARIANNE: It wouldn't surprise me, they're sometimes known for eating the fishermen's fish catches. What would stop them going a step further? After all they say that some seals are really humans in disguise. (*Looks at RUSALKA*)

WILL: Well if that's the case there's no hope for any of us! I swear the whole village is going back to the dark ages!

ARIANNE: What's that supposed to mean?

WILL: Take this story about the girl with the lantern...If I mention seeing a light, the villagers tell me it's a ghost. And now a seal is supposed to have spiked my petrol tank! It's not as if I'm harming anyone by my...research.

RUSALKA: Ahh Will! I'm so sorry this has happened, you don't deserve it! I love the seals like you do. Of course a seal hasn't done it! Arianne's just making mischief.

WILL: They're so majestic. Only last week I went out there and... (*remembering Megan's words carefully with a slightly stilted delivery*) there were "two seals playing together in the waves, rolling over and over and hitting the water with their flippers." I watched for ages from the boat. It was mesmerising.

RUSALKA: That's beautiful, I think it's amazing that you have a passion for something so important.

WILL: Yes...well...I must head off. Fortified by your coffee, Rusalka, I am now going to row round the headland to observe... the seal haul-out there.

EDNA: Let me know if you see any plastic waste. Rusalka had to free a seal from plastic rope round its neck just this morning.

WILL: Did you? That was brave of you. I'll see you guys around.

Out WILL

RUSALKA: What's got into you Arianne? Suggesting a seal sabotaged his engine?

EDNA: It's a long way to row.

ARIANNE: There's too much cooing over seals. It's the poor birds we should be worrying about as well. And the humans. See you, Rusalka.

Out ARIANNE

EDNA: Don't take any notice of her.

Out EDNA

Out RUSALKA back to the kitchen

SCENE: OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE HALL

Sound of music from inside

In SAM, sits on step

In BESS, with MAX behind her in the shadows

BESS: Hey Sam.

SAM: Hey Bess. Are you coming to the party?

BESS: I'm with Max. He's not invited.

In HETTY

HETTY: This is where you've got to, Sam. Not enjoying the party.

SAM: Yes, I am.

HETTY: So why are you out here? Don't like watching the boys chatting up Maeve?

SAM: Just talking to Bess... and Max.

HETTY: Max? I see. What are you wearing, Max?

MAX: I'm dressed as a space man.

HETTY: Why? the party's not fancy dress.

MAX: So no-one recognizes me, because I'm not invited. Besides, they say there's a UFO that hovers over the cliffs.

In MAEVE, she passes across them

SAM: Maeve... where are you going?

MAX hides

MAEVE: I've just got something I need to do.

SAM: Really?... but what about the party?

MAEVE: Arianne's mum's in charge of it. Why don't you all go back inside and join in?

Out MAEVE

SAM: Well, that was weird wasn't it?

HETTY: And she was weird earlier...

BESS: Earlier?

HETTY: On the beach when we found....

SAM: Sh! Remember what Rusalka said.

BESS: What did Rusalka say?

SAM: Nothing important.

MAX: They say Rusalka thinks she's a seal-person.

BESS: She is always in the water.

HETTY: Apparently when she was surfing recently she came across a seal that was tangled up in plastic rope and she managed to free it.

MAX: That would have been easy for her, if she's a seal-person.

BESS: She must be a seal-person.

HETTY: Do you think Maeve will be coming back?

SAM: Gone Maeve, and never said goodbye
Or was that wistfulness, that wideness of the eye
Your method Maeve
Without a wave...
In case you might have made us cry.

BESS: Who's being weird now?

HETTY: The wind's getting up a bit. I'm cold. Let's go back inside.

SAM: Are you coming Bess?... and Max?

HETTY: Maeve wouldn't like him being in the hall.

BESS: Maeve isn't there.

Out SAM, HETTY, BESS, with MAX nervously following

SCENE: THE FESTIVAL FIELD

In DAPHNE, EMMA with drinks

DAPHNE: Good band!

EMMA: Sorry?

DAPHNE: I said 'Good band!'

EMMA: Can't hear you. The music's too loud.

DAPHNE: This band – b-and – i-zz – gg-----ooo---dd!

EMMA: Yes, yes, I agree. Oh, that's better, they've finished at last. Who's on next?

DAPHNE: Something acoustic, I think.

EMMA: Oh good, I really found that last band rather loud...

DAPHNE: I prefer electric myself. Where have my children got to? They were here a moment ago. Oh well, I suppose they can't come to much harm. They've got to do their own thing at some point.

EMMA: Quite right. I...um... might go and search for them in a little. How was your trip with Duncan today?

DAPHNE: Yes...sort of... pleasant. He seemed to know the coast like the back of his hand. We didn't catch any fish though.

EMMA: It's not really the point these days, is it. Shall we get another drink while they're rearranging the stage?

Out EMMA and DAPHNE

SCENE: A KITCHEN

In MEGAN and JAKE

MEGAN: I spoke to Will earlier.

JAKE: You two seem to be getting on well.

MEGAN: Are you jealous or something?

JAKE: No, just stating a fact.

MEGAN: Listen Jake. He's planning to take his boat round to the cave.

JAKE: Planning's got to be the operative word, because I've seen to his outboard. He's not going anywhere with that today.

MEGAN: He says he's going to row.

JAKE: When?

MEGAN: Now, this evening. When the yacht is supposed to be coming in from Amsterdam.

JAKE: He must be mad! He won't make it.

MEGAN: You can't be sure.

- JAKE: Alright. We need to tell Duncan.
- MEGAN: I can't do this any more, Jake.
- JAKE: What do you mean?
- MEGAN: Sooner or later somebody's going to get hurt. Involving Maeve is wrong - she's too young to be caught up in something like this. You say that you're just making up for the lack of good jobs round here, but it's against the law. I don't want to be an outlaw, not even a Robin Hood kind...How did Duncan think it was alright to involve Maeve? Why has Maeve gone along with it?
- JAKE: It's a long story...
- MEGAN: I need to know.
- JAKE: Basically... Maeve was one of a group of children who used to play a game which involved jumping across the blow-hole on the headland. One day Maeve persuaded a girl who was new to the village to take the jump. There was a terrible accident, the girl slipped, fell into the blowhole and drowned. Duncan was walking nearby and told the inquest that it was his fault – he said he had inadvertently called out to try and stop the game just as the girl jumped and that this had distracted her.
- MEGAN: And had it?
- JAKE: No, but no one could be sure because of the sound of the blow-hole. It was Maeve's persuasiveness that caused the accident – the girl was frightened and lost her nerve – if Maeve hadn't encouraged her she would never have tried. Duncan said what he said to protect his niece.
- MEGAN: Good of him, I suppose.
- JAKE: But ever since Maeve has been completely in his power, because he never ceases to remind her that if she doesn't do as he says he will tell the world the truth about the accident.
- MEGAN: But she was only little at the time.
- JAKE: Yes, seven or eight.
- Pause*
- MEGAN: I'm going to see Carolyn. I need to talk to someone. You'll have to tell Duncan to find another lackey to 'control the pass'. I'm out.
- JAKE: Not Carolyn, Megan, you know how dangerous that could be. Duncan is a ruthless man!
- MEGAN: You should man up and deal with him.
- Out MEGAN*
- JAKE: Murder him? How could I live with it?
Every day I would see that face

bobbing beneath the seaweed, bloated
and quietly white like a dead mackerel,
accusing me with the fixed remains
of one staring eye. No. It's crazy.

CLARA: And yet Edna and Rusalka would say we're happy to murder seals and dolphins
and guillemots by putting our plastic waste into the ocean, albeit un- wittingly.
And perhaps Arianne would say that we are happy to condone murder by buying
diamonds for our rings of troth that have come from dubious sources in distant
countries – blood diamonds.

JAKE: Or is it crazy? An accident...

CLARA: Is he changing his mind?

SCENE: NEAR THE CLIFFS

In ROMNEY and PETRA

ROMNEY: Are you sure you saw a light?

PETRA: Positive. It was between those two sticking-up bits of rock. As though someone was
sheltering. Do you think it might be one of those Jack o'Lanterns Emma was
talking about?

ROMNEY: It might be a will-o'-the wisp I suppose. I've heard of those as real things.

PETRA: Isn't that the same as Jack o'Lantern or Joan the Wad?

ROMNEY: Who knows?

PETRA: If it's a Jack o'Lantern like the one that led Jan Coo...

ROMNEY: Emma said he wasn't called Jan Coo...

PETRA: ...led whoever then... it might be leading us to where she is now.

ROMNEY: Grrr!

PETRA: Or suppose it actually is the ghost of Tasmin. I suddenly feel scared.

ROMNEY: This was your idea.

PETRA: You wanted to come too. Do you think Mum will be missing us?

ROMNEY: She's got Emma and she's got her music – if you can call that old rocker stuff
music.

PETRA She might worry though.

ROMNEY: Alright, I'll message her now we're out of reach, tell her we're okay.

ROMNEY taps on her phone

PETRA: Look, there it is, over there.

ROMNEY: Where?

PETRA: There, near the edge.

ROMNEY: Let's go. Try not to use our phone torches...

PETRA: But there's no moon, how are we going to see...?

ROMNEY: ...unless we absolutely have to. You haven't been eating your carrots...

PETRA: I'm not a rabbit or a donkey. *(Pause)* You don't think it might be that seal?

ROMNEY: Seal?! What seal?

PETRA: The one on the beach who knew everything about me.

ROMNEY: *(Folds her arms)* What would a seal be doing up here on the cliffs with a light? The Dong with the Luminous nose or something?

PETRA: Leading me into a bog or over the edge of the cliffs as punishment for letting my plastic bottle float down the river. You tell me what the light is then, clever clogs!

ROMNEY: I don't know, but we're going to find out.

Out PETRA and ROMNEY

SCENE: ANOTHER PART OF THE CLIFFS

In MAEVE carrying the lit lantern, pauses, looks around, covers and reveals the lantern three times, then moves on

Out MAEVE

SCENE: OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE HALL

Sound of disco music

In MAX

He looks upwards, sees something

MAX: Oh wow. Yes!

MAX runs back into the hall

He drags BESS outside to look at what he's seen

MAX: It's a UFO, Bess. There. Look. See that flashing light.

BESS: I can't see anything, Max.

MAX: It's... gone, but it was there.

BESS: Okay. It's chilly in the wind.

In MEGAN

MEGAN: Hello you two.

BESS: Hey Meg.

MAX: Hey.

BESS: Are you coming to the party?

MEGAN: No, I'm on my way to find Carolyn. You look cold, Bess.

BESS: It's the wind.

MEGAN: This wasn't forecast was it. It feels like a storm coming. You're well dressed, Max.

MAX: This is my gear for tracking UFOs.

MEGAN: Ah, is that so? I'll leave you to it then.

Out MEGAN

BESS: Whatever you saw has gone, Max. Let's go back inside.

MAX: I don't think Hetty thinks I should be there.

BESS: Well I do.

Out BESS and MAX

SCENE: THE CLIFFS

In MAEVE, with lantern lit, stands on rock, and covers and reveals the light with a cloth three times.

CLARA: There stands Maeve among the golden samphire and the white sea champions on top of the cliff in the now stormy twilight, signalling to whoever is out there in the waters below that the operation is on, and keeping anyone superstitious at bay because of the old legend...

In PETRA and ROMNEY

On hearing them, MAEVE covers her face with the cloth, and begins to move off

ROMNEY: Stop! What are you?

PETRA: Are you Jack o'Lantern, King of the Pixies?... Joan the Wad?... or even... a seal-person?

MAEVE: My name is Tasmin.

PETRA grasps ROMNEY's arm in terror

PETRA: It is the ghost! What do we do?

ROMNEY: Ask it some questions.

PETRA: Like what? It might come for me.

ROMNEY: Tasmin, why are you up here signalling with a lantern?

MAEVE: I'm luring a boat onto the rocks so that the wreckers can do their work.

ROMNEY: Think of the poor people on board.

MAEVE: Think of the poor people on the shore.

ROMNEY: Have you got something against the boat?

MAEVE: Boats like this one have press-ganged the young men from the villages and stolen them away forever.

PETRA: That's terrible.

ROMNEY: Hold on. I've got a text from Mum.

PETRA and ROMNEY look down at Romney's phone while MAEVE steals away

Out MAEVE

ROMNEY: She wants us back. Oh...where's the lantern thing gone?

PETRA: It was definitely a ghost. It wouldn't know those sorts of things otherwise. It sounded sad.

VOICE of WILL: Help! Help!

ROMNEY: What was that?

PETRA: It must be a shipwreck.

Out ROMNEY and PETRA

CLARA: They went to the edge of cliff, and there below through the gloom they could just make out two figures bobbing in the waves that washed against the crooked rocks of the headland. Will's boat had been turned broadside on to the breakers by a gust of wind and capsized. Then Duncan had gone in after him – though later he recalled that he wasn't sure how he ended up in the water. It was almost as if he had been pushed from behind. But once in the waves his good instincts kicked in - he did have them - and he struck out to rescue Will. Jake on Duncan's boat could not - or did not - get close.

PETRA: Do something Romney! They're going to drown!

ROMNEY: What can we do from up here?

PETRA: Call Mum!

ROMNEY: She might be drunk. I'll call the Coastguard.

Out PETRA and ROMNEY with Romney on her mobile

The sound of rising wind and crashing waves, shouts, a helicopter, then silence

SCENE: THE HARBOUR

In MOTHER, she sits knitting

In SAM, HETTY, MAX, BESS

HETTY: Have you heard, have you heard, have you heard?

SAM: The marine biologist was airlifted from the sea by helicopter.

BESS: Maybe that was your UFO, Max.

MAX: Never.

HETTY: Duncan went in the sea as well.

SAM: And Jake tried to pull them both out, but he couldn't.

HETTY: They say the ghost of Tasmin was seen on the cliffs above.

BESS: Maybe that was your UFO, Max.

MAX: Never.

Out SAM, HETTY, MAX, BESS

In DAPHNE with ROMNEY and PETRA

DAPHNE: So you two are going to be in the local paper? My little heroes.

ROMNEY: We're not little.

PETRA: The reporter wasn't the least bit interested in the ghost we saw. That was far more exciting than the fact we managed to send a text message.

DAPHNE: Are you having a good time?

ROMNEY: Well at least it hasn't been boring.

PETRA: But we still haven't come across her.

ROMNEY: Grrr!

DAPHNE: Well, perhaps you'll just have to accept the fact that she's no longer around. I expect she moved on long ago.

Out DAPHNE with ROMNEY and PETRA

In ARIANNE, BERTHOLT running after her

BERTHOLT: Arianne! I knew there was something fishy about Will. I've just rung up the University of Falmouth where he said he was based, and they've never heard of him. He's a total fraud, he knows absolutely nothing about seals.

ARIANNE: And yet they say that when he was drowning a female seal pushed him up to the surface of the waters to let him breathe.

BERTHOLT: He obviously deceived the seals as well.

ARIANNE: He is a bit of a charmer. And as you told me, seals and women have a lot in common. But let's be honest, without the helicopter rescue, the man wouldn't have survived. We should be grateful for modern technology.

Out BERTHOLT and ARIANNE

In RUSALKA and EDNA

RUSALKA: A seal kept him afloat? Are you sure, Edna?

EDNA: That's what everyone's saying.

RUSALKA: I wonder if it was the one that I managed to untangle from the plastic rope that was cutting into her.

EDNA: Why should it have been that one?

RUSALKA: Out of gratitude to humans.

EDNA: Gratitude?

RUSALKA: Because I freed her from the plastic rope. (*Emphatic*)

EDNA: Well that was good of her then, seeing that humans were the cause of the plastic rope being round her neck in the first place! When will people ever learn!?

EDNA waves her placard that now says 'Life is fantastic without plastic'

Out RUSALKA and EDNA

In WILL with DUNCAN

WILL: You saved my life last night, Duncan.

DUNCAN: Don't thank me. Thank the seal that pushed you up to the surface when you'd disappeared under the waves. I would never have got to you in time if it hadn't been for that creature. I've never seen anything like it... though no doubt in your researches you'll have come across something similar.

WILL: No... no I haven't. I owe you my thanks, anyway.

DUNCAN: What possessed you to row round the headland in those conditions? What sort of seal research required you to do such a daft thing?

WILL: Actually... I have a confession to make... I'm not a marine biologist. I'm an undercover customs officer investigating a diamond smuggling ring.

DUNCAN: Ah.

WILL: I know what's been going on in this village.

DUNCAN: Really? I wish I did.

WILL: Duncan, I've been talking to Carolyn, and she's been talking to Megan. I want to strike a bargain with you.

Silence

I can see that what you're doing stems from the frustration of your plans to diversify and provide employment in the village. I know almost the whole village is compromised in some way or other by what's been going on, coloured by the darkness of the past.

In BERTHOLT

BERTHOLT: You're a fraud Will. You've never been a marine biologist. You know nothing about seals.

WILL: How right you are. But on the other hand I know something about you. Even impeccable Bertholt has taken bribes to turn a blind eye to the diamonds, because he couldn't earn enough from his work at the Bird Hospital to give his family what they needed.

BERTHOLT slinks off, sheepish

But I wouldn't want to destroy the community. The deal is this, Duncan: if you and your associates agree to give up smuggling and put your energies into a more creative project, I'm willing to ignore what's passed, tell my bosses that I couldn't find any evidence of wrong-doing, and leave you to get on with your lives in peace.

DUNCAN: What about Carolyn's objection? She's always been implacably opposed to my scheme for the factory.

WILL: Carolyn!

In CAROLYN and MEGAN

CAROLYN: Hello Duncan.

DUNCAN: Carolyn, Megan.

WILL: Duncan's asking about your attitude to his factory proposal.

CAROLYN: After discussions with Will, I can see it's to the benefit of the community if I withdraw my objection to your scheme to convert the old chapel into a small

factory. I'm happy for it to go ahead - on condition that it doesn't make any contribution to climate change....

In EDNA

EDNA: And don't forget about the plastic... (*Her new placard slogan reads 'It's time to get drastic, ditch the plastic'*)

CAROLYN: ...or pollute the sea in any way.

Out EDNA

DUNCAN: I'd always planned it like that.

CAROLYN: One day I'm sure, Atlantis will go under the waves, but let's postpone it as long as possible.

In HECTOR and CLARA and EMMA

HECTOR: Better to have industry where we can see it and regulate it than at the far ends of the earth where no one knows the damage it's doing.

In JAKE

JAKE: Megan, there you are.

MEGAN: Hello Jake.

JAKE: I've been looking for you everywhere. Where have you been?

MEGAN: I stayed the night in Carolyn's house.

JAKE: What?

MEGAN: I've decided I need some time on my own, Jake.

EMMA: Why don't you come and stay with me on Dartmoor? Hector and Clara are going to.

HECTOR: I'm looking forward to painting some abstract landscapes that reflect the Moor's industrial heritage.

CLARA: And I'm looking forward to researching some new folklore for my storytelling.

MEGAN: I think I just might take you up on that.

WILL: Duncan, Jake and Emma, I need a word with you.

Out WILL with DUNCAN, JAKE and EMMA

Out MEGAN with HECTOR and CLARA

In MAEVE

CAROLYN: Hello Maeve.

MAEVE: *(Cool, nervous)* Miss Evans.

CAROLYN: Can we go and talk?

MAEVE: I'm not supposed to talk to you.

MOTHER: *(Looking up from her knitting)* Tis alright darling, Duncan and your teacher have mended their feud.

MAEVE: That doesn't seem likely.

MOTHER: There's a few unlikely things been happening in this village, and I reckon we should make the most of them.

CAROLYN: Come and have some cake in the cafe.

MAEVE: Alright.

In SAM, HETTY, BESS and MAX with PETRA and ROMNEY

MAX: Uh-oh... I'd better go. It's Maeve. She doesn't like me.

MAEVE: We can be friends now.

BESS: See Max, I knew the feud wouldn't last forever.

HETTY: Shall we all go and play a game on the beach?

SAM: Romney and Petra have joined us from the campsite.

MAEVE: I'd like to, but I'm going to see Miss Evans first.

Out CAROLYN with MAEVE

MOTHER: *(Calling after Maeve)* Well done girl. Time for my tea, I reckon.

Out MOTHER

PETRA: Do you think that seal-person will be on the beach?

SAM: Pools that held her image
Shells that heard her talk
All you sands that printed
The footsteps of her walk
Salt sea-air she breathed with
Is nothing left in you?
Is she removed entirely
Because she's somewhere new?

HETTY: Sam sh!

Out SAM, HETTY, BESS and MAX

Song: Seal sing your song

From deep in the waves
To echo along
The tunnels of the caves
The channels of the ear
To a mammal's heart
Till the human can hear
Their selchie part.

In CLARA

CLARA: Such is our story. Good night everyone.