
Sea Spirit

A radio drama by

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CHARACTERS:

Anna Mackay

David Macmillan

PC#1 (aka Alan Henderson)

PC#2 (Roderick Mackay, Strathgarve Police)

Fraser Carney (Strathgarve Hotel proprietor)

Johnny the Kelp (old Strathgarve beach hound and shellfisherman)

Moss (PC Mackay's border collie)

Shugs Munro (Strathgarve local)

Sileas the Post (ditto)

Brodie Beg (ditto)

Donald Kirkiboll (ditto)

Morag Mackay (ditto)

Alister England (ditto)

Alan Henderson (ex-Strathgarve local)

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SCENE ONE: On the road, NW Highlands of Scotland, a winter night, David driving, Anna in passenger seat.

Characters: Anna Mackay; David Macmillan; PC#1

Music intro: first bars of the Dusty Miller, by Lunasa, fading to
FX - Inside moving car in the rain, wipers going

Anna *(squeegies condensation off a window with her hand)* I'm sure the turn-off should be down here, on the right somewhere.

David I hope to hell *something* is, Anna. I can hardly see the road. Black as Lucifer's crack! Can you see anything out there?

Anna I thought I saw a light a moment ago.

David *(dryly)* Hallelujah. Would that be the same light you thought you saw half an hour ago
...

Anna Come on, David! Don't make this my fault.

David . . . the one that was only our own

headlights reflecting from yet another
bloody "passing place" sign?

Anna *Please?*

David *(sighs)* OK.

Anna OK, then.

*Pause - FX - wipers start to
squeak*

Anna Rain's easing up a bit.

David *(pause)* But the guy *was* your uncle . . .

Anna *(tightly)* Oh, thanks! *(sharply, turning)* You
know you can be really . . .

David What's that over there?

Anna What over where?

David There, look! On the left, up ahead.

Anna Should be on the right, if I remember . . .

David

Well there's a light - looks like a house, or something. Could that be it?

Anna

Don't think so - it's been donkey's years. Damn, the rain's coming on again.

David

That's sleet now. Look, it's got to be the place. Hasn't it? I mean we've been driving for bloody hours.

Anna

(with strained patience) 'Hour', David. One hour, since that last place, Altna . . . whatsisname

David

Altnahurich - a creepy old inn, a cow byre and one rusted petrol pump! The only thing missing was the tumbleweed! And it *feels* like bloody hours. How can there be this much empty road in Scotland? We should be in the sea by now! I can't believe there's just so much - nothin'!

Anna

(pouts) Poor little city boy lost in the wilderness. Well, *that* isn't nothing. Looks like . . .

David . . . A phone box. Bloody hell. An old red phone box! Like something out of, um . . .

Anna Pull over, will you? Let's look at at the OS map again.

David *(grumpy, braking to a stop)* What's the point? There's bugger all on it but squiggly contours. I told you we should have bought that satnav . . . and now it's hailing! Aw, shit.

FX - Anna fights with map, hail rattles on the roof

David You know, when we got to Craighuadh Bridge I thought, thank god, a coffee and a burger, *somethin'*, it was a stoatin' big spot on the map. And what was there? A bridge. A bloody bridge! I bet Strathgarve turns out to be a riot, if we ever find it.

Anna Hang on. *(fighting with map)* They show payphones on these things.

David *(puffs wearily)* What the hell is a phone doing out here in the middle of nowhere

anyway . . .

Anna No cell coverage, genius. That's where you *need* a payphone. (*studying map*) Ah, yes, here it is . . .

David And will you look at that: "COINS NOT ACCEPTED"? Nothing like making things difficult for your customers is there! Jeeze! Miles of bogs and mountains in the pissing rain, and there's this . . . You know, it reminds me of that old film.

Anna (*absently*) Brigadoon.

David No, the other one, the one with the guy who offers to swap his wife with the drunk American but all he really wants is to buy the beach off that old guy who was a prison guard in, er - oh, you know, the one with Fletcher from the Two Ronnies

Anna (*mystified*) Porridge?

David Aye! Aye, that's the one.

Anna David, what in god's name are you on?

David I'm just saying. They had an old phone box like that. Local Hero, that was it! Hey, why don't we call the hotel from here? . . . No, wait a second, look at this . . .

Anna Just let me work this out, will you. There's the coast . . . Here's us . . . The Strathgarve turning must be . . .

David *(insistent)* No, I mean, **look**, Anna. There's someone in there!

Anna In where? No, how could there be? Out here?

David There bloody is.

*FX - cracks open car door; -
hail and sleet hisses noisily*

David Looks like someone on the floor!

Anna What?

David *(getting out)* The glass is all misted up . . .

Anna No, hang on, David . . .

FX - Anna follows
reluctantly. They approach
the phone box

David *(shouting over the downpour)* Someone asleep, sheltering maybe . . . no, it's . . .

FX - Phone door creaks open

David Sweet Jesus!

Anna *(behind him)* What is it?

David What the f . . . it's a deer. A goddamned monarch-of-the-fucking-glen! There's blood . . .

Anna *(looks in)* This is weird. I mean, totally weird. What's a dead deer doing in a phone box?

David *(laughs dryly)* Well it's no' callin' a cab, that's for sure!

Anna I'm going back to the car. I don't like this.

David Come on, Anna, it's just a beast. Don't your Highland genes make you want to instinctively gralloch it for a venison supper?

Anna *(walking away)* Not in this bloody weather!

FX - sound of a vehicle approaching at some speed

David Aye aye, what's this? Another living being! Call Jodrell Bank. We Are Not Alone!

FX - sound of sudden braking in the wet, vehicle reversing, stopping, door opens

David I do believe it's Hamish MacBeth.

Anna *(shouts from near the car)* Who?

David The plod, Anna. Polis Landrover. Funny hats they wear out here though

Anna Well, ask them where's Strathgarve. I'm getting in out of the rain - sorry, "sleet".

FX - she slams Skoda door

David Well, shit.

PC#1 *(approaches)* Excuse, me sir. Is this your car?

David Are you kidding me? We've just found . . .

PC#1 No, sir, I'm not kidding. Please answer the question, if you wouldn't mind.

David *(suppressing laugh)* Well of course it's our car. D'you think we flew here? Sorry but it's just . . .

PC#1 Best to stay calm, sir. Just routine.

David Calm? I am bloody calm. Listen, I'm gettin' soaked here. Can we just . . .

PC#1 One moment. Could I see your licence,

just what it is - my business.

Anna *(exasperated)* Shut up David. *(To officer)*
Actually it's *my* business. We're trying to
get to Strathgarve? My uncle's croft,
Cragganmor. Should be near here
somewhere?

PC#1 *(sceptically)* Strathgarve. *(mutters into
lapel)* Yes, can you give me a vehicle
check, blue Skoda, registration, er

Anna *(sharply now)* Excuse me, but what are
you doing?

PC#1 registration SY51 VTT. Yep OK
. . . . Thanks. *(to David)* Were you
intending to drive away, sir?

David *(incredulous)* Stolen it! He only thinks
we've bloody stolen the car! Look, mate,
we just want to get to bloody Strathgarve
and out of this weather, so if you wouldn't
mind . . . ?

PC#1 *(walks round vehicle)* This near-side lamp

lens is cracked. Hit something, did we?

David

What? No, well, aye, a wee shunt with an Astra in Tesco's car park in Rutherglen a couple of weeks ago, but . . .

PC#1

Would you come with me please, Mr. . . .
(reads licence, emphasising syllables)
Mac-mill-an.

David

This is a joke, right? Yer goin' tae have tae ask me tae accompany ye tae the Station, like in Taggart or somethin', is that it?
What Station? I mean *(laughs humourlessly)* come on . . .

Anna

(strained but reasonable) David, please!
Look, constable, can you explain what's wrong? Is there an issue with the licence or . . . hey, what the hell are you doing?

FX - PC spins David around to face the car and produces cuffs

David

Jesus Christ! Handcuffs? You arresting me for cheek or what?

SCENE TWO: Anna, alone in car

Characters: Anna; PC#2 (PC Roddy Mackay)

Musical bridge, The Dusty Miller by Lunasa, reprised, over
FX - sound of Landrover doors closing and vehicle moving off

Anna

Ohmygod, keys, keys! (*scoots over to driver's side, finds keys still in ignition*)
Thankyou, thankyou!

FX - Skoda starts up, she
begins to follow the
Landrover

(*to self*) OK, just hang onto those tail lights, it's a misunderstanding, that's all it is and we'll get things straight as soon as we get to civilisation - Strathgarve probably, must be - Do they have a police house? Don't remember, Aunt Lizzie never said and it's so long ago Damn, turning to snow - wipers on max. Oh David, sorry, this *is* all my fault isn't it?

FX - wipers speed up

FX - Landrover suddenly
veers off road and onto hill

FX - turns onto track, stops car on hand brake *(sudden surprise)* Whoa, whoa, where're you going? No, no, no! I can't get up there, damn it! Just some bloody hill track.

FX - Guns engine and goes for it, but slithers into drainage ditch Wait, please, this is crazy . . . *(near to tears, then recovering determination)* Right then!

FX - tries to get traction, no luck, thumps steering wheel in frustration Shit! This isn't happening, this just isn't fucking happening!

FX - beeping of mobile phone keys OK, try the phone. Maybe . . . a signal, *please*, just half a bar? Yes!

FX - throws phone Come on, come on . . . yes . . . No . . . ah, you bastard!

OK, Anna, think. Walk up? In these shoes?

No road. No lights. No *way*. What's a police house doing up there anyhow? Something is definitely but definitely screwy. And how come his radio was working back at the phone box? They have special masts and stuff, I suppose - but out *here*? Whatever, I'm screwed No, wait! Idiot! The phone box! It isn't far. You can still see the light.

*FX - clammers out and jogs
back down the road in snow*

Bloody hell, and I thought a wet weekend in Glasgow was bleak! Oh come on . . .

(starts to sing, badly & shiveringly)

In the bleak mid winter . . .

Keep going, follow the tyre tracks

Frosty winds make moan . . .

Can say that again

Ground as hard as iron . . .

Nearly there

Searching for a phone

laa la, la la, laa laa

snow on sodding snow

FX - Starts to open door

Here we go, move over Bambi . . .

FX - A vehicle is heard

(*hesitates*) Hold on . . .

approaching and slowing to a

halt

Yes! Somebody up there still loves me!

(*calls out*) David! Thank god, I was getting worried, and I've bellied the car . . .

FX - car door opens and

policeman emerges

Anna

Oh! (*surprised*) You're not him. Look, what's going on?

PC#2

(*approaching*) Excuse me?

Anna

Sorry, I meant . . . I thought you were the policeman who took David.

PC#2

I'm afraid you have the advantage of me, miss . . . ?

Anna

Anna, Anna Mackay. When I tried to follow your colleague's Landrover I got the car stuck at the bottom the track, you

see, and . . . where *is* David?

PC#2

(blankly) Hang on. My colleague? And David is . . . who, exactly? Your husband?

Anna

No, boyfriend - well, sorta kinda. We *were* an item, but then I lost my job at the Uni and my uncle Hamish died and things changed - *I* changed. It's complicated . . . Look, can you take me to David now please? I'll need to arrange to get the Octavia pulled out the ditch and . . .

PC#2

Ms Mackay, Anna, please, what we clearly need to do is get you out of this weather for the night. You're lucky I came by, there's a blizzard moving in and you'll find no accommodation around here - unless you usually sleep standing up. *(explains the joke)* The phone box?

Anna

But that's it, you see. Because of the phone box - the deer - that's why David got arrested I suppose. The other constable thought we'd hit it with the car - like that was criminal - and hidden the thing in the

phone box or something! As if anyone would stop in the pouring rain to heave some stinking carcass into a phone box, in the middle of the night, I mean it's daft, we hadn't even seen a car for miles . . .

PC#2

Deer . . . In the phone box

Anna

Aye. You'll be wanting to get it shifted . . .
(turning to open the door) . . . Oh!

PC#2

(peering in) That job seems to have been done, Ms.

Anna

God, I don't understand. I was only gone five minutes. How . . . ?

PC#2

You're sure . . . ?

Anna

Good grief, yes I'm sure, there was a bloody carcass stashed in here, you could smell it from the car! You can smell it now! Look, that's blood isn't it?

PC#2

(pensive) Looks like it. And the car is . . . ?

Anna I told you, stuck in a ditch on the track up to the police house . . .

PC#2 There is no police house around here. There's only one, and I live in it, and I know where I left it.

Anna Well maybe it's a shortcut, but it's just up the road. Please, please can we go? I'm freezin' to death out here.

PC#2 In a moment. Could I see your licence?

Anna But David was driving . . .

PC#2 Just for routine identification. If you wouldn't mind.

Anna Christ, that's what *he* said (*fumbling in pockets*)

PC#2 Who said?

Anna *He* said, the other copper - then look what happens!

PC#2

Ms Mackay, let's get this straight. The entire Strathgarve constabulary stands before you. The snow on this hat is the only snow on any police hat for 40 miles around. There is no other 'copper'. No colleague. No other police Landrover. And *(ironically)* - oh look, no deer. And you'll forgive me for wondering if there might be no David either!

Anna

(distracted) Oh damn, damn, *damn*. My purse! David took it with him to pay for a can of juice in Alt . . . Altna . . .

PC#2

. . . hurich?

Anna

. . . na-bloody-hurich! And it must still be in his jacket! He took it with him.

PC#2

So . . . ?

Anna

So my licence was in it. And all my credit cards.

PC#2

(wearily) Right. No copper, no boyfriend, no deer, no car - no identification. Are you

sure you didn't maybe parachute in here
just to torment me, Miss whoever-you-are?

Anna

(enraged) **Mackay!** But this is crazy! It's outrageous! I spoke to him, he took David away, handcuffs and everything, and left me here. Look, it's getting really scary and really weird *(verge of tears)* and now I'm losing it, do you think I'm making this up for fun?

PC#2

(more gently) For fun, no. Definitely not for fun. Look, miss, I'll look into it, but first let's get you safely to Strathgarve, OK? Your man'll be fine.

Anna

How can you **say** that? If it wasn't the police, who the hell was he? Look, sorry, I know I sound crazy, wandering in the blizzard wringing my hands like some mad operatic heroine. But for chrissake, people get abducted, tortured, murdered - it's happening all the time . . .

PPC#2

Well, this is Sutherland, not Baghdad. People don't get abducted by terrorists up

here. It's too cold for terrorism.

Anna

But it's a crime, isn't it, impersonating a police officer? Why aren't you going after him? If it keeps on snowing . . .

PC#2

I'm thinking about it.

Anna

. . . we'll never get up that track at all!

PC#2

When you say "we" . . .

Anna

Bloody *hell!*

*FX - Anna storms over to the
Landrover and gets in,
slamming the passenger door
violently*

Well are you coming or what?

PC#2

(sighs) Half a mo.

*FX - phone box door creaks
open*

Anna

Now what are you doing?

PC#2

Just checking something . . . mm, OK.

FX - phone box door shuts, _
officer climbs into vehicle, _
starts it, they drive off

Anna

Along here, just on the left, you can hardly see the start of the track now - but it's somewhere there, where those whin bushes are.

PC#2

I know it.

Anna

Well where the hell does it go? What's up there?

PC#2

Fishing loch, broken down boat house, old peat banks, nothing much

Anna

This. Just. Doesn't. Make. **Sense!**

PC#2

No. You mentioned blood in the phone box?

Anna

Yes, yes, you saw it yourself, didn't you?

PC#2

Oh I saw it all right. What I don't see is how it got there. This - deer . . .

Hind, was it? Small? Have to be of course. Eighteen-, twenty-stone red deer stag, with a good rack of antlers this time of year - hard to cram in a BT kiosk. Harder still to remove. Even a hind, I mean, you don't just tuck it under your arm and wander off. You can see that.

FX - pulls off-road and bounces up track

Anna

I can see you think I'm a nutter or a liar. I don't know much about deer - red, white or bloody blue - but it was a big looking beast with four legs and hooves. And no, no horns that I saw.

PC#2

Antlers. No *antlers*.

Anna

Whatever. *(suddenly exclaims)* There! Look, the Skoda!

PC#2

So it is. OK, let's take a look shall we.

FX - brakes to a stop and opens door

Anna Oh great, he's "interested". Progress.

PC#2 None of the usual signs of male occupancy
No dangling football boots, Iron Maiden
CDs, but we do have . . . let's see, box of
pretty multi-coloured tissues, nail clippers,
mints, a pink mobile phone on the floor.
More like feminine touches I'd say.

Anna No shit, Sherlock. It's my bloody car! I
never said it was David's. He was just
driving.

PC#2 Sorry. I suppose he took any personal
identification with him along with your
own, when he was - arrested?

Anna *(caustic)* I know I should have asked him
to leave his birth certificate and a bloody
notarised affidavit before getting cuffed
and kidnapped, but it slipped my mind!

PC#2 Affidavit, eh? Had some dealings with the
court system have we, Ms Mackay?

Anna With Strathclye Uni law department

actually - and if you don't bloody shape up I'll be having dealings with your superiors too in a minute.

PC#2

Tsk. Not 'in a minute', you won't. It's two hours to Inverness, and no mobile coverage. There's always the phone box of course, but . . . (*with faux regret*) oh dear, I forgot, it doesn't take coins and you've no credit cards with you! What a shame. I could charge it on Mastercard, but you'd have to ask nicer than that. Meanwhile I'm the embodiment of the law hereabouts, and you'll forgive my scepticism. (*sighs*) OK, if someone drove off up the hill, minutes ago, where are the tyre tracks? There's a half inch of fresh snow.

Anna

(*as though explaining to a child*) Well, the snow fell *afterwards*, you . . . Give me strength! Look, check in the boot.

PC#2

(*archly*) Why? He's not in there is he?
(*placatorily*) Only joking . . .

Anna

Not funny. Not. At. All.

PC#2

(opening boot) Sorry . . . Contents of boot - ah, boots! Two brace, man and woman for the use of, by the look of it. Wellies and climbing boots. Size tens too big for dainty feet I'll concede. More outdoor gear, rucksacks for two, large suitcase . . .

Anna

Now do you believe in David?

PC#2

(returning to Landrover) Maybe.

Anna

You'll find some tatty briefs in the suitcase too, and a novelty nasal-hair trimmer shaped like an index finger . . .

PC#2

(getting in) Excuse me?

Anna

. . . I know, gross! And I *promise* you those are not mine. Now can we go? Unless you've found that severed head I stashed in the wheel well?

PC#2

Nope. I'll leave that for the forensic pathologists - they like a bit of excitement now and then. What with that and the

cheesy nasal-hair trimmer they should have plenty to gossip about at the mortuary Christmas party. *(buckling belt)*

Anna *(suddenly deflated)* You're never going to take this seriously, are you?

PC#2 Never say never. I promise I'll have a nosey around - oops, sorry! - but first I'm *FX - starts rover, backs out onto the road* taking you down to the village for safe-keeping.

Anna And you never told me your name either.

PC#2 Mackay, miss. PC Roderick Mackay. You know, I think we must be related.

Anna *(sardonic)* Not too closely, I hope.

PC#2 (PC Mackay) *(with a twinkle)* Funny, I was hoping the same. Kissing cousins, perhaps?

FX - The Dusty Miller by Lunasa, musical bridge to Scene 3

SCENE THREE: Interior, next morning, Invergarve Hotel,
Strathgarve, remote coastal village

Characters: Anna Mackay; Fraser Carney

*Musical bridge, The Dusty Miller by Lunasa, reprised, fading into:
FX - Fraser Carney bustling around; outside sounds, placid sunlit
harbour with seagulls*

Anna comes downstairs late

Fraser Carney

'Morning, miss. What a snow it was last night! Hope you were warm in your room and managed some sleep?

Anna

Toasty, Mr Carney. And thanks. I couldn't have faced being up at the croft house on my own, with Uncle Hamish not yet . . . But I didn't sleep much. Too anxious, you know . . . the funeral . . . David . . .

Carney

Aye, it was plain last night you were upset and with good reason. Roddy filled me in.

David. Doing *something*. It looks so ridiculously peaceful out there . . .

Fraser

Aye, it's a virginal sight in the sun right enough. But I think Roddy and the coastguards are the best people to be looking for Mr Macmillan in this. Your city car would not get far up Strathgarve brae, even were it not already in a ditch.

Anna

I know. And that's another thing to worry about. I can't just leave it up there.

Fraser

Now don't worry about that. Seamus Mor will go for your car with the tractor later. Meanwhile, you'll be wanting a bite of breakfast. The lounge bar gets a wee bitty sun this time of day in winter and there's a fan heater going. Nobody else in. Full Scottish, is it?

Anna

Thanks, Mr Carney . . .

Carney

Fraser, please.

Anna

OK, Fraser. But just coffee and toast,

thanks. I'm holding you back, and last night . . . I was overwrought . . . sorry.

Carney

No trouble, no trouble at all. Toast it is. Sit yourself over there, under the big fish. I

FX - cleaning and tidying his way towards the door to the service area

don't know is it real or plaster, but the original must have made an impressive splash in your grandfather's net.

Anna

My grandfather? He caught that?

Carney

That he did, or so they say. I'll not know to this day how he brought in a thirty-pound salmon on an eight-pound line, but then I'm not initiated into the deep technical mysteries of the fishing. (*archly*) Though I do know a little about the mysteries of fisherman. Anyway, there's yesterday's papers there on the sideboard if you want to stay current. I'll send through in a minute.

FX - door to hotel service area squeaks open . . .

Anna

(*calling after him*) Thanks.

. . . and bangs shut.

FX - leafs through a
newspaper in a desultory
fashion but gives up
frustrated

Anna

(to self) I can't do this. Sorry Fraser, but
scratch the toast.

FX - dons coat, grabs room
key and walks out of hotel
into the street

SCENE FOUR: Exterior, Strathgarve beach

Characters: Anna Mackay; Johnny the Kelp

Musical bridge, Dusty Miller reprised, fading into:

FX - Snow squeaks underfoot. Seagulls loud

Anna

(To self) Oh, wow! The sea. The colours!

Incredible. Like . . . like the Aegean or

FX - footfalls crunch ice

something! *(shivers)* Icy bloody cold mind

down the slipway onto a

you. But beautiful. I'd forgotten. Or did I

sandy beach.

ever really see it before?

Oystercatchers piping along

the strand

Anna

(to self) God, it's so What is it? What

is it? It's so . . . *(surprising realisation)* **me.**

Johnny the Kelp

Aye, it always was. It'll be in the blood, as

they say.

Anna

(startled) Wha . . . ? Oh, sorry, you made

me jump. I didn't see you.

Johnny the Kelp

Always out on the sand, in the pools,
clambering on the rocks you were. And
your mother was the same. Couldn't have
kept her off the beach when she was a lass.

Anna

You remember my mum? I'm sorry, I don't
know . . .

Johnny

Oh, I remember, right enough. There was a
time she and I spent many hours on this
beach together, I can tell you - though I
shouldn't. If fate had been different . . .
Ach, but that was before you were born,
lass. These days its mostly just me and the
birds. You don't remember Johnny, then?

Anna

I'm *really* sorry.

Johnny

No, why should you. I'm a no-account old
beach scavenger, and you were still only a
wee bairn when your mother took you
away to the city, to become "somebody"
she said. Brought you back on holidays a
few times, but she was never the same. Of

course that was after . . . well, after.

Anna

So you knew my dad, too.

Johnny

That I did. And well. I knew the Mackay once as a big, sparking firework of a man you could not stand to be near without you'd feel a gush of life in your chest hot as a shot of *uisge*. And then again after the sea had quenched him - had put him out, as you might say - I knew him a second time. It was me pulled him from the sea, bleached and waterlogged as driftwood. Sorry, I shouldn't . . .

Anna

No, it - it's OK. It's like a story I've read. I was so tiny, and I'd hardly known him. My mother hardly talked about it. It's just . . .

Johnny

I could almost wish the sea never gave him back, to see him like that. And your mother the same, I believe. It killed her too, in the end. *(pause)* Anyway, I heard you did.

Anna

(nudged from rapt reflection) What? I did what?

them out of the sand when you weren't much taller than a wee spootie yourself.

Anna

Thanks. I . . . yes, wait a minute, I *do* remember. Of course. You're Kelpie! Or that's what *I* called you. Johnny the kelp man!

Johnny

At your service.

Anna

Oh, you used to gather sackloads of whilks from under the weed in the rock pools. I watched you sometimes break ice on the water to do it, bare-handed in January . . .

Johnny

Still do.

Anna

. . . and haul up barrowloads of seaweed for garden fertiliser . . .

Johnny

Nothing like it.

Anna

. . . *and* I remember your boat, and creels full of amazing blue lobsters!

Johnny

The *Fulmar*. Still afloat, over there.

Anna

And stories! The mermen, the water horse . . . That's why I called you Kelpie, I think - because of the water horse? I was pretty smitten with horses, and magical horses with seaweed manes coming from the sea were irresistible!

Johnny

Ah, the *kelpie* . . . magical indeed, though the true sea water horse is the *each uisge*, which some say is more dangerous. He is a sea spirit who will come ashore in human guise to take a wife, dragging her down into the deep and devouring her whole, so that only her liver remains and bobs to the surface like a blood-soaked fishing float!

Anna

Ugh, I don't remember that!

Johnny

No. (*winking*) I was a wee bit selective I admit. But I don't hold with such nonsense myself. The *each uisge* is much maligned in my opinion, and you would not be sorry to meet one.

Anna

This is so great! (*awkward pause*) Thanks

for the shell. Listen, I'll come back, after the funeral, when David's . . . we'll both come. That's my friend, from the city but he likes . . . well, he likes boats.

Johnny

Well, then. Welcome home, lass.

Anna

(walking away) OK. 'Bye for now.

Anna

Unusual for a police dog - a collie?

FX - Moss agitated

Roddy

Aye, well, she's only a Special Constable, sort of volunteer really. Wheesht, Mossy, wheesht. What is it? There's nobody, just Anna. I don't know what's getting her excited just now. She's usually placid.

Anna

(looking around) Well, there was Kelpie. I was talking to him a moment ago . . .

PC Mackay

Who . . . ? Ach, ***hush*** now, Moss! In the back! Good girl Listen, Seamus is towing your car down to the garage just now, they'll take a peek at it there. You should have it driveable in a day or two - whether the road is or not.

Anna

OK, but what's happening about David? What have you found out? Where the hell is he? Have you reported him missing? I mean, what's getting done?

PC Mackay

I've reported the situation to the Sergeant at Lairg and he's apprising Inverness today, but they won't have contacted anybody yet.

Anna

(acidly) "The situation". Hell. I should call somebody - his mother, his work, but I don't know what the hell to say. Maybe after the funeral I should . . .

PC Mackay

No, well it's only been a few hours, and there's too many questions yet. Look, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. Umm. The funeral . . . how are you prepared for that, by the way? Are you OK to be going on your own? I can take you if you like.

Anna

(surprised) You're planning on going?

PC Mackay

Of course, Hamish was my father's cousin. It's like *Deliverance* up here, you know, *(grins)* disgustingly incestuous. Everybody is somebody's relation.

Anna

(impatient) Yes but that means you'll be off-duty. How can you do that? What

about David?

PC Mackay

I'm on it. It's in the system. I'm waiting on a call back from my Sergeant . . .

Anna

Waiting on a *call*? I don't think you get it. This guy cuffed David! Pushed him around. Drove like a maniac . . . It was violent assault!

PC Mackay

Well . . . technically, aye.

Anna

What do you mean, "technically"? Jesus!

PC Mackay

Look, I told you, I'm on it. I'm doing all I can. I was up at the loch again this morning as soon as it was practical . . .

Anna

Well, move over CSI, Thunderbirds are "Go"! And? Come *on!*

PC Mackay

(reluctantly) I didn't want to have to tell you this. I found the Landrover by the old boathouse. Empty. No sign of anyone.

Anna

No? Well where the hell could they go?

PC Mackay

I don't know for sure . . .

Anna

. . . but you must . . .

PC Mackay

. . . *but* - like I said I have a suspicion and I'm making inquiries. I've a visit to make straight after the funeral and I dare say things will look clearer then, OK?

Anna

(sullen but resigned) Not really OK, no. But what can I do about it?

PC Mackay

I won't even go to the hotel for the soup and sandwiches after the burial. Promise. Try not to worry. Things are never as dramatic as they seem

Anna

Aye, right! This is starting to feel more like a surreal bloody comedy!

PC Mackay

OK, that wasn't well judged. Sorry. But things have to be done right. I can't search the entire Highlands on my own. Like I said, it's in the system. They'll send people, if and when. But that's not my call.

Meanwhile I'm doing everything I can and I've rounded up the local mountain rescue and coastguard volunteers just in case.

Trust me?

Anna

I suppose I have to.

PC Mackay

Look, climb in and we'll stop off at the police house, see if there's any messages, and then I can change and take you on to the kirk. You'll be needing a lift out to the graveyard in any case, it's up on the hill, remember?

Anna

I ought to. Seems like my whole family's up there. But I was too wee for my dad's burial and we never came back for Aunt Lizzie - I was still at school and mum was, well, pretty out of it by then . . . *(sighs)*

OK then, let me in before my last

FX - opens passenger door -
and gets in
door slams shut

remaining toe gets frostbite. And when we get to yours . . .

PC Mackay

What?

Anna
Can I get a sandwich? No meal last night and no breakfast either yet. I'm bloody famished! Either you feed me or Uncle Hamish'll have to shove over and make room for a skinny one.

PC Mackay
(laughs) There speaks a Sutherland lass if I ever heard one. Unsentimental and a mycologist to the last!

Anna
Excuse me?

PC Mackay
Always able to see the fungi-side of things

Anna
Well, well. Witty *and* erudite! I see there's more to you than meets the eye, Constable Mackay.

PC Mackay
I know one thing meets my eye.

Anna
Oh?

FX - starts landrover

PC Mackay
You belong here, Anna.

Anna *(intrigued)* Oh, you think so, do you?

PC Mackay *(serious)* I do think so.

Anna And what makes you an expert?

PC Mackay Hey, I'm a policeman! Who can you trust if you can't trust a policeman? But no more jokes now. I have to compose my face for a funeral. Policemen aren't allowed to smile at funerals - even when they're related.

FX - Landrover drives off, gulls swirl, mewing over musical bridge.
(Dusty Miller) to Scene Six

SCENE SIX: Interior, Hotel bar after funeral

Characters: Anna Mackay; Fraser Carney; Alister 'England'; Shugs Munro; Morag Mackay; Brodie Beg; Donald Kirkiboll; Sileas the Post

*musical bridge: Dusty Miller, by Lunasa, reprised, over:
FX - crying gulls, fading into hubbub of drinkers and jukebox*

Shugs Munro . . . a drink problem, he says. I says, aye, I've got a drink problem. Fraser keeps closing the bloody bar! *(general laughter from the company at the bar)*

Fraser Carney Oy, you lot, twenty-four hour drinking doesn't mean it's compulsory you know! *(more laughter)* Anna! Over here my dear. You'll take a dram with us.

Anna *(entering bar)* I will. *Slainte.*

company *Slainte/cheers/your health lass*

Anna I hope I've put enough behind the bar to keep things going for a while, Fraser?

Fraser Ach we're OK for a whiley yet, don't you worry. Everyone's wishing you well and Hamish has had a fine send-off in Strathgarve style. *(calls back to the service area)* Have they all had the soup, Morag? You'd best come through then for the craic.

Sileas the Post *(elbowing in beside Anna)* Shift yer arse Brodie and give a stool here. My feets is burnin' after that post run, never mind the roads are ice!

Brodie Beg I thought I could smell something scorching and I swore it was that gossiping tongue of yours, Sileas Mackay.

Sileas Ho ho, that's all your Christmas cards goin' for firelighters this year, Brodie. If you get sent any that is.

Brodie Ach, here, take the stool, warm your bony bum. I'm off anyway *(knocks back his shot, plants the glass with a smack of the*

lips). 'Afternoon Anna. Later, Shugs.

Shugs

Aye, aye Brodie.

Fraser

So, Anna, have you decided what to do about the croft? Will you take on the tenancy?

Anna

(taken aback) To tell the truth I hadn't really thought about it, not really. I mean, I don't see how I could.

Shugs

Back to the big city then, it is?

Sileas

If it was me I'd be back like a shot. George Square, Sauchiehall, Ibrox . . . no contest.

Donald

(dreamily) Celtic Park.

Sileas

(aside) Wash your mouth out! No, I mean who'd swap for a freezin' croft house up at Cragganmor? It's a bugger to get up that road at all some of these mornings, and you wonder why anyone would want to.
(to Anna) No offence, but Hamish was born to it . . .

Alister

Yo.

Fraser

There's plenty would rent a few fenced acres up by Kirkiboll, wouldn't you say?

Alister

Hamish's? No bother. That's good ground, well drained, not choked with reeds. I'd have it myself, but as chairman of the grazing committee I'd be accused of insider dealing!

FX - a C & W track on the jukebox finishes, The Bluebells' "Young At Heart" starts - a cheery chorus erupts in the background

Fraser

Why not think about it, Anna, at least? Go back to your job, mull it over.

Anna

Heh! I don't *have* a job as it happens. Got made redundant. Staff cutbacks. Look, I'll think about it. It's just impossible to concentrate on anything at the moment with David still missing and not knowing what's going on.

Sileas

Aye, of course. And, er . . . well, while

we're on the subject what's the score there?
This phony policeman Fraser was telling
about . . .

Fraser *(apologetically to Anna)* I only mentioned
. . . .

Anna It's OK, Fraser, I'd expect everybody to
know - place like this. Truth is it's a relief
to talk about it.

Morag What did this non-pc PC look like?
Couldn't have been anyone from around
here, surely?

Anna It was dark and raining, and it was all over
in a flash. I didn't pay much attention to
him. Could have been anybody with a
Landrover, nothing noteworthy . . .
Although . . . Wait a minute, David said
something about his hat . . . "They wear
funny hats around here," he said.

Morag Not like a proper police hat, then, is that
it?

Anna I suppose not . . . It was a peaked cap, that's all I remember.

Morag Like an old postie's hat maybe? Do they still give you a hat, Sileas?

Sileas I have it somewhere in the van or the house, never wear the stupid thing though. Just blows off in the winds up here. I keep my woolly toorie pulled down over my ears!

Shugs *(mischievously)* Maybe Morag is the phantom kidnapper!

Donald Aye, maybe he's tied in a mail sack in the back of your van, Morag, waiting for you to have your evil way with him!

Shugs And afterwards she'll send him back with "return to sender" written on his forehead and a second-class stamp on his bum!
(laughter)

Fraser OK, lads, OK, let's remember this is Anna's boyfriend - it's really no joke.

Anna

It's alright, I'd rather that than people tiptoeing around with phony concern. Actually he's not really my boyfriend . . .

Shugs

Hear that, Sileas? You're still in with a shout! *(clears throat)* Sorry, sorry . . .

Donald

(laughing at memory) Oh boy, that hat business reminds me of Alan Henderson - remember, Shuggie? Used to live up by Skelpisdale beyond. Alan the Coast he was because his dad was chief coastguard - you maybe wouldn't remember, Annie. It was only part time, but they get the hat and the badge on the navy jersey, you know. Well the lad was a bit of a Walter Mitty. Always collecting old memorabilia, war stories and stuff, and one day *(laughs)* there was this joint Army-RAF exercise out in the hills, inflatable tanks everywhere, hilarious they were with their barrels drooping and swaying in the wind. And young Alan drives by in the coastguard Landrover with his dad's hat on, tips a salute and says "carry on" and them all standing to

attention and saluting as he passed! Hohohoh, he got a few beers dining out on that little escapade I can tell you!

Fraser Shows how easy it is to be taken in by a uniform I suppose.

Anna *(absently)* You know, the weirdest thing was the deer, propped up dead in the phone box. Freaky, now I think about it.

Alister *(coming to the bar for drinks and half-hearing)* Deer, did you say? Oh aye, well known for the poachin' too was Alan, him and his brothers. But they never caught them at it, more's the pity.

Donald That's right enough. Nobody objects to a local dropping the odd beast now and then - do they, Shugs . . .

Shugs Whoa, I'm saying nothin' !

Donald . . . saving the estate of course, and the polis if he's forced to. But the Hendersons were a fair industrial scale operation that

made it difficult for the rest of us. And Alan was the worst. A bit too fond of guns and uniforms, that one.

Alister

Aye. *(aside)* Thanks, Morag, same again. *(to the company)* Wanted to join the Army I heard, moved away. Don't expect they would have had him. Bit of a nutter! You might remember him, Anna, he was a wee boy same age as you, the two of you used to play on the sand when you came back on holidays.

Anna

I did? *(realisation)* Oh, **that** Alan. Wait a minute, now I remember! Oh Jesus

Morag

Nasty streak, that Henderson. When he left the place it was good riddance. Wouldn't be surprised if he turned out a bad lot.

Sileas

FX - music, Scully Casey's Jig reprised, starting quiet, swelling behind dialogue to musical bridge, end of scene

Coincidence is, I heard he might be back, Morag. I saw Roddy on the road earlier and he was after going out to the old croft to see him, today just. To do with a poaching complaint, I believe it was

Anna *(to self) Shit! (to company, flustered)*
Look, you'll have to excuse me, I need to make a phone call. Can I get some change please?

Fraser Sure, Anna. *(shuffling some coins on the bar)* Just down the hall.

Anna Thanks

FX - leaves through banging door, bar sounds fading

FX - finds Rod's number on scrap of paper and fumbles at the payphone

come on, come on . . .

Recorded message, voice of PC Mackay This is Strathgarve police. There is no officer available at the moment. In an emergency please dial 999. If you wish to speak to an officer please dial Lairg 246 or Inverness . . .

Anna *(replacing handset) Damn it!*

FX - Anna bangs out of hotel front door into street.
Dusty Miller by Lunasa, musical bridge to Scene Seven

SCENE SEVEN: Exterior, Strathgarve beach

Characters: Anna Mackay; Johnny the Kelp

musical bridge: Dusty Miller, by Lunasa, reprised, over:

FX - beach sounds, gulls etc

Anna *(calling and running out on the sand)*
Wait! Hi, Johnny! Wait . . . *(arriving breathless)* I wondered if you'd be here

Johnny the Kelp Where else would I be, lass?

FX - small waves hissing on the sand

Anna Are you always out here, then?

Johnny When I'm anywhere.

Anna Kelpie, do you remember, when I was back here on holidays as a girl - there was a boy, used to follow me about? He was on the beach often.

Johnny

Wee Alan? I remember him, indeed. Years later he went away and few shed any tears. Always on the edge of trouble was Alan. Just like Loch Garve here on a fine day - smooth on the surface but with a murderous undertow, as I know too well.

Anna

Only, when I was still a student, at Uni, I got calls from this guy. This same Alan. How he found me I don't know - maybe through Aunt Lizzie. But he reminisced about Strathgarve, wanted to make a date. I didn't. Too busy, new friends, different life, you know, blah blah. And to be honest he put me on edge. But he persisted, and I didn't like it, he was too pushy and he got resentful . . . Now I'm wondering - things I've heard. Is this guy worse than just a pest? Could he be obsessive? Dangerous even? *(pauses for breath)* Sorry, why should you know? I'm just thinking out loud. Probably talking nonsense.

Johnny

Talk away, lass. It's a charmed place, between the tide marks. You can think

anything, say anything, and leave no trace.
The sea washes away your footprints
behind you, just as though you never were
here.

Anna

I'm starting to wish Henderson never was!
I heard he's back here, now, in Strathgarve
and I can't help thinking: Is it him?
Getting back at me somehow, through
David? It sounds crazy but I can't think of
any other explanation.

Johnny

And what about your polis man? What
does he think?

Anna

Roddy? Well, that's it, he's gone after
Henderson, for poaching he said. But
maybe he suspects him for David's kidnap
too, I don't know. I can't raise him. Does
he realise the man could be dangerous?
What if he was out poaching again with
his brothers and they stashed the beast
there to be picked up, and when Alan
came by and found us parked in the way
he thought he'd do the old coastguard hat
routine, pretend to be a copper to send us

about our business - creative, got to give him that - but then he realised who I was. Who David was!

Johnny

Well, it's possible right enough

Anna

But the thing is, he didn't really get a good look at me, in the dark and the rain. And how would he have recognised me after so long anyway? It's been years. It doesn't add up . . .

Johnny

No, indeed.

Anna

Unless . . . Ohmygod! He knows what I look like now! Or he knew my car! Knew about David maybe? Has he been *stalking* me? How long? Jesus Christ! How can I just hang around here knowing that? I should be *doing* something! But how? I've no idea where to start looking.

Johnny

Well, now, I'm thinking of the spooties. They can't move at all sideways along the sand, you see, their worlds are just up and down, one-dimensional. They have this

extensible leg, digs a hole down deep into the sand underneath and pulls them in after itself, two feet down sometimes, then it uncoils like a spring to push them up to feed. Now, they're cunning. Good weather prophets they are - dig deep when there's a north wind coming, stay shallow when it's from the south. To catch mister spootie takes patience and a bit of cunning yourself. You can force him to the surface with salt. He hates salt, an odd thing for a sea creature I grant you, but salt brings him out. But you've got to find his hole first. And salt won't work once you've touched him, he's wise like that, so once you've grasped him you don't let go or he'll be gone and you'll never bring him back. You have to tempt him, you see, deceive him. Wait for a south wind - like today, it would be a good spootie day - then you walk backwards on the wet sand by the water's edge, slowly, and where the water fills your footprint you might see a hole appear - see? There. That's the entrance of his burrow. He may come up or he may not, without the salt, so you

might have to dig him out, but only find the hidey hole and that's when you have him!

Anna

I don't see how . . .

Johnny

I was getting to that. Now, an obsessive man is cunning, but simple, like the spooties. He has tunnel-vision. His world is one-dimensional too, he doesn't move far, just does the same things in the same places, over and over, up and down, up and down in the dark hole of his obsession. If you know what it is, and where it is, and what tempts him, you can be ready to grab him. Do you see?

Anna

And what obsesses Alan is . . . (*suddenly struck*) Are there any old military places around here?

Johnny

Oh, yes, just one. There's the world-war-two mini-sub training base on the loch. They used them to sink German battleships, very secret. There are some concrete ruins on the cliff top - over there,

d'you see? - and an old quay below. Used to be a stair down the cliff, but it's long fallen away. There's an old peat track from the Altnahurich road goes to a wee lochan up there. I used to fish it when I was a lad, before the sea was in my veins. The ruin is a mile or so across the lochan.

Anna

(half to herself) The fishing loch - the track! That's it! You're a genius, Kelpie. I have to get up there somehow . . . Shit, but Roddy's already away up the brae and my car's still in the garage - wouldn't get up there anyway, not in anything less than a four-wheel drive with chains.

Johnny

Well, now, maybe you don't need to drive up to the front door. A body who haunts the beaches learns a few things over the years. There's a deep cave they used in the war, at the back of the geo where they built the quay to launch the little subs. Smuga Cave it's called, from the Norse, and at the very back of the cave is a waterfall where the Allt Smuga drops through a swallow hole from the lochan

fifty feet above and empties to the sea. On a rising tide, as it is now, you can row right in through the geo and a good climber could get up the swallow hole and creep in at the back door of mister spootie's burrow . . .

Anna *(ruminatively)* Just how did you know I'm a rock climber, Kelpie?

Johnny *(innocently)* Are you so?

Anna David and I were planning some climbing. The gear's in the back of the car. *(laughs)* And I was Uni rowing champion two years in a row. Did you know that as well?

Johnny Pshht, how could I be knowing any such thing and me an old beach-bum!

Anna Hah. So all we need is a boat?

Johnny The *Fulmar's* not presently busy.

Anna You know, I could do it . . .

Johnny

Well, go on, then - off and roust Seamus
the Pump out of his afternoon tea break
and get the gear from your car! Quick!
While there's light enough. I'll stand ready
to cast off the mooring.

FX - music, Dusty Miller, bridge to Scene Eight

SCENE EIGHT: Exterior, in rowing boat *Fulmar*,
Strathgarve Bay

Characters: Anna Mackay & Johnny the Kelp, in boat

musical bridge: *Dusty Miller*, by *Lunasa*, reprised, over:
sound of oars in rowlocks and the surge of waves

Anna (straining) It's a hard pull against
the swell, Kelpie. Did you never
fancy an outboard?

Johnny No, lassie, a little brash for my taste,
and a waste of good muscle. . . . Not
far now, just around this point
There, you're coming into the mouth
of the geo now.

FX - sound begins to reverberate

Anna It's like - like a canal, cut through
sheer rock!

Johnny Aye, it would have been a tunnel

long ago, carved by a subterranean river. Now the roof has fallen and all that remains of the tunnel is the Smuga Cave. Keep to the middle of the channel, away from rocks . . . That's it. See the old submarine quay there?

Anna

I see it.

Johnny

Keep on going, in under the cave roof . . . Yes, yes . . . Now ship oars! Gently in . . . now hold off those rocks and beach her there, see the sandy shelf . . . That's it!

FX - roaring water echoes from deep inside the dripping cave

Anna

(getting out, voice raised over the sound) It's eerie in here, awesome!

Johnny

Aye, and stygian at the rump end of a dark afternoon. You'll need your forehead lamp to see. But follow the stream back in, and you'll find

daylight again when you reach the
swallow hole. I'll look after the boat.
Go now. And good luck, Annie!

Anna

(moving off) Thanks, Kelpie. Thanks
for everything.

Johnny

Not at all, lass. Just think of it as
Johnny paying an old debt.

Anna

*(calls from deeper inside the cave
over rushing water)* 'Annie' . . . only
my mother ever called me that!

FX - musical bridge to Scene Nine, Dusty Miller

SCENE NINE: Exterior, hill above Strathgarve Bay

Characters: Anna Mackay; David Macmillan; PC Roddy Mackay; Alan
Henderson

*FX - music, Dusty Miller, fading to:
sounds of climbing, pebbles falling, grunts of effort, emerging onto the
open hill beside rushing burn*

Anna *(hushed, to self)* There it is! Like old
pill-boxes or something, corrugated
iron over the doors. Getting dark,
but I see no lights . . . I reckon no
light means no Henderson, anyway.
*(creeping closer, peeping through
gaps in sheet iron)* David? Are you
here? David?

David *(mumbling through tape)* mmmm!

FX - Squeal and creak of sheet iron

Anna

FX - Anna tears a tape gag off

David's mouth

(clambering through) David! Thank god! Are you alright? You're freezing!

David

(gasps) Bloody baltic, and a bit knocked about to be honest, but at least I'm out of the snow here in my wee chalet. It could be worse. And will be, if we don't get out of here before Hannibal fucking Henderson gets back! He's crazy! **And** armed.

Anna

He told who you he is? What this is all about?

David

Oh, he told me alright! With a length of two-by-two. You could at least have gone out with him for a beer or somethin'. Agh, I think my knee's knackered. I can't walk. Can we get these bastard cuffs off?

Anna

I don't see how. I'm sorry, David. Not just about the cuffs. You were right - all of the crap, it is my fault!

David

Ach, no. But never mind the self-flagellation! However you got in here, let's get the hell back out, now!

Anna

I climbed from the beach. No chance that way, not with you in this condition. Where did Henderson go?

David

Shit! I think he went back across the loch, only about ten minutes ago. There were a couple of boats.

Anna

Then we'll have to go the same way. Come on, try and get your arms on my shoulder . . . Gotcha. *(heaves)*

FX - they stagger across rubble and sheet iron out of the building

Hupp! That's it. Now lean into me.

David

It's pretty dark already. but if he left a boat it'll be over there by that spit.

Anna

I see it! Can you make it?

David

I think so. Let's just hope he's not

waiting on the other side!

Anna

Mood I'm in I almost hope he is, the bastard! Come on, let's get you in.

FX - they stagger through freezing water and half fall into the boat

David

(groans in pain) Looks like you're driving this time.

Anna

(putting oars in the water) I'm in the rhythm - had some practice already. Just try and lie down. Here we go. . .

FX - steady strokes of the oars, curlews calling over the water

David

Wow!

Anna

What? What is it?

David

Up there! Stars! What a show. I suppose I don't usually notice the ceiling. I'm no' used to being the one on my back in these situations.

Anna

What situations?

Anna

(shipping oars & whispering)

Headlights! Looks like two
Landrovers. Shh! And voices.
That's Rod Mackay . . . and
Henderson? Shouting

David

(whispering) Who's Rod Mackay
when he's at home? Or even when
he's here?

Anna

A policeman. He's been looking for
you.

David

I seem to be real popular with the
polis. I hope this is a kocher one?

Anna

(very quietly recommences rowing)

As real as Strathgarve has to offer.

David

If he's got a big truncheon he'll do
for me. God, did really I say that?

*FX - a gunshot echoes across the
water*

Anna

Shit! That was a gun!

David

You don't say! Actually it was a rifle. So much for the big truncheon. I think your man's in trouble. And by the way, the bad guy isn't polis anymore, so you shouldn't get confused. He's got some sort of old Army togs on, thinks he's a fuckin' survivalist or somethin'.

FX - the boat gently touches the shore

Anna

(still whispering) That fits.

David

Look at that! Two uniformed antagonists facing off, silhouetted against the Northern Lights. Like a Jedi confronting his dark-side nemesis! Totally surreal!

Anna

Get a grip, David. You lie low here. Stay in the reeds.

David

And how exactly do I have a choice? God's sake Anna, be careful, the guy's a loony! What are you going to do?

Anna

I've absolutely no idea. (*crawling away*)

PC Mackay

(*some yards off*) If you're trying to be scary, Henderson, you're succeeding. Trouble is, it's not the Jack Palance kind of scary, more the George Dubya kind of scary. Idiot let loose in a brain factory, that kind. And the thing is, I know you, I know where you live, where you work, what outstanding charges there are against you in Rutherglen. Oh aye, I know everything there is to know about Alan Doo-lally Henderson, and so does the rest of Northern Constabulary - half of whom are on their way here as we speak. So even moving a muscle now can do nothing but add more months and years to your sentence. Come on! Give it up.

Henderson

Shut up, you smart-mouth shite or the next one'll drop you like a

Anna is crawling around behind the police Landrover twelve-pointer. Thoughtful of you to bring your own cuffs, by the way. Now put them on like a good boy and get in the boat.

PC Mackay

It's hard to cuff yourself. Here, you come and do it for me.

Henderson

(laughs sourly) You must think I'm stupid.

PC Mackay

True.

Henderson

Anna reaches the open door of the Landrover and reaches up to feel for the keys Just do it. And throw the key in the loch . . . That's it. Now get in the fucking boat. We're going for a wee cruise, and if you're nice and quiet I might **not** blow your head off and dump your sorry carcass in the loch

. . .

Anna

(whispers, to self) Please let there be keys . . . Yes!

Henderson

. . . then you and the city slicker can keep each other warm at night while

I take your nice warm polis
Landrover to go and deal with the
stuck-up bitch.

FX - Anna climbs behind the wheel

Anna

(through gritted teeth) Not if the
bitch deals with you *first!*

FX - Anna turns the key, guns the
engine and lurches towards

Henderson

Henderson

What the f . . . !

FX - Henderson manages to get off
a shot at the Landrover, the
windscreen shatters

Anna

(hit in the shoulder, screams) Aagh!
You bastard!

FX - Anna floors the pedal and hits
Henderson a glancing blow,
knocking him down

PC Mackay

(falling on Henderson) Let it go!
Give . . . me . . . the **gun!**

FX - PC Mackay hits Henderson, and wrenches rifle away. Henderson grunts and is silent

David (staggering out of boat, shouts)
Anna! You OK?

PC Mackay (bewildered) Anna? (realising the situation) **Anna!**

FX - PC Mackay races to Landrover and tears door open

PC Mackay Anna, oh god, you're shot!

Anna I think . . . so . . . something hit me . . . doesn't hurt too much . . .

PC Mackay Come on, let me see that . . . Right, we've got to get you to hospital. I'm calling HQ. They'll send a

FX - PC Mackay grabs First Aid kit, brushes glass off Anna and tries to make her comfortable helicopter. I can't drive in these things anyway (*jingles cuffs*).

David (*dragging himself up behind PC*

Mackay) Jesus, is she alright? What can I do?

PC Mackay

If you can, try and keep these bandages pressed on the wound. Here . . . I'll get on the radio.

David

Hold on Anna! Hold on!
(PC Mackay heard on radio in background)

Anna

(exhausted, woozy) This is just typical.

David

What?

Anna

Two defenceless handcuffed men - and no libido . . .

FX - musical bridge to Scene Ten, reprise start of Dusty Miller

SCENE TEN: Interior, Raigmore Hospital

Inverness

Characters: Anna Mackay; David Macmillan

musical bridge: Start of The Dusty Miller by Lunasa, reprised, quietly.

over:

FX - hospital ward background sounds

David *(as if from far away)* Anna. Anna?

Anna mmm. David?

David You were asleep again. Sorry to wake you.

Anna It's fine. I seem to be dozy all the time. Apart from that I'm OK, just sore. Hannibal Henderson's bullet missed anything vital.

David I didn't realise it was a head shot.

Anna Ha ha. I should be out of here in a couple of days.

go away you know! If you need me, you know where I am.

Anna Thanks David. I mean it. You're a good friend. The best.

David *(ironically)* And it was all going so well.

Anna *(smiling)* I still owe you, you know. We've got stuff to settle - the loan for the car, other things. There's a small sum from the inheritance . . .

David Heaven's sake, Anna, keep it, do something good with it. I've still got a job to go to, and there's a bright future in telecoms. Hey, remember that old phone box? That's me:- I won't take money, but you could give me some credit for a change.

Anna *(rueful)* Sorry . . . *(impish)* But that was a truly terrible joke, by the way

David *(laughs)* See, there's no future for

us. You never laugh at my jokes.
Look, it's OK, I sense what's goin
on with Rod the Plod, I'm no' stupid.
And I think it's good for you. The
the man, the place - everything. It
isn't for me, all that. But it's what
you want. It's in your blood. Go for
it.

Anna

Well you're the third person to tell
me that, so it must be true. You sure
you're OK about this?

David

Aye. But just don't ask me twice.
*(leans over to kiss Anna on the
brow)* I'll see you.

SCENE ELEVEN: Exterior, outside the Strathgarve Hotel

Characters: Anna Mackay; Roddy Mackay; Moss

FX - peaceful early evening, harbour sounds, surf, oystercatchers, and curlews. Anna walks up to door of hotel, prepares herself to go in.

Roddy Mackay (off duty) approaches with Moss

NO musical bridge

Roddy

You came, then.

Anna

Yes. Hi Moss!

Moss

Wuff.

Roddy

I'm glad. How are you feeling?

Anna

Sore, but mobile. I just needed to chill so I've been watching the seals on the sandbanks. Such a beautiful, soft evening. A bit different from my last visit!

Roddy

Aye, that was a wild weekend. In every way. Leisure to take in the scenery this

time, eh?

Anna

It really is . . . stunning. How come a Mackay has the luck to be PC in Strathgarve anyway? Don't Northern Constabulary send you all over the map?

Roddy

Aye, lucky posting. Normally they'd keep you away from your own back yard, but it just happened there was no-one else in the right place at the right time. In any case I was Aultraggan born and bred. That's ten miles over in the next glen so I'm not really local. (*grin*) Strathgarve's finest used to thrash the daylights out of us in the Northern League footie, so there's no love lost. I've got two years here, then we'll see.

Anna

You might go away?

Roddy

I might. And I might come back. You did.

Anna

Did I?

Roddy

Well, here you are.

Anna Here I am. Listen, thanks for getting me out of there, the first aid, everything.

Roddy I should be thanking *you*. If it hadn't been for you, well

Anna You're welcome. (*archly*) Let's just hope you've learned your lesson now.

Roddy Lesson . . . ?

Anna (*confidentially*) Never leave your car unattended with the key in the ignition. You can't be too careful!

Roddy (*laughs*) Touché! Shall we . . . ?

Anna Yes.

Roddy (*opens door*) After you.

Shugs

Pfsh, should be decades!

Roddy

. . . possibly more on reference to the High Court in Edinburgh. Did they come by and take your statement, Anna?

Anna

Yes

Roddy

And . . . er, David? How's he doing?

Anna

He's OK. Gone home 'til the trial . . . it's complicated to explain. We've both had a lot to work out. This thing seems to have made us both rethink, make decisions. New brooms, and all that . . .

Morag

So is this you back to stay Anna? All well that ends well, is it?

Anna

I'm thinking I'll stay for a while, Morag. See how it goes. But it won't be over for me until that arsehole - excuse my Gaelic - is locked up . . . and my shoulder has forgotten that it had a bullet in it. (*turning to Roddy*) You know, Roddy, one thing I

can't work out: What did the deer in the phone box have to do with anything? Why put it in there? And when? How did he know we were coming by anyway?

Roddy

Ah, now all I can tell you about that is that it was nothing to do with Alan Henderson. Turns out he didn't even know the animal was there. Probably some local hero stashed it in there out of reach of scavengers to pick up later - wouldn't you say Shugs?

Shugs

Hey, don't look at me! (*awkwardly*) If I had to speculate . . . *if* someone had taken a beast on the hill, just for the sake of argument, and *if* they'd done that, then they *might* perhaps have spotted Henderson in the devilish dark and sleet and mistaken him as the polis, just like yourself Anna. Then it *might* be that they nipped in smartish to move the beast when the Landrover had gone.

Roddy

But you're only guessing, of course

Shugs Well of course, it's none of my business.
Not at all! (*moves away from bar, calls out*) Alister! Game of pool?

Alister Aye, you're due a thrashing, Hughie. I'm your man.

Roddy (*grinning*) So it was just happenstance apparently, a red herring.

Sileas Not a red deer at all, then. (*groans from the company*)

Morag Finding a poached herring would seem very fishy, I'm thinking. (*more groans*)

Brodie I'm just glad I got my boat back in one piece! Drifted back in on the sand all by itself, undamaged. Should have been on the rocks. A stroke of luck, that's all it is. Or maybe I named her right, eh?

Anna Your boat, Brodie? By itself? I don't understand . . .

Donald Oh, so now it's *you* named her, Brodie.

Heh! I recall well that *Sea Spirit* was Lexie's preference and you hated it with a passion!

Brodie Ach, well, whoever!

Anna *(aside to Rod, perplexed)* Brodie's boat? but I thought the boat was Kelpie's? The *Fulmar* . . .

Brodie *(overhearing)* Who? Ah, you mean old Johnny? Aye it used to be his, right enough. What a memory you've got there lass - and recognising her after all this time! I got her at the auction, what, twenty years ago? Fine strong boat to this day, but she's the *Fulmar* no longer. She's been the *Sea Spirit* these ten years or more. Would that be right Fraser? It was your boy repainted her for me.

Fraser *(pulling pints)* It'll be, oh, eleven years, just before Duncan went on the rigs.

Donald Heh heh, what a character was Johnny. Head full of stories, veins full of seawater

and whisky! He and your father worked the boats together sometimes, Anna, they were close - and your mother too. Well, when I say that . . . wheesht, no, no, it was just talk. I mean, they were maybe sweet on each other but it was never . . . although, some said that was why your mother and the Mackay . . .

Morag

Ach, Donald, will you be quiet! The lassie doesn't want to hear it. Ancient history, and it was only daft rumours . . .

Anna

(getting distressed) . . . but I mean, if I'd known it wasn't his boat I'd have asked . . . It never occurred to me . . .

Brodie

Don't worry about it. How were you to know? And anyway, it was good you took a boat as sound as the *Spirit*. A fine job, too, if I may say, to get her in to those rocks on your own

Anna

(hushed, to self) But, I saw it, the *Fulmar*. He showed me the cave . . .

Donald

Aye. Worst sea I've ever been in. We were out at the porbeagles on the Mackay's 30-footer and the swell came up. We ran ahead of a squall getting back in the bay but it overtook us. Gear flying everywhere, terrible blinding spray, deck heaving. Your father was stowing lines on deck and got hit and went over the side unconscious. Johnny scarce thought twice but grabbed a belt and was in after him, dived down and brought him back up against a fierce undertow out by the Mermaid Rock. He got Mackay in the belt, tied to a rope over the gunwhale, then a big wave came in and tore him away. That was the last I saw him. They never found him at all, not a piece. A terrible business it was, terrible all round, to lose two fine men like that at once. And not even a grave in the kirkyard for the one.

Anna

(shock settling in) You're telling me . . . Rod, am I crazy? He . . . But this just isn't possible! You *saw* me!

Roddy

Saw you?

Anna

Yes, talking - on the beach? (*sudden realisation*) No, no you didn't, did you? You *didn't* see. (*pause*) But *Moss did!!*

FX - sound of surf and screaming birds, rising in volume behind remembered snatches

snatches of talk echoing in Anna's memory:

Rod: "Wheesht, Mossy, wheesht! . . . I don't know what's getting her excited just now. She's usually placid."

Anna: "Well, there was Kelpie I was talking to a minute ago . . ."

Rod: "Who . . . ?"

Johnny: "I'll always be here, just the same, somewhere between the tide marks "

Anna: "Are you always out here?"

Johnny: "When I'm anywhere."

Johnny: "...on the edge of trouble was Alan. Just like Loch Garve here on a fine day - smooth on the surface but with a murderous undertow, as I know too well."

Johnny: "It's a charmed place, between the tide marks. You can think anything, say anything, and leave no trace. The sea washes away your footprints behind you, just as though you never were here. "

Anna: "'Annie' . . . only my mother ever called me that!"

Donald: ". . . Wheesht, no, no, it was just talk. They were sweet on each other but it was never . . . I mean, some said that was why your mother and the Mackay . . . but no it was only rumours..."

FX - sound of pounding surf reaches a crescendo, culminating in . . .

Anna

Oh god!

FX - a full glass crashes to the floor. The company, shocked, turn to help Anna

Roddy

Are you OK, Annie? Do want to sit down?

Anna

I . . . *(manages a laugh)* It's OK. Thanks. I'll be all right. Sorry, everybody, sorry about the glass - my shoulder, you know?

(gets control of herself) Roddy, I think I need to take a walk on the beach, get some air.

Roddy

Well, sure.

Anna

Want to come along?

Roddy

OK. If you really want. I'll bring Mossie.

Anna

Please.

FX- Anna and Roddy exit

SCENE THIRTEEN: Exterior, Strathgarve beach

Characters: Anna Mackay; Roddy Mackay; Moss

FX - beach sounds. gulls, oystercatchers

Anna *(running down the sand)* Come on! Down to the water . . .

Moss *(chasing)* wuff!

Roddy *(catching up breathless)* Well you've recovered fast. This sea air is damned effective, I must say. But mind that shoulder!

Anna *(laughing)* It's OK, this is a charmed place. Between the tide marks nothing can harm you. Don't you know *anything*?

FX - they walk splashing
along the water's edge

Roddy *(with mock severity)* I know you're a crazy woman

Anna BTW, I like that you called me that.

Roddy What, crazy woman?

Anna

No!

Roddy

What did I call you?

Anna

"Annie."

Roddy

Did I?

Anna

Yes. It's nice. (*bending to pick up something*) Here . . .

Roddy

What's this?

Anna

A gift. A razor shell.

Roddy

Hm . . . (*wryly*) A bit coals-to-Newcastle, but 'Thankyou!'

Anna

Welcome. Now that I'm definitely staying I've decided to woo you.

Roddy

Woo?

Anna

You know, court, importune, pursue?
(*sigh*) Shag?

