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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

# SHEILA'S ISLAND

by Tim Firth

SAMUEL FRENCH

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## CAST AND CREATIVE LIST

JUDY FLYNN | Sheila
ABIGAIL THAW | Denise
RINA FATANIA | Julie
SARA CROWE | Fay
TRACY COLLIER | Understudy

TIM FIRTH | Writer
JOANNA READ | Director
LIZ COOKE | Set & Costume Designer
PAUL ANDERSON | Lighting Designer
JON NICHOLLS | Composer and Sound Designer
GINNY SCHILLER | Casting Director
EMILY JANE KERR |Assistant Director
JUDITH PHILLIPS | Voice and Dialect Coach
PHILIP D'ORLÉANS | Fight Director

## PRODUCTION TEAM

TOM HURLEY | General Manager
LIZA CHEAL | Production Manager & YAT Head of Production
DAVE NORTH | Company & Stage Manager (Rehearsal and Opening)
ROGER RICHARDSON | Company & Stage Manager and Relighter (Tour)
CATHERINE GIBBS | Deputy Stage Manager
ADAM MOORE WHITE | Technical Assistant Stage Manager
HANNAH WALKER | Production Lighting & YAT Senior Lighting Technician
JACOB MOORE | Production Sound & YAT Deputy Technician
BEN RYDER | Head of Wardrobe
CRAIG FULLER | Photography (Production & Rehearsal)
FEAST CREATIVE | Artwork
MICHAEL WHARLEY | Photography (Lead Image)
Set Built by BOWER WOOD CONSTRUCTION
Transport by PAUL MATHEWS TRANSPORT

*SHEILA'S ISLAND* was first produced at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford on 10th February 2022, followed by a national tour to Edinburgh, Southampton, Derby, Salford, Liverpool, Crewe, Brighton, Richmond, Salisbury and Bath. The performance was directed by Joanna Read, with assistant director Emily Jane Kerr, set & costume design by Liz Cooke, lighting design by Paul Anderson, composer & sound design by Jon Nicholls. Casting Director Ginny Schiller. The cast was as follows:

**SHEILA**. . . . . Judy Flynn
**DENISE** . . . . . Abigail Thaw
**JULIE** . . . . . Rina Fatania
**FAY** . . . . . Sara Crowe

## CHARACTERS

**SHEILA**
**DENISE**
**JULIE**
**FAY**

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

In this play, as in life, interruptions are very important. The point at which someone's speech is skewered, attacked or overridden is always significant. Some lines of course dribble out for lack of intent or are subject to emergency stops and those are marked with dots or slashes. An interruption however is always marked with a / symbol which marks the exact point at which the subsequent line should come in. Eg.

**FAY.** It's still funny, Sheila, I'm not / saying…

**SHEILA.** Yes, yes, yes, so?

# ACT ONE

## Scene One

*(Rampsholme Island, Derwentwater. Eleven fifty five 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 her hands and knees crawls* **SHEILA.** *She is forty-something with a little rucksack on her back like a shrunken snail shell. She has a thick woolly kind of sweater, half-length walking trousers, woolly socks and a woolly bobble hat. Her jacket is a M&S anorak, and she wears little steel-framed specs. She is absolutely drenched – wringing wet from head to foot. In fact, the bobble on her hat is so heavy with water it lollops sideways on a thread. Underneath, her hair is plastered across her face. An Ordnance Survey map in a plastic case and another document in another plastic case and a compass hang round her neck like Indian beads. She staggers to her feet like the Fell Walker from Atlantis and stumbles up the bank to the land in a cocktail state of exhaustion, shock and surprise. She gasps heavily to catch her breath. She pulls down on one of her sleeves and wrings it out. A short stream of water cascades to the ground.)*

*(There is another mighty splash and up the shore lumbers* **DENISE**, *forty-something, with a more imposing frame than* **SHEILA**. *She is wearing a Barbour jacket, thick cords, boots and a flat tweed cap, with a kind of rugged jumper. She is equally drenched. In fact, words alone cannot express just how wet these two women are.)*

*(***SHEILA** *starts to wring out the other sleeve.)*

*(***DENISE** *wades up the shallows and stands at the water's edge. She is stock still, staring at* **SHEILA**. **SHEILA** *notices* **DENISE** *staring at her. She stops and gives a sheepish flicker of a grin.* **DENISE** *suddenly pushes her clenched fist out, throws her head back and shouts. Her accent is middle-class north-west.)*

**DENISE.** Rock, Sheila!

*(***SHEILA** *jumps a little.)*

*(Making the fist bob towards her face as if she is approaching it; looking at* **SHEILA** *again.)* Rock. Sheila. *(She moves her fist closer to her face.)* Sheila! ROCKS! *(She holds her fist directly in front of her face. She pauses, wipes the water off her face and smiles at* **SHEILA**.*)* Well, I think I did my job as lookout. How were things in the steering department?

*(***SHEILA** *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.

**SHEILA.** *(Miming a rudder.)* I thought "push away" made you "turn right".

**DENISE.** You'd think it would. You know. Someone sitting two feet in front of you screaming *(She shouts.)* ROCKS!

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

**DENISE.** But of course we're in the country now, aren't we?

**SHEILA.** That's certainly the way, obviously, with my, er… Hyundai.

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

**JULIE.** *(Offstage.)* Help! Denise! Sheila!

**DENISE.** *(Moving very close to* **SHEILA** *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 Julie.

**JULIE.** *(Offstage.)* I had a whistle but I think it's sunk.

**SHEILA.** Up here, Julie. We're on the peninsula bit.

*(***SHEILA** *tracks* **JULIE** *in the fog and goes down the shore to help her up.)*

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

That's the way, love.

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

*(***SHEILA** *drags* **JULIE** *up and swivels her into a sitting position.)*

**SHEILA.** Steady…

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

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

**JULIE.** The screen… still registering. *(She pants.)* I think it's OK.

**DENISE.** The phone's OK is it?

**JULIE.** *(Nodding, panting.)* The display's working.

**DENISE.** Oh don't be fooled by the display, Julie. We all put up a front. That phone could now be suffering from post-traumatic stress. Two months off in the middle of a managers meeting it'll suddenly crawl across the desk screaming "We're going down, we're going down".

**JULIE.** Sorry?

**DENISE.** Soon as we're back in Manchester I'd get that in for crisis counselling.

**SHEILA.** *(Whispering.)* Denise has lost her rucksack.

*(But* **DENISE** *has heard this.)*

**DENISE.** Yes, Denise has lost her rucksack. Her bloody ninety-eight quid rucksack with seventy quid of jumper and eighty-five quid of spare walking boots, but she's fine. That's all part of this bloody cockeyed exercise, coping with crisis, and she's absolutely completely

bloody... coping. *(She stands, dripping wet, forcing a huge insincere smile.)*

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

**DENISE.** Oh, I think hitting clearly marked rocks is a crisis, Julie. 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 –

**SHEILA.** Hold on. Where's Fay?

**JULIE.** Fay?

**DENISE.** Ah, don't worry about Fay. Fay'll be all right. God's looking after Fay.

**SHEILA.** You didn't see her? *(She calls.)* Fay!

**JULIE.** *(Calling.)* Fay! I thought she was with you.

**DENISE.** You'll find her. Just follow the line where the waters have parted.

**SHEILA.** Fay!

**DENISE.** Or actually she might've walked here on the surface. They can do either, Christians.

**JULIE.** She couldn't've gone down, could she?

**SHEILA.** Oh God, come on sweetheart. Shhh, listen. *(She calls.)* Fay. Are you there?

*(They all listen for the reply.)*

*(***FAY** *appears through the trees. She is a loping, slightly awkward woman. And sopping wet, obviously. She has an Arran sweater, 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 her back. She smiles her loping, awkward kind of smile.)*

**FAY.** Hi guys.

*(They all swing round.)*

**SHEILA.** *(Sotto voce.)* Oh thank God for that.

**DENISE.** And here she is. The Christian in a cagoule.

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

**SHEILA.** And you've got your rucksack.

**FAY.** *(Slapping the rucksack.)* Bit of a soggy rucksack.

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

**DENISE.** It is if you're one of the three.

**SHEILA.** *(Hitting her sides to warm herself.)* It'll all be insured, Denise, if a boat sinks.

**DENISE.** Where? Lloyd's of London?

**SHEILA.** The organizers.

**DENISE.** It's not the Queen Mary that's gone down, Sheila. It's the SS Property Of Keswick Town Council Number Twenty-Four.

*(***FAY** *sits and takes her boots off.* **JULIE** *scrabbles through her rucksack.)*

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

**JULIE.** *(Putting her hand up.)* Captain?

*(The others look at her.)*

*(Looking up.)* Are we keeping up this "captain" thing?

**SHEILA.** *(Embarrassed.)* Er…

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

**DENISE.** *(Turning to* **SHEILA***.)* She's right. First rule of the outdoors. What do we do, "Captain"?

**SHEILA.** *(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?

**FAY & JULIE.** *(Together.)* Right.

*(***FAY, JULIE** *and* **SHEILA** *start fishing about in their rucksacks.)*

**DENISE.** *(Slapping her hands together.)* Great. Yes. Right. Now. What was the first one again?

**SHEILA.** *(With her head in her rucksack.)* Dry clothes.

*(***DENISE** *lowers herself gently, puts her arms round* **SHEILA** *and looks out to sea like in the painting* The Boyhood of Raleigh.*)*

**DENISE.** Sheila. *(Gently.)* Somewhere out there some fish are swimming round with my socks on.

*(***SHEILA** *looks at her.)*

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

**DENISE.** *(Turning to* **SHEILA***.)* What's this? Is she opening up a shop?

**SHEILA.** Julie, could Denise borrow some dry clothes?

*(***JULIE***'s hands instinctively hover guardedly over the pile.)*

**JULIE.** Sorry?

**SHEILA.** Hers have sunk.

**JULIE.** *(After a slight pause.)* So?

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

**JULIE.** Er, well, what d'you want?

**DENISE.** Oh I don't know. I quite fancy blue today. *(She snatches a jumper.)* Anything. I want to live, that's what I want. *(She tears open the freezer bag and then begins to tear off her own sodden togs.)*

**JULIE.** Well, hold on, hold on. Has he put a nametag in? Can I just check?

**DENISE.** *(Gritting her teeth and throwing the jumper back.)* Angus puts nametags in for you, does he?

**JULIE.** *(Checking the jumper.)* Permanent marker. *(She passes it back to* **DENISE**.*)*

**SHEILA.** Don't stand with bare skin, girls, or you'll get hypothermia. Keep hitting it to keep warm. *(She starts to slap her body as she changes.)*

**JULIE.** What, you mean actually hit the flesh?

**SHEILA.** Yes, hit it. Try it. *(She nods.)* Does work.

*(***JULIE** *and* **FAY** *start to slap bare bits of skin as they become available. Of course,* **DENISE** *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.)*

**JULIE.** *(After a short pause.)* Hurts a bit, actually/ Sheila.

**FAY.** Yes, it does hurt a bit, Sheil.

**SHEILA.** Yeh, forget it. Just get a fleece on.

*(There is a pause. They continue changing. They wrap towels around their bodies to divest themselves of wet undies,* **DENISE** *seeking cover to do this.)*

**FAY.** 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.

**JULIE.** Yes, yes.

*(There is a pause.)*

How d'you mean?

**FAY.** *(Pointing at her exposed flesh.)* These! Goosebumps!

**JULIE.** Ah.

*(There is a pause.)*

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

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

**DENISE.** 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.

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

**DENISE.** *(Stopping in mid-action.)* What are you suggesting, Julie?

*(***JULIE** *immediately shrivels.)*

I hope you're not suggesting we drop towels and display our front bottoms publicly, because as far as Fay's concerned, if she's descended from a goose, I don't think I want to see.

*(***SHEILA** *looks at her map.)*

**SHEILA.** Actually ladies, thinking about it, we've not done badly here.

*(The others stop putting their socks on and turn to look at her.)*

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

**JULIE.** It's good captaincy, Sheil.

**SHEILA.** Oh, no, no…

**JULIE.** Isn't it, Denise, Fay? Made a good choice, didn't we?

*(***FAY** *nods.* **DENISE** *doesn't.)*

**SHEILA.** Oh no…

**JULIE.** For captain.

*(***DENISE** *grabs socks from* **JULIE**.*)*

**SHEILA.** 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 *(She mimes shooting an arrow.)* p-woosh. To the point. Plus it helped to know a bit about astronomy.

**DENISE.** *(Sitting on a rock to put her shoes on.)* Astronomy?

**SHEILA.** *(Pulling new trousers on.)* Oh yes. Well the clue was… hold on. *(She pulls out a piece of paper.)* Right. *(She 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?

**DENISE.** So?

**SHEILA.** So look, this is the clever bit. *(She maps out the islands with items of wet clothing.)* There are two tiny islands *(She 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 *(She 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? *(She points again.)* Hotel, upstream, plough. *(She stands back triumphantly.)*

**DENISE.** What about the *little green* with rail-*ings*?

**SHEILA.** 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? *(She pronounces it.)* "Eye"?

*(There is still no response.)*

Garlic!

**JULIE.** Ahh!

**SHEILA.** In my hotel visitor's guide *(She taps her 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. *(She holds her arms out to gesticulate "where we are".)* Tra!

*(***JULIE** *claps. It dies.)*

**FAY.** *(Smiling, pulling her shoe on.)* Of course there is a pub called *The Plough* in the next village.

*(The others look at* **FAY**. *She looks up and smiles, lopingly.)*

**DENISE.** *(Quietly.)* Sorry?

**FAY.** 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.* **DENISE** *ever-so-slowly turns to* **SHEILA**, *eyebrows raised.)*

**SHEILA.** 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… *(She laughs.)* going diametrically one hundred and eighty degrees in the wrong direction. Tcha! Ha! *(She laughs and pulls her boots on.)*

*(***JULIE** *goes "Tcha" and pulls hers on.* **FAY** *goes "Tcha" and pulls hers on.* **DENISE** *sits immobile.)*

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

**JULIE.** Yeah! Ha! So what's that? "Read the instructions wrong, don't plan properly, go off in the wrong direction…"

*(Their laughter rises.)*

**FAY.** Ha!

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

**JULIE.** "We mutually assess that we all cocked up!" Hargh!

**SHEILA.** Hey, hey – and what do the other two captains put in their Captain's Report? They had four middle-management on a team-building course and the whole lot—

**JULIE.** Don't!

**SHEILA.** —the whole team gets lost...!

**JULIE.** Oh don't!

*(The volley of laughter crumbles away into "Tcha"s and "Ha"s. Then there is silence.)*

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

**SHEILA.** Ha ha.

**JULIE.** Ha ha.

*(***SHEILA** *and* **JULIE** *start to laugh again.* **DENISE** *turns to* **FAY.** **FAY***'s words get through to* **SHEILA** *and* **JULIE** *too as the dialogue continues.)*

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

**FAY.** We've gone north.

**SHEILA.** *(Pointing lamely.)* North is up. That's what north is.

**FAY.** *(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.

**SHEILA.** So?

**FAY.** It's still funny, Sheila, I'm not / saying…

**SHEILA.** Yes, yes, yes, so?

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

**SHEILA.** Great. So?

**DENISE.** *(Quietly.)* So that way, Sheila, is downstream. *(She points the other way.)* That way is upstream.

**FAY.** Yes. That's the swing of it.

*(A silence is falling.)*

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

**FAY.** Beck.

**DENISE.** Sorry?

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

**DENISE.** Was it near one?

**FAY.** It – er – yes, was, I think. Yes.

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

*(***SHEILA** *thinks.)*

**JULIE.** One.

**DENISE.** Not three. One for each team. As you might expect.

**SHEILA.** Er…

**DENISE.** 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.)*

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

**FAY.** Right you are.

**SHEILA.** OK?

**JULIE.** Fine.

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

*(***SHEILA** *disappears up the shingle,* **FAY** *into the trees.)*

*(***JULIE** *lurches to her feet.* **DENISE** *watches* **SHEILA** *and* **FAY** *go.)*

**JULIE.** Chop-chop. The centre. *(She makes to set off.)*

**DENISE.** Oi. Psst. *(She whistles.)* Get on the phone.

**JULIE.** Sorry?

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

**JULIE.** Right. Er, technically, Sheila was elected captain.

**DENISE.** Julie. My old mucker. Indeed she was. But forget not – *(Dramatically.)* you were elected Keeper of the Rescue Phone.

**JULIE.** Well / I—

**DENISE.** 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.

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

**DENISE.** – X8, I know –

**JULIE.** *(Points.)* Video conferencing facility.

**DENISE.** Isn't that great?

**JULIE.** *(Holds it up to her face.)* Facial activation and infinite number memory.

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

**JULIE.** Not working. *(Tidying her hair.)* I must look a bit different.

**DENISE.** No well fair play, she's never seen you in this kind of situation.

**JULIE.** Oh here we go. I'm in. So who should I call?

**DENISE.** Well, let's see. *(Deadly serious.)* We could phone up to register our votes for *Strictly Come Dancing*.

**JULIE.** *(Smiling.)* Aah-ha! *(She wags her finger at* **SHEILA***.)*

**DENISE.** *(Gritting her teeth.)* Ring the hotel, Julie.

**JULIE.** Haven't got the number I think the /emerge –

**DENISE.** OK, Lakeland Rescue.

**JULIE.** ...emergency number's in Sheila's rucksack and if we only get one/ chance –

**DENISE.** OK –

**JULIE.** – if any water gets in you don't get long before it conks – OH I'VE GOT A SIGNAL! WE CAN GOOGLE THE HOTEL AND no it's gone. Let me try ag/ain –

**DENISE.** Don't! Wear it out. Trying to google things. She's wasted enough energy trying to recognize you.

**JULIE.** No one in at your flat?

**DENISE.** I hope not, Julie, as it would mean I was being burgled.

**JULIE.** I know! Angus! I could ring Angus

**DENISE.** Angus – permanent marker Angus?

**JULIE.** Angus my husband. He's at home. He's always at home.

**DENISE.** And does he operate a ground-to-air rescue service?

**JULIE.** Funny, you say that, but a woman did once coordinate the rescue of her husband on Mount Everest from her home in Godalming.

**DENISE.** Well she sounds great, let's ring her.

**JULIE.** *(Shows phone.)* It has see? Water's affecting the power.

**DENISE.** Should've plugged it into Fay.

**JULIE.** Eh?

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

**JULIE.** Eh?

**DENISE.** *Oh just get on with it.*

**JULIE.** And… *(She presses another button.)* send. Right. *(She puts the phone to her ear, then points to the phone.)* It's ringing. Great. OK. Just stand… back, you're blocking the signal. Back, there.

*(***DENISE** *moves left.)*

That's it. OK. *(She breathes in and speaks loudly, wincing.)* Darling? Angus? Hi, listen, it's me, Julie. We're in a bit of trouble, sweetheart. 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. 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? *(She pauses slightly.)* And it is quite important love, so could you do it as soon as you get back in.

*(***DENISE***'s face drops.)*

OK. Take care now baby. Bye.

*(The phone gives a beep.* **JULIE** *presses a button on the phone and looks at* **DENISE** *proudly.)*

**DENISE.** "Get back in?"

**JULIE.** Gone dead now, see.

**DENISE.** *"Get back in?"*

*(There is a pause.)*

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

**JULIE.** He'll get it. He never goes out. He'll only be at Aldi.

*(***DENISE** *stares at* **JULIE**.*)*

Two minutes. Down the avenue and left. And the machine flashes right by the front door. He won't miss it, Denise. Honestly.

*(***DENISE** *continues to stare at* **JULIE**.*)*

I couldn't do anything else. I could feel the signal going.

*(***SHEILA** *appears, walking up the shingle.)*

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

**JULIE.** Oh, er… *(She guiltily hides the phone.)*

**DENISE.** *(Jumping up to cover* **JULIE.***)* Blank, skipper. Nothing. *Pas un sausage.*

**SHEILA.** Right.

**DENISE.** Not overloaded with clues down your side then?

**SHEILA.** Er…

**DENISE.** No. Well. Unless faithful Fay has come up trumps I think Julie and I have made what I'd like to call a pre-emptive strike.

*(Suddenly* **FAY** *tears in from the trees.)*

**FAY.** Sheila! *(She sees the other two.)* Julie! Denise! Oh—you'll never guess what I've just found!

*(***DENISE** *shoots a look at* **JULIE.***)*

**SHEILA.** Oh, *wonderful!*

**JULIE.** *(Immediately losing her confidence.)* It was her idea! Come on now Denise, it was your idea to call for help. I know it'll look like mine because it was my / phone!

**DENISE.** *(Sotto voce.)* Shut up.

**SHEILA.** You've found the clues?

**FAY.** *(Catching her breath.)* I just saw a gyrfalcon!

*(There is a pause.)*

**DENISE.** A what-what?

**FAY.** It came down out of the mist and I thought, "It can't be, it can't " – pure white, black tips – then swept back up again. There's about one a year, if that, hardly ever

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