

The Beach Hut

A black comedy in one act

Written by Mark Rees

Spotlight Publications

The Beach Hut

CAST (in order of appearance)

Vera, 65 years old

Geoff, her husband, 65 years old

SET - a beach hut on the front at Scarborough

TIME - 2005

Notes on the characters

Vera and **Geoff** met on the beach as teenagers in Scarborough in 1956, part of the Teddy Boy and Rock 'n' Roll generation. They got married in 1965 and have now, forty years later, returned to Scarborough to celebrate their Golden Wedding. Vera is the more dominant. Geoff is somewhat hen-pecked and resorts to snide remarks to counter his wife's acerbic wit.

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The setting for the play is in front of a multi-coloured beach hut on the shore at Scarborough. There is one of those red/yellow/blue/green plastic 'fly screens' covering the door to the beach hut. There is also a picket fence around the front with a little gate. Down stage left and right are small flats painted with 'Donald McGill' like seaside characters, one male and one female, with a hole cut in where Geoffrey and Vera can put their heads through. They use these for all their major speeches when they talk directly to the audience and should be lit separately. There can be a bit of the promenade running across the back behind the beach hut and perhaps a yellow floor to represent the sand with seaweed etc. Down centre is a small table with a chair either side of it

Vera *(at the cut-out)* Forty glorious years! That's how long we've been married, Geoffrey and myself, forty glorious years! We had our honeymoon here and we've been coming back ever since. Except for that year he had his operation, you know, down there. What a fuss over such a little thing! But that's men, isn't it? *(Pause)* We love it here, it's got everything we need, all the amenities, you know. *(Pause)* We've had the same beach chalet for the last twenty years, we know what we like and we like what we know! We used to be further up the beach, near the promenade, but it's very busy up there, near the promenade. So I got us moved down here, far superior. It's a nice quiet corner; I call it "our little haven".

She sighs. Pause

They tried to move us from here once. We got a letter from the corporation saying they were going to relocate us, relocate us! Well, I wasn't having that. I didn't want to be relocated! I got on the telephone straight away, I did, straight away, and I told them so, I made such a fuss! I said I didn't want to be relocated and if they tried to move us I'd write to my MP. I did, I told them. And I would have, I most certainly would have. I'd have gone to the Houses of Parliament and chained myself to the railings like a suffragette. I would have too. When I phoned them up I played merry hell! I wasn't going to let the buggers get away with it. And they didn't, because we're still here. *(Pause)* Of course I didn't use the aforementioned swear word, I only thought it. I wouldn't want anyone to think I was common. Because swearing is for common people, it shows a lack of command of the English language, so I generally refrain! *(Pause)* I come from a very good background actually, in point of fact my mother was self-employed and my father was quite something in haberdashery.

The lights change and come up on Geoffrey's cut-out

Geoff Forty bloody years! That's how long we've been married, Vera and myself, forty bloody years! We had our bloody honeymoon here and we've been coming back ever bloody since. Except for that summer I had that operation, you know, down there! I couldn't walk, could hardly move at all for three days! Not that I got any sympathy, that would have been too much to expect *(Pause)* It's got everything here you know, all the amenities. Everything you could want, Vera says! *(Pause)* The thing is, nothing ever happens. Forty years I've been coming here and nothing ever happened. Hardly a drowning or anything. *(Pause)* We used to be further up the beach near the promenade. Plenty of people about up there, it had a bit of life about it, if you know what I mean! Used to see some sights up there, you know, young women in skimpy bikinis, things like that, all sorts there was up there. Of course she didn't like that, my Vera. Oh, no, she thought it unseemly, said they were common. I said to her I said there's nothing wrong with a bit of bare flesh, it's only natural. *(Pause)* She got her way and we got moved down here. It's too damn quiet. No young people come down here any more. Just old fogies in string vests, no hair, no teeth, and bodies that look like they could do with a bloody good iron! *(Pause)* We got a letter one year from the Corporation saying they wanted to move us, and I thought, thank goodness. But she put her oar in, didn't she, my Vera, kicked up a hell of a fuss she did, you should have heard her. Threatened to write to the Houses of Parliament, threatened to chain herself to the railings like Emily bloody Pankhurst. I don't know where she gets it from, I really don't! She's always had ideas above her station. For as long as I've known her she has laboured under the misconception that she is better than anyone else. I don't know why, she had nothing before I met her. Neither did her parents. Her mother took in washing and her father had a bike and sold buttons and knicker elastic, door to door.

Music

Vera and Geoffrey move from behind the cut-outs and sit at the table

Geoffrey reads a paper, Vera is thinking. A pause

Vera Geoffrey.

Geoff Yes, dear.

Vera I've been thinking ...

Geoff That's nice.

Vera I thought that tomorrow we might take that boat trip around the bay. The one we saw advertised on the pier.

Geoff Why not.

Vera Yes, why not. It's a whole hour, you know. Right around the bay, it goes. A whole hour for five pounds.

Geoff That's very good.

Vera It certainly is.

Geoff And it goes right around the bay?

Vera Yes, for five pounds.

Geoff Seems reasonable.

Vera Very reasonable, I would say.

Geoff Couldn't afford not to do it!

Vera We certainly couldn't.

Geoff Right.

Pause

Vera We'll do that then.

Geoff If you like. And after we'll have fish and chips from Ferrari's chip shop and eat them on the prom. It'll be my treat, have what you like, you can even have an extra pickled onion if you want!

Vera That'll be very satisfactory, Geoffrey, but I won't have an extra pickle if you don't mind, they give me wind.

Geoff Do they? They never used to, you were a demon for a pickle years ago!

Vera Well that was years ago. There were lots of things I did years ago that are not appropriate today.

Geoff Right.

Pause

Vera Look at that sea, Geoffrey, it's as calm as you like. Looks like a millpond.

Geoff I don't think I've ever seen it as calm.

Vera I might even dip my toes in later on.

Geoff You should.

Vera Later on, though, when it's warmed up a bit.

Geoff Let the sun get at it for a while, it'll warm up a treat.

Vera We've been lucky with the weather.

Geoff We have, hardly a cloud in the sky.

Vera We're always lucky with the weather, every year we come here; it's nearly always dry.

Geoff Except for nineteen seventy-four, it rained the whole fortnight!

Vera You're wrong Geoffrey, that was nineteen seventy-five.

Geoff Were it?

Vera It was. Don't you remember? Nineteen seventy-four was the year you started entering the sandcastle competition. You came third. And the next year was completely washed out.

Geoff You're right, Vera. I had forgotten. That really was my best year in the sandcastle competition too. Never been that high since. That was the year I did the Houses of Parliament. Only seems like yesterday.

Pause

Vera You'll try again this year?

Geoff I think so. I was thinking about doing Buckingham Palace.

Pause

Vera Or there's Windsor Castle.

Geoff Hadn't thought of that.

Vera Not very easy, mind.

Geoff You know me, I love a challenge!

Vera I know, Geoffrey, I know.

Geoff I'll sleep on it tonight. Don't need to make a decision until Friday.

Vera Quite right. You don't want to make the wrong decision. Look what happened last year.

Geoff Don't remind me! That little brat running over the top of my "Acropolis" just before the judges came around. He destroyed it.

Vera He was only five.

Geoff It's a sad indictment of the attitude of today's youth! He was a hooligan who should have known better. I blame his parents!

Vera I think it was a mistake to hit him though.

The Beach Hut

A black comedy set on the beach at Scarborough, a sequel to Mark Rees' teenage comedy "It's Only Make Believe". It features the same two characters Geoff and Vera, who return to Scarborough after forty years of marriage.

Plot summary

Vera and Geoffrey, now sixty five years old, have been coming to Scarborough for forty years and rented the same beach chalet for twenty years. However, their love for each other which bloomed in the Fifties has long since faded, and both of them have come this last time to Scarborough to do something about it. Something drastic ...