

The Beach Road

(A radio play)

An extract

by

Phil Tong

SCENE 1 - THE INTERVIEW ROOM

**SFX 1 - THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS
ECHOING IN A CORRIDOR TOGETHER
WITH THE SOUNDS OF SLAMMING
DOORS.**

**SFX 2 - A TAPE MACHINE CLICKS INTO
LIFE. THE SOUND MIXED WITH THE
SOUNDS OF A ROUGH SEA LASHING THE
COASTLINE UNDER A SEVERE WIND.**

POLICE OFFICER

Could you give your name for the tape, please?

BERNARD

I want to speak to my wife.

POLICE OFFICER

Just your name for the tape. Thank you, Sir.

BERNARD

I said... I want to speak to my wife.

POLICE OFFICER

I'm afraid she's not here, Sir. Now if you could just comply with the request...

BERNARD

She must have telephoned?

POLICE OFFICER

Not that I'm aware of, Sir. Now if you could just say your name for the tape.

BERNARD

I shouldn't be here! I've done nothing wrong!

POLICE OFFICER

Just your name, Sir.

BERNARD

This has all been some terrible mistake.

POLICE OFFICER

Your name, Sir. For the tape.

BERNARD

Bernard Simmons.

POLICE OFFICER

Occupation?

BERNARD

Telephone Engineer.

POLICE OFFICER

And for the tape will you please confirm that you are making this statement, freely and of your own volition?

BERNARD

She wasn't there when I rang. The Desk Sergeant said someone would call her.

POLICE OFFICER

I'm sure you'll understand that I can't possibly comment on what another officer may or may not have been said to you, Sir.

BERNARD

She was expecting me home. It's her birthday.

POLICE OFFICER

My wife's expecting me home tonight too, Sir. So I'd be grateful if we could get this done and dusted as quickly as possible. Now, if you wouldn't mind, in your own words, please...

BERNARD

We were supposed to be going dancing. I promised her. For her birthday.

POLICE OFFICER

If you could just keep to the details of what happened this evening, Sir, we'll be through all this in next to no time.

BERNARD

Sandra. That's her name. My wife. Just in case she calls...

POLICE OFFICER

I appreciate the information, Sir. But in the meantime, if you could... for the tape...please describe the events of this evening, in your own words.

BERNARD

I was on the last job of the day. It was dark. The weather was drawing in. I was driving down the A149. And, like I said, I wanted to get finished. It's my wife Sandra's birthday....

SCENE 2 - ON THE ROAD, IN THE VAN.**SFX 3 (MUSIC) - BARTOK STRING
QUARTET NO 1 (OPUS 7) 1ST MOVEMENT**

BERNARD (V.O.)

This road is full of ghosts; the bends dark with accidents. The black avenue of trees before me, bright with the white glare and onrush of headlights.

**SFX 4 - FEBRUARY WIND AND RAIN BEATS
DOWN ON A COASTAL ROAD IN THE EAST
OF ENGLAND. IN THE MIDST OF THIS WE
HEAR THE SOUND OF A TRANSIT VAN
DRIVING THROUGH THIS APPALLING
WEATHER.****SFX 5 - A MOBILE PHONE RINGS AND IS
ANSWERED. THE MUSIC FADES AS THE
SFX SLIP INTO THE BACKGROUND.**

BERNARD

Hello?

JONNO

(D) Oh, here we go lads, poet on the line!

BERNARD

Do you never tire of all this Jonno?

JONNO

(D) Never, mate!

BERNARD

Then, if you've got nothing useful to say...

JONNO

(D) Keep your hair on, Bernie! Where are you now?

BERNARD

The A149, just below Snettisham.

JONNO

(D) We've got a snag! Technical Services think the break is somewhere in the Heacham area. If you head in that direction, we'll update you when we've pinpointed the fault.

BERNARD

Any idea how long it's going to take?

JONNO

(D) How long is a piece of string?

BERNARD

Great!

JONNO

(D) If I get more detail I'll let you know but, as of now, your guess is as good as mine.

BERNARD

It's just.... I promised Sandra.

JONNO

(D) Hey, did you hear that lads? Bernie's on a promise!

BERNARD

It's her birthday. We're supposed to be going out.

JONNO

(D) Not another bloody poetry reading, is it?

BERNARD

I've got tickets for a 'Salsa' Evening at the Rialto in Hunstanton.

JONNO

(D) Bit old for all of that, aren't you?

BERNARD

No!

JONNO

(D) Livin' at La Vida Loca?

BERNARD

Sandra loves a bit of Ricky Martin.

JONNO

(D) Likes a bit of hip action, does she? Tell you what, Bernie mate, it must be a constant disappointment waking up next to you everyday.

BERNARD

She likes the music! OK?

JONNO

(D) Whatever you say, Bernie lad.

BERNARD

Sorry Jonno, you seem to be breaking up. Afraid I'm going to have to cut you off.

**SFX6 - THE BEEP OF A MOBILE PHONE AS
THE CALL IS ENDED**

BERNARD

Idiot!

SCENE 3 - A LITTLE CHEF

**SFX7 - THE AMBIENT SOUNDS OF A
MOTORWAY SELF-SERVICE RESTAURANT**

DAPHNE

What do you mean, you're not coming?

VALERIE

Just that. Leave me here and I'll get the train back.

DAPHNE

But you can't!

VALERIE

Daphne. This is Kings Lynn, not outer Mongolia. They do have trains here.

DAPHNE

That's not what I meant. And you know it isn't. I just don't understand why.

VALERIE

I should never have agreed to come with you in the first place.

DAPHNE

She's your friend too.

VALERIE

I know that?

DAPHNE

So?

VALERIE

Look, I'm sorry. But, I don't like it. It just doesn't feel right.

DAPHNE

You're the one who's always going on about 'Carpe Diem', saying how we should 'seize the day' and grab every opportunity going.

VALERIE

But George is hardly 'cold in his bed'!

DAPHNE

She wants a bit of fun, Valerie? Is that so shocking? After everything that's happened?

VALERIE

I'm not saying it is. But there is such a thing as 'indecent haste.'

DAPHNE

And you didn't think to say all this back in Purley before we set out?

VALERIE

It was a shock.

DAPHNE

It was a shock for us all.

VALERIE

But now I've had time to think.....

DAPHNE

Can't you just be happy for them?

VALERIE

No. I'm not sure I can.

DAPHNE

Then you're a very selfish old woman!

VALERIE

Am I?

DAPHNE

Well, that's how you're behaving. I've never seen you so bitter.

VALERIE

And I didn't expect you to be so, 'laissez-faire'! Daphne! Besides, I'm not sure I trust that old car of yours. It's a terrible night out there.

DAPHNE

What do you mean? There's nothing wrong with the car.

VALERIE

How do you know? You've never had it properly serviced.

DAPHNE

I like to do my own maintenance.

VALERIE

Well, I don't feel safe!

DAPHNE

Then get the train back, if that's how you feel!

VALERIE

I will!

**SFX8 - THE SOUND OF A CHAIR SCRAPING
BACK ACROSS THE FLOOR**

DAPHNE

I don't know why you always have to spoil things, Valerie. I was really looking forward to us having a lovely weekend up here with Maureen and Ken.

VALERIE

I won't be able to look at him without seeing poor George. Please, Daphne, I don't want to fall out with you about all this.

DAPHNE

You should have thought about that before you started with all this 'train' nonsense.

VALERIE

Then, let's go back together. In the car.

DAPHNE

What? After I've driven all this way? No. You go back if you must. But I'm doing what we agreed - spending the weekend with Maureen and Ken!

VALERIE

The weather's so bad. It worries me.

DAPHNE

Then take the mobile.

VALERIE

What about you?

DAPHNE

I don't need it. The car is fine. I'll ring you when I get there, to put your mind at rest.

VALERIE

Do you know something, Daphne? Never, in my life, have I ever met anyone as stubborn as you!

DAPHNE

Really? Well, I could say the same about you! Valerie.

**SFX 9 - THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS
WALKING AWAY, ACROSS THE CROWDED
RESTAURANT.**

SCENE 4 - ON THE ROAD, IN THE VAN.

**SFX 10 - THE FIRST MOVEMENT OF
SHOSTAKOVICH STRING QUARTET IN C
MINOR**

**SFX 11 - MIXED INTO THE ABOVE ARE THE
SOUNDS OF A TRANSIT VAN ON THE
ROAD. THE WIND AND RAIN HAVE
BECOME WORSE.**

BERNARD

(V.O.) The wind, a sharp steel blast. Hailstorm arrows pierce the fingers of light that probe the blanket of darkness that surrounds me. My eyes blink in the mesmer of this white noise vision. Overhead the cables hum a 'weird sisters' accompaniment to my quest.

**SFX 12 - THE MUSIC IS INTERRUPTED BY A
TRAFFIC ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE RADIO
BU A FEMALE ANNOUNCER**

ANNOUNCER

We interrupt this programme to bring you some weather news. There is a severe weather warning out for the North Norfolk coast tonight. High Spring tides, together with a severe trough of low pressure have caused storm force winds and tides in the area. Motorists are advised that they should not venture out unless their journey is absolutely essential. Visibility is expected to be extremely poor with sleet and snow showers likely, and winds gusting up to 90 miles an hour.

**SFX 13 - THE SHOSTAKOVICH STRING
QUARTET CONTINUES**

BERNARD

Did she think I hadn't noticed?

**SFX 14 - BERNARD'S MOBILE PHONE
RINGS AGAIN.**

BERNARD

Hello?

SANDRA

(D) Bernie? Where are you?

BERNARD

I'm still at work, doll.

SANDRA

(D) You did say you'd try to get home early this evening.

BERNARD

I know. But then the weather came in, and Jonno's got me out on a job.

SANDRA

(D) Didn't you tell him it was my birthday?

BERNARD

Yes. Of course, I did.

SANDRA

(D) So?

BERNARD

You know Jonno.... In one ear and out the other.

SANDRA

(D) So, should I cancel.

BERNARD

No, love. I'll be home. I'm just out Heacham way. Phone lines' are down. Probably all this wind. Once I find the fault I shouldn't think it'll take me very long.

SANDRA

(D) It had to happen on my birthday, didn't it?

I'll make it up to you love.

BERNARD

(D) Will you?

SANDRA

It is your birthday, after all.

BERNARD

(D) I'm all dressed up ready?

SANDRA

Are you?

BERNARD

(D) And I'm wearing your present!

SANDRA

I can't wait!

BERNARD

(D) It might be cold outside, but there's something warm waiting for you back here at home.

SANDRA

Say anymore and I'm likely to crash the van, doll. Trust me, I'll be as quick as I can. I'll ring you when I'm done.

BERNARD

(D) And don't forget! Tonight, I'm only drinking cocktails.

SANDRA

Really?

BERNARD

Remember the last time?

SANDRA

How could I forget?

BERNARD

I'll see you later then.

SANDRA

You most certainly will!

BERNARD

**SFX 15 - THE SOUND OF A MOBILE PHONE
ENDING**

BERNARD

She likes her present! Woohoo! And tonight, Bernie boy, you are going to 'ROCK'!

**SFX 16 - BERNARD'S MOBILE PHONE
RINGS AGAIN**

JONNO

(D) So where are you now Bernie?

BERNARD

Jonno, you old bastard, if this job turns out to be difficult, I'm going to pay you a visit, personally, in the middle of the night, and slice your bits off!

JONNO

(D) And here's me thinking you enjoyed your work!

BERNARD

I've just had Sandra on the phone, and she wants to know what time I'm getting home!

JONNO

(D) No worries. Technical Services reckon the line's down around junction 53 on the Heacham Beach road.

BERNARD

Near the bottom of Folgate?

JONNO

(D) That's the one. How close are you?

BERNARD

Couple of minutes away.

JONNO

(D) OK. Give me a bell if you have any problems locating the fault.

BERNARD

And when I'm done?

JONNO

(D) Well, then you'll be free to 'hoochie coochie' the night away with your beloved.

BERNARD

How kind.

JONNO

(D) So is she wearing your present?

BERNARD

How do you know about that?

JONNO

(D) The first rule of buying presents for your missus is, never check them out with Mavis in 'Accounts' first.

BERNARD

Bloody hell! How many people know?

JONNO

(D) Well that depends on how many people you reckon ever read the weekly briefing.

BERNARD

What?

JONNO

(D) You see, Mavis told Mark in IT, and he found the very picture that you showed to Mavis in that 'online catalogue'.

BERNARD

No.

JONNO

(D) In fact I'm looking at them right now. And I make no comment, mate, other than to say... They are very small!

BERNARD

I don't believe this.

JONNO

(D) Mind you, it's made a whole heap of difference to the way I look at Mavis. If she's into that sort of stuff, who knows what else she might be in to! Maybe she's wearing something like it right now. I'll be honest, mate, I haven't been able to stop thinking about it. Every time she comes into the office here. Oooooo.... Now be honest. You wouldn't turn it down, would you? I know I wouldn't!

**SFX 17 - IN THE BACKGROUND WE HEAR
THE OTHERS IN THE OFFICE CHEERING.**

**SFX 18 - THE SOUND OF A MOBILE PHONE
CALL BEING ENDED SUDDENLY.**