

## The Field Day    ACT I

*A couple are camping in a farmer's field in Cornwall. An old style frame tent is pitched upstage right at an angle, with a small folding table and various camping accessories. Birdsong, which slowly fades. The sound of lowing cows in the distance.*

*Alan enters with some sticks from a farm track up left. Jackie sticks her head out of the tent.*

**Jackie**    What are you doing with those?

**Alan**        *(Puts sticks on the grass near the tent)* I thought we might have a fire later this evening to keep the midges away. We could cook some sausages on sticks like we used to in the Scouts.

**Jackie**    *(she comes out of the tent)* I was never in the Scouts, remember.

**Alan**        You told me that you were in the Guides.

**Jackie**    No. I was in the Brownies for two weeks, but they were far too rough for me. Angela Simmons pulled my knickers down behind a bush and made me sit in nettles. I never went back.

**Alan**        You never told me that.

**Jackie**    Well. I'm not exactly proud of it. I didn't even tell my mother!

**Alan**        Ah, well that explains it then.

**Jackie**    What?

**Alan**        Your love of big pants.

**Jackie**    What??

**Alan**        They protect you.

**Jackie**    Alan. I wear them because they are comfortable. I don't like a string between my buttocks. Would you?

*Alan muses on this. A silence.*

**Jackie**    What's the toilet like?

**Alan**        Minimal. Made of the finest concrete blocks that money can buy.

**Jackie**    Men and women?

**Alan**        Just the one.

**Jackie**    That's the trouble with these cheap farm sites. Is there a lock on the door?

**Alan**        No. It's broken. You'll have to put your feet against the door.

**Jackie**    My feet! Both of them?

**Alan**        Well, just one.

*A pause.*

**Jackie** It's OK for you men. (*a pause*) Is there any paper?

**Alan** I didn't look.

**Jackie** I bet there's no paper. Have we got any?

**Alan** I think there's some in the car. It's very useful for wiping the dipstick.

**Jackie** That bloody car. It's always breaking down. It's about time you got a new one.

**Alan** You know we can't afford it, now that I'm working on a reduced week.

**Jackie** That bloody factory. I wish you'd get a nice job in an office, like Rita.

**Alan** Well, your sister went to college, unlike me. Still that factory has served me well. They taught me a trade.

**Jackie** Yes, and now, a lot of the stuff you used to make, they make in China.

**Alan** It's progress.

**Jackie** I don't think so.

**Alan** Things will pick up.

**Jackie** They better bloody had. And what happens if they put you down to a three day week, eh? We can hardly manage as it is, even with me doing the telephone surveys from home.

**Alan** (*Imitating her on the phone*) "Were you very satisfied, quite satisfied, neither satisfied or dissatisfied, slightly dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the way in which your enquiry was handled?"

**Jackie** It doesn't help to have you in the background whooping every time a goal is scored on the telly.

**Alan** Look, Sky Sports is my only vice. You can do your surveys from the bedroom telephone.

**Jackie** I do. I can hear you through the floor. "Were you very satisfied, Sir?" "Oh Yes! Yes! Get it in there!" ..... It doesn't always go down well with my clients.

**Alan** I thought you liked delving into people's private lives.

**Jackie** At least the money is better than cleaning. And to think I spent two years studying to come down to this.

**Alan** Oh, stop moaning, we're on holiday. Enjoy the fresh air and the scenery.

**Jackie** Fresh air! We are in a field full of cows, and they've been here some time from the state of it. And the scenery..... a wall of railway sleepers holding up a slurry pit!

**Alan** We could have gone to that camping park. It was very nice. Little pitches amongst the trees, hot showers, a bar..... and a volley ball court.

**Jackie** And we know why you wanted to stay there, don't we? You've been watching too much beach volley ball on TV. And the price! £21 a night! We can't afford that.

**Alan** (*musings*) They were good looking women.

**Jackie** I am fed up with you ogling young women.

**Alan** I can't help it. I am biologically programmed to do it. Wives just don't understand these things.

**Jackie** And I'm not staying somewhere where there's a bar. You know what you're like when you've had a few. You just can't control yourself.

**Alan** I need a lot of loving. I wasn't breast fed.

**Jackie** Here we go again. You ought to have some counselling about your relationship with your mother.

**Alan** It's all right for you. You had brothers and sisters. I was on my own. Me and my little imaginary friend, Jimmy.

**Jackie** Not that bloody Jimmy again. I'm up to here with Jimmy.

**Alan** He was a true friend. You know how hard I find it to make friends with men.

**Jackie** Not with women, though, eh.....

**Alan** I'd just like, one day, to meet a man with whom I could share and confide. And we could go walking along the coast paths, from bay to bay, with the salty air in our nostrils.

**Jackie** Rather than nasal hair in your nostrils.

**Alan** It's my testosterone levels. The doctor says they're above normal.

**Jackie** I can believe that.

(*pause*)

**Jackie** (*exasperated*) I think I'll blow the li-los up.

**Alan** And afterwards... perhaps.... we could try....zipping the sleeping bags together.

**Jackie** No way.

**Alan** But it's been ages.....and .... we are on holiday.

**Jackie** And that's the way it's going to stay.

**Alan** Big pants are out of bounds, then?

**Jackie** (*She gives him a look*) I'm going to blow up the li-los.

*She enters the tent.*

**Alan** (*aside*) You've enough wind for it.

*He sits on a camp stool and picks up a stick. He pretends it is a gun, and shoots at the audience, and then at Jackie through the canvas. He stands and picks up a long straight stick and pretends it is a light sabre, making the noises, again with a final stab at the tent. He sits on the stool again and picks up two small sticks and rubs the two together.*

**Alan** I could never get the hang of this in the Scouts. Rubbing two sticks together to make fire. It's something primitive man seemed to manage, to make fire to cook his sausage. (*he gets up and stretches*) Ah. This is the life! Fresh air. Away from the trials and tribulations of the modern world. Alone in the wilderness. A man and his sausage.

*The sound of furious li-lo pumping come from the tent.*

**Alan** Go on, girl. Give it some welly. She's a devil when she's got that pump in her hands.

*He stares into the distance. Enter a younger woman, Gaia, from the farm track, up left.*

**Gaia** What is that strange noise?

**Alan** Oh, that's Jackie.. She's exercising her bellows. Blowing up the li-los.

**Gaia** Li-los?

**Alan** Airbeds.

**Gaia** My bed's in the van.

**Alan** Sorry?

**Gaia** In the camper van. I'm parked over the other side of the hedge, just down the track. The bed's very comfy. Soft. Plenty of room for one, very cosy for two.

**Alan** Oh, yes. I saw the VW on the way back from the farm.

**Gaia** The loo here is very basic.

**Alan** I've always wanted one of those VW campers. Classic. Does yours have the bay window or the split windscreen?

**Gaia** And there's no paper.

**Alan** Of course, those petrol engines aren't exactly economical. You'd be lucky to get 25 miles per gallon. And they burn a lot of oil when they get to a high mileage. How many miles have you got on the clock?

**Gaia** And the lock's broken.

**Alan** Really? I suppose those old models don't have an immobiliser, do they?

**Gaia** No, the toilet lock.

**Alan** You've got a porta-potty? Very nice. My wife would like one of those.

*(Pause)*

**Gaia** You're not really listening to me, are you?

**Alan** Yes. You're talking about the toilet.

*(Pause)*

**Alan** It's a nice van, though. Not a spot of rust on it.

**Gaia** I love it. It's like being a snail. I carry my home with me.

**Alan** Snails don't have a built in fridge for the beer, though.

**Gaia** Or the champagne.

**Alan** Champagne?

**Gaia** Don't you like champagne?

**Alan** Why yes, of course, but I can't afford to buy it. I'm on short time at the moment.

**Gaia** Short time?

**Alan** I'm only working a four day week. It's the recession. That's why I'm back to taking a camping holiday this year. Out with the old tent. *(he laughs)*.

**Gaia** Mummy and Daddy used to take us camping when we were small. Those long balmy holidays spent in the summer sun, and then back to prep school in September.

**Alan** Ahh.

**Gaia** What do you do in your four days?

**Alan** I make electric motors.

**Gaia** Really? And the other day?

**Alan** I read a bit, and grow vegetables on the allotment.

**Gaia** Daddy has a gardener who grows our vegetables. What's your favourite?

**Alan** I would say.... the potato.

**Gaia** Why the potato? It's so common.

**Alan** It sustained the Irish peasants. You can stay healthy on a diet of potatoes alone.

**Gaia** I didn't know that.

**Alan** And what is your favourite vegetable?

**Gaia** Well, I absolutely adore the love apple.

**Alan** Eh?

**Gaia** The tomato. It's strictly a fruit though. The seductive harlot red colour, the sensuous, slightly sweet flesh bursting with juicy splendour.

**Alan** Oh yes. Running down your chin and dripping onto...*(he looks and pauses)*..... your chest.

**Gaia** Did you know it was banned by the Catholic Church for being the devil's fruit and a sinful indulgence.

**Alan** Really?

**Gaia** Some even thought that it was the fruit that Eve offered Adam.

*Sound of furious li-lo pumping*

**Alan** She's still at it. A double takes a lot of air.  
*(pause)*

**Alan** The field you are in is much nicer than this one.

**Gaia** Yes. A sea view.

**Alan** And no cows.

**Gaia** No.

**Alan** But this one's cheaper.

*(pause)*

**Alan** I wonder what it's like, being a cow. I mean, I've tasted grass and it's not up to much. I couldn't eat it every day. Now and again I would crave something else. Having four stomachs could be interesting, though.

**Gaia** And four teats?

**Alan** I think I might enjoy the milking. It's a very soothing sound, that click, click of the milking machine. You can imagine the cows going into a kind of meditative state when they are being milked.

**Gaia** Meditation. Just simply being.

**Alan** I'm a simple being. So my friends say.

**Gaia** Simply being. Not judging, not thinking, just being aware, at peace, and living each moment as it unfolds.

**Alan** Ah. *(pause)* Do you do that? Meditate.

**Gaia** I do Tai Chi.

**Alan** Bless you.

**Gaia** It's a series of movements, focusing the mind, which helps to bring about a state of mental calm and clarity.

**Alan** Show me.

**Gaia** Well, it starts like this. *(She performs the beginning of the 10 form. He watches her enthralled)*

**Alan** *(quietly)* God, you're beautiful.

**Gaia** *(she stops)* Silly. I'm nothing special.

**Alan** *(aside)* You could be.

*She walks a few paces away from him, and turns. (pause)*

**Gaia** I'm on my way to a festival.

**Alan** Oh, yes? Glastonbury?

**Gaia** Far too noisy. No, it's a folk festival near Hereford. I fiddle.

**Alan** Do you really? *(suggestive)*

**Gaia** I'm meeting up with the rest of the band in a few days. Thought I'd spend a little time near the sea before I went. I love Cornwall.

**Alan** Yes?

**Gaia** The light. It's so clear.

**Alan** I've never thought of it before. I suppose it is. You can see right through it. *(he laughs)*

**Gaia** And the sky. So blue.

**Alan** Like your camper van.

**Gaia** Yes. *(pause)* Would you like to come and look over it, the VW? .....and admire the sea view? We could drink some drink champagne.

**Alan** Why not? And will you fiddle for me?

**Gaia** It's possible. All things are possible.

*They exit up left. Sound of furious li-lo pumping, which suddenly stops.*

**Jackie** Alan..... Alan! Come in here and help me. I think I've got a leak. Alan! Where is he? *(She comes out of the tent and shouts)* Alan!! *(exhaled sigh)* He always does this. Wanders off when you need him. Always wants to go exploring. I guess it's his Boy Scout instinct. Well, I hope he finds something interesting to explore.

*She goes into the tent and brings out a folding chair which she puts it up. She returns to the tent and comes back out with book and a packet of biscuits. She sits in the chair and makes herself comfortable. She takes a biscuit and eats it as she opens the book part way through and starts to read. She reads and immediately eats another biscuit having finished the first.*

*Enter a farmer, Mr. Bryant, from up stage left, the farm track.*

**Bryant** Afternoon, missus.

**Jackie** Good afternoon .

**Bryant** I'm sorry to be bothering you, what with you with your nose in a book an' all.

**Jackie** That's all right. I haven't got into it yet.

**Bryant** My name's Bryant, Mr Bryant.

**Jackie** Oh yes.

**Bryant** I be the custodian of this land.

**Jackie** The custodian?

**Bryant** Yes. Well, I could say I was the owner, but does one really own anything during our time here? I mean, we're just borrowing it as we passes through, so to speak.

**Jackie** I suppose we are. I'd never thought of it that way before.

**Bryant** Like you borrowing the toilet as you passes through.

**Jackie** Well, I haven't used it yet.

**Bryant** Your husband has. He broke the lock and used up the last of the toilet paper.

**Jackie** I'm sorry.

**Bryant** I don't mind the toilet paper. But when the lock's broken, people puts their feet against the door and they dirties all the fresh distemper I puts on in the spring.

**Jackie** I'm sure he'll mend it for you.

*(a pause)*

**Bryant** What's you a reading then?

**Jackie** A book.  
**Bryant** Oh arhh. We don't see many of them in these here parts.  
**Jackie** Really.  
**Bryant** Travelling library only comes once a month. What's it about?  
**Jackie** It's a romantic novel .  
**Bryant** Romance, eh? I don't get much romance these days.  
**Jackie** I'm sorry to hear that.  
**Bryant** Wife passed away last Michaelmas.  
**Jackie** Oh, dear.  
**Bryant** She was out moving the electric fence up on Moorsedge. The heifers had broke through. She got a right belt when she forgot to switch it off. Stopped her heart.  
**Jackie** Oh, dear.  
**Bryant** I didn't find her for three days. Thought she had gone to her mother's.  
**Jackie** I see.  
**Bryant** We'd had a row.  
**Jackie** Oh, dear.  
**Bryant** Lucky the weather was cold. *(pause)* She liked them romantic novels.  
**Jackie** Yes?  
**Bryant** Oh, yes. She used to get me to read the sexy bits out loud. She liked that. Used to get her going, if you know what I mean.  
**Jackie** Really.  
**Bryant** I miss that.  
**Jackie** Well, you would. Any man would.  
*(pause)*  
**Bryant** Do you like fancy birds?

*Jackie gets up out of her chair.*

**Jackie** That's a very personal question.  
**Bryant** I mean chickens, bantams. I've got some beautiful Silver Seabrights, and a lovely pair of Gold Partridge Dutch. I show 'em, you see. I got a third at the county show last year. And they lays lovely eggs. Do you like free range?  
**Jackie** It's not often these days I have an opportunity to ..... free range.  
**Bryant** Come down to the farm and I'll show you my little ladies. That's what I calls 'em. I've only got the one cock though..... just to keep them happy.  
**Jackie** I'm pleased to hear it.  
**Bryant** And then, you can have some eggs.  
**Jackie** I'll bring my book. It might come in handy.

*They exit up left along the farm track. Enter Eugene from the beach path, up right, behind the frame tent. He wears a small rucksack, shorts, socks and garters. A bit geeky. He wears horn rimmed glasses. All the right gear, walking poles etc.*

**Eugene** I think this is it, Wendy. The map says the footpath runs along here. Then it goes into a track.

*Enter Wendy, a second hiker, similar but carrying a much bigger rucksack.*

**Wendy** Are you sure, Eugene? What does the Silva compass say?

**Eugene** We are straight on an East North East bearing, and that is where we should be. The map reference is Easting 678 Northing 192

**Wendy** Are you really sure this is the right way?

**Eugene** Absolutely. You can tell by the direction of the sun.

**Wendy** Couldn't we rest for a while? I've got blisters.

**Eugene** I told you to harden up your feet by rubbing them every day for a month with isopropyl alcohol. But you wouldn't listen, would you? It serves you right. You must be prepared.

**Wendy** I'm hungry, too.

**Eugene** And did you pack the Kendall Mint Cake? Oh no, you left it at home. I told you it was essential, but you wouldn't listen, would you? It serves you right.

**Wendy** But Eugene.

**Eugene** No butts, Wendy. No butts. I don't have "butts" in my vocabulary.

**Wendy** Not even water butts?

**Eugene** Now you're being silly. You know exactly what I mean.

**Wendy** I'm thirsty. I could do with some water.

**Eugene** It's your own fault. I told you to get a Platypus. But all you bought was a tiny bottle of spring water.

**Wendy** But they are so expensive.

**Eugene** The Platypus is flexible, lightweight, durable and taste-free, the modern way to keep hydrated during any outdoor activity. The triple-layer laminate is welded at the seams, and is highly durable, and guaranteed leak-proof. That's more than you can say for your little bottle.

**Wendy** Can I have some of yours, Eugene?

**Eugene** No. It serves you right. You must be prepared. It's for your own good that I teach you this lesson.

**Wendy** Well, I'm not going any further. I'm tired, hungry, and thirsty. And my feet hurt.

*(She takes off her rucksack and sits on the grass)*

**Eugene** You are pathetic. One would never know that your father had been in the SAS. If he could see you now he'd turn in his grave.

**Wendy** Please don't go on so.

**Eugene** Alright. We'll camp here for the night to give you a chance to recover. But I want to be away by the crack of dawn tomorrow.

*He puts his walking pole on the grass, takes his rucksack off and removes a small pop-up tent from Wendy's rucksack, which can be assembled quickly and stand without assistance. The tent when assembled stands mid stage left.*

**Eugene** Did you remember to pack the instructions? I want to do things in the right order. If you don't do things in the right order it never goes up right.

**Wendy** Yes, dear. I am fully aware of how you like to do things in the right order.

**Eugene** I do like to get it up right.

**Wendy** Yes. I know.

*Eugene looks at the instructions and they start to put up the tent. Enter Alan and Gaia from up left, a little drunk, laughing and giggling, with champagne bottle, nearly empty and glasses in hand.*

**Gaia** No, I tell you, it's true. She slipped off the stage and ended up in the mayor's lap with her skirt over her head. It was lucky she was wearing those big pants.

**Alan** Ah! Big pants! How I hate them. *(He notices Eugene and Wendy)* Hello there. That's a small one you have there. You'll be cosy in that!

**Eugene** Good afternoon.

**Alan** I said you'll be cosy in that. Snug as a two bugs in a rug. Eh?

**Eugene** No doubt.

**Alan** This is Gaia. She's a friend.

**Eugene** Ah. Gaia. The Gaia philosophy conceptualises that all living organisms on a planet co-exist for the benefit of the whole.

**Alan** What?

**Gaia** He's right, Alan. My parents were heavily into the Gaia thing when they were young. That's why they called me Gaia.

**Alan** *(seductively and flirty)* So. You exist for the benefit of the whole planet do you?

**Gaia** Well. It depends.

**Alan** On what?

**Gaia** On which planet I'm on.

**Alan** Venus?

**Gaia** Botticelli?

**Alan** Chillybotti..... *(he laughs)*

**Gaia** Not in my comfy little camper van.

*She giggles. Alan tops up the glasses.*

**Eugene** The planet Venus is named after the Roman Goddess of love and beauty. Apart from the Moon, it is the brightest natural object in the night sky, reaching an apparent magnitude of minus 4.6, bright enough to cast shadows.

**Alan** (*sarcy*) Really. How interesting. Thank you so much for telling us.

**Eugene** That's alright. I thought you'd like to know that.

**Alan** Would you like some help to put up your tent? I think I could show you exactly where that pole could go.

**Eugene** That's a walking pole. I like to do it myself. I have my ways.

**Alan** I bet you do.

**Wendy** Eugene does have his ways, I can assure you.

**Alan** Ah. She speaks. And you are?

**Eugene** This is Wendy, my intended.

**Alan** She speaks. She doesn't speak. And what are your intentions for her?

**Eugene** We are engaged to be married.

**Wendy** Next year. (*showing the engagement ring to Gaia*).

**Gaia** Marriage is an outmoded institution. Marriage proposes to join two free persons into one, thus denying the freedom of each person.

**Eugene** I will feel just as free when we are married as I do now.

**Gaia** Ah. But will Wendy? The institution of marriage perpetuates the oppression of women. It is through the role of "wife" that the subjugation of women is maintained.

**Eugene** I'm sure Wendy will be as happy to perform the role of wife to me, as I will be to perform the role of husband to her.

**Alan** Wendy? Will you perform for him? Will you roll over on your back and let him tickle your tummy?

(*Wendy smiles awkwardly/embarrassed.*)

**Eugene** I think we'd better get this tent secure before it gets any later.

**Alan** Mind the stones. It's stony here. You don't want your peg to bend, do you.

(*Gaia laughs. During the following conversation Eugene and Wendy finish putting up the tent and get inside it*)

**Alan** Now let me find that book we were talking about. (*He puts down the champagne bottle by the chair and goes into his tent and Gaia sits in the folding chair*) God, what a mess. The lilo's completely flat, and there's clothes all over the place. Where's my rucksack? Ah. (*He comes to the door of the tent with a book in his hand*) There's big pants all over the floor in there. I think they've been breeding.