Fire Island

A Play for a Young Audience

by

Andrew Hilton

Lyrics by Andrew Hilton & John Telfer

Music by John Telfer
Cover:

John Voce, Eddie Nestor, Tod O’Boyle and Sara Tracy in the 1985 revival
Like *Backfire!* this 1984 play, which deals with ideas of energy use and misuse, could well have shown its age. Given that we know now that the continued use of fossil fuels threatens catastrophe, it seems extraordinary to me that only 30-odd years ago I was to portray the solution to the abandoned island’s problems as the exploitation of its newly discovered coal reserves.

Changing the play to reflect our current emphasis on clean energy seemed a real possibility, and as much of the rest of the play has stood the test of time I decided to go ahead with an update ...

A.H.

March 2021
Fire Island was commissioned by the Molecule Theatre of Science and first performed at the Mermaid Theatre on 17th September 1984. A ten week National Tour followed. The company was as follows:

Sunny - Eddie Nestor  
Michael - David Jessiman  
Joyce - Eva Louise  
Spud - John Voce  
Norda - Tania Jones  

Director - Andrew Hilton  
Designer - Rod Langsford  
Composer - John Telfer  
Musical Director - Roger Cutts  
Lighting - T.M. White  

Production Manager - Forbes Nelson  
Company Manager - Linda Edwards  
Deputy SM - Audrey Cooke  
ASM/Understudy - Emma Bridgeman-Williams  
ASM/Understudy - Tod O’Boyle  
Technical ASM - Rhett Stevens

The production was revived at the Mermaid on January 15th 1985 and a 15-week national tour followed. The cast was as follows:

Sunny - Eddie Nestor  
Michael - Tod O’Boyle  
Joyce - Sara Tracy  
Spud - John Voce  
Norda - Julia Brooks  

and Production team changes:

Deputy SM - Emma Bridgeman-Williams  
ASM/Understudy - Theresa M. Murphy
Characters

SUNNY
MICHAEL
JOYCE
SPUD
NORDA

with the voices of a Ship’s Captain, Engineer & Surveyor, and later of radio operators from the ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Kestrel’

An island in a warm ocean, in the present day
Act One

Prologue

*Sound only. Night. Aboard a small ship at sea in a violent storm. The crew communicate by intercom:*

*Captain*  Mr Lewis! More power, more power! I’m losing steerage way!

*Engineer*  We’re taking in water, sir. Port engine’s flooded!

*Captain*  Then full ahead on starboard! This sea could have us over.

*A great screech of wind.*

*Mr Patel, Mr Patel!*

*Surveyor*  Captain?

*Captain*  Those three kids. Get them in a lifeboat. We may not make it.

*Surveyor*  No lifeboat, Captain!

*Captain*  What?

*Surveyor*  Port boat smashed, starboard lost overboard. This is some storm!

*Captain*  The survey launch? Could you get them into that?

*Surveyor*  That’s no lifeboat, Captain!

*Captain*  I know, but it’s tough. It may be their only chance. Get ’em into it and batten down as tight as you can. We won’t launch it unless we have to.

*Another great screech of wind.*

*Engineer*  Starboard engine’s flooding, sir, fast. It’s going to cut out any second!

*The engine cuts out.*

*That’s it, sir. It’s gone!*

*Captain*  Abandon engine-room, Mr Lewis! Join me on the bridge.

*Engineer*  Aye, aye, sir!

*Captain*  Mr. Patel?

*Surveyor*  Yes, Captain.

*Captain*  Launch that boat as soon as it’s ready. [Fading] Let’s hope this sea is kinder to those kids that I fear it’ll be to the rest of us ...

*The sounds of ship and sea fade away.*

*A large, yellow sun rises.*

*Spotlight on Sunny.*
**Song of the Island - 1**

*Sunny*

*Once upon a time there was an island,*
*island in the sun*
*with animals and plants and trees*
*and birds that sung.*
*Once upon a time there was a city,*
a city on the island in the sea,
twenty thousand people living happily!
And they worked to make their island thrive
so their life there could survive
in prosperity!

*Fire Island,*
*Fire Island,*
*Fire Island,*
*Why did it die?*

*The light on Sunny fades.*

**Scene 1**

*A small, sandy beach. Behind, a moonscape background of rocks and the remains of human settlement of three centuries ago. There are no trees, no grass - no geen of any kind, even in costume and props.*

A small, fibreglass launch lies on the beach. It has an inboard motor and a small cabin, a large headlamp and an aerial; and inside is equipped for sleeping, cooking and radio communication.

The sound of gulls, and the sea gently lapping on the shore.

After a few moments *Michael* pushes his head out from under the awning. He has just woken up. He looks round, blinks, rubs his eyes, looks over the side at the dry sand underneath, then jumps out of the boat and looks about.

*Michael*   *Joyce! Spud! Wake up!*

He thumps on the side of the boat.

*We’ve landed!*

*Joyce’s head appears, then Spud’s.*

*Joyce*   *Where are we?*

*Michael*   *No idea. After the storm we must have fallen asleep and just drifted ashore. At high tide by the looks of it.*

*Spud*   *[Blearily] Where’s the sea? ... Oh.*

*Joyce*   *[Getting out of the boat] Any sign of The Seeker?*

*Michael*   *No.*
Joyce: D’you think it really did sink?
Spud: I think it sank almost as soon as they put us in this boat.
Michael: We can’t be certain. Those waves were big enough to hide a battleship.
Spud: I know. I just think it sank. And the lifeboats had been smashed.
Joyce: Poor Mr Lewis.
Michael: And Captain Burroughs. And Sam Patel. We’ve been very lucky.
Joyce: We have. But where on earth are we?
Spud: Are those ruins?
Michael: I’m going to see what I can see from up there. Haven’t we got some binoculars?
Spud: Here!
Michael: Thanks.
He climbs the highest rock.
Joyce: I’m going up there!

Joyce takes another vantage point, and Spud climbs out of the boat to take another.

Michael: Hey! Just look at this!
Joyce: Wow!
Michael: It’s a desert! No trees, no grass. Just sand and rock ... and ruins of old buildings everywhere.
Joyce: Can’t you see any people?
Michael: No. And no cars either.
Joyce: There must be a town - further along the coast.
Michael: No ... no, there’s nothing. Just rock and ruins, and sand and sea. I think ...
He scans the horizon right round.
Yes ... yes, we are.
Spud: What?
Michael: We’re on an island. A big desert island!
Joyce: You mean we’re marooned?
Michael: I can’t understand it. We saw lots of islands from The Seeker, didn’t we? None of them looked like this. They were covered in green.
Joyce: Yes. Trees and bushes like jungles!
Spud: Maybe there’s no water. Like a desert in Africa.
Michael looks again through the binoculars.
Michael: I don’t think so. I think that’s a stream ... and another one! Plenty of water. It doesn’t make sense.
Spud Perhaps there was a war. Perhaps it was bombed!
Joyce Yes! Or a volcano! Or an earthquake!
Michael Maybe. People certainly used to live here.
Joyce It’s spooky, if you ask me. Where’s the mainland?
Michael Well, it must be east of us, so with the sun there, in the south ... [looking over the audience] it ought to be that way. I can’t see it. ‘Course, it was already out of sight when the storm broke. And the wind was blowing offshore ... we could have drifted a long way. We could be fifty miles off the coast. More, even ...
Joyce Then what do we do?
Michael Let’s go back to the boat and decide.
Spud I’m starving! Is there anything for breakfast?
Joyce Oo, typical! We’re marooned on a desert island and all you’re bothered about is your stomach.
Spud I don’t think straight when I’m hungry.
Joyce When you’re full you don’t think at all.
Spud Hey!

Michael has been examining his mobile.
Michael No signal. Not a thing.
Joyce I tried in the storm. Same.
Spud My battery’s flat. And I’ve lost my charger.
Joyce Well, what shall we do? Set off in the boat. We’ve still got petrol, haven’t we?
Michael Yes, but ... have we got a chart?
Spud I’ll look.

He climbs into the boat. Joyce looks at the hull.
Joyce No damage, Michael. It’s a tough little boat.
Michael Yes.
Spud Yippee! Here’s breakfast! Chocolate!

He throws chocolate bars to Michael and Joyce.
M & J Thanks!
Joyce Oo, bit soft.
Michael Yes, the sun’s getting hot already. Is there any more, Spud?
Spud Mm. Three more bars.
Michael Better put them in the fridge then. Stop them melting altogether.
Spud Does it work?
Michael ‘Course it does. It’s electric. Runs off the boat’s battery.
Spud  Oh, right ...
Michael  But what about a chart? Have you found one?
Spud  There's this, that's all.
Michael  \[Taking a folded map from Spud\] Let's see ... No, this isn't a sea chart. Just a very detailed map of a bit of the mainland coast. That bit Sam was doing his research on last week, I think. We can't put to sea with this.
Joyce  Can't we?
Michael  We don't know where we are. We don't know how far we've got to go. We could run out of petrol and still be miles from anywhere. 'Least, I think it ought to be a last resort.
Joyce  What's the alternative?
Spud  We could stay here - play Robinson Crusoe!
Joyce  No thanks, Spud!
Spud  Don't we just call for help, then?
M & J  We said, there's no signal -
Spud  On the radio.
Michael  What?
Spud  The radio. It's a transmitter. Didn't you know?
Michael  No!

They all lean into the boat.

Spud  It's how old Sam kept in touch with the ship. It's a bit old-fashioned, I think, but I've heard him use it ...

Michael has climbed into the boat and is fiddling with the radio's buttons.

Michael  That's switched it on. Red light there, look. Now ... this says 'transmit'. That must be it ... Hello! Hello! ... What am I supposed to say?
Joyce  You give the name of your boat, don't you?
Michael  What is it?
Spud  Same as the ship - The Seeker.
Michael  Hello, Seeker, this is Seeker ... Is that it?
Joyce and Spud nod.

Spud  Then you say 'Mayday, Mayday'.
Michael  Why?
Spud  It's code for 'help'.
Michael  Are you sure?
J & Spud  'Course!
Michael  This is Seeker calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday!
Pause  This is Seeker calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday!
Pause  No reply. Of course, we don’t know what range it’s got. Only a few miles, maybe. We might have to wait for a ship to pass quite close. Shall I just keep trying?
Joyce  You’d better, yes. Is there anything we can do?
Spud  I’m thirsty. Have we got any water?
Michael  Try the pump.

Spud reaches into the boat and tries the electric water pump.
Spud  No. Empty.
Joyce  That’s what we’ll do then, Spud. Find one of those streams and fill up these ... here.
Michael  We’d better boil it before we drink it.
Joyce  Yes, but we can do that. The boat’s got a gas stove and a kettle. Come on, Spud. Which way shall we go?
Spud  Let’s try this.
Joyce  O.K. Good luck, Michael. Find someone, won’t you!
Michael  I’ll do my best. Bye!
Joyce and Spud leave.

Don’t get lost!
Joyce  [Off] We won’t!
Michael  Now where’s the best place for this? Out of the boat ... and pointing out to sea.

He sits on the sand, leaning back on the hull.
Right. Seeker, this is Seeker, calling all ships. This is Seeker calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday! ... Seeker, this is Seeker calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday! ... [etc]  

Music. The sun climbs higher in the sky. Enter Norda, a pale, thin woman dressed all in black.

Norda  What’s this? People? Here? No! Never! Never here! He’s brought them! He’s brought them!

Michael shifts a bit. Norda draws back.

Be off with you! Be off!

Michael is oblivious. Norda leaves the way she had come.

Michael  Seeker, this is Seeker calling all ships. Can you hear me? Mayday, mayday, mayday! ... Seeker, this is Seeker calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday! ... Phew!
Joyce  [Off] Michael!

Enter Joyce and Spud with full bottles of water.

See, plenty of water. Much further away than we thought though.

Spud  And look! We think we've found what happened to the island.

He hands Michael a lump of rock.

Michael  It's just a lump of rock.

Spud  No, look. At these browny bits.

Michael  Oh!

Joyce  It's iron. We're sure it is - iron ore!

Michael  It looks like it, yes.

Spud  We found it in an enormous pit. Must have been an old quarry. The people here must have been iron miners. And the iron must have run out.

Michael  That could explain the ruins, couldn't it?

J & S  Yes!

Michael  We'll keep this as a souvenir.

Joyce  Have you had any luck on the radio?

Michael  Oh - no, I haven't.

Joyce  [Looking at her watch] But we've been away for nearly an hour!

Michael  We'd better face it. It could be a while before we contact anyone. Days, even.

Joyce  Days? On this island? D'you know, there aren't even any animals here, or birds. Apart from the streams, it's just still and silent. It's dead!

Spud  There's no food for anything, is there? Even birds can't eat sand, or old bricks.

Michael  [Shrugging] Well ...

Joyce  O.K. 'Spose there's no point in getting gloomy. If we are stuck here, we'd better make the best of it. We could make a camp, couldn't we? Use what there is in the boat, build a shelter. We shall need some shade.

Spud  Yes, just think, we could've been washed up on a log, without anything! The boat's got lots. Gas stove, pots and pans, even that fridge!

Michael  We're going to need that in this heat. Right - oh, let's pull the boat up, first. Out of the reach of the tide ... Ready? One, two, three ...

They heave the boat further up the beach.

Now. Who does what?

Joyce  You leave this to us and get back to the radio. We'll boil some water -

Spud  Oo, yes, I'm parched!

Joyce  - then do our best with the camp. What about food?
A blank moment.

Spud Hey, I can fish! Sam’s rods are in the boat.
Joyce Have you ever fished before?
Spud No. Have you?
Joyce No! O.K. You fish, I’ll build the camp. If this island can be made fit to live on, we’ll do it!

Music. Joyce finds the gas stove and kettle and puts water on to boil. Spud sorts out the fishing rod, then climbs one of the rocks with it and casts.

Michael Seeker, this is Seeker calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday! ... Seeker, this is Seeker calling all ships ...

Fade.

Music. Build lights on Sunny, for:

Song of the Island - 2

Sunny The island in the sun was full of colours,
colours that now have gone,
fields of gold and rooves of red
and clothes that shone!
Colours of the forest and the city,
the city on the island in the sea,
greens and blues and yellow flame
in harmony.
But now
in this empty desert land
the colour of the sand
is all there is to see!

Fire Island,
Fire Island,
Fire Island!
Why did it die?

Scene 2

The beach. Joyce, Michael and Spud stand admiring Joyce’s work. Spud holds something behind his back.

Joyce How about that?
Michael Brilliant! Looks like we live here!
Joyce Shelter, see - the awning from the boat held up with the paddles. Kitchen - gas cooker and electric fridge. Electricity supply - the boat’s battery. And there’s water in the tap!
Taking a cup, she reaches into the boat and works the electric pump. She offers the cup to Michael.

    Here, all that talking, you must be thirsty.

    Thanks ... It’s hot!

Joyce     I’ve boiled it. But it’s pure. And look, there’s electric light ...

She switches the boat’s headlamp, which now hangs by the shelter, on and off. There are wires everywhere now, of course.

    And there’s music!

She plays something on her phone.

    All that silence was driving me mad!

Michael   This island doesn’t look so bad after all, does it, Spud?

Spud      No. And it’s going to feel better soon. Look!

He holds up a large fish.

Joyce     Wonderful! What is it?

Spud      It’s a fish!

Joyce     I know that! What kind?


Joyce     Me too!

Spud      Yeah!

Michael   Shall we cook it straightaway?

Spud      Yes!

Joyce     Let’s! Let’s have a party. We deserve it. We’ve turned a spooky old desert into a little bit of civilisation!

Spud      Pity we haven’t got our Xbox with us.

Joyce     We’ve got music!

She turns the music up to maximum.

Michael   I’ll cook. You find some plates, Spud.

Spud      Right.

Michael lights the gas stove with a match, plonks the fish into a frying pan and puts the pan on the stove. No gutting, of course, and no oil. The gas goes out. Michael strikes another match. Then another.

    Oh no!

Spud      What’s the matter? Joyce ...

Joyce     Yes?

Spud      Turn the music down!
Joyce  Why, what’s the matter?

Michael  The gas has run out.

Joyce  No!

Michael  You shouldn’t have boiled all that water. How many kettlefuls was it?

Joyce  Lots. Five or six.

Michael  Probably wasn’t full to start with. There isn’t a spare cylinder, is there?

Joyce  No.

Michael  That’s it, then.

Spud  No food?

Michael  No. ‘Less you want to eat it raw.

Spud  Urgh!

Joyce  We’ve still got matches. Couldn’t we light a fire?

Michael  What with? Have you seen any wood on this island?

Joyce  Not a stick.

Spud  [Holding pan up] Can’t the sun cook it?

Joyce  Don’t be daft!

Spud  I’m starving!

Michael  We all are, Spud!

Pause.

How much chocolate have we got left?

Spud  [Leaping to the fridge] Chocolate! I’d forgotten that! ... Three bars. One each!

Michael  Hang on! We ought to think this out first.

Spud  Eh?

Michael  If we can’t cook fish, and there’s no other food on the island, three bars of chocolate is all we’ve got.

Spud  It’ll do to keep us going.

Michael  Yes, but how long for? What if we really are stuck here? If we eat it all now, what will we do tomorrow? And the day after that?

Spud  Well ...

Joyce  Michael’s right. We’ll have to ration it. It’s the basic necessity of life, food. We can’t afford to run out.

Michael  No

Spud  Can’t we eat any of it now, then? Not even half a bar?

Michael  Well, O.K., half a bar. Between us.

Spud  Between us?
Michael and Joyce nod solemnly.

I won’t be able to do anything, you know. I shall just have to lie down, dead still, and conserve all my energy. Here, you divide it ... Bet Robinson Crusoe didn’t have to lie dead still and listen to his tummy rumble!

Joyce [Giving him a piece] Got the energy to eat that?

Spud Just!

Michael At least it’s nice and hard again. Hate chocolate all soft.

Joyce So do I.

They all eat.

Well? What do we do now?

Michael I get back to the radio, I suppose. If we don’t get help soon, we’re going to be in a real mess.

Joyce What do we do?

Michael Just wait. Conserve your energy like Spud says.

Joyce O.K.

Michael At least saying ‘Mayday, mayday, mayday’ doesn’t use much.

He returns to the radio. Joyce sits and watches. Music under Michael’s repeated call. The sun begins to fall in the sky, and the light to fade.

Michael puts the microphone down, very dispirited.

Joyce Nothing?

Michael Not a whisper.

Joyce Never mind. You’ve done your best. It’s getting quite late, you know. We might as well get some sleep. Don’t you think, Spud?

Spud nods.

You can try again in the morning.

Michael What if a ship should go by in the night? We don’t want to miss it.

Joyce No ... What if we leave the light on? Shining straight out to sea? There might be a search going on by now. People must know the Seeker’s missing. A light shining from an uninhabited island ought to attract attention.

Michael Yes ...

Spud Wouldn’t it run the battery down?

Michael Yes, it would. It’s a good idea though, isn’t it? I know! We can run the motor. That’ll keep the battery charged up. If it works like a car, anyway ...

He looks in the engine.

Yes, it does. The engine turns the dynamo, and the dynamo charges up the battery. So ... check it’s in neutral ...

He starts the motor, then leaves it ticking over.
That’s it. Leave it ticking over like that and we’ve got our own petrol power station. It’ll make all the electricity we need - for the lamp, the radio, the fridge, everything!

Joyce Good. Hand the lamp up to me. I’ll put it up there ...

She climbs the rocks and points the lamp out to sea.

Is that it?

Spud Bit further that way ... that’s it. It’d be great to wake up in the morning and find a ship waiting to pick us up, wouldn’t it?

Michael Yes!

Joyce At least this way we shouldn’t miss one. I’m off to bed. Goodnight!

M & S Goodnight, Joyce.

Joyce curls up under the shelter and goes to sleep.

Spud Shall I put the fish in the fridge?

Michael Might as well. Stop it going bad.

Spud I wish we knew for sure what has happened on this island, Michael.

Michael So do I. The quarries running out of iron - that doesn’t explain everything, does it? Why are there no trees here, no grass, nothing.

Spud Perhaps it was an earthquake or something.

Michael Mm. Certainly no-one could survive here now.

Spud Let’s hope we don’t have to!

Michael We won’t! We’ll contact someone in the morning. Here, have a pillow. Goodnight, Spud.

Spud Goodnight.

Music. They stretch out on the beach and go to sleep. The sun sinks out of sight. The lamp shines, the motor sounds.

Enter Norda.

Norda Not gone yet? Settling in nicely! He’ll pay for this. He won’t bring people here, I won’t have it. Nothing shall live on this island. Nothing shall live, nothing shall grow!

She writes something in large letters in the sand.

Now be off with you, be off! Get in your boat and go!

She leaves. Spud stirs.

Spud Who’s that? Who’s that? Hello?

He looks around, sees nothing.

Michael. Michael!

Michael What?
Spud  Did you hear someone? I thought I heard someone.
Michael  No. There’s no-one to hear, is there?
Spud  No, but ...
Michael  Go back to sleep, Spud. It’s just the motor. Or the sound of the sea. There’s no-one on this island except us.
Spud  O.K. Goodnight.
Michael  Goodnight.

The lamp shines, the motor sounds. Fade.

Build light on Sunny, for:

Song of the Island - 3

Sunny  The island in the sun was full of noises,
noises filled the air,
shouts and cries and children’s laughter
everywhere!
Noises of the forest and the city,
the city on the island in the sea,
anvils rang and songbirds sang
in every tree!
But now
there’s no sound to be heard,
no man, no beast, no bird,
no voice, no melody!

Fire Island,
Fire Island,
Fire Island!
Why did it die?

Scene 3

The sun rises on the beach camp. There is no sound from the motor.

Spud wakes, gets up, stretches, looks out to sea, then pats his stomach ruefully.

Spud  I am starving!

He opens the fridge, takes out the fish, makes as if to bite it, draws back with a grimace, then looks up at the sun.

Why can’t the sun cook it? It’s hot. Come on, Sun - cook my breakfast for me!

Song - Sun
Sun, sun, why can’t we use your heat?
I only want to eat,
I only want my breakfast!
You warm the sea and you warm the land,
our feet get hot walking on the sand.
Sun, sun, why can’t we use your heat?

He catches sight of the words in the sand.

Michael! Michael, wake up!

Michael Hello, Spud.

Spud Who did this?

Michael What?

Spud This. Look!

Michael scrambles up and looks.

Michael ‘Go away’. Is this a joke, Spud?

Spud ‘Course not!

Michael Then there is someone else on this island?

Spud Looks like it.

Michael Joyce! Joyce!

Joyce Hello.

Michael Look at this.

Joyce What?

Michael [Pointing] Look!

Joyce ‘Go away’. Who did that?

Michael and Spud shake their heads.

This island isn’t deserted?

Michael Can’t be.

Joyce Not very friendly, is it?

Spud No.

Joyce Mind you, you wouldn’t expect to find friendly people in a place like this.

Michael Who can it be?

Joyce I don’t know and I don’t care! I think this island stinks!

Spud So do I! The sooner we get off it the better. We’ll die of hunger if we’re here much longer.

Joyce Where’s that radio? I’m going to have a try. Cross your fingers - hard!

M & S Right!

Joyce Hello, this is Seeker calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday! This is Seeker calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday! Come in, please!
Michael  Wait, Joyce ... Look at the red light. It was much brighter than that yesterday. The battery can’t be running down, can it? Hey! Who switched off the power station?

Joyce  What?

Michael  The motor!

Spud  Not me.

Joyce  Not me.

Michael  Well, I didn’t. Then who ... ? Oh no! Look at the petrol gauge - it’s empty!

Joyce  What?

Michael  We’ve run out of petrol. Switch everything off! The fridge. And the lamp - that’s still on, look, just. We must have all the power for the radio. Oh, why didn’t I think it would run out?

Spud  Fridge off.

Joyce  Lamp out.

Michael  Right. And don’t use the water pump! I’ll have another go ... Seeker, this is Seeker calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday! ... That’s it. It’s gone dead. The battery’s flat. We can’t call for help.

Spud  What do we do?

Joyce  I think we should just leave. Like you said yesterday - the last resort. Chuck everything back into the boat and just go!

Michael  We’ve run out of petrol, Joyce! It’s my fault. I didn’t think it would use much, just ticking over like that.

Joyce  No, we’re all to blame. Isn’t it stupid? Here we are, stuck on a desert island. We’ve a perfectly good boat with a perfectly good engine, and a perfectly good radio -

Spud  And a perfectly good gas stove -

Joyce  Yes, and a perfectly good gas stove, and we can’t use any of them -

Michael  Because we’ve run out of energy!

Joyce  Exactly.

Michael  After all we said about running out of food.

Joyce  We must be soft in the head.

Spud  Couldn’t we just row the boat?

Joyce  Miles across the sea - with a couple of paddles?

Spud  No.

Joyce  Well, let’s at least have some music on. Cheer the place up a bit ... Oh no, my phone’s dead as well! Oh, I hate this island, I hate it! We can’t eat, we can’t call for help, our phones are useless. We can’t even take a risk and put to sea in
our boat. We’ve got to get help somehow!

Spud But to get help we need the radio.

Michael Yes. And the radio needs electricity ... What if ... ?

Spud What?

Michael What if we could replace the energy somehow?

Spud In the battery?

Michael Yes ... What if there was another way of turning the dynamo to make it charge up the battery?

Spud Turning it by hand, you mean?

Michael Maybe.

Spud That wouldn’t work, would it?

Joyce It might. If we all had a go - turning it in relays.

Michael We could try. Let’s see if we can get it out of the engine ...

They all lean into the boat

I think we can ... But it’ll take two of us. And then we’ll have to improvise some kind of handle. Come on, Joyce. You stand by with the tool box, Spud!

Music. They remove the dynamo and fit a crude handle onto it. Then ...

Michael Shall I start?

He turns the handle vigorously for a moment, then stops.

Wait. Switch the radio on and see if I make the red light come on.

Spud Right. Go on!

Michael turns again as fast as he can. Spud peers at the red light, shielding it from the sun.

Joyce Is it on?

Spud Just.

Michael [Stopping] That’s something. If we switch the radio off, then all have a go at this - in relays like you said, Joyce - we should be able to store up some real power in the battery.

Spud [Switching the radio off] O.K. ... Off.

Michael It’s going to be hard work, though. My arm’s feeling it already.

Spud No wonder, we haven’t eaten anything! We’ll have to, you know - if we’re going to do any good. Energy doesn’t come out of thin air.

Joyce Spud’s right, Michael.

Michael You mean we should eat some more of our chocolate?

Joyce All of it! Risk the lot, that’s what I say!

Spud Me too!
Joyce: We've got to get off this island, Michael!

Michael: O.K. Fetch it out, Spud. Let's turn chocolate into electricity!

Spud opens the fridge and reaches for the chocolate.

Spud: Ugh, gone all soft again.

Joyce: That's the fridge not working either.

Michael: Never mind. Put it all on a plate.

Spud: There.

Michael: That's it. Ready?

S & J: Ready!

Song - Energy

Take a bar of chocolate -
a bar of lovely chocolate -
eat it off the plate,
feel your body strengthen
to an energetic state!
Turn the iron handle
quick as you can go,
From the food in your mouth
to the muscles in your arm
let the energy flow!

Wouldn't it be lovely, wouldn't it be great
wouldn't it be nice - if the battery ate!

Take a bar of chocolate -
melted, urgh! -
lick it like a cat.
If you didn't have to work
it would make you fat - fat cat!
Turn the handle quickly
- Quick as I can go!
You're turning it too slow!
- Quick as I can go!
Give your energy
to the battery
through the dynamo!

Wouldn't it be lovely etc ...

Running out of chocolate -
what? Oh no! -
out of energy!
Give me the last piece
fast as you can please
and you'll see! - We'll see!
Hope it’s not been wasted
- Hope it’s not!
- well, it wasn’t very large!
With the energy burning
and the dynamo turning
is the battery charged?
Wouldn’t it be lovely etc ...

Michael    Oo, my arm’s dropping off!
Joyce      Mine too!
Spud       Mine too!
Michael    Still, at least all that energy’s gone into the battery.
Joyce      Yes, it should be able to work anything now. I feel like I’ve moved a mountain.
Michael    Let’s see ...

He switches the radio on.

[Cautiously] It is working.
Joyce      Great!
Michael    The light isn’t all that bright. Still, here goes ... cross fingers! Seeker, this is Seeker, calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday.
Pause.     Seeker, this is Seeker, calling all ships. Mayday, mayday, mayday.
Pause.     Michael is just about to call again, when ...
Radio Voice Hello, Seeker. Hello Seeker, this is Hesperus. I am reading you.
All        Yippee!
Michael    Sshhh!
Radio Voice What is your position, please, what is your position?
Michael    Hello! We’re stuck. We’re marooned without petrol -
Spud       And without food -
Michael    Yes, and without food on a deserted island, somewhere off the mainland coast.
           We -
Radio Voice Which island, please, which island?
The voice is getting fainter.
Michael    We don’t know what it’s called. We were shipwrecked in the storm, you see.
           We were sailing from -
Radio Voice I am losing you, Seeker, I am losing you ... 
Michael    What? ... Hello, hello, can you hear me, can you hear me? Come in, Please!
Silence.    Hello! ... It’s gone again.
Joyce You’ve lost contact?
Michael The battery’s gone. Dead as a dodo.
Joyce As soon as that?
Spud After all that effort?
Michael Yes.
Joyce A radio doesn’t use that much power, does it?
Michael No.
Joyce So all that chocolate and all that work produced only a few seconds worth of electricity?
Michael Yes. If only we’d known where we are! We’re in a worse mess than ever now. That chocolate was the last bit of energy we had.
Spud Yes, and I’m still starving!
Joyce Spud! ... Is there no other way we could get energy? No other way to make the dynamo work?
Michael Nothing I can think of. Short of building a wind turbine. And we can’t do that!
Joyce We’ll have to think of something. We can’t live without energy.
Michael But what is there? Here?
Spud Aren’t we forgetting something?
Joyce What?
Spud The words in the sand. There is someone else on the island, somewhere. Whoever it is, they must have some energy, mustn’t they? And some food. They’d be dead if they didn’t.
Michael That’s true. They must have something, even if it’s only enough to cook fish with. But they won’t give us any, will they?
Spud Why not?
Michael They hate us. They want us to go away.
Spud Yes ... 
Joyce We could ask.
Michael We don’t know where they are!
Joyce We’ll have to look! What else can we do? We can’t get off the island without energy, we can’t live on it without energy. We’ve got to try something!
Michael Yes, I ... 
Spud These could be their footprints in the sand ... Look, leading off that way!
Joyce Our only hope, Michael.
Michael O.K., let’s go and look. But ... I don’t understand. Who can it be, living here in this desert?
Joyce  [Shaking her head] Let’s just hope he or she or they are a lot nicer than they seem!

Michael  Yes ... Go on, Spud, lead the way!

Music. Spud, Michael and Joyce leave.

After a few moments, enter Sunny. He stops, surprised at what he sees. He calls out:

Sunny  Hello? Hello?

He sees the fish, picks it up. It stinks. He looks in the pan, puzzled. He examines the gas stove.

Ah, no gas!

He thinks for a moment, looks at his watch, and then up at the sun.

Yes!

He turns decisively and exits the way he had come.

Fade lights on beach scene.

Build lights on Michael, Joyce and Spud for:

Song - Who?

Who could be living here
in this desert place?
What sort of animal,
beast with a human face?
What will we find, we don’t know,
will it be friend, or our foe?
Who could be living here?

Fade.

Scene 4

A cave. A great heap of coal.

Norda is hacking at the ground with a lump of rock.

Norda  Out with it, out with it, you devil. I’ll heap you up! Heap all of you up and burn you! Send you away - out there, into space. You’ll bring no life back here. There’ll be no people on this island. No trees, no factories, no people!

Throwing more lumps on the heap, she falters and nearly falls.

So weak. So weak. But keep going ’til it’s burnt - every last piece of it! Then you can rest.

She hammers again at the coal. Enter Spud, Joyce and Michael, who stop and stare.

Joyce  It’s an old woman!

Spud  What’s she doing?
Michael    That’s coal. She’s digging up coal!
Joyce      So that’s her energy supply!
Spud       We could cook all right with some of that, couldn’t we?
Michael    Why’s she making such a big fire? That can’t be just to cook with ... Hello!
Norda      What? Who are you?
Michael    We -
Norda      Is it you with the camp on the beach?
Michael    Yes, we -
Norda      Why haven’t you gone? I told you to go! Can’t you read?
Michael    We’re stuck. We’re marooned!
Joyce      We were on a ship, you see. It sank in the storm and we got washed up here in a boat.
Spud       Then we ran out of petrol and gas - and electricity - so we can’t leave -
Joyce      And we can’t radio for help -
Michael    And we can’t even cook. We hoped -
Norda      You’re lying. You won’t fool me. He brought you, didn’t he? He told you about the coal and brought you here, didn’t he?
Joyce      What? Who are you talking about?
Norda      [Pointing off] Him! Him with his soil and his trees and all his stupid dreams!
Joyce      We -
Norda      Tell him from me - he won’t bring life back here. This island is dead. Dead! There’ll be no new forests here. No farms, no factories, no schools - no people!
Joyce      She’s crazy.
Michael    Look, we don’t know what you’re talking about. We don’t want to be here. We want help to get away.
Spud       Yes, and some coal just to cook with, if we can. We haven’t eaten properly since the day before yesterday -
Norda      Never! Never! I’m burning it - all of it! I’m burning it off!
Joyce      What?
Norda      I won’t leave a scrap of it. Tell your friend I’m going to burn his dreams. Tell him from me. Then go away and leave this island in peace!

She picks up a rock.
Michael    She’s mad!
Norda      [Taking aim] GO!
They flee.
Norda

**Song - I Hate Life!**

*People, I hate people!*
*I hate living in this world, I hate life!*
*Cities! Or green hills!*
*If it moves, if it grows, if it sounds, if it smells*
*I can’t stand it, I just hate it, I hate life!*  

*Give me stillness! Give me silence!*
*Give me desert, nothing growing!*
*But no sunshine, please no sunshine,*
*Give me darkness, like a graveyard!*

*I hate aeroplanes and motorcars*
*and stereos and videos and offices and factories*
*and engines!*
*I hate farming-land and forest-land*
*and leisure parks and pleasure-grounds*
*and animals and birdlife make me mad!*
*And I hate everything that reminds me of life*
*in that world full of noise, full of heat, full of light!*

*Give me stillness! Give me silence!*
*Give me desert, nothing growing!*
*I hate people, I hate children!*
*I want nothing, nothing breathing,*
*no warm life, I hate life,*
*I hate YOU!*

Blackout.
Act Two

Scene 5

The beach scene as it was left at the end of Scene 3.

Enter Sunny, with a bag, a large concave mirror (and stand) and a large fish. He calls out:

Sunny Hello!

He puts the fish in the frying-pan and adds some oil.

Now, where are we going to catch the sun ... ?

He places mirror and frying pan and focuses the sun on the fish.

That’s it. Now, sun, let’s cook these people some dinner. Let’s have a nice hot sizzle ... 

After a few moments the fish begins to fry. Sunny sits by the pan and prods the fish with a fork, salts it perhaps, sniffs it.

Mm, good.

Gently, he sings:

Song - Sun 2

Sun, sun, shining in the sky
let no clouds go by,
here’s a fish for frying!
You warm the sea and you warm the land,
our feet get hot walking on the sand,
sun, sun, shining in the sky ...

Off, the approach of Michael, Joyce and Spud.

Joyce [Off] What a horrible old woman. How can we go away, if she won’t help us?
Spud [Off] Why wouldn’t she give us any coal? Enough to cook with wouldn’t have hurt her.

Michael [Off] We’re going to have to eat that fish raw.
Spud [Off] What? I bet Robinson Crusoe didn’t have to eat -
Joyce [Off] Spud, shut up about Robinson -

Entering and seeing Sunny, they stop dead in their tracks.

Sunny Hi!
M & J Who are you?
Sunny My name’s Sunny. I live here. I saw you’d run out of gas. Thought you might need something to eat. I brought you a fresh fish.
Spud Yes, we do, but -
Is that cooking?
Certainly is.
They approach hesitantly. Spud makes to touch the fish with his finger.
Ow!
Careful!
What -
It’s the sun. You’re cooking with the sun!
Always do.
It’s a mirror. It’s catching the sun’s rays and concentrating them - on the fish!
That’s right.
Like a magnifying glass!
Does it really work?
Can’t you hear? Can’t you smell?
Yes!
Yes, it’s the best smell ever! We haven’t eaten properly for two days.
It won’t be long. It’s cooking nicely.
Tell me - what brought you here?
We’re marooned. Our ship sank in the storm. But we were lucky, we got ashore in this boat.
We’ve been trying to get a ship to pick us up. We’ve got a radio, you see. A transmitter. But our battery’s gone flat, and our petrol’s run out, too.
Tricky. I think you’d better use the wind.
The boat’s not a yacht!
No - to work your dynamo. Build a small wind turbine. Like an old Cretan windmill.
A windmill! We can build a windmill?
Yes. I use an old water-wheel myself. But a windmill’s quite easy. I’ll show you. But we’ll eat first.
Yes, please!
Just a few more minutes ...
Are you ... Are you the man the old lady was talking about? The old lady in the cave?
Oh ho, you’ve met Norda, have you? Yes, that’d be me. There’s only the two of us here. You mustn’t mind Norda. She’s quite harmless.
She didn’t look harmless. She threatened to throw a rock at us. We don’t understand. What’s going on on this island?

You think it’s a bit strange - all these ruins and just a mad old lady and a man who cooks with the sun?

Yes, it’s spooky.

Joyce!

[Laughing] Well, now. For a start, do you know where you are?

They all shake their heads.

You’re sixty nautical miles off the mainland coast, south south west of Port Cyrus. You’re on Fire Island. Three centuries ago this was home for maybe twenty thousand people.

Twenty thousand!

Yes, Fire Island was a small city. A noisy, very dirty, living city! This is what’s left.

Did they live on iron? By mining iron?

We found some - some iron ore, look!

That’s right. They mined iron, and they forged it into tools. Ploughs and hand tools for the farm, knives and forks for the kitchen, weapons too. If you’d been here all those years ago out there in the bay you’d have seen maybe twenty or thirty ships, all loading up tools made here. You’d’ve had to shout to be heard over the din. Sailors coming ashore, fishermen landing their catches, barrows and carts on the quayside, horses, merchants, children, traders shouting - “Knives, buy my knives! Fish, fresh fish!” But above all that, beyond the quay, in the heart of the island, the sounds of the iron-founders hammering out the island’s wealth. If you were on the mainland and you looked this way at night, they said you could see the glow from the foundry furnaces. On the darkest nights and with the furnaces at their hottest, they said it seemed the sea itself was on fire!

Is that how it got its name?

I guess so.

It sounds wonderful

Yes!

But then the iron ran out, did it?

What? Oh no. Not the iron. There’s plenty of iron here still.

Then why’s it like this? All these ruins. And no life. No people.

They ran out of energy.

What?

Around the city was a forest. To heat those furnaces they cut down the trees and burned them. One day the last tree was gone.
Michael: You mean that was the end of the iron industry?
Sunny: No fuel, no furnaces.
Michael: How could they be so stupid, letting themselves run out of fuel?
Spud: Sounds a familiar story to me.
Michael: What? Oh yes. We ran out of electricity a bit like that.
Spud: And petrol. And gas.
Joyce: We thought they’d go on forever.
Sunny: They don’t!
Joyce: No. So what happened then?
Sunny: The foundries made their last tools. The ships that came to buy made their last visits.
Joyce: What did the people do?
Sunny: They left. Most of them. A few stayed behind - and starved.
Spud: Starved?
Sunny: So they say. You see, it’d been a long time since they’d grown their own food. They’d given over every bit of the island to iron-making. They had to buy food from the mainland - trade it for the tools they made. But with no more tools to trade the food stopped coming. They tried to get food out of their own soil - too much. What with the goats they kept to provide milk they wore the soil out. The goats pulled up the roots, and then streams washed what was left of the soil into the sea. Left it just rock and sand like you see it now.
Michael: But there’s coal on the island. We saw it. That old woman - Norda - she’s digging it up.
Sunny: Digging it up?
Joyce: Yes, making a great pile of it. She said she’s going to burn it off. So you can’t have it!
Spud: We asked if we could have some, to cook with. But she wouldn’t give us any. Just shouted at us.
Sunny shakes his head, wryly.
Michael: Didn’t they know about the coal? Three hundred years ago?
Sunny: No. It just lay in the ground. A great, undiscovered treasure.
Michael: And so the island died?
Sunny: Yes.
Joyce: What a sad story. But ... but what are you doing here - now?
Sunny: I want to make it live again.
Michael: What?
Sunny  I’ve brought soil here, and seeds. I’ve planted trees. Already there’s a small corner of the island that’s green again.

Joyce  Why? Why not just leave it?

Sunny  Three hundred years ago my family lived on this island. They worked here in the foundries. When the last tree was burnt they escaped, made a new life for themselves on the mainland. But they dreamed that one day they’d come back and Fire Island would live like it had before. They never did come back, but they passed that dream on.

Michael  And you’ve come!

Sunny  Yes.

Joyce  On your own?

Sunny  I’m just a start. Others will follow. Farmers, builders, engineers. We must build again. Houses, schools, a hospital ... I’m going to show it can be done. The island can be brought back to life.

Michael  So you’ll dig the coal and start the foundries up again?

Sunny  [Laughing] No, no foundries - and no coal mines either. Only clean energy from now on. We’ll leave the coal in the ground, make energy from wind turbines and solar panels. We’ve no shortage of wind here, and no shortage of sun. It will be a green revolution for a new, green island. New farms, new forests, a self-sustaining economy.

Joyce  Sounds like a paradise.

Sunny  As near as we can make it, yes.

Spud  I don’t understand. Why does Norda think you want the coal, why’s she trying to burn it all off?

Sunny  Norda has been hurt very badly. I don’t know quite how, but I’m told she used to be very wealthy, and exceedingly generous. But something went wrong and she lost her home and all her money. She asked her friends for help and they all refused her - you know, made one excuse or another. I’m afraid it turned her head. From that moment she trusted no-one, hated everyone. And came here to live again. She wants it just as it is, a denial of life in every form. I’ve told her over and over I’m not going to dig for coal, but she believes nothing I say.

Joyce  How does she live?

Sunny  Very poorly. I think on raw seafood. She can’t last much longer. She’ll run out of energy herself.

Joyce  You mean she’ll die?

Sunny  Yes ... But let’s not think about Norda. Dinner’s ready!

Spud  Yippee!

Sunny  Hold out your plates.
Joyce  Spud!
Spud  Sorry.
Sunny  This is sea trout. Like salmon. Very nice.
Michael  It’ll be wonderful. Thanks!
Joyce  Mm.
Spud  I feel better already. I was about to stop working altogether, you know. This is just in time.
Joyce  Spud has an appetite like an iron furnace.
Spud  I don’t eat trees!

They all laugh.
Sunny  Eat fish!

Music. They eat ...

Michael  That was great. I’d forgotten just how hungry I was.
Joyce  Me too.
Spud  I hadn’t!
Sunny  Good. So you’re feeling better? Full of energy again?
Trio  Yes!
Sunny  Come on then - let’s build you a wind turbine.
Trio  Right/Yes! etc
Sunny  What are we going to need? A spindle. The steering-wheel from your boat might do. And spokes ... yes, your two paddles - you’ll have to lose your shelter - and these rails [deck rails] if we can get them off. Sails, of course - have you any pieces of cloth?
Spud  We’ve the ship’s signal flags in a bag - I was using it as a pillow.
Sunny  They might do very well. Dig them out, Spud. And let’s see what we can make with oars, rails and the steering-wheel ...

Music. They build a small wind turbine - Cretan windmill-style - and mount it in the highest section of old wall. They then connect it to the dynamo.

Michael  Switch the radio on, Spud. See if the red light works.
Spud  I think so - yes! It’s only dim, but it’s on!
Trio  Yippee!
Michael  Switch it off. We’ll have to leave it now, to store up power in the battery. But it’ll do it, won’t it?
S & J  Yes!
Michael  Thanks, Sunny. That’s brilliant.
S & J  Yes, thanks!
Sunny That’s O.K. Hope you get help soon.

He picks up his mirror etc.

Spud Are you going?

Sunny Yes. I must fish again now. Or I’ll have nothing to cook tomorrow.

Joyce If we do get some help, are you sure you don’t want to come back with us? Back to the mainland?

Sunny That’s kind of you. But no thanks. My life is here. If you want to see my home and the trees I’m growing, I’m that way - two miles. I’ll be back there by dusk. Good luck!

Joyce Thank you.

Michael Yes, thanks for everything.

Sunny waves and exits. Spud follows him to watch him go.

What a strange man.

Joyce I like his dream. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to see the island really alive again?

Michael I think it feels different already. The turbine giving us power, food in our stomachs. We should just leave the battery charging and try the radio again tomorrow.

Joyce O.K.

Michael So I’m just going to lie down and soak up the sun ... Is something the matter?

Joyce Just thinking about Norda. Sunny says she might die, she might starve. She may be mad, but we’ve made it worse, haven’t we? Just being here, I mean.

Michael Maybe. Hardly our fault though, is it?

Joyce No.

Spud [On the high rocks] Hey, where are the binoculars?

Michael Why?

Spud Fire. I think I can see a fire. Where Norda’s cave is.

Michael climbs up beside him and takes the binoculars.

It’s definitely a fire. She must be burning that coal.

Joyce joins them and takes a look, too.

Joyce Is there nothing we can do?

Spud How d’you mean?

Joyce She’s a mad, unhappy old lady. She’s digging coal out of the ground and burning it - wasting it - all to no purpose. And if Sunny’s right, she hasn’t eaten properly since she came here. We’re making it worse, Spud!

Spud So?

Joyce I think we should go and speak to her again. See if we can make her see sense.
Spud    Not much hope of that.
Joyce    Maybe. But can’t we try? Michael?
Michael thinks for a moment.
Michael    I think Joyce is right. We’ve nothing to lose. And we might be able to persuade her Sunny means no harm. And nor do we.
Spud    Does it ... does it need all three of us?
Joyce    Why, what’s the matter? You’re not scared of her, are you?
Spud    No! I’ve got a stomach ache.
Joyce    You’re a pig, Spud - you ate too fast!
Spud    I was starving!
Joyce    Well, it serves you right. Anyway, stay here if you want and make sure our windmill doesn’t fall to bits. You can wash up, too! Come on, Michael!
Joyce and Michael exit.
Spud    How can I wash up? No hot water, is there?
He sits on the sand.
    What I need is a rest. [Stretching out] Fire Island, you’re not such a bad place, after all.
Music. He sleeps. After a while Norda enters.
Norda    What, not here to stay? Liars! All liars! I’ll show them. We’ll have no windmills here!
Spud    [Waking] Hello?
Norda    Oh, left the young one on guard, have they?
Spud    What do you mean?
Norda    You won’t stop me, boy! You’re making no energy on this island!
She makes a dash for the turbine. Spud gets there first.
Spud    Stop!
Norda    Out of my way!
Spud    I won’t. I won’t let you touch it! I may be young, but I’m strong, I’m warning you!
Norda    You ... ! Oh very well. Then I’ll go to the heart of it. Him and his trees - I’ll finish them. Put paid to his stupid dream once and for all!
She runs off.
Spud    What shall I do? Sunny’s gone fishing. She’ll tear his place apart ... Joyce! Michael!
Urgent Music. Spud runs off.
Fade.
Scene 6

Norda’s Cave. The heap of coal has been reduced to smouldering ash.

Enter Joyce and Michael, warily.

Joyce Can you see her?

Michael No.

Joyce Look at it - just a pile of ash!

Michael [Calling] Norda! ... Norda!

Joyce Norda!

Michael Norda! ... Where can she be? ’Spose she may have gone fishing. Shall we look for her along the shore? We’d better stick together.

Joyce OK.

Michael This way then?

Spud [Off] Joyce! Michael!

Joyce! Spud? ... Here! This way, Spud!

Enter Spud, panting.

Spud We’ve got to help Sunny. Norda - she’s gone crazy! She tried to pull our windmill down -

Michael What?

Spud I stopped her! But she said something about going right to the heart of it and she went off to Sunny’s place. Said she’d put paid to his dream once and for all!

Joyce You’re sure - that’s where she was going?

Spud That’s what she said. And she wasn’t heading back here.

Michael [To Joyce] He won’t let her do anything, will he?

Spud He won’t be there. He went off to fish! Said he wouldn’t be home until dusk. She was really angry. She’ll tear the place apart.

Joyce We must stop her.

Michael Yes, we must! Well done, Spud! Come on!

They run off.

Scene 7

Sunny’s Plantation. The brilliant green of a few slender young trees dominates the scene. There is a small water-wheel, part of an old mineworking, turning. Against a wall, great bags of soil and a smaller one of seeds.

The sun is low.
Music. Enter Norda.

Norda  Fool! Fool! Trying to make this island grow again. Never! What’s this ... seeds? Him and his trees! Out with you ... there, into the sand, the barren sand. You’ll never grow there! And this? ... Soil? Ugh! What to do with you? ... Into the sea with you ...

Painfully she drags a soil sack towards the sea. She has to pause.

So weak, so weak ... But not much further ...

With a huge effort she has moved the sack another metre or so when Michael, Joyce and Spud enter.

Michael  Hey!

Norda  [Backing off] What are you doing here? Go away!

Joyce  What are we doing - what are you doing?

Michael  What’s this? ... It’s soil! Soil for Sunny’s trees. Where are you taking it?

Norda  I’m throwing it it the sea where it belongs.

She goes for another sack, but Joyce beats her to it.

Joyce  Oh no, you’re not!

A momentary stand-off.

You interfering brats! I’ll finish this place. I’ll finish it now!

Music. Norda goes on the rampage, pulling up the trees. The trio try to stop her and she turns to the water-wheel. Trying to stop it turning, she screams, topples backwards onto the ground and lies still. Silence. The trio are momentarily transfixed, then bend over her.

Spud  Is she all right?

Joyce  Norda! Norda! ... Look, her hand is bleeding ...

Enter Sunny, carrying some fish.

Sunny  What’s happened?

Joyce  Norda. She was going mad - pulling up your trees, trying to wreck your water-wheel. Then she just fell down. And she’s hurt her hand.

Sunny  Norda ... Norda ...

He checks her breathing, feels her pulse.

She’s breathing, but her pulse is weak. Goodness knows when she last had any food. The temperature’s dropping now, we must keep her warm, and bandage this hand. Spud, fetch some of those sacks, will you? Somehow, when she wakes, we’ll have to make her eat, or she won’t have a chance.

He cleans and bandages the hand.

Joyce  Could we cook her a fish broth?

Sunny  In the morning, when the sun is up. Then we must get her to the mainland. To hospital. Does your radio work yet?
Michael Haven’t tried it. Thought we’d wait ’til the morning.

Sunny Could you bring it here then? We could connect it up to my own battery. The water-wheel keeps it fully charged.

Michael Yes, of course. Come on, Spud. Let’s both go.

Spud O.K.!

Michael and Spud run off. Sunny and Joyce look at Norda.

Joyce Will we save her?

Sunny That’s up to her. If we can persuade her to eat ... At least she’s resting now. You must be pretty tired yourself. I’ll watch her. You get some sleep.

Music. Joyce lies down and sleeps. Sunny pours himself a mug of water and sits by Norda. The lights slowly fade into night.

Scene 8

The same. The sun is well up. Michael is sitting at the radio, quietly calling for help. Sunny is stirring a pan of broth under the mirror. Joyce watches. Spud is asleep. Sunny spoons some broth into a bowl.

Sunny Norda ... Norda, can you hear me?

Michael stops radioing and watches.

Food for you, Norda. A broth to make you strong again.

Norda No, no ... no food. I can’t ...

Sunny You must eat. You’ve starved yourself. Here, just a mouthful ....

He puts the spoon to her mouth. A pause, then she takes it. The rest smile.

Music as Sunny continues feeding Norda. After a few moments Michael returns to his radio call, and Joyce begins to sing softly ...

Joyce Once upon a time there was an island,

island in the sun

with animals and plants and trees

and birds that sung.

Once upon a time there was a city,

a city on the island in the sea,

twenty thousand people living happily!

And they worked to make their island thrive

so their life there could survive

in prosperity ...

Norda has eaten and fallen asleep again. Sunny gives bowls of broth to Michael and Joyce and sits next to Joyce.

Sunny She’s sleeping again now. I think she’s going to be O.K.
Joyce: Will she still want to tear up all your trees?
Sunny: We’ll have to wait and see.
Pause.
Joyce: Sunny ... cooking with the sun ... the sun must be very hot, mustn’t it?
Sunny: Very, very hot.
Joyce: Is it on fire?
Sunny: Not really. The sun is a great nuclear reactor.
Joyce: Sunny ... like the ones we build on the mainland?
Sunny: No. The man-made ones make their energy by splitting apart the tiniest atoms of things. ‘Nuclear fission’, we call it. The sun does it by putting atoms together. That’s called ‘nuclear fusion’. We’re trying to do it ourselves, here on earth.
Joyce: To make little suns?
Sunny: I suppose so. It would be another great source of energy.
Joyce: Will we do it?
Sunny: I don’t know. I believe it’s really very difficult. Maybe.

Joyce takes a mouthful of broth.

Joyce: What would happen if the sun stopped? Stopped doing that fusion - went cold? I mean, what would happen to us?
Sunny: The earth would die. Like Fire Island did all those years ago. The sun shines on the earth, giving us warmth and light, and the plants energy to grow. The animals and the people eat the plants. It’s a great chain of energy. The sun is the source. We’d be nowhere without it.

Joyce: We’d have coal and oil and gas, though.
Sunny: Not enough for a dark, never-ending winter. Yes, they’re sunlight in a way - stored sunlight. Stored in the earth and under the sea. Living things, fed by the sun millions of years ago, then locked into the dark of the earth - when the surface of the earth moved and changed its shape. But they couldn’t replace the living sun ... I think she’s awake ... yes ... Hello, Norda.

Norda: Where am I? [Looking around] Oh ...
Sunny: How are you feeling?

At first she says nothing. Then:

Norda: I pulled up your trees, Sunny. I threw your seeds into the sand.
Sunny: It doesn’t matter. The trees can be planted again. And a bit of sand with the seeds won’t do any harm.

Norda: Who are these young people? Did you bring them here?
Sunny: No. Their ship was wrecked in the storm. They were very lucky to survive in
their little boat. But see, Michael is radioing for help. To get back to the mainland.

Norda So they told me the truth?
Joyce Yes, we did. Why didn’t you believe us?
Sunny Joyce ... When Michael finds help, Norda, you must go back with them. This island is killing you. Last night you had a very narrow escape.
Norda No. No, Sunny. You mustn’t send me away!
Sunny No-one can live on hatred alone, Norda. You need care, proper food, somewhere to be warm at night. Not everyone is against you, you know.
Norda I know. You’ve been very kind - all of you. But I stay on the island. Perhaps ... perhaps I could help you, Sunny? [Her first smile] I’m quite good at digging coal.
Sunny [Laughing] So I’m told! But the coal stays in the ground. Here we use only clean energy. The sun and the wind and the water.
Norda Is that all?
Sunny That is all.
Norda I’ve got everything wrong, haven’t I?
Sunny Well ...
Michael Hello, hello ... Quiet, everyone. I’ve found someone!

This wakes Spud. We hear a Radio Voice, possibly Australian.

Radio V Reading, you, Seeker. This is Kestrel. Give me your position.
Michael Er ... [looking to Sunny for confirmation] about 60 miles south west of -
Sunny South south west ... 
Michael No, sorry - about 60 miles south south west of Port Cyrus. We’re on Fire Island. Our ship went down in the storm. We’re marooned. And we have a sick lady who needs to go to hospital.
Norda No, no, no ...
Radio V I understand, Seeker. I will check your position. Keep tuned, please. Over.
Michael Thank you ... We’ve got help!

A cheer from Spud.
Sunny That’s great. You can go home. And Norda can go to hospital and get better.
Norda Sunny, no. I know how wrong I’ve been. It’s like I’ve woken from a nightmare. I like what you are trying to do, and I want to help you with it. Some more of your broth and some rest and I’ll be fine. Please let me stay. I can catch crabs and find mussels - sometimes even a oyster! And I would love to plant trees for you.
Sunny It’s more than planting a few trees, Norda. For the island to really live again
people must come back and build. Homes and schools, farms, factories even. And we’ll need more than a centuries-old water-wheel to power us. There’ll be huge wind turbines and great fields of solar panels. Not a quiet place, not just a green place, but Fire Island more as it used to be, burning with industry and life. You do understand?

Norda  Yes, I do. That’s what I want.
Sunny  Well ... 
Norda  I’m staying, Sunny.
Sunny  O.K. Then we’ll get you well, and work together.
Norda  Yes!
Sunny  [To the trio] Looks like you’ve lost your patient.
Joyce  [Quietly] Yes ...
Sunny  You’d better all go back to your camp and get your things together - pack them all back in the boat. If it can stop for you that ship will want you to be ready.

The trio whisper to each other.

Hey, what are you waiting for? You’ve got things to do!

Joyce  We’re not going, Sunny.
Sunny  What?
Spud   No, we’re not.
Michael  We’re staying here, too.
Joyce  If we can help, we mean.
Sunny  But -
Radio V  Hello Seeker, hello Seeker, come in, please. This is Kestrel.
Pause.  Seeker, can you read me? Over.
Michael  Hello, Kestrel. Yes, we read you. Over.
Radio V  The coastguard has been searching for you. Your ship survived the storm and reported you lost. The Captain will be very relieved to hear he didn’t make a terrible mistake putting you in that boat.
Michael  That’s wonderful!
Radio V  We are fifteen miles south west of you. We can reach you in an hour and a half and pick you up. Please state your exact position on the island. Over.
Michael  Er ...
Joyce  Go on, Michael - tell him. Tell him we’re staying.
Radio V  Come in, Please, Seeker. I must have your precise position on the island. Over.
Michael  Hello, Kestrel. This is Seeker. We are very grateful, but we no longer need help.
We are staying on the island. Repeat, we are staying on the island. Over.

*Radio V*  
Do I read you correctly, Seeker? On my chart Fire Island is uninhabited. Looks about as homely as the Sahara Desert.

*Spud grabs the microphone.*

*Spud*  
Not any longer, Kestrel. Your chart is out of date. We’ve made friends here and we’re staying. We’re going to make Fire Island live again! Over.

*Radio V*  
O.K. Seeker, I read you. Good luck! Over and out.

The radio goes dead.

*Joyce*  
So, it’s five of us now. Is that all right, Sunny?

*Teasingly, he makes them wait for an answer.*

*Sunny*  
Yes. A new beginning. Hey, Norda?

*Norda*  
It is. We’ll work together, all of us. Farm together, build together. We’ll make this island live like it used to live. Won’t we?

*All*  
Yes! We will!

*Sunny*  
Then let’s get going. Not you, Norda, not yet. Enforced rest - that’s an order! Michael and Spud, can you rescue the seeds from the sand? Just scoop them up, we’ll sift the sand out later. Joyce, give me a hand replanting these trees. Then we’ll give them a good water, before we all go fishing again. OK?

*MJ & S*  
OK!

*Music.* They set to work, and as they do Norda sings:

**Song of the Island - 4**

*Norda*  
Once upon a time there was an island,  
*island in the sun*  
*with animals and plants and trees*  
*and birds that sung.*  

Once upon a time there was a city,  
*a city on the island in the sea,*  
*twenty thousand people living happily!*  

And they worked to make their island thrive  
so their life there could survive  
in prosperity!

*Fire Island,*  
*Fire Island,*  
*Fire Island,*  
*You’ll never die!*

*Slow fade.*

*The End.*
The Score

Song of the Island 1&4
Song of the Island 2
Song of the Island 3

Sun
Energy
Who?
I Hate Life!

(and a ‘Windmill Song’ - unused in production)
Song Of The Island

Once upon a time there was an island,
island in the sun

With animals and plants and trees and birds

That sung

Once upon a time there was a city,
city on the island in the sea

twenty thousand people living happy

And they worked to make their island thrive
so their life there could survive in prosperity

Fire Island

Fire Island

Fire Island

Fire Island, Why did it die?

Last rendition of the song sung at the end by Norda from bar 32

You'll never die
The island in the sun was full of colors that now have gone with fields of gold and roofs of red and clothes that shone! Colors of the forest and the city on the island in the sea, greens and blues and yellows.
low flame in harmony

But now in this emp

ty desert land the colour of the sand is

all there is to see!

Fire Island

Fire Island

Fire Island Fire Island

Why did it die?
Song Of The Island (3)

Andrew Hilton

Sunny

The island in the sun was full of noises

noises filled the air, shouts and cries, and children's laughter everywhere!

Noises of the forest and the city, a city on the island in the sea

an-vils rang, and song-birds sang in every tree!

But now there's no sound to be heard,

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no man, no beast, no bird, no voice no melody.

Fire Island

Fire Island

Fire Island,

Why did it die?...
Sun

Sun, sun, why can't we use your heat

I only want to eat I only want my breakfast

ey, you warm the sea and you warm the land, our feet get hot walking on the sand.
Sun, sun, why can't we use your heat.
Energy

sprightly reggae (till slowing at each verse end)

5
Joyce

OOH (munch munch)

Spud

dreamily

a bar of love-ly choc’ late

take a bar of choc’ late

eat it off the plate

feel your body

Michael

10

J

MMM (munch munch) YUM YUM

(turning) Al-right!

S

M

strengthen to an energetic state (as in “hurry up!”)

turn the woo-den han-dle

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From the food in your mouth to the muscles in your arm, let the quick as you can go
From the food in your mouth to the muscles in your arm, let the quick as you can go

J

$123 \quad \text{Hymn like}$

\text{energy flow!}

Wouldn't it be lovely.

S

\text{energy flow!}

M

\text{energy flow!} \quad \text{decelerando} \\
$123$

wouldn't it be great? wouldn't it be nice if the battery fit! (to Michael)

S

M

primo tempo
now YOUR turn

Take a bar of choc’ late

melt-ed! URGH!

lick it like a cat! If you didn’t have to work it would make you fat! fat cat!

(uttering)

lick it like a cat! he he he he he!

fat cat!

lick the handle quickly

You’re turning it too slow!

give your

turn the handle quickly

You’re turning it too slow

give your

Quick as I can go!

as quick as I can go!
J
energy to the battery through the dynamo!

S

M
decelerando

51

Hymn like

J
Wouldn't it be lovely, wouldn't it be great? wouldn't it be nice if the

S

M

58

primo tempo

J
battery ale!

S
(excitedly) Choc- late? (less hopefully) choc- late?

M

battery ale! primo tempo

J

S

M
J
running out of choc-late
throughout
out of en-er-gy

S
WHAT? OH NO!
give me the last piece

M
running out of choc-late
throughout
out of en-er-gy

68
we'll see! hope it's not been was- ted!

S
fast as you can please and you'll see!
hope it's not.....! Well it

M
we'll see! hope it's not been was- ted!

73
with the en-er-gy burn-ing and the dy-na-mo turn-ing is the batt-ry charged?

S
wasn't very large!
with the en-er-gy burn-ing and the dy-na-mo turn-ing is the batt-ry charged?

M
with the en-er-gy burn-ing and the dy-na-mo turn-ing is the batt-ry changed?
Wouldn't it be lovely, wouldn't it be lovely, Oh
Piano TACET

wouldn't it be great? wouldn't it be nice if the battery ate!

wouldn't it be great? wouldn't it be nice if the battery ate!
Who?

mystério

Who could be living here...

in this desert place?

What sort of animal...

beast with a human face?

What will we find? we don't
I Hate Life!

Norda

quite violent, rocky.

Piano

People!

I hate people! I hate living in this world

Pno

I hate life! Cities!

Pno

and green hills! if it moves or if it grows

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— if it sounds or if it smells... I can't stand it, I just hate it, I hate life! Give me stillness! give me Silence! give me desert nothing growing! but no sunshine please, no sunshine give me darkness like a grave...
I hate aeroplanes and motor cars and

I hate stereos and videos and offices and factories and engines! I hate

farming land and forest land and leisure parks and pleasure grounds and animals and bird life make me

mad! And I hate everything that reminds me of
knife in a world full of heat full of noise full of... light! Give me stillness! give me silence! give me desert,

nothing growing! I hate people 'specially children!

I want nothing, nothing breathing no warm
I hate life
I hate you!
Windmill Song

Building a windmill, make it spin!
Catching the power, of the wind!

Building a windmill, make it spin!
Catching the power, of the wind!

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Let it blow!

Let it blow!

Making the sails turn the dynamo

Making the sails turn the dynamo