

Run Out

By Jamesine Cundell Walker

This play is suitable for in the round, end on, thrust or traverse productions. The play only requires a small bench or rock to sit on and a trig point. As a result, it is especially suitable for touring companies. It is currently set in the hills around Skipton but can easily be adapted to suit other regional trig points.

Cast

Malcolm: 50s or 60s tall and rangy. He is a staid middle-aged man

Mavis: 50s or 60s his wife, shorter and plumper; she longs for more excitement

Cyril John: (CJ) 50s, good looking; probably not as fit as Malcolm in reality but grasping his long-lost youth.

Alexis Villani: 40s American, slim and fit.

Jenny Wilkins: 30s Mavis and Martin's daughter, a bit downtrodden and down at heel

Grandma Jenny: 20 in 1953, to be doubled by Jenny

Rita: 20, can be played by Alexis, or another actress.

Setting: Any local trig point, present day. Please feel free to change the place names to your own local references.

Malcolm enters. He carries a very large rucksack as though he is on a long-distance walk. It is full of equipment which will come out during the play. Each time he takes out an item it is a little dusty and needs a shake or a wipe.

He strides at a good pace across the stage and takes in the 360 degree view. He breathes in the clean air and is clearly at home here. He then sits on the bench. He takes out a flask and four cups, they are all dusty and need a little clean with his hanky. He pours himself a drink and looks around, at ease with the world. He checks his watch and finding it is 10 o'clock he gets out his mobile device and puts in his ear phones. We hear him sing snatches of the Archers theme tune, give a few muffled titters then silence. It is Sunday morning.

Pause

Mavis enters, she is out of breath, overheated and cross, although she carries only a large bum bag. She begins her rant oblivious to the fact that Malcolm is engrossed in the Archers. She leans on the trig point and takes off one boot during this, adjusting her sock, finding a stone etc.

MAVIS I know I tell you not to wait for me on hills, but it is occasionally nice to have a bit of encouragement, you know. You were off up this hill like a whippet as usual. How many times do I need to tell you, your legs are twice as long as mine. I have to go like the clappers to have any hope of keeping up. When I told our Jenny she said we should line up, you know, line up like on ... on a line somewhere and then both take 100 paces. She said you could probably walk twice as far as me in a hundred paces. Maybe more. Then you might understand why I struggle. No wonder I'm always out of breath. And don't give me the one about just keep going slowly. I need to stop and get me breath back, I do. I could walk as slow as a tortoise and I'd still need to get me breath back on hills. I just would. I've always been the same. I get sick of people telling me how to walk. I've got the book, the video and the t shirt and I know if I don't stop and breathe I'll never get up a hill. That's all there is to it. You men with your long legs, you've no idea. I say you've no idea what it's like for a little woman. Five foot two versus six foot, I mean I've no chance. But will you listen... I say will you listen?

She moves towards Malcolm on this and realises he is away with the Archers. She stands in front of him and waves. He pulls out the ear phones oblivious to the fact that she has been talking for five minutes.

MALCOLM Hello darling, you're here then. I didn't wait for you, because I know you don't like it. Take your time, that's the thing with hills. Just go at your own speed but try not to stop, that's really important. Just keep plodding on. Slow and steady wins the race. Try not to stop. That's the best way.

Behind him, Mavis makes strangling actions.

MAVIS Yes, I'm here then. And I'm so glad you didn't wait for me. *(pauses for effect, but he isn't listening)* I know you don't like it when I stop for the breathtaking views. Do you get it breath taking views. *Malcolm is back with the Archers.*

MAVIS Are you listening? *She smiles at him, ironically, he smiles back. She pulls one earphone out and yells.* I said are you listening?

MALCOLM There's no need to shout, I'm just catching up with the Archers while we wait. *(He laughs)* I still love that Joe Grundy. They don't make characters like that any more do they? How old must he be though? At least 108 I'd say and still out working the land. They must think we're stupid. People just don't live that long still working and active. And with a sex life! Well, I didn't mean Joe Grundy, obviously.

MAVIS What do you mean old people... I mean oldER people.... don't have a sex life? Did you just say that?

MALCOLM *(pulls out an ear phone)* Did you say something?