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SF PERUSALS

NEVILLE'S ISLAND

A Comedy in Thick Fog

by Tim Firth

SAMUEL FRENCH

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim's theatre credits include *The Girls*, a musical co-written with Gary Barlow, *This is My Family* (UK Theatre Award Best Musical), *The Safari Party, Our House* (Olivier Award Best New Musical), *Sign of the Times, The Flint Street Nativity* and *Calendar Girls* (Olivier nomination, WhatsOnStage Best Comedy Award).

Tim's film credits include *Blackball, Calendar Girls, Calendar, Kinky Boots* and *The Wedding Video.*

Tim's most recent work for television is the Playhouse drama *Timeless*. His other TV credits include *Money for Nothing* (Writer's Guild Award), *The Rottentrolls* (BAFTA Award), *Cruise of the Gods*, *The Flint Street Nativity* and *Preston Front* (Writer's Guild Award; British Comedy Award, RTS Award, BAFTA nomination). His album of songs *Harmless Flirting* was produced by Willy Russell, with whom Tim toured the UK in a show of words and music.

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NEVILLE'S ISLAND

First produced at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, in May 1992, with the following cast:

NEVILLE	Adrian McLoughlin
GORDON	Russell Dixon
ANGUS	Claude Close
ROY	Kenneth Price

Directed by Connal Orton
Designed by Michael Vale

The play was revived at Chichester Festival Theatre on 11th September 2013 with the following cast:

NEVILLE	John Marquez
GORDON	Adrian Edmonson
ANGUS	Tim McMullan
ROY	Rufus Hound

Directed by Angus Jackson
Designed by Robert Innes Hopkins

This revival production was remounted at the Duke of York's Theatre on 10th October 2014, presented by Jamie Hendry Productions, CFT Enterprises, MJE Productions and Gavin Kalin, with the following cast:

NEVILLE	Neil Morrissey
GORDON	Adrian Edmondson
ANGUS	Miles Jupp
ROY	Robert Webb

Director	Angus Jackson
Designer	Robert Innes Hopkins
Lighting	Howard Harrison
Sound	Paul Groothuis
Music	Isobel Waller-Bridge
Casting	Gabrielle Dawes

CHARACTERS

NEVILLE
GORDON
ANGUS
ROY

The action of the play takes place on Rampsholme Island on Derwentwater in the Lake District.

Time – the present. November.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Interrupted Speeches

A speech usually follows the one before it BUT:
When one character starts speaking before the other has finished, the point of interruption is marked / .

E.g. **ROY** No, Gordon you're missing the point, / he meant—
GORDON The point is, Roy, that geese do not get goosebumps.

ACT I

Scene One

Rampsholme Island, Derwentwater. 11.55 a.m. Friday. November.

This is not a desert island. No sand dunes or beautiful people eating Bounty bars. To one side the dark, idly rippling water laps up a stone shingle beach, which in turn gives on to an area of patchy, scrubby, grassy, rocky wasteland, the like of which exists only in the austere climes of the Lake District.

The shingle arches round in a vague "U" shape so it looks like we're on a slight peninsula. To the land side the scrub grows into small, evil-looking low bushes and thence into a slightly cavernous tree cover. Through this tree cover is the dark heart of the island. Somewhere there is a tree branch, about five or six feet off the ground. This forms a mid-air platform.

Nothing here is hospitable. Everything is spiky and cold. Even the grass spurts up in vicious little clumps which defy you to sit on them.

The day, to suit the island, is grey and inhospitable. A low, very thin, clinging mist drifts menacingly in off the water. The morning light is half-hearted, filtered through the gathering layers of mist, so that the sun loses all fire and takes on the appearance of a circular sacrament wafer. All we can hear is the sound of a gentle wind tickling the trees, the gentle splatting of the ripples on the shingle and the cooing of pigeons overhead somewhere.

All is very much as God intended.

Suddenly there is the most almighty splashing sound from the water, as though someone were trying forcibly to drown a buffalo. This continues for a few moments until our attention is seized. Then up through the shallow water on his hands and knees crawls **NEVILLE**. *He is forty-something, quite small, with a little rucksack on his back like a shrunken snail shell. He has a thick woolly kind of sweater, half-length walking trousers, woolly socks and a woolly bobble hat. His jacket is a C&A anorak, and he wears little steel-framed specs. He is absolutely drenched – wringing wet from head to foot. In fact the bobble on his hat is so heavy with water it lollops sideways on a thread. Underneath, his hair is plastered across his face. An Ordnance Survey map in a plastic case and another document in another plastic case and a compass hang round his neck like Indian beads. He staggers to his feet like the Fell Walker from Atlantis and stumbles up the bank to the land in a cocktail state of exhaustion, shock and surprise. He gasps heavily to catch his breath. He pulls down on one of his sleeves and wrings it out. A short stream of water cascades to the ground.*

There is another mighty splashing and up the shore lumbers **GORDON**, *forty-something, with a more imposing frame than* **NEVILLE**. *He is wearing a Barbour jacket, thick cords, boots and a flat tweed cap, with a manly kind of rugged jumper. He is equally drenched. In fact words alone cannot express just how wet these two men are.*

NEVILLE *starts to wring out the other sleeve.*

GORDON *wades up the shallows and stands at the water's edge. He is stock still, staring at* **NEVILLE**. **NEVILLE** *notices* **GORDON** *staring at him. He stops and gives a sheepish flicker of a grin.* **GORDON** *suddenly pushes his*

clenched fist out, throws his head back and shouts. His accent is middle-class north-west.

GORDON Rock, Neville!

NEVILLE *jumps a little.*

(making the fist bob towards his face as if he is approaching it; looking at **NEVILLE** *again)* Rock. Neville. *(He moves his fist closer to his face.)* Neville! ROCKS! *(He holds his fist directly in front of his face. He pauses, wipes the water off his face and smiles at* **NEVILLE.***)* Well, I think I did my job as look-out. How were things in the steering department?

NEVILLE *gives a wet half-laugh.*

Busy back there was it? Yeh. I suppose it is, in a rowing boat. Lots of read-outs to check. Computer radar. Message probably didn't get through.

NEVILLE *(miming a rudder)* I thought "push away" made you "turn right".

GORDON You'd think it would. You know. Someone sitting two feet in front of you screaming *(He shouts.)* ROCKS! *(His voice returns to normal.)* But it's so easy to get these things confused. *(He advances on the retreating* **NEVILLE***.)*

NEVILLE 'Cos normally you turn right if you want to go right. Don't you?

GORDON But of course we're in the country now, aren't we?

NEVILLE That's certainly the way, obviously, with my, er…Passat.

GORDON Words mean different things out here. Port, left. Starboard, right. Rocks, career straight ahead.

ANGUS *(offstage)* Help! Gordon! Nev-ille!

GORDON *(moving very close to* **NEVILLE** *and leaning in, murderously)* But that's the real tragedy. Because you sank the boat. You had the chance. And you still didn't manage to drown Angus.

ANGUS *(offstage)* I had a whistle but I think it's sunk.

NEVILLE Up here, Angus. We're on the peninsula bit.

NEVILLE *tracks* **ANGUS** *in the fog and goes down to the shore to help him up.*

ANGUS *enters, spluttering. He is lumbering under the most enormous rucksack, which has all kinds of tin pans and seats and outdoor gear clanking off it.* **ANGUS** *is dressed in posh walking trousers, very posh boots and an M&S Arran sweater drawn over his girth. He's also wearing, rather bizarrely, a camouflaged combat jacket and a black balaclava, which makes him look like something out of the SAS. He is holding a mobile phone aloft like an Olympic torch.*

That's the way, mate.

ANGUS Argh…argh…argh… *(He clanks up the beach; spluttering)* It's safe. It's safe. I saved it. The phone's all right. Oof.

NEVILLE *drags* **ANGUS** *up and swivels him into a sitting position.*

NEVILLE Steady…

ANGUS Argh! *(He pulls off the balaclava and discards it like a wet kipper.)* It's safe. It's safe.

GORDON Yes, well done. You did well there, Angus. I saw you swim up with it. It was like watching the Statue of Liberty drift into shore.

ANGUS The Retina Display…still registering. *(He pants.)* I think it's OK.

GORDON The phone's OK, is it?

ANGUS *(nodding, panting)* The display's working.

GORDON Oh, don't be fooled by the display, Angus. We all put up a front. That phone could now be suffering from post-traumatic stress. Two months off in the middle of a board

meeting it'll suddenly crawl across the desk screaming, "We're going down, we're going down".

ANGUS Sorry?

GORDON Soon as we're back in Manchester I'd get that in for Crisis Counselling.

NEVILLE *(whispering)* Gordon's lost his rucksack.

But **GORDON** *has heard this.*

GORDON Yes, Gordon – has – lost – his – rucksack. His bloody ninety-eight-quid rucksack with seventy quid of jumper and eighty-five quid of spare walking boots, but he's fine. That's all part of this bloody cockeyed exercise, coping with crisis, and he's absolutely completely bloody...coping. *(He stands, dripping wet, forcing a huge insincere smile.)*

ANGUS Is this a crisis then? I've never been in a crisis before.

GORDON Oh, I think hitting clearly marked rocks is a crisis, Angus. I think sinking the boat the company left for us is a crisis. I think paddling fifty yards like the Oxford first crew with our craft gently disappearing below us, that just about dings the bell on my crisis-o-meter.

NEVILLE Hold on. Where's Roy?

ANGUS Roy?

GORDON Ah, don't worry about Roy. Roy'll be all right. God's looking after Roy.

NEVILLE You didn't see him? *(He calls.)* Roy!

ANGUS *(calling)* Roy! I thought he was with you.

GORDON You'll find him. Just follow the line where the waters have parted.

NEVILLE Roy!

GORDON Or actually he might've walked here on the surface. They can do either, Christians.

ANGUS Roy!

GORDON Fantastic at water polo.

ANGUS He couldn't've gone down, could he?

NEVILLE Oh God, come on Roy. Shhh, listen. *(He calls.)* Roy. Are you there?

They all listen for the reply.

ROY *appears through the trees. He is a tall, loping, gangly man, slightly awkward. He is sopping wet, obviously. He has a tight Arran sweater over a shirt and tie, walking boots, walking trousers and a dark blue cagoule which has the hood up and two toggles hanging down. There is a capacious rucksack on his back. He smiles his loping, awkward kind of smile.*

ROY Hi, lads.

They all swing round.

NEVILLE *(sotto voce)* Oh thank God for that.

GORDON And here he is. The Christian in a cagoule.

ROY *(laughing amiably and slapping* **GORDON** *in a Christian-ly tactile kind of way)* Ha! I seemed to end up the other side of the island. Bit foggy to see.

NEVILLE And you've got your rucksack.

ROY *(slapping the rucksack)* Bit of a soggy rucksack.

NEVILLE *(his teeth chattering)* Never mind, that's good. Three out of four. That's good.

GORDON It is if you're one of the three.

NEVILLE *(hitting his sides to warm himself)* It'll all be insured, Gordon, if a boat sinks.

GORDON Where? Lloyd's of London? It's not the *Exxon Valdez* that's gone down, Neville.

NEVILLE The organizers.

GORDON It's the *SS Property Of Keswick Town Council Number Twenty-four.*

ROY *sits and takes his boots off.* **ANGUS** *scrabbles through his rucksack.*

NEVILLE 'Blue Sky Outbound Limited'. They'll be insured. Look, if they're going to put clues on islands in the middle of lakes, they must legislate for this.

ANGUS *(putting his hand up)* Captain?

The others look at him.

(looking up) Are we keeping up this "captain" thing?

NEVILLE *(embarrassed)* Er...

ANGUS It's just you're not supposed to have wet things next to your skin. They said at breakfast.

GORDON *(turning to* **NEVILLE***)* He's right. First rule of outdoors. What do we do, Captain?

NEVILLE *(trying to generate "Captain-mode")* Right, yes. Er. Change into dry clothes first. Then find stage-two clues, then phone to say the boat's sunk. How about that?

ROY AND ANGUS *(together)* Right.

ROY, **ANGUS** *and* **NEVILLE** *start fishing about in their rucksacks.*

GORDON *(slapping his hands together)* Great. Yes. Right. Now. What was the first one again?

NEVILLE *(with his head in his rucksack)* Dry clothes.

GORDON *lowers himself gently, puts his arms round* **NEVILLE** *and looks out to sea like* "The Boyhood Of Raleigh".

GORDON Neville. *(gently)* Somewhere out there some fish are swimming round with my socks on.

NEVILLE *looks at him.*

ANGUS Look at that. *(He lifts a variety of items of clothing, all neatly wrapped, from his rucksack.)* That was Julie's idea. Putting them in a bin sack, then in individual freezer bags. Dry as a bone, every...single...one. *(He assembles a small pile of beautifully pressed jumpers, shirts and trousers.)*

GORDON *(turning to* **NEVILLE***)* What's this? Is he opening up a shop?

NEVILLE Angus, could Gordon borrow some dry clothes?

ANGUS*'s hands instinctively go over the pile.*

ANGUS Sorry?

NEVILLE His have sunk.

ANGUS *(after a slight pause)* So?

GORDON *(nodding at the pile)* I mean, don't do yourself short or anything.

ANGUS Er, well, what d'you want?

GORDON Oh I don't know. I quite fancy blue today. *(He snatches a jumper.)* Anything. I want to live, that's what I want.

He tears open the freezer bag and then begins to tear off his own sodden togs.

ANGUS Well, hold on, hold on. Has it got a name tag? Can I just check?

GORDON *(gritting his teeth and throwing the jumper back)* Julie puts name tags in for you, does she? That's nice.

ANGUS *(checking the jumper)* That's fine. *(He passes it back to* **GORDON***.)*

GORDON Yes. *(He pauses slightly.)* Because of course things do tend to get lost at work, don't they?

ANGUS Mmm?

GORDON Especially if we have PE on the field before hometime. Everything gets mixed up on the pegs. Quite often I go home with Roy's suits on, and my mum, she gives me such a roasting.

ANGUS *(looking at* **GORDON***, then smiling)* Awww. He's having us on. *(to* **GORDON***)* You do have us on, don't y'?

GORDON *scowls, not deigning a reply, and starts changing.*

NEVILLE Don't er...stand with bare skin, lads. Or you'll get hypothermia. Keep hitting it to keep warm. *(He starts to slap his body as he changes.)*

ANGUS What, you mean actually hitting the flesh?

NEVILLE Yes, hit it. Try it. *(He nods.)* It does work.

ANGUS *and* **ROY** *start to slap bare bits of skin as they become available. Of course,* **GORDON** *does not. There is a short period of changing and slapping.*

This is what the Romans did when they first came to Britain. If you check the mosaics in Chester, you see they had to keep hitting themselves. It smarts, you see. Keeps you warm.

The smacking continues, but lessens in vigour.

ANGUS *(after a short pause)* Hurts a bit, actually.

ROY Yes, it does hurt a bit, Nev.

NEVILLE Yeh, forget it. Just get a jumper on.

There is a pause. They continue changing. They wrap towels around their midriffs to divest themselves of wet undies, **GORDON** *lying on the ground to do this.*

ROY Funny thing is, your body does actually accustom itself to cold. It's like, when you're exposed to the elements, your common ancestry comes out.

ANGUS Yes, yes.

There is a pause.

How d'you mean?

ROY *(pointing at his exposed flesh)* These! Goosebumps!

ANGUS Ah.

There is a pause.

GORDON You share a common ancestry with geese, do you, Roy? That's interesting. Your family photo album should be worth looking at.

ROY Ha! No, I mean you get throwbacks to prehistoric patterns. The hairs are rising atavistically to form a layer of clothing over the skin.

GORDON Actually it's all been disproved, that. They've found prehistoric man very early on developed the Disney character beach towel. If you check cave paintings you can quite clearly see stick figures chasing mammoths through rivers, then standing round in groups trying to get their undies back on without anyone seeing.

ANGUS I know, it's daft really, isn't it? This? *(He gestures at the towels wrapped around their midriffs.)* You know. Out here. All men together.

GORDON *(stopping in mid-action)* What are you suggesting, Angus?

ANGUS *immediately shrivels.*

I hope you're not suggesting we drop towels and display our nether regions publicly. Because as far as Roy's concerned, if he's descended from a goose, I don't think I want to see.

NEVILLE *looks at his map.*

ROY No, Gordon, you're slightly missing the point, / he meant—

GORDON The point is, Roy, that geese do not get goosebumps. When geese get cold, they go inside. Which is a privilege currently denied to us.

ANGUS Why are they called goosebumps, then?

GORDON Because, rather significantly, they resemble the skin of a goose which has been caught, plucked from its normal clothing and strung up out of its native environment.

NEVILLE *(looking at the map)* Actually lads, thinking about it, we've not done badly here.

They others stop putting their socks on and turn to look at him.

No, seriously. Seventeen hundred hours we were supposed to check into phase two, and it's now *(He checks his watch.)* eleven forty-seven. We're streaks ahead of the other two teams.

ANGUS It's good captaincy, Neville.

NEVILLE Oh, no, no...

ANGUS Isn't it, Gordon, Roy? Made a good choice, didn't we?

ROY *nods.* **GORDON** *doesn't.*

NEVILLE Oh no...

ANGUS For captain.

GORDON *grabs socks from* **ANGUS**.

NEVILLE No, what it is is crosswords. Cryptic clues. When we got the clues this morning, I knew immediately, because I do them on the train in, and so if you're accustomed to them you can cut through, just go *(He mimes shooting an arrow.)* p-woosh. To the point. Plus it helped to know a bit about astronomy.

GORDON *(sitting on a rock to put his shoes on)* Why astronomy, pray tell?

NEVILLE *(pulling new trousers on)* Oh yes. Well the clue was... hold on. *(He pulls out a piece of paper.)* Right. *(He reads.)* "Blue Sky Outbound Team-Building Weekend, November fourth to sixth. Blah blah. Pennine Mineral Water Limited, Team C. Right. Proceed from Queen of the Lakes Hotel. Head upstream until you find the plough." *Plough*, remember. "Phase two will be posted on the *little green* with rail-*ings*." OK?

GORDON So?

NEVILLE So look, this is the clever bit. *(He maps out the islands with items of wet clothing)* There are two tiny islands *(He points to them in turn.)* Otter and Otterbield, there and there. Then there's *(likewise)* St Herbert's Island, Rampsholme Island, Lord's Island and Derwent Isle. Now that shape, if you know astronomy. *(He points to each of the islands in turn.)* dot dot dot dot dot dot...is almost exactly the same shape as Ursa Major, the Great Bear. Otherwise known as the Plough! See? *(He points again.)* Hotel, upstream, plough. *(He stands back triumphantly.)*

GORDON What about the *little green* with rail-*ings*?

NEVILLE Aha. On the Ordnance Survey map Otter and Otterbield are just marked with a white circle. Of the islands that are marked green, Rampsholme is the littlest. And "Railings", now that's a real classic crossword clue, setting one word in the middle of another one. Railing. Ail in a ring. A circle of ail. And what is "ail" the French word for? *(He pronounces it.)* "Eye"?

There is still no response.

Garlic!

ANGUS Ahh!

NEVILLE In my hotel visitor's guide *(He taps his nose.)* in the drawer with the hair dryer, it said "Rampsholme" means "Garlic Island" in Old English. Phase two is posted up in the

garlic on the smallest green island upstream in the plough. *(He holds his arms out to gesticulate "where we are".)* Tra!

ANGUS *claps. It dies.*

ROY *(smiling, pulling his shoe on)* Of course there is a pub called The Plough in the next village.

The others look at **ROY**. *He looks up and smiles, lopingly.*

GORDON *(quietly)* Sorry?

ROY Just down the valley. You know. I passed it driving up here. It's just – ha – you jogged my memory because it does have a small green outside it with white railings.

There is a pause. **GORDON** *ever so slowly turns to* **NEVILLE**, *eyebrows raised.*

NEVILLE Precisely. That, you see, that's where the cryptic bit comes in. That's where the other teams will be heading, I bet you. Right now. Reading it on a surface level and actually... *(He laughs.)* going diametrically one hundred and eighty degrees in the wrong direction. Tcha! Ha! *(He laughs and pulls his boots on.)*

ANGUS *goes "Tcha" and pulls his on.* **ROY** *goes "Tcha" and pulls his on.* **GORDON** *sits immobile.*

Hey, wouldn't like to be them at the assessment dinner tomorrow, eh?

ANGUS Yeah! Ha! So what's that? Read the instructions wrong, don't plan properly, go off in the wrong direction...is that a good or bad game plan for running a company?

Their laughter rises.

ROY Ha!

NEVILLE Ha ha! That should give them something to talk about at the Sunday night debriefing!

ANGUS "We mutually assess that we all cocked up!" Hargh!

NEVILLE Hey, hey – and what does the captain put in his Captain's Report? He had four middle-management on a team-building course and the whole lot—

ANGUS Don't!

NEVILLE The whole team gets lost...!

ANGUS Oh don't!

NEVILLE That's a good sign, eh? Ah hargh! That's worth fifteen thousand quid to find out...argh ha ha!

ANGUS Oooh don't...fifteen thousand quid!! Aharghhhh, don't...!

ROY Ha ha ha!

NEVILLE Ahh hargh...!

The volley of laughter crumbles away into "tcha"s and "ha"s. Then there is silence.

ROY I mean technically we've gone downstream rather than upstream. But it's still funny. Ha ha tcha.

NEVILLE Ha ha.

ANGUS Ha ha.

NEVILLE *and* **ANGUS** *start to laugh again.* **GORDON** *turns to* **ROY**. **ROY***'s words get through to* **NEVILLE** *and* **ANGUS** *too as the dialogue continues.*

NEVILLE Harrr...no. No, no. Upstream. *(He points.)* Hotel here, look. Plough, island. We've gone up. Up.

ROY We've gone north.

NEVILLE *(pointing lamely)* North is up. That's what north is.

ROY *(getting up to the "map")* Er, Derwent Water here. Feeds Bassenthwaite there, yes? Continues as the River Derwent and goes out to sea at Workington.

NEVILLE So?

ROY It's still funny, Neville, I'm not / saying...

NEVILLE Yes, yes, yes, so?

ROY Well, so, technically it starts up there somewhere. In the hills. That's the source.

NEVILLE Great. So?

GORDON *(quietly)* So that way, Neville, is downstream. *(He points the other way.)* That way is upstream.

ROY Yes. That's the swing of it.

A silence is falling.

GORDON OK. OK. And just out of interest, Roy. This *Plough* pub with the little green and railings, was it near a river at all?

ROY Beck.

GORDON Sorry?

ROY They're called becks up here. Ha, I used to get confused when I first came up birdwatching, because the / names...

GORDON Was it near one?

ROY It – er – yes, was, I think. Yes.

GORDON Good. Go-od. And Neville. When we followed you, if I remember, stumbling and groping down no recognizable footpath to the water, how many boats were there?

NEVILLE *thinks.*

ANGUS One.

GORDON Not three. One for each team. As you might expect.

NEVILLE Er...

GORDON No, no. Just wondered. So just *say* they weren't "cryptic clues". Just instructions. One reading might have been: "Walk up the river to the pub and look on the railings."

There is a pause.

NEVILLE Right, well, let's just find if the phase two clues are here before we go jumping to conclusions, eh? Roy, you take the north, the up...that side, I'll search the other coast and you two do the centre, OK?

ROY Right you are.

NEVILLE OK?

ANGUS Fine.

GORDON *(making a fighter-pilot decision and mock-bustling about)* Great, yes. Off we go. Let's get looking. Sniff out those clues. Chop-chop.

NEVILLE *disappears up the shingle,* **ROY** *into the trees.*

ANGUS *lurches to his feet.* **GORDON** *watches* **NEVILLE** *and* **ROY** *go.*

ANGUS Chop-chop. The centre. *(He makes to set off.)*

GORDON Oi. Psst. *(He whistles.)* Get on the phone.

ANGUS Sorry?

GORDON Get on the phone. Call for help. We're up the swannee.

ANGUS Right. Er, technically, Neville was elected captain.

GORDON Angus. My old mate. Indeed he was. But forget not – *(dramatically)* you were elected Keeper of the Rescue Phone.

ANGUS Well / I—

GORDON No no no, don't do yourself down. We could take one phone per group and we chose yours as the very princess of phones, the phone which our paltry phones can only dream of being.

ANGUS Yes. Well, you know, it's the Moshito Z—

GORDON —XK Retina Venturer, I know—

ANGUS *(points)* Video conferencing facility.

GORDON Isn't that great?

ANGUS Fully GPS and infinite number memory.

GORDON That's right. And if you don't know enough people it phones up at random and introduces you. It's a tremendous phone, Angus.

ANGUS So who should I call?

GORDON Well, let's see. *(deadly serious)* We could register our vote on "Strictly Come Dancing".

ANGUS *(smiling)* Aah-ha! *(He wags his finger at* **GORDON***.)*

GORDON *(gritting his teeth)* Ring the hotel, Angus.

ANGUS Haven't got the number.

GORDON OK, the police.

ANGUS I'm not definitely sure about ringing nine-nine-nine anymore.

GORDON *(sighs)* OK—

ANGUS If there's only enough power for one call 'cos didn't they change it to 112, or was it 211?

GORDON OK. Well, let's think. Police uncertain. Rescue, don't know. Blue Sky Outbound, don't know...

ANGUS No one in at your flat?

GORDON I hope not, Angus, as it would mean I was being burgled.

ANGUS I know! Julie! I could ring Julie!

GORDON Julie-sews-in-labels-Julie?

ANGUS Julie my wife. She's at home. She's always at home.

GORDON And does she operate a ground-to-air rescue service?

ANGUS *(dialling)* She could ring the hotel.

GORDON *(sighing)* OK.

ANGUS Very low, see. Very low on power.

GORDON Should've plugged it into Roy.

ANGUS Eh?

GORDON They're supposed to have the power in them, aren't they, Christians? Prob'ly recharge phones if you've got the right adaptor.

ANGUS Eh?

GORDON *Oh just get on with it.*

ANGUS And... *(He presses another button.)* call. Right. *(He puts the phone to his ear, then points to the phone.)* It's ringing. Great. OK. Just stand...back, you're blocking the signal. Back, there.

GORDON *moves left.*

That's it. OK. *(He breathes in and speaks loudly, wincing.)* Julie? ...Hi, listen, it's me, Angus. We're in a bit of trouble, sugar. Could you get the telephone number of the Queen of the Lakes Hotel, that's the q-u-e-e-n of the l-a-k-e-s hotel. It's up on the corkboard by the pasta machine. Next to the picture of us at La Rochelle. Tell them Group C have run into difficulties on Rampsholme Island in Derwentwater. Repeat, in difficulties, Rampsholme Island, Derwentwater. OK? *(He pauses slightly.)* And it is quite important, love, so could you do it as soon as you get back in.

GORDON*'s face drops.*

OK. Take care now. Bye.

The phone gives a beep. **ANGUS** *presses a button on the phone and looks at* **GORDON** *proudly.*

GORDON "Get back in"?

ANGUS Gone dead now, you see.

GORDON *"Get back in"?*

There is a pause.

We're in a life and death situation and you left a message on the answering machine?

ANGUS She'll get it. She never goes out. She'll only be at Sainsbury's.

GORDON *stares at* **ANGUS**.

Two minutes. Down the avenue and left. And the little light flashes right by the front door. She won't miss it, Gordon. Honestly.

GORDON *continues to stare at* **ANGUS**.

I couldn't do anything else.

GORDON *rubs his eyes like a tired father.*

I could feel the signal going. The phone just went dead.

NEVILLE *appears, walking up the shingle.*

NEVILLE Ah. You're back. How did you get on?

ANGUS Oh, er... *(He guiltily hides the phone.)*

GORDON *(jumping up to cover* **ANGUS***)* Blank, Skipper. Nothing. *Pas un sausage.*

NEVILLE Right.

GORDON Not overloaded with clues down your side then?

NEVILLE Er...

GORDON No. Well. Unless Religious Roy has come up trumps, I think Angus and I have made what I'd like to call a pre-emptive strike.

Suddenly **ROY** *tears in from the trees.*

ROY Neville! *(He sees the other two.)* Angus! Gordon! Oh – you'll never guess what I've just found!

GORDON *shoots a look at* **ANGUS**.

NEVILLE Oh, wonderful!

ANGUS *(immediately losing his confidence)* It was his idea! Come on, now, Gordon, it was your idea to call for help. I know it'll look like mine because it was my phone!

GORDON *(sotto voce)* Shut up.

NEVILLE Sorry?

ANGUS I wasn't doubting you as captain, I knew you'd've got / it right, Nev—

GORDON *(sotto voce)* Just shut – up.

NEVILLE You've found the clues?

ROY *(catching his breath)* I just saw a gyrfalcon!

There is a pause.

GORDON A what-what?

ROY It came down out of the mist. And I thought, "It can't be, it can't be" – pure white, black tips – then swept back up again. There's about one a year, if that, hardly ever this far inshore and never in the Lakes. Never, ever, not once recorded in the Lake District. *(He stands, panting.)*

GORDON You're telling us you saw a bird.

ROY Oho, it's more than a bird, Gordon. It's one / of—

GORDON But it's a fluffy thing with wings. Not a paper square with clues on.

ROY Oh. No, no I didn't find any clues. Sorry.

ANGUS *relaxes.*

Sorry, is that... Oh dear. I didn't mean / to—

GORDON Nope, no. That's the right answer, Roy. You did fine.

NEVILLE No clues at all, not even / where a clue might—?

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