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TIN AND FISHES

TIN
AND FISHES
A PLAY FOR VOICES

by Pauline Sheppard



UNITED WRITERS
Cornwall

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Sources

Geevor Oral History Project
Drill & Blast, Nation on Film (BBC) a film by Mick Catmull
of A39 Films
The Cornishman Newspaper (1930s to present day)
A Geevor Miner's Tale by Ian Davey
Deep Down, R.M. Ballantyne
St. Just & Pendeen by Edith M. Nicholas
St. Just in Penwith by Douglas C. Vosper
Geevor Mine Underground by J.A. Buckley, D. Wills, K.T.
Riekstins.
St. Just Area Guide
TSW Film Archive
Cornwall Studies Library
Morrab library, Penzance

Tin & Fishes was commissioned by
St. Just Heritage Area Regeneration Project
and The World Heritage Site Bid Office.

Tin and Fishes could have been told many ways: as a gritty mining drama, as a farce about the political engineering of society, as a spectacular historical pageant in St. Just's *plen an gwari*. Each approach would be wonderful theatre. However, every time I came back to the source material - real memories, personal anecdotes - I found that they spoke for themselves, and with a little editing and animation by true Cornish voices, they told a simple truth about people, place and change.

Pauline Sheppard

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The Cornishman newspaper
Elaine George
Cyril Honey
Rachel Ewer
Bill Roberts
Elvia Elbro
Paul Adams
R. Williams
B. Lawry
Mrs Murley
Ian Davey
Phyllis Lockett
Maurice Trembath
Andrew Coke
Mike Miucci
Patrick Adams
Dave Morgan
Mark Kaczmarak
Ray Roddan
Ross Williams
Lucia Crothall
and a great many conversations in and around the parish*

for Ray Roddan

Tin and Fishes was first performed at Geevor Tin Mine on July 20th 2006. The cast was as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Matthew Richards | Simon Uren |
| Lizzie Richards/Maggie Thomas | Stacey Guthrie |
| Susie Richards/Miss Procter | Julia Twomlow |
| Ben Thomas | Grevis Williams |
| Artist/Jim Eddy | Stephen Hall |
| John Ellis | Paul Farmer |
| Voice | Pauline Sheppard |

Other characters played by the cast

Original Music by John Bickersteth

your self respect, your pride. There idn' nuthin' else - it's people that count and long as you follow that seam forward and can feel back along to your roots then you know who you are and you got all that knowledge behind you. I want to be part of that ... tin an fishes ... and there's so much I don't know. I need your help, Dad. I need to know what you know. Trouble is, have you got time to tell me?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

I got a lifetime, lover. A lifetime to give you.

SUSIE

That's all we need, Dad, your life and mine together, that's the winning seam; now we can go on.

VOICE

Over Kelynack, the airfield boils with rabbits and a ferret. Chapel Carn Brea glows in the pink of evening. The sea, which has been white from clay, red from tin, black from oil, is constant and changing. By Pendeen lighthouse, Mr John Ellis joins the summer crowds and the artist to watch the swollen sun sink with their expectations, and hopes he has the eyes to glimpse the green flash that is known to fishermen; and the red sea comes back, even if just for a setting.

END

experience of big change.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Neither did I.

SUSIE

What happened? You were always so positive, you never used to be a drinker.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Never used to be a lot of things. Never used to be unemployed, never used to be old. Never used to need somethin' dampen down the phlegm. You did the right thing, going, there's nuthin' left here.

The culture's gone; the mine kept it together. What we had was pride, friendship, camaraderie. They took all that, took it all away. Idn' nuthin' left in Cornwall. It's dead an' I'm dyin' too.

SUSIE

You selfish bastard! How dare you! How dare you rub out my whole life! Do you think it ends with you? Do you think that's it? That pride, that friendship, that camaraderie, the love, we still got that. No one can take that away. I used to walk along the shore where I been livin' in Indonesia, and I'd imagine the sea'd come from Boat or Priest's and I'd think it's the same sea in the same world, someone finishes something one place and someone starts somewhere else and it keep changin' and it's always the same, 'cos it's about people. I met Danny Thomas up Geavor, he was just standin' up there in the rain. I asked him why, he said he didn't know, he was guardin' it he said. Suddenly it makes sense. He just needed to get close to his roots. I need to do the same. I didn't want to come back but I have to come home.

It's people that matter, Dad. You showed me how to see tin, how it go higgledy-piggledy through the rock, sometimes seemin' to die out, then comin' back somewhere else. You got to win it, you said. Well you got to do the same with life. You just got to keep goin', keep

Tin and Fishes

VOICE

Six miles north of the Land's End, in the westernmost of the nine hundreds of *Kernow*, surrounded by ancient remains from another age, and the scars from our own, you'll find *Lannyust*, St. Just. We stand on the ridge of a hill, with the moors at our back door and the Atlantic raging at our front. Our skyline is identifiable from all directions. The Parish Church rises from its square of doll's-house cottages at one end of town; and John Wesley's gaunt and mighty chapel strides across the street at the other. This is where we live.

JOHN ELLIS (*In American accent*)

St. Just is not a pretty town. This postcard shows the *Plen an Gwari* or Place of the Play, one of two surviving mediaeval theatres, the other is also in Cornwall. There's an eighteenth-century Market Square, which mostly comprises inns - the two oldest being *The Star* and *The King's Arms*; and the nineteenth-century Bank Square overlooked by the Town Clock, a rather plain war memorial. *Kelleenack* (*he has trouble with the pronunciation*), which I hope to visit, is mentioned in Domesday and Cape Cornwall is the only cape so-called in England. I should say in Cornwall for it is another country here. Yours truly, John Ellis. *P.S.* The most noteworthy feature is the free car park.

VOICE

Visitors have come to St. Just by '*kittereen*'. Ben Eddy Omnibus, Joss Olds, Arkelus Bus ...

ARKELUS

... with Royal Mail stamped on its side. *Allus room for one more!*

ENSEMBLE (*each actor takes a mode of transport, quick-fire delivery*) The Dolly Pentreath ... the Grey Hound ... West Penwith Motor Car Co. ... Western National ... First Bus Open top ... Blue Bus ... A40 ... Peugeot 405 ... BSA Bantam ... on foot.

ARKELUS

Arkelus Bus! Sixteen sittin'. Can take thirty; men an' boys get off to walk up Nancherrow ... *Allus room for one more!*

VOICE

A German pilot crash-landed his bomber during the war, some have been washed up in Priest's Cove, and in the *thirties* you could fly in to Land's End Airport from as far afield as Manchester on a day return ... but no train has ever rolled in to St. Just. No one will ever accuse St. Just of being "*the end of the line*"; we leave that claim to Penzance and we maintain our reputation as the *Wild West*.

MISS PROCTOR

We got *Weather*.

MAGGIE THOMAS

'Ess we do.

VOICE

Miss Proctor and her carer Maggie Thomas are queuing in the post office. Thanks to Miss Proctor's foresight, they are dressed for *Weather* in sensible button-up raincoats, boots and headscarves; unlike Mr John Ellis. On camping

MATTHEW RICHARDS

You were in *Rowe's* gettin' a pasty, before the queue got too big you said.

SUSIE

Must've heard it afterwards. I was still there. Does it matter whether I was in the shop or up with you?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Yes.

SUSIE

Why?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Things change but you allus need a pasty.

VOICE

She runs her fingers down the aging spines of Cornishmen.

SUSIE

When you think how much information you got here.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Who wants the past? Just old papers is all.

VOICE

She pulls a newspaper from the pile..

SUSIE

May 1986. '*Gail Tilsley comes to Truro*'. I'd forgotten about that. You only took me up there 'cos you fancied her. '*Leak casts doubt on tin future*'. They knew, they knew already, didn't they? You're right, I wasn't there, not really, I mean I was but I was trapped in my own world, what I was doin'. I was worried sick about sixth form, exams an' stuff, you know? The teachers' strike .. and Davey goin' away up Bristol and leavin' me behind ... I just, I just thought things'd go on, I didn't have any

SUSIE
But Mum said they're treatin' you.

MATTHEW RICHARDS
She doesn't know.

SUSIE
She never did.

MATTHEW RICHARDS
She love you.

SUSIE
She drive me mad.

MATTHEW RICHARDS
Your mother's strong. Tidn' that she can't imagine, she just won't meet trouble afore it happen - that's a strength. She'll bite all round the edges, like she dust that house, just to keep it all out, keep out the real problem. Won't let her imagination run away with her see. She's a coper, don't know anyone in the world cope better'n Mother. We're weepin' an imaginin' what might have been and worryin' a thing to death and she just get on and cope. Like last night, she know those tablets have to get stronger, she know I have to take 'em more often but what's the point talkin' about it? She just get on. She get upset and she'll clean, wash, bake just to hold herself in.

SUSIE
I went up Geevor last night. Twenty years a long time but it all come back. David Penhaligon's speech about deckchairs an' icecream.

MATTHEW RICHARDS
You wasn't there.

SUSIE
I was. I remember.

holiday from America, Mr Ellis sports new shorts, tee shirt, sandals, yesterday's sunburn and a bright and sunny disposition.

MR ELLIS
Forecast says sun coming in from the west.

MISS PROCTER
We'm like flies caught in a droplet of water, just can't see beyond.

MR ELLIS
Excuse me.

VOICE
Miss Procter rummages for her purse, the single item in her copious plastic shopping bag, the maroon and cream one with the handle tied with string and the corners stitched with *Chadwick's superior heavy stitching thread* bought in the war.

MISS PROCTER
It's a *phenomeenon*. We could be stuck in this cloud for days, not able to see a hand in front of your face; or just as like the wind could whip up quick as a flash and you be leaning round they corners. Two first class stamps, please, Mrs Semmens.

MRS SEMMENS
You only give me 10p, Miss Procter.

MISS PROCTER
I only want two stamps.

MRS SEMMENS
That'll be 64p.

MAGGIE THOMAS
She been in the *seventies* all day, she asked me to get her a ticket to see John Prescott speaking over Penzance.

MISS PROCTOR

Like I say, Maggie Thomas, I'm going to tell ee a thing or two about this EEC and decimalisation and what it doin' to we. Now, we had a wind back along smashed the church windows, hurled gravestones up in the air and overthrew a dog kennel complete with dog. Mr and Mrs Osborne up Trewellard lost their roof.

VOICE

On February 10th 1972 the pressure storm funnelled up Cot Valley and through St. Just with winds in excess of 90 miles an hour. The Beaufort Scale of wind force states that over 63 knots is force 12, a full hurricane. Miss Procter may spend much time in the mists of her mind but she knows the weather, she used to work as a cleaner at Land's End Radio.

MISS PROCTOR

Where knowing the weather mattered.

ARTIST

The light here is incredible.

VOICE

In Priest's Cove, the artist sits working the raindrops into his foreground waves.

ARTIST

It challenges reproduction. The far west draws you in with promises of dreams come true but it can be a dark and brooding place; raw and elemental.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

"St. Just boy in fight at barn club."

VOICE

Up to Pendeen, Matthew Richards, hoovered out from his house, shelters in the dust of his garden shed with his diaries. His diaries are piles of newspapers, *The*

MISS PROCTOR

Used to be a Polish camp.

MAGGIE THOMAS

What did?

MISS PROCTOR

He kissed me, back of the bus shelter, cheeky bugger.

MAGGIE THOMAS

Who?

MISS PROCTOR

Jan Switek of course.

VOICE

In Matthew's shed, father and daughter face each other at last.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

You didn't have to come

SUSIE

I didn't want to come

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Long as you know.

SUSIE

What the doctors say?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Six months, could be a few weeks.

SUSIE

What about the chemotherapy?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Stopped that.

VOICE

In Number 69 Boscawell, Lizzie watches her daughter walk towards the shed as the kitchen window steams around her in the comfort of baking pasties.

In Tregeseal, Mrs Thomas is combing Miss Procter's hair in front of the window that overlooks the gardens. Miss Procter hums a tango as she watches Dan Thomas's strong bare arms pulling at the bracken and brambles. She remembers Jan Switek who took her to Goonhavern Banjo Band and walked her home by moonlight.

MAGGIE THOMAS

You're deep in thought Miss Procter.

MISS PROCTOR

Mrs Thomas, trouble with young people is ...

MAGGIE THOMAS

They're getting older.

MISS PROCTOR

Thass right.

MAGGIE THOMAS

An' they don't know.

MISS PROCTOR

Thass right.

MAGGIE THOMAS

'Cos they don't know we used to be young.

MISS PROCTOR

Well, you got to tell 'em anyway, in case you forget.

MAGGIE THOMAS

You're probably right, Miss Procter.

Cornishman, in date order and with his own handwritten notes running round the margins and weaving through the columns. He is reading the headlines in February 1972.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

'Hubert Eva, who emigrated to Minnesota in 1869, fought the Chippewa (Chief - Bug - a - may - gleh - shig) died aged 102 - killed by a car. ... First Helicopter night time flight to Scilly' ... Here we are ... 'Fight at Barn Club, the argument was over a girl' ... 'ess. Can't blame the man for lookin', helluva tits Lizzie got. *Get Carter* on over to Penzance, Lizzie enjoyed that, she like Michael Caine, Lizzie do.

VOICE

He places the newspaper face down and takes another as he empties the glass at his side.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

'Government declare State of Emergency. Power cuts continue; special provision to keep hospitals open. Water rationing for Land's End Peninsula and St. Just. Candles run out Isles of Scilly. Unigate St. Erth collections held up due to power cuts at farms. Mr Page of Bennetts say coal supplies dwindle'. St. Just street lighting to stay off. Television goes off early' ... wadn' altogether bad, find somethin' to do with the lights out.

VOICE

And turning the paper sideways to read his notes.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Seen *Keef Hartley Band* up Bristol, went on the *M5*, be good when it go all the way. Lizzie idn' well, being pregnant make her sick. Time to settle down, I reckon, tin or fishes?

VOICE

He searches for October, nine months on, reads one word and remembers.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Geevor. Went Trammin' with Ben Thomas. I was walkin' down this tunnel, literally six foot, just above my head, an' he suddenly says, "Stop", an' I said "Why?" He said, "Just get back out the way," an' I said, "Wass the matter?" He said, "Just move towards me now," and I moved back an' he had this crowbar an' he says, "That lump of granite above your head's bout ready to go," an' I said, "What you mean?" An' he walked up an' he just taps that rock, soft like, no pressure at all an' about three ton of granite come down. Best people to work with were the old boys, 'cos they knew. They could read rock, instinctive. He knew that rock'd go, nuthin' to see, no faults, didn't look loose. Could've been a gonner first day.

VOICE

And he reaches beneath the workbench for the whisky bottle under the coal sack when the smell of *funk* fills the shed. High up and deep down in the graveyard in Larkes Corner, Ben Thomas turns

BEN THOMAS

Didn' you learn nuthin' off me, boy?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

I'm tired. I can't go on.

BEN THOMAS

Idn' that what you said on the grizzly?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

I used to love workin' the grizzly

BEN THOMAS

Hard graft but he make a shift go.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Bloody long day you do nuthin'.

WOMAN TWO

Yes, we used to go there for wool.

WOMAN ONE

And if Mother sent me for wool, she used to send me to they for the pump.

WOMAN TWO

They used to call round here the pump, 'cos the pump was out there.

WOMAN ONE

Well, that's as far as I know.

WOMAN TWO

Well I can never remember.

WOMAN ONE

There was another one at the top of Green Lane.

WOMAN TWO

I can remember that one.

VOICE

The mist rolls back across the sea to reveal the No Go By twins on the cliffs at Botallack.

TOMMY

Stand by! ... I'm lighting the fuse now.... Blastin'!

BOTH

*Voom ... vroooooom ... vrrroooooom ..
woooooooooooooooooof!*

VOICE

And they shake and laugh and tumble over the restored *calciner* at Botallack.

TOMMY

Shitloads of dust! Shitload of dust come down!

WOMAN ONE

Out there where Hill's shop is.

WOMAN TWO

Who're you talkin' about?

WOMAN ONE

Out Bosorne Road. Mrs Eddy was a teacher and her sister used to keep a shop.

WOMAN TWO

They don't live in Bosorne Road. They lived there in Bosorne Terrace. No, the pump I went to with them there was one out Green lane opposite Lafrowda Villas, and there was one on Cape Cornwall Road which was Miss Butcher? Miss Butcher Angwin's? I don't remember no pump round here.

WOMAN ONE

No, not here, where Ed Eddy used to live.

WOMAN TWO

Well that's here at the top of Bosorne Street.

WOMAN ONE

Well, it was, we used to call that ...

WOMAN TWO

I don't remember no pump there.

WOMAN ONE

Well it was. One in the thing there, a pump ...

WOMAN TWO

What, in Argos's yard there?

WOMAN ONE

No. Where, just at the back where Hill's house was, but what we used to say home was because they used to sell very good wool to knit socks.

BEN THOMAS

Thass right.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

I'm scared, Ben.

BEN THOMAS

Thass alright, boy, we all are.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

I need the whisky, keep the phlegm down.

A squeal from BECKY, aged ten

VOICE

Sunlight filters through the window with a girlish scream.

BECKY

Get off, Tom! He'll see us!

TOMMY

He'll be pissed by now. If I catch you it means torture.

VOICE

The twins from No Go By are playing *Bad Lads' Army* between Matthew's neat rows of cabbages.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Little buggers!

VOICE

Young legs are fast and Matthew's lungs are older than his sixty-four years and he gives in to coughing. Beneath the bench, the whisky bottle lies untouched.

LIZZIE hums as she works

LIZZIE

I always say a bit of vinegar in the water an' newspaper give the best shine to glass.

VOICE

At Number 69 Boscaswell, Matthew's wife Lizzie polishes the bungalow's picture window. In her peach sitting room, dust is banished, there will be no darkness, no *funk* in her house. It's a light, bright, brittle room full of glass; the glass of the picture window with the sea view; the glass doors imprisoning the rocks in the display cabinet, the glass over the photographs; so much glass holding years of reflections. Lizzie rubs, huffing out the smears and scratches of memories: their wedding, Ben Thomas's funeral, Susie's going away ...

LIZZIE

... breakfast this morning and Susie's letter.

SUSIE

Dear Mum and Dad, I'll be arriving Penzance at 7.45. Have hired a car so see you just after eight ... Susie.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

What you go tellin' her for?

LIZZIE

She got to know.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Draggin' her back here.

LIZZIE

She want to know.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

What good'll it do?

LIZZIE

Can't do no harm.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Won't change nuthin'.

JOHN ELLIS

Will you look at that? The hill in back with that weird foreground figure an' all? That's something else.

SHOPKEEPER

I think it's exactly what it is.

JOHN ELLIS (*reading the title*)

The *Spry* ...*Spry* ...

SHOPKEEPER

Spriggan.

JOHN ELLIS

Sure looks like one mean little fella. I wouldn't want to meet him, would you? I'll take it.

VOICE

And on the granite terrace of the retirement home in Tregeseal, Miss Procter presides over *thunder and lightning*, zig-zagging the *golden syrup* across the thick cream on the fresh splits with an expert flick of her wrist. With one eye on the sky for *Weather*, she listens as tea is taken from best china cups to the accompaniment of memories.

WOMAN ONE

Tea idn' the same no more.

WOMAN TWO

Don't taste right. It's the water.

WOMAN ONE

I used to go out Bosorne Road for water. Mrs Eddy had a pump there.

WOMAN TWO

Where?

something more than this.

JOHN ELLIS

Wow, I didn't know there was so much, so much
Cornishness.

VOICE

In *Just Cornish* John Ellis studies a book in *Kernewek*.

JOHN ELLIS

You even got a language an' all. *Die-eth day*?

SHOPKEEPER

Dydh da. Good day.

JOHN ELLIS

It really is another country. I'd like one of your St. Piran
flags and a book on Cornish surnames. I believe my
ancestors may have come from here. I might even be your
Cousin Jack.

SHOPKEEPER

Well there's a thought.

JOHN ELLIS

I know that place!

VOICE

His eyes alight upon a drawing, not yet framed and lying
on the counter.

JOHN ELLIS

I was up there only this morning. How much is that
picture?

SHOPKEEPER

Well, that's new in, he fetches a good price, he do, mind
he is just a sketch ... £250?

LIZZIE

Well, she's comin' home an' that's that.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

You can't never leave things be. Allus got to interfere.

VOICE

And he coughs with embarrassment and hurt pride.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Now look what you done.

LIZZIE

What I done!

MATTHEW RICHARDS

I'm goin' up the shed.

VOICE

Lizzie polishes out the angry face. In the photograph
behind the glass a young Matthew laughs back at her,
standing proudly beside the *Ford Escort*, two year old
Susie on his shoulders.

LIZZIE

What happened? How can two people start so close an'
get so they just an irritation?

VOICE

She strokes the smiles on the faces of her family.

LIZZIE

Some proud of that old car, you were. Wouldn't've made
money like that at the fishin'. Two hundred a week, three
hundred sometimes, felt like a queen I did when we got
the bathroom put in, an' a new automatic washin'
machine on the *HP*; an' the colour *tele*, you could see
Omo washin' whiter on a colour *tele* ... a queen in a
palace an' that car, I'd like a pound for every time you
polished it, never polished no other like that first. First of

everythin' is special. Susie was only two we went up to that holiday in Devon, Westward Ho. Look at the face on her, legs still stingin' I s'pect.

VOICE

And she kisses her daughter's image to push back the wave of guilt and panic that washes in with the holiday memory.

LIZZIE

Where's she to? Oh Matt, where's she to? She was playin' here with her bucket an' spade an' now she's gone? I only looked away for a second, just a second, see if you was comin' back with the icecreams.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Calm down, she won't've gone far.

LIZZIE

But what's happened to her? Oh s'posin' the sea's took her, s'posin' she's drowned, our little girl ... Oh, Matt, I'll never forgive myself ...

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Tide's miles out, she won't be far. *Susie!*

LIZZIE

Susie! Susie!

VOICE

Dragging through the soft clumsy sand along the pebble ridge, must have been half a mile before they found her.

LIZZIE

Gigglin' to herself in that sly way she got. Wicked girl!
Wicked wicked wicked girl!

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Lizzie, stop. Stop, Lizzie. She's sorry, aren't you love?
She only run off, didn't you lovely? She's two year old at

MINER ONE

I blame the Common Market, Brussels an' all.

KID ONE

Maybe go Sixth Form.

WOMAN ONE

Time was, my father'd put a few turnips an' taties in the buggy and I'd take 'em down the shop to sell. They's ploughin in broccli now 'cos they're the wrong size. If he idn' quotas, it's global warmin', where's it gonna end?

KID TWO

Sixth Form's crap. Sick of school.

WOMAN TWO

Even if everythin' get destroyed, somethin'd grow back, surely.

KID ONE

Got more freedom Sixth form, more than school.

WOMAN ONE

They say there'll be no oil in twenty years time, what they gonna make things from then. Tin?

MINER ONE

What we gonna do?

KID TWO

I'm gettin' out.

MINER TWO

Keep our heads down I s'pose an he'll blow over.

KID TWO

What you reckon, don't fancy comin' up Bristol?

SUSIE

There's got to be somethin' better; there's got to be

WOMAN TWO

An' over Penzance, we had Finns Shoes, Cardboard Box Company, Penlee Quarry; an' Hayle 'Lectric Works, Knitting Mill over Bodriggy, Holmans, J & F Pool, John Heathcote Textiles, Rank Bush Murphy - what happened?

KID TWO

Fuck all here.

MINER TWO

All gone now.

MINER ONE

Heard say they're gonna dump nuclear waste down the shafts.

KID TWO

All I want's a set of wheels, ounce of *skunk*, good sounds, few beers

WOMAN ONE

No kiddie want to go to school in a hand-knitted jumper, all labels these days and don't save for nuthin'. I can't afford to go away on holiday no more, can you?

KID ONE

I read about how this guy invented a computer game, made a shit load of money. You can work in *IT* anywhere.

MINER TWO

I don't understand nuthin' no more. When I was twelve, I knew where I was to. TV closed down at midnight, weren't no mobile phones, no *cds*, no computers, no *CCTV*, now I'm lost but every bugger else know where I'm to.

KID TWO

So what you gonna do?

the sea side.

VOICE

Lizzie, who'd seen 100 terrible deaths in 10 short minutes, never ever let her imagination run away with her again. The polished photographs cower in their frames.

DAN THOMAS (*sings from Green Day*)

"*There's a place where adults can't be right ...*"

VOICE

Ben Thomas's grandson Dan slaloms round the shoppers in Market Square.

DAN THOMAS

Comin' up to Cedric's, chilled, cool mix,
headin' for a kick-flip. Fuck it. real fix!
Comin' out the *caff* there, mother an' the old dear,
Gotta leg it now, get away into the all clear.
It's a schoolday, not a cool day.
Back of *Semmen's* Coal truck, parked up, neat,
Front of *Warren's* bread van, moving in the street,
"What ya givin' grief for? Hit the brakes, man!
I might have been a oldie, a baby in a pram."
Jumpin' down the road, "Chill man, don't shout."
Grinding the pavement, superb!

VOICE

Dan Thomas, 14 and excluded.

MISS PROCTER

In my day he'd've gone to borstal or had the birch. We had the cane at school. Hangin' too good for 'em.

MAGGIE THOMAS

He's just a kid, Miss Procter. Tisn't a hangin' matter.

MISS PROCTER

Not yet he idn'.

MAGGIE THOMAS

Kids these days got pressures. If we'd heard from his father it'd help.

MISS PROCTER

Idn' brought up to no respect.

MISS HARGREAVES (*in Home Counties English accent*)

Literacy is the problem. I give them a thorough grounding in grammar. Lesson Plans are the answer to good teaching. Year 7 first term: verbs, tense, beginning with past and present.

VOICE

Miss Hargreaves from Sutton Surrey.

MISS HARGREAVES

Twenty-two and newly graduated. Distinction in Educational Theory & Teaching Practice.

VOICE

Danny's years of exclusion were seeded with a single thoughtless comment, a livid red word scrawled across his year 7 introductory essay ...

DAN THOMAS

17th September, 2003. My Family. My name is Daniel Thomas. I live up St. Just with my family. Mostly the work was at the mining but that've gone. My mum works as a chamber maid over to Land's End. My Dad's a miner.

MISS HARGREAVES

WAS, Daniel. My dad WAS a miner, NOT is, it should be past tense!

VOICE

Based on grammar, not on comprehension, English failed him; and being once out of step, he found himself outside.

handouts. Sick of hearin' about the mine. *Skat* the bugger down, ground's all poisoned anyway.

KID ONE

Got any fags?

MINER TWO

Can't even smoke no more, doctor say I got to lay off the fags.

KID TWO

I'm sick of being skint.

MINER TWO

They're advertising for miners in South Africa.

WOMAN ONE

They's allus been ups an' downs to trade 'ere, tin an fishes, bound to come right again.

KID ONE

What's your dad doin'?

MINER ONE

When you think they advertised for workers here in the *sixties*. Jobs going beggin' in Cornwall they said, *Ities*, Poles an all come over.

KID TWO

Went up Nottingham, work in coal, got a postcard a year ago, nuthin' since. What about yours?

WOMAN ONE

We had the Clay Works, Telephone Exchange, Land's End Radio ...

KID ONE

Still down Geevor, clearin' up - they're workin' Sat'days for nuthin'.

MINER TWO

Even you got the pumps goin', imagine the health an' safety issues.

KID TWO

Nuthin' down here.

MINER ONE

Don't bare thinkin' about.

KID ONE

Could sign on. Don't have to leave.

WOMAN ONE

It's alright for they as never worked down no mine, but I say it was a terrible place, there's men've lost limbs, gone deaf, blind, horrible injuries, an the *tysus* ...

KID TWO

Fuck that. I'm gettin' as far away from 'ere as possible, make some real money.

MINER TWO

Lovely bunch of men to work with, anybody get into difficulty, anything at all, the men come an' help you,

KID ONE

They got jobs goin' down Land's End.

MINER ONE

In the blood see, once you've worked down a mine he's in the blood, don't get that nowhere else.

KID TWO

If I'm gonna work kitchens I'll go down France or Spain, somewhere warm, better money. Better fit go fruit pickin'.

WOMAN TWO

I'm sick of it all, sick of politics and government

ARTIST

Dy'Lun, mys-Gwynngala ... An mor.

VOICE

The artist writes across the blue.

ARTIST

All morning fighting Time to catch the sparkling effervescent water at the very moment the sun dazzles through the white fog. The world is turned from dull to bright and the mind opens from introspection to the horizon of possibilities. The Sea - *An Mor*.

VOICE

The ancient language sings in our place names.

ENSEMBLE (*Each voice takes one place name, keeping a quick-fire rhythm*) Portheras, Bojewyan, Pendeen, Boscaswell, Higher, Lower; Trewellard, The Bunney, Carnyorth, Botallack, Truthwall, No Go By, Nancherrow, Tregeseal, Boscean, St. Just, Bosavern, Bosorne ...

JOHN ELLIS

Kelleenack?

ENSEMBLE (*pronouncing correctly, all together*)

Kelynack!

VOICE

In Bank Square, beneath the Memorial Clock, Mr John Ellis is lost in his map.

ENSEMBLE (*Each voice in turn, quick-fire*)

Carn Galver, Bosulow, Carn Down, Chun, Carn Bean, Woon Gumpus, Carn Kenidjack, Leswidden, Carn Goose, Lafrowda, Carn Leskys, Cot, Carn Eanes, Cuppas, Carn Polpry, Numphra, Carn Grean, Bartinney, Carn Brea, Nanquidno, Carn Aire.

VOICE

The names dance tantalising image of engine house, cromlech, wrecker, fogou and fairy.

ENSEMBLE (*Each voice in turn, quick-fire*)

Gwynver, Gribba, Brisons, Nanven, Cape, Priests, Crowns, Levant, Enys, Pendeen, Kenidjack, Portheras, Zawn ...

VOICE

Here, Miss Procter and Maggie Thomas parade across the *Plen an Gwari* on their way home.

MR ELLIS

Excuse me, ma'am. Can you advise me on a good walk? I want to take in some of your past, you know, rare historical sites an' all.

MISS PROCTER

The past you say, you want the past. You see that building there?

MR ELLIS

The *Co-op*?

MISS PROCTER

Centre of the universe. Allus has been. Used to be able to get a ticket to anywhere in the world from there, even America.

MR ELLIS

From the *Co-op*?

MISS PROCTER

Sampson's Shipping Agent was then. Used to be posters of liners there on those walls, liners goin' all over the world. Now, you want rarity, look no further than our post office, its a marvel he's there at all. The past you say - *Renshalls Hardware* have gone this past twelve month. Go back a bit further and you have the miners' cottages, aren't no

VOICE

In Boat Cove Susie stares at the small black mark on her arm.

SUSIE

Penwith Spot, our tattoo. Me, Davey James an' the others, we all got 'em, did 'em with a pin and *Indian ink* last day at school. Got pissed up, round the back of the bus shelter, faggin' up an puttin' the world to rights. Me an' Davey against the world, only he was going to get out whatever it took.

VOICE

As she stares at the sea, voices float back on the tide of her memory. People ... people talking at school, in her mother's kitchen, in the pubs.

(*The following are cross conversations between two men, two women and two teenagers.*)

MINER ONE

When the pumps closed, it was like they cut off our blood supply.

KID ONE

Idn' you goin' Sixth Form?

MINER TWO

They say you couldn't never open the mines now they're flooded.

KID TWO

Get a job up Bristol.

MINER ONE

Cost too much to get the pumps goin' again.

KID TWO

They's a wicked scene in Bristol.

fancy red coats an' run round Prussia Cove like lunatics; food's good an' they make-up girls is rich." So I rang in sick so's I could be an extra for the *tele*. Five-thirty next morning I'm there for the minibus with this actor, David he was called, he givin' it all this about what to do an' all. Interestin' it was really, an' saw that little Welsh maid, she was friendly. I thought this'll be bit of alright, then we took the North Road, "Wasson, Jim? I thought we was goin' out Stackhouse." ... "They've done that scene, they're doin' one down the mine now." ... "Down what mine?" ... "Over Geevor." An' he's laughin' an' there's my boss now tellin' all the extras how to be miners an' you there helpin' him. I was shittin' myself, hidin' up the back with this false beard on an' one of they hats with candles? "'Ere Matt," you said, "put these on, be a proper film star then no one'll recognise you." An' you give me these sunglasses. An' there's this maid sprayin' red hair spray on my face an' arms an' clothes, "Make you look a proper miner," she says. Proper miner! Ridic'lous really. You could tell most of they extras never done any manual work, specially that David. Then we was ready. We had to walk up the cliff like as if it was end of shift an' Ross Poldark was to walk past us an' speak to Zacky, they was the real actors. "Action," calls the director an' off we go an then "*CUT!*" An he shouts out, "*Matthew Richards, take off those sunglasses!*" An' the boss there lookin'! You're a bad bastard, Ben Thomas. I'd've got away with it, hadn't been for they glasses.

VOICE

And he pours whisky with no tea.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

I dunno what to say to her. Same as when she come back from university an' said she was goin' away to Indonesia an' I didn't know what to say to her. Always knew what to say before, don't know her no more; don't know myself.

miners no more, aren't no mines no more; and you notice the house on the end have a big window? That's 'cos in the past, he used to be a shop. Up to Pendeen we had a proliferation of shops, in the past: John Thomas Coal; John General Store, oil and paraffin; Bessie Matthews General Post Office; Miss Polgrain, general items; Ernie Symons, Cobbler; Mavis Trembath, kitchen window shop ... Up along's the old garage, empty; Schoolhouse gallery, we got more galleries than you can shake a stick at and what's the use I say. Paintin' is all very well but you can't eat a painted cow and you can't harvest no painted corn can'ee? Then there's Little Manor Farm, only he idn' a farm no more, he's a guest house. You want history? You don't have to go nowhere to find history, boy, we're bloody livin' in it.

VOICE

The maroon and cream bag bears down on all uncertain lost pedestrians. Maggie Thomas smiles in her wake.

MISS THOMAS

You give'n a good old dose of tongue pie there, Miss Procter.

VOICE

Mr Ellis closes the cacophonous map and heads for a place he can at least pronounce.

MR ELLIS

Cape Cornwall.

VOICE

From up in his shed, Matthew sees a lemon yellow Longships and the purple humps of Scilly behind the little pink boat in the emerald green sea of his birthday card. A card made by seven year old Susie, and preserved in *The Cornishman* for October twenty-fifth, 1979.

SUSIE

It's you, daddy, I've drawn you fishing.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

That's the best picture in the world

SUSIE

Can you hear the sea?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Can't you?

SUSIE

When you're underneath it.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Sometimes it roar just above my head.

SUSIE

Harry Edwards says Cornwall's gonna sink one day 'cos of all the tunnels, says the sea's goin' to flood in and we'll drown like Lyonesse.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Be a while afore that happen.

SUSIE

Are there tunnels under our house?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Under our house, under Harry Edward's house, under the sea, under Constable Trahair's house - put an extra charge in the other day shake his foundations.

SUSIE

That's where you got your tattoos.

VOICE

All over his chest and back the spiteful hurts and scars from flying chips of granite.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

That's right, my love.

VOICE

A moment of frustration shatters years of control and with a sweep of her arm an avalanche of broken glass and rock tumbles into the peach room; she lifts a stone.

LIZZIE

Rocks! That's all, what's the good of them!

SUSIE

That's tin, Mother, tin you got in your hand. They pick it up off the ground where I'm working.

VOICE

The mist rolls up Cape Cornwall Road, filters into Pleasant Terrace, Princess and Queen Street, West Place and Chapel Road; swirls around the *Plen an Gwari* and fills Bank, Market and Church Squares before it pushes on up Fore Street and beyond. All movement ceases and the cloud clamps down like a damp pillow suffocating the sound and colour out of life.

In Matthew's shed over to Pendeen, the contents of the biscuit tin lie strewn across the bench:

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Receipts for things I can't remember, from shops long gone. These screws come from off the motor of a vacuum cleaner, an' this old watchstrap, had that at school. Fifty blue cigarette coupons, *Embassy Red*, before smokin' damaged your health ... we was savin' for somethin', wonder what

VOICE

He laughs out loud and puts on the pair of broken sunglasses.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

I thought he'd be a laugh like. I fancied goin' in one of they old boats. Your Jim got me into it, "C'mon, Matt," he says, "We get dressed up in these

SUSIE

Just leave the meat out.

LIZZIE

Lookin' at your father's collection? Don't know what they all are, went on about 'em so often I forgot to listen, only so much you can say about a bit of old rock. I clean round 'em. Crystals, they's crystals, I know that. They're all yours any rate.

SUSIE

I don't want 'em.

LIZZIE

'Course you do. Your father's pride and joy, he saved 'em for you, very rare some of these. Delicate, got to be careful how you touch 'em. "Give 'em to Susie, it's her work, conservation an' all. Give 'em to Susie, Susie know." Well I hope you do is all ...

SUSIE

How is he?

LIZZIE

He's havin' treatment. Chemotherapy make him ill.

SUSIE

He's coughing a lot.

LIZZIE

Rocks! Just lumps of rock, bits of rock buried in his skin, his tattoos. "How it happen," I asked. "Air blast," he said. "Yes, but how'd it happen?" ... "You don't want to know", he said. But I did. I wanted to know but he wouldn't tell me, he wouldn't tell me. He told you though didn't he? He told you! I couldn't stand it, not knowin', never knowin' ... never knowin' whether he'll be back or no...

SUSIE

Finding the tin.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

You have to win it. He idn' like coal, tin go higgledy-piggledy through the rock, make you work to get'n. Sometimes he disappear then he come back somewhere else.

SUSIE

I'm going to file my card in your birthday paper ... Thursday, October twenty-fifth, 1979. There!

VOICE

The Cornishmen spring back crisply as she runs her fingers down their spines.

SUSIE

I'm gonna be a miner when I grow up.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

You should've been a boy, Susie Richards.

SUSIE

Tell about a driller dad.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Good driller can blow a square or a triangle ...

SUSIE

Or a boat.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Whatever shape you want they can blow out. Some of the holes are put in for explosives, some done just to split the rock. You was to just drill a hole an' stick in a piece of dynamite, he'll go bang but the shock be absorbed by the granite see, an' you wouldn' get nowhere. What you do is, you drill a pattern an' put the dynamite in certain holes; then, when you come to *pop* it, the empty holes'll crack -

somewhere for the shock to escape see, an' the granite'll split. Good *stoper'll* do you a perfect square, any shape you want, near as dammit anyhow. It's a real skill, can't just pop off on your own with a box of explosives and an *air-leg*.

TOMMY

Can you blow things up?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Who're you? Where's Susie?

VOICE

Ten year old eyes of the No Go By twins look on with amazement.

BECKY

You was talkin' to yourself, mister.

TOMMY

I'm Tommy and this my sister Becky.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Come thievin' again 'ave 'ee?

BECKY

Heard talkin's all. Are you pissed?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

You're robbin' me.

TOMMY

We idn' robbin'.

BECKY

Just come to see you're alright, thass all.

TOMMY

Wouldn'a seen us we was robbin'.

maroon and cream bag, and a shower of splits, cream and syrup tin rain down in front of Dan Thomas's skateboard. With youthful grace he spins and stops.

DAN THOMAS

Here, Miss Procter, let's sort you out.

MISS PROCTER

I want to catch the bus.

DAN THOMAS

So do I. Mother'll kill me I miss it.

MISS PROCTER

Your mother?

DAN THOMAS

You know, Maggie Thomas, runnin' a bit late this mornin' she is. All my fault.

MISS PROCTER

Never mind, you're here now.

VOICE

In No 69 Boscaswell, the photographs stare back at Susie.

SUSIE

A child on it's father's shoulders, a child in a school uniform; a woman in a mortar board; and the reflection of a woman in the glass doors that cover rocks in a cabinet. Which one is me? Am I here at all?

VOICE

Her mother bristles in, aproned and floured to the elbows.

LIZZIE

I'm makin' pasties, shall I just leave the meat out or shall I put cheese in for yours?

MISS PROCTER

I only need two more for the page, I'm saving for the travel rug.

SARAH

We don't do 'em no more, Miss Procter. I'm afraid this is out of date, my love.

MISS PROCTER

Well why didn't you say so? I'll get a new one dreckly.

SARAH

This here's a sheet with all our special offers.

VOICE

Clutching the sheet for goods she doesn't recognise and does not need, she crosses Market Square to *Warrens Bakery*.

Snug in The Row, Jim Eddy ferrets in his cramped and crowded kitchen.

JIM EDDY

C'mon, my beauties, c'mon ...

VOICE

He lays fresh newspaper on the concrete floor between the castle of empty tins and the leaning towers of eggbox.

JIM EDDY

There, there, no pretty little rabbit goin' to keep us in a cage.

VOICE

And his beauties skitter and squeak around him.

Miss Procter storms towards the bus stop. After years of honourable service, jarred by urban regeneration - designer-waves in the pavement outside the British Legion - the *1950s* string snaps on the handle of the

MATTHEW RICHARDS

How old you, boy?

TOMMY

Ten.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

You wasn't even born. What the heck you know?

TOMMY

I know lots ... what's an *air-leg*?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

What you gonna do when you grow up?

TOMMY

I'm gonna invent a game better than *Grand Theft Auto* and I'll make millions.

BECKY

He will, he's clever.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

What about you?

GIRL

Dunno. Be artist I s'pose.

VOICE

Susie Richards landed on time at Gatwick.

SUSIE

Got held up in Customs, missed a connection, caught a *Great Western* to the end of the line, delayed at Reading and Taunton. Fell asleep on King's Sedgemoor, and woke up at Saltash on the bridge. Isambard Kingdom Brunel's gateway to Cornwall ... Weird though, I'd forgotten how different it feels here. I need a coffee.

GUARD

You'll be lucky, miss. No, no coffee, no miss, not after Plymouth. Buffet stops at Plymouth.

VOICE

And she remembers the hundred inconveniences of living at *the end of the line*. The hired car awaits her at Penzance station and she travels the North Road to Pendeen. The rain rolls over the sea towards her and by the time she gets to Geevor the sea and cloud are one and all. Beneath the silent headgear, she rolls a cigarette and Pendeen's mournful horn brings back the voices.

WOMAN

Nobody believed it would close, everybody hung on to the belief something would happen. Five hundred of us went up London on a train. I heard David Penhaligon speak up Camborne.

DAVID PENHALIGON

You need more in an economy than just tourism, ice cream and deckchairs. Our mining industry is not a figment of the last decade or the last two decades. It has occupied Cornishmen and it has produced wealth for this century, the previous century and probably the last two thousand years; and what we're asking the government to do is to recognise the great contribution we have made for the wealth of Britain, and in this time of great trial and tribulation to come to our assistance - that's what we're asking our government to do.

MINER ONE

We asked for a loan thass all, for 20 million loan.

MINER TWO

The man from the *DTI* come down.

MINER ONE

The who?

VOICE

With a cry of joy he runs about the hill, unaware of *Golden Samphire*, *Bladderwort* or *Royal Fern*, believes himself alone in Nature's pleasures and is overseen by a circling buzzard and the artist.

ARTIST

Sketching quickly the unusual sight. *The spriggan on the hill*.

VOICE

In the *Co-Op*, Miss Procter's shopping stands to attention in the maroon and cream bag.

MISS PROCTOR

Typhoo Tea, loose leaf, *Rich Tea* biscuits, tin of *Golden Syrup*, carton of clotted cream.

SARAH

Fifty-six pence change, Miss Procter.

MISS PROCTOR

Thankyou, dear.

SARAH

That it then, my love, only they's a queue backin' up to toiletries.

MISS PROCTER

I got my book here.

VOICE

And she pulls the book with the red cover from her coat pocket.

SARAH

My Christ Almighty! *Green Shield Stamps*, my mother collected they!

reminded of her son and then the alien returns.

DAN THOMAS

No way.

MAGGIE THOMAS

You promised.

DAN THOMAS

Whatever. I'll get the bus.

MAGGIE THOMAS

Mind you do.

DAN THOMAS

I said so, didn't I?

VOICE

At Tregeseal Miss Procter waits for no one.

MISS PROCTER

Buttoned up and laced since dawn. South-easterly bring a stiff breeze. *Weather* comin' in later.

VOICE

She sets off alone to shop at the allotted time.

Mr Ellis braces himself against the sprightly south-easterly wind on Chapel Carn Brea. Beneath the pancake rocks he writes his daily postcard home.

JOHN ELLIS

The sealine embraces 29 points of the compass and from here you can see both coasts and St. Michael's Mount. There was a mediaeval chapel here on top of a great stone carn and a hermit kept a beacon to guide the fishermen. This afternoon I go to visit a fogou. Truly this place is all history.

MINER TWO

Department for Trade and Industry.

MINER ONE

In his suit.

BEN THOMAS

Shook hands he did.

MINER ONE

In his bowler hat.

DTI REP (*English accent*)

I can see all the work you men are doing and I can see no reason why the Government shouldn't invest in your mine.

WOMAN

Something will happen, they can't close Geevor, only just opened Victory shaft, Queen come down an' all; they can't close it, something'll happen.

MINER ONE

Something did happen.

BEN THOMAS

Two months later, Black Friday.

MINER TWO

Bowler hat brigade in London don't give a bugger for we down here.

MINER ONE

They're linin' their pockets, they don't bother 'bout we.

BEN THOMAS

When I come up from underground I was told by a reporter, how do you feel about the mine shutting? Well *one*, I'm sad that Geevor is having to shut and the *second one* I'm really mad, as a matter of fact I'm friggin' teasy

'cos the blokes here have worked really hard over the last five months. We've been working nine hours a day, matter fact we worked nine hours on our last day, an' all Mr Gilbert - that's our chief over there like - is askin', is 20 million pound over the next ten years an' so far all we've got from her up there, Maggie Thatcher, wait an' see, wait an' see. It's wrong, there's men here, there's families here that are gonna lose out. When the last Cornishman come out of Geevor an' if that's the last, she ought to be fuckin' hung drawn an' quartered an' dropped down that shaft. That's my opinion of her, pal.

WOMAN

Nobody believed it would close, everybody hung on to the belief something would happen. Fair number went away, some short term, some long term, strain on families that was, the families suffered.

DAN THOMAS

Miss! Miss, you alright miss?

VOICE

The face of Danny Thomas in the gloom.

SUSIE

Yes.

DAN THOMAS

Only I saw the car like. You aven't broken down nor nuthin'?

SUSIE

No.

DAN THOMAS

Oh ... alright.

SUSIE

Danny? You Danny Thomas?

MAGGIE THOMAS

Dan! Dan! You want a lift you come now, I'm late.

VOICE

There is no sound from above the polystyrene tiles.

MAGGIE THOMAS

Dan!!

VOICE

Opening her son's bedroom door, she pauses on the edge of an angry alien world.

MAGGIE THOMAS

Dan? Come on.

VOICE

A grunting sound from beneath the mound of duvet.

DAN THOMAS

Where to?

MAGGIE THOMAS

Tregeseal. You're workin' in the garden.

DAN THOMAS

No way.

MAGGIE THOMAS

You promised.

DAN THOMAS

Not today, Tuesday.

MAGGIE THOMAS

It is Tuesday, you got to be there by ten-thirty. Miss Procter want me to take her shoppin'. It's almost nine.

VOICE

For a moment, the eyes look sleepily out and she is

whisky.

TOMMY

What about explosions?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

When you was blastin', even if you was blastin' the grizzly, you had to shout you was gonna blast. Sometimes, you hear the shout, then you hear a thud, funny noise, not a crack. Nuthin' quite like it really, you feel it, not through the air, through the ground - *wooooooooooof!* - straight through your whole body. As much as it's a noise, it's a vibration but deadened by the granite. The whole ground shakes, your body shakes, then a few rocks fall, then a shit load of ... (*he remembers his young audience*) a lot of dust fall, an' you got to keep back out of the way for a bit while it clear. Then you go an' see what damage you done. An' he's heavy work, everythin' heavy, no bits of old wood from *B&Q*, heavy wood, and steel, steel girders, an' you movin' it all in tight spaces, gettin' it in the cage an' down the levels. (*He is becoming excited*) Three hundred fathoms, thirty-seven degrees centigrade, standin' on pegs four inches wide, helluva drop beneath, hundredweight an' a half of drill above your head, dust in your eyes, sweatin' buckets, lose a stone an' a half easy, riddled in cramp. Sometimes it's freezin' cold with water up to your knees, other times you have to stop to pour the sweat out of your boots. But a mine without the men, you're right, he idn' no place at all, he's an empty place.

BECKY

Any biscuits in that tin?

VOICE

At 102 Trewellard, Maggie Thomas yawns through instant coffee and *Radio Cornwall* and shouts up to her son.

DAN THOMAS

Yes.

SUSIE

It's Susie, Susie Richards, I knew your dad and mum, you wouldn't remember. You must've been about five last time I saw you.

DAN THOMAS

Your old man work with my grandad?

SUSIE

Yes. Matthew Richards. How's your dad? Didn't he go up north to work?

DAN THOMAS

Coalmines. Dunno, haven't seen him in years, not since 2000 ...

SUSIE

Your mum?

DAN THOMAS

She look after old people.

SUSIE

What you doin' here? You work here?

DAN THOMAS

You'd laugh.

SUSIE

Wouldn't.

DAN THOMAS

I kind of guard it.

SUSIE

Guard it?

DAN THOMAS

Don't make sense do it. I just come up here's all.

SUSIE

You're soaked. You want a lift home?

DAN THOMAS

Don't s'pose you're goin' up London?

SUSIE

Just come down.

DAN THOMAS

Have to be home then.

VOICE

In *The Radjel, The North, The King's Arms, Commercial, Wellington and Star*; copies of miners and fishermen look out from the walls and in from the bar. Jim Eddy sits in his chair in *The Miner's*.

JIM EDDY

Sixty-five years of age an' still gettin' into 32 inch *Levis*. Had a quiff since 1958.

PHYLLIS JAMES

Sharp-faced little man, he is, like his ferrets.

VOICE

Barmaid Phyllis James paints portraits in her head which are never hung in galleries.

PHYLLIS JAMES

He sit there, stiff backed, both feet on the floor, don't never cross his legs, white socks, spit and polish shoes, elbow on the mantel, pint of best, line of roll ups at the ready. Wears his shirt cuff back over denim jacket sleeve to show gold identity bracelet and signet ring. Saw him wearing glasses once to read a can of processed peas in the *Co-op*. Got eyes like periwinkles, allus smilin'.

TOMMY

Was you a miner?

BECKY (*correcting her brother*)

Were you a miner?

TOMMY

Well *were* ee?

VOICE

Matthew stares at fresh-faced, scrubbed and out before breakfast No Go By twins.

BECKY

Tommy went down Geevor with the school.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Like it did you?

TOMMY

What's to like? Nuthin' goin' on.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

You need to go down a workin' mine. When he's empty there's no noises, no life.

TOMMY

What sort of noises?

MATTHEW RICHARDS

There's a particular sound to a mine, like there's a smell. You can hear talkin' from hundred yards down the track, even if you can't see for dust, you can hear. You might be hearin' voices from the next level, sound carrying from the tunnel above you.

MATTHEW coughs

VOICE

The biscuit tin remains unopened and he pours more

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Said you shouldn't've stood on the bar.

BEN THOMAS

I shouldn't've stood on the bar.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Said we was all responsible for our own safety.

BEN THOMAS

We was. I took a risk.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Why?

(Silence)

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Why?

VOICE

No sound but his own coughing, and he adds another whisky to his tea.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Memories! - Wass the good of 'em? Lizzie's right, idn' no good holdin' on to the past, should burn all this, all this rubbish ...

VOICE

The *1980s* are scooped up and carried between the rows of cabbage to the incinerator; back in the shed, he reaches for the biscuit tin that keeps the matches dry.

TOMMY

Mister ...

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Get out of 'ere!

VOICE

And she draws it all in her mind as she draws the pints.

PHYLLIS JAMES

Wasson then, Ferret?

JIM EDDY

This here's the thing - eat his way through a rabbit get out a hole, eat his way through anything.

PHYLLIS JAMES

What do?

JIM EDDY

Ferret. I had one once got kicked by a rabbit, got an abscess, give'n antibiotics - kidneys failed, then lungs collapsed. Now then, Shag Murley had a ferret, only ferret I've ever seen had muscle definition in his back legs.

Had a *jill* off Shag, tame as you like, just me an' her. Had her round my neck, smoothin' her, took her up girlfriend's house. She only had the top of my finger off, jealous see - hurt like hell for two weeks, couldn't use'n, couldn't do a thing. Shag Murley's ferret.

VOICE

As she wipes the bar, Phyllis Rowe draws a fluffy grey rabbit hand in hand with a sharp-faced, neatly-dressed ferrety little man.

Two figures are framed in the electric lamplight behind the picture window at Boscaswell. Father and daughter cannot break the space between them.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Sent for reinforcements 'ave she?

SUSIE

Dad.

LIZZIE

Here we are, biscuits too, your favourite, Susie love, *garibaldi*? You do still like 'em. Come on, sit down, Susie.

VOICE

They sit in a distorted past unable to meet across the battlefield of tea and biscuits.

LIZZIE

It's so lovely in here in the evening. Your father spend all his time up the shed, despite we had this window put in.

SUSIE

No milk for me.

LIZZIE

Live in the past he do - should take a match to all they old papers, burn the lot.

VOICE

A volley of china rattles, clatters and explodes from her armoury of cups and saucers.

LIZZIE

Here we are. All together. Susie home at last eh, love.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

I can still see. I 'aven't lost my senses.

MATTHEW coughs

LIZZIE

And the dust up there, idn' no good for his chest. Drink up, Susie, plenty more in the pot. Not thirsty love?

SUSIE

I don't take milk.

... padding to the bathroom, pause, water thundering through the cistern, hum of electric razor ... *one, two, three* (PAUSE) *five, six, seven* steps to the bottom of the stairs ... kettle boiling ... stirring three spoons of sugar in his thick red tea ... scrape of the chair while he read the paper, door latch, then the gate ... only he never coughed so much before.

VOICE

Matthew, in his shed by seven for the day shift, pours a cup of tea and whisky and goes down to the deep levels in his past.

MATTHEW RICHARDS

Nineteenth, right under, couple thousand feet ... no different from lookin' up at the kitchen ceiling, never stopped to think there's thousands of feet of granite on top of you, pressing down ... pressing down ...

VOICE

He looks for comfort in his diaries, reads ...

MATTHEW RICHARDS

'Gus Honeybun opens fete.'

VOICE

And sees ...

MATTHEW RICHARDS

'Fifty-five year old miner dies in a fall of ground on the 10th level.'

You were the one told me, that's when it get dangerous you said, might be one little small pebble keepin' tons of rock from falling down a box hole. How many times you made me put an extra length of wood on a charge, just to make sure? They said you should've been roped up.

BEN THOMAS

I should've been roped up.

MATTHEW RICHARDS
Thass good, love.

VOICE
He concentrates on his line; the dancing mackerel glint as they try to swim in the unfamiliar element of air.

MATTHEW RICHARDS
Where to?

SUSIE
Indonesia.

VOICE
He swallows the hook of pain.

SUSIE
Forestry Commission want people to help deliver a conservation programme for *World Wide Ores*.

VOICE
No sound save the mackerel, gasping and flopping in the bucket in their desperate bid for life.

SUSIE
There's nothing here, Dad. Cornwall's finished.

VOICE
And a terrible dream of drowning and her mother's face.

LIZZIE
Wicked wicked wicked girl!

VOICE
At last the hawk moths settle as daylight creeps across the restless covers and she listens to the familiar sounds of her father's morning ritual.

SUSIE (*Throughout the following, MATTHEW coughs sporadically*)

LIZZIE
Not take milk. Should've said.

MATTHEW RICHARDS
She did.

LIZZIE
You an' your fads. No wonder she's so thin, eh? Doesn't she look thin to you, Matt? Still a vegetarian?

SUSIE
Yes.

LIZZIE
I got some nut cutlets from *Tesco*, they got good organic section, have them for tea tomorrow, or could have fish an' chips, van come Tuesdays.

SUSIE
Nut cutlets be fine.

LIZZIE
An' me and your Dad can have chops. Be nice eating together, I could do 'em now, if you're hungry.

SUSIE
No thanks. I'm fine.

LIZZIE
He's open twenty-four hours, *Tesco* is. Always get more. Here, give us your cup, Susie, I'll pour another, one without milk.

SUSIE
It's okay, I had coffee on the train.

LIZZIE
Won't take a minute, really. I'll just get rid of this.

SUSIE
Mother don't fuss!

MATTHEW RICHARDS
For God's sake!

MATTHEW coughs

VOICE
The cough, charged deep within his chest explodes, the tremour shakes his hand. The tea soaks into the peach carpet in diversionary stain.

SUSIE
Dad?

LIZZIE
It's the chemotherapy. *Sssh*, Matt, relax, bend forward and try to breathe even, like the doctor say. I got your tablets here. It's the excitement, that's what 'tis. Havin' Susie here an' all, bit too much for you. Susie, fetch a glass of water. That's it, lovely, small breaths, that's it, that's right, have a tablet and time for bed eh?

VOICE
An uneasy truce is built on morphine.

In her room in Tregeseal Retirement Home for the elderly, Miss Procter, sleepless on the waves of *Sailing By* and the *World Service*, remembers the shops she forgot.

MISS PROCTER
John Tresize Bike shop; Dicky Jordan, Carpenter; Willie Prowse, coal ... and the handcarts, *Pulcher! Pulchur! Mackrul!*

VOICE
And then she waits with expectation as she does every Friday night for ...

MISS PROCTER
Billy Shithouse. One of the council collectors, come round 12 o'clock Friday night to empty the outdoor toilets. Had a lovely smile on him, allus look up an' wave. Stopped comin' in 1959 after watermain put in.

VOICE
Up No Go By, deep down beneath his duvet, Tommy writes a list of titles for his game:

TOMMY
Labyrinth, Big Bang, Underground ...

VOICE
And in 102, Trewellard, Maggie Thomas sighs relief at last as she hears the front door close behind her son Dan at half past two.

Interval

VOICE
Dawn comes late to St. Just, sliding over Carn Galver as the badger trots home in Botallack, and turning the dew into a thousand golden diamonds on the airfield at Kelynack. The air is light and dancing; the sea is bardic blue, the world is raw and ready for living.

All night long, great hawk moths of memories flickered in Susie's wakeful brain: fishing with her dad in Danny's father's boat.

MATTHEW RICHARDS
You take the helm now, lover.

SUSIE
Dad, I been offered a job.