

CLAY

a tragedy in five acts

by

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CHARACTERS

- Dora** a woman of about 36 who looks as though she never spends any time on her appearance. She is melancholic, calm and quite elegant.
- Titus** (Dora's partner) a stocky man of around 40. Good-natured, mild, taciturn and dour.
- Imme** (Dora's daughter) a girl aged ten, with a club-foot, she has a chronic cold which makes her look slightly feverish.
- Nele** (Dora's sister) a woman of 28, modern, lost, rather neurotic.
- Finch** (Dora's ex-lover) a handsome man in his early 40s. Adventurer. Charming. Untrustworthy.

ACT 1

Scene 1

Dora, Titus

Dora Imagine the house where the end of a disastrous history has taken place. A square house of grey stone with red roof tiles. Charmingly flaking woodwork, romantically deep cracks in the interior walls, doors hanging nostalgically askew on their hinges. Imagine the single glazing with weather boards on either side of the windows. Imagine threadbare rugs strewn around the flagstones floors in all the rooms. Imagine the cosiness of gas fires in almost every room in the house. Imagine in the kitchen a stove and cooker in-one and in the bedroom and the bathroom and the hallway and the toilet and the pantry the lack of any form of heating at all. Imagine how wonderfully rural this all appears. While you're imagining, forget that we're in Holland and that we're actually in the utmost north of Holland and so just stretch your imagination to encompass a breathtakingly green French spring, or a brilliantly warm russet-brown autumn which is more like a late summer. Include fruit trees and crickets and fireflies in your imaginings. Forget the eternal grey sky, forget the eternal sea of wet churned up clay around the house, forget the eternal rain, the eternal chilly mornings and the eternal darkness of the nights.

Titus So this is about a disastrous history which no-one had expected to reach a resounding final chord. Which everyone thought had already faded out or was almost inaudibly reaching its final stage.
It all started with love at first sight in a street in June. Love at first sight which the parties in question elevated to a dizzying height where the ravines were shrouded in mist.
A history that was already ancient history. A story that was over. And perhaps the ending wasn't completely satisfactory, perhaps it wasn't completely finished but at least it was an ending. At least it was over and things had moved on and an ever widening gap had arisen between what happened then and present day life. And as far as I'm concerned, that gap could have stayed there. We could have quietly gone on with our present day life. An unremarkable but okay life.
If you ask me.

Dora Of course the others have their own personal version of this history but you and I, we can have a little talk about my version.

So that you can take my side, of course, although I wonder if that's what I'll achieve by it.

I've distorted history too. Of course.

Not because it's not good enough.

In one sense it's a compliment that it was intriguing enough and ever-present enough in the time that followed to be repeated and repeated and bastardised.

But also because I couldn't do otherwise.

Because justice is only done to a history by grace of its given version.

Because otherwise it's just dates and geographical coordinates.

Because otherwise I'd make do with the fact that I met him in the year nineteen hundred and eighty nine of Our Lord at 53°13" latitude North, 6° 35" longitude East.

That we moved around between that point and 40°50" latitude North, 14° 15" longitude East and that we did that until nineteen ninety two and that he then left, for 33° 55" latitude South, 151° 10" longitude East.

And I've distorted it because I can't help it that an event is changed after the event by everything that you've forgotten and everything that you know, by what you make up and what lies locked up inside your head.

My head is full of everything I've seen and read and heard, of which I can't recall whether I've seen it or read it or heard it and about which I can no longer remember where and when and whether I made it up myself or experienced it.

Half of my memories are based on quotations.

Since reading Sallinger I think I love my little sister Nele like Holden loved Phoebe.

I don't even know if that's really since I read Sallinger or since *someone* who had read Sallinger said or wrote or sung that he loved his little sister like Holden loved Phoebe.

The only way of remembering is to repeat and repeat and bastardise and cherish and the repetition makes it fade because time heals all wounds and turns every happiness into history because put into words it wasn't so great and infinite and wordless after all. No happiness becomes a great and painful happiness if it doesn't have a very bad ending. Because otherwise it's a great happiness that was overtaken by time which heals all wounds and puts all greatness into perspective.

Because then the object of the happiness grows older with the memory; gets grey hairs at the same time as the memory starts dragging its leg.

The ending is now growing a tail and for the sake of our story we have to assume that we don't yet know if it's going to be a continuation, a disillusionment, an epilogue or an appendix.

I have to tell it in order to preserve it even if it turns out to be laughable that two people who once shared a history have now become two people with their own story and their own version of a small piece of shared past.

It could turn out that what's going to happen completely ruins my present version.

He could shout out banalities like: but this never happened!

It could turn out that his appearance makes everything I've carefully built and maintained collapse.

I have to tell it because now it's still a story.

And because alcohol eats away brain cells that were meant for memory and puts phantoms in its place.

Because besides blood and tears, this story is also drenched in Scotch whisky.

Scene 2

Imme, Dora, Titus

Imme What are you doing?

Dora I'm playing a record and doing a little thinking.

Imme What's Titus doing?

Dora Titus is fixing the kitchen machine.

Imme And what's Nele doing?

Dora Nele's in town. She's coming over next week.

Imme Oh. And me?

Dora You'd know that best yourself, I would think.

Imme goes to walk away

Titus There's a draught.

Dora Imme! IMME. Come here. (*grabs her roughly by the arm*)
Have you left the window open upstairs?

Imme No.

Dora Are you positive?

Imme No.

Dora Exactly. How often do I have to say it. That window has to be closed! You've got that cold because you sit in front of an open window the whole bloody time. I don't understand it. I don't understand why it's necessary.

Imme No.

Dora And: in any case CLOSE it when you've finished staring.

Imme Yes.

Dora Hurry up then.

Exit Imme.

Four o'clock in the afternoon and it's already dark. God, what miserable weather. I'm going to pour myself a drink. Want one? You're getting old. I can suddenly see it very clearly. I can see the lines on your face and you're getting a bit podgy.

Titus That's the way it goes.

Dora I don't mind. I think it's very reassuring that we're getting old and a bit podgy.

The telephone.

Dora Yes?
God again...
I got it, yes yes, I got it...
I think I said it clearly enough last time...
No, I'm not prepared to...
Well really! No!
No.

But that's not...
No!
Good day!

A million! Jesus! A million. For this heap. Titus, did you hear that. How far are they going to go?

Titus How far do they have to go?

Dora It doesn't make any difference. I'm not selling. I enjoy my view and Holland is full enough with ugliness.
Don't sell and don't let yourself be seduced by absurd offers.

Titus Cheers.

Dora Money enough.

Titus In ten years time it'll be gone.

Dora Ten years! Then I'll be forty six. God!
Titus.

Titus Yes.

Dora Forty six.

Titus Yes.

Dora The sky so grey and the mud so black. It's like living in a ruddy black and white film.
Have you seen that brochure from the garden centre anywhere? Have you seen that Intragardens brochure or whatever it's called? Or maybe...
Listen Titus. We're going to sow.

Titus What? What are we going to sow?

Dora Mimosa.
Top up?

Titus No.

Dora *(calls)* Imme!
I'm serious. We'll make a big yellow sea of it. A yellow sea of mimosa. Well. What do you think?

Titus Yes.

Dora Imme!

Imme ?

Dora What do you think of the idea of sowing the whole bloody plot?

Imme Yes.

Dora With little yellow flowers.
See, Imme thinks it's a nice idea too. Put your boots and jacket on.

Titus Such activity.

Dora For a change you mean?

Titus I don't mean anything.

Dora Okay then, let's not do it.

Titus That's not what I meant.

Dora Oh.
So you only meant that, for a change, I'm... That you find it amazing that for once I'm...

Titus I'll come with.

Imme Yes!

Dora Eh? So that's not what you meant? Well?

Titus It *is* amazing that you want to ...

The telephone.

Dora I'M NOT SELLING! Vultures.

Titus I think we should go all the same.

Dora We?

Titus Yes. Well. We. Or you or me.

Imme We're going to sow the whole bloody plot.

Titus Yes.

Imme With little yellow flowers.

Dora Yes.

Scene 3

Imme, Dora, Titus

Imme And that man? That man was a farmer, wasn't he?

Dora I don't know.

Imme Yes he was, that man was a farmer.

Dora What are you talking about?

Titus About her book. A man with a blue overall and a hay fork: a farmer.

Dora Oh god, yes. Yes but, not every man with a blue overall is a farmer, Imme.

Imme No?

Titus No. But it's very possible that this man *was* a farmer.

Imme See.

Titus Hey! Wipe your feet!
I really must put down a path of planks or stones. So we stay mud-free inside.

Dora We'll start tomorrow.

Imme Tomorrow?

Dora Yes, it's dark.

Imme Mimisa.

Dora Mimosa.

Imme Mimosa.

Dora Yes, but then rapeseed instead. That will grow better here.

Imme Rapeseed. Rapeseed, raheepsaheed.

Exit Imme and Dora.

Titus It's been raining the whole day, the clay has changed into a mud-bath. Birds are wheeling eternally slowly above. I'm getting a bit old and a bit podgy and Dora finds that enormously reassuring. As far as I'm concerned it's no more than the passing of time. It doesn't make me feel reassured and it doesn't alarm me either. It's just the way it goes. Time passes.

The telephone.

Titus Yes.
Yes, she lives here.
Just a moment.

Dora!
Finch.

Dora No.
Really?
No, I won't.

Titus takes the telephone again.

Come on give it here. I'll do it. Come on.

Dora speaking.
Yes.
What did you say?
Oh.
Yes.
Yes, yes.
No, that's okay.
Yes.
Tomorrow.

Fine.
Yes, I agree.
See you tomorrow then.
Bye.

Finch. My god.

Scene 4

Dora, Titus

Dora Will this dress do? Or am I too skinny for this dress?

Titus Yes.

Dora What?

Titus It'll do.

Dora Oh you're no use at all.

Titus I said it was pretty didn't I.

Dora You've got no idea about this kind of thing though have you?
You think my pyjamas are pretty.

Titus Different sort of pretty.

Dora Oh, different sort of pretty.

The bell.

Dora Oh god.
Not yet. Anyone who comes early to such a loaded meeting has
no heart, or at least a lack of tact. Titus. Answer the door!

Titus Dora! It isn't Finch! It's a... a... What do you call it?

Dora What?

Titus A missive from that building firm.

Dora Throw it in the stove. Property developer. Actually.
Imme! Where's Imme??

Titus What?

Dora Property developer, not a building firm.
This dress is coming off.

Titus

Dora Imme!

Dora takes her dress off and throws it at Titus.

Dora And that can go in the stove too. God I'm getting skinny and fat
at the same time. What a strange sensation. Idiiotic.

Titus pours Dora a drink. Enter Imme.

Dora Thank God for booze and God bless the man who pours it.
Without whisky...

Imme Without whisky...

Dora Ah, just who I was looking for.
Stay around here, will you.

Imme Why?

Dora Because.
I've got to watch you two. Stick together, okay?

Imme No.

Dora Yes. Right then. Scram. *Exit Imme.*

Titus Do you want me to go away?

Dora I said stick together didn't I? I said that didn't I? You do live here
don't you?

Exit Dora. Exit Titus.

Enter Nele upstage right.

Enter Imme.

Imme Nele! Nele!

Nele Imme. Darling. Come here.

Imme Nele, Nele!

Nele Your cheeks are so hot. Are you ill?

Imme Am I ill?

Nele Are you?

Imme Where's the dog?

Nele He's not here. Where's Dora?

Imme Where's Dora?

Nele Dora! DORA!

Imme DORA!

Dora Nele!

Imme Nele! Dora!

Nele Dora.

Dora Imme scram. And stay away from the windows.
Nele, what are you doing here?

Nele I was just passing.

Dora Yeah yeah.

Nele Really.

Nele looks at Dora in her underwear.

What are you wearing anyway?

Dora It's a bit inconvenient actually.

Nele A bit inconvenient? Where's Titus?

Dora Where's Waus?

Nele Dead!

Dora No! God.

Nele Run over, stone dead. Didn't suffer. Says the vet whom I just believe. He didn't look as though it was painless. His lips were pulled back so far that you could see all his teeth. He looked almost like a pony when he was dead. Christ Dora it's so cold in here.

Dora Ah. Dead.
Listen Nele...

Nele You're getting central heating for your birthday.

Dora Whether I want it or not?

Nele Whether you want it or not.

Dora Listen Nele...

Nele I want to bury Waus here and then Imme can say goodbye to him. That child's got to learn somehow that death exists.

Dora Nele...

Nele Why don't you buy her a puppy?

Dora You've got to leave. I'm expecting company.

Nele Aren't I company then?

Dora Jesus-H-Christ. How can I keep everything under control if everyone has their own vision of the day. Yes, you've got to leave. I don't need you here as well. It's all already...

Nele All already what?

Dora Complicated enough. Just come back tomorrow. Or next week.

Nele Do you know how long the drive is?

Dora You were just passing weren't you?

Nele Well, yes, tomorrow then.

Dora Well then don't come.

Nele Dora!

I don't want to go. I don't feel well.
I need to stay for a bit.

Dora Where's the dog?

Nele In the car.

Dora Won't he go bad? I mean...

Nele I turned the heater off.

Dora That's why you're cold. You've just got hypothermia.

Nele I'd at least like to say hello to Titus before I go. Is he in?

Dora No. He's not in. He's out. So you're just going are you?

Titus enters while Dora is speaking.

Nele Titus!

Titus Nele.

Nele Dora's kicking me out of the house. Charming.

Titus It'll be a while yet before he comes.

Nele Who? Before who comes?

Dora No-one.

Titus Oh.

Nele Who.

Dora Finch.

Nele Jesus! Eh?! What. He's in Sidney isn't he? Or...
Bloody hell. What's he playing at?

Dora Just be normal.

Nele Yes, he's a complete bastard that bloke.

Dora And that Nele is exactly why I want you to leave.

Nele He put you through hell.

Dora That's not true.

Nele Of course it's true.

Dora It wasn't like that. You don't understand the first thing.

Nele Titus?

Dora Titus knows nothing about it.

Nele No?

Dora No.

Nele I'm talking to Titus.

Dora Why are you sticking your nose in?

Nele Because I care about your well-being and Imme's and everyone else's.

Dora Imme?

Nele Yes.

Dora I'm going to get dressed.

Exit Dora.

Nele Titus?

Titus I don't know that much about it.

Nele You were there weren't you?

Titus ...

Nele Do you ever ask a question?
You think that anyone who's got anything to say will do that off their own bat. Some people need a bit of prodding Titus. You've got to ask questions and then ask new questions about the answers.

Titus I haven't got to do anything.

Nele Pour me a drink will you. Need warming up. By the way I've got the bodily remains of Waus in the car. I wanted to bury him here but of course that's not on now. Can I put him in the shed for the time being? It's cold enough in there.

Titus Yes, well yes.

Nele Thank you.
Cheers.

ACT 2

Scene 1

Dora in her clothes from first scenes.

Dora Eternally low and slow flying birds, the body of a dog in the shed, a small horizontal opening in the lead-grey sky. My little sister mooning around the kitchen refusing to go. Portents.

That man left me in a ruthless way. He abandoned me in a heartless fashion without giving a reason. After a life in which there couldn't have been a single reason for leaving. After a life in which leaving would have been a heartless ruthless deed with or without giving some excuse for a reason. After I had sacrificed everything for him. After I'd handed over my soul to him, just like that, as a gift. After I'd allowed him to lay me down in all possible ways, look at me from all possible angles, share all my possible thoughts. After I'd risked years of imprisonment for him.

I didn't go and look for him. I didn't travel off after him. Not because I didn't want to but because I could no longer set one foot in front of the other, because I couldn't haul my legs out of bed any more, because I couldn't lift my head up from my chest any more.

And now there are three possibilities.
He's coming to look at me in my misery. To see how I'm growing old parked in this muddy backwater.
Or he's coming with a white flag and armfuls of questions about forgiveness and my heart.

Or he knows nothing and thinks that such violations lapse over the years. That's possible too.

I'm not mad. I'm not overly fanatical. I'm in possession of my senses. Passionate uncompromising love is the last taboo of our time. We listen to antiquated operas about it: how the wronged lover flings themselves onto the point of a sword. But it's not of this time any more. We wouldn't want a lover who would fling themselves onto the point of a sword, who only doesn't fling themselves onto the point of a sword or into the river because you're still there with your beating heart and your glowing cheeks. We'd be completely uncomfortable with the idea. We'd leave a note on the table with the number of a therapist and take to our heels.

Scene 2

Finch, Dora

Finch Dora.

Dora Finch.

Finch Doradora. My goodness.

Dora Hallo.

Finch Shall I take my shoes off? Or? I can't get this mud off.

Dora Stamp as hard as you can. We're used to it.

Finch God, Dora. Let me have a look at you.

Dora Yes, that'll do. Just put your coat down somewhere. And that bag too. And those flowers. Lilies.

Finch Lilies.

Dora Aren't lilies funeral flowers?

Finch Kiss or shake hands?

Dora Both. Then the kiss retains some formality.
Have I ever had flowers from you before?

Finch Yes?

Dora Yes.

Finch You still remember?

Dora I remember everything exactly.

Finch You look good.

Dora Do I?

Finch Go well with the house. Colour matches your hair.
What are they going to do? Are they going to build?

Dora We'll wait and see if they're going to build.

Finch How long have you lived here?

Dora Ten years.

Finch Ten years!

Enter Titus.

Dora Finch, Titus. Titus, Finch.

Finch Titus. Yes. Yes, I think I saw you once or twice back then. Didn't I?

Titus Yes. Hallo.

Dora Exactly. In the pub. Now I remember. You were sitting there and I was sitting here and we bumped into you Finch, while you'd cried off that evening because you had to work late. Do you remember? I made a right fuss about it, at the time. I couldn't understand that a plan can change in the course of an evening. That while you're working you can start fancying a beer.

Finch Was that the same evening? I can remember meeting you... at... Well anyway, my memory's never been anything to place a bet on. No, of all my talents my power of recall doesn't exactly jump out at you.

Nele enters while Finch is speaking.

Hey Nele.

Nele Hallo.

Dora Coffee? Or would you rather get straight down to drinking?

Finch Coffee's fine.

Dora On the strong side with much too much sugar?

Finch Lovely.

Exit Dora.

Finch Everything all right with you?

Nele That depends on what you call all right.

Finch Do you live here?

Nele I live in town. In a flat. With ceiling tiles and pizzeria walls.

Titus So you're back? Are you?

Finch Yes.

Titus Temporarily or for good?

Finch For good. For now.
But you never know. You never know.

Nele Why are you here?

Finch I wanted to see Dora. And you?

Nele Just like that? You just wanted to see Dora?

Exit Titus.

Finch Isn't that allowed?

Nele It surprises me. And it surprises me much more that she wants to see you. She hates you.

Finch Is that so?

Nele Yes.

Finch I never really got to know you.

Nele No. While Dora was driving through Europe with you in an old bus robbing petrol stations and totally submitting to you sexually and what's more enjoying it, I was mourning my parents.

Finch Were you jealous?

Nele Oh ha ha.

Finch She never talked about you either. She only said: I've got a younger sister, she's called Nele and I hope she turns out all right because she can't do anything and she doesn't want anything.

Nele Oh. Well.

Finch And there you are then, sitting under your ceiling tiles with your face to the wall. And Dora married to her best friend. He finally managed it after all.

Nele They're not married.

Finch Oh.

Nele They're very happy.

Finch Great.

Exit Nele. Finch looks around, stretches his body inside his well-fitted suit, in a way which seems to suggest that he feels completely at home. He takes an elegant step, checks to see which book is lying on the table, turns on the record that's on the turn-table, whistles along to it. Enter Dora.

Finch Naples.

Dora When were we there?

Finch In eighty-nine. The first time.

Dora We only went there once.

Finch Twice.

Dora Once. Your memory is nothing to place...

Finch The first time in December. It was cold. The second time in April. It was cold then as well. For the time of year. You were

wearing a ... god what do you call those things, a wrap-over skirt? Out of pure vanity because your legs were covered in goose-pimples the whole time.

Dora Wrap-around. Here's your coffee.

Finch Thanks.
Am I right?

Dora ...

Finch Three times in Paris, twice in Naples, once in Berlin.

Dora What are you doing here?

Finch I was curious.

Dora Curious?

Finch Yes, something like that.
You smell just the same. I smelt it at once.
You've been drinking.

Dora Yes.

Enter Imme, she looks at Dora and Finch who are standing very close together but not touching each other. Then she barks.

Finch Hey!

Imme Hallo.

Finch Hallo.

Imme Who are you?

Finch I'm Finch. And you?

Imme Finch is a bird.

Finch A bird and a man. I'm the man.
Dora, is that your daughter?

Dora Yes.

Finch Jesus. Good God, how nice.

Imme.
How old are you?

Dora Imme's ten.

Finch A daughter. My Dora, a daughter.

Scene 3

Dora, Finch, Nele

Dora Are you staying to dinner?

Finch I'll have to make a phone call then.

Nele To your wife?

Finch Girlfriend. She's in a hotel in the village.

Dora She's not. Well, invite her too.

Finch Em, I don't know.

Dora Go on. It's fine. And anyway it's just about as tasteless as a village hotel could be. You can't do that to her.

Finch Are you sure this isn't being prompted by uncontrollable curiosity?

Dora I haven't seen you for ten years. You've forfeited the right to ask me such a thing.

Enter Titus and Imme.

Dora Finch just told me that he's left his girlfriend in The Welcome Inn. I've just said she must come too and that they're staying to dinner. What's her name?

Finch Effie.

Dora She's Dutch.

Finch Yes.

Dora Not Australian.

Finch No.
 What's wrong with her leg?

Dora Different lengths and a club foot.
 Effie, eh. Young? Beautiful?

Finch She always had it? From birth?

Imme We're going to sow the whole bloody plot.

Finch What?

Imme Outside.

Finch Ahah!

Imme Mimosa.

Finch Marvellous!

Dora Rapeseed.

Finch What are they going to build anyway?

Titus A housing estate. Urban development in the fields of Groningen!
 Can you imagine.

Finch My god.

Titus Dora won't sell.

Finch What are they offering?

Titus Almost eight times the value of the house.

Finch Heroic.

Imme Heroic.

Finch Yes, your mother's being extremely heroic!

Imme Yes.

Finch About that drink: please.

Dora What would you like?

Finch What do you think?

Dora Whisky.
 Scotch.
 Single Malt.
 You're in luck, that's what we drink here all day long.

Nele What are we eating?

Finch Let me guess. Fish?

Dora Yes.

Finch Trout?

Dora Yes.

Finch With salad, vegetables, jacket potatoes, and some sort of
 pudding, and, er, cheese? Am I right?

Dora Yes.

Finch A cheese board with a piece of dry Groninger sausage in there
 somewhere.

Nele Very good!

Dora Yes.

Finch And soup. Soup. I'm not sure there's soup but if there is soup
 then it's probably a lightly bound vegetable soup. Broccoli or
 courgette.

Titus I didn't see any trout in the kitchen. Just a couple of chickens.

Dora Yes, we're having chicken.

Finch Chicken.

Titus Delicious chicken.

Finch Yes, well that's nice too isn't it.

Dora You don't need to reassure me about my chicken. I'm well aware that my chicken in sherry is delicious. I'd just forgotten. I'd just completely forgotten that trout used to be my favourite food and my speciality in the culinary field. I had forgotten and it suddenly seems so idiotic to forget a thing like that. How can you forget your favourite food?

Finch You forget so much.

Dora Yes. Yes. I'm sure you do.

Scene 4

Finch and Dora

Finch I remember the first time I saw her. She came walking down my street with a pair of sunglasses on her nose and a street map in her hand and a bunch of keys on her little finger and a bag on her back and a bag in her hand and a jacket over her arm and a jumper tied round her hips and a book in her back pocket and the jumper all caught up behind it so it nearly fell out and I could have seen which book it was and with an unlit cigarette in the corner of her mouth and a tiara in her hair glittering away like mad.

Dora I remember the first time I saw him. I walked into the street with my sunglasses on with a map in my hand and a bag on my back and two small bags in my hand and a jacket and a jumper tied round and a book which was threatening to fall out of my pocket the whole time and he was sitting there on a step as if he'd been sitting waiting on that step the whole morning to tell me that I was in the right place and that upstairs above that shop was my new accommodation. And he invited me to sit next to him on his step.

Finch I wanted to ask her to sit down next to me and to stay sitting but I didn't dare to and then the map and the bag and the keys slid out of her hand onto the ground and when she bent down to pick them all up, the book fell out of her pocket and I saw that it was by Gombrovitz and while she was kneeling down at my feet I saw a little bit of skin between her trousers and her T-shirt and I saw the curve of her bottom inside her trousers and I saw the little blonde hairs on her arms and then the sunglasses fell off her nose and she looked at me.

Dora I couldn't think of what to do except to drop everything in front of him so that I had to stop. I was on my hands and knees in front of him. First I saw his brown feet in the sandals and the white linen trouser legs with his legs sticking out of them and the long scratch on his left shin. Between his legs I saw a newspaper and a packet of cigarettes of a brand unknown to me and a coffee cup. I thought: he must live here, otherwise he wouldn't have a coffee cup between his feet on the street and that made me feel very calm and as I heard my sunglasses hit the pavement I looked up into his eyes.

Finch I wanted to give her a light but I thought she might want to stand up again first.

Dora I asked if this house was number 28.

Finch No, she said: I'm your new neighbour.

Dora But I didn't know that, did I?

Finch I immediately wanted to take her upstairs in order to undress her and look at her and touch her. To feel her warm skin which would be gleaming here and there with summer sweat. To brush her hair back to look at her throat and her ears and her jaws and to kiss them. To smell her and see her armpits when she laid her arms above her head. To see if there were scars, if she'd worn a swimming costume that summer.

Dora He invited me to come and sit down and introduced himself and asked what I was studying and where I'd lived before this and if this was really all the stuff I had and how that was possible.

Finch She told me that her last student room had burnt down and that she was sleeping somewhere else at the time thank god otherwise she would have gone up in flames as well. And I was incredibly happy that she hadn't gone up in flames but that her room had so that she was sitting here on the step with me but I wondered where she'd been sleeping instead, whether she perhaps had a boyfriend who she'd been sleeping with. A boyfriend who undressed her when she was with him and brushed her hair back to see her throat and her ears and her jaws and kissed them and who knew all the scars and all the irregularities of her skin.

Dora And then he picked up the newspaper again and carried on reading where he'd left off.

Finch I didn't!

Dora You did!

Finch Out of sheer overwhelming astonishment.

Dora Yes. Or out of irrepressible interest in world events.

Finch No.

Dora I took my stuff upstairs and looked out of the window at the back of his head with the newspaper underneath it and I lit a cigarette when he lit a cigarette and I looked to the left when he looked to the left and I ran my hand through my hair when he ran his hand through his hair and I heard him say to a friend who cycled by and then stopped that he was sorry he couldn't make it this evening and I hoped and hoped and hoped that he'd said that because he was planning to take me out to his favourite bar and ...

Finch Which friend was that?

Dora Jelle.

Finch Jelle?

Dora Yes. Jelle Nieuwkoop.

Finch Oh.

Dora Later, I went downstairs and he was still sitting there only now he had a beer which surprised me because as far as I knew he hadn't been anywhere.

Finch And I offered her a beer too.

Dora Yes.

Finch And I went inside to get it.

Dora He stood up and I finally saw what he looked like when he was standing upright and that my head came up to his chin and that seemed to me to be exactly the right height to lean up against.

Finch Oh.

Dora Before I'd even finished my beer he stood up again and said that he had to go. I'll see you around, he said.

Finch Oh really?

Dora He asked me if I knew that Charlie Chaplin had once taken part in a Charlie Chaplin look-alike contest and that he'd won third place.

Finch Really?

Dora Really. And because he wanted to be sure that I completely understood what was so staggering about that, he told me to imagine that I'd won third place in a Dora look-alike contest and to ask myself who would have won first and second place.

Finch Oh god, no. No.

Dora Yes. And then he stood up and left.

Finch Before she'd even finished her beer she stood up and said that she had to go and that she'd see me around. She must be going to her boyfriend's, she hasn't got a bed any more since the fire of course.

Dora I think my father came and brought me a bed round but I can't remember if that was the first day or a couple of days later. Although that was his only visit to my new house before shortly afterwards together with my mother he drove off the side of a mountain and died from a fractured skull from his crown through his left eye socket to his cheekbone and my mother flew through the windscreen and bled to death from an arterial wound, slowly but in an unconscious state at least thank god.

Finch From that day on I was convinced that there would never come a day without her and that all the days before were less important. That at best I had lived through all the days before in order to have something to tell her about.

Dora That's just typical of one of those thoughts you have before you come to the time after *all the days before* and which you never have again afterwards. And if you already think it, it's more likely that it's in a poem you're reading than that it's something you feel yourself.

Finch Cynic.

Dora Idiot.

Finch Blue.

Dora I'd forgotten that. Blue.

Finch Blue.
Bluebird.

Dora How did he get that scratch?

Finch What?

Dora That long red scratch on his left shin?

Finch He can't remember.

ACT 3

Scene 1

Nele I'm the little sister. With her house in town. With her mooning about. With a dead dog and a nasty taste in her mouth. Who can't do anything and doesn't want anything. Says Dora. No, Finch says that Dora said.

Dora's twisted the whole story. She sees Finch as the great love of her life. Only because he left. Because he disappeared into thin air before her love could cool off in a natural way. And for ten years she hasn't cut her hair or bought a new dress. She's forgotten that trout was her favourite food, that she has the ability to be the life and soul and to surrender to another person. Has buried herself in the clay and told herself that back then, with that man, she was really alive and happy. That she was a different person then to her present melancholic bony self. What's he doing here anyway. Anyone who dares to ask the question shouldn't expect an answer. He's got a secret agenda. Maybe he wants to take her with him because he can't find any other woman who will attach herself to him so unconditionally. Or maybe he's turned into a psychopath who's come to murder all his ex-lovers. Thereby leaving a trail of bodies stretching from the European continent to Australia. I wouldn't be surprised. He's looked at me as well a few times in a way that was impossible to mistake. Titus is the real find. Only Dora

doesn't seem to recognise that. She sees him as a good egg who repairs her appliances, tells her if there's something important in the newspaper so she doesn't have to read it herself and who doesn't ask her any questions and that's nice and peaceful. She doesn't see that that man is a very special man and that he doesn't ask any questions out of politeness and not because he doesn't want to know anything. She doesn't see that he's a man to thank your lucky stars for who really accepts her for what she is and loves her for it. Actually, it's all wasted on her.

But who am I. I sit in my flat under my ceiling tiles with my back against the pizzeria wall. I've got little right to talk about other peoples' lives because my own life isn't exactly what you'd call a success either.

Scene 2

Titus, Dora, Nele

A scream.

Imme runs in holding Waus.

Imme Waus.

Finch Sorry, I didn't know...

Titus Oh god.

Imme He's dead.

Dora Yes.

Imme Waus is dead.

Dora Waus is dead.

Titus But he didn't suffer.

Dora How do you know that?

Imme Why's he in the shed?

Titus Waus died and we're going to bury him here. Because he loved playing here. We'll make a lovely day of it and every year we'll light candles for him. All right?

Nele starts to cry.

Finch Oh, but I'm very good at that. Burying dogs. Imme, and Nele too actually, listen, we'll make a really beautiful grave for him.

Dora Go to the kitchen now Imme. I'll come and see you in a minute.

Titus Dora.

Dora Yes, well you're all trying so hard to comfort that child. As if a beautiful grave makes any difference.

Imme Waus wasn't even old was he?

Dora No.

Imme Why did he die then?

Dora Because he crossed the road without looking. He got run over by someone who didn't see him. Maybe he was driving too fast or not looking properly. It's very sad but that's the way it goes.

Imme I don't want him to be dead.

Dora Some things happen whether you want it or not. And they're completely irreversible and beyond repair. There's nothing you can do about it.

Nele But you don't have to make it any worse than it already is.

Dora What is this urge you've all got to make things more beautiful than they really are. Life is a series of hard facts and it's never too early to start letting that sink in. It's no more beautiful than it is. And it saves you whole heaps of disillusionment in the future. You should all know that. Just go and look at your faces in the mirror.
Waus is dead and we're going to die too and that doesn't include it being painless or well-timed.

Nele Amen.

Dora Let's sit down and eat.

Scene 3

Titus, Finch and Nele at the dining table

Titus White, red or something else.

Finch Red.

Nele White.

Exit Titus.

I drink white with chicken.

Finch So you're drinking white because of the chicken. Regardless of anything else.

Nele Yes. Regardless of what? What else is there?

Finch The taste and what you fancy.

Nele As if you know what that red wine tastes like.
And anyway, fancy, fancy. What are you talking about actually?

Finch Have you got a boyfriend Nele?

Nele I had one, for a while. Huub, he was called, but after two weeks he already found our differences to be irreconcilable. The only difference was that I adapted myself to him and he didn't to me because he didn't know how to meet me halfway because I'd already totally adapted. So I didn't understand it at all when he suddenly saw all kinds of differences between us.

Finch Well it's just as well then.

Nele What?

Finch That it's over. What good's a man like that?

Nele Yeah. I don't know either. Huub.
Phoned Effie yet?

Finch Yes.

Nele But she's not coming?

Finch No.

Nele Do you think Dora looks older?

Finch Older but not old and as beautiful as ever. She's the kind of woman that time can't spoil at all.

Nele Is that what you came to see?

Finch No but I'm happy to see it.

Nele Dora though you were dead and reported you as missing. Then the police came round to say that you were alive and kicking in Australia. Dora nearly died of embarrassment in front of that policeman.

Finch Dora knew I was in Australia.

Nele She didn't.

Finch We talked about it.

Enter Dora with serving dish.

Dora Chickens.
Where's Imme?

Nele Titus has gone to fetch her.

Dora Sitting in front of the window of course. It's enough to drive you crazy. Staring into the distance at nothing.

Enter Titus and Imme.

Dora Was she sitting in front of the window?

Titus Yes.

Dora Then it's just as well that Titus went to fetch you and not me because I would have given you a smack. What possesses you? I'm going to have all those windows sealed up. Windows are made of glass so that you can look through them when they're closed. Why don't you understand the simplest things?

Titus I think Imme understands it now.

Dora I doubt it.

Titus Shall I serve then?

Nele So Finch, did you continue your criminal life in the southern hemisphere or did you start doing something respectable?

Finch I did all sorts of things.
In the end I got into swimming pools. Building contractor. Nice time. Paid well. Thanks Titus.
Could build a swimming pool here too if you want one. We'll dig it next to the hole for...

Nele Waus.

Finch Waus. Next to the hole for Waus we'll dig a big hole for a pool.

Imme Yeah! Can we have one Dora?

Titus We'll see. If we're going to have a swimming pool, I can dig too.

Finch I'm sure you can Titus.

Titus If you were to dig a swimming pool it would take you weeks wouldn't it?

Finch Well, it keeps you busy for quite a while.

Titus Were you planning on staying at The Welcome all that time then?

Finch I haven't really decided anything yet.

Imme But can we have one?

Dora I wouldn't know what we'd do with a swimming pool.

Imme Swim in it.

Titus Enjoy your food.

They eat.

Titus So you haven't yet decided what you and your girlfriend are going to do?

Finch No, no, we've got to see. Depends on so many things.

Imme What else would you do with a swimming pool?

Dora Now Imme, stop going on about it.

Imme Stop going on about it.

Finch It is incredible, this landscape. The flatness, the emptiness, and then those machines standing waiting there, motionless. While I understand that they're not going to be doing anything. When will they come and take them away?

Dora They've put them there specially to put pressure on me. To work on my nerves.

Finch It's unbelievable. Eh? Really unbelievable. How did you come to own it, this house?

Dora I bought it.
Two months after you left. I wanted a view of nothing. That reminded me of nothing, that was completely nothing. With at most a tree or at most a road in the distance. Without anything. I wanted absolute nothingness. If I could have, I would have gone and lived in the fog if I could have. But this was very nice too. Very nice in the context of what I could stand.
And Titus can work well here.
He's always found the cold flagstones and the layer of ice on the water in the cistern in winter very inspiring.

Finch And your muse within hand's reach. Isn't she?

Nele Yes look, there on the sideboard. That's Dora 6. Isn't it Titus? Dora 6.

Titus Yes.

Finch And do you still exhibit your stuff?

Titus I don't particularly like to.

Finch It's beautiful. It's really beautiful. How much is it?

Nele D'you want to buy it then?

Finch I'd just like to get an idea.

Titus They normally go for around 15, 16 thousand. But Dora 6 isn't for sale.

Finch And Dora 5?

Titus Doesn't exist.
And Dora 4 has already been sold. Not as Dora 4 by the way.
As "nude 24".

Finch Nude eh.

Titus I've got a photo of it.

Finch So it's standing on someone's mantelpiece right now. Or on the
piano. Or on a pedestal in a hallway or garden.

Dora It's not really recognisable, is it?

Finch I can see it's you Dora. Not so literally but I can see your grace
and your slender form and your quiet melancholy in it. The
atmosphere, if you like. More the feeling.
And a figure like this says at least as much about the artist as
about the subject.

Titus Does it?

Finch It expresses a great protective love of the artist for the subject. I
think. I see. I think I can see.
Do you always work in bronze?

Titus Clay too. I don't really like talking about my work. I like showing
it but I don't find it easy to talk about. It so quickly turns into a
load of nonsense doesn't it. I like to show them. If you want you
can have a look out the back and see more pieces but I don't
like talking about them. Everyone has to decide for themselves
what they see in them and what kind of information that gives
about the artist or the subject, as you say. I've got nothing
further to add.

Imme Look, this is me.

Puts a figurine of 50 cm high on the table.

Finch Well I never.

Imme I'm standing wonky. That's because of my foot.

Finch Yes I can see.

This one looks so firm and sturdy as well.
Very solid. Really solid images Titus, with a very subtle elegance.

Nele Titus is very famous and acclaimed for his sculptures you know.
When are you going to do me then?

Finch As soon as you've acquired a bit of substance yourself I should think.

Nele What's that supposed to mean?

Imme Out Of True, it's called.
That's because I'm wonky. Out Of True it's called.

Finch I can see.

Nele When I've acquired a bit of substance, well really!
Why did you go to Australia anyway? Did you have some special connection with it? Yes? I didn't know that. Did you know that Dora?

Dora I thought perhaps because it's the other side of the world, it's almost impossible to go any further away. Theoretically, it's better to disappear in South America but then the poverty and the turmoil is so uncomfortable isn't it. So, yes no, I didn't know...

Nele No?

Dora ... but I can understand it. No. Why?

Nele What can you understand?

Dora I just said.

Nele Jesus! What have you actually come here FOR??

Finch Do I have to tell you that Nele?

Nele Not me in particular. Just tell everyone why you've come here to disturb everyone's peace.

Silence. Titus eats, Dora drinks, Imme strokes her sculpture, Nele looks at the others in bewilderment and Finch leans back and plays with his glass.

Nele Dora.

Dora No.

Nele Can you give me a top-up before that bottle's empty?

Finch You were drinking white weren't you?
That's in the fridge I assume.
I'll go and get it.

Exit Finch.

Silence.

Imme I think he's nice.

Finch returns.

Finch The chicken was delicious Dora.

Dora Good.

Imme Isn't Waus cold in the shed?

Titus Waus can't feel the cold any more Imme. Because he's dead.
When you're dead you can't feel anything any more. No cold, no
pain, nothing.

Finch I'd quite like a game of chess with you Titus.
I played chess with you before once.

Titus And?

Finch I won.

Titus I never play chess any more.

Finch But you'll make an exception for me this evening.

Titus Yes.

Finch Great.

Imme I know all of MCK's songs.

Finch Really.

Imme I can do a show for you if you like. Okay?

Finch Yes.

Dora Pudding anyone?

Nele A cheese board I expect.

Dora Yes.

Nele With a bit of Groninger sausage in there somewhere.

Dora Yes.

Finch Lovely.

Scene 4

Dora and Finch.

Finch I can remember a hotel where we stayed a week. We never left our room. Just had room service the whole time. It was boiling hot in that room. It had the sun on it the whole day long. From our window we could see the sea. You read to me. When it was finished we went swimming.

Dora I remember once we drove for 48 hours. I was convinced that everything would be different the moment we stopped. And I was convinced that you were convinced as well that everything would be different if we stopped and went to sleep for instance. It was snowing and I was so tired that I could only see snowflakes and the road hardly at all.

Finch You were driving extremely dangerously.

Dora I'd rather have crashed the car than let that drive come to an end.

Finch Dora, what have you done?

Dora What do you mean?

Finch The past years.

Dora Nothing.

Finch Nothing.

Dora Nothing. Read books, had a daughter, thought things over.

Finch Had a daughter. That's quite something.

Dora Yes.

Finch How old is she exactly?

Dora It's possible, it's equally impossible.

Finch Shouldn't you have told me?

Dora Pardon?

Finch You should have told me.

Dora You left. Without an explanation, without warning. Without leaving an address. Just like that. Gone.

Finch You could have looked for me.

Dora You knew where I lived.

Finch I didn't have a child.

Dora But you didn't know that.

Finch I didn't assume it naturally.

Dora What did you assume then?

Finch Are you trying to accuse me of not considering that you might have had a child without knowing who had fathered it?

Dora Not at all, that's exactly what I don't want to accuse you of.

Finch Do you maybe want to accuse me of something else then?

Dora Oof.

Finch Dora, it's ten years ago.

Dora Ten years ago is it! Blimey. Ten years already.

Finch Dora.

Dora Ten years without a word.

Finch I was making you unhappy. You were terribly unhappy Dora, there was nothing I could do about it.

Dora Oh, so you wanted to solve my problems and leaving without saying a word seemed a good idea.

Finch Ten years ago Dora.

Dora I wasn't unhappy.

Finch Yes you were.

Dora By whose standards?

Finch Objectively discernible. Unhappy. Depressed. I was... I couldn't...

Dora Stand it?

Finch If you like.
Anyway you don't actually know whose she is?

Dora Ten years ago, you said didn't you? Lapsed, isn't it?

Finch Don't you want to know?

Dora No.

Finch Why not?

Dora Because it would reduce her to a product of something.

Finch But you do know of course.

Dora She's just here and that's that.

Finch I loved you very terribly much Dora.

Dora Oh yeah. And one fine day it just stopped.

Finch No.

Dora You're talking in the past tense.

Finch I'm trying to say that I didn't go away because I didn't love you.

Dora I wasn't unhappy. That wasn't it at all. That's an extremely banal description. I was completely spell-bound and utterly willing. I wanted to do everything for you and I did everything for you. I held a gun to the temple of a French garage owner. I left Nele in the lurch. I stopped studying, stopped grieving for my parents, stopped dreaming about the life I wanted. I considered my love for you and your love for me as my identity. I considered your body as mine and my body as yours. I considered your ribs and your jaws and your knees and your eyes as my only reality. I even would have pulled the trigger and killed that man if I'd had to.

Finch That wasn't necessary. I knew that.

Dora You betrayed me in an appalling and unforgivable way.

Finch You've got a completely unrealistic image of a relationship.

Dora It wasn't realistic. It wasn't a relationship.

Finch I'm going to make a start on that grave for...

Dora Waus.

Finch I'm going to make a start on that grave for Waus.

Dora Yeah. Now? It's night-time.

Finch That's got a certain something don't you think? Digging a grave in the dark.

Dora I want to ask you one thing.
Don't be frightened.
I won't ask why you went away and also not why you're here.
I have to think about it.
I have to put it the right way.
I'm going to think about it.

Imme comes in. She has changed and starts her show.

ACT 4

Scene 1

Titus For years I've accepted the fact that half a Dora is more than no Dora. That there's a hole in her heart and a crack in her mind. I didn't say that he was a bastard in order to comfort her. I didn't say she had to cry, or not cry, drink or not drink, look for him or not look for him. I didn't ask anything of her and understood that after you've given your all for someone you can only tolerate someone who asks nothing of you at all.
I've never seen that as a sacrifice and I've never seen myself as a sucker. I was convinced that I was completely capable of doing it.
I am the personification of acceptance.
The reed in the wind.

And now she's digging a hole in the clay as if her life depends on it. Together with that devil who doesn't appear to be a devil but a tall appealing man who if you ask me also exists in a vacuum in his life and has come to see if the key to the future maybe lies in the past.

They're standing there with a pickaxe uncovering the depths in a hole of two by one. I'm not saying anything, but even a blindman in the dark can see that it's a hole of two by one.

My problem is my eternal understanding.
Not put on. Not out of fear. Without exaggeration. True.

Scene 2

Titus. Dora enters and is already pretty drunk.

Dora Hey.
What are you doing?

Titus Nothing.

Dora Ach, that eternal nothing. None of us do anything. Not Nele and not you and not Imme and not me either. For gods sake. Those cranes out there are exemplary of our lives Titus. Stranded in their destiny.

Titus That's not true.

Dora Titus! What did you say? You said something. Something very definite. You said: that's not true.

Titus I do everything I want to do.

Dora Is there another bottle round here?

Titus No.

Dora Can you go and get one from the cellar?

Titus No.

Dora Have you been doing an assertiveness course while I was outside?

Titus No.

Dora Oh.

Titus What do you think Imme will think about you two burying Waus in the middle of the night while she's asleep?

Dora I don't know. I've never been much good at following Imme's train of thought.

Dora finds a half-full bottle of wine.

Dora Well how about that. Cheers.

Titus To your good health.

Dora What's that all about?

Titus I'm drinking to your good health.

Dora Yeah, yeah.

Titus Or is that being too intrusive?

 I want to say something to you...

Dora No full sentences please. Have you suddenly started talking in full sentences? Tell me later will you. Tomorrow or next week.

Titus I want to say something about... About something that I... About my eternal understanding.

Dora And that you've discovered that you've got a boundary? Where are you going?

Titus I don't like being insulted.

Dora Oh yes you do.

Titus I don't think so.

Dora Why are you running away then?
Are you going to stand in the hallway all angry?

Titus I'm not allowed to speak in full sentences am I?

Dora I'm not the boss am I?

Titus Stop it.

Dora Just sit down and have a drink and be your usual self.

Titus goes to leave but comes back.

Titus I think it's terrible that you two are... That Imme... That. Bloody hell Dora!

Dora goes to hand him a glass and Titus knocks it out of her hands.

Silence.

Exit Titus.

Dora picks up the letter from the property developer which was delivered in the first act. She sits down, signs it, puts it in her cardigan pocket and goes out.

Scene 3

Nele and Titus

Nele I don't understand. I don't understand Dora, I don't understand you, I don't understand Finch and I don't understand Dora – oh no, I've already done her. I don't understand why someone doesn't bang their fist down on the table. I don't understand why you don't just throw him out. I'm worried that he's going to

completely ruin Waus' funeral. I just don't understand it Titus.
Have you got a glass?

Titus I don't need a glass; I'm drinking out of the bottle.

Nele Jolly good.
At least that's something.

Titus Cheers.

Nele Of course I don't know what it's like do I? I don't know what it's
like to be together with someone for a long time or to have been
together with someone for a long time. I just don't have any
experience of it. Why that should be though...

Titus That doesn't matter.

Nele Dora was eight when I was born. Understand? I was the pale
anaemic little sister with two left hands and no special talent. I
was ten when she left home and sixteen when they died and
Dora went away. I was just an adolescent. Understand.
Adolescents don't want to do anything anyway. I went and lived
with the neighbours and Dora sent me a postcard now and then.

Titus Yes.

Nele Maybe I was a surly, pig-headed kid too and maybe I wasn't
very nice either but that's how people react to things sometimes.
I used to see more of you than Dora in those days. At least you
came to my graduation and I was a bit in love with you I think.

Titus Yes.

Nele But of course you didn't know that.

Titus No.

Nele It wouldn't have occurred to you either.

Titus No.

Nele And then they came back again and they were going to stay and
I felt just like a stranger. I was just plain shy with Dora.
Give me a bit too.

Do you think that at a certain moment it's all laid down? That the cards are dealt and that life definitely will never be as great or as fulfilling or as passionate as you used to think it would be?

Titus No.

Nele Do you envy Dora?

Titus No.

Nele Are you drunk?

Titus No.

Nele I think you are.

Nele goes over to the telephone and presses the recall button.

Nele Here, I'm getting my answering machine.
Hey Titus, can you hear what I'm saying?

Titus Yes, and?

Nele That means that he didn't ring that so-called Effie at all. Maybe there isn't an Effie in the first place. He made her up. Hey! That makes you think doesn't it.

Titus Just leave it.

Nele Should we just wait quietly till it's all over?

Titus Listen, I don't know any of that. I just can't see what difference an Effie or no Effie makes.

Nele It says something about his reliability. It says something about the man who's outside with your wife.

Titus She isn't my wife.

Nele Because she's her own woman.

Titus Yes.

Nele Titus!

Titus That's just the way I think. I don't just say it. That's how I think. I've got... I'm eternally... tolerant. Everyone has to do and think and feel what they like. No-one is beholden to me just like I'm not beholden to anyone.

Nele That's just not true!

Titus It is true.

Nele You can't live that way.

Titus That's the way I live.

Nele There are things which are worth fighting for aren't there?

Titus If you think about it long and hard... If I think about it long and... If someone doesn't want something, really doesn't want... what could I fight for then?

Nele goes and sits on Titus' lap.

Scene 4

Meanwhile outside.

Dora and Finch are sitting on the edge of Waus' grave.

Finch Jesus Dora, what a godforsaken backwater.

Dora Yeah, lovely eh?

Finch And it's bloody freezing here too.

Dora Yes.

Finch In Australia there are different constellations. And the moon is all skew-whiff.

Dora Southern hemisphere. I know.

Finch Do you still go... Do you ever go travelling?

Dora No.

Finch Don't you want to show Imme anything? The mountains, the sea, cities and ...

Dora No. She doesn't know any better.

Finch But you were always so...
So curious and inexhaustible and it used to make you so happy. I thought at first that you missed that, when we came back. That you couldn't stand being in one place, staying in one house. And now you're... now.... here.

Dora That's something different.

Finch Imme is so... She seems so...

Dora Lonely?

Finch Yes.

Dora Ah man, mind your own business.

Finch The last weeks.
We were back and planning to stay.
You signed up again at the university.

Dora I maybe thought about it but I never actually did it.

Finch Oh.

Dora You brought things home for me. Ice-cream or wine or flowers or music.

Finch Didn't you? I seem to remember that you started studying again.

Dora That's not so.

Finch Could it be that you said that to me?

Dora It could be that you thought it up for your own peace of mind. That I'd found a new purpose in life as well that had nothing to do with you.

Finch You started seeing Titus.

Dora Another comforting thought.

Finch You apparently had an affair with him.

Dora You never said what you were doing. You went out and you came back, sooner or later.

Finch It was GOOD that we had separate lives again. That when I went out of the door I didn't only think of the moment that I'd come back again and find you lying on your stomach on my rug or on the balcony, or in the bath or...

Dora You went out and I waited for you. I didn't know what else to do and I knew that you liked it when you came home and found me lying on my stomach on your rug.

Finch Dora, sometimes you were sitting in the same chair that I'd left you in.

Dora The last morning you brought me redcurrants. Redcurrants.

Finch That really was a bit creepy.

Dora You came home. I pretended to be asleep because I wanted to feel you wake me up. You came in and you were looking for something. After that you did the washing-up and made some coffee. I could feel you looking at me and I was scared that my eyelids would flutter. Then you went and had a shower. I smelled your shampoo and the coffee and I heard you dry yourself and pull your belt through your trouser waistband and put your shoes on.
Then you came and sat on the bed and brushed my hair back from my face. "Dora," you called out, "Dora..."

Finch I can't remember.

Dora It was the last morning. I've gone over and over every detail in my head.

Finch And changed nothing of course. Everything faithfully preserved for posterity.

Dora Who can say. You can't remember it.

Finch I can remember countless times that I made coffee, had a shower, did the washing-up, brushed the hair back from your face. Called out Dora.

Dora This was the last morning. You were looking for something.

Finch And you've probably already decided it was my passport.

Dora That's very possible.

Finch And those redcurrants? Anything about those redcurrants?

Dora I ate them for breakfast.

Finch Aha.

Dora And I fired them at you. From one of those wafer tubes, you know, those things you stick in ice-cream. I fired them at you from one side of the table.

Finch And me?

Dora You drunk your coffee and you tried to catch the berries in your mouth and later you got irritated because you were wearing a clean white shirt and ...

Finch ... you thought that was ridiculous. Because what did I need a clean white shirt for when I wasn't going anywhere, and no-one mattered except you. Oh Dora. That you embrace that total isolation, now again too and that you condemn your child to it as well, what's more.

Dora You've completely misunderstood something.

Finch Oh yeah?

Dora Yeah.

Finch What then?

Dora I don't even think I can explain it. You're so far off the mark that I don't even have a common point to start from. As if I chose to come and live here...

Finch Are you trying to say that you live here while you don't want to live here at all? Or are you trying to give me the blame for it. Are you trying to claim that you're still sitting here thinking about what went wrong between us. Well, I'd like to say one thing to you. As long as you refuse to look at your own unhealthy desire for a hermit's existence, you're not in a position to tell me

anything because it's all a total dead loss and because you're going to fall mercilessly through the hole of your own self-deception.

Dora There is such a thing as sheer bad luck, it can be that things turn out different to the way you want.

Finch Oh.

Dora And that you can smugly wonder if I'm still sitting here thinking about what went wrong between us, but that the numbing bewilderment has indeed never worn off and that I would still like to...

Finch Still like to...

Dora And that the isolation from back then and my life now are two different things.

Finch I'm afraid you're confusing the one with the other Dora. Those redcurrants. That breakfast. That last morning. That I liked it finding you sitting in the same chair every day.

If you say that I left just like that, without explanation, and you say you can't stop thinking about it...

Dora Did I say that?

Finch Isn't that so?

Dora Did I say that?

Finch Yes. Why don't you want to know why I went away or why I'm here now?

Because then your story will collapse?

Because your alibi will be swept away?

Because the foundations under your loneliness will cave in?

Because it will all turn out not to be true??

If you don't want to know, then I won't tell you anything.

Just come and lean up against me Dora. I'm cold. Come and lean up against me.

Bluebird.

I want to ask you something too. It's a very simple question and you only have to say yes or no to it. And if you say yes you only need to pack your things.

I don't know if it's possible to go back in time.
I don't know if things are irreversible.
I don't know if you've got it in you.
I don't know if it would turn out to be the death blow.
I know that there are other possibilities.
I can also leave and do something else and I might even be happy.
I'm just searching. Searching for something that got lost. For something that ...

*The music drowns him out and Dora raises the shovel.
A roll of thunder.*

ACT 5

Scene 1

*Nele, Imme, Titus
Morning.*

Nele Where's Dora.

Imme Baking rolls.

Nele I didn't see her in the kitchen.

Imme I did.

Nele Titus?

Titus Yes.

Nele Did you get any sleep?

Imme Where's the Finch?

Nele I don't know. When I went to bed they were still outside. Dora and Finch. I don't know. Did he stay the night?

Imme We're going to bury Waus today, eh Titus?

Titus I don't know. Yes.

Imme With candles and black clothes on, eh Titus?

Titus Yes.

Enter Dora.

Dora Coffee? Anyone?

She pours the coffee walks away again.

Imme What are you wearing Nele for the funeral?

Nele Just what I've got on now.

Imme Do you think that's suitable?

Nele Don't be so silly.

Enter Dora.

Dora Breakfast.

Nele Where's Finch?

Dora Gone.

Nele Gone?

Imme What are you wearing Dora for the funeral?

Dora Which funeral. Oh. Nothing. There's no funeral.

Nele What?

Imme Why not?

Dora Waus has been buried and Finch has gone. I don't want to talk about it.

Imme What's going on?

Dora I thought it was an absurd plan in the first place, that funeral. It's only a dog. It has to be buried but we're not going to make a big thing of it.

Imme runs out.

Nele Dora! That poor kid. And anyway he was my dog. Why are you always in control of everything? Well? He was my dog wasn't he?

Dora Sorry Nele, maybe it could have been done better, but that's the way it went.

Nele You just used Waus... You just used him in order to spend hours outside with...

Dora Don't be so ridiculous. Have a roll.

Enter Imme, crying.

Imme Waus has gone.

Dora That's what I said. He's gone. We can put a bunch of flowers on his grave and say goodbye. You can't keep a dead animal above ground forever. I'll spare you the details Imme.

Nele He'd only been dead three days!

Dora Imme? A roll?

Imme No!

Nele We'll dig him up.

Dora No way. No-one's digging anything up here.

Nele Titus?

Titus I. Don't. Know.

Nele And how did Finch leave then? Did he go on foot?

Dora I haven't the faintest idea.

Nele When did he go then? At 5 o'clock?

Dora I didn't look at the clock.

Nele And is he coming back? I mean is he coming back again?

Dora No.

Nele No.
Dora That's what I said.
Imme He didn't even say goodbye to me.
Dora He didn't say goodbye to me either.
Nele I'm going home.
Dora Good.
Nele Jesus.

Nele gets up and gathers her things together.

Nele Oh yeah, there probably isn't an Effie at all. In any case, he lied about the fact that he'd phoned her.
Dora Oh.
Nele It doesn't make any difference to you?
Dora No.
Nele I thought you might like to know.
Dora No actually.
Nele Finch has gone and everything will just carry on as normal?
Dora Not completely.
Nele Because??
Dora You'll find out yourself.
Nele I'm going then. Bye Titus. Bye Imme.
Dora Bye Nele.

Before Nele has completely exited, from outside comes the swelling sound of lorry engines, tipping-trucks emptying their load, cranes going into motion. Pile-drivers. Etc..

END

