

IN CONFIDENCE

THE BALANCE OF MIND

Script for a full-length play by Michael Barry

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THE BALANCE OF MIND.

SETTING:

ON STAGE IS A FARM. THE FARMHOUSE HAS AT LEAST ITS WORKING KITCHEN OPEN FOR BUSINESS. A FARMYARD LEADS ON TO A FIELD, CURRENTLY A MEADOW. THIS YARD IS NOT USED BY COWS WHICH ARE HERDED AND MILKED OFF-STAGE.

A CHALET, THE FIRST OF THREE PLANNED AS A NEW VENTURE, OFFERS AT LEAST A FRONT ROOM AND A VERANDAH FOR STAGE USE.

DOMINATING THE SET, OUT ON THE MEADOW, IS A PRIMITIVE STANDING STONE. TWO MORE ARE IN THE DISTANCE ON OPEN MOORLAND. THEY ARE SYMBOLS OF OUR SECRET AND MYSTICAL PREHISTORY, AND A LINK TO THE POWERFUL AND OFTEN UNKNOWN ENERGY FORCE-FIELDS SURROUNDING US, GIVING US LIFE.

CHARACTERS:

ELISE - 30s, london nurse, intelligent, energetic, lean, edgy

KATH WILLIAMS - late 50s-early 60s, farmer's wife, sturdy, worn-down

JACK WILLIAMS - farmer, 60s, angry, depressed, hard-working, worn down

TOM - 40s, vet with DEFRA, easy-going, rational

CHAS - late teens, farm lad, big, strong, abundant energy

OLD WOMAN - old style, country dweller, astute but simple, no doubts

ACT I

1. A GLIMMER OF DAWN, THE STANDING STONE IN SILHOUETTE.

A DIGGER IS HEARD: LOUD, TEARING THE EARTH AT THE BASE OF THE STONE, DUMPING IT TO ONE SIDE, STARTING FORWARD, DIGGING, TEARING, BACKING, SWIVELLING, DUMPING, AGAIN AND AGAIN - AND UNDER THE SOUND CAN JUST BE HEARD THE FARMER, JACK, ANGRY, HOT AND BOTHERED, SWEARING AND SWEATING WITH THE EXERTION.

A TOUCH OF SUNRISE.

THE DIGGER STOPS (OFFSTAGE), LEFT ON TICKOVER, AND THE FARMER JUMPS OUT, ENTERS AND APPEARS BY THE STONE, STAMPS ON THE GROUND IN A RAGE, THEN STARTS KICKING THE STONE, CURSING, SWEARING, IN A FIT.

FARMER:(SHOUTING) Sod it, bloody sod the bugger! Soddin' stone. Soddin', soddin'

HE SLUMPS IN DESPAIR. THE SOUND FADES TO STILLNESS.

2. THE LIGHTING FADES UP TO MID MORNING.

COWS ARE LOWING, AGAINST MILKING EQUIPMENT OFF. KATH, MRS WILLIAMS, THE FARMER'S WIFE IS HEARD, INSTRUCTING THE COWS, CALMING THEM.

A SMALL CAR IS HEARD TO APPROACH ERRATICALLY, TOO FAST, OFF STAGE. IT SCREECHES TO A HALT, BUMPING A GATEPOST. ELISE OPENS THE DOOR, GETS OUT, ANGRY, UP-TIGHT.

ELISE: (OFF) Oh shit. Shit, shit, shit!

SHE PULLS OUT TWO BAGS, BANGS THE DOOR SHUT, THEN ENTERS EDGILY INTO THE YARD AND STANDS FOR A MOMENT, BREATHING HARD.

ELISE: Oh my God, it's a fucking farm! Shit!

SHE PUTS DOWN AN OVERNIGHT BAG STUFFED MESSILY WITH A MIX OF CLOTHES, AND A BACK-SACK WITH A LITRE OF VODKA STICKING OUT THE TOP.

KATH, IN OVERALLS, PEERS ON FROM OFF STAGE, STURDY BUT WORN DOWN WITH CARE AND WORRY.

KATH: (SHOUTING FROM DISTANCE) You just hit our gatepost?

ELISE: Might have done. I didn't see it, alright?

KATH: How can you not see a gatepost?

ELISE: It jumped out at me, that's why.

KATH: You alright, are you?

ELISE: Look, there's no damage, OK!

KATH: Elise Knight?

ELISE: Yes! But -

KATH: I'll be right with you

KATH DISAPPEARS AGAIN, IS HEARD TO ORDER ONE COW OUT OF HER STALL, AND ENCOURAGE ANOTHER IN TO THE EMPTY SPACE. THE LATTER IS CONNECTED UP TO THE EQUIPMENT.

ELISE: Shit, shit, shit! What am I doing?!

ELISE WIPES THE REMAINS OF TEARS FROM HER FACE, RUMMAGES IN THE BACK-SACK, PULLS OUT A CONTAINER OF PILLS AND TAKES ONE.

KATH REAPPEARS IN TIME TO SEE THIS AND COMES ACROSS TO ELISE.

KATH: You need some water for your tablets?

ELISE: Oh shit! Hi! Pleased to meet you. Cool! Christ, I'm dying for a coffee.

KATH POINTS OUT THE CHALET OPPOSITE.

KATH: The chalet's ready for you.

ELISE: Morland Chalets, right?

KATH: That's us.

ELISE: But it's a farm! A dairy farm!

KATH: Morland Farm, yes.

ELISE: Well - your ad didn't say. It just said Chalets.

KATH: So?

ELISE: So - I wouldn't have bloody booked to stay on a dairy farm!

KATH: Why on earth not?

ELISE: Because I disagree with the whole concept!

KATH: Then why bother to step outside London? What are you doing in the countryside in the first place?

ELISE: There's a huge difference between the countryside and a dairy farm!

KATH: Well, I don't see it meself.

ELISE: Look, I'm not here to conduct a fundamental debate on the issues involved, I'm in the countryside to breathe some fresh air and enjoy some much needed peace and quiet - and here isn't it!

KATH: Well, you're booked now, girl, so you better make do.

ELISE: Are you refusing to give me my money back?

KATH: Of course I am. You've reserved the chalet, I've prepared it and held it open just for you -

ELISE: Only for three hours!

KATH: Cancellations are only accepted with 24 hours notice. Perfectly standard terms.

ELISE: Oh shit! What the hell! But I won't be recommending you to any of my friends.

KATH: Thank the lord for that!

ELISE: OK, OK! Where do I go -

KATH: It's all ready for you now, so just make yourself at home.

ELISE: Not much chance of that!

KATH: Everything's turned on ready to go. No need to explain what's what to an intelligent adult, but come across and see me if you have a problem.

ELISE: And where - ?

KATH: I'm usually in the kitchen (INDICATES THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN) - or with the cattle in the barton. There's basics included - usual farm stuff - part of the deal as you know. I'll get our lad, Chas, to bring them over. Anything else you'll need to get yourself.

ELISE: Yes, you said - I've already -

KATH: Four days, isn't it?

ELISE: That's right. I need to -

KATH: So you're away Tuesday morning?

ELISE: If I last that long!

KATH: By 10 o'clock if you don't mind. Folk can arrive early!

ELISE: No problem. Cool!

KATH SEES THE BOTTLE OF VODKA IN THE BAG.

KATH: Big bottle of vodka, that! Unwinding, are you?

ELISE: (NERVOUS LAUGH) A short break.

KATH: Rat-race is it?

ELISE: Something like that.

KATH: High stress!

ELISE: Yes.

KATH: You look short of sleep.

ELISE: Yes, well - it's a tough job.

KATH: Farmer too are you?

ELISE: No. Nurse.

KATH: Ah. (BEAT) Alcohol won't solve nothin'.

ELISE: Don't you believe it!

KATH: Well, I got to get on. You know where I'm to if you need me. Enjoy your stay. If you can.

SHE GOES BACK TO HER COWS.

3. CROSS FADE TO MUSIC, REFLECTING ELISE'S ANGUISHED MOOD.

CHALET LIGHTS UP.

ELISE PICKS UP THE BAGS, AND ENTERS THE CHALET'S LIVING AREA. SHE PUTS THE BAGS DOWN ON THE CENTRE TABLE, STANDS STOCK STILL FOR A MOMENT, THEN STARTS TREMBLING, SHUTS HER EYES AND HOLDS ON TO A CHAIR - BUT IT'S NO GOOD, HER GRIEF ERUPTS AND SHE SLIDES ONTO THE CHAIR AND LETS IT ALL OUT.

THEN SHE FORCES HERSELF TO TAKE SOME DEEP, DEEP BREATHS AND MANAGES TO BRING CONTROL BACK AGAIN, STANDING TO DO SO. SHE MAKES A QUICK DECISION, BREAKS OPEN THE VODKA, POURS ONE, DRINKS IT AND POURS ANOTHER.

SHE CLOSES HER EYES, STANDING IN LIMBO.

4. HER MOBILE SUDDENLY RINGS, CUTTING OUT THE MUSIC. SHE FISHES IT OUT AND DURING THE CALL WALKS OUT ONTO HER VERANDAH.

ELISE: Oh, it's you! I might have guessed he'd set you on me. Losing his subsidized accommodation must really have panicked him! (PAUSE) No, Sue! I really don't want to hear it. And I - what did he tell you? (PAUSE) Of course he's sorry - caught red-handed, with his trousers down and his dick up! (PAUSE) No, I don't do forgiving - not with men, it's a waste of time, and time's too short. Move on, I say! Next please. (PAUSE) Sue, I don't care if he is your fucking brother - and I choose that adjective very carefully, you understand. I don't even care if it means the end of our friendship. No one - just - no one does that to me! Let alone with the sodding girl next door. God, what a slag she is! (PAUSE) No! No, no, no. I told him and I mean it - out, piss off, don't come back - and don't steal anything or I'll set the police on him. And don't let him think I won't. No!! Goodbye Sue, don't ring again!

SHE ENDS THE CALL, THEN LOOKS UPSTAGE AND SEES THE STANDING STONE. REPRISÉ THE MYSTERIOUS MUSIC ASSOCIATED WITH IT.

ELISE:(TO HERSELF) Good heavens, that is just so - beautiful!

5. ELISE WALKS TOWARDS THE STONE LIT BY THE MIDDAY SUN. BIRDS, WILD MOORLAND.

JACK WILLIAMS APPEARS FROM INSIDE THE FARMHOUSE, SITS AT THE KITCHEN TABLE AND DOES SOME PAPERWORK.

ELISE LOOKS AT THE STONE, FEELS IT, SENSES ITS ENERGY.

ELISE:(TO HERSELF) Lone guardian - independent - magic even? And two more - in the distance - but in alignment - exactly! Weird!

SHE SEES SIGNS OF EXCAVATION AT ITS BASE AND LOOKS AT IT CLOSELY, TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE HOLE AND THE PILES OF EARTH MEAN. SHE STOOPS DOWN, PICKS UP THE LOOSE, STONY SOIL FROM A PILE AT HER FEET, AND LETS IT RUN THROUGH HER FINGERS.

ELISE:(TO HERSELF) Excavation? A dig? Archaeology stuff? Don't get it!

SHE STANDS AGAIN AND TURNS TO THE SUN, SHUTTING HER EYES, FEELING IT BATHING HER WHOLE BODY. SHE BECOMES AWARE THAT HER BREATHING HAS BECOME RELAXED AND STEADY. SHE LOOKS SUDDENLY AT THE STONE. THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT IT.

ELISE:(TO HERSELF) Is it - the sun - or the stone? Or just being completely alone high on a deserted moor? (BREATHES DEEPLY) The peace is so - palpable.

THEN SHE RETURNS TO THE CHALET, AND WILLIAMS SEES HER PASS. HE FINISHES

ELISE ENTERS THE LIVING AREA OF HER CHALET, STANDS STILL FOR A MOMENT, THEN HER GRIEF THREATENS TO TAKE HER OVER AGAIN, BUT SHE FIGHTS IT, SWEARING TO HERSELF WITH THE EFFORT. THEN SHE GRABS THE VODKA BOTTLE AND GLASS AGAIN, POURS A LARGE TOT, CLOSSES BOTTLE, SIPS, BREATHES DEEPLY)

ELISE:(TO HERSELF) Not quite the same - peace from vodka and peace from magical ancient stones - but it's a useful substitute, readily available over the counter - without a prescription

6. WILLIAMS COMES OUT OF THE KITCHEN,
CROSSES THE YARD TO THE CHALET.

JACK: Hello there!

ELISE PULLS HERSELF TOGETHER AND COMES
TO THE DOOR.

JACK: How's our first chalet guest?

ELISE: The first! OK, thanks - apart from being on
a farm.

JACK: Hah! Can't do much about that, I'm afraid.
Seen the wife and all that?

ELISE: Couldn't miss her!

JACK: She's good, isn't she! OK - now, I'd better
warn you. You have arrived at a bit of a bad time -

ELISE: Oh!

JACK: Not your fault, you're fine - I mean for us.
They've just discovered we got bovine TB again -
some more of the livestock.

ELISE: Is that bad?

JACK: Not as bad as BSE or Foot & Mouth - we 'ad
them as well, see - but bad enough. There'll be a
few to go to slaughter. Not too many, I 'opes. But
I don't want you gettin' upset or anythin'. It
'appens - all part of a farmer's life.

ELISE: Oh, OK. I'm sorry to -

JACK: Don't you worry, me dear. You are our future
- the answer to our problems - well one of they
anyways!

ELISE: Well, I'm glad to hear I'm doing something
right.

JACK: Oh yes! We're all 'avin' to diversify
nowadays. It's not farmin' that's the problem -
just the bureaucracy that controls it.

ELISE: How bad is it then?

JACK: Oh, the EU is the worst. A major health risk
for farmers nowadays. Then add all these livestock
crises.

ELISE: So what can you do?

JACK: Turn arable as fast as I can, try and make up
for the losses.

ELISE: Well, less livestock is good. But that's a big change, isn't it?

JACK: Bigger because of the bureaucrats, yes! You're too young to remember, my dear, but one of the first signs of problems - EEC then, mind - was back at the end of the 60s, when they suddenly announced that carrots 'ad to be straight!

ELISE: What!

JACK: Bloody straight! Your generation will only ever have known straight carrots.

ELISE: True - good Heavens, why?

JACK: Bureaucrats! Doin' what they do best - creatin' jobs for theyselves, buildin' empires, which needs more taxes, and so on. Keeps the ball rollin' like!

ELISE: I know bananas are getting straighter!

JACK: Same thing, just more recent. Why they don't just leave these things to market forces, I do not know.

ELISE: Yes, I guess if enough people want straight bananas, then the growers will grow them or the shops hammer them out, or whatever.

JACK: As I say - it's our taxes build bureaucracies! Well, I won't keep you. Enjoy your stay.

DURING THIS KATH ENTERS THE FARM KITCHEN AND MAKES SOME TEAS. SHE WILL TAKE ONE BACK INTO THE HOUSE WITH HER, AFTER TAKING TWO OUT TO JACK AT THE END OF THIS SCENE.

ELISE: Oh, Mr Williams?

JACK: Jack!

ELISE: Jack, the lad!

JACK: That were I - when I were young. Old man Jack now!

ELISE: I went up to that standing stone.

JACK: Soddin' thing!

ELISE: There was trenching round it. What's that about?

JACK: Well, you see girl, like I said - turnin' arable. Dairy farmin' is dyin', I reckon. Government keep up their current level of incompetence, it'll be gone before long. In this country I mean.

ELISE: Well, I'd support that for one. But what's that got to do with the stone?

JACK: Well, the one on our meadow'll be in the way of spray arms, you see. (HOLDS HIS ARMS OUT SIDEWAYS) 20 foot each side they be, fully extended.

ELISE: So you're taking the stone out?

JACK: Bugger it, say I. Lot of 'assle in.

ELISE: Why not just go round?

JACK: Right - could go round, many do. But it's bad, that stone. I'm not superstitious, mind, not like some. But won't get a good crop with that thing there. Negative influence, I says. You can feel it. We got to live. That comes first.

ELISE: That seems a shame. Isn't it protected or something?

JACK: Bloody government. They don't care about I, so why should I bother with all their regulations and stuff? Mebbe bed 'er in on the moorland. Same thing.

ELISE: I reckon it has - well, a lovely feel, I don't know - atmosphere? - to it.

JACK: Soddin' thing! Can't bloody shift it. But I'll get the bugger out, if it's the last thing I do.

7. JACK GOES, STRIDING ACROSS THE FARMYARD.

JACK: Come along, Chas lad - there's work to do!

KATH ENTERS THE FARM-YARD CARRYING TWO MUGS OF TEAS. CHAS, THE HUNKY 18 YEAR OLD FARMHAND, HAS RUN ON FROM OPPOSITE SIDE TO CATTLE AREA, COLLECTS THEM FROM HER.

KATH: There's two, Chas. Jack! Your tea's here. And there's one for Tom in here when he's ready. And the girl's supplies.

JACK: Right! Chas, give me they. You get those chalet provisions across to the girl. Then catch me up.

JACK EXITS TO CATTLE AREA WITH THE TWO MUGS OF TEA.

CHAS FOLLOWS KATH BACK INTO KITCHEN, COLLECTS A PLASTIC BAG OF PROVISIONS AND TAKES THEM ACROSS TO CHALET.

8. MEANWHILE ELISE HAS PICKED UP HER DRINK, GRABBED A PAD AND PEN FROM HER BAG, AND SAT IN THE SUN. SHE STARTS WRITING A POEM AS FAST AS SHE CAN, SCRIBBLING FURIOUSLY, CROSSING OUT, REWRITING.

CHAS RUNS ACROSS TO HER, CARRYING THE BAG OF PROVISIONS.

CHAS: Mornin' Miss.

ELISE: Hi. Chas, I guess! How are you?

CHAS: Just great, Miss. Got your supplies here.

SHE TAKES THE BAG AND PEERS IN.

ELISE: Eggs, milk, rolls. Home baked?

CHAS: No! - delivered! Mrs W said to give you some.

ELISE: She deserves some credit then!

CHAS: That a poem? You a writer or summat?

ELISE: Yeah! Sometimes.

CHAS: I writes poems!

ELISE: Really? Like what - ?

CHAS: Well, my latest now - it's wicked: There were a young milk-maid who'd shudder, Whenever she handled an udder. An udder is thick, -

ELISE: OK, Chas, OK - that gives me a good idea of your amazing talents, thanks!

CHAS: But I haven't finished yet, Miss! All right then - how about this 'un: A handsome young farm lad took pity, On a lass with some beautiful -

ELISE: Yeah, fine, great, thanks Chas but it's just not my sort of poetry, OK?

CHAS: But my friends all like 'em! They think I got talent!

ELISE: I'm sure you have! Thanks for sharing it with me. See you later!

CHAS: Would you mebbe read me one of yours, Miss? Mebbe?

ELISE: Don't know about that, Chas. Poetry is a bit personal. And right now, I think I need to - safeguard my privacy.

CHAS: Oh right.

ELISE: My inner emotional life is not intended for public consumption, you see. Not today anyway.

CHAS: Mebbe tomorrow then?

ELISE: Ah, who knows what tomorrow will bring, Chas. "Each new morn, New widows howl, new orphans cry."

CHAS: That's really good, Miss. I can tell.

ELISE: Yeah! (BEAT) Yes - Shakespeare is good. See you Chas.

CHAS: 'Bye Miss. (BEAT) It's great, Miss - great you're 'ere!

CHAS RUNS OFF, AND ELISE CONTINUES WITH HER OWN POEM, INCREASINGLY WITH TEARS COURSING DOWN HER FACE, IN SPITE OF FIGHTING THEM FEROCIOUSLY.

EVENTUALLY SHE STOPS, LOOKS AT IT, SCREWS IT UP, HURLS IT BACK INTO THE CHALET.

ELISE: Damn the sodding bastard - how fucking dare he? How - oh! Shit!

SHE SLAMS HER HAND DOWN ON A HARD SURFACE TO EMPHASIZE THE LAST WORD, HURTS IT AND CRIES SOME MORE. SHE WIPES HER FACE, EMPTIES HER GLASS, REFILLS IT, AND TAKES A DEEP BREATH.

SHE BLOWS HER NOSE, STANDS FOR A MOMENT, SWAYING GENTLY TO HER OWN HEART-BEAT.

9. TOM HAS APPEARED FROM THE CATTLE AREA, COLLECTED HIS TEA FROM THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN, WALKED INTO THE FARM-YARD AND LOOKED UP AT THE STANDING-STONE AND DISTANT VIEW.

ELISE'S FINAL MOVEMENTS CATCH HIS ATTENTION AND HE WALKS TO THE CHALET.

TOM: Hello! Nice to see someone has time to relax.

ELISE: I'm on holiday. It's allowed!

TOM: Yes - the chalet. First of three, I hear. Diversification of agricultural land. The new trend. Quite understandable too!

ELISE: Is it a trend?

TOM: Yes - upwards! Dairy farming is the complementary down trend. As it slowly fades away - in Britain anyway - chalets will be one of the things that take its place.

ELISE: Wouldn't worry me!

TOM: Well, young miss, it would worry me.

ELISE: Why? And it's Elise!

TOM: That's nice. I'm just Tom. Well, quite aside from earning a living to support my hungry family, I guess I'm a bit of a socialist at heart.

ELISE: Join the human race!

TOM: OK! To me it seems that a resource like land should be for productive use and not just something pretty for tourists.

ELISE: I can go along with that. But productive use doesn't necessarily mean dairy-farming.

TOM: I'd have thought it did. All part of trying to produce enough food to keep your population alive and healthy.

ELISE: OK, I won't quibble over the detail - for now. But why is farming dying out - if it is!

TOM: Well, I need to be a little bit cautious, sounding off. I'm a vet with the Department of the Environment - DEFRA, you see. But in a nutshell - the government has made no investment - or encouraged anyone else to make any investment - in the dairy industry. So it's now more expensive to produce milk, for example, than the farmer can get from selling it.

ELISE: He makes a loss?

TOM: Exactly! So, quite rightly, he - the farmer in general - is giving up doing it. Who can blame him?

ELISE: They said on the news a while back, we'd need to start importing milk from Europe. I didn't believe it!

TOM: Well, do! It's true! Happening already. All our food soon, in fact. You see Europe has developed massive dairy operations with state-of-the-art machinery, healthy subsidies and a lot less regulation - so they produce milk that makes a profit.

ELISE: But not here!

TOM: The less regulations bit does mean lower animal welfare standards, mind.

ELISE: We operate double standards?

TOM: And how! Being over-regulated, we don't allow certain things to be done in this country - but we happily buy products from countries that do allow these things. And those products are cheaper as a result!

ELISE: Like not torturing dissidents in this country but sending them back to their own country where they will be tortured! Or letting the Americans spirit them away to torture them somewhere where no-one's looking!

TOM: Interesting comparison! It's what the politicians call "understanding the broader picture". Now add to that one livestock crisis after another - decimating herds.

ELISE: Like this?

TOM: Yep! There they are - the Williams - just recovering from BSE and Foot & Mouth, building their herd back up, and then wallop! - bovine tuberculosis.

ELISE: That's what badgers have, isn't it?

TOM: A number of mammals can develop it - but my bosses in DEFRA reckon badgers are the cause of the cattle getting it. So they're trying to cull badgers in high-incidence TB areas.

ELISE: Is this one?

TOM: Becoming one, yes. That's a quarter of their herd showing positive so far - and that's just today.

ELISE: Shit! Does that mean incineration, movement restriction and so on?

TOM: No, not that bad. TB isn't quite so dramatic. No, the infected cattle get slaughtered in the normal way.

ELISE: Good God, the Williams do have a problem! Talk about "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune"!

JACK CROSSES IN BG FROM CATTLE AREA TO FARMHOUSE KITCHEN. HE POURS HIMSELF SOME MORE TEA.

TOM: Oh-ho, a cultured person no less! Rare to find anyone today who's even heard of Hamlet, let alone can quote! But you're right, they do have more than their fair share of problems. Do you know, they still call their cows only by their own names? Just like the old days!

ELISE: Why, what do other farmers do nowadays?

TOM: Give them numbers, mainly. They can get very attached to their cattle, farmers. The Williams are. Get quite emotional about them.

ELISE: But they're just meat on the move!

TOM: Hah! There speaks the modern urban woman! Anyway, it's all quite safe for humans - you can move around freely while you're here, and the cattle can go into the food chain - some return for the Williams at least. Well - I must get on. You know, I really like over-regulation myself: it keeps me busy, you see! I get lots of really well-paid work.

ELISE: It'll run out if you succeed in killing off farming!

TOM: Ah, nothing's perfect!

ELISE: You know, one person's disaster is often another's salvation. If people didn't fall ill and suffer pain, I'd be out of a job too!

TOM: I must admit, I'm very tempted to try and do my bit to slow the trend down.

ELISE: How?

TOM: Another time, maybe! But I can tell you one thing for free. The Williams of this world deserve better than DEFRA! See you!

HE EXITS BACK TO THE CATTLE AREA OFF.
ELISE GOES BACK INTO THE CHALET AND
EXITS. FADE DOWN ON CHALET.

10. JACK HAS ENTERED, Poured himself a tea, and stands with his back to room/audience. KATH is at the table and looks up from paperwork, senses his mood.

KATH: Is it bad?

JACK: (NODS)

KATH: How bad? Jack?

JACK: About 40 so far.

KATH: Christ!

JACK: Could be more yet.

KATH: O-oh! That is bad.

JACK TAKES OUT HIS HANKY, DAMPENS IT (FROM TAP OR KETTLE) AND MOPS HIS NECK AND EAR ON ONE SIDE.

JACK: Last time I'll clean up Marigold's licking.

KATH: Oh Jack - keeps your neck clean, she does. Prefers you to all the others, she does.

JACK TURNS AWAY AGAIN, CLEARLY UPSET BUT TRYING TO HOLD IT BACK.

KATH RISES TO HIM, PUTS AN ARM ROUND HIM.

KATH: 'Spect we could train one of the younger ones in her place.

JACK: (NODS).

KATH: Maybe two even - one for each side. That'd keep you really -

SHE TURNS AWAY AND SITS AGAIN, PICKS UP AN INVOICE.

KATH: Daffy Dill? Chrysanthia?

JACK: Both infected.

KATH: Christ! This vet bill for their - bloody waste of money that be then.

JACK: Aye. And their feed. And their wormers. And - and -

HE TURNS AWAY AGAIN, USING THE HANKY TO WIPE THE TEARS AWAY.

KATH: Oh Jack! But - but we can - we can cope. We done it before, haven't we? And we've got the chalet started now, that'll help. Eh? And turning arable - that's right, eh? All that'll make things better again. Jack?

JACK NODS, CONSIDERS, THEN EXPLOSIVELY EXPRESSES HIS RAGE AND STORMS OUT. KATH SHOUTS AFTER HIM.

KATH: Jack! We'll cope! We will!

BUT ANGRY AND DISPIRITED, HE'S GONE. KATH LOOKS AT THE PILE OF INVOICES IN HER HAND. WHERE IS THE MONEY COMING FROM TO PAY THEM? SHE SHUTS HER EYES AND RESTS HER HEAD IN HER HANDS, WEARY OF IT ALL.

11. CHALET. CHAS, JACKET IN HAND OR ON, IS GOING HOME. HE PAUSES TO LOITER OUTSIDE THE CHALET. ELISE COMES OUT ON THE VERANDAH AND SEES HIM.

CHAS: Evenin' miss.

ELISE: Shit Chas - it's Elise, OK?

CHAS: Oh OK - Elise.

ELISE: Evening, Chas. Off home now?

CHAS: Well, yeah. But - well I were wondrin' -

ELISE: Love the accent! I were wondrin'! Just great!

CHAS: Oh. (Deflated) Right! Well -

ELISE: Oh, sorry Chas - I mean I do like it, the west country accent. It's a lot more mellifluous than my urban crap.

CHAS: Oh, OK. Well, I were wondrin' -

ELISE: So you were - but what?

CHAS: Well, like - would you come an' 'ave a drink tonight? Mebbe meet some of my frien's? Or mebbe just the two of us?

ELISE: You're asking me for a date?! Christ, Chas! We've only just met!

CHAS: Oh well - you know, thought you might, you know, bein' on your own like - summat to do!

ELISE: Well Chas, I am flattered - and surprised! You do know I've a decade or more on you, don't you? I'm an old woman in your eyes! Maybe you're into older women!

CHAS: Well, not that old. Younger 'n my mum. (BEAT) I think.

ELISE: I hope!! Agreed. But I mean why? I just don't see -

CHAS: You don't 'ave to, Miss. I'm not forcin' you!

ELISE: But why did you ask?

CHAS: Well - you're - nice. An' - an' attractive. An' - an' - you know.

ELISE: Ha! I can guess, I suppose! You're saying you fancy me?

CHAS: Well Miss, that be a bit of a leadin' question like.

ELISE: No, it's not. A leading question is more like - do you want to shag me?

CHAS: Well bugger me - you don't 'alf put a feller on the spot!

ELISE: Well? Do you?

CHAS: Well, since you asks, I wouldn't say no - but I wouldn't ask till we got to know each other like.

ELISE: Well, more fool you! Chas - just listen for a moment. I'm "something" over 30 and you're not even 20 yet - right? I'm a towny with towny values and attitudes. You're a country lad with completely different values and attitudes. I have interests and work you know absolutely nothing about - and vice versa. We have absolutely nothing in common - save perhaps one thing: I'm a sexually needy, deprived, passionate, nubile woman, who could really do with a bit of physical comforting right now - and you're a handsome hunk who's probably hung like a horse (just a hunch, Honey!)...

So, in a nutshell - no thanks to the drink, but if you want a shag, come on in.

SHE STEPS ASIDE. CHAS IS GOBSMACKED, THEN LOOKS ROUND TO SEE IF ANYONE IS WATCHING. HE GOES INTO THE CHALET.

12. THE SUN IS NOW LOW ON THE HORIZON (SILHOUETTING THE STONES IN THE DISTANCE).

MUSIC. LONE BIRD CRY.

WILLIAMS STAGGERS ON TO THE STANDING STONE, LOOKS AROUND IN DISBELIEF AT THE GROUND AROUND IT.

JACK: All cleared again! Just - how?! Bugger it! How?! (SIGH) Try again the mornin'.

HE LEANS FORWARDS AGAINST THE STONE AND WITH IMMENSE WEARINESS, HAMMERS BOTH FISTS AGAINST ITS UNRELENTING SIDE. HE STAYS STILL FOR A MOMENT, PUSHES HIMSELF UPRIGHT, THEN WALKS, DEFEATED, ACROSS THE YARD AND INTO THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN.

FADE TO DARK NIGHT. MOONSHINE. AN OWL. A NIGHTJAR.

13. CHALET. ELISE (NOT WEARING VERY MUCH) LEADS THE WAY OUT ONTO THE VERANDAH. CHAS FOLLOWS SHEEPISHLY, STUFFING HIS SHIRT IN HIS JEANS. SHE STANDS ASIDE TO LET HIM PASS.

ELISE: See you later, sunshine.

CHAS: Right! Er - thank you, Miss!

ELISE: (LAUGHING) Not at all, Big Boy - thank you! You done well, my lad! I shall sleep well tonight! In fact, if you must know, you were exactly what I needed right now.

CHAS: (STEPPING FORWARD TO KISS HER) I love you!

ELISE: Don't you bloody dare! (PUSHES HIM AWAY) That was sex, right? Nothing to do with love!

CHAS: But -

ELISE: No! Go on - piss off home, Chas! Back to normal, OK?

CHAS: But I do!

ELISE: You do not - and even if you think you do, you don't. And either way, I'm not having it.

CHAS: You 'ave no feelin's, you don't.

ELISE: I have plenty of feelings, so don't start trying to judge me! My feelings have taken a nonstop battering for just about twenty years now - and those that are left are not for you.

CHAS: Can I come again!

ELISE: From what I've seen, you can come as often - sorry! Sorry! No! Maybe! Don't know! Go home! Piss off!

CHAS: Goodnight Miss - my lover.

ELISE: Oh my God. (GOES BACK INTO CHALET)

CHAS: (QUIETLY) I love you - my lover!

HE GOES. DISTANT DOG BARKING. (END OF DAY 1)

14. A GLIMMER OF DAWN, THE STANDING STONE IN SILHOUETTE.

A DIGGER IS HEARD: LOUD, TEARING THE EARTH AT THE BASE OF THE STONE, DUMPING IT TO ONE SIDE, STARTING FORWARD, DIGGING, TEARING, BACKING, SWIVELLING, DUMPING, AGAIN AND AGAIN - AND UNDER THE SOUND CAN JUST BE HEARD JACK, ANGRY, HOT AND BOTHERED, SWEARING AND SWEATING WITH THE EXERTION.

BEHIND THE DIGGER A HOWLING WIND BUILDS UP RAPIDLY, BLOWING A REAL HOOLEY.

A TOUCH OF SUNRISE.

THE DIGGER STOPS (OFFSTAGE), AND JACK JUMPS OUT, ENTERS AND APPEARS BY THE STONE, STAMPS ON THE GROUND IN A RAGE, THEN STARTS KICKING THE STONE, CURSING, SWEARING, IN A FIT.

JACK:(SHOUTING) Sod it, bloody sod the bugger! Soddin' stone. What 'ave I got to do, for Christ's sake? Answer me, you soddin' lump of.... Oh, God!

HE SLUMPS IN DESPAIR, THEN SLOWLY EXITS. THE WIND DROPS DRAMATICALLY THEN FADES TO STILLNESS.

15. FULL SUNRISE - DAYLIGHT FOLLOW-ON.
COCK CROW. COWS MOOING, MILKING SOUNDS
OFF STAGE.

ELISE WALKS OUT ON TO THE VERANDAH WITH
A COFFEE, SITS IN THE CHAIR, SOAKING UP
THE RISING SUN. HER ATTENTION IS
FOCUSSED ON SOME SERIOUS REWORKING OF
THE POEM.

SHE READS IT THROUGH TO HERSELF. IT'S
ABOUT DISAPPOINTED LOVE, BETRAYAL,
DUPLICITY. IT AFFECTS HER, BUT SHE
CONTROLS HER EMOTIONS, TRYING TO BE
IMPARTIAL. SHE CORRECTS A COUPLE OF
BITS. READS ONE BIT OUT LOUD:

ELISE: And so her life is played,
An idle farce
That lingers
At the tedious parts
And only emptiness
Can link
Her future with her past.

16. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN. DURING SC 15,
KATH IS FEEDING JACK WITH HOT ROLLS AND
COFFEE. CHAS RUNS ON, AVOIDS LOOKING AT
ELISE, ENTERS KITCHEN AND HELPS HIMSELF
TO A ROLL AND COFFEE.

CATTLE TRUCK HEARD ARRIVING IN CATTLE
AREA (OFF). DRIVER DESCENDS, SLAMS
DOOR, OPENS BACK UP, SETS UP RAMPS.

JACK: Come along lad. No time to get your feet up.

KATH: Chas, take this bag - oh, an' this letter too
- over to the London girl, right?

CHAS TAKES THEM FROM HER AS JACK
STRIDES ACROSS STAGE AND OFF TO THE
CATTLE SHEDS. CHAS RACES ACROSS TO
ELISE.

CHAS: Mornin' Miss.

ELISE: Hello, lover! Sleep well?

CHAS: (EMBARRASSED) So-so, Miss. Got your supplies
here.

ELISE: Cool!

CHAS: Mebbe - but warm up soon. You'll see. Letter
in there too.

SHE TAKES THE BAG AND PEERS IN. SHE LOOKS AT THE LETTER CAUTIOUSLY, NOTICES THE WRITING AND DISMISSES IT.

ELISE: Yuck! (AS CHAS TURNS TO GO) Chas - that stone?

CHAS: Yeah?

ELISE: Jack's not got it out yet then?

CHAS: Ah, big un that. Tractor should shift it.

ELISE: But not yet?

CHAS: Turnin' arable, see.

ELISE: Jack said.

CHAS: 'E dug a big trench out this mornin'.

JACK: (OFF) Chas lad!

CHAS: Well, Miss, I got to go. Truck's come for the first cattle.

ELISE: He hasn't got very far though?

CHAS: Eh?

ELISE: Digging out the stone?

CHAS: No - funny that. 'E's tried before too. Never gets very far. Don't want to be shifted, see. Leastways that's what my gran says.

JACK: (OFF) Chas - move it, lad!

ELISE: Doesn't want to be shifted?

CHAS: (GOING) That's what she says. Funny that. But 'e won't give up! Not 'im! Try an' pull the stone later, prob'ly.

HE RUNS OFF.

ELISE PULLS OUT THE LETTER, STARES AT IT AND READS IT CURSORILY. THEN SHE SCREWS IT UP WITH ENERGY AND HURLS IT BACK INTO THE CHALET.

WILLIAMS, CHAS AND THE DRIVER ARE HEARD OFF STAGE HERDING A FULL LOAD OF CATTLE ON TO THE TRUCK.

ELISE: Bastard! Sodding bloody bastard! Well - she can have him. I certainly don't want anything to do with him. Never again!

17. ELISE REGISTERS THE NOISE AND
CROSSES THE YARD TOWARDS IT.

WILLIAMS, ANGRY AND DISPIRITED, ENTERS
WITH A BUNDLE OF PAPERS ON A CLIPBOARD,
SEES ELISE.

ELISE: Are those the infected cattle?

JACK: (VENTING HIS ANGER) Too bloody right, girl.
Another cack-handed solution by an incompetent
government just to destroy farmers.

ELISE: Yes?

JACK: They sees a problem, tackles it at half cock,
don't tell us who are doing the work that there is
a problem, mind, or what it is, and then they wreck
our lives when it gets out of hand.

ELISE: Is it out of hand?

JACK: For us - course it is! Incompetent bunch of
tossers. They're the ones - the MPs, civil servants
- they're the ones that need culling! They're the
ones who need loading up in trucks and taking away.
Chas, watch they two - don't let 'em get out -
Christ! (TURNS BACK TO ELISE) Cull that lot - and
the bloody sprouts in Brussels - and farming would
be a damn sight easier and a damn sight more
efficient. It would be a right joy to do, it would.
Like it used to be.

WILLIAMS LOOKS AT HIS PAPERS AND FILLS
IN OR SIGNS OFF SECTIONS AS HE TALKS.

JACK: Bloody paperwork! "Stand-still order". That's
a laugh for a start. It means they have to move not
stand still. They'll be burgers before the day's
out. An' there's prob'ly more yet. Not their fault
they got TB. Not our bloody fault neither. You know
how they work in Defra? The high-ups in London. The
local lot are alright, just doin' their job, they
be. But the bosses! If it's a problem, hope it'll
go away. When it becomes a crisis, blame someone
else. Waste a lot of money, wait for a lot of
farmers to go bankrupt, then say their experts have
done a report. Demand a pay rise and more staff.
Wonderful, isn't it? Bloody wonderful.

ELISE: And I thought the NHS was depressing!

OFFSTAGE: DRIVER AND CHAS CLOSE UP
TRUCK RAMPS AND TAILGATE.

JACK: Will be when they starts cullin' the patients an' the wrinklies to free up the beds! You know, when it comes down to it, the government don't actually want us to produce food in Britain. Import it all, makes life easier for them! Well, must sort these forms out. (EXITING BACK TO CATTLE AREA) Remember - our taxes build bureaucracies!

ELISE: (PARTING SHOT) That's not all they do though!

18. ELISE WALKS TOWARDS THE STANDING STONE, THEN STOPS. SHE HAS THE THREE STONES ALL IN ALIGNMENT AND STANDS TO WONDER AT THEIR SIGNIFICANCE. MYSTICISM AND MAGIC SEEM TO BE PALPABLE IN THE AIR.

MUSIC.

AN OLD WOMAN APPEARS WALKING SLOWLY TOWARD THE STONE. ELISE STEPS BACK AND WATCHES HER. THE OLD WOMAN WALKS ROUND THE STONE CHANTING TO HERSELF.

OLD WOMAN: The stones give energy, the earth gives life
Them as don't trust 'em, will come to strife.
Men as does damage, the spirits displease.
Heal all our sickness, ward off disease.

THEN SHE BOWS TO THE STONE, OPENS A CONTAINER (NOT BOTTLE OR CARTON) OF MILK SHE IS CARRYING AND POURS THE MILK ROUND THE BASE OF THE STONE, REPEATING HER CHANT VERY QUIETLY. SHE WALKS AWAY IN THE DIRECTION SHE CAME FROM.

ELISE GOES OVER TO THE STONE AND LOOKS AT IT CLOSELY. SHE LOOKS DOWN FOR THE EXCAVATED HOLES THAT WERE AT ITS BASE. TO HER SURPRISE THEY HAVE DISAPPEARED, THE TURF NOW WHOLE AND UNTOUCHED. SHE STOOPS AND WIPES HER HAND ACROSS FLAT. CLEARLY THE GROUND HAS NEVER BEEN TAMPERED WITH IN ANY WAY. SHE LOOKS UP TO WATCH THE OLD WOMAN DISAPPEARING.

ELISE: Completely gone! "Big trench", he said. No sign of it! It's - weird - irrational!

SHE WALKS ROUND THE STONE, TOUCHES IT, FEELS THE ENERGY, LAYS HER HANDS AND FACE AGAINST IT AND RELISHES THE WAVES OF PEACE THAT COME OVER HER. SHE BREATHES IN DEEPLY AND LETS IT OUT SLOWLY, UNCERTAINLY, JERKILY, THEN TRIES AGAIN TO GET IT SMOOTH, CONTROLLED. STILLNESS AND IMMENSE PEACE.

ELISE SUDDENLY FISHES OUT HER MOBILE AND DIALS SUE.

ELISE: Sue - me - nothing's wrong! Well, I'm phoning you, aren't I? Look, don't speak - just listen! This is miracle time. There's a stone here - a standing stone, I think they call it. Well, three really. In a line. It's just amazing. I don't know what it is, how it's done, but it's like moving into a cloud of peace - I mean as you get close to it. You can feel it. Like instant valium - just pure, sheer peace. Everything drops away, all your troubles - just float away. That bloody brother of yours just - gets erased. I so want one of these - in my living room - so whenever I get stressed with all the overwork, whenever some bloody man dumps on me, whatever - I just have to go and lay my face against my stone and it would all vanish and I'd be able to float again - and not in a haze, just absolutely clear-headed, floating in peace. Oh! It's just - amazing! (PAUSE) Of course we are, you stupid cow! Speak soon!

ELISE CLOSSES UP THE PHONE, AND REMEMBERS THE FILLING IN OF THE TRENCH. TROUBLED, SHE WALKS BACK THROUGH THE YARD TO THE FARMHOUSE DOOR.

19. LIGHTS UP IN FARMHOUSE. KATH APPEARS, INVITES HER IN.

KATH: Join me for a coffee?

ELISE: If it's not inconvenient?

KATH SHOWS HER A CHAIR, GRABS A COFFEE POT OR KETTLE OFF A RANGE AND FIXES THE COFFEES.

KATH: You comfortable? Got all you need?

ELISE: Yes, thanks - and thanks for the rolls. That was kind.

KATH: Thought you might like them fresh for breakfast. Now - the village shop is very limited. You'll be better going on into Westborough itself. Only 8 miles. Get everything you need there.

ELISE: OK. Thanks. Cool! (PAUSE) Ah - I was going to ask you about those stones.

KATH: Witch's Cow Stones.

ELISE: There's three of them overall, aren't there?

KATH: Yes. Ancient site. Lot of superstitious mumbo-jumbo about them.

ELISE: You don't have a book - or even a map, do you? Something I can explore with?

KATH: No problem - they're mentioned in a bit of detail in this booklet.

SHE PICKS IT UP AND PUTS IT IN FRONT OF ELISE, THEN SITS AT THE TABLE WITH HER OWN COFFEE.

ELISE: Can I borrow this for a day or two?

KATH: If you like. Look after it though. It's the only copy we got. You into local history or summat?

ELISE: Not seriously, no. Just interested. Intrigued really. I saw an old woman there chanting today. She poured milk round it. The one on your land.

KATH: My God, they're not still doing that, are they?

ELISE: What is it, though?

KATH: Primitive claptrap. Praying stones, they used to say. Where you pray for healing or fertility or summat.

ELISE: She did look a bit old to be praying for fertility!

KATH: No - could be for a grand-daughter..

ELISE: Oh. But the milk?

KATH: Ha! Bit bloody late for that.

ELISE: How do you mean?

KATH: It's an old superstition - to protect cattle from pestilence. Chas' grandmother has a cow, so it might have been her, warding our pestilence away from her brute. Ha! Stupid bloody cow herself, that one. Never been out of the village in her life.

ELISE: (SLOWLY) What was funny though is that the holes have gone.

KATH: What holes?

ELISE: The trench your husband had dug to start loosening the stone.

KATH: Christ!

ELISE: There was one there yesterday. And Chas said that Jack had dug another this morning. But now it's just like they never existed!

KATH: (THINKING QUICKLY) Yes, well don't get the wrong idea about that. Chas will have filled that in, made it good. Probably just leave the stone, see.

ELISE: Oh! But -

KATH: But nothing! That old crone was just looking to cure her arthritis, OK? Or protect her cow. It's harmless enough. Like writing poetry is harmless. Don't do nothing for anyone - but some people like to do it, let them get on with it, I say.

ELISE: I write poetry.

KATH: Chas said. So there you are then. Harmless, as I say. There's only one line of poetry I ever heard that made sense to me. It's all about bloody bureaucrats. "Sit on your arse for fifty years and hang your hat on a pension".

ELISE: Louis MacNeice. He called poetry a precision instrument for recording our reactions to life.

KATH: (STANDING) Well, he certainly bloody recorded mine! Now, I must get on, I'm afraid.

ELISE: (FINISHING COFFEE STANDS) Yeah, right. Thanks. Cool!

20. ELISE COMES OUT OF THE FARMHOUSE AND CROSSES TO THE CENTRE OF THE YARD. SHE OPENS THE BOOK AS SHE GOES, LOOKS AT THE CHAPTER LIST, LOOKS FOR A PAGE AND STOPS TO READ:

ELISE:(READING) "To disturb an ancient site or remove an old stone was to invite disaster. Many traditions give warnings to would-be desecrators: sickness or death, strange voices, poltergeists, weather disturbances. Some desecrators went mad".

21. FARMYARD. JACK ENTERS FROM OFF BEHIND THE FARMHOUSE, PASSING ELISE. HE'S CARRYING A TRACTOR PART AND AN OILY RAG.

JACK: What you doin' readin' books in the middle of the yard for, girl? We built a lovely verandah, with comfy chair, just for you to relax in!

ELISE: I'm on my way, don't worry.

JACK: Good on yer, girl.

ELISE: But while you're here: you said "taxes build bureaucracies", right?

JACK: Don't they just.

ELISE: Maybe - but that neatly bypasses the biggest grouch a lot of us taxpayers have: supporting you farmers!

JACK: Oh my God! I ain't got time for this! I got a tractor to get movin'.

ELISE: When it comes down to it, you farmers live off us taxpayers. All those subsidies - it's us townies who pay them.

JACK: Rubbish! The government lets you think that. Godammit, they encourage you to think that just to drive yet another nail into our coffins.

ELISE: You're lying! You have to be! There's always something on the news about subsidies.

JACK: There's always somethin' on the news about the dire straits farmin' is in - but you notice that, eh? No, course not.

ELISE: You're changing the subject! Our taxes - your subsidies!

JACK: OK, OK girl - calm down. Just - let's be rational. Think back - to your history lessons. After the last war - OK, the second world war - the government said "Right - we're not goin' short of food again. That's a promise", OK? The 1947 Agricultural Act.

ELISE: 1947! That's the bloody Middle Ages! I'm talking about today.

JACK: Come on, girl! 60 years, that's all. That's my lifetime, that be! Not history - real life. OK! "Not going short of food again". So, we farmers were subsidized to make sure Britain would be self-sufficient.

ELISE: I don't care why you're subsidized - I'm just saying -

JACK: Hang on! Bugger me! - you got more of a temper on you than a flock of geese! Christ! Our subsidies have fallen since then - way down on what you think.

ELISE: Like hell!

JACK: It's true - it's just the government won't tell you. They want you to rubbish us so as they can get away with phasin' us out. Now - the real problem - well, one of many - is that they "reformed" the common agricultural policy - CAP, right?

ELISE: OK.

JACK: Though "reformed" is a stupid word - "fucked up" is more like it. What they gone an' done is cut the connection between subsidy to farmers and food production, which was the purpose of it all in the first place. Self sufficient! No more!

CHAS CROSSES FROM CATTLE AREA TO
KITCHEN WITH SEVERAL COFFEE MUGS

ELISE: What are you going on about? You're trying to blind me with science!

JACK: No, no - this is important! Believe me! Chas lad, come 'ere once you dropped they, OK? (BACK TO ELISE) We now get something stupid called the Single Farm Payment - just to look after the countryside! Which we've always done anyway! It's a con - to stop us producing food.

CHAS PLACES THE MUGS IN THE KITCHEN
SINK AND RETURNS TO JACK.

ELISE: You're just proving my point! We taxpayers support you farmers. Full stop.

JACK HANDS THE TRACTOR PART AND RAG TO
CHAS.

JACK: Chas, you can fit that OK, can't you? (CHAS NODS) Good lad. Be over in a minute.

CHAS TAKES THE PART AND EXITS BACK TO
THE CATTLE AREA.

JACK: (BACK TO ELISE) Listen to me, girl. It's a lot less than you think, OK - but the bigger point is that you taxpayers aren't getting' value for money anymore. You did! But now the government pay us to keep the countryside pretty for you townies to come and enjoy on short break holidays - and to hell with bein' self sufficient. Bring the food in from abroad.

ELISE: So what's wrong with that? You're moaning now because the western world is giving a fair chance to developing countries to compete and earn themselves some money for once.

JACK: Bugger me! Where've you been, girl? Where d'you get a pair of rosy tinted glasses like that? Can't see an inch in front of your stubborn little nose, can you!

ELISE: Hey, come on - this isn't personal!

JACK: 'Course it's personal. This is my whole way of life you're tryin' to rubbish here. You, Blair, Brown. "Screw the farmers, who needs 'em?"

ELISE: No, that's not fair. It's a question of values, that's all.

JACK: Yes! Exactly! And you got the wrong values, girl!

ELISE: Do bloody stop calling me "girl", for Christ's sake. Elise! That's my name! Or Miss Carver. Or Nurse Carver. Not bloody "girl"!

JACK: (LAUGHING) By God, you're a right handful, you are! I pity any feller who has anythin' to do with you!

ELISE: (LAUGHS TOO) You're right - they don't last long!

JACK: OK, Elise, sorry to upset you - but -! Who do you think rules the roost when it comes to deciding what food at what price we all get to eat?

ELISE: I - how do you mean?

JACK: It's not a hard question - the answer is the supermarkets - the big ones, "multinational retail giants". The boys who'll screw anyone over for a profit.

ELISE: Rules the roost?

JACK: They're the guys who go into the developing countries and tell the farmers - in so many words: "Don't produce food for your own people. You'll never get rich that way. Produce some nice exotic foods for the wealthy western nations - through us. You still won't get rich, but we will - at your expense. And you'll help us kill off our home based farmers, who need to stay alive in a much more expensive country, and therefore can't give us the profit margins we need".

ELISE: Well, OK, maybe some of that goes on. But you're completely overlooking hundreds of other influences. I mean, what about Fair Trade, OXFAM, Unicef, whatever, whatever.

JACK: Spittin' in the wind! Doin' good work, don't misunderstand me. But the real influences are stupid inter-tribal warfare maintained by seriously nasty despots tryin' to get rich - and the multinationals. You want my recipe for a global meltdown? If - or when - the multinationals ever put two and two together, and recruit all those nasty little despots as regional managers, they'll double their profits yet again, and damn well near rule the world. No western government will ever be able to stand up to that regime! Especially after killin' off their own home based food production.

ELISE: Christ! OK - I admit you seem to be more up on all this than I am. I'm not saying I agree with you. I'm just owning up to not knowing enough to eat you and your arguments alive and spit them out before breakfast.

JACK: You got spirit, girl! I like that. I'll end up givin' you a job before you leave at this rate.

ELISE: Looks like you couldn't even afford me for half a day a week!

JACK: Too true.

ELISE: So it's too late, you reckon? The game is lost?

JACK: Probably. If the public understood it properly, mind, especially you townies - and insisted on buyin' only British produced food - that might still make a difference. Assumin' there's enough left to be bought.

ELISE: I'll think about it.

JACK: But even if there is still enough to feed everyone, you'd never find it. It's all mislabelled. The supermarkets will call any old tut British.

ELISE: Yes, I agree, that is an issue demanding more action.

JACK: Chickens from Thailand, beef from France, turkeys from Turkey, ducks from soddin' Pekin, labels from Wolverhampton - they all get sold as British! Makes me sick.

ELISE: There must be ways of challenging that? Legal, I mean! If not political.

JACK: If only! Next time, eh? I need to catch Tom before he goes off home and see where he's got with all these TB inoculations, not stay hob-nobbin' with stroppey loud-mouths from the Smoke. See you, girl!

ELISE: OK, old man! Missing you already.

SHE ENTERS THE CHALET, POURS SOME COFFEE, THEN RETURNS TO THE VERANDAH WITH THE BOOK.

22. TOM MEETS JACK AND UPDATES HIM ON THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS WITH THE CATTLE, AND GETS HIM TO SIGN A FORM.

TOM, DRESSED FOR HOME, THEN CROSSES THE YARD AND SEES ELISE. JACK GOES OFF TOWARDS CATTLE AREA, ANGRY.

TOM: It's alright for some! But there'll come a day, young Miss - you mark my words - when I'll be on holiday and you'll be slaving over a hot bed-pan!

ELISE: Do you know - when I arrived yesterday everything seemed basically black and white. But somehow in just a couple of days life has started to seem very complex. Maybe it's the stone that's turning my mind! Or just the fresh air? What do you think? Time to sit?

TOM: Sure, thanks. (DOES SO) What I think is what I didn't say when we were talking earlier. You and Hamlet are right of course. When it comes down to it there are more answers than there are questions. Lots of them are just plain wrong, others are part wrong and part right, and very few, if any, are right.

ELISE: So what didn't you say earlier? I was intrigued.

TOM: OK - me, right - not DEFRA, not official, just someone who's just told a farmer that 70% of his herd has to be slaughtered. So - off the record - big quotes: Prevention is better than Cure!

ELISE: Well, as a nurse I'd certainly agree with you. Though not a lot of doctors do. It would do them out of a job!

TOM: And it's especially better than a cure which doesn't work. Having us "field-workers" spend millions of tax-payers' money culling badgers and cattle in high-incidence TB areas just does not work. It doesn't go away. It keeps reappearing...

...With this approach bovine TB is here to stay - for a long, long time.

ELISE: So what would you do?

TOM: Bear with me on this: farmers have been pushed very hard to save money, so many of them don't put lime on the soil anymore. It's not considered "essential" - but artificial fertiliser is considered "essential". However this acidifies the soil. So do other things of course. Lime would counteract this, but without it our soil just goes on getting more acidic. Now if there is iron around - and some areas are very rich in iron - acidity encourages it into the top-soil and into pasture grasses, which the cattle eat. With me so far?

ELISE: Yep!

TOM: OK - a load of scientific studies have shown a firm link between iron-rich soil and TB incidence in mammals - especially cattle and badgers - independently of each other. OK?

ELISE: OK

TOM: Right. Add to that the common use of a certain type of pesticide cattle wormer which just happens to attack the cows' natural defence system against too much iron, and you have a recipe for disaster - another livestock crisis!

ELISE: But why badgers?

TOM: They eat stuff from the same soil - and even get the same cattle wormers because they're partial to dung-beetles. Dirty little beasts!

ELISE: I guess it's the same process as with humans. Lower our immune system efficiency through nutritional deprivation, alcoholism or aids, for example - and we have a much greater chance of getting TB. And it is on the rise!

TOM: Well, there you are. So killing off infected cattle just doesn't work - but getting the soil, cattle feed and wormers right in the first place would. In fact, has done - that's the point! And at a much lower cost. But I never said that!

ELISE: And I never heard a word of it!

TOM: Right answer!

CHAS RUNS ON FROM CATTLE AREA CARRYING HIS JACKET, FULL OF HIGH SPIRITS. HE LEAPS IN THE AIR, HEADING AN IMAGINARY BALL INTO THE NET SUCCESSFULLY, THEN THROWING BOTH HANDS IN THE AIR WHILE TROTting ROUND THE YARD TO THE IMAGINED CHEERS OF THE CROWD.

THEN HE RUSHES OVER TO THE CHALET VERANDAH, FULL OF EXPECTATION.

CHAS: Miss! Miss!

HE SUDDENLY SEES TOM AND IS IMMEDIATELY CRESTFALLEN.

CHAS: Night Miss! Night Tom!

HE RUSHES OFF (TO EXIT FARM GATE OFF)

ELISE: Night Chas! (BACK TO TOM) You said you were tempted to slow down the trend? Of farming disappearing?

TOM: I did, didn't I? I'd really love to - play a small part anyway - but I can see a few problems. However, I'd like to think there's room for someone like me, who knows all the theory - and knows it works - to spread the word.

ELISE: Like being a consultant?

TOM: Yes, exactly. Advising farmers that there is a better way, that DEFRA have got it wrong, and that better results can be got more cheaply - and that I can show them how.

ELISE: So - will you?

TOM: Mmm - I'd like to, but -! I'll think on't - to coin a Shakespearian phrase. What do you think?

ELISE: Oh God, don't ask me! And anyway I'm not too sure I know where I am: still against the whole idea of dairy farming? Still totally in favour of individual self-realisation? You see the conflict? For me personally - do I convert from vegetarianism? If so - to vegan or omnivore?

TOM: Oh my God, you are a tortured soul!

ELISE: Not so fast, matey! You do realise, don't you, that 30% of the earth's landmass, the bits that are free of ice, is already dedicated to livestock production? That this produces 1/5th of all greenhouse gases? That's more than from transportation, for example. That there's about 5 to 10 times the amount of calories in the grain

produced to feed livestock than there is in the livestock produced? That the majority of the world's soy and corn feeds livestock rather than people? That some 800 million people worldwide suffer from hunger or malnutrition? That the conclusion is in fact quite inescapable!

TOM: Less livestock?

ELISE: Bingo! The man's a genius.

TOM: So maybe I should stick to culling cattle instead of saving them?

ELISE: Maybe DEFRA actually know what they're doing after all?

TOM: Hah! Oh dear - I'm not sure that meeting you was such a good idea!

ELISE: Hey, don't listen to me! What do I know? I'm just a stroppy loud-mouth from the smoke - to quote Jack.

TOM: I'm sure most men could tell the difference!

ELISE: That was a compliment, wasn't it? Good God, I haven't had one of them for a few years. But seriously, it's your life. Your family. You need to make your own choice - the one that's right for you. Don't pay any attention to me.

TOM: No, no - you could well be right. "The broader picture" eh? At least if I stay on doing what I'm doing, I can go off home every night to my wife and adoring kids for a beer, beef-burgers, and Emmerdale and all my problems will be sorted, just like that! Thank God I'm not a farmer! Good night, Elise. Be good!

HE EXITS. HIS CAR CAN BE HEARD STARTING UP AND DRIVING OFF.

23. ELISE OPENS THE BOOK AT ANOTHER PAGE. HINT OF MYSTERIOUS STONE MUSIC.

ELISE: (READING) "The theory of earth currents and the belief that sites are sacrosanct, gives an explanation for the multiplicity of disasters. The flow of the earth current still existing in many ancient sites is disturbed if the site is disturbed. Its involuntary release by inexperienced persons produces an uncontrolled outburst of energy which can cause harm to nearby people and animals, and disrupt the weather". (YAWNS) And so endeth the second day!

THE LIGHTS HAVE FADED TO EVENING, THE
SETTING SUN IS LOW, THE STANDING STONE
IN SHADE AT ITS BASE.

ELISE EXITS THROUGH THE CHALET. (END OF
DAY 2)

FADE TO BLACK.

INTERVAL

ACT 2.

24. LIGHTS UP TO EARLY MORNING.

ONCE AGAIN THE DIGGER IS TEARING THE
EARTH AT THE BASE OF THE STONE, DUMPING
IT, MOVING FORWARD, DIGGING, BACKING,
SWIVELLING.

JACK IS ONCE AGAIN MANIC, ANGRY, HOT
AND BOTHERED, SWEARING WITH THE
EXERTION.

JACK: (SHOUTING, OFF) Sod it, bloody sod the
bugger! Bloody get dug, you bastard, bastard thing!

25. ELISE APPEARS FROM THE DIRECTION OF
THE OTHER 2 STONES, RETURNING FROM A
LONG WALK, FLUSHED, ENERGY FLOWING.

JACK SWITCHES OFF THE TRACTOR
(OFFSTAGE) AND COMES BACK ON TO THE
STONE PULLING A STEEL CABLE, WHICH HE
ATTACHES ROUND THE STONE DURING THE
DIALOGUE.

ELISE: Doesn't want to be shifted, eh? I'd let it
be, don't you think?

JACK: And what's it to you, girl?

ELISE: I passed a barn full of bull calves on my
walk.

JACK: So?

ELISE: They're still quite young, I guess.

JACK: Nearly six months.

ELISE: Can I ask what their future is?

JACK: They go for veal, they do.

ELISE: Veal!

JACK: That's right, girl - veal!

ELISE: But that's outrageous! I thought the veal market was dead - and rightly so!

JACK: No, not dead, and not rightly so! Live and kickin' - and growin' too, at last.

ELISE: But don't you have any idea how cruel - unnatural - veal production is?

JACK: No, I don't! An' clearly you don't neither!

ELISE: I just don't -

JACK: You saw 'em! Did they look cruelly treated? Eh, girl - did they?

ELISE: OK, maybe not - but that's because people like me fought long and hard to have veal crates and stalls outlawed.

JACK: Fair enough! You done right there, I'll grant you! They were unnatural and cruel practices. We didn't produce white veal then - and we don't now. No one in Britain does now.

ELISE: So? What are you doing?!

JACK: You never 'eard of Rose veal? Eight month old bull calves - reared naturally - lovely, tasty, very low in saturated fats, full of good healthy minerals and vitamins. Put a bit of flesh on you, girl, that would!

ELISE: But still veal! Eight months life! How would you like only eight months life!?

JACK: Look girl - do you drink milk?

ELISE: A bit.

JACK: Butter?

ELISE: Yes.

JACK: Cheese?

ELISE: OK.

JACK: So?

ELISE: So - I'm personally vegetarian, not vegan. But vegans have a greater sense of morality than even me! They'd see the end of dairy farming altogether if they had the chance.

JACK: Prob'ly want to see the end of the world too, bloody weirdos!

ELISE: Don't you believe it! I know vegans who all agree that it's not the natural purpose of cows to be raped and forcibly milked until they're slaughtered to feed obese carnivores after only one third of their life span. And they're right, old man Jack - you hear?

JACK: Look, the human race is carnivorous by nature - and millions of people - including you veggies - all demand a dairy industry. You all subscribe to farms like this one!

ELISE: But that doesn't justify producing veal!

JACK: Doesn't it? Think again, girl!

ELISE: What do you mean - doesn't it? Of course it doesn't.

JACK: What are the alternatives?

ELISE: I don't know. Let the creatures live a natural life span, at least.

JACK: And who's going to pay for their upkeep? Not you, I 'spect!

ELISE: You sell them as beef then, don't you? When they reach the proper age.

JACK: Look girl, we're dairy farmers - different thing from beef farmers, right? And OK, things do get easier for us when beef prices are risin'. But normally, for us - one bull maybe - to inseminate the cows - but a herd of bulls does nothing to earn its keep at all. No, there are only two options really, if we don't keep the male calves for proper British veal. One - shoot 'em as soon as they're born - give the carcasses to the hunt for their hounds. Or two - sell 'em to the Europeans, who have a massive white veal industry an' will pay for 'em.

ELISE: Oh shit!

JACK: And don't go thinkin' those European buyers have the same animal welfare standards we do - 'cause they don't. If you want to get on your high horse about veal, (which is prob'ly cruel to the horse!), go an' live on the continent. They did get around to bannin' veal crates a couple of year ago but they still have enough unnatural practices to curl your hair!

ELISE: Well, whatever! No, I'm not convinced. There has to be a better, more natural, moral way of conducting the business of a dairy farm.

JACK: Well, you find it, you come and tell me! In the meantime - if you drink milk, you need to buy our Rose veal - if you want to take responsibility for your own actions, that is!

ELISE: I can't. I'm vegetarian!

JACK: I reckon you're all mouth, you! No brain! No thinkin'! Those bull calves have got to go somewhere, an' without pushin' milk prices beyond what you'll pay.

ELISE: Oh God - I'm really going to have to turn vegan. The whole thing is so - sordid and unnatural.

JACK: Well, it's certainly unnatural for me to stand around chattin' in the middle of the mornin', girl! You go and settle down with your vodka, and write a poem or two, and you'll soon feel better.

26. FROM THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN, KATH SEES JACK AND ELISE TALKING AND REGISTERS JACK'S ANGER.

JACK EXITS TO THE TRACTOR (OFFSTAGE), STARTS IT UP, ACTIVATES THE PTO AND STARTS TRYING TO PULL THE STONE OUT.

ELISE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STONE, LAYS HER HEAD AGAINST IT AND CLOSES HER EYES. THEN AS THE TRACTOR POWERS UP, SHE STEPS BACK AND WATCHES. THE TRACTOR REVS AT FULL POWER AND HEAVES THE TAUT CABLE VIOLENTLY. THE STONE DOESN'T BUDGE AN INCH.

THE SKY HAS DARKENED WITH SUDDEN CLOUDS AND A STRONG GUSTY WIND BUFFETS THE SCENE, GROWING SUDDENLY FROM NOTHING.

ELISE: Good God, what is going on? (BEAT) Christ, I'm not staying here.

ALARMED, ELISE CARRIES ON AND RETURNS TO CHALET, GETS HERSELF SOME COFFEE.

CURSING AND SWEARING UNDER HIS BREATH, JACK DISCONNECTS THE PTO, LEAVES THE TRACTOR ON TICK-OVER, RE-ENTERS, DISCONNECTS THE STEEL CABLE FROM THE STONE, EXITS AND REELS IT IN TO THE OFF-STAGE TRACTOR.

THE WIND DIES DOWN, DAY BIRDS START CALLING, THE CLOUDS START BREAKING UP AND THE SUN SHINES AGAIN.

ELISE SITS ON THE VERANDAH, AS THE EARLY SUN RE-ESTABLISHES ITSELF.

27. MEANWHILE KATH HAS WATCHED ELISE'S PROGRESS BACK TO THE CHALET AND NOW PICKS UP A MILK CANISTER FROM THE KITCHEN TABLE, CROSSES TO CHALET, DUMPS THE CANISTER ANGRILY AT ELISE'S FEET, AND STANDS THREATENINGLY OVER HER.

KATH: Look girl, in my book you're a towny! You've spent your life in a town - London, even! Am I right? You can't get more towny than being a Londoner.

But what it means is that you know piss-all about the countryside - no, no! - hear me out! That's not an insult - well, not just an insult - it's plain fact. Because it's so common. It's not your fault, all you townies are the same, all tarred with the same brush - never did find out what that means - but what I'm saying is your values are all the same as other townies, sentimental, squeamish, impractical and downright threatening to us who have our lives to lead and our jobs to do and can't stand being dictated to all the time by idiots who don't know their arse from the rear end of a cow.

And - and! - you're not alone, it's not just all you ordinary people, all you very ordinary people, who live in urban ghettos, it's your bloody leaders, your politicians, your bossy-boots, power-mad towny dictators who don't trust country people to run the country, who have to dump all their towny crap on us, even though it's bull-shit from beginning to end. And believe me, we know bull-shit when we see it - or hear it or smell it! We're knee-deep in it without 'avin' yours dumped all over us.

It's all legislation and regulation based on prejudice and nothin' else! Why can't they trust to democracy? Eh? This is supposed to be a democracy - but when did any country based organization, political or otherwise, 'ave any power? Not devolved! Bloody 'ell, how patronisin' is that? But natural democratic power that should be ours by right!? They're shits, the lot of them! And you support them. Majority oppression! Just because there's a damn sight more townies than there are real people. It's as bad as a petty African dictatorship. State control, centralized, paternalistic, over regulated - and almost always wrong, wrong, wrong!! Now you can say something. (BEAT) And don't go mouthin' off your fancy theories at my Jack. He's got enough on 'is plate without 'avin' to deal with you.

ELISE IS SPEECHLESS. KATH WHEELS AWAY AND HEADS FOR THE CATTLE AREA. SHE STOPS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE YARD TO SHOUT HER LAST LINE.

KATH: An' stop messin' with our Chas! He's too good for the likes of you!

28. VERY SLOWLY, ELISE RISES, PICKS UP THE MILK AND WALKS UP TO THE STANDING-STONE. SHE WALKS ROUND IT COPYING THE OLD WOMAN'S RITUAL, POURING THE MILK ROUND THE STONE'S BASE, CHANTING THE WORDS AS SHE GOES.

ELISE: The stones give energy, the earth gives life
Them as don't trust them will come to strife.

ON HER WAY BACK TO THE CHALET SHE DEPOSITS THE MILK CONTAINER OUTSIDE THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN DOOR.

29. BACK AT THE CHALET, SHE POURS HERSELF A LARGE VODKA, POPS A PILL, AND SITS WITH HER NEW POEM. AS SHE WRITES AND THINKS INTERMITTENTLY, STILL EDGY AND EMOTIONAL, THE LIGHTS CHANGE THROUGH TO LATE AFTERNOON.

CHAS APPEARS FROM THE CATTLE YARD, CARRYING HIS JACKET. HE HESITATES BEFORE GOING OVER TO ELISE.

CHAS: Evenin' Miss.

ELISE REGARDS HIM CURIOUSLY FOR A MOMENT.

CHAS: New poem?

ELISE: Will you be a heart breaker too, Chas? I wonder. Being rooted in nature, does that reduce the inherent level of male duplicity?

CHAS: Dunno, Miss.

ELISE: No, I suppose not. One bull to inseminate us all - and destroy a whole delicate china shop in the process.

CHAS: As I see it, you're the heart breaker, not me.

ELISE: Point taken. It's all to do with mismatched expectations when it comes down to it. And anyway I suspect it's the path to wisdom in the long run. The pain! No pain, no gain! Are you in pain?

CHAS: Yes, Miss.

ELISE: I ought to be flattered, not irritated. Grateful even. Like Phoebe I am "not for all markets".

CHAS: Can I see you? Tonight? This evenin'? Now?

ELISE: What a lot of choice!

CHAS: Please, Miss. I promise not to say "I love you".

ELISE: (SUDDEN SURGE OF THE TEAR DUCTS) Oh dear God, did I cause this? Is it my efforts? My responsibility? My bonus? Chas, dear Chas - go home - forget me.

CHAS: Please, Miss!

ELISE: No Chas - in fact, as it happens, I'm otherwise occupied this evening.

CHAS: I could come back - later.

ELISE: Go home! Do not come back later! See you tomorrow!

CHAS: Oh Miss, please! I'll be good to you! I knows what you likes. Please! (ELISE SHAKES HER HEAD) Will you read me your poem then? Please.

ELISE: No, Chas! It's not for you! It's all wrong! The roles are reversed. It's me in your shoes. It hurts! I know it hurts! For both of us. Even if for me it was 1000 shags not five. That's different. The more you do it, the more you - well, it is different, believe me. Oh, OK - maybe it's right. But, you go home as soon as I've read it, yes? Even if it affects me? Promise?

CHAS: Must I?

ELISE: No promise, no poem!

CHAS: Right! I promise.

ELISE: A lover's tempest awakens spring
And forces one alive.
But withers when his autumn leaves
And once again one dies.
His summer's fullness bursts and blooms,
His passion bringing peace.
But heart and soul in winter's morgue
Just shrivel and surcease.

AS SHE ENDS SHE LETS OUT A SUDDEN WAIL OF GRIEF AND CURLS UP ON HERSELF. SHE PUSHES UP A HAND TO HALT CHAS IN HIS TRACKS.

ELISE: (ANGUISHED). You promised Chas - piss off! Go!

RELUCTANTLY, CHAS BACKS AWAY AND GOES.

ELISE SLOWLY PULLS HERSELF TOGETHER AND DOWNS A LARGE SLUG OF NEAT VODKA.

ELISE: "Come seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
Then shall be done a deed of dreadful note"
Right, let's do it girl - let's go, go, go!

SHE GOES INTO THE CHALET AS THE LIGHTS CONTINUE THROUGH TO DARK NIGHT.

NIGHT-JARS AND AN OWL. A DISTANT DOG.

JACK TRUDGES WEARILY BACK TO THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN DOOR, ENTERS AND STANDS ALONE IN THE KITCHEN.

JACK: (quietly to himself) Oh bugger it, bugger it, bugger it. (BEAT) Bugger it!

ELISE EMERGES ZIPPING UP A DARK WELL-WORN CAMOUFLAGE JACKET AND CARRYING A BALACLAVA. SHE LOOKS ROUND, PULLS THE BALACLAVA ON AND SLIPS QUIETLY AWAY BY THE NEAREST DOWNSTAGE CORNER.

JACK SUDDENLY PULLS OPEN A CUPBOARD, PRODUCES A BOTTLE OF RUM FROM LAST CHRISTMAS.

JACK: (to himself) "To Uncle Jack and Auntie Kath - have a lovely Christmas, love Eileen"

HE PULLS OFF SOME DECORATIVE RIBBON, BREAKS THE FOIL, OPENS IT, POURS A LARGE MUGFUL OF IT AND DOWNS IT IN ONE CONCENTRATED GO.

HE STANDS LETTING THE WARMTH SPREAD THROUGH HIS BODY AND START TO NUMB HIS MIND. SATISFIED, HE PUTS THE CAP BACK ON THE BOTTLE, RETURNS IT TO THE CUPBOARD, AND EXITS THROUGH TO THE HOUSE.

THE LIGHTS FADE BEHIND HIM.

30. LIGHTS GET DARKER, MOONSHINE
PICKING OUT THE STONE. NIGHTJAR. THEN
SOUNDS OF A SCUFFLE FROM THE UPSTAGE
DIRECTION OF ELISE'S EARLIER WALK.

CHAS DRAGS THE KICKING STRUGGLING ELISE
ACROSS THE YARD TO THE CHALET.

ELISE: Stop it! Chas, let me bloody go! Damn it!
Shit! Hell! Let me go!

CHAS: Keep your voice down! The Williams will
hear you else.

ELISE: So bloody what!

CHAS: You don't want 'em askin' questions like,
now do you!

ELISE: (ANGRY) Yes, I bloody do! What else is the
point? I act to make people ask questions. That's
what it's for!

THEY ARRIVE AT THE CHALET.

ELISE: (QUIETER) Oh God, what's wrong with me?
What's wrong?

CHAS LETS HER GO AND SHE STANDS
FORLORNLY.

ELISE: I don't understand. I don't. I didn't act!
Hold me. Chas. Please.

SHE STARTS SNIFFLING AND RELUCTANTLY
PUTS A HAND OUT FOR CHAS. HE TAKES HER
IN HIS ARMS AND HOLDS HER TIGHT.

ELISE: I couldn't do it, just couldn't. The moment
came - just another piece of basic activism - a
radical gesture - it's in my blood - done it dozens
of times - but tonight - nothing, frozen to the
spot, just not able to - past it, past it! That's
what it is! Time to hang me out, let me die, I've
swung into middle age lethargy. Well known problem.
Just never thought it would happen to me. Anger
gone, dissipated, hello lethargy. "See if I care!".
Yes, that's it! "Elise, Elise! Something's wrong!
Very wrong!" "Oh dear, is it, how sad, but I'm
busy watching 'Celebrity Love Nest Challenge'.
Nothing I can do". (VOICE BREAKING) Oh God! I'm
half in a trance already. Oh Chas!

CHAS: I'm here.

ELISE: So I noticed! But why? Why? What are you
doing here?

CHAS: Seein' you don't come to no 'arm.

ELISE: Protecting me from myself?

CHAS: Lettin' they calves loose won't do nothin'.

ELISE: I know. But it wasn't that.

CHAS: They'd not go far, just leap around and play nearby mostly.

ELISE: I mean, realizing that isn't what stopped me.

CHAS: Any that got out proper, we'd round 'em up in the mornin' no trouble.

ELISE: I do know I'm right, that's the thing. Animals shouldn't be bred in captivity to serve us. The whole idea of farming animals, especially battery farming - and keeping zoos too - is just so wrong.

CHAS: But don't you see - that's their life. They wants it. They likes their warm, comfortable barn. Don't want to be out roamin' the country. They gets frightened sometimes when they gets loose. Fun and games for a bit - then they wants to come back 'ome again.

ELISE: But that wasn't it, you see.

CHAS: All you'd do is get the Williams angry with you. Don't much like you already. No need to make it worse.

ELISE: But you do, don't you Chas?

CHAS: I do, Miss.

ELISE: In spite of me doing something so - stupid! In your eyes?

CHAS: You could do anythin' Miss.

ELISE: You think the sun shines out of my arse?

CHAS: It does! I seen it!

ELISE: It was the Williams that did it.

CHAS: Eh?

ELISE: Thinking about their problems, you see. I suddenly realized I was more on their side than - than against them. I'd just have made things worse for them.

CHAS: Well, right - that's right!

ELISE: So I stopped. I didn't do it.

CHAS: So when I got to you -

ELISE: - and saved the day -

CHAS: - you weren't doin' nothin' anyway?

ELISE: 'Fraid not, Chas.

CHAS: Made a right fool of meself then?

ELISE: No, Chas, never that! Your thinking was right. I might have done it. I've done it before, no problem. And - you were so - manly!

CHAS: Were I?

ELISE: Like a Knight in shining armour on a white charger!

CHAS: Bugger me!

ELISE: Or maybe me? It would take my mind off things, stop my head grinding itself away. I think I need some -. This feels too much like a - mess! Or worse! Yes, you're seeing the mess inside now, aren't you? That's what happens when you play around with a thirty-something. It's not just failing the pencil test, it's all the shit and barbed wire tangled up inside, the machine guns and machetes sticking out of every orifice to repel intruders. You should leave the mess to wallow by itself. Stay clear! You really should.

CHAS: Should I?

ELISE: Yes Chas, you should. (BEAT) However, you asked for it - now you got it.

CHAS: My lover!

ELISE: Do I give in gracefully? Accept middle age? The middle class, laissez-faire, don't care a toss attitudes of the Vast Majority? More to the point, do I look a well-hung gift-horse in the lunch-box when it's offered on a plate? To mix my metaphors.

CHAS: I love you!

ELISE: So a shag's not out the question then? And a vodka, of course. Got to keep the priorities clear. And of course, it's not one or the other - it's both together! Thank God for small mercies. And in your case big ones!...

... Come on then, Big Boy, come and shag me senseless, so I can forget my woes.

CHAS: My lovely lover!

ELISE: Five times so far? Let's see if we can push it up - don't you just love puns? - push it up to double figures, OK? It'll be hard - there's another! - but oh so worth it. So it was the third day that endeth with a Big Bang!

SHE TAKES HIS HAND AND LEADS HIM INTO THE CHALET. (END OF DAY 3)

31. THE STONE. LIGHTS CHANGE TO BREAK OF DAWN.

ONCE AGAIN THE DIGGER IS TEARING THE EARTH AT THE BASE OF THE STONE, DUMPING IT, MOVING FORWARD, DIGGING, BACKING, SWIVELLING - ALIEN NOISE IN THE PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY.

JACK IS ONCE AGAIN MANIC, ANGRY, HOT AND BOTHERED, SWEARING WITH THE EXERTION.

THE WEATHER IS BAD, SERIOUSLY BLOWY, SCUDDING CLOUD, NASTY WIND BENEATH THE TRACTOR'S NOISE. SOME LIGHTNING AND THUNDER.

JACK: (SHOUTING OFF BUT BARELY HEARD OVER THE NOISE) Sod it, bloody sod the bugger! Bloody get dug, you bastard!

JACK STOPS THE DIGGER OFF-STAGE, JUMPS TO THE GROUND AND ENTERS, CROSSING SLOWLY TO THE STONE. HE STANDS BY IT, QUIET, DEFEATED, THEN SLOWLY, CAREFULLY TOUCHES IT, CEDING VICTORY.

SUDDENLY HE STANDS STOCK STILL, WITH A SHARP GROAN, FROZEN IN AGONY, CLASPING HIS EXPLODING HEAD IN BOTH HANDS - THEN SUDDENLY SWIVELS ROUND AND WALKS OFF. THE TRACTOR DOOR IS HEARD TO OPEN IN A LULL IN THE WIND, THEN SLAM SHUT.

THE STORM SUBSIDES VERY QUICKLY. SUDDEN SOUND OF BIRDS REVEALED. THEN THE SHOTGUN. THEN UTTER SILENCE.

CHAS CRIES FROM WAY OFF-STAGE, RUNNING FEET, THEN HE APPEARS AND STOPS AGHAST AT THE SIGHT. HE INSPECTS THE BODY, PICKS UP WILLIAMS' HAT, THEN BACKS AWAY AND RUNS FOR THE FARMHOUSE, SHOUTING OUT FOR MRS WILLIAMS.

32. FARMHOUSE. MRS WILLIAMS COMES INTO THE KITCHEN, THEN TO THE ENTRANCE, CATCHES CHAS' INCOHERENT URGENCY AND RUNS WITH HIM BACK TO THE STONE.

SUDDENLY, SHE'S THERE: HER HUSBAND'S BLOODIED BODY LIES STRETCHED JUST OFF-STAGE FROM HER, THE GUN CLOSE BY. SHE IS IMPASSIVE FOR A MOMENT, STAGGERS TO ONE SIDE, CONTROLS HERSELF.

THEN CHAS IS BESIDE HER, SUPPORTING HER. MRS WILLIAMS RECOVERS HERSELF AND LEADS CHAS AWAY FROM JACK'S BODY. THEY STAND BY THE STONE.

CHAS: I was finishin' off the hedgin' - next field. I seed 'im - actin' mad, 'e was. But no more 'n usual. I didn't reckon on't. Then I 'ears the gun. Nut'n I could do.

ELISE HAS HEARD THE GUN AND ENTERS TO THE VERANDAH. SHE SEES MRS WILLIAMS AND CHAS AND RUNS OVER TO THEM, HEARING CHAS' EXPLANATION. KATH LEADS CHAS BACK TO THE FARMHOUSE, AS ELISE KNEELS ONSTAGE OF THE BODY TO CONFIRM DEATH. SHE THEN TAKES OUT HER MOBILE AND IMPROVISES THE START OF A 999 CALL.

KATH GOES IN TO THE KITCHEN, BUT CHAS SUDDENLY TURNS AWAY, BADLY UPSET, ANGRY, INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE YARD, TRIES TO DEAL WITH HIS SHOCK, MAYBE LEAPING ABOUT PUNCHING THE AIR.

HE LOOKS BACK AT THE STONE, RUNS OVER AND LOOKS AT IT, TRYING TO WORK IT OUT. HE PICKS UP THE SHOTGUN. HE CAN'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING. WHEN ELISE REACHES OUT A HAND TO HIM, HE RUNS OFF AGAIN BACK TO THE YARD, DISTRAUGHT, STARING IN AT KATH, SITTING IN THE KITCHEN, NUMB.

ELISE STARTS TO MOVE BACK TO THE YARD AND FARMHOUSE, AND WITH CHAS NOW STILL, WE BEGIN TO HEAR HER CALL.

ELISE (ON PHONE): Yes, I've confirmed death.
(PAUSE) No doubt at all. Clearly suicide. No, it
was witnessed. (LOWERING VOICE) A wife and a young
employee. (PAUSE) Alright so far - I think. No
immediate shock anyway. The paramedics can confirm.
(PAUSE) Fine. Yes, of course I'll stay here. You'll
send an ambulance? (PAUSE) Moorlands Farm. OK,
thank-you.

SHE SHUTS THE PHONE. SHE SEES CHAS
STANDING, WATCHING HER.

ELISE: Chas? (PAUSE) You wouldn't make us all a cup
of tea, would you? Nice and strong.

33. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN. CHAS RUSHES IN
AND MAKES THE TEA (THE KETTLE'S ALWAYS
HOT). ELISE FOLLOWS HIM BACK IN.

ELISE: Thank-you. Can I do anything for you, Mrs
Williams?

KATH: You can stop patronizing me for a start.

ELISE: I'm sorry?

KATH: You may well be, but it's unpleasant.

ELISE: I meant -

KATH: I know what you meant. "No immediate shock"
indeed! Medical specimen am I?

ELISE: I just wanted to reassure -

KATH: What do you expect for Christ's sake?

ELISE: (CAREFULLY) Everyone responds to grief in
their own way.

KATH: Oh my God. Listen - I'll deal with my own
feelings by myself, thank-you. (PAUSE) I'm grateful
to you for your kind help, but now I'd appreciate
it if you'd just go and get on with your holiday.
That's what you're here for, isn't it?

ELISE: Well, yes, I understand - but it might be
more - helpful if I -

KATH: It would be a bloody sight more helpful if
you'd just leave me be.

ELISE: (ACCEPTING SLOWLY) Sure. I understand.

KATH: You understand piss all.

ELISE: Look- !

BUT SHE CURBS IT. KATH STANDS AND TAKES
A MUG OF TEA FROM CHAS, RUFFLES HIS
HAIR KINDLY, THEN STANDS STARING OUT OF
THE WINDOW.

ELISE: Just let me know if -

KATH: There isn't.

ELISE: (PAUSE) There's an ambulance on the way. I
can sign the - their paperwork. Save you some
hassle.

ELISE GOES. KATH AND CHAS EXIT INTO
FARMHOUSE. FARMHOUSE LIGHTS DOWN.

GENERAL LIGHTING CHANGES FROM MORNING
TO AFTERNOON.

34. ELISE WALKS SLOWLY UP TO THE
STANDING STONE, TOUCHES IT, THEN SITS
AT ITS BASE AND RELAXES, SHUTS HER EYES
AND ENJOYS THE PEACE. BIRDS.

WHEN SHE OPENS HER EYES AGAIN, THE OLD
WOMAN IS STANDING IN FRONT OF HER,
STARING AT HER.

ELISE: Oh! Hello. (STANDING) Am I in your way?

WOMAN: No. Where were it to, lass? 'Ere?

ELISE: Yes.

WOMAN: Ambulance been and gone? Chas run over an'
told us.

ELISE: Yes. It's so - just awful!

WOMAN: It were comin'.

ELISE: No, I don't believe that.

WOMAN: (PAUSE) You'm be doin' the right thing.

ELISE: Yes?

WOMAN: Trust the stones. You'm be alright, you see.

ELISE: Can I ask? What you're doing? With the milk?
I saw you - before.

WOMAN: They'll see me right.

ELISE: Are you praying?

WOMAN: I trust 'em, see.

SHE STARTS HER CHANTING AND CIRCLING AS BEFORE. THEN SHE SUDDENLY STOPS.

WOMAN: They mustn't ever move it. Mustn't try to move it. That's not right. They don't want that.

ELISE: Who don't?

WOMAN: The stones won't be shifted. Come to a bad end, they do. Always do.

ELISE: Who exactly?

WOMAN: Them as tries to shift 'em. Them that don't trust 'em. It's the earth. Where we come from. Respect, see? It'll see us right then, see.

ELISE: Yes.

WOMAN: (LOOKS AT HER SHREWDLY) You knows. I sees it. You'm doin' the right thing. You'll be alright. You trusts it.

ELISE: I do feel - the peace, you know?

WOMAN: Peace is right. Anger - and force - for change - don't work. Provokes, you see. It must always be patient and peaceful.

ELISE: Oh my God, you know?

WOMAN: You'll find the way, I knows.

ELISE: You think? Nothing's clear just now.

THE WOMAN MAKES HER LIBATION AND STARTS TO MOVE OFF.

OLD WOMAN: You go home, lass. You'm alright now. And not him. He's not the one. Not Chas neither - but you knows that. 'Tis another for you. You'll see.

ELISE: Good-bye.

SHE WALKS OFF. ELISE WATCHES HER GO, LIT BY THE SETTING SUN AND HEADS BACK TO THE CHALET.

35. LIGHTS FADE SLOWLY TO NIGHT AS ELISE ENTERS THE CHALET VERANDAH. SHE SITS, UNSCREWS VODKA BOTTLE, POURS, RECAPS, HOLDS GLASS UP.

ELISE: Hail to me, blithe spirit, Bird who always hurts (PAUSE) Birds should never flirt? Bird remove thy skirt? Well - blithe anyway! And certainly spirit anyway!

SHE DRINKS THE RAW SPIRIT THEN
BREATHES OUT TO COOL HER MOUTH.

ELISE: (TO HERSELF) "...only emptiness can link, her future with her past"

CHAS SHUFFLES INTO THE YARD.

CHAS: (HELPLESSLY) Miss!

ELISE: Chas! No, oh no - please, no. Go home.

CHAS: (WEEPING) Miss!

ELISE RISES, PUTS DOWN HER GLASS,
GOES TO CHAS AND ENFOLDS HIM. CHAS
BREAKS UP COMPLETELY AND ELISE DOES
HER BEST TO COMFORT

CHAS: (EVENTUALLY) Please Miss - love me. Like you done before.

ELISE: Chas darling - holding you and comforting you at such an awful time - that's one thing. There's no charge for that. It's so little, I know. But encouraging you in your dreadful mistaken obsessive passion for me - that's quite another thing. It's just not an option. I really won't be a party to prolonging your anguish. I'm sorry for it. I admit I should have seen it coming - my mistake! I just didn't. I'm grateful for the sex. That was fun and I needed it. But please, darling, darling Chas - nothing else is remotely possible. And you must realise - please realise - your - dependency on me now has so much to do with Jack. If it weren't for this awful tragedy, you'd be coping fine. So please, please, dear, darling Chas - go and meet up with your friends, get totally plastered, and crash out in oblivion. Tomorrow is another day.

CHAS: Each new morn, new widows howl, new orphans cry.

ELISE: (BREAKING UP) Oh my God, Chas - please, just go home. I can't cope - not with this. I'm so useless, and so, so wrong for you.

CHAS: (HOLDING ON TO HER DESPERATELY) I love you - so much, Miss. So much!

A LONE OWL HUNTING HOOTS. A DISTANT
DOG BARKS

ELISE: So endeth the fourth day. And did God
dare to see it was good?

ELISE LEADS CHAS INTO THE CHALET AND
CLOSES THE DOOR. CHALET LIGHTS FADE
OUT.

(END DAY 4)

36. LIGHTS FADE UP FOR MORNING.

AN OFF-STAGE CATTLE TRUCK HAS ITS RAMPS
REMOVED AND STOWED, AND IS CLOSED UP
AND BOLTED. THEN THE DRIVER STARTS IT
UP AND LETS IT TICK OVER.

KATH SIGNS SOME PAPERS AT THE KITCHEN
TABLE, WATCHED BY TOM, DRESSED NOW A
BIT MORE FORMALLY.

TOM: Here! And here! (PAUSE) Thank-you.

TOM TAKES THEM FROM HER, SEPARATES THEM

TOM: These are your copies.

HE PUTS HIS COPIES IN HIS BRIEFCASE AND
CLOSES IT.

CHAS APPEARS IN YARD FROM THE CATTLE
AREA, SEES TOM FINISHING OFF WITH KATH,
SO WAITS.

TOM: Well, that's it, Mrs Williams. I am sorry
it's been such a dreadful time for you. Please
don't hesitate to contact me if there's anything
I can do to help you, OK? However big or small, I
would like to be of some help if I can. I feel I
owe it to Jack. And I do have a lot of contacts,
some of which may be helpful to you.

KATH: Thank-you Tom. I'll bear that in mind.

TOM: Well, all the best then. I'll be off. 'Bye
then.

KATH: 'Bye!

ELISE ENTERS CHALET VERANDAH CARRYING A
CAFETIERE, PUTS IT ON THE TABLE AND
POURS HERSELF A CUP OF BLACK WITH 2
SUGARS.

TOM SHAKES HANDS WITH KATH, THEN MOVES INTO THE YARD AND CROSSES TO CHAS AND GIVES HIM TWO OF THE PAPERS. KATH EXITS INTO THE FARMHOUSE.

TOM: Chas lad!

CHAS: They for the driver then?

TOM: They are, lad. Get him to sign them all, one for him, and you keep this one for Mrs Williams and this copy for me. Got that?

CHAS: No problem!

CHAS RUNS OFF. TOM HAS SEEN ELISE AND CROSSES TO HER. IN BG, CHAS CAN JUST BE HEARD SPEAKING TO THE DRIVER. THEN AFTER A PAUSE, THE TRUCK POWERS UP AND DRIVES AWAY

TOM: That's not a cafetiere of freshly-made coffee I see before me, is it? The handle of the cup pointed towards me?

ELISE: It could be - if you play your cards right! (SHE POURS HIM A CUP)

TOM: (SITTING) That's me done here for a while. You'll have had a traumatic few days, I guess?

ELISE: Oh God - not me! Poor Mrs Williams!

TOM: Indeed. Though quite self-sufficient in her own way.

ELISE: I did notice! Why do you think he did it?

TOM: Depression, I would think. What else is there? How are you? Has this upset you?

ELISE: (SIGHS) Yeah. Yeah, I guess so. Suicide's sad.

TOM: At least you don't look as wrought up as you did when I first saw you.

ELISE: Ah! Well, could be. I was in a bad way. Overwork, run-down, man problems! That's why I came here. Unwind. And I think it's worked! Not that my puny little problems are remotely in the same league as Mrs Williams'. But yes - I'm certainly more relaxed than when I arrived! Strange really.

TOM: No danger of you popping your wellies then - that's good!

ELISE: God, no! Not me - I'm a tough old bird, me! Well - becoming one! Do you know - I've been thinking - and reading a bit while I've been here - about the stone and stuff. I think there's another possibility - than depression, you know?

TOM: I'm all ears.

LIGHTS SLOW BUILD TO FULL DAY.

ELISE: Do you know what electrical induction means?

TOM: As I understand it one current or magnetic field can alter or even set up another current or magnetic field - without being in direct contact with it.

ELISE: OK. You know how amazing our brains are. When we think - or move - consciously or unconsciously - whatever we do that shows we're alive - it's a result of neurons in the brain moving from one point to another - carrying messages or instructions, whatever - very delicate electrical currents.

TOM: Agreed.

ELISE: Well now - big leap - couldn't the Earth's energy fields affect the brain. We know it happens with currents we understand.

TOM: Electroconvulsive Therapy?

ELISE: Yes, ECT. Not nice, but it works! And Radionics. I tried that once, made me feel great.

TOM: Telepathy too, that sort of thing?

ELISE: Well there you're talking about something else - about the brain being active, itself transmitting rather than just being passively affected by outside currents.

TOM: OK. Well, maybe - let's agree it could be true.

ELISE: I don't see why not. Now this book I borrowed from Mrs Williams reckons that many ancient sites were established precisely to harness the benefits of the Earth's energy fields - or even cosmic forces on behalf of the Earth.

TOM: Harness?

ELISE: Trap and store - like a battery. Ley lines. Powerful forces.

TOM: Sites like the stones up there?

ELISE: Exactly: disturbing an energy field or a flowing current could quite conceivably have a damaging effect on the brain's delicate neural currents.

TOM: Well, that's a new slant on the old phrase "While the balance of mind was disturbed". I guess that's what the inquest will say - for the wrong reason if your theory is right. Williams was far too phlegmatic to kill himself over agricultural bureaucracy. Many farmers do, I grant you, but not this one. He just got angry, shouted a lot and worked it off that way. It was something else, I would agree. Has to be. But - we'll never know! You're off today, I hear?

ELISE: I am! Bags all packed and ready to go. Back to real stress - thanks to another area of over-regulated bureaucracy!

TOM: Well, you look as though you'll cope alright!

ELISE: Oh yes! I'm fine, really! A complete cure!

TOM: You must have plugged into the stone!

ELISE: I think I have! (SMILES)

TOM GIVES HER BACK THE COFFEE MUG AND
RISES TO GO.

TOM: (SUDDEN THOUGHT) Good God! Thought it rang a bell. Ever heard the story of Robin Hood's Butts in Somerset?

ELISE: No.

TOM: Long time ago! A treasure-seeker got some workmen to dig in one of the barrows for him. At the end of a day's hard work digging trenches and carting away loads of earth, the barrow wasn't any smaller. When they returned next morning, the trenches and the mounds of earth had completely disappeared. There wasn't a single trace of the day's work to be seen.

ELISE: Is this true?

TOM: Oral tradition - handed down, documented too, I think. Anyway, the treasure-seeker had a go himself. He spent a couple of hours digging a hole, then got out of it for a rest. He stood up and turned to look at it, and it wasn't there!...

... Completely vanished! So - maybe you're right.
(BEAT) Maybe Hamlet's philosophy was right! I'll
leave you to puzzle that one out. Been a pleasure.
Look after yourself.

ELISE: Thank-you! You too! Good luck with your
plans.

TOM: Ah! I'm sort of having second thoughts on
that.

ELISE: Why? It's a good idea.

TOM: You didn't think so two days ago!

ELISE: Oh Christ, don't pay any attention to me.

TOM: Well, either way, I just don't think I can
make it work.

ELISE: But why not?

TOM: Well, once I've spelled out what I'm going to
do - to save a farmers cattle from T.B. and save
his business - then he doesn't need me any more.

ELISE: Why not?

TOM: Well, once he's seen the scientific evidence
favouring this course of action, he can just get on
with it himself. No need to pay me! I'd never earn
a living!

ELISE: Oh, I see. But that's a shame.

TOM: The only way I can bring up my family is by
going along with the government's long term cock-
up. I hate it - but I need the money! And anyway -
it's what you really want.

ELISE: What do you mean?

TOM: Your desire to see as many cattle culled as
possible and get us all on to a veggie diet.

ELISE: True!

TOM: So - bonne chance!

ELISE: You too, Tom. It's been good meeting you.
And - you may not be the only one having second
thoughts!

TOM: Oh, is that a good thing?

ELISE: I - don't know. How do you mean?

TOM: Well, I reckon, we, all of us, need people like you around. To act as - a sort of irritant - stopping us all getting complacent - make sure things do change when they need to - make things better, I guess.

ELISE: Bless you, Tom - I'm going to remember that as a compliment - another compliment in fact! But I've come to realise it's a young person's game - well, some of it! It needs - I think - an energy and a passion that come from being single-minded. As soon as you start to see the grey areas, the complications, other people's points of view, you're done for. Well - that's how I see it today!

TOM: Well, whatever you do, I'm sure you'll do it well. Cheeribye!

TOM SMILES AND GOES.

CHAS CROSES FROM CATTLE AREA TO FARMHOUSE KITCHEN AND HELPS HIMSELF TO A COFFEE.

37. ELISE TAKES OUT HER MOBILE AND SPEED DIALS.

ELISE: Sue - no! Bugger your brother! He's history. Full stop. This call's about something totally different! No, Sue - please, just listen. I'm not sure how to put this - I think my activist days are over. Wait - wait! I set out to do something - something I felt strongly was right and needed doing, at least as a gesture, a marker - to focus on a need for a better point of view - and - I failed. I chickened out. And I'm not sure I know why. (PAUSE)

Oh never mind the details. You'd have approved, the whole cell would have approved - but - but many things, really. I think I'm too close to the farmers, the whole operation here, the injustices they suffer. That alone may have turned my own working values. I don't know. No longer black and white - just suddenly lots and lots of grays. Maybe it's age! Maybe I'm becoming middle aged. Maybe they're right, all those who say idealism is for the young. Maybe idealism - activism - is all too often another word for wearing blinkers. (PAUSE) No - not always, agreed. But sometimes. Sometimes - perhaps more often than we've ever realized, both parties in a fight have right on their side. (PAUSE)...

... OK, what I'm saying is - I'm confused, I'm alone, I feel miserable and I'm having to recognise I've changed - am changing. I think when I get back I need a new start in some way - a preparation at least for a new phase of my life. We'll see.
(PAUSE) What I'm trying to say is - maybe I'm dumping the cell as well as your bloody brother.
(PAUSE) No, not you, you stupid cow! You mean far too much to me. I'll see you tonight, don't worry.

ELISE CLOSSES THE MOBILE AND MOVES INTO THE CHALET.

38. KATH ENTERS THE KITCHEN AND GIVES CHAS A BAG OF PROVISIONS. CHAS BOUNDS INTO THE YARD WITH THE BAG, TWIRLING IT ROUND FOR A HIGH ENERGY RELEASE.

ELISE RE-ENTERS AND PLACES HER BAGS BY THE FRONT DOOR. CHAS RUNS OVER TO HER.

ELISE: Hey, Chas! How're you today?

CHAS: OK, Miss, I reckon. Rolls and milk. And paper.

ELISE: Paper? Thanks! Recovered from your shock?

CHAS: Reckon. Awful thing though.

ELISE: Yeah, it is. I don't envy you - being there. Don't let it give you bad dreams.

CHAS: It did, Miss.

ELISE: Oh - I'm sorry.

CHAS: Not your fault! You were just - great!

ELISE: I know - but none the less. It'll pass though.

CHAS: Happen it will. Report in newspaper there!

ELISE: Oh, OK! Is Mrs Williams alright? I mean, really alright?

CHAS: S'pose so. Don't let on much, 'er don't. Well - not to I, anyhow.

ELISE: What'll you do? Stay on, I suppose?

CHAS: Dunno. Mebbe. Mebbe not. It'll all likely change now.

ELISE: How do you mean?

CHAS: Well, too much for an old widow woman - farm like this.

ELISE: She's not that old!

CHAS: Old enough! We won't be changing over to arable now anyways. Can't do it single-handed. Reckon I'll be out of a job before long. I've a mate works in a supermarket. Says he can get me in if I want. So - that's prob'ly it. You goin' today?

ELISE: 'Fraid so!

CHAS: I'll come an' say goodbye before you go!

HE RUNS OFF QUICKLY BEFORE SHE CAN ANSWER. BUT THE THOUGHT TROUBLES HER.

39. ELISE POURS HERSELF A COFFEE, USES SOME OF HER NEW MILK, BUT PUTS THE ROLLS IN HER OWN BAG.

SHE OPENS THE PAPER AND READS A FRONT PAGE HEADLINE: "FARMER'S SUICIDE".

IN THE FARMHOUSE, KATH APPEARS AND SITS. THE TABLE HAS THE NEWSPAPER OPEN IN FRONT OF HER CHAIR.

ELISE: (READING) "Mr Jack Williams, farmer of Westborough High Farm, was found yesterday after he had killed himself with his own shot-gun (mutter, mutter)... Williams was described by friends in the farming community as suffering from depression caused over several years by the high level of regulatory controls imposed on farmers by the European Union, and in the shorter term by the devastating effects on his business of a spate of livestock crises". (THINKING) The balance of mind!

ELISE FOLDS THE PAPER, STORES IT IN HER BAG, FINISHES HER COFFEE, PICKS UP THE BOOK. SHE CROSSES TO THE FARMHOUSE, KNOCKS AND ENTERS.

KATH: You're off then?

ELISE: Yes. I've tidied up a bit too.

KATH: Good!

ELISE: Do I owe you anything? For the rolls, milk?

KATH: No - my treat. I - thank-you - for your help yesterday. Sorry I was a bit upset.

ELISE: Oh God no! I'm - it's - you've had a tough time. I hope things-

KATH: I'm sure they will.

ELISE: What will you do? Can I ask?

KATH: Retire, probably. Sell up and take it easy somewhere. There's no future in farming. Depressing bloody state of affairs.

ELISE: Yes, I saw the newspaper report. Thanks for that.

KATH: Well - there we are then.

ELISE: You don't think - ?

KATH: What?

ELISE: You don't think that trying to move the stone, for example -

KATH: What?! You have been nosing around those old superstitions, then? Bloody hell, girl: You're a Londoner, aren't you? A nurse, at that? Supposed to have your feet on the ground, aren't you?

ELISE: I'm open to - ideas. I don't close my mind to -

KATH: And I do, I suppose! Thank-you.

ELISE: No, I'm not trying to offend -

KATH: Well, you do it well in spite of that. Though what more can be expected from someone who scribbles poetry and lives on a diet of pills and vodka, I don't know.

ELISE: (PAUSE) Yes, well - I guess I'd better go. I do hope things -

KATH: Thank-you.

ELISE: Good-bye.

NO RESPONSE. ELISE WALKS OUT OF THE KITCHEN IN SILENCE. SHE GOES OVER TO THE CHALET, AND PICKS UP HER BAGS.

40. CHAS APPEARS OUTSIDE THE CHALET. DISTRAUGHT, ON THE VERGE OF TEARS. ELISE EMERGES.

ELISE: Oh Chas, for Christ's sake!

CHAS: Oi don't want you to go, Miss.

ELISE: Well, oi do want to go. Oi'm goin' 'ome, my lover!

CHAS: Can't you stay?

ELISE: No oi can't! (NORMAL VOICE) I've got a job, Chas darling! I need it and the money I make from it.

CHAS: You could live here and be a nurse. Big hospital fifteen mile away.

ELISE: I'm a city girl, Chas. I need the bright lights. I'd die here.

CHAS: I'd be here. To love you!

ELISE: No Chas, for fuck's sake, stop that! You do not love me. It's puppy love - nothing serious, totally misplaced, here today, gone tomorrow.

CHAS: No!

ELISE: Yes! Find someone your own size! I don't mean that literally of course. I mean a nice, homely, buxom, nineteen year old, who'll mend your dinners, cook your socks and give you a herd of calves.

CHAS: But I wants you!

ELISE: You think you do, but you don't. I promise you! You do not want me! No man in his right mind wants me - least of all you. A woman might. You know - there's a thought - but not you!

CHAS TURNS AWAY FIGHTING HIS TEARS.
ELISE PUTS HER BAGS DOWN, GOES TO HIM,
PUTS AN ARM ROUND HIM.

ELISE: Please Chas, don't make this hard for me. I'm only being kind to you. You'll thank me one day, believe me!

CHAS: Will I ever see you again?

ELISE: Best not!

CHAS: Please!

ELISE: Look - I'll send you a Christmas card - to here, OK? And I'll give you an address then that you can send me some news to, OK?

CHAS: But that's months and months away.

ELISE: I know. You'll have forgotten me by then.

CHAS: No!

ELISE: We'll see! Now - give me a kiss and let me go.

CHAS KISSES HER PASSIONATELY AND SHE HAS TO UNTANGLE HIM TO GET FREE.

ELISE: Shit! Now - normal life, right! No waiting for me, promise?

CHAS: My lover!

ELISE: Jesus Christ! Be good!

CHAS: My only lover!

SHE PICKS UP HER BAGS AND MARCHES OFF AS CHAS SLOWLY CRUMPLES UP. MRS. WILLIAMS HAS SEEN THE KISS.

MRS. WILLIAMS (IN KITCHEN): Chas! Tea! (BEAT) Come on lad!

CHAS SLOWLY CROSSES UP TO THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN.

MUSIC: [PEACEFUL NEW AGE - DERIVATIVE OF THE STONE'S MYSTERIOUS MUSIC]

ELISE STOPS FOR A MOMENT BEFORE EXITING TO HER CAR AND LOOKS BACK TO THE STONES. SHE THINKS FOR A MOMENT.

ELISE: I shall miss that bloody stone - more than anything, I reckon! Hamlet? I wonder what - ah: There are more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy. Elise. (PAUSE) True. Yeah, bloody true.

FADE TO BLACK.

CURTAIN