**THE LAST PICNIC**

(a 50 minute black comedy)

by Claire Booker

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**CHARACTERS**

Richard Jenkins A City actuary in his 30s or 40s.

Juliette His wife. A social worker.

Dan Crisp Richard's old school friend.

Aunt Dot Juliette’s eccentric aunt.

Berenice An attractive young French girl.

Tramp A woman of indefinite age and dubious table manners.

**SET**

The action takes place in summer on the beach at Littlehampton. It requires a simple set to represent an open beach.

**PROPS**

An inflatable dinghy is needed for the first scene. A sandcastle appears in later scenes and should be constructed so that it can split in two. Beach paraphernalia includes deckchairs, towels, a picnic hamper, a large black umbrella and two buckets of sand. A mobile phone and a pair of binoculars are required but don’t need to be functional. In the final scene, two pairs of upturned legs are required. This can be achieved either by using actors and covering their recumbent bodies, or by using dummy legs.

**SCENE ONE**

Juliette and Berenice are sunning themselves in deckchairs, whilst Dan and Richard battle it out on the ground doing press-ups. Aunt Dot is engrossed in a book entitled 'Cosmic Catastrophe - The Fate of the Universe'. She wears a sou’wester and plastic mac.

Rich (out of breath and trailing) Twenty six, twenty seven . . .

Dan (vigorously) Thirty five, thirty six . . .

Rich He's bending his arms!

Dan Thirty seven, thirty eight . . .

Bere (spurring him on) Vas-y Daniel!

Rich He's cheating, Juju.

Juli Oh for heaven's sake.

Dan Thirty nine, forty. Yo! (jumps up and makes a victory salute)

Bere Magnifique! (to Dan) You are so strong.

Rich He cheated, Juju.

Dan Still a bad loser, eh?

Rich I’m not a bad loser.

Dan Always were - even at school.

Rich He was bending his arms.

Juli Richard. We're on holiday.

Rich (mobile phone rings) Oh, what now?

Juli Can’t you switch it off?

Rich (into phone) Yes?

Bere Daniel. Come and do my back now. I am burning.

Dan Hot and sexy. Just how I like you.

Bere Kissy wissy. (Berenice giggles as Dan applies suntan oil to her back)

Rich (into the phone) Twenty five percent? (shakes phone) Jack? Jack, I'm losing you . . . bloody tunnel . . . (shakes it again, exasperated) The man’s an idiot. (dials again) I’m surrounded by idiots.

Dot (grimacing) That smell.

Juli You'll be fine, Dot.

Dot A horrible fishy aroma.

Juli It’s the sea.

Dot (looks out at the audience in horror) Ju-ju, I’m going to have one of my turns.

Juli (to Dot) No you’re not. Remember your breathing. (she hunts in her bag) Breath out. (pulls out a brown paper bag. To Dot) Breathe in, one, two, breathe out, three, four, five . . . (Dot does so)

Dot It's a very flat beach. No natural defences at all.

Juli (puts the bag onto Dot’s face) Breathe into the bag. Breathe out. Remember your affirmation: ‘The irrespressible joy of being Dorothy.”

Dot (through the bag) ‘The irrespressible joy of being Dorothy.”

Juli Good.

Bere The sea is a long, long way, Dot. Look. I cannot see it.

Dan It’s probably reached France by now.

Dot France? Flooded? The Maginot Line stormed. Invasion. Gas!

Juli You’re bigger than this, Dot.

Dot There’s nothing to stop it rolling all the way up the beach, until it reaches my feet, my knees, my thighs . . . (clutches her groin) . . . and beyond.

Rich (*still holding the phone*) You’re in no danger of drowning. None of us are.

Dot How can you be so certain?

Rich Well, strictly speaking I can’t.

Juli Richard.

Rich (into phone) Yes, hello? Jack? (he stands away from the others whilst conversing on his mobile)

Dot He knows. He knows. We’re going to drown!

Juli Breathe out, three, four, five . . . breathe in, one, two

Bere I think it is very sad.

Dot Am I mad? Do you think I’m mad?

Dan Mad?

Juli Certainly not.

Bere Batty, yes. (the others freeze her out) I say something wrong?

Dot It’s not my fault the polar ice caps are melting. When I polish furniture I do it with elbow grease. Ditto personal hygiene. Nothing has replaced carbolic soap in my affections.

Bere What is carbolic?

Dot If you listen very carefully at night, you can hear the Arctic drip, drip dripping!

Juli (to Richard) I wish you’d fix that tap.

Rich (still on phone) Sorry darling?

Dot Breathe in, one, two, breathe out, three, four, five. . .

Tramp (enters, carrying two metal buckets containing sand, and singing to herself) Seagulls for breakfast, seagulls for tea, seagulls for breakfast, seagulls for tea . . .(talking to the buckets) Ok there, Win? Easy she goes. (she settles herself down. The others look unsettled) Home sweet home.

Dot What is that smell? (notices tramp with horror)

Tramp (sings tunelessly) Wherever I roam, there’s no place like home.

Dan Ignore her, she’ll go away.

Tramp The sea's out, the sun's up, there's seagulls for supper.

Dot Make her go away, Juju. You’re good at that sort of thing.

Bere What is that on her head?

Rich (*his phone call over*) Oh, just what we need. Has she asked for money yet?

Bere That is a good idea. If we give her a bit of money . . .

Rich Berenice! No eye contact!

Bere I have 50p.

Rich No.

Bere It’s only 50p.

Rich Only 50p, but it’ll still go on booze. (to the tramp) Sorry, love. Bit of a cash flow problem at the moment. (pulls out his wallet) Don’t suppose you take Barclay Card?

Tramp Piss off.

Rich I’ll take that as a ‘no’.

Juli Leave her alone, Richard. She’s got the same right as us to be on the beach. (the tramp opens up a black umbrella and shades the two buckets)

Dot (deep sigh) Ah, that’s better. The wind’s changed. (gets her book out and starts reading)

Rich You see. A firm hand sorts people like her out.

Dan (amorously to Berenice) Come here. Let’s get our tongues around a bit of Franglais.

Bere Naughty naughty. (Bere and Dan kissing and canoodle)

Juli Are they going to keep that up all week?

Rich Dan, give it a break. Berenice, there’s more to life than mindless sex.

Bere Is there?

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