

Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)

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Critical Analysis of the Play *Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)*

A: Introduction: The revised play in context

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The play *How Doggie Dough Dough Saved My Life* was submitted as my MPhil research thesis in September 2008. Following comments from both the external and internal examiners it was requested that the thesis be revised and resubmitted. The reworked play, now titled *Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)*, is the result of this process.

Both examiners recommended that the original play needed major redevelopment work and outlined some of the areas where this would be of benefit. In taking on board these comments in a constructive manner this revised thesis attempts to demonstrate how their notes have been taken very seriously and rather than presenting a superficial rewrite, the play has been reworked and revised by going back to first principles.

However, although revised, rewritten and rebuilt, the play retains central elements, scenes and ideas from the original and in this sense is not a brand new play, but *Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)* is certainly far removed from *How Doggie Dough Dough Saved My Life*

This essay therefore details the rewriting and the revision of *How Doggie Dough Dough Saved My Life* to redevelop it into *Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)* (henceforth abbreviated to *Rocks!*). Another focus of the essay is a reflection on, and critical analysis of, issues connected to this aspect of playwriting – about what changed and what remained the same, and why, during this rewriting and revision process.

One element that remains consistent between *How Doggie Dough Dough Saved My Life* (henceforth abbreviated to DDD) and *Rocks!* is the desire to use the MPhil experience to not only study playwriting more generally, but to practice writing comedy drama, so *Rocks!* is again presented as a comedy drama. To this end the essay analyses the play within the broader context of comedy drama as well as investigating dramaturgical, genre, and structural issues through considering characterization, stylized elements, and the rewriting of different drafts.

While DDD was a comedy drama about dogs, a dog bakery, depression and about Alan, a man in his 40s, trying to adapt to a world that seems not to need him, *Rocks!* is a character-driven comedy drama about people abruptly shaken out of their taken-for-granted routines and forced to consider what and whom they really care about in their lives. It is a play about the existential clash between permanence and impermanence, people literally stuck between a rock and a hard place. The two Act play finds Mark, in his mid to late 40s, at the epicenter of change when his safe, predictable life routine is shattered as his relationship with his wife Molly collapses and his boss Derek sacks him. He appears to find redemption in a new relationship with Susan who is constructing a Rock Peace Garden, a 'mini-Grand Canyon', as a monument to her late husband. All four characters confront their personal inertia and isolation to 'get a grip' on their lives.

To help address issues of stronger characterization the revised play pivots around just four characters and these interact more fully with each other than in DDD: the aim being to present more rounded and emotionally complex characters. But in revising DDD to

Rocks! the principle characters have been kept consistent. Thus Alan becomes Mark Morris (who remains a university policy researcher), Maggie (Alan's wife in DDD) becomes Molly (Mark's wife, also still working as a retail manager), Alicia in DDD (the owner of the dog bakery) becomes Susan in *Rocks!* who is building the Rock Peace Garden. Alan's university boss Professor James Luckhurst, now becomes Derek and remains a professor and head of department.

The core idea of the contrast between 'two world's' between Act 1 and Act 2 has been retained. But in Act 2 of *Rocks!* rather than the action being in a dog bakery as in DDD the action takes place within the Rock Peace Garden. Thus a critical change has been that the use of the dog bakery in DDD and of dogs as a central metaphor has been dropped – that is, no more dogs - and the new central metaphor of the Rock Peace Garden been introduced to make the play more playable.

In addition, a key theme from DDD has been revised and redeveloped. In DDD the issue of 'depression' was explored, with hindsight not very successfully, and part of the problem in writing about this was distinguishing between severe depression and milder forms of the condition that impacts people's judgment. In researching this aspect for *Rocks!* the work of Kathleen Norris was discovered and her book *Acedia & Me* about the condition of 'acedia' – which she defines as the "absence or lack of care", and often mistaken for 'depression' – became critically important to reworking the play (this aspect is explained in more detail below). Acedia or the inability to 'care' is the central dramatic theme of *Rocks!* and the play is about the human consequences of acedia.

Thus the major areas of redevelopment and difference between DDD and *Rocks!* is that the revised play is more focused, has a simpler tone, much stronger themes and characterization, and a more playable premise in the stylized element of the Rock Peace Garden.

B. Reworking the central themes to turn DDD into *Rocks!* and stylized elements in *Rocks!*

The revised play has a much more focused concept of what it is about – its central theme and sub-themes are more clearly defined. Going back to the original ideas that led to DDD, one of these was writing a play about a person who is depressed and the idea that the depressed person sees his or her world differently than when not depressed (hence the success of cognitive psychotherapy in treating depression by helping patients learn to ‘re-think’ or deal with their thoughts differently). This was then turned into the challenge: could I write a comedy about depression. Clearly with DDD the answer became no – the idea did not work to sustain a full-length play and the metaphor of dogs and the dog bakery did not deliver (the idea of ‘dogs’ coming from the common reference to depression as “the black dog”, a phrase attributed to Winston Churchill).

While working on how to revise and redevelop DDD I came across the work of Kathleen Norris and her 2008 book *Acedia & Me: A Marriage, Monks, and A Writer’s Life* which gave me the spark and the substance to rework the central theme of DDD into what

became *Rocks!*. In her book – much of it autobiographical and grounded in her spiritual journey (as a Christian) – she revives and details the long-forgotten concept of acedia, which she says is often (incorrectly) mistaken for depression, but she cautions the condition of acedia is hard to pin down. ‘Acedia’, which in Greek means “the absence or lack of care”, she says has been hard to define adequately in English. Her research shows ‘acedia’ has been described as a large number of things, for example, as: heedlessness, torpor, a non-caring state, spiritual torpor and apathy, the deadly sin of sloth, a mental syndrome the chief features of which are listlessness, carelessness and apathy. As Norris writes: “Trying to talk about acedia is like trying to define a negative or grab a shadow” (p. 44).

I have taken acedia in its original meaning as described by Norris as an “absence or lack of care”. She traces the origins of the concept to a group of 4th century Christian monks who went to live in the desert to follow their devotions in isolation and the play draws upon this part of Norris’s work directly in the videoblogs given by Mark (see below) as a dramatic means to give the narrative twists and tease the audience. The play’s central theme thus questions our ability to care and also how we become numbed to ‘caring’ in the sense it is hard to care.

In one passage Norris equates acedia with consumer culture writing that we seek to keep our options open so we are always free to grab the “new improved model when it appears” (p.25). Thus, she argues, it is not easy for us to recognize acedia in ourselves as it prompts us to see obligations to family, friends, and colleagues as impediments to that

freedom. She goes on: "...acedia's genius is to seize us precisely where our hope lies, to tear away at the heart of who we are and mock that which sustains us" (p.44). This is exactly the premise of *Rocks!* – Mark's hope is torn away, his core is exposed and as a comedy drama Mark's acedia is subject to mockery, quite cruelly at times.

A sub-theme developed in *Rocks!*, but not present in DDD, is a questioning of what is true or how, depending on your point of view, the same events can be seen in very different ways – building on the idea that the depressed person sees the same event very differently from their non-depressed self. This idea was written into a very early version of DDD, but later edited out and did not appear in the submitted thesis. In *Rocks!* this idea is re-introduced but through the device of the videoblog. The videoblog concept was, in part also inspired by Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1944) and the use by Williams of the narrator's monologues by the character Tom Wingfield before certain scenes (although *Rocks!* is not meant to be a 'memory play'). Like *The Glass Menagerie* Mark's videoblogs question the illusion that has the appearance of truth.

In 2008, unconnected to the play, I spent a lot of time researching the world of blogs (the blogosphere) and was surprised to find that among much dreadful content, there is a new media world out there that is savvy, informed, interesting, witty, well written and popular, with some blogs commanding massive audiences running into tens of thousands of regular subscribers. This new media is providing a commentary and insight that is often absent from traditional media or poorly covered. Related to this, I spend a lot of time being exposed to North American media and now find it hard to trust any source as

accurate or factual – there is an astonishing amount of lies, misinformation, factual distortion, and special interest pleading (often disguised) to the extent it feels challenging to understand what is correct. For example, as I write this essay the Copenhagen climate summit approaches and this is a case in point with the tactics of ‘climate change deniers’ or scandal over the leaked emails from the University of East Anglia climate scientists. I used these insights from the blogosphere to create the videoblogs in *Rocks!* both to add confusion to the narrative, but also as an additional source of insight or factual information to the unfolding narrative to reflect how the new media world is creating a ‘shadow’ commentary to mainstream narratives. It is also a way to add an extra comedic edge to the play.

The final sub-theme to the revised play is replacing the dogs/dog bakery ‘other world’ metaphor with the Rock Peace Garden and rocks: they are now the central stylized elements of the play. I started thinking about rocks while building a patio in my small back garden. Rocks seemed like the perfect metaphor for what I was trying to say especially around the notion of acedia as well as providing an ‘other world’ or dramatic space. Who cares about rocks? – we are surrounded by rock, but my skim of basic geology books on rocks proved that we owe a great deal to our rocky world – some of which are described by Susan as the play unfolds (I used Redfern, 2003, Eicher, 1976 and Lawton et al, 1997 for the factual information about rocks used in Susan’s dialogue). The rocks metaphor also fits well with the idea of the fragility of our lives – a point of the play is that Mark’s supposedly secure, taken-for-granted, ‘rock solid’ world (like so many of our lives) can quite quickly and shockingly fall apart in many different ways. The

geology of rocks shows quite clearly that rocks, far from their image of permanence are, over a long timeframe, in a constant state of flux and change, most dramatically in earthquakes or volcanoes (which spew up liquid rock). So I started to see the play as a series of tectonic plates rubbing up against each other (each scene is a clashing tectonic plate) until the fault line gives and there is the final eruption in Act 2, scene 7, between Mark and Susan as rocks are smashed in the Rock Peace Garden.

C. Resisting comedy: from *Eating Dirt* and *How Doggie Dough Dough Saved My Life to Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)*

Layered on and around these themes and the play's character journeys (see below) is the desire to present all this as comedy drama. But the writing task of making comedy has been challenging, especially over the discipline of a full-length play. To this end this section recaps the journey to the writing of *Rocks!* as it applies to comedy. The writing of DDD did not begin until the end of December 2007. Between October 2007 and December 24th 2007 a different play, called *Eating Dirt*, was to be the thesis submission. *Eating Dirt* is a serious 'ideas' play about corporate social responsibility in the food industry, but after struggling to find a way to complete the play within the time frame of the course it was put aside to concentrate on a new play that would enable the craft of writing comedy drama to be explored: the result was the play *How Doggie Dough Dough Saved My Life*. However the experience of working on *Eating Dirt* is important since it provoked the need to write DDD and hence *Rocks!*

During the first semester of the course (October-December 2007) the focus was on the development of *Eating Dirt*. The initial story was set inside the offices of an unspecified food conglomerate. The play's theme poses the question: can you both make money and save the planet? In the play the character of the company's chief executive officer (CEO) David Obslum decides to take his company 'green'. But CEO in waiting, and Obslum protégé, Matt Gunnery thinks this is leading the company to disaster. In the ensuing power struggle the battle between corporate ethics and personal ethics co-mingle in an escalating power struggle for corporate and personal survival.

The 'style' of the play is influenced by the work of playwrights such as David Hare, David Edgar, and Bertolt Brecht, as well as writers using the docu-drama format. Plays studied to this end were David Edgar's *The Prisoners Dilemma* (2001), *Pentecost* (1994), *Destiny* (1976), David Hare's *The Absence of War* (1993) and *Racing Demon* (1990), and Brecht's *Life of Galileo* (1937-39), and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941). Also important was Fraser Grace's play *Breakfast With Mugabe* (2005) that was read as a contemporary model of how to write about 'power' relationships between characters. David Edgar's play *Pentecost* (1994) was of particular influence in the way he uses the painting as a device for driving the narrative of the play and as a unifying theme – and this influenced the notion of a 'dog bakery' in DDD and the 'Rock Peace Garden' in *Rocks!* as a device to drive narrative and plot.

Eating Dirt started to evolve into a complex and large play and it was found increasingly difficult to develop the full play within the time frame of the course. But, and as

important, during the first semester a bigger writing issue emerged – it was increasingly felt writing *Eating Dirt* was a play that ‘ought’ to be written because of my previous work experience which conflicted with a personal ambition to write comedy drama, especially over the discipline of a full-length play, and also to explore more personally-based themes than that of the life of a corporation.

Playwright Denis Kelly in his course seminar on November 19th 2007 advised the class to “provoke” themselves and consider what it is they as an individual really want to write about, although he cautioned that it is hard to find the answer to this question. In addition, course supervisors and experienced playwrights Steve Waters and Lin Coghlan urged the class to, in effect, write what comes from inside and see what is there. It was reflecting on the advice and experience of professional playwrights such as these that helped me decide to change track and try and write on more personal themes and to attempt comedy drama. A new play was written from ‘inside’ and this is how *Rocks!*, via *How Doggie Dough Dough Saved My Life*, emerged.

But what is comedy drama? In examining the process of writing from October 2007-June 2008 a consistent challenge was structure and genre in comedy. By deciding to write comedy drama certain dramaturgical, genre and structural elements in playwriting are being assumed (Downs and Russin, 2004). But what are these elements and what is comedy drama even? Andrew Stott in his book *Comedy* writes that providing a simple formula to answer the question ‘what is comedy’ is not easy. But he goes on to say that

when applied to drama, comedy is seen as using ‘stock’ character types in a scenario where some kind of problem must be resolved (Stott 2005).

Leggatt, in reviewing five centuries of English stage comedy, confirms this ‘formula’, noting that the comedy genre over this period has been a relatively stable and consistent genre, not least that comedies end happily and often result in marriage or a celebration (Leggatt, 1998). However, despite the consistency of the comedy genre on the English stage, both Leggatt and Stott point out comedy stretches across many forms - for example, farce, satire, the comedy of manners, slapstick, the sitcom, and so on. Stott therefore suggests comedy is as much a tonal quality as a structural one.

But there are some common elements or themes that persist in stage comedy. For example, much traditional comedy is plot-driven as it moves towards resolution (Stott, 2005, Leggatt 1998). Then there are other well trodden comedy paths such as various forms of inversion (‘the world-turned up-side-down’), foolishness (especially the character of ‘the fool’), intellectual myopia, a ‘fish out of water’, different identities and indeed mistaken identities assumed by ‘tricksters’ as witnessed in two classic comedies which are among plays influencing my desire to write comedy drama, namely Gogol’s *The Government Inspector* (1836) and Dario Fo’s *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (1970). Thus for Stott comedy is: “...a term that can refer equally to a genre, a tone, and a series of effects that manifest themselves in diverse environments” (2005, p.3).

However, comedy must also provoke laughter and perhaps because of this Stott cautions:

“Comedy is often perceived as ephemeral and *lacking intellectual weight*, or, in the process of those who claim that explaining a joke kills it or that things are ‘just’ for laughs, is seen as an aspect of communication that is emphatically closed to study and interrogation” (*emphasis added*, p.18, 2005).

In the context of this analysis *Rocks!* is not a traditional theatre comedy – there is no happy ending with a marriage (there was in DDD), the redeveloped ending in *Rocks!* darkens as Mark comes to realize just how much he cares about certain aspects of his life and his character’s ‘happiness’ is left unresolved even though he achieves a level of personal insight. For Molly and Derek, and for Susan there are happier resolutions: they appear to get what they want, the former wanting children, and Susan through some kind of acceptance and moving on from her grief over the death of her husband through building the Rock Peace Garden.

Mark, however, is written to perform certain comedic stereotypes throughout the play: he is made to look a fool (‘pathetic’ in his eyes), and his world is ‘turned upside down’.

Rocks! also sets up scenes to maximize more slapstick style comedy such the use of Happy the teddy bear, echoing the dramatic use of Nibbles the hamster in Yasmin Reza’s award-winning comedy the *God of Carnage* (2008) or having Mark ‘stuck’ on the rock face at the start of Act 2 (scene 1) and living in a ‘cave’ as a modern ‘caveman’.

The comedic tone is also developed through scenes that are more satire, such as Act 1 scene 3, when Mark has his meeting with his boss Derek and finds out his contract is not

being renewed. While *Rocks!* is fiction, this scene draws on the premise ‘write what you know’. Coming late in life to playwriting I have years of experience working in Universities and have held a number of fixed term research contracts (in the UK, at the University of Bradford, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of Reading, and Thames Valley University).

While the scene takes liberties with the ordering of the facts for dramatic purposes, everything that Derek says in that scene has either been said to me personally while employed as a contract researcher or to people I have known in a similar position. Of course, it is an individual experience and this depends on who and where they work and the type of work being done. All my work experience has been as a social scientist in the policy field and working on contemporary problems for government departments, industry or Non Governmental Organizations. My work, by its nature, has been subject to political stresses and the ugly world of entrenched interests and the perspectives of the academy have often been in conflict with these. For example, working in one institution I was told to my face that the sort of work I did was indeed ‘lightweight’ because it did not involve publishing in the ‘right’ journals – Derek in the scene taunts Mark that his work is also ‘lightweight’. I was working in Universities where I witnessed the ‘secret’ of some departments ‘poaching’ staff from other Universities to beef up their Research Assessment Exercise rankings and Derek’s boasting of building his academic empire through ‘poaching’ researchers reflects this experience. As a contract researcher I have experienced being told first hand there is no more money to continue my work (it is a sobering experience to be a ‘world expert’ on a Friday and then unemployed on the

Monday!) as well as being at the coalface of bringing money into Universities through winning research contracts. This scene is not a case of 'revenge is sweet' more like having some satiric fun and making Mark feel a bit what I remember once feeling.

D. Questions of Genre and structure: From DDD to *Rocks!*

DDD became 'locked' in a particular genre-type, the 'romantic comedy'. McDonald defines a romantic comedy having as its central narrative motor: "...a quest for love, which portrays this quest in a light-hearted way and almost always to a successful conclusion" (McDonald, 2007, p.9). In revising *Rocks!* the play no longer conforms to these genre-type formulae and is not being wedded to the stylistic conventions of the traditional 'romantic comedy' genre-type. Thus *Rocks!* moves to become a play with a comedic 'tone' (Stott, 2005), while DDD tried to work within a genre-type (the 'romantic comedy'). *Rocks!*, therefore, still falls within the conventions of a broader 'genre', that of comedy drama and aims to create a set of expectations for an audience related to comedy. As a comedy drama *Rocks!* sets out to play the comedy card wherever possible, but as character and situation allow, thus deliberately exploiting the possibilities presented by the term 'comedy-drama'. For example, in Act 1, scene 5, in which Molly spells out to Mark that she is leaving him and off to the Amazon with Derek the comedic misery for Mark is deliberately piled on layer by layer.

In reworking the play so its comedy is character and situation driven (rather than conforming to a genre-type) *Rocks!* is more focused on the emotional development of

each character. For example, *Rocks!* has tightened its focus on Mark's 'rite of passage' to make his character more complex. As David Edgar said in his course seminar on genre (October 8th 2007), the place where the 'rites of passage' takes place is important, especially in comedy, and that this takes characters to a "difficult place" to use his phrase. The 'difficult place' in *Rocks!* is two-fold. Firstly, is the physical place: taking Mark into the Rock Peace Garden to live and, secondly, in this revised version, the 'difficult place' also becomes Mark's emotional life in the Rock Peace Garden.

Rocks!, like DDD, is structured very precisely around the concepts of an Ordinary World and a Special World to use Vogler's terms (Vogler, 2007). Act 1 of *Rocks!* (as in DDD) is all about establishing the Ordinary World, in this case Mark's routines and everyday life and how he then relates to people in this life. Both the characters of Molly and Derek act to show Mark's Ordinary World collapsing. Act 2, with the help of Susan, sees Mark cross a threshold into the Special World of the Rock Peace Garden. From the start both *Rocks!* and DDD were conceived as being set in and structured around 'two worlds' - or in dramaturgical terms 'theatrical spaces'.

E. 'Mark' as central character and the other characters

On reflection, the characters in DDD were poorly grounded in a 'real world' and often 'bumped' into each other rather than interacting as more complex, emotionally developed people. One of the major revisions for *Rocks!* has been limiting the play's characters to just four (eliminating the 'one-dimensional' or 'stock characters' (Leggatt, 1998) that

appeared at the start of Act 2 of DDD) and building the relationships between these four more fully.

While Mark remains the 'hero' his journey is a lot less black and white and more troubled and while coming to a major realization about himself in Act 2, scene 7, we do not see where this might lead him (no 'happy ending' of the romantic comedy genre): he is left alone piling rocks in the Rock Peace Garden, while Molly, Derek and Susan get on with their lives. The three remaining characters have a much more important role in moving Mark along in his journey and they are more consistent in pursuing their own personal cares. Molly for example is not reconciled with Mark (Alan reconciled with Maggie in DDD) because she fulfils her wish for children through a relationship with Derek. Derek is a power broker and has a successful career, but still has something missing in his life that he remedies through becoming a father with a younger woman (Molly).

Both Molly and Derek influence the character of Mark throughout the play driving his pain and serve to act as a constant spur for him to consider what it is he cares about.

Mark's relationship with Susan is reworked from DDD – it is still the problem of unrequited love from Mark's perspective, but also for Mark trying to use Susan so he can sink back into his old routines similar to the 'comfort' he found in plodding along with Molly.

Susan's character has a new dimension in that she is working through her grief for the loss of her husband Jonathan who, we learn, died in an accident; he is her inspiration to

build the Rock Peace Garden, a monument to his memory, but serves equally to give meaning to Susan's life and a place to transfer her 'caring' role. She is distracted from this new mission through being attracted to Mark (who appears to become a surrogate for Jonathan to Susan), but she is unable to develop the relationship any further following what is revealed as a foolish (from her perspective) one night stand with Mark. Her behaviour in different scenes corresponds to the so-called five stages of grief (denial; anger; bargaining; depression; acceptance) proposed by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*. Thus in Act 1, scene 7, Susan is fairly upbeat in her interaction with Mark and uses her 'bargaining' phase to persuade him to come work at the Rock Peace Garden. In Act 2, scene 1, we see her in an 'anger' phase in her dealing with Mark, while in the climatic Act 2, scene 7 we see a struggle through to a type of 'acceptance'.

The characters all interact in a 'real world' that is painted as one of routine and repetition. This 'real world' is grounded in what for many people heading towards their 50s as a next major birthday, is the dawning realization they have been practicing the same routines for 15+ years. For many people this is the grind of working year after year, often in the same industry or sector, which despite advancement often becomes something of a habit or has lost its initial spark. Against this is the task of trying to balance family life with work demands and often the desire to achieve personal goals, as well as loving and meaningful relationships. It is also at this age that some people realize they are not achieving their life's dreams as they face their own mortalities (the so-called mid-life crisis).

This is the background reality of the world in *Rocks!* and in different ways each character, consciously or otherwise, is fighting against this, overcome in this instance by the challenge of fighting ‘acedia’ – Mark by fooling himself he can rise above it all because he doesn’t ‘care’, Molly and Derek by fulfilling themselves through parenthood, and Susan by devoting her life to building a monument to a memory of a past love. Only Mark, through the videoblogs has come to an understanding that he is gripped by ‘acedia’ yet even now he uses this, for a time, as an excuse, rather than a cure, for his behaviours.

Mark’s character also tries to demonstrate David Edgar’s ‘three natures’ of character that he outlined in his seminar of October 8th 2007. The three ‘natures’ described by Edgar are, first, characters have a role in life (their ‘office’), second, they have a role as hero, villain, helper etc, and third, their individual character as a person. As Edgar pointed out in what he calls ‘great drama’, there is much ‘conflict’ between these three natures. Thus in Act 1 we confront Mark in his currently chosen ‘role in life’ – a role that fast becomes unsustainable. In Act 2 he is more the ‘helper’, albeit reluctantly, so we are not quite sure if he is hero or villain. Finally as he breaks down into smashing the rocks of the Rock Peace Garden in Act 2, scene 7, we can finally see him as a suffering individual in his state of ‘acedia’ and his true character or nature as a ‘caring person’. Thus the emphasis on the Edgar ‘natures’ of Mark’s character rise and fall at different points throughout the play’s development.

F. Rewrite: Catalysts and Provocation

The revising and rewriting of DDD to develop it into *Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)* was carried out in my own time at different stages during 2009. During most of this period I was working full-time outside of a theatre and drama environment.

During 2008 the basis for the rewriting process was to develop DDD as the original thesis submission. This process is recapped here since some of the essential building blocks and conceptual underpinnings of *Rocks!* were developed as part of rewriting DDD. The rewriting process started following notes provided by Steve Waters on January 25th 2008 after his reading of the very first version (and very incomplete draft) of DDD. Back then he identified the main issue as structural, with the play starting strongly then becoming more diffuse as it develops – an observation that proved truly prescient and was never fully addressed even, on reflection, in the version of DDD that formed the submitted thesis in September 2008.

A concerted effort to address this structural defect was attempted during the third rewrite after the Showcase event in June 2008 when Act 2 was in effect largely re-structured and re-written. A further issue highlighted in that January supervision was that promising characters introduced in Act 1, namely Maggie (Molly in *Rocks!*) and James (Derek in *Rocks!*), do not reappear anywhere else in the play. This was addressed in earlier rewrites with both James and Maggie reappearing in Act 2, albeit briefly and not to great effect. But as pointed out in the examiners notes these relationships and characters remained largely underdeveloped or bordered on caricature. *Rocks!* has attempted to redress this

‘character’ problem by redefining the inter-character relationships as well as bringing greater clarity to the key themes through character arcs and their emotional lives.

The fixation on structure being dictated by genre-type often resulted in writing that was from the head and not the ‘heart’, thus ignoring basic creative writing advice. For example, creative writing teacher and poet Natalie Goldberg says: “But yes, you can have topics you want to write about...but come to it not with your mind and ideas, but with your whole body – your heart and guts and arms. Begin to write in the dumb, awkward way an animal cries out in pain, and there you will find your intelligence, your words, your voice” (Goldberg, 1986, p.37).

The structure of DDD did not change much between the first draft in January to the version submitted for the Showcase on May 12th, although the first 30 minutes changed in important areas. But it took the experience of the Showcase rehearsal and performance to focus the mind on the structure and character development of the play. The rehearsal for the Showcase reading and feedback from the actors, director and performance itself, was the most important part of the final re-writing process. The Showcase forced the re-appraisal of the play through the comments of knowledgeable strangers coming to the script for the first time.¹

¹ After the Showcase event I was approached by two BBC radio drama producers who, from seeing the 30 minute reading of DDD, asked me to develop the idea into a BBC radio play. Working with the producers I reworked DDD into a proposal for the BBC commissioning process. The DDD proposal was successful in getting through four commissioning rounds at the BBC but at the fifth and final commissioning round the proposal didn’t make the cut. Feedback suggested the idea was not rejected, but that the BBC had recently commissioned a ‘dog’ based drama and thus it did not fit into the

In the rewriting and revising process for *Rocks!* I have again been conscious of the need to make the goal of each scene to show change, conflict and at the same time set up the forward momentum of the overall play structure. For example, Act 1, scene 2 serves to set up all the different story strands of the play, the tedium and dissatisfaction in Mark and Molly's relationship, introducing Susan and the Rock Peace Garden and her motivations, the fact that Molly 'cares' and Mark doesn't; Mark's job and the power-play within this; and finally the fact the Mark will be left alone as others in his life walk away to pursue their own cares.

Farrell (2001) reminds the playwright of the importance of change in a play; for example, his Rule 1 is every scene, without exception, must build to a moment when something changes. In general this proved one of the biggest writing challenges - being able to bring about change within the other dramaturgical elements while at the same time writing a comedy that aims to provoke laughter.

Building on the insights from the November 5th 2007 seminar on Scenes and Dialogue each scene was approached with the idea of it being a "complete unit of action".

However, one writing problem from this approach was that many scenes in earlier versions of the play became too self-contained or episodic. This issue was addressed in the re-writes by re-working some scenes so that earlier scenes foreshadow subsequent

current scheduling. While a demanding process, this was an invaluable experience in understanding the level of professionalism needed to be a successful writer and also opened my eyes to the brilliance of producers and how they can help a work by championing it.

scenes and that earlier plot lines would trigger events in later scenes that could then be resolved. As an example of the former, in Act 1, scene 2, it is mentioned that Molly knows Mark's boss Derek, this relationship is further alluded to in Act 1 scene 3, and in Act 1, scene 5, Molly reveals she is leaving Mark for Derek. The juxtaposition of the 'videoblogs', especially Mark's, between certain scenes is used to create doubt in the audience's mind whether Mark really 'cares' or not thus attempting to engage the audience in thinking about the 'changes' they are witnessing as each scene unfolds.

G. Conclusion

One key objective of the comedy drama, as Nelson makes clear, is to make people laugh. He writes: "...a comedy...[is] a work designed in some way to provoke laughter or humour on the part of the audience" (Nelson, 1990). As this essay has pointed out, comic elements and techniques have been applied in the rewriting and revising of *Rocks!*, but is it in fact funny? I asked the actors in rehearsal for the Showcase how can I know if the play works as a comedy? Their reply was simple – I would only know by how an audience reacts, the fate of the play, they said, is in the control of the audience. The Showcase audience (around 100 people), seeing a 30-minute extract – the lightly revised Act 1, scenes 2 and 3 in *Rocks!* - responded with a lot of laughter. For that audience at least, this part of the play worked as a comedy drama.

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Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)

By

Michael Heasman

LIST OF CHARACTERS

MARK MORRIS: mid to late-40's, a policy researcher.

MOLLY: Late 30's, MARK's wife for five years.

DEREK: 50ish, university professor and head of department, MARK's boss.

SUSAN: Around 50, widow, building the Rock Peace Garden.

Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)

Act One

As the audience enters and waits there is a TV screen on stage they can all see. The screen shows the theatre audience and the audience image on screen pans around so people can see themselves if they so choose. The screen turns to white and the head of MARK appears, he is talking into his laptop web camera to record his video blog. He addresses the audience directly.

SCENE 1

MARK: *(Clears throat)* Er...right, hello there. My name is Mark...Mark Morris and welcome to this...er...videoblog, first one I've done actually. So, hello, my name is Mark Morris and welcome to GetAGripBlog.com, the blog that tries to really care about life, but can't be bothered. So what am I trying to care about today? Well I am in a theatre waiting to see a play with the implausible title *Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)*. Hey, I didn't chose the title and I didn't write it or have anything to with it, in fact I don't really care about the play at all except...except it is about me. So I thought I'd do this videoblog as a sort of product disclaimer to put my point of view out there in the blogosphere since the play is, to put it mildly, inaccurate. I don't care if people want to use stuff about me, but it's not me out there, what you're about to see, it's not the real me, so what follows

comes with the big Mark Morris health warning: viewer beware. I have nothing to do with this staging, I wish I could offer you your money back so you could all leave now, but I can't. So just remember the people in it have a vested interest, they pretend I care...I'll update you with the truth...keep posted to my videoblog...(MARK *mumbling to himself to fade*)...so how do you turn this thing off, ah there it is..

SCENE 2

(MARK disappears, replaced by pictures of a street café and tables, stage lights rise to show MOLLY sitting at an outside café table drinking coffee on an early summer evening. She is dressed smartly from her job as a retail manager. She is checking some stock spreadsheets or similar, getting more and more agitated, she checks her watch a few times. MARK enters and strolls over to where she is sitting carrying a bag stuffed with papers and books. He sits next to MOLLY).

MOLLY: You're late.

MARK: Such a lovely evening, it's so warm.

MOLLY: You know you are...as usual.

MARK: Interesting?

MOLLY: What?

MARK: Those...(pretends to read MOLLY's papers). What are they...latest trends in cookware, the 'must have' chopping board this autumn, 'the celebrity chef' garlic crusher we can't live without.

MOLLY: (*Ignores MARK, pointing to her coffee mug*) Want anything?

MARK: Nah, had a tea with Derek before I left the department. He asked me to help him with a paper he's preparing on the health costs associated with attempted suicide, see if we can recommend cutbacks.

MOLLY: Doing Derek's dirty work again? You're always writing his papers.

MARK: My name goes on the paper. Anyway all helps with my contract renewal.

MOLLY: You're his dog's body.

MARK: Woof, woof. Anyway, you didn't seem to mind Derek at the departmental dinner. Sucking up to him all night.

MOLLY: Only trying to oblige you as 'the loyal wife' and partner. I was on duty, he is so full of himself.

MARK: My darling call of duty wife right? It's all a game.

MOLLY: You're so belittling...and why are you late, you always keep me waiting.

MARK: Had a bad day in the world of retailing dear?

MOLLY: It's always what you do that is so important, what I do is...well...

MARK: ...Pays more than me and has better prospects.

MOLLY: So you can remember some important things.

MARK: Look I'm sorry you had a crazy day at the store.

MOLLY: Smile and serve. Sure you don't want coffee?

MARK: You love it though.

MOLLY: I need to decompress a bit longer... Lovely evening...

MARK: ...Lovely evening.

(As MARK and MOLLY sit in silence 'decompressing' after work, SUSAN enters. She is 50ish, dressed in work clothes for manual labour, she is struggling to push a barrow or trolley containing a large rock. MOLLY and MARK notice her efforts and follow her as if hypnotized. As she draws near her struggle increases and the barrow topples and the rock falls out).

SUSAN: Fudge, fudge, fudge...*(she starts to try and get the rock back into the barrow but it is too difficult and heavy. MARK and MOLLY watch her distress).*

MARK: *(to MOLLY)* What does she think she's doing.

MOLLY: Aren't you going to help her.

MARK: I think I'll have that coffee now.

MOLLY: Go and help.

MARK: You want anything else?

MOLLY: Okay, I get it *(MOLLY gets up and goes across to where SUSAN is still struggling with the rock)*

MOLLY: Want a hand?

SUSAN: Oh hello *(looks MOLLY over)*. What a lovely dress.

MOLLY: Well thanks. It's new.

SUSAN: Give me a twirl *(MOLLY obliges)*.

SUSAN: Hi, I'm Susan, by the way.

MOLLY: Molly. Need a hand.

SUSAN: I know, silly me. Should have waited but it is a gift, a very rare rock. Look it has a fossil on one side.

(The on-stage screen changes from a café scene to that of an impressive plant fossil in a rock)

MOLLY: It's beautiful.

SUSAN: A million years old. Aren't rocks magical.

MOLLY: And heavy.

SUSAN: Don't get your dress spoilt.

MOLLY: It's my work uniform really. Let's give it a go.

SUSAN: Are you sure about that.

MOLLY: No problem.

SUSAN: After three then...one, two, three, lift...

(SUSAN and MOLLY can't quite lift the rock back into the barrow)

SUSAN: Fudge, fudge, and fudge.

MOLLY: Fuck a duck its heavy. *(To Mark who has been avoiding watching by reading a book)* We could do with some help here.

MARK: Who...me?

MOLLY: Get over here.

MARK: *(Joining SUSAN and MOLLY)* Thought you had it all under control.

MOLLY: This is Mark, my helpful husband.

SUSAN: Hi Mark, I'm Susan *(she shakes MARK'S hand)*.

MOLLY: Right. After three again. One, two, three. *(The three of them eventually manage to lift the rock back into the barrow)*.

SUSAN: Thanks so much, you saved me.

MOLLY: *(to MARK)* Did you see the fossil.

MARK: Er...no. So...er...*(He looks)*

SUSAN: Isn't it special.

MOLLY: I don't wish to be nosy but how come you're pushing a rock around?

SUSAN: It's for my Rock Peace Garden.

MARK: What's that then?

MOLLY: Ignore him.

SUSAN: It's in memory of my late husband.

MOLLY: I'm sorry.

SUSAN: Oh, he died in a car accident, nearly two years ago now. He loved rocks so I thought it is a good way to spend his life insurance money, build him a memorial that others could enjoy. A bit of peace to contemplate our wonderful planet.

MARK: By making a rock garden in your garden?

SUSAN: No, silly you. It's a giant rock garden, a mini Grand Canyon, I'm redeveloping an abandoned quarry. It'll be open to everyone, like a public theme park, but made of rocks. A place for contemplation and reflection.

MOLLY: Wow!

MARK: Oh?

SUSAN: I've been building it for the past eighteen months. Well supervising dozens of contractors really. It's almost ready for opening. You can come and see it, before it opens to the public.

MOLLY: We would love too, wouldn't we Mark.

MARK: Sure.

MOLLY: Let me help you with the barrow. (*MOLLY goes and packs her papers into her case from the café table*).

SUSAN: (*to MARK*) You should come. Rocks can be very soothing.

MARK: And hard I believe.

SUSAN: You might want to volunteer.

MARK: I'm averse to manual labour.

SUSAN: You might find some new muscles (*Susan squeezes MARK'S biceps, then prods his belly*)

MARK: Hey, what's the idea.

(*MOLLY returns*)

SUSAN: Let's go. (*MOLLY and SUSAN both push the barrow and slowly EXIT*)

MARK: (*As they leave*) So, see you at home, dear? (*MOLLY does not reply or look back. MARK sits back down at the café table, looks around, fidgets with his papers and books, stares blankly into the distance. Fade to blackout*).

SCENE 3

The next day. The TV screen shows scenes of a large modern University complex (all modern and dreary office like buildings). Inside the office of Professor Derek Luckhurst, 50ish, head of department at this 'new' university. His desk and manner is more that of a management consultant than the stereotypical academic professor. He sits with his feet on table, playing with some executive toys like a stress ball, wasting time. There is a knock at the door.

DEREK: One minute (*DEREK gets some papers together and writes on them with his pen and starts to look studious*). Come in, Come in.

MARK: (*carrying briefcase enters*) Er...is it ok to see me now?

DEREK: Terribly sorry, it is frantically busy, anyway we have a few minutes before my next meeting. It's gone crazy, the departments really expanding so I've appointments to put in place, I teach two courses, not to mention keeping the Dean happy and motivating the existing staff.

MARK: It must be hard juggling all that stuff. Here's the background research you asked for (*takes out papers from case*).

DEREK: Oh thanks (*puts papers aside without looking*). I love the life Mark, but it's the politics, Mark, that's the time waster. Departmental politics, Faculty politics and university politics. Then we have to teach, and do world class research. Not a task for the faint hearted.

MARK: Challenging but interesting...how I look at it.

DEREK: Your job? You see it as challenging.

MARK: I meant the modern university these days. My work is challenging in the sense it would not be interesting otherwise.

DEREK: Anyway, glad we could find the time to meet.

MARK: Well thank you for agreeing to see me I know how busy you/

DEREK: Did I tell you I got John Franklin.

MARK: John Franklin?

DEREK: From San Diego university. Top-notch place. I've been after him for years. A real coup for the department. He'll be joining us in a couple of months. A real coup.

MARK: Oh.

DEREK: You know these people like Franklin can ask their weight in gold. They know they're good. Like elite athletes, but with the brain. There's a shortage of top talent. The Dean will go spare when he sees what I'm paying, but when the research contracts role in he'll be all over me. Do you know what tipped it for us getting Franklin.

MARK: You reputation?

DEREK: That's a given Mark. No, getting his wife a job. She's a psychologist, managed to place her with a top-notch appointment in the medical faculty. Light teaching load, all research. He and she were chuffed.

MARK: Sounds great.

DEREK: Yes it is.

MARK: On a related topic, one of the reasons for this meeting was about my contract renewal.

DEREK: Good timing Mark, I wanted to see you about your progress in the department. Now how long have you been with us?

MARK: It's been 14 months, 14 months out of a 15-month fixed term contract.

DEREK: Ah yes, I remember now. How have you enjoyed your time here.

MARK: It's been a great experience...and I really enjoy working with such a great team of people/

DEREK: (*Picking up sheet of paper*) I got Margaret to print out your work review. I see you're also doing some teaching now...

MARK: Yes, in health policy/

DEREK: Policy...ah yes...and getting a few policy contracts. Not very technical these projects.

MARK: Sorry?

DEREK: All very descriptive work, not very theoretical, not much quantitative stuff.

MARK: You said you employed me to bring the policy angle.

DEREK: Yes of course...did I? Have you met Linda Drinkworth yet?

MARK: Yes, she was at the staff coffee break.

DEREK: You know that is what is so special about this department, its collegiate spirit. Coffee breaks. Underrated as a way to create intradepartmental teams, excellent stuff.

MARK: I found coffee very useful.

DEREK: So what do you think of Linda? She was something of a star at University of Utrecht.

MARK: She seems...seems very competent.

DEREK: Competent! Do you know what I had to do to poach her, but don't tell anyone I poached her...

MARK: Of course not.

DEREK: I bought her fifty thousand pounds worth of datasets to analyse. God was she chuffed. Fifty grands worth of data. God was she foaming at the bit.

MARK: I can see why.

DEREK: She was already bloody good, but this data it'll make her reputation, the papers she'll get into the heavy weight journals using this data. And the PhD students she'll get. She saw the opportunity I gave her and jumped at it.

MARK: She seems very pleased to be here.

DEREK: I see here (*looks at paper*)... you have been publishing papers and reports.

MARK: I do my best.

DEREK: Ah, well that's it, doing your best. You see while we're having a bit of a heart to heart, and if I can give you some advice as a senior academic, it all looks a bit thin, a bit lightweight, not top notch journals, can you explain this?

MARK: It's mainly policy, strategy, hands-on, looking at real issues and providing guidance, a different type of publishing/

DEREK: All very descriptive.

MARK: It's often what people ask for.

DEREK: And these...these lightweight journals, where's the impact Mark, the impact.

MARK: Well a lot of the issues don't lend themselves to more traditional academic journals, they are still/

DEREK: But I think Linda Drinkworth and John Franklin's work is seen as 'hands on' and looking at 'real issues' and providing guidance.

MARK: Yes, of course, there are many different niches, I don't mean to criticize. That is one thing I would like to bring up. With short-term contracts it is often difficult to do that 'heavyweight work', it needs time and often PhD students/

DEREK: But you've had more than a year.

MARK: Yes, and I have done the best I can, starting from...er...scratch, you know how long it takes to get published in journals.

DEREK: So what'll you do when your contract is up in, what was it, four weeks time?

MARK: Well that was why I wanted to speak to you.

DEREK: What exactly did you have in mind.

MARK: Well, it was the question of extending my contract. You did mention the possibility of renewal/

DEREK: Dependent on funding Mark, I've always been perfectly clear have I not, it is dependent on funding.

MARK: Yes, you made it clear, but I had the impression there would be further funding.

DEREK: Who gave you that impression.

MARK: Er...it was you...who gave me that impression, I am sorry if/

DEREK: Let me take you into confidence. Between you and I and these four walls, there's a lot of politics and as you know restructuring going on. The Dean would like some departments to merge and we have all been put on his hit list. We want to keep our own identity as a department don't you agree?

MARK: Yes/

DEREK: It's important. That's why I've been recruiting top names from around the world like John and Linda to join us, and our core staff has been pumping out the publications into the heavyweights. So Mark the bottom line is budgets are tight.

MARK: But I have brought in research funding and there is overhead to support me.

DEREK: But your salary is just part of the costs Mark, as you know, there is all the on-costs, and office space. I'm surprised there is not a riot from other staff members over you getting such a decent office, especially you being temporary staff.

MARK: A fixed contract position.

DEREK: It all costs. You can't say we haven't been generous.

MARK: Yes, but/

DEREK: I've paid for you to attend conferences, you get your own photocopy card and of course the free coffee.

MARK: Ah, the coffee, and the conferences/

DEREK: And the office.

MARK: Have been covered only in part I admit from my research funds.

DEREK: Look MARK you can't find anyone more sympathetic than me to temporary people...I can understand it is hell to not have a little bit more job security, but my hands are tied, you're not the only one in this position. It's the reality we all face these days, all universities...so many temporary people. You do understand my position?

MARK: Not really.

DEREK: Well let me be a little bit clearer. There's no more money in the pot for your position and the position will end as set out in your contract...

MARK: But....

DEREK: ...Of course feel free to put me down as a referee for any job application at any other institution. I will be delighted to do that for you, lend my name and reputation to your application.

MARK: Thanks...I appreciate that (*Pause*)

DEREK: Was there anything else?

MARK: No...it was about my future, my life.

DEREK: Sorry?

MARK: Nothing, just mumbling. Thank you for your time, I know how busy you are.

DEREK: No problem.

MARK: Thanks.

(DEREK stares at MARK. Both men stare at each other until MARK gets up ready to leave)

MARK: Thanks for seeing me.

DEREK: And don't forget. Need a reference, glad to help out...and Mark (*MARK turns looking hopeful*) give my regards to Molly, your lovely wife.

MARK: (*Almost whispering, puzzled*) You know Molly?

DEREK: (*Using his hands to shoo MARK away*) Good luck. Shut the door behind you.

(DEREK returns to his papers ignoring MARK. MARK, devastated leaves. DEREK stares after him smiling smugly to himself. When he's gone he returns to his executive toys. Blackout).

SCENE 4

(Videoblog, this time it is SUSAN)

SUSAN: Hello and welcome to the SheRocks blog. My name is Susan and this is the official blog of the new Rock Peace Garden theme park opening in a few weeks time. It's about rocks and it's big, our own local 'Grand Canyon'. I created the Rock Peace Garden in memory of my late husband Jonathan and it will be his legacy to his love of rocks. The Rock Peace Garden will tell the story of rocks and how rocks have made the life we know today. Did you know all the soil we see on the ground, what we commonly call dirt, is made up of eroded pieces of rock. The crust of the earth we walk upon is rock. All our oil and coal are the result of being made in rocks. Gold, diamonds, and other precious

substances all come from rocks. Our lives are literally created from rocks. Come see the rock experience soon.

SCENE 5

Susan's videoblog is replaced by pictures of an average-looking block of flats. On stage we are in the interior of a modest apartment, evening. MOLLY is sitting looking through a large pile of holiday brochures. MARK is studying with piles of academic papers and books and making notes.

MARK: This is fascinating stuff.

(MOLLY ignores him as she leafs through brochures)

MARK: Did you know over the next decade depression will be the second biggest health problem in the world after heart disease.

MOLLY: Fascinating.

MARK: It is. Did you know one in four of us will experience periods of depression.

MOLLY: So we are all going to kill ourselves.

MARK: No, but attempted suicide figures are up. Did you know there are all sorts of reasons people get depressed: being unemployed, relationship breakdowns, not enough money to make ends meet, loss of a loved one, even not keeping yourself fit.

MOLLY: *(putting brochure down)* Why are you doing this.

MARK: Doing what.

MOLLY: Working yet again in the evening.

MARK: Derek asked me to prepare some background research on a paper he's writing.

MOLLY: Derek, always Derek and you're the departmental lackey again.

DEREK: I've got to finish for tomorrow and everything helps with my contract renewal.

MOLLY: I thought you had that meeting yesterday. You said you thought it went well.

MARK: It seemed to...few details to sort out...anyway I find this stuff interesting myself, it will fit in with my own research. Don't you find depression interesting?

MOLLY: I'm too depressed to think about it.

MARK: Ha, ha.

MOLLY: I'm serious. I am depressed.

MARK: About what.

MOLLY: You tell me, you're the health policy researcher.

MARK: I think you're bored rather than depressed. You know managing a shop all day.

MOLLY: That's your considered opinion. Ten years as a researcher and that is the best you can do.

MARK: I was a late starter.

MOLLY: Okay then, I'm bored. So what about your contract renewal.

MARK: A formality I'm sure, Derek has to look through his budgets, you know just the way things are in universities these days.

(Both return to their reading)

MARK: This is fascinating stuff.

MOLLY: *(Off to distance)* As if.

(Off stage there is the distant sound of banging, like rocks being broken up. As this gets louder. MARK becomes agitated)

MOLLY: It's our Susan again, didn't realize that building site out back was her Rock Peace Garden.

MARK: It's a bloody mess, her and her rocks.

MOLLY: But it's sort of romantic, a permanent monument to her late husband, she must have loved him very much.

MARK: There should be a limit on the number of rocks people can keep.

MOLLY: It's her new life.

MARK: Not if it interferes with mine.

MOLLY: And her livelihood. She told me she'll run it as a business, she needs too to keep it going.

MARK: A Rock Peace Garden, who heard of anything so ridiculous. Who cares.

MOLLY: I do for one, I visited it, I'm going to help her.

MARK: You visited it?

MOLLY: Yeah, after work. Now that is something fascinating.

MARK: I think the apt phrase here is 'whatever'.

MOLLY: In case you're interested I'm helping her with the Rock Garden's retail experience, I'm designing the gift shop.

MARK: A Rock Garden gift shop? What people do for a living.

MOLLY: Like studying depression.

MARK: Rocks, depression, as I said 'whatever' (*Both go back to their own thoughts and reading*)

MOLLY: So what's for dinner, it's your turn isn't it.

MARK: Pasta.

MOLLY: (*Resigned, reading the holiday brochures*) Pasta. Again. Fine.

(*MARK reluctantly stops his reading and note taking, gets up and moves to kitchen area and starts to get some tins and packets for dinner, he starts to peel and chop stuff*)

MOLLY: (*After a long pause*) The rainforest. What about the rainforest!

MARK: What?

MOLLY: The rainforest! Wouldn't you love to go there. The Amazon.

MARK: To the Amazon?

MOLLY: So lush and exotic.

MARK: Why would we want to go to a rainforest.

MOLLY: For a holiday, I've been looking (*holds up brochure*)...you know one of those eco-tours, walking among hundred foot trees, lost in the mists of the jungle.

MARK: You think that's fun.

MOLLY: The squawking birds, the greenery, sleeping in an authentic tree hut. Like reality TV.

MARK: And bitten by insects and creepy crawlies and sweating all the time. Reality.

MOLLY: You know Mark, you are such a spoilsport.

MARK: I'm not. I remember when we went to Scotland you nearly died because of the mosquitoes.

MOLLY: I think you exaggerate. They were a nuisance not life threatening. The rainforest, that is a place I've always wanted to visit.

MARK: Since when?

MOLLY: It's been a secret dream.

MARK: Why didn't you tell me it's your dream.

MOLLY: It wouldn't be a secret then.

MARK: You could have told me. We're always thinking of where to go on holiday.

MOLLY: Well I suppose I didn't think you had the sense of adventure.

MARK: I am an adventurous type. I thought we agreed you're the boring one.

MOLLY: As you say 'whatever'.

MARK: I go shopping to the supermarket each week. That's an adventure.

MOLLY: I mean a real adventure.

MARK: I get into bed with you each night.

MOLLY: Oh, oh...way below the belt. I suppose wearing your white and blue-striped thick cotton pajamas is your idea of the wild.

MARK: Ooh, hit me where it hurts, my nighttime fashion sense. When is going to a rainforest as an eco-tourist taking a wild risk.

MOLLY: Come on. Before it is all gone.

MARK: We pay beyond our means for a package tour.../

MOLLY: There's loads of eco holidays now, they're coming down in price.

MARK: We still have to fly there, travel to the rainforest, stay in accommodation where you for one will insist on running hot and cold water, clean linen, cocktails and authentic ethnic food cooked as you like it. What sort of carbon footprint is that.

MOLLY: You really are a killjoy.

MARK: Only making sure we are on the same carbon wavelength.

MOLLY: Oh come on it would be fun. Doesn't have to be the Amazon rainforest, there's rainforest in the Far East, even Australia. So what about it.

MARK: It'll cost too much, we barely make ends meet as things are.

MOLLY: We're professionals, we can get a loan. You only live once.

MARK: You know I don't like going into debt.

MOLLY: You borrowed money to go to university.

MARK: That's different.

MOLLY: You borrowed money to buy a car.

MARK: That doesn't count.

MOLLY: So what does count Mark, you're approaching 50 years old, doing the same old same old, year after year. Live a bit.

MARK: Routine is good and productive.

MOLLY: You know the definition of insanity.

MARK: No.

MOLLY: When you keep doing the exact same thing and expect a different result.

MARK: *(Finishes chopping and comes into room and sits near MOLLY, brings her and him a drink)* So that's why I do all the cooking then.

MOLLY: So it's another walking holiday in North Yorkshire?

MARK: You said you enjoyed yourself last time.

MOLLY: I did, you're right, and the reason for that is because I am a positive person

Mark, I make the best of things regardless.

MARK: And as a result you're so easy to be with Molly. All lightness and fun.

MOLLY: You know you really can be a miserable git sometimes.

MARK: *(Pause)* I've been under stress. It's that contract renewal.

MOLLY: Not your bloody job again. Thought you said it was a formality.

MARK: There is a lot of pressure...universities these days...they're not ivory towers...

MOLLY: And I enjoy the high life in retail management while poor Mark slaves to change the world in the university.

MARK: I have never pretended that.

MOLLY: But your job is so important and special while the rest of us...well what about the rest of us, about me.

MARK: You know I support you in everyway.

MOLLY: When you find five minutes once a month to notice I am here when your head removes itself from up your behind...or the fascination of depression.

MARK: I'm sorry.

MOLLY: For what. (*Pause*) When is the last time you touched me?

MARK: Not.../

MOLLY: Do I have the plague.

MARK: What?

MOLLY: Let's go to the rainforest.

MARK: I'm not sure.

MOLLY: Not sure or don't want to?

MARK: Molly, you know the time is not good for me at the moment.

MOLLY: There is never a right time. I'm serious about this Mark.

MARK: What about next year.

MOLLY: Now or never.

MARK: That's unfair...I have a lot to do.

MOLLY: At least look at the brochures.

MARK: (*MOLLY hands MARK holiday brochure and he looks at it*) All very interesting and er...exotic. It might be fun...but I feel we need to...perhaps.../

MOLLY: Perhaps? Perhaps.

MARK: Look at our situation.

MOLLY: Really. Welcome to the world of reality. (*She drains her drink*) Get me another drink.

(*MARK goes and gets another drink for MOLLY, his is still full*)

MOLLY: (*Taking drink*) You know I really want to go to the rainforest, so I am going.

MARK: What do you mean?

MOLLY: I'm going without you.

MARK: How can you decide like that, why are you showing me this brochure...

MOLLY: So you'll know what you are missing.

MARK: It's only a two week holiday.

MOLLY: No Mark, it's me.

MARK: Of course I'll miss you.

MOLLY: Have you spoken to Derek recently.

MARK: About work. Why?

MOLLY: He's going to the rainforest.

MARK: You mean Derek, you mean my boss?

MOLLY: Don't be childish Mark.

MARK: Well the person known as Derek who I report to as head of department who you said you hated after the departmental dinner.

MOLLY: That's right, Derek. He wants to go to the rainforest.

MARK: I didn't know...How can he afford...when did you see him?

MOLLY: I see him, here and there.

MARK: He didn't mention seeing you.

MOLLY: I suppose he would be embarrassed.

MARK: He is my boss.

MOLLY: Well not quite so.

MARK: But you don't like him, but as you say you're a positive person and try to get on with people.

MOLLY: He's going tomorrow.

MARK: But what about our joint paper, I have to hand it in tomorrow.

MOLLY: Seems he's missing reading your depressing paper on depression for tropical fruits and monkeys.

MARK: I see where all this rainforest stuff is coming from now.

MOLLY: Do you?

MARK: You said Derek is really an insecure loser after the departmental dinner, so if an insecure loser can go to the rainforest, so can you.

MOLLY: Then you know Mark, I seem to be attracted to insecure losers.

MARK: What do you mean?

MOLLY: I'm going to the rainforest tomorrow also.

MARK: You're...

MOLLY: Same place as Derek.

MARK: You and...

MOLLY: Derek and I are going together.

MARK: But...how's that going to work.

MOLLY: As I said, I have been seeing Derek a lot recently and we don't write research papers together.

MARK: He never said...

MOLLY: No he never said anything to you.

MARK: So...

MOLLY: Yes loser Derek and I.

MARK: Loser Derek/

MOLLY: A loser who shows an interest in me.

MARK: You and Derek...oh my god, you and Derek...Derek...what do you mean, going to the rainforest...oh my god...when did this happen...why/

MOLLY: For god's sake Mark. You know its been over, finito, between us for months. When did we last make love.

MARK: But we still love each other...

MOLLY: I have to be honest with myself.

MARK: I love you, you're everything to me...Derek and the rainforest...didn't you ever love me (*MARK picks up cuddly teddy bear called Happy*). Both Happy and I love you.

MOLLY: Leave Happy out of this.

MARK: But he cares for you.

MOLLY: Okay, I suppose we were in a kind of love once. But whatever it was you ground me down. (*MARK stares open mouthed looking as if he is going to cry*) For god's sake, not the water works again.

(*MARK and MOLLY stare at each other lost for words*)

MOLLY: (*Breaking the silence*) You never give me what I want

MARK: You never tell me.

MOLLY: You never listen.

(*Pause*)

MOLLY: Going to help me pack.

MARK: Pack...?

MOLLY: My stuff. Take your mind off things.

MARK: For the holiday?

MOLLY: For good. I'm leaving you remember.

MARK: For the rainforest?

MOLLY: Something hot and humid and fecund.

MARK: Fecund?

MOLLY: The fecund: fertile, producing or capable of producing in abundance.

MARK: What are you talking about...you want a baby?

MOLLY: We talked about it.

MARK: The time has not been right...my career, your career...

MOLLY: The time is never right. The clock never strikes midnight. The big hand never meets the little hand.

MARK: We said we needed to plan things.

MOLLY: For years I am waiting for the chime. The ding, the dong. For you, for me, for us. But nothing.

MARK: So the rainforest is a baby substitute.

MOLLY: Now you're winding me up.

MARK: Is this all about sex again?

MOLLY: You are the amateur psychologist Mark.

MARK: What about the couples counseling we had, Molly you said...with time.

MOLLY: Bloody time again. We'll all be dead in time.

MARK: I don't understand...you're going on holiday and leaving me...and Happy?

MOLLY: You never were stupid Mark, I'll give you that. I've got to pack.

MARK: Pack?

MOLLY: My suitcase. I'm going on holiday tomorrow remember, the rainforest. Want to help.

MARK: Pack your suitcase...

MOLLY: Give you a last chance.

MARK: For what?

MOLLY: To see what you, and Happy, are going to miss.

(MOLLY gets up to pack, MARK follows, both exit. Blackout)

SCENE 6

(Videoblog, this time it is MARK, he is fuming)

MARK: Pathetic, pathetic, pathetic. I am sorry to interrupt but if you believe this then I'm pathetic. Not true. Who do they think they are. I want to interrupt at his point because you should know there is a perfectly normal explanation for my behaviour. It is a simple case of 'acedia'. Not many people know about acedia. It means an inability to care. Yes, I

suffer from the condition known as acedia. As if I am able to care about Molly, about Derek, sorry can't be done. You should check out acedia, unusual term but I bet most of you suffer, just like me. Let me explain this to you. Acedia: a term coined by fourth century Christian monks who went to live in caves in the desert, and used to explain the torpor, heedlessness, or state of apathy they fell into through the tedium of their daily routines. Now I'm betting there's not many of us who don't know that state of affairs. Molly and Derek, huh, let's see how long they last. Keep watching if you can be bothered, more corrections to follow.

(TV screen returns to pictures of the average-looking flats)

SCENE 7

Some time later. Early evening in the interior of MARK and MOLLY's apartment. There are some suitcases packed – they're MARK's – and he is still packing an open suitcase. MARK is sitting arranging a number of items on a table in front of him - a selection of kitchen knives and a long piece of rope suitable for a hanging - as though he is going to pack them. He also has Happy his teddy bear ready to pack, as he goes to put Happy in the case he stops and looks at Happy.

MARK: *(apparently speaking to teddy bear)* So Happy just you and me. Thank goodness you're here, my cuddly friend. I need to have a heart to heart, you and I Happy. The truth is I have reached the point where there is no point. No job, no Molly. I've done the

research Happy. Depressed people often have thoughts of ending it all, did you know that? I guess it doesn't concern you much being stuffed. But I've done my research, I score enough to be classified as depressed. Being a researcher, what a wonderful skill, so much information, you can find out everything these days (*picks up pile of papers*), including the ways people top themselves.

So what's left Happy in the absence of a handy firing squad, lethal injection or electric chairs. The knife (*holds up a knife*) or the good old rope (*holds up rope*), a true wild west hang 'em high scenario, a favored method of state execution according to my research: "sentenced to death by hanging". Well this should be simple enough. There... a few knots (*ties noose with rope*) and voila! (*holds up noose*). You're right again Happy, where would I hang this bit of rope. Don't want it to break under my weight. See this is where willpower lets me down. If only I had stuck to that low fat diet I would be slim and lithe: just right for hanging. Happy, this is not good, I should diet first. Weight loss, then death by hanging.

(MARK stands with rope/noose in his hand as the doorbell sounds followed by knocking).

MARK: Oh god, who can that be Happy, it's not very convenient just now. (*More knocking, door bell ringing*). What shall I do. Kill myself or open the door. (*Mumbling*) Kill myself or open the door. Oh god, what shall I do. (*More knocking*). I know what, open the door, see who it is, then kill myself.

(MARK goes to peep hole on door to see who it is, he still has rope in hand)

MARK: Oh god, it's her Happy, the woman with the rocks.

SUSAN: (*Through door*) Hello, hello, is anyone there?

MARK: (*Opening door*) Er yes.

SUSAN: Thank goodness I caught you, can I come in (*enters before MARK can answer*).

Thanks. What a day I've had, phew what a day... (*walking around apartment*). Neat apartment you have here, neat and to the point. I like it. Oh look at that wallpaper. Very chi-chicee. And what an adorable little teddy bear (*picks it up and gives Happy a cuddle. Sees MARK still standing by door with rope*). Oh I'm sorry how very rude of me, I see you were having a moment with teddy.

MARK: Oh, nothing that can't wait.

SUSAN: I was looking for Molly.

MARK: Er..she's out at the moment.

SUSAN: (*Spotting noose in MARK'S hands*) I hope I haven't come at a bad time?

MARK: Oh, no, no. I wasn't doing anything special.

SUSAN: (*both staring a noose*) Practicing knots?

MARK: What...oh my rope? My rope! No, not knots..this...this is for my line dancing practice.

SUSAN: Line dancing. Cowboys? I see, isn't line dancing all yippidy do da, rah rah round 'em up, hi ho silver stuff?

MARK: That's a common mistake.

SUSAN: Oh?

MARK: Line dancing is about...well dancing, not cowboys. You do the cha cha, the waltz, the quick step, the Charleston...er

SUSAN: And the lasso?

MARK: Oh, yes, the lasso. It is a prop. Yes a prop to help me with a cowboy line dance.

A one off cowboy number. I was practicing.

SUSAN: Let's see.

MARK: You want to see...what?

SUSAN: Your cowboy line dance.

MARK: My line dance.

SUSAN: Yes, the line dance.

MARK: Okay the line dance.

SUSAN: Any music.

MARK: I was sort of humming to myself. Getting the steps right.

SUSAN: Ok let's go cowboy.

MARK: Well...ok.

(MARK hesitantly at first, starts to do a line dance using the noose in a pathetic lasso gesture. He speaks out loud a set of line dance moves as he slowly performs the steps, as he gains confidence he really can do a line dance, to the amazement of SUSAN)

MARK: Step, step, kick, back, step, step kick.... Yeee haaa...and back, step, step, kick...Yeee haaa *(MARK goes through dance routine)*

SUSAN: Yeee haaa. Get them cowboy.

MARK: Shall I stop.

SUSAN: Can I have a go.

MARK: Well it's/

SUSAN: I've got plenty of rhythm. How's it go.

(SUSAN stands side by side with MARK, he takes her through a dress rehearsal. Then they perform the routine which SUSAN picks up easily, she mimes the lasso motion while MARK continues to use the rope. They stop after a short burst of line dancing).

SUSAN: We work really well together.

MARK: We do have a bit of rhythm.

SUSAN: You know there's no need for the lasso.

MARK: *(throwing noose aside)* Right, sure.

SUSAN: So...Molly's out. She said she would help me with the Rock Peace Garden, sort out the 'customer retail experience'. I said I'd pop round.

MARK: Sure...er...

SUSAN: So I hope you don't mind me just popping round like this. Been meaning to anyway, for ages, keep getting distracted. So how long have you and Molly been here?

MARK: Five years now, it's Molly's place, we moved in when we got married. I like it here.

SUSAN: Yeah great location, very convenient for the Rock Peace Garden

MARK: We heard.

SUSAN: You haven't visited yet. Don't you like rocks?

MARK: Never really thought about it. Rocks seem hard to care for.

SUSAN: But you do have an adorable teddy bear.

MARK: Happy...the teddy bear's called Happy.

SUSAN: Such a super name for a teddy bear.

MARK: You think.

SUSAN: Sure *(goes and cuddles it again)*. Hello Happy.

MARK: It was Molly who thought of the name, she said if I had a teddy bear called Happy I might be happy. Some sort of cuddly toy transference I suppose. A bit crazy, I know...

SUSAN: You know it's not Mark, I see the energy flow all the time between rocks. We think of them as solid, but they are moving all the time, such energy – earthquakes, volcanoes, molten rock, its really spooky sometimes just how powerful that can be, the earth's energy. I see rocks as a symbol of nature's energy, so why not between stuffed teddy bear and owner. There's a study to be done, don't you think?

MARK: Sure.

SUSAN: So what exactly is it you do?

MARK: A university researcher. I do, or did health policy

SUSAN: Well there's your next study. The health benefits of stuffed toy ownership. Or what about the health benefits of rocks. You could write a book and the Rock Peace Garden could sponsor it. We'll become rich and famous and retire to an island of rock somewhere warm and sunny.

MARK: I am sure its been done.

SUSAN: There's always room for one more self-help book.

MARK: I could think about it.

SUSAN: Why not. You only live once.

MARK: Molly's motto.

SUSAN: So where is Molly?

MARK: Well...she's

SUSAN: And the bags, going on holiday.

MARK: Oh, my bags.

SUSAN: Is there anything wrong?

MARK: Many things.

SUSAN: Mark I'm not stupid.

MARK: No you don't seem to be.

SUSAN: Molly called me, asked me to look in.

MARK: Oh.

SUSAN: Doesn't have to be this way.

MARK: No.

SUSAN: She cares for you, you know that.

MARK: Has a funny way of showing it (*Pause*)

SUSAN: We can't know what people are feeling. She told me you've both been stuck in a routine for so long you drifted apart.

MARK: She talked with you?

SUSAN: You can talk to me.

MARK: I can't.

SUSAN: You can trust me.

MARK: I'm not ready (*MARK starts packing again, puts Happy in case*)

SUSAN: So Mark, do you like rocks?

MARK: Well to be honest. I've never thought about rocks.

SUSAN: I can't imagine.

MARK: No.

SUSAN: But you do like them?

MARK: As I said, not really thought about it.

SUSAN: How can you not like rocks?

MARK: They hurt when you bump into them, big rocks are difficult to get around, being between a rock and a hard place is not a good place to be?

SUSAN: Have you ever been to the United States.

MARK: A couple of conferences, here and there.

SUSAN: What about the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon the rock formations in Monument Valley (*Pictures of these or similar show on the on-stage TV screen*).

SUSAN: We can learn a lot from rocks

MARK: We can?

SUSAN: Do you know why I love rocks.

MARK: Can't really guess.

SUSAN: Because of their philosophy on life.

MARK: I'm new to rock philosophy.

SUSAN: We can learn a lot.

MARK: I'm sure.

SUSAN: Rocks can teach us that nothing is permanent. They look solid, unchangeable, but rocks are always on the move, tectonic plates, pushing and shoving over millions of years shaping and re-shaping the earth as we know it today.

MARK: Fascinating.

SUSAN: It is. Makes it hard to believe in coincidences, instead things are on the move clashing into each other. Take us. Do you think that is coincidence?

MARK: Could be.

SUSAN: I think not. I think we are meant to meet. The shifting of the human tectonic plate. I believe all people who come into our lives are meant to be there.

MARK: Even muggers.

SUSAN: We can learn from the bad as well as the good. (*Starts picking up and examining knives and looks again at noose*) Nice set of knives.

MARK: They're from Germany.

SUSAN: Takes a rock to sharpen a knife. You know the Rock Peace Garden is opening soon. I could use some help if you're not doing anything.

MARK: I'm busy.

SUSAN: Packing? Where you're going.

MARK: I don't know. Molly said I could stay but I feel I need to get out. My own space. Something temporary.

SUSAN: I have a space.

MARK: But I hardly know you.

SUSAN: At the Rock Peace Garden, the Cave Gift Shop has public washrooms and toilet, it is warm and dry, has catering facilities, you could camp down in there while you work for me.

MARK: What?

SUSAN: Free board and lodging for helping me finish off some of the rock formations.

Lots of lugging of rocks.

MARK: But...

SUSAN: You can move in today, start in the morning.

MARK: But...

SUSAN: So done then?

MARK: But....

(SUSAN shakes MARK'S hand as in sealing a deal. As she goes to leave SUSAN stops).

SUSAN: By the way.

MARK: Yes?

SUSAN: Can I borrow the lasso.

MARK: The lasso...oh the rope. Why.

SUSAN: Practice how to line dance.

MARK: Thought you said you didn't need the rope.

SUSAN: I fibbed. It would be better if I had the rope.

(MARK gives SUSAN the rope, she starts to leave, before going out she turns and returns to MARK and kisses him passionately on the lips. She exits, MARK is left in an empty room. Fade to Blackout).

END of ACT ONE

Rocks! (Are Hard To Care For)

Act Two

All the action in Act Two takes place in the Rock Peace Garden. The rock garden is made up of rocks very large and small and conveys the impression of a canyon and rock 'forest' – a mini-grand canyon. There are quite a few rocks and stones of different sizes lying around. When there is no videoblog, the TV screen shows pictures of rock formations.

SCENE 1

(On stage there is a 'rock face' and on this is MARK trying to climb, but he is stuck, his hands and feet spread-eagled and unable to move (the video screen could show Mark on the rock face higher up than on stage). To one side of the rock face is a cave entrance with a wonky sign above it saying 'Cave Gift Shop'. MARK is grunting and moaning as he tries to work out how to move from his stuck position. He looks a lot more disheveled and the worse for wear from Act One. The TV screen comes to life and we see SUSAN'S face. She starts to deliver her latest videoblog, she looks as though she might have been crying).

SUSAN: Hi everyone, Susan again. Thanks for your comments and donations for completing the Rock Peace Garden. Today is the anniversary of Jonathan's accident and his passing so I'm a little tearful, but I look at the rocks and think of him and I know he would want me to be happy, that he is still here in the rocks. He liked rocks because he said they gave him perspective and he liked the story of geologic time. He would remind anyone who would listen that our planet is more than 4.6 billion years old and if you could somehow compress this time into 12 months, from January to December, then our oldest rocks would date from some time in mid-March...

MARK: (*softly*) Is anyone there?

SUSAN (*videoblog continues*)...now he was in his stride, the first life on earth, ancient sea organisms, he said, appeared in May, while plants and animals emerged in late November. The dinosaurs appeared in mid December and they became extinct the day after Christmas. Then finally on December the 31st of that one-year calendar, our ancestors, early humans appeared. Now he got really excited: Rome ruled the Western world for just five seconds from 11.59PM and 45 seconds to 11.59PM and 50 seconds while Columbus discovered America only three seconds before midnight he'd say. And now we face our last second and the prospect of our own destruction, even extinction...as he said rocks give you perspective...(breaks off to cry a little)...sorry...(switches videoblog off).

MARK: Hello! Anyone there? Help! (*getting louder*). Help! I need help. Please. Is anyone there. Help I'm sort of stuck...please help me.

SUSAN: (*enters, hears but does not see MARK*) Is that you Mark?

MARK: Hello!

SUSAN: Mark!

MARK: Susan? I'm up here.

SUSAN: (*now spotting MARK*) What are you doing up there?

MARK: Er...climbing

SUSAN: I told you not to climb.

MARK: I'm stuck. Help.

SUSAN: Why are you climbing?

MARK: I'm trying to fix some of those spotlights. I need a bit of help.

SUSAN: I told you not to climb. You can just stay there

MARK: But I'm stuck.

SUSAN: We're all stuck dear.

MARK: But I am stuck

SUSAN: We're all stuck.

MARK: Help me...please.

SUSAN: (*Turns to her own thoughts*) Jonathan I hope you like this place, a place for your spirit. Oh Jonathan, why did you have to leave me. Why me?

MARK: Susan? You okay?

SUSAN: You left me, alone. I miss you so much.

MARK: Susan what's wrong?

SUSAN: What do you care.

MARK: About what?

SUSAN: Oh Jonathan, if only...if only...never mind.

MARK: It's Mark, Susan, me Mark. Up here, yoo-hoo.

SUSAN: I know, I really do.

MARK: Can you please help.

SUSAN: Not sure I have the energy any more.

MARK: But you have to. I'm stuck.

SUSAN: I don't think I can, don't you listen.

MARK: I'm cramping, in my legs.

SUSAN: Well that's not very nice.

MARK: (*Cries in pain from cramp*) Arrgh...Can't you help.

SUSAN: Okay, first you need to embrace the rock.

MARK: Arrghhhhh...

SUSAN: Embrace the rock.

MARK: What?

SUSAN: Embrace the rock Mark, become one with its surface.

MARK: Are you out of your mind...argh...

SUSAN: I guess I am (*SUSAN goes to leave*).

MARK: Come back, don't leave me.

SUSAN: (*She returns*) Are you listening now.

MARK: To your every word.

SUSAN: So shut your eyes and feel the rock.

MARK: I'm feeling it, I'm feeling it.

SUSAN: Rock is liquid, atoms, molecules, only in our mind is it solid.

MARK: I feel it, liquid...*(in pain)* oh my god.

SUSAN: Are you relaxed yet?

MARK: Susan stop joking around, I'm in pain up here.

SUSAN: *(Almost whispering)* Not as much pain as I'm in.

MARK: Susan, I'm serious, please help.

SUSAN: Are you embracing the rock yet.

MARK: I'm embracing the rock.

SUSAN: Close your eyes.

MARK: For god's sake. My eyes are closed. Argh....

SUSAN: Breathe.

MARK: I'm breathing.

SUSAN: In, hold, one, two, three, exhale.

MARK: In, one, two, three *(panting and cries in pain from cramp)*

SUSAN: In, hold, one, two, and three.

MARK: *(Panting)* One, two, three...

SUSAN: Feel the rock's face.

MARK: I'm kissing the bloody thing.

SUSAN: Feel the rock.

MARK: Someone help me!

SUSAN: Mark what are you doing up there?

MARK: I'm stuck.

SUSAN: We'd better get you unstuck then.

MARK: I'm embracing the rock, honest.

SUSAN: Good. Then let's begin.

MARK: Please be gentle.

SUSAN: *(SUSAN now talks MARK down the rock face by telling him where hand and foot holds are)* Lower your left leg, there's a ledge a few inches down. As you do move your right hand to the next crag and grip it, then repeat with your right leg and left hand

MARK: I can't move.

SUSAN: Relax.

MARK: I can't.

SUSAN: You can.

MARK: I can't.

SUSAN: Trust me, you can.

(Slowly MARK starts to move and then manages to quite easily climb down the rock face.

Once on the ground he sits down to recover)

SUSAN: There, how does that feel.

MARK: Better...better.

SUSAN: *(Tearful again)*

MARK: Are you okay?

SUSAN: Oh you know dear, we keep smiling.

MARK: Smiling? About what?

SUSAN: Don't you even remember, it is the anniversary of Jonathan's accident.

MARK: Oh.

SUSAN: Why does it continue to hurt so much, it's two years.

MARK: It must be hard.

SUSAN: Yes.

MARK: Looking back. Memories.

SUSAN: No. It's the future we'll never enjoy that really hurts.

MARK: At least there is the Rock Peace Garden.

SUSAN: You're right, rocks don't die and leave you.

MARK: Yeah, these big boys aren't going anywhere.

SUSAN: If only that was true.

MARK: I tell you I'm not moving them.

SUSAN: Rocks are always moving, they're constantly changing.

MARK: Not that I'd notice.

SUSAN: And you have no faith.

MARK: Now you're kidding, mountains moved by faith, look at these blisters, that's what is moving your rocks. These hands and power tools.

SUSAN: I appreciate your help Mark, if not your faith.

MARK: I'm doing my best.

SUSAN: And I am appreciating it. And how is the accommodation shaping up?

MARK: The Cave Gift Shop? It's fine, a good place to camp down with its own ensuite public washrooms and toilet. Fantastic.

SUSAN: It is only meant to be temporary, until you get back on your feet.

MARK: I know. But I was kind of hoping you'd change your mind. I was kind of hoping/

SUSAN: ...Stop right there.

MARK: But I thought/

SUSAN: Stop there.

MARK: I felt we had grown close enough now.

SUSAN: I think we are seeing the same thing differently.

MARK: Our relationship...

SUSAN: Is not a relationship.

MARK: I thought we would be together.

SUSAN: You're not moving in with me. We discussed this.

MARK: But Susan...

SUSAN: Please, not today of all days.

MARK: You know we all have to move on sometime, even you.

SUSAN: Excuse me

MARK: You have your life to live, we can't remain in the past.

SUSAN: What are you implying, that I don't live my own life. How dare you.

MARK: Susan, I thought you and I...

SUSAN: You and I are friends.

MARK: Don't you care for me.

SUSAN: I take care of many people.

MARK: But you and I are alone, we could be together...

SUSAN: That's right we're alone, together.

MARK: And working together, the two of us. I sort of like that (*MARK goes to grab*

SUSAN'S hands)

SUSAN: (*Breaking free*) Mark don't. Just don't.

MARK: We've come to rely on each other.

SUSAN: No, you rely on me.

MARK: I'm sorry...I simply thought...

SUSAN: Yes?

MARK: Yes.

SUSAN: You thought wrong.

MARK: But the way you behave...

SUSAN: I like you Mark, but let's be honest you're not my type.

MARK: I'm not your type, huh.

SUSAN: No.

MARK: I'm the type to move your rocks here and there and everywhere. I'm here to be at your beck and call to complete your precious rock garden in Jonathan's name.

SUSAN: How dare you.

MARK: Well? Isn't that true. I'm your type enough for that, to be your friend, to do Jonathan's work.

SUSAN: You're free to leave when you want dear.

MARK: Good enough to be your resident cave man when it suits you.

SUSAN: Okay, okay, keep staying in the Cave Gift Shop until you find somewhere else.

MARK: Thanks, but I'll find a new cave.

SUSAN: Please Mark, I need to be alone. Leave me alone.

MARK: Alone.

SUSAN: I'm sorry.

MARK: *(Starts picking up an armful of small rocks from ground)* Right. Alone. These need moving, I'll gather these up, alone. See you then.

SUSAN: Yes, later.

MARK: Later.

SUSAN: Okay.

MARK: I'll be in my cave if you need me *(MARK exits into cave)*.

SUSAN: *(To rock face)* Jonathan, I am sorry, so sorry, why did you leave me, I feel so lonely, I miss you so much. Are you there, can I send you good thoughts, please send some to me, I love you, I miss you so much, I love you...*(SUSAN is overcome by her grief as lights fade)*.

SCENE 2

(MARK'S videoblog)

MARK: So what does acedia mean to those long-forgotten fourth century desert monks. I like this story that sums it all up so neatly. There was a monk called Abba Paul who like many desert monks wove baskets made from palm fronds as he prayed. Being seven days journey from the nearest town it was too far and costly for him to travel to sell his baskets. But he continued to toil away doing a full days labour making baskets and when his cave was filled with a whole year's work, he would burn up all the baskets he had so carefully toiled over each year and then start all over again. Welcome to the 21st century Abba Paul.

SCENE 3

MOLLY and SUSAN enter together, both are holding clipboards and pens, they both take notes as dialogue unfolds.

MOLLY: (*Pointing off stage*) I thought over here we could put the children's fossil discovery rock bin.

SUSAN: Great idea. Means they will be in the heart of the Rock Peace Garden.

MOLLY: I don't think there will be any health and safety issues, but I'll double check.

SUSAN: Children playing with rocks and stones, no problem.

MOLLY: As long as they don't throw rocks at each other.

SUSAN: It's meant to be a Rock Peace Garden.

MOLLY: Perhaps we need more displays to emphasize the 'peace' theme.

SUSAN: Okay, I'll write something, create some leaflets.

MOLLY: Good. I've found a supplier to produce the pet rock packages for the Cave Gift Shop.

SUSAN: Right, another job done.

MOLLY: But we still need a name for the refreshments section.

SUSAN: How about the Hard Rock Café.

MOLLY: I think its already been done. I could check out the copyright position.

SUSAN: I was joking.

MOLLY: I'm not.

SUSAN: Okay, what about Rock Café.

MOLLY: Not sure. What about the Rock and Sandwich café.

SUSAN: So there's food, snacks, drinks...

MOLLY: Rock and Diner?

SUSAN: Rock and Snack?

MOLLY: Rock and...

SUSAN: Rock and...rock and...

MOLLY: There must be something. Rock and...

SUSAN: Rock and...

SUSAN and MOLLY: Rock and Roll

SUSAN: The Rock and Roll Sandwich café.

MOLLY: No, no the Rock and Roll Café.

SUSAN: Done. High fives! (*MOLLY and SUSAN 'high five'*)

MOLLY: I will need access to the Cave Gift Shop soon to do the retail layouts.

SUSAN: I know, he's still there.

MOLLY: I don't mind seeing him, but I need the space to work.

SUSAN: I asked him to leave. I'm a bit concerned about him.

MOLLY: Yeah, he likes to make people concerned.

SUSAN: I'm worried he seems a bit down, behaving funny.

MOLLY: You mean depressed?

SUSAN: Could be.

MOLLY: That's the role Mark likes to play the depressed little puppy.

SUSAN: I think you're being a bit cynical.

MOLLY: What, me and Mark, cynical?

SUSAN: I know.

MOLLY: I got the impression you and him were, you know, getting along rather well.

SUSAN: Oh I don't know, I suppose we connected, like you and I.

MOLLY: Connected!

SUSAN: It's strange, since Jonathan's passing I haven't wanted to, you know, be with another man.

MOLLY: Don't you think Jonathan would want you to find happiness again.

SUSAN: I could never love anyone the way I love Jonathan.

MOLLY: There are many types of love.

SUSAN: And let me tell you Mark is not my type.

MOLLY: Nor mine it turned out.

SUSAN: I suppose that's why you married him.

MOLLY: Now who's cynical.

SUSAN: Sorry.

MOLLY: I am sad about Mark and I, I want the best for him. So did you and him, you know, 'connect'.

SUSAN: Stop it.

MOLLY: Come on, I don't mind.

SUSAN: There is, was, a bit of attraction.

MOLLY: So did you...you and him.

SUSAN: This is all about trying not to make yourself so guilty about Derek, isn't?

MOLLY: No, but I do want to see if Mark can be mature about Derek and I.

SUSAN: There was one night.

MOLLY: And?

SUSAN: Nothing.

MOLLY: Nothing what?

SUSAN: Nothing to talk about the next day.

MOLLY: Oh one of those nights, I've had one...*(thinks)*...or two of those.

SUSAN: I'm sorry.

MOLLY: Don't be. You and Mark, can't believe it.

SUSAN: Shut up you! Look, you were off with Derek.

MOLLY: Yes, yes, yes.

SUSAN: Yes, and nothing came from it with me and Mark.

MOLLY: Right. The Cave Gift Shop.

SUSAN: Yes, the Cave Gift Shop.

MOLLY: I've arranged some rock art, sale or return.

SUSAN: And a friend will supply us with the rock cakes.

(MOLLY and SUSAN exit as they continue ticking off jobs)

MOLLY: Tick. The stoneware pottery arrived yesterday...

SUSAN: Tick. Salad of the day will be rocket...

MOLLY: Tick. *(Both exit)*

(Blackout)

SCENE 4

(SUSAN'S videoblog)

SUSAN: Hello rock fans! Susan again and it's one week to opening of the Rock Peace Garden, it's so exciting. A big thank you to all the people who are making my dream come true. And I know Jonathan would want to tell you he's as thrilled as I am. Special hugs and kisses to my friends Molly and Derek, real rocks to lean on. And I don't know what I would do without you and the many donations you've made to have rocks named after your loved ones. A true monument that will last for millions of years. Anyone can make a contribution, go to my blog SheRocks and click the rock face icon for our secure online payment service. Thanks for your support and keep rocking. Love Susan.

SCENE 5

DEREK is wandering in the Rock Peace Garden, he has a piece of paper clearly following instructions. He stops near the Cave Gift Shop entrance. There is the sound of some hammering and of music almost starting, then dieing down, then starting, the tune not quite discernable.

DEREK: *(To himself, looking at instructions on a piece of paper)* First left, follow the rock face, then right and the Cave should be, yes, here.

DEREK: *(Calling out)* Mark, Mark are you there?

MARK: *(From inside cave)* Hello! Can I help you?

DEREK: Is that you Mark?

MARK: Just a minute.

(More hammering, a lot of smoke, then the music starts up, it is the theme from 2001: A Space Odyssey. Through the smoke MARK emerges from the cave, more disheveled, in one hand he carries Happy by a leg, in the other is a tool such as a hammer held like a weapon. The two men face off against each other. The music breaks down again and stops).

DEREK: Mark?

MARK: Er...Derek.

DEREK: What's happened to you?

MARK: I'm happy.

DEREK: Happy, well that's good.

MARK: Happy with Happy *(Shows DEREK his bear)*

DEREK: Strange place this.

MARK: You into rocks or what?

DEREK: Rocks? Oh, of course not, no time for geology.

MARK: Yes, busy man.

DEREK: Is this some kind of undercover research project.

MARK: Sorry?

DEREK: Undercover research project, rocks and health, your sort of policy stuff.

MARK: Not as far as I know.

DEREK: So what are you doing here?

MARK: I live here.

DEREK: You live here! What are you really doing here.

MARK: It's true I live here.

DEREK: In this cave?

MARK: What do you want?

DEREK: Er...Molly, your ex-wife she said I would find you here.

MARK: Oh, that Molly. Did she want me to kill you?

DEREK: Ha, ha. Very good. Look Mark, these things happen. She told me things were over between you.

MARK: Oh yeah. I had better kill you now then.

DEREK: Look Mark be reasonable.

MARK: I think I am *(Raises hammer with menace)*.

DEREK: Look Molly sent me, she expects me back.

MARK: Then I had better kill her as well.

DEREK: Always the sense of humor, ha, ha.

(MARK lunges towards DEREK but with Happy the bear as his weapon and tussles

DEREK with Happy's body making bear growling sounds. DEREK falls to the ground in surprise and shock)

MARK: Ha, ha, just joking.

DEREK: *(Gets up and regains composure, MARK helps brush him down)*

DEREK: Mark, I wanted to see you face-to-face, have a little chat about your future.

MARK: Well Happy and I are all ears.

DEREK: There's some good news.

MARK: For whom?

DEREK: Let me set out a potential scenario for you Mark. I'm sure you remember that research funding proposal we put in.

MARK: No.

DEREK: The big research council funded project.

MARK: Oh yes, that one, the one I researched, wrote, prepared and submitted.

DEREK: Yes, the one we put in on behalf of the department as part of your job.

MARK: The one in which I am down as a principal researcher.

DEREK: Well good news. I heard on the grapevine the department will be successful in getting the funding. It's a big project and we've done awfully well to get such a prestigious, heavyweight, contract.

MARK: Heavyweight.

DEREK: Your name does appear on the proposal as you say.

MARK: By the way I noticed John Franklin's name is not on the department's staff list.

DEREK: What?

MARK: I saw that John Franklin is not a member of the department.

DEREK: Ah yes...we came to a mutual understanding, our interests didn't quite meld.

MARK: So he went somewhere else?

DEREK: What about the research project we've just won.

MARK: I won.

DEREK: Using the department's reputation, of course.

MARK: And not the reputation of my work, of course.

DEREK: We were very pleased to give you the opportunity.

MARK: Yes it's a good project.

DEREK: Well we've been thinking, assuming the grapevine is right, we've been thinking we could use you as a, well, a sort of consultant on the project, say three or four days a month, so you can keep your hand in.

MARK: *(Pause)* You think.

DEREK: I think I could swing it with the Dean.

MARK: I'm not interested.

DEREK: I'm sorry?

MARK: My project, my success.

DEREK: Your name can go on some of the publications.

MARK: As I said, no thank you.

DEREK: Excuse me.

MARK: No.

DEREK: What are you saying.

MARK: No.

DEREK: I don't want us to fall out.

MARK: We've not even fallen in.

DEREK: Come on Mark, its just business. It'll be a win-win for all of us.

MARK: No, it's a lose for you and a win for me. You're not getting the project.

DEREK: I think we are.

MARK: I also contacted the research council, to see how things were progressing.

Without me being at the university they've found another one.

DEREK: Another university.

MARK: Yes. In fact John Franklin helped me.

DEREK: You what...John Franklin? You know Franklin?

MARK: Known him on and off for years.

DEREK: You never said.

MARK: You've lost the contract, Derek.

DEREK: How.../

MARK: That's right it gone to Franklin.

DEREK: You'll never succeed without us, our infrastructure, our reputation.

MARK: I'm going to be working on the new research project so I can keep my hand in as you say.

DEREK: That's not possible.

MARK: But it is. So if I can't get you anything, a rock, a small but neatly formed fossil I'm quite busy.

DEREK: You haven't heard the last of this.

MARK: A rock cake/

DEREK: *(Starting to exit)* This is not over/

MARK: A rock sculpture/

DEREK: You'll regret this/

MARK: A book on volcanoes...*(DEREK exists shop still grumbling)*. Oh well, next time then, be glad to help. Bye.

(MARK starts to work building a stone man from rocks. Blackout)

SCENE 6

(MARK'S videoblog)

MARK: Hello! Interrupting again, sorry, experiencing a wave of guilt seeing that. I was lying of course. I had met John Franklin. Once. I was on the same table at a conference dinner a few years ago. He didn't speak to me all evening. As for that contract, I'm sure Derek's department won it, I've no idea to be honest. But as I told you I'm beyond being able to care, even what you think of me now. I'm feeling tired, very tired. Sorry.

SCENE 7

(MARK is building a stone man made of rocks, he continues as dialogue unfolds)

SUSAN: *(Enters carrying a lunch box)* I've brought you something to eat.

MARK: Put it over there.

SUSAN: Peace offering?

MARK: What do you want.

SUSAN: Are you still mad at me.

MARK: Why should I be.

SUSAN: Because I can't give you what you want.

MARK: And what is it I want.

SUSAN: I don't know.

MARK: You know my needs and wants.

SUSAN: A little. But I can't give you me.

MARK: So what is it you really want Susan.

SUSAN: The Rock Peace Garden to open on time.

MARK: Funny. I think that's the least of your neediness.

SUSAN: Really. You think that you know what I want, what I want deep down?

MARK: Why couldn't I.

SUSAN: I'm not sure I know you anymore.

MARK: I never asked, did you go to work while with Jonathan?

SUSAN: I did as a matter of fact, I was a teacher, primary school.

MARK: Explains a lot.

SUSAN: Why.

MARK: Because I hated school.

SUSAN: Yet you ended up working at a university. We must have done something right.

MARK: Don't mistake a love of learning with anything you're taught at school.

SUSAN: I don't think your experience is typical.

MARK: There, a good teacher argument.

SUSAN: I loved teaching.

MARK: Yet no children of your own.

SUSAN: We couldn't.

MARK: So regrets.

SUSAN: No, Jonathan and I had a wonderful life together.

MARK: And what did he do.

SUSAN: Surprised you haven't guessed, he was a geologist. He worked for mining companies.

MARK: A career exploiting rocks.

SUSAN: Don't start this again.

MARK: What, being jealous of a dead person.

SUSAN: If you have to put it that way. I told you I love Jonathan. We connected, yes, but not like I was with him

MARK: Thanks. So I'm fine for a fling while you go through a stage of 'oh well what's to lose'.

SUSAN: I don't deserve this.

MARK: Don't flatter yourself.

SUSAN: I would like you to leave the Rock Peace Garden Mark, we open next week and you need to leave.

MARK: I'll finish my stone man.

SUSAN: I'll finish that

MARK: Pass me that rock then.

SUSAN: Which one?

MARK: Over there (*SUSAN tries to find the right stone*)

(*MARK moves to sit to eat the lunch SUSAN brought. He watches her as she tries to build the stone man*)

MARK: Don't you think you're being a little self-righteous.

SUSAN: How am I self-righteous.

MARK: You know, doing the rock garden in Jonathan's memory, going on and on about the sacrifice you're making.

SUSAN: It is a monument to love.

MARK: Or a monument to your own ego, have you thought about that for a moment.

SUSAN: You're so cruel, I thought you were a better person than this.

MARK: Oh I was a better person, once. Look at yourself, courting the media, your self-serving videoblog to create an audience for your act as the noble widow, and let's not forget soliciting donations and working out how to maximize your income with your new friend Molly.

SUSAN: You can be a very bitter person, Molly says the same.

MARK: Let's keep her out of it shall we.

SUSAN: Why, isn't this what it's all about.

MARK: No it's all about you and about you exploiting rocks like Jonathan did when he was alive. Let go for god's sake, let go.

SUSAN: Shut up, and shut up about Jonathan, you know nothing about him.

MARK: I think I do, look he's all around me.

SUSAN: Oh what's the point.

MARK: The point is honesty, integrity.

SUSAN: Give me a break.

MARK: Why don't I do just that, give you a break from all this (*MARK throws his food aside and picks up a large hammer and starts lashing out at rocks with extreme aggression*).

MARK: *(As he hammers)* Let's smash away our memories. Break our connection. Let's smash whatever gets in our way. What holds us back. What stops us living our life the way we want to. Let's smash all we want, all we need. Smash. Smash. Smash. Let's smash our way to the future.

(MARK turns to the stone man and starts to destroy it)

SUSAN: Stop! Stop!

MARK: Smash! Smash! Smash!

SUSAN: Please Mark, show some compassion.

MARK: *(Hammering away)* No more Jonathan. No more Mark.

SUSAN: Enough! Enough.

(SUSAN starts to break down)

SUSAN: Enough...you've made your point...you've made your point. I'm sorry, so, so sorry. Please stop...

MARK: Why, why should I stop, what does any of this mean.

SUSAN: Don't, don't...

MARK: Broken dreams, broken souls, broken hearts.

SUSAN: You're mad, crazy.

MARK: Then let's smash it all *(MARK tries to hand the hammer to SUSAN on the ground)*. Take it! Go on take it.

SUSAN: Okay, you win, you win *(she takes the hammer from MARK and weakly starts hitting rocks)*

MARK: So how does it feel. Smashing?

SUSAN: Yes, smashing.

MARK: Good.

SUSAN: You're an idiot Mark.

MARK: Once a school teacher, always a school teacher (*MARK snatches the hammer back from SUSAN. During this MOLLY runs on stage, alerted by the hammering and shouting, she stops when she sees MARK hovering over SUSAN*).

MOLLY: (*Quietly*) Mark...Mark!

(*MARK doesn't hear her at first*)

MOLLY: Mark...(*MARK turns and sees MOLLY, he drops the hammer looking defeated*)

MARK: Oh great, now it's you.

(*MOLLY runs over to comfort SUSAN*)

MOLLY: (*To SUSAN*) You okay?

SUSAN: No, he's crazy.

MOLLY: He's really harmless. (*To MARK*) What have you done, why is Susan so upset.

MARK: (*Calming down*) I don't know, I've done nothing. Nothing. Preparing some rocks for the opening day's exhibits.

MOLLY: Here let's get you up. There, you're okay.

SUSAN: I got a little upset. I think Mark did too (*MARK bows in acknowledgement*).

MOLLY: Let's get you into the Cave Gift Shop for some water and clean you up.

SUSAN: Thanks, I think I can make it on my own (*SUSAN exits into Cave Gift Shop*)

MOLLY: (*To MARK*) What are you thinking.

MARK: And nice to see you too.

MOLLY: I've been meaning too, but you know, gets busy.

MARK: I bet.

MOLLY: You and Susan, what's been going on.

MARK: Who knows.

MOLLY: What kind of answer is that. I've never seen her so upset.

MARK: Something to do with Jonathan, opening of the Rock Peace Garden...

MOLLY: And nothing to do with you; are you out of your mind and after all she's done for you.

MARK: Yes, oh so much.

MOLLY: Cut the sarcasm, she's also my friend.

MARK: Best buddies are we.

MOLLY: As a matter of fact yes.

MARK: Have to claim her as well.

MOLLY: Will you never accept some responsibility for your life.

MARK: Responsibility, look who's talking.

MOLLY: I don't have to listen to your belittling any more.

MARK: *(Starts piling up rocks that he's previously scattered)* Susan's your friend.

MOLLY: And I hope you are going to apologise to her.

MARK: You know what your new friend did.

MOLLY: Are you listening.

MARK: A real good friend.

MOLLY: What are you going on about.

MARK: No friends in war or love, you know.

MOLLY: Where's this leading.

MARK: So your friend, told you of her little romance?

MOLLY: Romance.

MARK: Not so cock-sure now.

MOLLY: This is ridiculous.

MARK: Susan's secret romance is far from ridiculous.

MOLLY: Oh my god, Derek?

MARK: You what?

MOLLY: No way, Derek and Susan. You really are evil.

MARK: Are you being stupid. Not Derek. With me. Me.

MOLLY: *(Bursts out laughing)* Your romance with Susan.

MARK: Doesn't that surprise you. Two can play at your game.

MOLLY: You mean that one night Susan spends all her time trying to forget.

MARK: What...she told you.

MOLLY: We're friends.

MARK: It meant more than one night.

MOLLY: She was lonely and hurt Mark, and so were you. It was night of comfort, no more.

(During this DEREK enters looking very concerned seeing MOLLY and MARK together)

DEREK: There you are my love. What's going on here.

MARK: *(Completely defeated now)* Oh even better, the wife snatcher and job sacker arrives.

MOLLY: It's okay darling, Susan got a little upset over some tiff with Mark.

MARK: Blame me, why don't you.

MOLLY: Are you sure you are all right.

MOLLY: No harm done (*She rubs her midriff region with her hand, DEREK puts an arm round her smitten, he puts his hand over hers on her tummy as they look into each other's eyes*)

MARK: (*Penny drops*) You've got to be kidding.

DEREK: There is something we want to tell you.

MARK: Oh god (*MARK looks even more defeated, head in hands*)

DEREK: Molly and I are pregnant.

MOLLY: Please be excited for us.

MARK: Oh god.

DEREK: Being pregnant I can tell you is such a privilege.

(*SUSAN returns from the Cave Gift Shop with some water*)

SUSAN: I heard you break the good news to Mark.

MOLLY: That we're pregnant. So exciting.

DEREK: Isn't she glorious. Glowing.

SUSAN: You both are.

MARK: Why, tell me why.

DEREK: It was the Amazon.

MOLLY: The lush vegetation.

MARK: Bloody fecundity.

DEREK: Conception took place there.

MARK: Too much information.

SUSAN: (*To MARK*) I felt so sorry for you.

MARK: No need to feel sorry.

MOLLY: When we were together you didn't seem to care.

SUSAN: We care for you, we really do, more than you know.

MARK: What do I know, I know this. I thought I didn't care, I couldn't care, I was numbed about caring, but seeing you three, you know what I know, I do care. I care that you left me for that jerk, I really do care about my research and that I lost my job. Susan I cared for you, when you took an interest in me when I thought you needed me. You were more than one night. But you know in all of this I forgot one thing. I forgot how to care for myself, if only I took care of myself then I could care for all this.

MOLLY: I'm sorry you feel like this.

DEREK: That consultancy job is still open, we did get the contract, my grapevine is always right. *(To MOLLY)* We had better be going home, you look tired.

MOLLY: I am a bit. Keep in touch Mark, we'd like that.

MARK: Yeah, yeah.

(DEREK and MOLLY exit arm in arm)

SUSAN: Well then.

MARK: Well then *(Pause)*.

SUSAN: I'll...see you tomorrow.

MARK: Yep, back to the grindstone.

SUSAN: Opening next week.

(SUSAN exits collecting the lunch box on her way).

MARK: Rock on.

(MARK starts picking up rocks to rebuild the stone man, lights dim, MARK freezes as the videoblog comes on, it is SUSAN. In this one she looks expensively dressed, immaculate hairdo, looking very up market)

SUSAN: Hello rock fans! It's our first anniversary since the Rock Garden opened and what a wonderful twelve months it's been. Record number of visitors, breaking all forecasts. Thank you all. And today let's give a big rock garden welcome to Molly who's joining us as our director of customer satisfaction *(picture of Molly with baby girl)* and her little helper baby Sapphire, so sweet at four months old, remember who rocks you baby! *(Back to SUSAN)* So here's to keeping on rocking for another year.

(Videoblog goes blank. Lights fade to blackout).

THE END

