

# DEEP END

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## Characters:

Claudia Honeybone  
Doris Hooker  
Marjorie Pinkum  
Ngairé Andrews  
Decima Delaware

## Setting:

*An impression of a living room. There is a photograph of a Second World War soldier on a dining table. There are two chairs at the table. A Second World War military hat hangs on the knob of one of the chairs. It is the 1990s.*

## DEEP END

*The curtains open to a recording of Vera Lynn singing "The White Cliffs of Dover".*

There'll be blue birds over  
The white cliffs of Dover  
Tomorrow - just you wait and see

*Claudia Honeybone enters, as if slow dancing with someone. She is holding some knives and forks. She is wearing swimming togs underneath a dressing gown. She also has a towel which she places on the back of a chair.*

There'll be love and laughter  
And peace ever after  
Tomorrow - when the world is free

*She takes the photograph, and hugging it to her breast, continues to dance.*

The shepherd will tend his sheep  
The valley will bloom again  
And Jimmy will go to sleep  
In his own little room again

*She replaces the photograph on the table and sets the knives and forks on the table as if setting it for two - still moving in dance time.*

There'll be blue birds over  
The white cliffs of Dover  
Tomorrow - just you wait and see

The shepherd will tend his sheep  
The valley will bloom again

*She takes the photograph and dances again.*

And Jimmy will go to sleep  
In his own little room again.

*She places the photograph on one of the chairs - as if it was sitting down for a meal - and sits in the other chair herself.*

There'll be blue birds over  
The white cliffs of Dover  
Tomorrow - just you wait and see.

**Claudia:** *(glaring at the photograph)* Grace? Or don't you believe in saying grace any more?

*She pauses, casts her head down and says:*

**Claudia:** For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful.

*She nods and smiles at the photograph.*

**Claudia:** (*reprovingly*) AMEN!

**Claudia:** You may start now.

*She picks up her knife and fork and begins to eat an imaginary meal. She pauses occasionally as if having an imaginary conversation.*

**Claudia:** Yes! The potatoes ARE new - of course. It's the season for new potatoes. I like them cooked with just a little mint. A quick scrub and into the pot. That's it. That's all. And asparagus. Just a light boil and then butter. I got the spuds at Hayden's. Vegies are very reasonable there. Doris put me onto it. The meat's a bit tough, but... well, I'm sorry... How do you think I felt. Cold, she said. Have it cold... That's Marjorie... That's Marjorie... Well I can't help it. (*She begins to get annoyed*) If you think I'm going to go there after all I've been through. (*She stands*) If that's the way you want it you can take the Austin 7 and go. I'll keep the kids. They can get to school on the bus. I'll manage. I'll manage all on my own as I have in the past. (*The speech begins to build up loudly. At the climax, Doris enters*) Don't go making a big thing of it. The faults all on my side, oh yes, all on my side, it's always on my side, whenever you're not pleased, it's all on my side, my side of the family, my relations, not yours, oh no not your relations, next thing you'll be related to the Duke of York. You'll...

*Doris Hooker enters suddenly. She is carrying a towel and wearing swimming togs underneath a dressing gown.*

**Doris:** (*shouting*) Claudia Honeybone! The war ended fifty years ago. You weren't even a twinkle.

*Claudia replaces the photograph on the table, and gathers the knives and forks.*

**Claudia:** I was pretending.

**Doris:** Pretending or not, it was stupid.

**Claudia:** You think I'm stupid pretending?

**Doris:** You can't live in the past.

**Claudia:** People pretend all the time.

**Doris:** Well that's no excuse. Where are the others?

**Claudia:** They're not here.

**Doris:** I can see that. How are we meant to practise?

**Claudia:** They're changing.

*Doris sits.*

**Doris:** I'm not waiting all day.

**Claudia:** You won't have to.

**Doris:** *(referring to photograph)* Whose is the photograph?

**Claudia:** I found it in an antique shop. It must have been lying there for years. It was covered in dust.

**Doris:** So?

**Claudia:** I felt sorry for it. That's all. It's a photograph of someone, isn't it? He had a life. I fell for him. There and then in the antique shop. I thought, "I'm taking you home with me Sonny Boy. Maybe we'll fall in love".

**Doris:** Don't be silly.

**Claudia:** Well, not quite like that. But... I wonder what he was really like.

**Doris:** God knows. Anyway, the war's no longer relevant.

**Claudia:** Was he killed? Is he a grandfather now? I mean, he was someones son. He must have had a family. They must've missed him. It's sad to think of that.

**Doris:** Of course he was someone. And the hat?

**Claudia:** *(ignoring question about hat)* He was. That's what I mean.

*Marjorie Pinkum and Ngaire Andrews enter. They too are carrying towels and wearing their swimming togs under a dressing gown.*

**Doris:** Where's Decima?

*Decima Delaware enters directly behind them. She too is carrying a towel and wearing swimming togs under a dressing gown.*

**Decima:** Right here.

**Doris:** *(putting on her bathing cap)* Well let's get started.

**Ngaire:** *(to Decima)* She thought you were late.

**Decima:** *(putting on bathing cap)* I followed you in.

**Marjorie:** *(putting on bathing cap)* Well!

**Claudia:** I think you were all late. I almost had dinner.

**Doris:** Dinner indeed! With some lover boy.

**Marjorie:** Who?

**Doris:** It's in her mind.

**Ngaire:** Who?

**Doris:** The photo.

*Marjorie, Ngaire and Decima look at the photograph.*

**Decima:** Who is it?

**Doris:** She doesn't know.

*Doris places her towel on the floor.*

**Ngaire:** He's quite nice.

**Marjorie:** A bit stern.

**Claudia:** That's melancholy. He's thinking about the war, and his family.

**Doris:** Nonsense. Shift the table.

*Marjorie, Ngaire and Decima move the table and chairs out of the way. The photograph is placed on the table. Claudia puts on her bathing cap and lays her towel out on the floor.*

**Doris:** Put on your cap, Ngaire.

*Ngaire puts on her bathing cap. Marjorie and Decima lay their towels out on the floor.*

**Doris:** We haven't got long.

*Ngairé lays her towel down on the floor. The towels now form the shape of a starfish. The music of Vera Lynn singing "There'll Always be an England" begins. During the introduction they gather in a circle facing one another, and attach pegs on their noses.*

*During the first verse, Doris first rearranges the order in which they stand.*

I give you a toast, ladies and gentlemen

**Doris:** No Marjorie! I think you should be over here.

*Marjorie moves.*

I give you a toast, ladies and gentlemen,  
May this fair land we love so well

**Doris:** That's right.

In dignity and freedom dwell.

**Doris:** Ngairé and Decima. Swap places. Now move back and march on.

*They hurriedly move back and march to their positions.*

The worlds may change and go awry  
While there is still one voice to cry:

**Doris:** *(dramatically)* Now ready!

There'll...

**Doris:** DIVE!

*They plunge to the floor. It is a synchronized swimming rehearsal.*

... always be an England  
While there's a country lane

**Doris:** Rise!

*They rise, facing out of the circle, with their hands in the air. They constantly circle in various directions.*

Where ever there's a cottage small  
Beside a field of grain

**Doris:** Smile! For God's sake smile! Enjoy the bloody thing.

**Decima:** I am smiling.

There'll always be an England

**Doris:** You're not!

While there's a busy street

*Arm movements and false smiles continue.*

**Claudia:** She was!

**Doris:** She wasn't. You can't see her from there. And turn.

Where ever there's a turning wheel

**Marjorie:** She was!

A million marching feet.

**Doris:** Turn! Face into the centre.

*They face again into the circle.*

Red, white and blue  
What does it mean to you?

**Doris:** Breath and dive!

*They dive again into the centre of the circle.*

Surely you're proud  
Shout it aloud  
Britons awake!

**Doris:** Roll and turn and leg through the surface of the water!

*They roll over on the floor, turn and rise onto the back of their shoulders with one foot gracefully in the air. The other leg is bent down at the knee.*

The Empire too  
We can depend on you

**Doris:** Other leg, Ngaire! The other leg!

Freedom remains

**Doris:** Wave it! Wave it! Wave the bloody thing!

These are the chains nothing can break.

**Decima:** I'm not a flag.

**Doris:** And rise and...

There'll...

**Doris:** DIVE!

... always be an England  
And England shall be free

**Doris:** And rise!

*Claudia is late in rising.*

**Doris:** (*referring to Claudia*) Bitch.

If England means as much to you

**Doris:** Breath!

As England means to me.

**Doris:** Move to the left. Salute! Salute! Salute! Other hand Marjorie.

Red, white and blue  
What does it mean to you?  
Surely you're proud  
Shout it aloud  
Britons awake!

**Doris:** Turn to the right. Change hands! Other hand Marjorie. God you're useless. Other bloody hand.

The Empire too  
We can depend on you  
Freedom remains  
These are the chains nothing can break.

**Doris:** Turn and...

*They face into the circle.*

There'll...

**Doris:** DIVE!

*They plunge into the floor again - except for Claudia. She takes the hat off the back of the chair and puts it on. She walks towards the audience, stage left, mouth agape, as if she has seen something. She continues to stare, suddenly oblivious of the rehearsal behind her.*



... always be an England  
And England shall be free

**Doris:** Roll!

*They roll.*

If England means as much to you

**Doris:** Turn!

*They turn on the floor.*

As England means to...

**Doris:** Rise!

...me.

*They rise facing out from the circle. Marjorie faces the wrong way.*

**Doris:** Other way, Marjorie.

*Marjorie turns.*

**Doris:** Hands up triumphantly. Smile, Decima! For God's sake would you bloody well smile!

*They hold frozen in this position briefly after the music has finished.*

**Doris:** How can you hope to do it in the water?

*They notice Claudia standing apart and staring into the audience.*

**Ngair:** What's wrong, Claudia?

*Ngair goes over to her. Doris stands apart from the others.*

**Doris:** Leave her.

**Claudia:** It's his hat.

**Decima:** Whose?

**Claudia:** The mans.

**Marjorie:** What man?

- Doris:** Leave her.
- Claudia:** The man in the photograph. I know it.
- Doris:** *(more vehemently)* Leave her! We must practise again.
- Claudia:** No! I will not!
- Doris:** Of course we must.
- Claudia:** *(gathering her towel)* I will not.
- Doris:** Don't be such a wet fish. We'll do it again.
- Claudia:** I saw him. The man.
- Doris:** If you're going to carry on like a moron then you'll be out of the team. You're nothing but trouble. Let's do it again girls.
- Decima:** *(embarrassed at the tension)* I think we'll get changed now.
- Doris:** You can't go yet.
- Marjorie:** Yes, I think we'll get changed.
- Marjorie, Ngaire and Decima take off their bathing caps and gather their towels.*
- Doris:** What the hell do you want to do that for?
- Marjorie, Ngaire and Decima exit. Doris gathers her towel.*
- Doris:** See what you've done. You can't cope, can you? You just mess everything up. At least Marjorie tries.
- Claudia:** It's not that I can't do it - at least with practice. It's just that...
- Doris:** *(abruptly, unkind)* What?
- Claudia:** It's just that...
- Doris:** Go on.
- Claudia:** Nothing.
- Doris:** Have it your way then.
- Claudia:** I think ... I think I should live somewhere else. It's not working. I'm fooling myself.

**Doris:** *(shocked, upset, irrational)* You didn't used to be so sure, did you? Do it then. Run off. You're just an old rag. Something to chuck away. I'm happy.

*Doris clears the cutlery from the table and tidies the chairs.*

**Claudia:** Sometimes I think it's as if a river has swept in here. The river bank broke. It's in the house, flooding the house, rushing, rushing through the house. I cling to the leg of the table, but the river washes the table downstream. I fight against the current, but there's nothing left to hold on to. Chairs rush by, the sideboard, the sofa. I'm drowning. Caught in some huge current. I don't know why I ever stepped in, but it's caught me now. I can't get out. I can't. I'm drowning.

*The introduction to the next song begins.*

**Doris:** Drown then. You're a free person. You're the one that stepped in. I like it in here. Think about it. I'm going to change.

*Doris exits with the cutlery, leaving Claudia alone. Vera Lynn singing "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" begins to play.*

That certain night  
The night we met  
There was magic abroad in the air  
There were angels dining at the Ritz  
And a nightingale sang in Berkeley Square.

**Claudia:** *(over the words of the song)* I was lonely, you see...

I may be right  
I may be wrong  
But I'm perfectly willing to swear

**Claudia:** Just lonely.

That when you turned and smiled at me  
A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square.

**Claudia:** *(looking at photograph)* I didn't know how to meet a man. I mean what do I do? How do I meet a man? I went to a pub.

The moon that lingered over London Town  
Poor puzzled moon, he wore a frown  
How could he know we two were so in love  
The whole darn world seemed upside down.

**Claudia:** In a pub. Surely some one would talk to me. She did. She was the only one that showed any interest.

The streets of town  
Were paved with stars  
It was such a romantic affair

**Claudia:** But I'm not like that. I didn't know how much a drink cost. I gave the man a twenty dollar note and hoped for the change.

And as we kissed and said "Good Night"  
A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square.

**Claudia:** I think I'm... I'm just... I'd never been to a pub before.

When dawn came stealing up all gold and  
blue  
To interrupt our rendezvous

**Claudia:** *(taking military hat off her head and examining it)* I never meant it that way. She just stuck her claws in and held me there.

I still remember how you smiled and said  
Was that a dream or was it true?

**Claudia:** She kept telling me. Claudia, you are. You are, Claudia. It was the drink.

Our homeward step was just as light  
As the tap-dancing feet on the stair  
And like an echo far away  
A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square.

**Claudia:** She was the only one who showed any interest.

I know 'cause I was there

**Claudia:** Bitch.

That night in Berkeley Square.

*Doris enters, having got changed.*

**Doris:** You can't leave, you haven't got a job.

**Claudia:** I'll find one.

**Doris:** You've no where to live.

**Claudia:** I'll find somewhere.

**Doris:** You can't afford it.

**Claudia:** I'll make do.

**Doris:** After all I've done. After all I've bought. After I've given you board, and clothes, and food, and that.

*Claudia stands there in silence.*

**Doris:** Is this gratitude?

*Claudia remains silent.*

**Doris:** Eh?

*Claudia simply stares.*

**Doris:** Eh?

*The sound of rain begins. It grows into heavy rain.*

**Claudia:** It's raining.

**Doris:** We all know it's raining. We can hear it. "It's raining". Of course it's bloody well raining. Perhaps you could wear the coat I gave you? Perhaps you could use the umbrella I gave you? Wear my shoes if yours are wet. I think, Claudia darling, you owe me a lot more than walking out.

**Claudia:** We can still be friends.

**Doris:** Well you can't leave tonight. Obviously.

*There is a silence - except for the rain.*

**Claudia:** Obviously.

**Doris:** *(matter of factly)* I'd like you to stay.

*Marjorie, Ngaire and Decima enter - having changed from their swim gear.*

**Decima:** It's pelting down.

**Marjorie:** Last time it rained like this the river flooded.

**Ngaire:** Marjorie, the river doesn't flood every time it rains.

**Marjorie:** Well I know that.

**Doris:** You can't go in the rain. We can practise again.

*They stand in silence.*

**Claudia:** Perhaps I'll put the jug on.

**Doris:** Use the microwave, dear.

*Claudia exits. Marjorie takes the photograph and looks at it.*

**Doris:** Claudia got it at an antique shop. And the hat. Said she felt sorry for it. Silly girl. She lives in soap operas.

**Ngairi:** Like sand in an hour glass... *(She trails off)*

*The lighting gradually changes to a more dreamlike impression. The sound of rain fades. One by one each character falls into a reverie. All characters are detached from each other.*

**Marjorie:** *(walking apart from the others, still with the photograph)*  
Sometimes I think I'm Thumbelina. But I've been left behind. All the others have gone. My brothers and sisters and my mother. They've gone somewhere - maybe to the river for a picnic. I don't know where. And I am left. Hidden in the long grass - where I can't be seen. And a soldier man comes and gathers me up and puts me in his coat pocket and takes me to the others. It's warm in the pocket, and comforting. It was my father, the soldier man. I'd never seen him before. But I knew it was my father.

**Decima:** When I first got married - well when I was married for the first time - it was to - no - not married - just engaged - to a Territorial - at Waiouru - yeah - no - he wasn't a Territorial - I think he was in the army - it doesn't matter - he'd come home on leave - and - in between I'd spend my time driving up and down the road looking for young men hitch-hiking in army shirts so that I could pick them up. "Do you perhaps know him?" I'd ask. "I just happen to be going where you're going", I used to say. God knows how much petrol I used, driving all over the country. Oh to be young again.

*Doris puts on the military hat and takes the photograph off Marjorie. She begins to march and parade around the stage.*

**Doris:** *(singing softly, over and over)*  
Soldier, soldier, won't you marry me  
With your musket, fife and drum.  
Oh no sweet maid I cannot marry you  
For I have a wife of my own.

**Ngairé:** *(over the singing)* Before I had the kiddies I always imagined I'd be Conan the Barbarian or something. Going round shooting up everything. The kiddies put a stop to that. Nappies stop everything. We gave Jarrod a gun for Christmas. Everyone said you don't give boys guns any more, and we gave Charlotte a doll. Give Jarrod the doll, they said, and Charlotte the gun. But I still think boys are blue and girls are pink, don't you? I'm sorry, but that's the way I was brought up. Some people dress them in yellow, but that's cowardly. It didn't matter anyway, because Charlotte played with the gun and rode motor bikes and Jarrod played Doctors and Nurses with the doll. He's left home. We never hear from him now - where he is or what he's doing. I think he might be in Auckland. He never brought his friends home. He might be married now, for all I know. But surely not. Surely we'd be asked to the wedding. Or he could be living in sin. Wouldn't that be nice? At least he'd be happy. Living with a girl. A very pretty girl. *(Her voice grows louder and louder)* I hope she's pretty. They don't call it living in sin anymore, but, my God, it would be better than anything - *(almost in tears)* but he's not. He won't be. It's his father's fault. Once bitten twice shy. But once bitten and you're dead, O Lord, you're dead. Caught! Like a fish in a net. Caught! *(Shouting)* Caught! *(Fading)* You're trapped.

*During this next speech, Claudia enters with a tray of cups and saucers, milk jug, tea pot and biscuits. She dumps them on the table and exits again - taking no notice of what's going on.*

**Marjorie:** I never knew my father. He died in a war somewhere. He was a hero. It was by accident he died. It wasn't in battle. It was on leave. In Scotland somewhere. Killed on the road. Going from somewhere to somewhere. Drunk no doubt. Going somewhere else. Somewhere else. A soldier. In a war.

**Decima:** My second husband was a bit of a pansy. I don't know why we ever married. He used to cook. There's nothing more sexy than a man who cooks. But if you're a man who cooks you have to be macho. He wasn't macho at all - he was a pansy. He used to do things like boil potatoes. Anyone can boil potatoes. A real man does shrimp cocktails and garlic bread. No, no. Not my Arnold. He'd usually end up having to mash the spuds anyway. Over done. Over boiled. Oh to be young again.

*Doris' singing gets suddenly louder. She is still wearing the hat and parading with the photograph. She marches off stage. The singing can be heard. She returns, but without the photograph. Once she has returned:*

**Ngair:** *(over Doris)* Before I had the kiddies. Before I had the kiddies. Before I had the kiddies. Would you shut up, Doris. Before I had the kiddies. Shut up, Doris! *(Doris stops singing and becomes introverted)* Oh, the things I would get up to! Climbing trees, and riding horses. I was a regular Tom Boy. "You're a regular little Tom Boy", my grandmother used to say. "A regular little Tom Boy". *(She laughs)* Isn't that funny!

**Doris:** Leave! Leave, I ask you! Just like that. No sign. No warning. Just pack the bags and off. Not even a "How's your father?" It's not like her. So timid - usually. So shy. So coy. I don't mind that. I don't mind giving, giving, giving. When the question on the census form said "How many hours community service a week do you do?" I put "Twenty-four hours a day". I was thinking of her. It was just a joke but she didn't like it. Very close to the surface. Never far from tears. She's never far from tears.

*There is a loud clap of thunder and rain restarts in force - as Claudia enters. All characters instantly come out of their reverie.*

**Claudia:** There's a flood warning. The river's high. They're sandbagging the banks.

**Decima:** They always say that.

**Claudia:** Where's the photo?

**Doris:** I've taken it. *(She drops the hat on the floor)* Well Claudia? Pour the tea. I hope you didn't use tea bags.

*Claudia pours five cups of tea and hands them out. While she does so:*

**All:** Thank you. Sugar? Milk? Biscuit? etc.

**Doris:** Claudia's got some news.

**Decima:** You're not getting married?

**Marjorie:** *(aside to Decima)* Shh!

**Decima:** *(whispered)* What?

**Claudia:** What news?

**Ngair:** News even to you!

**Doris:** Claudia's leaving. She's shifting.

**Marjorie:** Where?



*Claudia stands there looking silly - as if on trial.*

**Decima:** Why?

**Doris:** She doesn't know where, and she doesn't know why. She's simply going. That's all I know.

**Ngaire:** Where to, Claudia?

**Claudia:** I thought I'd go, that's all.

**Marjorie:** But you haven't a job.

**Doris:** Exactly. That's exactly what I said.

**Claudia:** I've packed. I've packed my things. I'll go when it stops raining.

**Doris:** Silly! Silly!

**Claudia:** I'm going!

**Doris:** You can't go tonight.

*There is an embarrassing pause.*

**Ngaire:** Speaking of going, we must be off.

**Marjorie:** Yes.

**Decima:** Yes, we must be off.

**Marjorie:** Do let us know, Doris, when the next rehearsal is.

**Ngaire:** Do let us know, Claudia, where you've moved to. We must visit. We simply shall.

**Decima:** Good night then, and thanks.

**Ngaire:** Yes.

**Marjorie:** Yes, thanks.

*They move towards the exit.*

**Doris:** Yes, I'll be in touch soon. Marjorie, you must practise turning.

**Decima:** Good night all.

**Doris:** In the living room or somewhere.

**Marjorie:** Yes, Doris. Good night.

**Ngairé:** Good night.

**Claudia:** Good night.

*They exit. The sound of the rain fades away. During the following conversation Claudia clears the tea things and takes them out - returning to the stage several times. When she is off stage, Doris speaks louder - as if calling out to the kitchen.*

**Doris:** Claudia, I'd like you to stay. I know I'm hard to live with. I know I've been a bit bossy. But it's for your own good. Don't you see that? Look! Why don't you stay a little longer, just a few more days, a few weeks, and I'll help you set up your own house, your own home. You'd like that wouldn't you and it would be really nice. Your own garden. Your own set of friends apart from mine. It's just space you need. A bit of space.

**Claudia:** It's not the house. It's not the garden.

**Doris:** Somewhere you can call your own. We don't have to be exclusive.

**Claudia:** It's the river. It's the deep end.

**Doris:** I can still keep you - give you money. You know that.

**Claudia:** I don't belong here.

**Doris:** Money's no problem.

**Claudia:** *(with determination)* I don't belong here!

*Doris is momentarily taken aback, then:*

**Doris:** I wrote and told your parents. Someone had to. You weren't going to. They just have to accept it.

**Claudia:** *(horrificed)* You didn't?

**Doris:** I got a lovely letter back - from your mother. Thank you, she said. Thank you. We're not that way ourselves. Imagine! As if it was hereditary! She's going to write - to you. All the support you need - she said - all the support. Aren't people funny?

**Claudia:** You wrote to them?

**Doris:** You haven't got a letter yet?

**Claudia:** That is awful. That is awful.

**Doris:** Don't worry. Sit down. Relax. Look, I'll still get you a house. Your own place. We can be... friends.

*Claudia sits at the table.*

**Claudia:** I suppose so.

*She looks at the photograph.*

**Claudia:** I suppose so.

**Doris:** You are, Claudia. You are.

**Claudia:** I suppose so.

**Doris:** Say it.

*Claudia does not answer.*

**Doris:** *(more vehemently)* Say it!

**Claudia:** I suppose so.

**Doris:** I'll get some wine. We'll celebrate. That's the attitude! Think positively.

*Doris exits. Thunder is heard. The rain starts again. Claudia continues to sit at the table. Doris enters briefly, uncorking a wine bottle.*

**Doris:** The river's broken its banks.

*Doris exits. The storm and rain noise grows thunderous. The table and chairs begin to float off - as if the river is going through the house. Pieces of furniture float past. This can be done unpretentiously - the ropes pulling them need not be disguised. At some stage Marjorie, Ngaire and Decima float down stream. The photograph floats on stage and away. Claudia clings to the leg of the table. She is dragged part way across the stage where she lets go. The table disappears. The storm subsides. This sequence should take several minutes, the sound constantly varying in intensity and timbre. Claudia remains lying on the empty stage clinging to the military hat. Silence. Doris enters with the wine and two glasses.*

**Doris:** What in the name of God?

**Claudia:** It's all gone. Everything's gone.

*Claudia slowly gets up.*

**Claudia:** It all went. It's lost now.

**Doris:** What, Claudia? What?

**Claudia:** It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

*Doris pours wine into a glass and hands it to Claudia. She pours one for herself. They clink glasses together.*

**Doris:** Here's to us!

**Claudia:** To us.

*They drink.*

**Doris:** I think we'll enlarge the verandah and build a little conservatory. Hygroscopic gardening. That's what we'll do. We can grow vegetables and flowers, just in water. All year round. And you can keep your telescope in there and look at the stars. It'll be fun. It'll be lovely.

**Claudia:** Hydroponic.

**Doris:** And sit there in a wicker chair and read. My stars today... Did you read your stars? Mine said that all on top things would look bright. But underneath. Underneath...

**Claudia:** What?

**Doris:** That's why I thought of the conservatory. It would brighten things up. Give an interest.

**Claudia:** I'm glad I'm staying.

*They pause.*

**Claudia:** Ngaire said that horoscopes were a load of nonsense.

**Doris:** What were you doing talking to Ngaire? Silly girl.

**Claudia:** She said the editor's wife simply made the horoscopes up each day. It was a way of get a few cents in her pocket. She gets paid for it.

**Doris:** What nonsense! Ngaire? What nonsense she comes out with.

**Claudia:** I think it's true.

- Doris:** I think you'd do better spending time speaking to someone with a few more brains.
- Claudia:** Ngaire's nice. I like her. She always shows an interest.
- Doris:** Well I think you can leave Ngaire alone. She doesn't know what she thinks half the time. She's only in the team because she's good at it.
- Claudia:** I like her.
- Doris:** She's a bit mixed up.
- Claudia:** I'll make my own mind up on that.
- Doris:** Oh will you, my dear? Since when have you got into the habit of making up your own mind. I think it best if Ngaire's no longer in the team. She's very forward.
- Claudia:** I think your...
- Doris:** No, no.
- Claudia:** But she's...
- Doris:** Claudia. I'm in charge of the team. I decide who's in the team.
- Claudia:** If Ngaire's not in the team, then I'm not in the team.
- Doris:** Oh, you're taking a stand. How boring.
- Claudia:** I mean it.
- Doris:** Then you're not in the team. It's as simple as that.
- Claudia:** Why are you doing this?
- Doris:** Look. I can see it's not working out. You've packed. Why don't you go. It's not working out. You're very wise. You saw it coming. Off you go then. Off you go. Now! (*Getting very loud*) Now! Get out!
- Claudia:** What do you...
- Doris:** Get out!
- Claudia:** I'll get my bags.

*Claudia exits with military hat.*

**Doris:** Neither Arthur or Martha. Neither here nor there. I don't know why I do it. Time and again I've given a kindly hand. Face the real truth, I say. Face it. Huh! Dream on, darlings.

*Claudia enters having changed her clothes. She carries two suitcases, and an umbrella. She is wearing the military hat.*

**Claudia:** I'm going then.

**Doris:** Good. I dare say Ngaire will put you up.

**Claudia:** Thank you.

**Doris:** *(grabbing the hat)* You won't be needing that.

**Claudia:** But...

*Claudia puts her bags and umbrella down, as if to shake hands.*

**Claudia:** I'll say good bye.

**Doris:** You can say what you like. *(Coldly)* Good bye.

**Claudia:** Thanks.

*They stand looking at each other.*

**Doris:** Well don't just stand there.

**Claudia:** Yes. I hope you do well in the competition.

**Doris:** Huh!

*Claudia picks up her two suit cases and exits, leaving the umbrella behind. The music of Vera Lynn singing "We'll Meet Again" begins. Doris looks at the military hat. She puts it on and goes off stage, returning with the two chairs. She places the chairs facing each other. She sits in one chair, facing the other.*

We'll meet again  
Don't know where  
Don't know when  
But I know we'll meet again some sunny day.

Keep smiling through  
Just like you  
Always do  
Till the blue skies drive the dark clouds  
far away.

So will you please say hello  
To the folks that I know  
Tell them I won't be long  
They'll be happy to know  
That as you saw me go  
I was singing this song:

*Claudia enters. Doris does not look up.*

**Claudia:** I forgot my broolly. That's all.

*Claudia takes the umbrella and exits. Doris remains sitting.*

We'll meet again  
Don't know where  
Don't know when  
But I know we'll meet again some sunny day.

*Lights fade.*

**THE END**