The Retirement Plan
A one act play for four actors
by Louise Pople

Running time: approx. 40 minutes
Synopsis: Two middle aged ladies on an adventure
Characters:
   Brenda: middle aged easy going timid woman
   Louise: middle aged frumpy woman
   Clive: middle aged New Zealander
   Mason: American (1 line)
Setting: Yorkshire Dales

Ambient British countryside sounds in the background for a short time before actors enter then fading but just audible in the background throughout play.
Louise and Brenda enter over the brow of a hill fully kitted out in walking gear, gaiters and backpacks.
Louise is humming a few bars of Star Trek theme.
Brenda sits down on a rock, gets out a packet of jelly beans and starts eating while Louise puts down her walking pole, takes off backpack, rummages through pockets and takes out a journal and pen. Stands upright with book presented in front of her.

Louise: Captain's Log Star date Saturday, sixth June 2016. Mission, to boldly go where no man has gone before. (Laughs) Well only about ten thousand people a year. (Sits down). Right let me see. Day 6 of our Adventure before Dementia, Coast to Coast walk. Kirby Stephen to Thwaite 14 miles.
Brenda: Here we go again. I don’t know why you are bothering with this Louise, it takes up an awful lot of time and who’s going to read it. I can’t see that anyone besides us is going to be the in the least bit interested in our little adventure.
Louise: It’s not a case of who’s going to read it Brenda. When we get back, someone might ask us about our holidays and we’ll be able to give them all the details.
Brenda: Who?
Louise: Well I don’t know who, anybody I suppose.
Brenda: *(looks at watch)* Yes, like at 10.34 on Saturday 6th June we were sat in the middle of nowhere eating jelly beans because you were too tight to let us buy a packed lunch. Well that makes riveting reading.

Louise: *(scowls at Brenda. Reads out loud whilst writing in the journal)*. I woke up this morning feeling excited at the prospect of the day ahead. Brenda kindly made us both a cup of decaf coffee and then we started on our usual morning routine.

Brenda: Routine? What routine?

Louise: You doing your morning Sudoku from your Puzzler Holiday Edition, to improve your synapses and me doing my stretches and Tai Chi to invigorate me spiritually, mentally and physically. *(Does some actions with her arms)*.

Brenda: And I usually end up at some time, receiving a hefty slap across the face from your spiritual and mental invigoration.

Louise: That has only happened twice Brenda. I do admit to perhaps needing a tad less enthusiasm and a little more control as Master Tranquility at the community centre has pointed out. *(Writing)* After our usual ablutions. *(Aside)* where I had a taste of cryogenic freezing, encased in a tiny plastic capsule of a shower cubicle, being showered in stone cold water. *(Writing)* We descended the mock Tudor staircase to avail ourselves of our host’s “locally sourced, free range, GM free, high energy walkers special” breakfast.

Brenda: As you always like an early breakfast and to be early, for our early breakfast, we were once again the first ones into the breakfast room and had to wait a good ten minutes before our tea pot and milk jug were delivered to our table.

Louise: Up with the larks is obviously not a saying that our host is cognisant of. *(Writing)* Breakfast, after its big build up was something of a disappointment and hardly a culinary challenge for our host. It’s like when I ate at Andrea’s last Thursday week and she served up Kashmiri lamb with aromatic authentic spices, which was in fact lamb stew with a dash of curry powder.
Brenda: Oh you’re too fussy Louise. There was a good choice of things to eat on the menu, a variety of eggs with wholemeal toast

Louise: That you could have rubbed down the paintwork with.

Brenda: Lots of different fresh fruit: mango, kiwi, blueberries

Louise: All rather exotic for the north, and the yoghurt and muesli that wouldn’t have looked out of place in a rabbit bowl.

Brenda: Well, I thought it was delicious - the yoghurt and muesli tasted lovely and the eggs were pretty good as well.

Louise: Well, it wasn’t to my taste. I suppose the breakfast room was pleasant enough, if you like horse brasses and imitation beams, a little dated but clean. Our host seems to have amassed an overwhelming and quite tasteless collection of tacky china owls decorating every available space. I can only presume she has indulged grandchildren.

Brenda: They were very sweet Louise. I like owls. They remind me of when I used to read Winnie the Pooh to the children. Graham so loved Kanga and little………..

Louise: (interrupts- reads as writing) I was able to show off my DIY electrical skills when the light bulb exploded in the hall way and I entertained my fellow guests with my agility by jumping onto a chair and safely, swiftly and capably replacing it. Years of looking after myself have thankfully paid off.

Brenda: That magazine that you take, what is it? Oh yes, Home Electrics monthly, has really proved useful. I remember when you rewired my kettle and sorted out the plug on the hoover. You really are a whizz with anything electrical.

Louise: Yes, I like to think that electrically I can turn my hand to most things.

Brenda: I don’t think there is anything that you couldn’t turn your hand to. You really are very clever. I know Miss Shepherd was very relieved that you were there. I couldn’t see her surgically stockinged legs finding their way on top of that chair.

Both laugh
Louise: *(Writing)* Our host, Miss Shepherd, a homely looking woman mid-sixties with a broad Yorkshire accent and bandy legs you could have run a sheep through, was very helpful and welcoming. *(To Brenda)* As I said to Miss Shepherd, you often find that the homely looking women of this world are far more pleasant than good looking women. I suppose they have to try harder for people to like them.

Brenda: Oh Louise, you really do say the most terrible things. The poor sweet woman was absolutely aghast. That really was very naughty of you.

Louise: Oh rubbish, you are far too sensitive Brenda. I am a very good judge of character and I know Miss Shepherd didn’t take offence. She probably recognised the truth in my astute observation and took it as a compliment. Anyway, I digress. *(writing)* After breakfast, Brenda and I returned to the bedroom to plan our day. Brenda sorted out her blisters and rubbed cream into her poorly knee. I organized the maps and route and checked the compass.

Brenda: I’m really not that keen on walking the full fourteen miles today Louise, with my knee. It looked very puffy when I woke up this morning and is still very stiff. I’ve taken anti-inflammatory, and I’ve massaged it, but it’s still no better.

Louise: Oh come on Brenda Man up. If you tell yourself it doesn’t hurt, it won’t hurt; a motto that I live by every day of my life.

Brenda: That’s daft. How can that be right? If I chopped your right arm off, are you’re telling me that it wouldn’t hurt you if you told yourself it wouldn’t hurt?

Louise: It’s all mind over matter Brenda. There are people who can have operations with no anaesthetic by simply meditating and telling themselves that it doesn’t hurt. The mind is very strong Brenda; you try it, believe me you’ll find it works.

Brenda: *(Rubbing knee)* Ok knee, this is mind over matter, You don’t hurt, you don’t hurt, you don’t hurt. I’m really not sure this walk was such a good idea Louise, I’m finding it very hard. Why couldn’t we have had a beach adventure, somewhere like
Mexico - eating nachos to Mariachi music? James and Phoebe went to Mexico last year and they said it was wonderful.

Louise: Can you afford Mexico Brenda? *(Brenda pulls a face)* Well, neither can I. I tell you what, maybe one day, when my boat comes in, we’ll have some time on an exotic beach in the sun.

Brenda: I’ll keep you to that Louise.

Louise: *(Carries on writing)* The morning has gone well, a bit of a climb out of Kirby Stephen but some lovely views across stunning countryside. A bit boggy underfoot in places but worth the trek.

Brenda: We have met some really nice people en route this morning, haven’t we? Fancy you and I being referred to by the other coast to coasters as Thelma and Louise. I’ve never seen the film but I’ll get it when we get back. They said it’s about two women on a road trip in America. Thelma, lovely but a bit of a mouse, and Louise, well I don’t know what she is like but I think she murders someone. I suppose I’m the mousy one. Eeek eek. If the hat fits, as they say.

Louise: Did you hear me trying to help the group by giving them a little lesson on reading the land as we went along? I can’t believe that they had got this far with such a vague idea of how to use contour lines and had no idea of when they were encountering scree or crags. Alan and Patrick, the two very nice boys from Penge seemed very interested in my wide knowledge on the subject and I am sure they will look back at this morning as a very informative and interesting time. They were both fascinated by my proficient use of the compass and whistle. Such nice boys, a little timid walking along hand in hand at their age but very nice boys.

Brenda: *(Grins knowingly)* I think the rest of the group behind us weren’t able to appreciate the importance of your advice and seemed to be chatting about TV programmes. I overheard one of them mention an old 70s sit com, ‘All Gas and Gaiters’, so I suppose they must have been…*(Glances at Louise in amused way)*
Louise: (Writing) Today, the weather forecast is for it to be dry again, with light showers expected this evening. Warm and sunny both here, further on our route and home in the south west of England. (Aside) The geraniums on the patio will enjoy the sunshine today as will the beautiful little pansies with their smiling faces looking over the lawn. What a picture. I do hope that Ray is able to mow the lawn today. Those little smiling faces watching him. Such a shame that I couldn’t be there to see him. (She slowly closes the book, looks thoughtfully into the middle distance and puts the book back into her backpack. Puts the backpack on, gets kitted up again). Captain’s log concluded for the morning. Beam us up Scotty (laughs to herself). Come on Brenda, let’s get a few more miles under our belts before lunch. Spit spot.

Brenda: (Follows, muttering) Spit spot? one minute it’s Captain Kirk then suddenly I’m travelling with Mary Poppins. All part of the adventure I suppose. Maybe when she turns into Superman I’ll be able to get her to carry me. Ok let’s give this a go. My knee does not hurt, my knee does not hurt (stumbles, cries out - carries on muttering angrily) My knee does not hurt….

Both walk off the stage. Country sounds louder to depict passing of time

Louise: (Humming English Country Garden walks back on stage, coat around waist, looking hot and a bit tired. Puts down map, backpack, walking pole, stretches, looks out at the view and smiles - talking to herself) Looks like I’ve got time to carry on with the journal before Brenda turns up. (takes journal out of backpack) Captain’s Log, star date… oh this is no fun without Brenda. Let me see (starts to write) The miles from Gable Cragg proved to be both beautiful and challenging resulting in Brenda’s poorly knee objecting to the climb so much that she felt it necessary to turn back and take the lower easier route to Thwaite. (Frustrated) Oh I can’t concentrate on this, how can I concentrate knowing what is going on at home. (sighs, looks down at shaking hands)
Clive kitted out as hill walker, walks onto stage, stretches, admires view through a pair of binoculars

Clive: G'Day, can I join you?

Louise: Yes of course.

Clive: It's a job to find somewhere flat to sit around here. (sits down, takes out packed lunch from backpack. Looks content). Ahh bliss, just look at that view - awesome. Now to feed the inner man.

Louise: I'm Louise by the way. Australian eh? We've been walking for the last few days alongside a group of Americans, there seems to be so many foreigners invading our land at the moment.

Clive: Hi Louise, I'm Clive and actually I'm from New Zealand, a Kiwi, here on my third visit to your beautiful country.

Louise: New Zealand, Australia, one and the same really. You'll be used to seeing all these sheep about the place then.

Clive: It's a good thing I'm a generous hearted man Louise, we may be geographically close, but we're a completely different country - the size of our population, our climate, the culture.

Louise: Yes, but you've both share our Queen don't you? You've got the same accents and both live on the other side of the world. I didn't realise that antipodeans could be so sensitive.

Clive: I didn't realise that you Irish knew so little about Kiwis. (winks at Louise) I think we're going to have to agree to differ on this one Louise.

Louise My friend Brenda and I are on the cross country Coast to Coast walk.

Clive: Yes, that's what I'm doing, the experience of a life time. Is your friend not with you then?

Louise: Brenda's a bit behind but she'll be along in a while. She's got a jippy knee. Came a cropper on the first day and took a bit of a tumble. Luckily, she was in front of
me at the time or she’d have taken me with her. Yes, well she decided to buy these cheap walking boots. I told her Brenda, don’t skimp on your footwear but some people think they know best and then she slips and, like a drunken navvy sprawled all over the countryside, buggers up her knee. Well, I know I shouldn’t laugh but she did look a sight lying there on her back with her legs akimbo unable to get up. You know what a tortoise looks like on its back .... Ooh how I laughed. ...........

**Clive:** How terrible, poor woman, sounds like a really nasty fall, accidents like that can happen to anyone on this terrain. Is she managing ok now? Is it holding you up much?

**Louise:** It’s held us up a bit but I’m a patient woman. I said I’d slow down and walk with her but she says she doesn’t want to hold me up and will walk on her own so I bat on and she tootles along bringing up the rear. Timmy Tortoise I call her. Bless, oh how we laughed. Where did you spend last night?

**Clive:** Mulberry Lodge in Kirby Stephen, a small guest house on the edge of the town. Hanging baskets outside, big welcome mat in the doorway, beautiful - typical English house.

**Louise:** Oh same here, left a lot to be desired though didn’t it?

**Clive:** I thought it was very good. We had a lovely room, very clean, hot shower, very welcoming. Strange, we didn’t see you at dinner last night or at breakfast this morning.

**Louise:** Ah well, I like to eat early. I do find it difficult to eat after 6.30 in the evening, plays havoc with my movements. Brenda likes to eat late but I say to her, “Do you really want to coupie and bury it on a hillside somewhere?” No of course not. I’ve got one of those fold-up trowel doobries but it’s not nice is it? Better to eat early and let nature take its course before you set off.

**Clive:** Yes I’ve noticed that dunnies are in short supply around here, doesn’t worry me though. I’m a real outdoor type.

**Louise:** We were early for breakfast as usual this morning but ended up leaving a bit late as I needed to ring my husband to have a chat about the weekend jobs. There were
some things I especially needed him to do today. The breakfast wasn’t up to much was it?

**Clive** Oh I thoroughly enjoyed it. The fruit and muesli was great, just right to set me up for a day’s walking. Didn’t you enjoy it Louise?

**Louise** I can’t be doing with all this continental stuff. Whatever happened to tinned grapefruit? I love tinned grapefruit. When I was a child, my mum used to put a little glace cherry in the middle of it, what a treat. Now breakfast looks more like tea; fresh fruit salad, yoghurt, bread rolls… Whatever happened to fried egg and bacon and black pudding? People look down on you now if you order an full English breakfast. One minute we want to be continental, the next we don’t, it’s all a fad. I’m sure the good old fried English breakfast will be back in favour one day. And as for the packed lunch this morning - £6. £6!! (Exclaims) Who in their right mind would pay £6 for a packed lunch?

**Clive:** I did.

**Louise:** Oh you did, did you? Oh dear, as visitors to our shores, I feel I must warn you against opportunists trying to make money out of poor naïve tourists. You really would be much better off buying from a local store rather than settling for some dried-up dog eared sandwiches filled with plastic cheese and toe paste.

**Clive:** Well I’m just enjoying Miss Shepherd’s Stilton cheese and grape on wholemeal bread, a pork pie, kettle crisps and tiffin. A feast fit for our queen. Well worth £6 in my mind.

**Louise:** Well Miss Shepherd must have liked you. I told Brenda not to be so daft wasting money on packed lunches. We have cereal bars left over, some jellybeans and a couple of apples - one thing we are definitely not, is greedy. (Looks at watch) 11.59 now, I suppose I could have an early lunch. (Rummages through bag gets an apple from the bottom and takes a bite) Where are you staying tonight Clive?

**Clive:** At the small hilltop guest house in Keld, at the end of the main street.
Louise: Oh only doing the 11 miles then? Taking it gently, probably best if you're not used to it. Brenda would have stopped at 11 but I said “No Brenda let’s crack on and do the 14”. I’ll get her a bag of frozen peas from the village when we get there, for her knee, she’ll be fine. Bless. We looked at the guest house where you must be staying when we thought that we might only do the 11 miles. I suppose it’s ok if you are on a budget. Like Brenda’s boots *(Laughs loudly)* Did I tell you about her fall, went a right purler, cheap boots you know? Like budget accommodation, you get what you pay for.

Clive: That’s not always the case Louise; it's got very good revues you know. Five stars for food, hospitality, cleanliness and comfort. I checked it on one of those holiday review sites and it came out very well. ‘Excellent budget accommodation’ it said. I’m looking forward to staying there.

Louise: Ray, my husband, and I always had to scrimp and save, staying in cheap accommodation like you’ll be staying in tonight. I had to make do and mend for many years. It sometimes seemed that there was never enough money to go round, always saving for the future always putting money aside for his retirement. *(Bitterly)* How long are you planning to take to get across the country?

Clive: We’re planning on 16 days, including a well deserved rest day in the beautiful town of Richmond half way. I want to visit the castle and look around all the quaint little shops there. I’m really looking forward to it. Never been to this part of the country before and I’m loving it.

Louise: Gosh really, 16 days, that long, another Timmy Tortoise eh? *(Laughs too loud and fades away)* I couldn’t be doing with that. It’s heads down and arse up for me. *(Loud laugh again)*

Clive: Aren't you worried about your friend? Shouldn’t you go back for her - she might be in difficulty especially if she’s got an injury? I don’t like the thought of her making her way across country on her own. Would you like me to go back along the lower route to look for her?
Louise: No, I’m not worried, she’ll be along soon. Cheap boots did I say? Legs akimbo. How I laughed.

Clive: Well as long as you’re sure. Do you walk a lot Louise?

Louise: Oh yes, I’m out walking most days. The Mendip Hills are really close to where I live, and the Quantocks and Exmoor. I spend a lot of time out of doors. My husband works a lot. He lives away from home during the week and comes home every weekend, well some weekends. We need to keep the wolves from the door he says; think we must have a pack of them following us! I don’t know. He’s in accounts so he takes care of all the money side of things. I’d like him to retire so that we could spend more time together, maybe one day. Mind you, I think he’ll work until he drops.

Clive: He sounds a very conscientious man living away from home to ensure your financial security. I wouldn’t like to be away from home so much. It must be hard for you both.

Louise: He has lodgings in Peterborough with a very nice old lady, a Mrs Morris. I’ve never met her but she seems a very sweet woman, looks after Ray really well. I don’t know how old she is but Ray gives me the impression that she is very elderly. 15 years he’s been with her now. Mind you he says he looks after her, by doing all manner of odd jobs for her. I don’t know what she’d do without him. He’s so kind to her.

Clive: Fifteen years, that’s a long time to be working away from home.

Louise: Yes. When he went to live with her in her boarding house all those years ago there were three other chaps living in the house as well but now Ray is the only one left. It seems the Peterborough branch has had to slim down to become more efficient and he’s really lucky to still be in work.

Clive: Way of the world at the moment, job losses employment uncertainty. It’s just the same in New Zealand. I’m lucky as I’m able to work from home most of the time. Is it just him and the old lady then?
Louise: There is her grandson living there as well, a little lad who came to live with her when he was very young. He must be about 12 now. I think Ray helps out a lot there. Well leaving a baby with an elderly woman, ridiculous. I don’t know how she would have managed without him. Simon’s his name, nice lad it seems. I saw a photo of him once in Ray’s pocket….. I don’t suppose you’ve ever been to Peterborough?

Clive: As I say, I’ve visited the UK several times - London, Bath, Edinburgh - but I can’t say that I have ever been to Peterborough.

Louise: No me neither, I’ve often thought about it though, but never ventured there. I used to think that it would be nice just to turn up there and surprise Ray but he doesn’t like surprises, well neither of us do really. The view is splendid from here isn’t it?

Clive: It certainly is. You can see for miles in all directions - a real stunner of a day too.

Louise: I remember in the early days when my husband Ray and I used to walk together. We would always picnic where there was a good view “We like a nice view, don’t we pet” he would say. “What we could do with is a nice little tea room here.” Oh how we laughed. We were young then. We would talk about the future and the family we would have and how we would bring them to the fells and walk their little socks off and show them all the views that we loved and share….. Well, that wasn’t to be and then Ray got this chance to go to Peterborough to work and he was gone. I’m happy though, although I’m very much a people person, I like my own company.

Clive: It’s wonderful isn’t it, the tranquillity of the place. You can’t beat it roaming the hills, breathing the fresh air into your lungs. Why did you decide to do this walk Louise?

Louise: Well, Brenda and I call it our ‘adventure before dementia’. Neither of us has ever had an adventure you know. Brenda married young, had her four children close together and then spent the rest of her life running around after them. Her house is always full of her children and grandchildren, never gets a minute to herself. If she’s not out shopping with them, she’s with the grandchildren at afterschool activities, swimming lessons, brownies, cubs, sleepovers, family parties. I call it selfish; they shouldn’t put on
her so much. She says she enjoys it but I’m sure that she finds it all too much. Her husband died about three years ago now and since then there is always someone in her house popping in to check on her.

**Clive:** Poor woman, how sad. It must have been awful for her being left a widow when relatively young.

**Louise:** Oh no, not you as well. A strange thing about being widowed is that you seem to take on almost celebrity status. If you’re divorced no one feels sorry for you, everyone feels that you are partially to blame for being on your own. Widowed, no one feels you’re to blame, everyone feels sorry for you and showers you with love and ……

**Clive:** *(interrupting)* Oh I don’t agree with that. Brenda sounds like a decent kind of woman and I’m sure everyone has rallied round because she’s such a nice woman.

**Louise:** Brenda’s trouble is that she’s too soft, she never stands up for herself, she’s not assertive enough. She says it’s lovely to have company and to have her family around her so much. I think she has brought her children up to be needy. She has lots of friends as well, always has, but I think they impose on her too much.

**Clive:** Some people like their lives to be full and to be busy and active all the time. They like the hustle and bustle of family life.

**Louise:** Now my house is quite different: peaceful, tidy, organized. I couldn’t be doing with all this chaos. When Ray comes home, as soon as he has finished his cup of tea I whisk it away and wash it up. I’m sure he appreciates the order and tidiness. It can’t be easy for him living with an old woman and a teenager.

**Clive:** No I’m sure it’s not, he must be relieved to get home to you.

**Louise:** Anyway, I said to Brenda that it was about time we put ourselves first and went off for an adventure. We both enjoy walking. Brenda walks with the Ramblers but I find them a funny lot so tend to walk more on my own. So here we are now walking from one side of the country to the other. Do you have family Clive? *(Checks phone. Puts it back in backpack as she speaks).*
Clive: Yes, I’m here with my wife June. She doesn’t share my love of walking so we’ve hired a car and she drives along my route each day, stopping at all the beauty spots on the way and meeting me in the evening. She is enjoying the British countryside, nature and wildlife and catching up on her reading. We don’t like to be apart so I didn’t want to leave her behind, and at the end of each day I can tell her all about the walk, the people I’ve met, the countryside, the views - it’s like reliving it all over again. It’s working out really well.

Louise: Yes, that must be very nice for you and I’m sure your wife shows great patience and interest hearing you retell your day, mile upon mile, every evening. Do you have any children?

Clive: Yes, five children

Louise: Gosh so many of you! Are you Catholic or just careless? Ha ha ha (laughs loudly fading off) Oh don’t be offended, just a bit of English humour. I’ve nothing against large families, although there are those who would point out the drain that a large family is on society’s resources and the world’s resources, but I’m not one of those.

Clive: I love having a large family, our whole lives have revolved around them, they are such a joy. A family gives you a purpose in life. You don’t mind working hard all your life if it means you’ve got money invested for a comfortable retirement and to leave to your children at the end of the day.

Louise: I don’t know what Ray would do if he retired. I suppose there is always the garden. When he comes back from Peterborough the first thing he does is mow the lawn and then tidy his shed. Mind you his shed is never untidy but he does take a pride in it. When he comes home he spends most of his time in there. Men and their sheds eh? He’s home this weekend. I don’t know why because I told him that I wouldn’t be there but he said that he’d mow the lawn, as he always does when he comes home, tidy the flower beds and sort out a few bits of paperwork to do with pensions and investments. I didn’t even know that we had any investments.
Clive: Sounds like he has a sound financial head on him.

Louise: Oh he’s such a clever man always planning for the future. I expect he has his retirement all mapped out ready for the day when he has the last click of his ballpoint and walks out of the Peterborough at office ready to spend the rest of his life in financial security with his little woman. I couldn’t have children you know but I don’t think I’ve missed out at all. It just wasn’t to be. I was expecting a couple of times but it just didn’t work out. I was ill afterwards, you know with the upset of it all but I pulled myself together when Ray left. As I always say, tell yourself it won’t hurt and it doesn’t… I don’t think Ray would have made a good father anyway, too much into his work for that. I’ve asked him to get a local job but he says the Peterborough office would fall apart without him and it’s not so easy when you’ve got a pension with the company. Maybe I have to admit that my life has been a bit lonely… (drifts off without finishing sentence)

Clive: He sounds like the type of man who is a caring and sensible person who has worked hard to have both of your futures mapped out.

Louise: Yes, I’m quite sure he has. (Looks nervous and unsettled)

Clive: I’m getting a bit concerned about your friend Brenda, maybe something has happened to her. Can you ring her to see if she’s ok? (Picks up binoculars and scans the hills). Oh there are some people about half a mile away at the bottom of the hill. Several men with a woman in a purple jacket and blue trousers.

Louise: Yes, that could be Brenda. Red hair, well not naturally red, nobody’s hair is naturally Colour and Go, number 16, Red Mahogany is it? Yes, purple jacket and cheap boots? Well yes, that sounds like her.

Clive: She’s sat on a boulder with her gaiters off and her trousers rolled up. Some tall guy is massaging her knee, by his technique looks like he’s done this before. (Louise grabs binoculars).

Louise: Oh for heavens sake, it’s the Americans. Well I don’t know how on earth that’s going to help her. Walk through it is what I say. Positive thinking and frozen peas will
sort it. We have been walking with these American gentlemen, probably a misnomer there. They are very friendly but a bit pushy for my liking. Brenda seems to like the attention but she’s probably not such a good judge of character as I am and is easily taken in. I’m sure they carry guns as well. The one rubbing her knee is called Mason, if you can call it a name, more of an occupation to me. He was leaning over her, fussing around the other night at the bar. I swear I could see the outline of a gun in his pocket. I told Brenda but she just laughed. Can you imagine what would have happened if it had gone off?! Well, I just hope his gun has a safety catch on now.

**Clive:** I’m sure he is just being helpful, helping a damsel in distress as you Brits like to say. Looks like his massaging is giving her some relief.

**Louise:** This is ridiculous, she’ll be fine you know. I do hope he doesn’t go in for any of that deep tissue massage, that won’t do her any good at all. Leave her alone and she’ll soon be stepping it out again. She just needs to be a bit assertive. Men always like to think they know best and are in control but sometimes they just need to be put in their place. I hope the Americans aren’t delaying her. It’s getting on for 12.30 and we need to be moving on. *(Checks phone)*

**Clive:** Looks like they’re on the way up the hill, Mason is giving her a hand. They’ll be here in a couple of minutes if they come straight up the path. Is there anything I can do to help you both? You’ve still got a bit of a way to go.

**Louise:** Oh thank you but you don’t need to worry. How kind of you to ask though, and they say Australians haven’t got manners, well, you prove them wrong. Ahh they’re just by the corner. Yoo Hoo Brenda, Brenda, over here. *(Phone rings, appropriate ringtone - jumps)* Oh, that’s my phone. Who on earth could that be? *(Rummages through backpack and eventually finds mobile, hands shaking slightly).*

Hello, yes, speaking

Really?

Yes, I have someone with me. Why? What is this all about?
The Police?
Yes, I’m his wife.
No, no, no, I can’t believe it. Ray, my Ray, Dead? Electrocuted whilst mowing the lawn.
There must be a mistake.
Really?
Oh my goodness, how terrible.
Yes, I’m in the middle of nowhere at the moment.
Oh you know that, the neighbours told you.
Yes ring me back about six when we’ll be at our overnight stay.
No, there are no other family members. No children. Nobody else to contact, it was just me and Ray.
No I don’t need to contact anyone else, it was always just me and Ray. (Turns away from Clive. Turns off phone, slight smile to herself.) Bet that wasn’t on your retirement plan was it Ray, (said quietly with venom) and you even paid for my subscription to Home Electrics monthly. Looks like I managed to shock you before you got around to shocking me. (Smiles

_Brenda and Mason walk on to stage, laughing and joking._

**Louise:** Oh Brenda I’m so pleased to see you.

**Brenda:** Oh hello Louise, looks like I’ve got something interesting to enter in your journal. Mason has boldly gone where no man has gone before…… into my gaiters!

_Brenda and Mason laugh heartily._

**Louise:** Oh don’t be so silly Brenda, there has been a tragedy, something awful has happened, the police have just called me. I’ve had such a shock, well not me but Ray, he’s been electrocuted whilst mowing the lawn. He’s dead!

**Brenda:** (staring at Louise) Dead, Ray dead? (accusingly) Oh Louise.

**Louise:** Why are you looking at me like that Brenda? It was an accident, a terrible accident.
Brenda: Sorry Louise….

Clive: How can I help you ladies? There must be something I can do?

Louise: No, thank you, we’ll be on our way now. \textit{Starts to walk off stage, speaking as she goes} Now tell me more about Mexico, can we get there by car from America?

Brenda: \textit{hobbling after her and calling} Louise……………………

\textit{(Brenda and Louise walk off into distance)}

Clive: \textit{(Looking bemused)} Would you like a pork pie Mason?

Mason: Thank you Clive \textit{(Mason sits next to him)} So you’re Australian then?

\textit{Curtains close.}
Retirement Plan Ideas. Will you be ready for retirement? Everyone grows old. It’s inevitable. The question is, will you be ready when retirement gets here? The fact is, average life expectancy in the US is 78.2 years. Most people will retire well before that age. Furthermore, those individuals who think Social Security will be enough are fooling themselves. That program was never intended to and never will take the place of good retirement planning, for employer or employee. Having a plan for retirement can increase your confidence and peace of mind about the future. Read here for professional insight on how to get ready for retirement. A Getting ready to retire. Now that you’re approaching retirement, it’s time to make sure you’re ready for it. No matter what your vision is, having a plan for retirement can increase your confidence and peace of mind about the future. Overview. Saving for retirement. Getting ready to retire. Managing money in retirement. Retirement planning, in a financial context, refers to the allocation of savings or revenue for retirement. The goal of retirement planning is to achieve financial independence. The process of retirement planning aims to: Assess readiness-to-retire given a desired retirement age and lifestyle, i.e., whether one has enough money to retire. Identify actions to improve readiness-to-retire. Acquire financial planning knowledge. Encourage saving practices.