

Characters

PETER
DEBBIE
ELSA
THE NEIGHBOUR
PC JUNKIN
ALEX
ROSIE

This text went to press before the end of rehearsals and so may differ slightly from the play as performed.

ACT ONE

Deck of Cruise Ship

Simply indicated – a row of deck chairs at the front of the stage.

Above this – and at all times – there is a screen that shows additional action. At the moment it shows the sky and the sea.

PETER and ELSA, sitting on deck. PETER (mid-forties) is studying his laptop with a frown.

Two deckchairs along, is ELSA – they are clearly acquainted with each other, but are not fellow travellers. She is a powerful battleaxe of a woman, hard to guess her age.

When they speak she is obviously American – drawling, confident, unabashed – and he is English – mordant and always slightly cross.

ELSA. What are you looking at?

PETER. Donald Trump.

ELSA. Why?

PETER. He makes me angry.

ELSA. Do you like being angry?

PETER. I love being angry. I never know what I think about anything until I'm against it. It's why I read the *Guardian*.

ELSA contemplates this for a moment.

ELSA...I don't have a relationship with anger.

PETER. A what, sorry?

ELSA. I'm never really angry about anything.

PETER. How can you start the day without hating someone?
It's why they have news in the morning.

ELSA. I guess I just really like people. I'm people positive.

PETER. Yeah?

ELSA. It's just who I am. I don't hate anyone.

PETER. Yeah? What about him?

He shows her the picture on his laptop. She studies it for a moment, considers.

ELSA. I'd do him.

PETER. Donald Trump??

ELSA. Yeah. I think he's funny. I'd do him.

PETER. *Look* at him.

ELSA. I'm looking.

PETER. He's ancient.

ELSA (*shrugs*). My husband's dead – the bar is low.

PETER. Don't say that. Don't you sit there and say that to me.

On a cruise. When I'm on holiday. Don't say you'd do Donald Trump.

ELSA. I voted for him.

PETER. No. Don't. Don't say that.

ELSA. *Everybody* voted for him.

PETER. He lost the election.

ELSA. He only lost because of fraud and people voting against him.

PETER. Voting against him is not fraud.

ELSA. Oh, Peter, you're all tense now.

PETER. I'm not tense.

ELSA. I can hear you *clenching*.

PETER. I'm not clenching.

ELSA. Oh, honey, look at you – you could snap a proctologist off at the knuckle.

PETER. I'm fine!

ELSA. Are you angry now, Peter?

PETER. Yes! Yes, I am.

ELSA. You're welcome. Enjoy!

PETER laughs. Fair point.

PETER. You know. I'm going to miss our deckchair chats!

ELSA. Me too. I'm always hoping you'll be here when I come out.

PETER. Likewise.

ELSA. You or somebody.

DEBBIE enters. Also mid-forties, PETER's wife – teasing, sunny.

DEBBIE. Have you started packing?

PETER. Broadly.

DEBBIE. Hello, Elsa.

ELSA. Debbie, my sweet. Your husband is angry.

DEBBIE (*checking the laptop*). Donald Trump?

PETER. Have you seen this? Have you seen what he's done now?

DEBBIE. What's he done?

PETER. I'm still reading.

DEBBIE. Why do you have to read about Donald Trump every morning?

PETER. You won't let me have coffee.

DEBBIE. Your *doctor* won't let you have coffee, it's bad for your blood pressure.

PETER. Actually, it's irrelevant. My blood pressure finds a way.

ELSA. My husband loved coffee. He used to say 'Give me coffee or give me death!' Now he's got death. So I guess that worked out.

DEBBIE. You see? Don't you want me to be remembering you fondly some day?

PETER. It's not something I'm actively looking forward to, no.

DEBBIE. Just me then.

PETER. Oh, you're funny. Isn't she funny, my wife?

DEBBIE. So, darling – *have* you started packing?

PETER. I'm homing in.

DEBBIE. Which means?

PETER. Everything's in the cabin. I just have to put it in the case.

DEBBIE. Docking in two hours.

PETER. I know.

DEBBIE. I know you know. And I know you think, if you leave it long enough, I'll pack for you.

(*To* ELSA.) Game of chicken basically.

PETER. Slow chicken.

DEBBIE. Marriage, as it's known.

ELSA. I love your relationship. With all your remarks.

PETER. There you are, darling. Elsa loves our remarks.

ELSA (*to* PETER). You should be more happy though.

PETER. Happiness is misinformation. It's like being an antelope. Somewhere a lion is watching you.

ELSA. Are you ever in Denver?

DEBBIE. Well, no.

ELSA. Might you ever be in Denver?

DEBBIE. Well – I suppose so, it's possible –

ELSA. When you come to Denver, I want you to look me up. Elsa Jean Krakowski.

PETER. Well, of course, we'd love to –

ELSA. Promise me – I mean it. Don't you two *dare* come to Denver without looking me up.

PETER. If we're ever in Denver, we will definitely do that.

ELSA. Elsa Jean Krakowski. Promise?

PETER. We promise!

ELSA. Cross your heart?

PETER. Cross our hearts.

ELSA. Hope to die?

PETER....okay.

ELSA. My husband used to say that. 'Hope to die.' Now he's dead. And people say God doesn't listen.

DEBBIE....Anyway. I think Peter is wanting to go and pack.

PETER. Darling, are you wanting me to go and pack?

DEBBIE. Are you getting that sense?

PETER. Twenty years of marriage – it's like telepathy, but more hostile.

DEBBIE. I'll help you.

PETER. Will you?

DEBBIE. You can't be allowed to pack a suitcase on your own – you'll only get into a fight.

ELSA. You two, go pack. I'm already packed. I'm always packed, because you never know.

DEBBIE. Your friend, Barnaby. I saw him on the upper deck, if you're looking for him.

ELSA. Oh, Barnaby. I have to apologise for Barnaby.