

Anglia

An audio drama

Chris Gregory

It is April 2029. Climate change is taking hold. Wars are being fought across North Africa and the Middle East over access to water. Far right governments in the UK and the USA have tightened their border security making it virtually impossible even for refugees to gain entry.

We are in east Anglia, a village in the fens close to the sea in North Norfolk, not far from the border with Cambridgeshire

Characters

Millie Wyatt: She works in the bar at the Green Dragon pub

David Wyatt is a native of East Anglia, husband of Millie. He is a fisherman, bar worker, odd-job man. The couple are scraping a living in harsh economic times. Lately David has been working in one of the migrant internment camps

Rachel Woods is a US journalist sent to cover the emerging story of immigrant arrivals

Laura Michaels is Rachel's editor back in New York City

Awara is a Kurdish migrant from Northern Iraq. She has travelled from her country with her family to escape war and climate change in her own country.

Willa Watson is part of Rachel's news team at ANN in New York. She is the main news presenter

James Davis: Government inspector

Jack : A regular customer of the Green Dragon.

Police Officer

Coast Guard Crew Member

Prologue: Setting the scene: The Fens

David: Most landscapes evolve over millions of years. Ice and wind, sea and rain do their work to slowly sculpt valleys and hills. Shape coastlines and rivers, lakes and mountains.

But some landscapes are changed by humans in decades rather than millennia: The Fens of eastern England were nothing more than hundreds of square miles of swamps and marshes stretching from the sea as far inland as the city of Cambridge. Haunted by spirits and the souls of people they lured to their deaths in the treacherous marshes, the swamps were drained to form rich, table-flat farmland. But the spirits remained in the stories and folk-tales the locals told and handed down from generation-to-generation. Stories of boggarts and marsh spectres, of mysterious lights called “will’o-the-wisps” that travellers would mistake for friendly lanterns and follow to their deaths, drowned in the swamps and muddy pools. Stories conjured from the thick mists that still shroud the land from time to time creating a sense of mystery and foreboding that has proven impossible for the fens to be rid of.

But land that lies below sea level can just as easily be reclaimed if the dykes and levees protecting it should break or sea levels should rise.... In the changing world of the mid twenty-first century those rising seas have already started to claim back some of the land man stole from the sea.

(slowly, slightly dramatic). The year is 2029 and this is Anglia.

Scene 1 : Millie’s Bedroom

Sounds : someone moving in bed, breathing

Millie : - (breathing, muttering... as though she’s having a bad dream – restless..)

Sounds : Phone alarm goes off...

Millie : (muttering) Mmmm. Shut up, Shut up. I heard you...

Sounds : a radio is switched on.

Radio Voice : “It’s five thirty and this is the Radio Fenland news. Cambridge Police are looking for a man suspected of being involved in a hit and run incident in the Trumpington area of the city. A police spokesperson said they are looking for the driver of a dark green Ford Apollo in connection with the incident”. In Peterborough, far left demonstrators have clashed with police following a peaceful march by Britain First members through the city centre. Fifteen protestors and two police officers were injured in the incidents....

Fades

Millie : (dictating into her phone). Text to David Wyatt. Hope you’re ok love. Thinking of you. Be safe out there on the sea. Hope you catch plenty. See you later. Millie ex ex.

Phone : Text reads : Hope you're ok love. Thinking of you. Be safe out there on the sea. Hope you catch plenty. See you later. Milie. kiss kiss. Re-write or send?

Millie : Send.

Sounds : Ping

Phone: Message sent to David Wyatt

Scene 2: Millie's Walk

Millie : I like to walk. Early in the morning, when no one else is around I'll put on my boots and just go where my instincts lead. Sometimes I walk through the woods before dawn on a winter's morning, my breath clouding in front of me. Sometimes, I'll walk the coast path, listening to the waves breaking on the beach, even on those short mid-winter days when it's still too dark to see the sea, you can feel it as a presence, brooding and breathing out there in the blackness. I walk in all weathers, all temperatures, all lights and all times of the year. I watch the changing seasons and my walks set the mood for my day, calibrate my outlook.

This morning, I am up and about even earlier than usual. Couldn't sleep, I always struggle to settle when David is out in the fishing boat. I head for the beach...wanting to catch the pink light of a September dawn colouring the wave tops. It's a normal morning until...

Sounds: News report cuts in

Radio Voice : A boat carrying migrants capsized in the North Sea last night off the North Norfolk coast. The Coastguard estimates that up to 150 migrants may have drowned. Police are advising people to avoid beaches in the area while their forensic investigation continues.... (fades)

Millie: At first, I can't tell what they are, the light not quite good enough to give definition to the shapes. I've seen seals on these beaches, I've seen cargo washed ashore from freighters plying their routes up and down the coast. But this feels different. That instinct the mind has to detect something unusual and terrible. A tingle in the back of the neck, the way the brain seems to say: "wake up, pay attention, this is important!"

(slowly, awe struck, horrified) And then I realise: Bodies – dozens of them. Washed on the shore like driftwood carvings of people. Tiny children, women, young men, helplessly flung ashore like artist's mannequins posed into random, improbable shapes: motionless on the wet sand.

For a moment I too am motionless, paralysed in the half-light as I struggle to comprehend, struggle to make sense of the sight in front of me. Then I rush back to the cottage, dial 999 and sit, shaking, forcing myself to breathe as I wait for the hours to pass until it's time to go to work.

Music

Scene 3 Millie's cottage

Sounds: The sound of a door opening. Footsteps...

David : (Gently). Millie, Millie! Oh, you're asleep...

Millie: Oh, oh gosh, must have drifted off. Hello love. You're back early. It's not even 8

David : Boat developed a fault. Had to limp back into King's Lynn on one engine.

Millie : Oh that's unlucky. catch much?

David : No, didn't make it out into the main fishing grounds. Ended up pulling up mussel and whelk pots with a boat from Boston. Boring really.

Millie : Forget "boring" ! You're safe, that's all that matters.

David : The money matters Millie. You know that. I won't have made a quarter of what I'd have got if we'd pulled in a good haul off Jutland or the Zuider Zee.

Millie : But you haven't risked clashing with Danish or Dutch naval patrols either, or getting caught in a storm so sod the money !

David : We won't make ends meet unless I get a couple of proper trips out there each week. You know that.

Millie : Let's not think about it now eh? Listen, I've got to go to work in ten minutes but let me make you a coffee before I go.

David : Thank you! You're amazing Millie.

Millie : I'd hardly describe myself as amazing – I'm nothing special. I've had a terrible start to the day too

David : Terrible ? How come

Millie: Migrant boat capsized out there somewhere... there were bodies on the beach David. (she's really upset...can hardly say the words). I hated it. It was horrible. I thought of you, thought of them. Little kids. Women my age....

David : (Starts to become a little prickly). They shouldn't be trying to come here. Serves them right. Maybe if the news gets out about what happened it will deter others from trying. It's our land Millie. Our home. I've lived in the Fens all my life, they're not going to take it from us...

Millie : Jesus David. You sound like the bloody Prime Minister! It's not the war you know. We're not "fighting them on the beaches". These are innocent people who've gone through hell. They just want to feel safe... We can't begrudge them that.

David : I can't believe you sometimes Millie : They're trying to take our lifestyle, steal it from us! It's a harsh world but we have to defend what we've got. They'll take it from us. You know that!

Millie : Oh grow up David. For goodness sake grow up! It's so depressing to hear you spouting fascism over coffee after what I've seen today.

David : (softening) Millie I.... listen I'm sorry. I shouldn't have been so forthright. Let's talk later, yeah?

Millie : (coldly) I'm working a late shift tonight. (Pause: relenting) If you promise to be a bit nicer why don't you come into the Green Dragon for a drink at about 8. I think I'll be on the bar. If it's quiet we can have a chat then.

David : Alright love. Have a good day. See you later.

Scene Four: The bar of the Green Dragon Pub

Sounds : Gentle background music. The sound of quiet conversation. Clink of glasses. Footsteps to the bar.

Millie: Can I help you?

Rachel: Yes, hi. I'm looking for a room for a few nights do you know of any good guest houses or pubs with rooms?

Millie: We have rooms here. Nothing special but I can do you bed and breakfast for £150 a night.... Are you on your own?

Rachel: Yep, just me.... The room sounds great. Oh, do you have Terraband access and a desk I can work from?

Millie: Terraband can be a bit slow at times but the room has a desk. Are you a writer?

Rachel: Journalist. I work for American News Network. We're here covering the migrant crisis...

Millie: We don't hurt them. Not round here. Not like they did in Sussex and Kent.

Rachel: I.... I never said you did. That's not the angle of our story... The American public can't imagine the scale of what's going on here and whilst it's not exactly front-page news it's starting to gain some traction.

Millie: We can't imagine it ourselves. Not sure how it even got this way. The government don't seem to want to know about it: they just built The Camps and assumed that was the end of it.

Rachel: What do you know about the camps? Know anyone that could get me in to one of them? I'd like to see what they're like for myself.

Millie: My husband does some work in Heacham. That's the second largest camp.

Rachel: Could he get me in, or at least give me a name to call? (remembers her manners). Sorry, how rude of me. I'm Rachel. Rachel Woods.

Millie: Millie. Millie Wyatt. Nice to meet you Rachel but not sure I'm going to be able to help. The camps are incredibly secretive. David could lose his job if....

Rachel: No, sorry Millie. Don't risk that for me. Maybe if he could just give me a name, a number to call. Hey listen. It's quiet. Let me buy you a drink. Get to know each other. If I'm going to be staying for a while it would be good to get started on good terms!

Millie: (laughing) So you think we'll fall out later then?

Rachel: No, I.... No that's not what I meant. Sorry clumsily put! Let me buy you a drink ... and, I'll take the room. Like me to pay up front?

Millie. I'll ask the boss. I only work here. What can I get you to drink?

Rachel. Oh, give me a beer: something local. When in Rome...

Millie. Adnams ok? Brewed in Suffolk, not too far down the coast from here.

Rachel. Sure.

Pause

Millie. There you go, enjoy

Rachel. Cheers. (Swallows). Oh wow. That's got some flavour!

Millie. Yep, that's the general idea.

Rachel. So, tell me about what it's been like here, since the boats started arriving Millie.... When did you first become aware of it?

Millie. Well there had always been lots of migrants trying to cross the channel. Shorter crossing I guess but....

Rachel. One of the busiest shipping lanes in the world and only 22 miles wide so easier to patrol.

Millie. Exactly. But also, bigger towns on the south coast. More people to object. They formed up into vigilante groups, "people's militias" they called themselves, as though they represented the entire population. But they were always the same makeup. White, undereducated men, willing to swallow every bit of rhetoric and propaganda coming out of the government. Basically, doing the Home Office's work for them....

Rachel. You think? You reckon the government tacitly approved of the vigilante's activities? Turned a blind eye to their activities?

Millie. Definitely. And the same true of what's going on in your country. Your president seems to approve too. She was using our "people's militias" as an example of what towns in Texas and New Mexico should be doing to keep out Mexican migrants.

Rachel: I know. Not sure she realises or cares how many people have died as a result of what's been going on.

Millie: None of them do. They're not on the front line. Tucked up in their cosy beds in London or Washington or Paris or wherever. Haven't had to look at bodies strewn across a beach or kids locked up away from their parents or poor sods falling from the undercarriages of aeroplanes...

Rachel: It was terrible to hear about the boat that capsized not far from here. They closed all the beaches I heard.

Millie: (shaken). Don't, please.... I... I'm sorry, it's just that I was walking by the beach this morning and saw them... the bodies

Rachel: Oh god – that must have been awful.... Would you mind...

Millie: (Abruptly). I'm not going to talk about it if that's what you're going to ask. (Pause). Sorry... that was rude. It's just that I've spent the entire day trying to push it from the forefront of my mind and I... (distressed – fighting back tears.).. ..sorry. I just can't talk about it yet. Sorry.

Rachel: No, of course not. Let's talk about something else. Can I get you another drink before I head up to my room?

Music

Scene Five – Rachel's hotel room. Rachel is on the phone to Laura, her editor back in NY

Rachel. Oh hi, it's Rachel. Could I have the editor's office please? (Pause ..Rachel hums and taps her pencil). Oh hi. May I speak to Laura Michaels please? (pause). Yes, Rachel Woods here. I'm in England covering the migrant crisis.

Pause

Laura: Rachel, hi. Good journey? How are you?

Rachel: Yes fine thanks. Got myself set up here. Desk to work at. Terraband not the best but I'll survive

Laura: Good. Look, I'm going to need a whole week's worth of reports from you. We're going big on this. This echoes the stuff that's going on down on the Mexico border and we want to try to say that it's not just the US that is having these issues. I know Italy Spain and France have it far worse than England but so many of our listeners can relate to Britain much more easily

Rachel: Absolutely. That's fine. I've got about a dozen ideas for different stories and angles so I'll run them past you later and you can choose the ones that fit your agenda best.

Laura : That's great. Keep me posted Rachel. Look after yourself.

Music : fades to Rachel delivering a news report...

Scene six: Rachel's first news report

Willa Watson: And now we go over to our reporter Rachel Woods who is in England covering the latest migrant crisis developing there.

Rachel : I'm here in East Anglia, England where waves of migrants from North Africa and North Western Asia have been arriving in the last few weeks. Over the coming days I'll be presenting a series of reports from this rural, isolated part of England called "The Fens" looking at the impact of the migration on those involved. My first report looks at the background to this crisis.

(Pause, sound effects) background footage....

Rachel : When the Water Wars began in North Africa in 2026 huge numbers of migrants began to move from their traditional homes in Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, through the eastern Mediterranean and north into Western Europe. As countries tightened their border security it became more difficult for migrants to take the overland route to destinations in France, Germany, Scandinavia and the United Kingdom. The waves of small boats crossing the crowded English Channel which peaked last year have been slowed by naval patrols in the Channel and battalions of British troops deployed across ports and beaches. The UK's Prime Minister announced increased spending on border patrols so the people smugglers and traffickers found a new way of getting migrants ashore. The dangerous process of winching small boats from the sides of tankers in the North Sea (the waterway which runs all the way up Britain's Eastern Coast) began earlier this year and has resulted in tens of thousands of migrants finding their way ashore along this sparsely populated coastline which is itself suffering the effects of climate change.

Low lying land, much of it reclaimed from the sea back in the 16th and 17th centuries is now falling victim to coastal erosion and flooding as sea levels continue to rise. Compounding these current issues in this part of the world are the effects of Brexit. Ten years on and with over 12 million working-age Brits unemployed, East Anglia is particularly badly affected. Local unemployment rates amongst 20 to 40 year-olds can be as high as 60% in some communities where previously locally manufactured agricultural products were sold to buyers in Europe. Those markets have now collapsed resulting in business closures and increasing reliance on government subsidies and hand-outs for local communities to survive.

Meanwhile, the government set up a chain of what it calls "Migrant Processing Facilities", known by locals as "The Camps" along the coast. Here, refugees are housed and fed while the authorities consider their claims for asylum. Some critics claim that they are not aware of a single migrant leaving one of these facilities other than to be repatriated back to their lands of origin. Locals however welcome the opportunities for employment the camps bring.

Willa Watson : Join us each day this week for more reports from England and visit our website for up to date coverage of the crisis and more in-depth articles from Rachel and our other correspondents.

Fades to music

Scene Seven: Rachel speaks to Laura

Laura : Hey Rachel. Absolutely loved the report. It's gone down really well here. We want you to dig as deeply as you can on the camps. Is it true that once refugees enter them they are simply imprisoned with no prospect of ever finding their way into British society? We also want some human stories from the locals there. How does all of this affect them, how do they feel about the migrants, what about the impact of the economic crash? Talk to people, see if you can find anyone willing to go on the record and talk on microphone.

Rachel : I'll try. Got a couple of candidates in mind but I'm not promising anything. This strikes me as quite a tight knit, secretive sort of community. I'll hang out in the local pub, see what I can find when alcohol has been consumed!

Laura : Wish I could join you. Been ages since I was in England and months since you and I properly caught up.

Rachel : Let's make a date when I get back.

Laura : Absolutely. Look, I know it's been tough for you lately. If there's anything you need, anything we can help with just shout. OK?

Rachel : Thanks Laura. I will.

Scene eight – the bar at the Green Dragon

Sounds : Bar sounds : Rachel and David are chatting

Rachel : Thanks for talking to me David. I'm going to record this if that's OK?

David : Ok but I'm not going to say anything that could get me into trouble if that's what you're hoping for.

Rachel : No, no. Just recording it because I've got a memory like a sieve! I want to be sure to get what you say exactly right so I don't attribute stuff to you that you didn't actually say. You know what us journalists can be like!

David : (laughs) Yeah! No, that's fine.

Rachel : Ok – just going to do a little intro then hand to you. : David Wyatt interview on 19th September 2029. David, you've lived in East Anglia all your life and you do some work in the migrant camps... What can you tell us about the camps and the conditions for the refugees in them?

David : I can't tell you much. I visit the camps maybe a couple of times a week. Me and a few of the lads from the village set ourselves up as a sort of odd-job business. We'll do anything: carpentry,

cleaning, painting. Whatever they need. We're cheaper than the big city facilities companies and we're local. They can call on us day or night to do the jobs required. We don't ask questions, don't need insurance and they know they can rely on us to keep our mouths shut if we see things that... you know, stuff they wouldn't want people to know about.

Rachel : Like what? What have you seen David?

David : I just said they can rely on us to keep our mouths shut...

Rachel : Of course...listen, I don't want you to say anything that could lose you're your job. I know how difficult it is.

David: All I'll say is this. It's not like a holiday camp in those places. I wouldn't want my family in there....

Rachel : Especially not if you'd just marched your family thousands of miles across Europe and risked your life in the North Sea...

David : Well, that's their choice isn't it? No-one's making them do that...

Rachel : Well no but...

David : I'm not saying I've got sympathy with them or anything. I just wouldn't want my family living in those conditions

Rachel : No. Ok, so, can you estimate the numbers of refugees living in each of the camps?

David : I only know the Heacham camp well. I've been to Downham and Yarmouth a couple of times but couldn't tell you much about them...

Rachel : Ok, so Heacham: How many migrants in there ? any ideas?

David : I'd say more than a thousand. You can see them exercising mid-morning, walking round and round the yard. It's like a school playground or something. Gates and fences all around them to make sure they don't get out...

Rachel : And have you spoken to any of them ?

David : we're not allowed to. (Hesitantly) One of them tried to speak to me once.... Couple of months ago

Rachel : Yeah : what did they say ?

David : He tried to shake my hand. Just said "good morning sir". Smiled at me. Not been called sir for a while!

Rachel : Polite then?

David : Well it was probably a trick wasn't it ? If I'd tried to shake his hand, he'd have had my watch or whacked me over the back of the head or something. Guard arrived immediately and pulled him away...

Rachel : Really ? Sounds like he was just saying hello

David : Well, that's where you and I differ isn't it Rachel? You'd probably feel different if they were flooding into your country. You can write that too if you like.

Rachel : David, wait...

Sound of a chair being moved, footsteps

Rachel : Ok, goodnight David – thank you.... (softly) God, what's wrong with these people?

Scene Nine: Millie's room: Millie's walk.

Sound : The alarm goes off....

Sounds : Shower, electric toothbrush.... Front door opening – footsteps on gravel.

Millie : Since the morning of the bodies on the beach I've shied away from walking by the sea. Silly I know. You can't live this near the coast and not walk on the beach but somehow, I don't feel ready yet. Can't quite face it.

I walk across the road, through the gate, and then follow the field edges about a mile and a half towards Laney's wood. I love the smell of the woods at dawn. I love to hear the early morning birdsong, see foxes and badgers going home after their nocturnal hunting. I love the way that the trees seem to play tricks with the sound. I once spent an hour trying to catch a glimpse of a cuckoo in these woods. Every time I was convinced I was directly under the tree from which it was calling I'd hear it once more and be equally sure it was somewhere else. If you wanted to stay hidden in these woods, you probably could. For a few days at least.

As I approach, I think I can see a faint wisp of smoke, rising almost imperceptibly above the treetops. I convince myself it's my eyes playing tricks on me. Maybe a smudge of early morning mist, maybe a swarm of midges. But then I see it again and I'm sure it is smoke. The way it drifts, the way it rises upwards then catches the breeze and disperses. Even then I don't think anything is unusual or untoward. I suppose I just assume it is something to do with forestry or logging...

I first see the figure as I enter the woods by the southern path. My immediate thought is that it must be a poacher, checking his last few traps before heading home to sleep. But then I start to think it is the slender hooded shape of a young woman, ghostlike in the pale morning light.

Millie : (tentatively) Hello – hello...

Millie : She... the figure, scurries off. Seemingly startled by my presence. Summoning a courage I don't necessarily feel I follow, slowly, picking my way through the ferny undergrowth, twigs cracking loudly beneath my feet.

In not many steps I stumble upon a camp, hidden in a shallow dip – four or five low tents, a windbreak of leaves arranged on a wooden frame. A fire, burnt out but still gently smoking. You could walk right past without even noticing it, especially in subdued light. The figure I had seen earlier staring straight at me. Her eyes seemingly both defiant and frightened at the same time....

I stumble for words – consider retreating. I immediately understand what this is... migrants who have somehow evaded the beach patrols trying to hide out in the woods to consider their position...

Millie : Hello.. Millie... My name is Millie... do you speak English?

Awara : Awara. I am Awara

End of part one

Millie : Are you...ok? Do you need anything? I hope I didn't frighten you.

Awara : Are you the police ? Detective? Immigration?

Millie: No! No – just walking...

Awara : Will you tell them about us ?

Millie : No. No, I won't tell them. A secret...

Awara: A Secret. Yes....

Millie : Where are you from ? How did you get here?

Awara : From Iraq. Northern Iraq... We are Kurdish. We walk and ride across Europe to reach here. Then take a ship from Holland... From Den Haag. And a boat to shore...two days ago...

Millie : Incredible. You are so brave...

Awara : Brave? It would be brave to stay where we live. We have no choice but to travel. We have been made nomads.

Millie : Do you have food? How many of you are here?

Awara : 9 of us. Please do not inform them... for our children's sake.

Millie : No, no, don't worry. I won't tell anyone you're here.... But can I get you food and water?

Awara: You would do that for us?

Millie: Yes. Yes, of course I would. Stay here. I'll go now

Awara: Wait. Would it be possible...? we need more than food. I am sorry...

Millie: No, it's ok. What do you need?

Awara : Medicine. We have two sick children. Cold and wet from the boat. We cannot move on until the children are better. And a portable phone charger. No electricity here...

Millie : Erm, yes, sure. I will bring paracetamol... paracetamol? What about blankets? To keep them warm...

Millie: And I raid the little village shop trying to find the things they might need. Bread, biscuits, as much water as I can carry. Tins of beans. Half a dozen apples. I pick up bags of sweets for the children. A box of paracetamol. Back at the cottage I find a couple of thin fleecy blankets and my portable charger. I throw a map of the area into my rucksack. Three or four spoons I can afford to do without, a half-eaten piece of cheese, some paper party cups and plates. I set off across the fields to the wood. It's later now, traffic on the roads, more people around. I feel guilty: furtive. I'm doing something I know most of the people around here would hate me for. They wouldn't have a single qualm about calling the authorities if they had found what I had. They might even inform on me for helping them out. I could be charged with aiding and abetting illegal immigration. What would David say?

Millie : (gently). Hello... Awara... hello?

Awara: Millie... you came back... Are you alone? Did anyone see you coming here?

Millie : No. I was careful. I brought you some things.

Awara : Thank you Millie. You are very kind.

Millie: And I can see that it is difficult for her to accept my gift. Perhaps it is an affront to her pride, her sense of self-sufficiency. Perhaps she doesn't trust me. Can't rid herself of the nagging fear that this is a trap. A carefully laid ambush that will see them whisked off to the camps the moment she lets down her guard....

Millie: It's ok. Don't worry. I hope your children are better soon. Be careful how much paracetamol you give them. Make them eat before they take the medicine...

Awara : Yes, I am a doctor. I know what to do.

Millie: (slightly shocked). You're a doctor?

Awara : Yes, is that so hard to believe?

Millie: And as I walk away, back across the fields with the sounds of larks and song thrushes colouring the hazy air I contemplate the plight, the desperation that must cause a doctor to up sticks and march her family across two continents for a better life, or a different life.... How unsafe would an educated professional person need to feel to flee like that? How hopeless would a situation need to seem to consider such a peril-strewn journey the better option? I feel bad that I must have sounded so surprised when she told me of her profession.

Scene Ten: Rachel news report

Sound : Rustling of paper, the sound of a button being pressed on a recording device... A beep

Rachel : (clears throat in preparation) (vocal exercise). Pepperoni macaroni pepperoni macaroni.. ok.. September 20th...

Rachel : In my second report from East Anglia in England I look more deeply at the unfolding migrant crisis playing out in this remote, underpopulated corner of the United Kingdom. Only about 140 miles from London but hampered by poor transport links, this part of East Anglia could be many hundreds of miles from the capital for all the influence it seems to have on London and vice versa. But this is also where hundreds of migrants are choosing to try to come ashore. I talked to the crew of one of the coastguard patrol boats searching for migrant boats off this shoreline.

(fading and back in...)

Crew member: They come at night mostly. Some in tiny boats, some in these larger, overloaded inflatable things. The currents here make it impossible to navigate accurately unless you know what you're doing...

Rachel : Many have drowned trying to reach the beaches. There have been numerous accidents and coast guards believe they may have averted many more.... Those that do reach land safely face internment in one of the many processing camps set up by the British Home Office up and down this coast. Former air force bases, schools, old industrial premises have all been pressed into service to house and process the new arrivals. Critics say that they are being used as prisons rather than refugee reception centres but the government insists that inmates are treated well and that each asylum claim is treated on merit.

Sounds : Click as recording device is turned off – paper rustling

Rachel : (deep sigh)

Sound : Knock at door...

Rachel : Hello?

Millie: Rachel. Hello, it's Millie... Millie from reception. Do you have a moment?

Rachel : Sure, come in.. (pause). How are you ?

Millie : I'm fine. Listen, this needs to be kept a secret for the moment but I've got something I need to tell you...

Scene Eleven: Rachel at the camp.

Sound : wind , birdsong..

Rachel : Testing... This is Rachel Wood at Heacham Immigration Processing Camp

(Playback – thinner sound..). “testing .. this is Rachel Wood at Heacham Immigration Processing Camp”

Rachel : (dictates notes into her phone). Heacham Camp: it’s 10.23 on September 21st Impressions.... This looks like a purpose-built camp. Low, grey buildings, tiny slit windows. All around there are high fences topped with coiled barbed wire .. razor-wire ? Two tall lookout points with what look like search lights at the front and back of the compound. There’s a large grass area with gravel paths criss-crossing it. An exercise yard maybe? The front gates – double gates with sturdy wood panelling... a couple of officers standing there. Are they armed ? baseball caps, anti stab vests ... one wears dark aviator shades... difficult to get more detail from this range...

Sound : a bus, wheels on gravel

Rachel : Wait, huh.... A bus approaching from behind me... I can see passengers at the windows... It’s full of migrants. I can see young children sitting on their mother’s laps. Young men and women. There are guards on the bus, standing in the centre aisle between the seats.... The camp gates are being opened and the bus is driving through. I can see....

Police officer: Excuse me Miss. What are you doing?

Rachel : (surprised). God, you frightened me! ... I’m a journalist, just working on a story

Police officer: A story on what?

Rachel : On the camps...

Police Officer: I’m going to need you to leave the area please.

Rachel : what? This is a public place isn’t it?

Police officer : We can deny access to any area where specific restricted activity is taking place

Rachel : What’s that supposed to mean ? Specific restricted activity?

Police Officer : Not open for discussion. If you don’t leave I’ll need to arrest you and you could be charged with trespassing in a restricted area...

Rachel : Arrest me? I told you I was a journalist. Arresting me isn’t going to play well with my listeners.

Police Officer : Not my concern. Not my decision. I will arrest you if you refuse to leave...

Rachel : Ok, I’m going. So when can I return to this area? When is the restriction lifted?

Police Officer : Not up to me I’m afraid. Thanks for your cooperation.

Supplementary to scene Eleven:

(Phone call) :

Laura : Hey Rachel. How are you doing? Loved the latest dispatch. What can I do for you?

Rachel : I just wanted to let you know I've been threatened with arrest just for being near one of the camps. They informed me there was "Specific restricted activity" going on which effectively turns the area into a no-go zone. There were busses full of migrants entering the camp I visited. They clearly think they have something to hide and the secrecy around the places is clear. I guess I just need to know if you want me to keep pushing and risk arrest.... What support would you give me if I ended up in jail... ?

Laura : (intrigued) Wow, what have they got to hide? Hmm.. But Rachel, you need to be sensible. Don't risk arrest. We can get almost as good a report if we tell the story of them threatening you with arrest as if you're actually arrested. If you're in custody you can't file any more stories so I'd rather you were walking free than locked up! And Rachel, think of yourself – don't risk anything please. I'd never forgive myself if you ended up getting into trouble.... Just use your judgement to see how far you can push to get the story but please be sensible.

Rachel : (slightly disappointed) Ok, Ok. You're right of course. I'll try to switch off my more tenacious newshound instincts for a few days! Thanks so much Laura.

Laura : No problem. You look after yourself.

Scene Twelve: prologue

David : If you don't know about the Fens they're like nothing else in the world. The land here was just marshes before it was drained hundreds of years ago. So, where the land becomes the sea is a kind of dotted line: ambiguous, sketchy. The coastline has moved many times over the centuries.

Out there, under the North Sea is a lost land called Dogger Land. A sort of northern Atlantis: a kingdom submerged beneath the waves. Trawlermen miles and miles out to sea dredge up tree stumps, Mammoth skulls and all sorts of other artefacts that convinced archaeologists and geographers that there was land there. A land bridge that connected Britain to Northern Germany, Holland and Denmark.

From the middle ages they started to build drainage ditches and canals through the marshes, they put up walls and dykes to stop the sea flooding onto the land. Most of the Fens lie below sea level you see and it is as flat as any land you'll ever come across. You can see for miles on a clear day. There isn't a hill within half an hour's drive of here. You can track the progress of electricity pylons across the landscape, you can see wind turbines like tiny toys ten miles distant.

Gradually the marshes dried out and became farmland. Rich land, good for agriculture: We grow fruit and vegetables, we grow crops. The land is good for grazing cattle: Fertile and abundant. Farmers never want for water and whilst the soil can be somewhat clayey it is full of the nutrients that both crops and animals need.

There are stories and songs about this place that are hundreds of years old yet still get passed from parent to child. Stories of spirits and supernatural beings: Of Will o' the wisps and boggarts, ghosts and spectres in the marsh mist at dusk or daybreak. There are people still alive that won't walk out

on the paths through the Fens after daylight has faded. There are plenty of stories of visitors, ignorant of these customs, who have disappeared never to be seen again.

It was here that King John lost the crown jewels in the thirteenth century. Literally lost them in the marshes. It was here that the warrior queen Boadicea saw off the Roman legions that had marched unchallenged across most of Western Europe. They conquered mountains and deep valleys but couldn't master the flatlands of Eastern England. Never underestimate the strangeness, the weirdness of this place. Never take anything for granted in this landscape.

And that moving coastline I mentioned is moving more quickly now than it ever has before. Sea levels are rising, inundating the dykes and seawalls, reclaiming our low-lying land, battering away at our cliffs and beaches, taking back from us what we stole from nature all those years ago. But we're not going to let it go that easily. This is a lifestyle. The fens are in our blood and we won't let the weather, the sea or migrants take them from us without a fight...

Scene Twelve – The bar of the Green Dragon

Rachel enters - buzz of conversation , clink of glasses, background music

David : ah, here comes the Voice of America

Rachel : Hi David. Can I get you a beer?

David : Wouldn't take it from you even if I was really thirsty...

Rachel : (slightly taken aback). Oh! Erm, sorry. What have I done wrong?

David : (angry) I'm not stupid. Just because you're broadcasting in another country doesn't mean I can't listen to what you're saying. You're dragging us through the gutter in your reports aren't you? You haven't included the voice of the locals at all. It's just migrants this and camps that. Poor migrants drowning, poor migrants locked up in camps. What about the locals who have to put up with all the disruption this causes? What about the effect of this bad publicity on our local economy? People like you just don't care though do you? It's all about getting your voice on the radio, getting your words printed...

Millie : (raised voice) David! Stop being an idiot !

Rachel : David! I've talked to you, listened to what you've had to say. The report is going out tomorrow.

David: (angry) Oh, tomorrow, after you've set us up to look like the villains because we're not being kind to the poor migrants...

Millie : (embarrassed) David! For god's sake, shut up!

Rachel: It's ok Millie... I'm going up to my room... Have a nice evening everyone.

Millie : Oh well done David, That was really classy. Thanks for scaring away our customers. Maybe you'd like to help yourselves to free beer on the house too – rob us of some more profits... Times are hard enough without you costing us income...

David : It's only money – she's trying to make us look bad in front of the whole world. If that catches on you can wave goodbye to money from tourists in the future. Not that they'd be likely to come here with all that's going on...

Millie : David – you need to calm down about all of this. It's eating you up – changing you ...

Scene Thirteen : Millie and Rachel

Sounds – a gentle tap on a door...

Millie (whispering). Rachel.... Rachel...

sounds – a slightly louder knock

Millie (still whispering). Rachel – are you awake?

Rachel - (muffled through door). Ugh – Millie – come in...

Millie : Are you going to join me on the walk ?

Rachel : Sure – yes, sorry, I'd forgotten what rising at dawn felt like though. You do this every day?

Millie : Most days, some days in the middle of winter I chicken out but yeah, most days. It's the best time of the day... seriously

Rachel : Well, I'm a night owl – the only time I'd be likely to see dawn would be if I'd been up all night.

Millie : Party girl ?

Rachel : Once was.... Life's much quieter now. Having a proper job slows you down.

Millie : Tell me about it. David and I work at least three jobs each. Even then we can only just about make ends meet. It's difficult here Rachel. That's why you mustn't be too hard on David and the other locals. I know they come across as idiots, but life has been really tough lately. They see

the migrant arrivals as yet more competition for jobs, more competition for the few good things left in this part of the world.

Rachel : I know that. But I don't expect to be loudly insulted in front of all the other customers of the bar when I'm off duty and just coming in for something to eat and drink. You lost yourself some trade last night. I ended up eating biscuits and drinking that awful instant coffee you put out in the rooms. And by the way, they come across as racists first and foremost, then as idiots.

Millie: I'm sorry, he was out of order...

Musical interlude.

– sound effects birdsong

Rachel : So tell me more about why I'm walking around the edge of a muddy field in the middle of the night after four hours sleep..

Millie : You must keep this a secret Rachel... I'm telling you as a friend, not a journalist...

Rachel : That's rather awkward.. but go on...

Millie : I found a camp, not like the Migrant reception camps... literally half a dozen tiny tents pitched in a wood. I met a young woman called Awara. She's a Kurdish doctor... there are a couple of kids. A few more adults. They must have come ashore, evaded the Coast Guard and police patrols and pitched these flimsy little tents in the wood where they could lay out of sight. The kids were ill so they couldn't press on. I took them food, blankets, medicine.

Rachel : Wow – and you've not told anyone about this?

Millie : No way. If David and his friends found out they'd be out there with sticks smashing the tents down... or worse still, informing the police

Rachel : Really? Jeez Millie, remind me why you're with this guy again...

Millie : I know. I sometimes ask myself that question. But listen. Promise you won't tell anyone about this camp... if the word gets out.....

Rachel : Millie! It's ok. You have my word. Journalist mode disengaged. Human being mode selected.

Millie : Ok – this is the wood. Let's be really quiet....

Sounds : footsteps , cracking twigs.. bird song...

Millie : (softly). Awara.... Awara... it's Millie

Awara : Millie. Who is this? Is she a police officer? Immigration?

Millie : No, no. She's a friend. Nothing to worry about...

Rachel : Hello Awara. My name is Rachel.

Awara : You are American ?

Rachel : umm, yes, that's right. I'm from the United States...

Awara : I learnt English from watching American movies and listening to language lessons with American accents.

Millie : How have you been? How are the children? Are they feeling better?

Awara : A little better. Not properly recovered but certainly getting better. Thank you for the medicines and blankets. And for the food.

Millie : I brought you some more... Just a few tins and some water and some apples...

Awara : You are very kind. Millie. But I have to ask you. What do you think will happen to us if they find us? In international law it says that if we are refugees we must be treated according to certain rules. But when I read the news here I understand that migrants are put into camps. Into prison camps. Is this true? Millie?

Millie : I... I don't know. We must go. I will come back soon to bring you more food. Stay in the wood. Don't leave the wood Awara.

Music

Supplement to Scene Thirteen: Rachel on the phone to Laura

Rachel : So we went for a walk, really early in the morning. Way earlier than you'll ever, ever see me when I'm back home!

Laura : And what were you looking for on this walk Rachel ?

Rachel : A tiny encampment of migrants. Kurds from northern Iraq I believe. They must have hiked and hitchhiked across two continents to get here. Stowed away on ships, hidden on trains. However they did it, they also managed to evade the coast guard patrols, get ashore without detection and walk a couple of miles from the sea to this tiny wood where they're camped. The authorities don't know they're there...

Laura : Are you going to write about it ?

Rachel : I promised not to... one word out of place and they could be discovered. They have tiny kids with them. If they are caught, they'll be locked up in one of the camps.

Laura: You don't need to give away any details like the location of the wood. They'll probably be found anyway won't they? If the picture you're painting in your reports is true it sounds like England has become practically a police state

Rachel : Well not quite, but it's certainly a hostile environment for migrants... I'm more worried about the locals finding them if I'm honest. There are some poisonous attitudes floating around Laura. Everyone seems to have become emboldened by the hard-right government and they just let the racism and hostility flow like no-one's watching. God knows what might happen if some of the people I've met stumble across the camp.

Laura : Well, I think you should write about it. What's the point of you being there if you come across a story like this and don't share it? Bigger picture: you'll be helping to expose this hostility towards migrants – maybe exposing this lot to danger but perhaps making the environment slightly less hostile for those that come later...

Rachel : Would you let me think about it? It's not like you're not getting plenty of other juicy stories from me. We don't exactly "need" this one...

Laura : Ok – let's talk again tomorrow , see if you've changed your mind. Sleep on it.

Rachel : Ok – thanks Laura. Appreciate it.

Laura : No problem. But a tip Rachel, don't tell your editor about a great story you're not intending to break again please... It makes me think there might be other revelations you're uncovering which you're keeping to yourself!

Rachel : Noted ! I guess I was telling you as a friend and not my editor. See you soon.

Scene Fourteen: Bar of the Green Dragon.

Sounds : hum of conversation... Door opens..

Millie : Afternoon sir. What can I get you?

Davis : Erm, I wasn't after a drink actually. I was just wondering if you knew of a Rachel Woods? I think she might be staying in the area.

Millie : Rachel Woods ? Erm...

Davis : American. Blonde hair. Journalist...

Millie : and who's asking about her ?

Davis. My name is Davis. I'm a writer on the Times. Acquaintance of hers. Is she staying here?

Millie : We don't give information about our guests so even if she was staying here I wouldn't be able to tell you

Davis : No, of course. I'm sorry, I don't want to get you into trouble. Just that I haven't seen her in months and it would be good to catch up.... So, if I were to pop back at say 7.30, 8ish tomorrow morning and see who was eating breakfast in your lounge that might be a good way of finding her?

Millie: I suppose so, if she was staying here

Davis : Which, of course, you aren't in a position to confirm or deny.

Millie: No...and if you'll excuse me I need to serve this gentleman...

Davis : absolutely – thanks for your time miss....?

Millie : You're welcome.

End of part 2

Scene Fifteen : Rachel's room.. she is trying to record a report

Rachel : (Recording a news report) As I watched, another busload of migrants was arriving at the front gate of the camp. Probably another 50 to 60 migrants. I could see women and small children amongst those onboard the bus and

Sound : Loud knock on the door..

Millie : Rachel – Rachel are you in there ? Rachel

Rachel. (exasperated) Shit! What is it Millie? I'm working.

Millie : Sorry – can I come in ?

Rachel : I've got a deadline and I'm trying to....

Sounds : door opening, footsteps

Rachel: Oh sure, just come walking in!

Millie : I'm really sorry – just thought you needed to know something..

Rachel : I promised not to report on the migrant camp...

Millie : No, no, not that. There was someone here looking for you. A man – said his name was Davis? Said he was a friend of yours...

Rachel : Davis ? I don't know anyone called Davis. What did he look like?

Millie : Suit, tie... tallish. Said he was a journalist working for The Times.

Rachel : Journalist in a suit and tie?

Millie: I immediately got a bad feeling about him... he was creepy and I felt like he was looking down his nose at me. Just thought I ought to tell you. He said he would come in for breakfast tomorrow morning to see if he could find you. That struck me as pretty weird.

Rachel : (exasperated) You told him I was staying here? You had no right...

Millie: No! I didn't tell him. But I got the feeling he knew.... That's why I thought I needed to warn you...

Rachel : Ok, Thank you... .

Music

Rachel : (speaking alone). We're not sure whether she is narrating a news report or talking to herself..

I've been here almost a week now and I kind of didn't get it – this thing about the beauty of the place. I guess I thought, how could a place so flat and with no obvious landmarks be considered beautiful? And then this morning I woke early, pulled back the curtains and saw this cloak of mist across the land., hugging the ditches and dykes and spreading out across the flat fields... I could see trees seemingly growing out of the mist. It made me understand those stories that the locals tell, about travellers getting lost on the fens : falling into marshes or ditches never to be seen again... But beautiful... in the early morning sunlight the sky seems crystal clear and I'm looking down on the clouds, spread out across the flat fields.

Sound : Knock on the door....

Millie : (whispering). It's me, Millie. Are you coming for a walk?

Rachel : Yep.

Sound. – door opening

Rachel : How are you Millie ? God, it's beautiful out there...

Millie: the mist's down over the fields. You're lucky to have an experienced guide who knows the paths like the back of her hand... You could fall into a ditch and be lost forever...

Rachel : I could be eaten by Boggarts or charmed to my death by will o'the wisps! Spirited away by the fairy folk never to be seen again!

Millie: Don't joke about stuff like that!

Rachel : Seriously? You do kind of believe in it don't you? Really? You sound like David! Ok then. Lead the way Fen Girl! Save me from the ghosties!

Sounds : footsteps, birdsong... ambient sound. Music

Millie : So how come you're here all alone Rachel? I always assumed that there'd be a whole team of people working with a news reporter on an overseas trip...

Rachel : Ha! TV reporters might have a camera operator, a sound guy if they're really lucky but us radio and web journalists are on our own. Have recording kit will travel.

Millie : And what about your decision to come here. Did you volunteer or was it an order? Do you have family?

Rachel : Nothing's ever sort of "go or you're fired". Us journalists tend to like to be out there though. Seems that the further you travel and the more uncomfortable it is the better the story you'll get. And no, I don't have family. I had a partner until about six months ago but we had a tough time... I had a miscarriage 18 months back. A baby was all he wanted it turned out. It was really important to me too. I turned into a complete monster for almost a year. He seemed to turn in on himself. Stopped talking to me – stopped talking to anyone. We both coped with it in different ways until we discovered that our coping mechanisms didn't include each other...and it just fell apart.... He moved out in early Spring. I've been pulling things back together since then. I promised myself I'd take all the opportunities that came my way at work so... here I am!

Millie : Rachel, I'm sorry. That must be so hard.... How long were you together? (hesitates) or.. maybe you don't want to talk about it...

Rachel : No, no it's fine.... Hmm – almost ten years...We met on an anti-Trump rally. Oops – sorry, showing political bias, that's a no-no – don't tell anyone!

Millie : (laughs). He was horrible wasn't he?

Rachel : So they say! You could argue he just laid the ground for what we have now though...which is worse. Erm, so people say! And what about you Millie – you and David seem...

Millie : Incompatible....? Yeah – I know what you're thinking, and you wouldn't be the first person to say that.

Rachel : I was going to say "different". You seem to have a sensitivity and... I don't know, a sense of compassion that he doesn't have. Or doesn't demonstrate ... or hasn't demonstrated to me at least.... Sorry, I don't mean to disrespect your boyfriend. Please don't be offended.

Millie: He's not as bad as you've seen... honestly. He's lived here all his life. He loves the landscape, the myths and legends around it. I sometimes think he genuinely believes in boggarts and will o'the wisps... He works so hard to bring in money. He'll do anything including going out in all weathers in a fishing boat a couple of nights each week.

Rachel: It sounds like the next word you say is going to be "But"

Millie: However....

Rachel : Almost....

Millie : However – he's kind of fighting the wrong battles in his head. He thinks the migrants are trying to take something from him. Not from him perhaps but from the fens and the fen people. He thinks that you're here just to paint him and the Fens in a bad light. He thinks that his identity is somehow compromised by the presence of others. I guess that's the same nameless nagging paranoia that caused so many people to vote to break away from Europe in the Brexit referendum all those years ago...

Rachel : It's a very human thing. I guess most of us learn to control it, but some never manage to. The same sense of "otherness equals bad" that brought the Trump dynasty to power..... you can scapegoat people whose culture and language you don't understand for your own failings so much more easily than blaming yourself. Blaming your neighbours your friends or your own government for bad things that happen. Happened to the Jews, blacks in southern US and South Africa, protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland....

Millie: But deep down, in spite of all the bitterness and the prejudices, he's a lovely guy...

Rachel : Oh they all are. It's just a matter of learning to live with all the bad bits... If you can... tolerate them, I guess.

Millie : You couldn't ? With your man...?

Rachel : No. The miscarriage made me re-evaluate everything. Question what I wanted from life. This business with the wars and the migrants makes you think too doesn't it? About life and how fragile it is... about what you can possibly get from it if it might all be over in a few hours...

Millie: Blimey. This got deep all of a sudden!

Rachel : Yeah. Sorry! But think of Awara and her friends ... what must their view of life be compared to ours? When you've been forced to leave everything behind. You've been forced to leave home and travel through lands where there are thousands of "Davids" resenting your presence, wanting you gone. Where do you settle in the end? How do you ever make a life knowing that everyone wants you out of their country, out of their sight?

Millie: I honestly don't think you can. I lay awake at night trying to conjure up a happy ending for Awara and I cant ... I just can't. I think that's why I was so keen to help when I found the camp. Well, that and the fact that David can be such an arsehole when it comes to the migrants. I wanted to offset some of the negativity with some kindness. A bit like how you're supposed to plant trees after you've taken a flight to counterbalance the carbon emissions....

Rachel : I understand. I'm not sure that putting right our wrongs is ever quite that easy though. Doesn't make the difference we'd like to believe it does.

Millie : Don't burst my bubble please. I was almost in my happy place there for a moment!

Rachel : We're nearly at the wood. It's cold, I wonder how they're managing to keep warm...

Millie : It's a dilemma – if they light a fire you'd see the smoke for miles in this flat landscape. That's why I brought blankets. But not enough for all of them. I guess they have sleeping bags but I cant be sure of that...

Rachel : Rather them than me...

Interlude – music – helicopter effects – dogs

Sounds : birdsong... footsteps... we are in the woods now...

Millie : Awara... Awara

Awara: Millie. How are you? Hello Rachel.

Millie: Are you ok? are your children better?

Awara : Yes: but we must leave here. I wanted to talk to you about what our options could be.

Millie: Awara, you need to be so careful....

Awara : I know. It is really bad for migrants with this government. I read about the camps that are really prisons. About the flights to take migrants back to their countries. About the local people hating migrants just for being there. But I am a doctor... I could work here... Work for the health service ... use my skills to help Britain. My friends are an architect, another doctor. We have a writer, a Web designer. We have skills that will make us useful so it will be different for us wont it?

Millie: I.. I'm not sure...It's hard to tell.

Awara : I heard dogs, close by last night. I thought they were coming for us. Helicopters flying overhead.... Did you hear the helicopters?

Millie : Coastguard helicopters. They fly up and down all the time, usually over the sea but sometimes they fly inland too...

Awara : What are they searching for? No, you don't need to tell me. I know the answer. And I know that even though they are coast guards they are not trying to save people from the sea. They are trying to save the British people from the horrible migrants... Yes?

Millie: Awara I...

Awara: Don't lie to me Millie. You have been so kind to me, but I need you to tell me the truth now...

Millie: (devastated). Yes Awara. They are looking for you... for migrants I mean. And if they find you.....they'll take you to the camps.

Awara: The prisons.

Millie: The... the... prisons, yes. And they'll lock you up and they'll try to send you back to where you came from...

Awara : And they don't care that we are refugees? That there are international conventions on how to treat people fleeing from oppression? We are running from war and famine and drought and ...they wont care because... Because if there is one refugee or two or a hundred they can take them in and feel sorry for them and look after them to make them feel nice about themselves. But when there are a thousand, ten thousand a hundred thousand the word "refugee" is forgotten... They are invaders. An army. A swarm. Your Prime Minister: he says he will "fight us on the beaches"...

Rachel : Awara... listen..

Awara : No Rachel, you listen! You may never understand what I have had to go through, what my family has had to go through so please don't give me platitudes and try to soothe me with your

words because I know what is going to happen to us! If you want to use your lovely words perhaps you could talk to my children... explain to them why the last 18 months of war and travel and always being hungry and always being hated everywhere you arrive isn't going to lead to the better life my husband and I promised them. Explain with your sweet words why the life savings we paid to traffickers to get us on the ship and then into a tiny inflatable boat that almost drowned us were wasted... Tell them why, in this country that has this wonderful reputation for being kind and tolerant and welcoming they are actually locking people up like cattle because we look different, because we don't speak English, because we come from somewhere your people don't understand....

Rachel – I was just trying to Oh god – I know it's so tough for you I...

Awara : and you are foreign too Rachel ! You are not from here – you are from as far away from here as I am, yet you are not thrown in prison. You are not hated by everyone here. You are not going to be deported back to your country at gunpoint on a deportation flight. What's the difference? We wanted to be here so badly that we risked our lives and our children's lives to get here. We could have stopped in Italy or Greece or Croatia or anywhere along the way but no! Because Britain is "tolerant" and "kind" and "progressive" and "welcoming"; fought wars to liberate the oppressed and stand up for decency and honour, we chose to come here. We all learnt English, we all learnt about the King and your wonderful parliament, we learnt how you "love the underdog" and value hard work and endeavour. It's all bullshit Millie.... If you're white and speak English you're fine, if not you can go to hell....

Sounds A silence : Millie is sniffing.. perhaps holding back tears...

Millie : (sniffing, gently crying) (through tears) We brought you some food and more blankets.... Some water and some chocolate for the children

Awara: (quietly). Thank you...

Rachel : Awara. Look, I am a journalist. Would you let me tell your story? Tell the world what you and your friends have been through? Tell them about the hardship and what you know will happen to you if you are caught?

Awara: Write what you like....

Rachel : I'd rather write it with your blessing Awara. I won't use your name, but I want to tell your story. Would you let me do that?

Awara : I said write what you like. Just tell the truth.....This country.....this world must get used to migrants. Everything is changing. The weather is changing! We all know that, but Britain and America think they can just close their borders and pretend everything is just like it always was while thousands die or are displaced or are left stateless by what is happening. You're living in a dream while the rest of us inhabit a nightmare world caused by your pollution and your foreign policy and your selfish disregard for everyone but yourselves... So yes Rachel, write until you can't write any more. Write until your fingers bleed and don't stop writing until there isn't a person in your country and this one who doesn't know our story....

Rachel : I will Awara. You have my word

Music :

Scene Sixteen : The bar of the Green Dragon

Sounds : chatter, background music.. glasses clinking

David : Rachel, Rachel!

Rachel : Hey David. Going to give me another dressing down in front of all the locals again or can I buy you that drink I offered you before you “went off on one”?

David : No, please let me buy you one. I need to apologise.

Rachel : I think you do. Adnams please. A pint.

Pause : background sounds

Rachel : Thanks David. Cheers

David : Cheers. Listen, I was out of order and rude and said some things I shouldn't have said....

Rachel : Yep – all of the above. So are you apologising or just listing your shortcomings?

David : I'm sorry. I'd like to tell you a bit more about how I feel... how a lot of us locals feel about the migrants and what they're doing to...

Rachel : I'm not going to write a sob story for you David. Believe it or not you're not the losers in this whole situation.... And yes, I get the unemployment and the coastline changing because of sea level rising and even the presence of the camps but even with all of that, on a global scale you're living in paradise. And do you know what? I've even started to get what you're saying about the beauty of the Fens. There really is something about this place isn't there?

David : There is. It's in my blood and my fathers' and my grand-fathers' before him...

Rachel : any women in your family tree at all David?

David : Well, yes, of course.... Listen I wanted to make you an offer. I'm going off on a trawler out of Kings Lynn tomorrow night. Fishing. You know I'm part of a trawler crew, right? If the weather is OK, we'll head out into the North Sea. We often encounter migrant boats on the way back in. It would be a chance for you to see the boats first-hand but also to write about something that really is in the blood of a lot of us. The sea and the fleet. Interested?

Rachel : Wow David. That would be amazing... You sure that wouldn't be a problem? Wouldn't I just get in the way and piss everyone off?

David : You'd probably have to stay in the wheel house with the skipper rather than be on deck, 'specially if it gets a bit choppy but at least you'll keep dry there and be able to chat to the most knowledgeable bloke on the crew.

Rachel : That's a fantastic offer David. Can I provisionally say yes and let you know for sure when I've spoken to my editor?

David : Yes – but I'll need to know by 9ish.

Rachel : Great – thank you!

Pause : Music

Sound : Number tapped on phone keypad...

(David is on the telephone)

David: Hello, is that Mr Davis? Yes, she seems really interested. No, she hasn't confirmed yet but... Ok, yes, I'll hurry her for a decision. Leave it with me. And yes, I understand. I won't mention it to anyone.

Music

Sound : number tapped on phone keypad

Rachel: Oh yes, hi – I was trying to get Laura Michaels. Is she around please? (Pause) Oh, ok. Out for the whole day? Is she picking up email? Ok – don't worry. No, it's fine. Just tell her Rachel Woods called. I don't need a call back, I know she's busy.

Sound : number tapped on phone keypad

Rachel : Oh hi Millie's voice mail. It's Rachel. Give me a call back if you pick this up. Preferably before about 9 tonight please. Just want to run something past you. Thank you!

Sounds : radio switched on..

Willa Watson: And now it's time for the latest in our series of reports from Rachel Woods in England. Rachel has been reporting on the new migrant crisis developing in the country and in this report she talks about the impact of the migrant arrivals on the local community in the region known as "East Anglia"

Rachel's voice : Thanks Willa. The Fen country of Eastern England is a mysterious landscape of flat land, ditches and drainage canals stretching from the famous university city of Cambridge in the south, from Peterborough with its stunning cathedral in the East up to lesser known towns such as Wisbech in the North. The region has a coastline that has been seriously eroded by the effects of rising sea levels meaning that some villages that were bustling local centres as recently as a decade ago are now underwater. The same is true all around the low-lying eastern coast of England with villages such as Dunwich, Morston and Old Hunstanton disappearing beneath the waves... (NB – Wisbech is pronounced whizz beach)

Sound : phone rings

Rachel: Hi, it's Laura... Oh hi David. No, I've not managed to speak to her yet. You need to know now? Ok, ok. Count me in. Yep. Definitely sure. Thanks – I'll see you in the morning then.

Rachel : (recording into her Dictaphone). And so, it's done! I'm committed. I hope I can find my sea legs quickly on the boat. I've been known to get queasy on the Staten Island Ferry before...I fall asleep reading about the fishing grounds out beyond the Wash. I read that boats can roam as far as the territorial waters of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. I read about fishing boats rescuing migrants from capsized, overloaded wooden and inflatable boats not far off the coast. I realise I know nothing about what goes on aboard a fishing vessel... I guess I've got some finding out to do....

Sounds : Phone rings

David : Hi it's David Wyatt. Hi Mr Davis. Yes, she's agreed. She left a message on Millie's voicemail but I deleted that. I'll continue to monitor it just in case she tries again. No, Millie's at her mum's house in Wells; Won't be back until ten at the earliest. Ok, see you in the morning.

Scene seventeen: Dockside: Port of King's Lynn

Sounds : Seagulls dockside ambience

David : So here she is. The Ella Jane. Crew of 7. Two diesel turbines. Capacity for almost a tonne of fish although we hardly ever get near to that these days

Rachel : I read that the relaxation of fishing laws after Brexit lead to overfishing because the original European quotas didn't apply anymore. I guess that's why you're not catching as much

David : Maybe. I just know we all have to work harder for whatever we can get and lots of nights we'll come home empty handed. Let's get you on board and set up.

Pause : more seagull sounds... water lapping against a boat

David : everyone, this is Rachel Woods. Skipper's agreed she can come with us today. She's a journalist. And we have another guest on board. Do you want to introduce yourself sir?

Davis : Yes, James Davis – I'm a government fisheries inspector.

David : So best behaviour everyone. Don't want to give Mr Davis anything to report us for do we?

Rachel : Wait, did you say your name was Davis?

Davis: That's right. And you're Rachel Woods aren't you? I've been looking forward to meeting you...

David : All hands on deck.. here we go...

Sound : diesel engines – water churns..

End of Part Three

Opening to Part Four

Willa : News report re climate change becoming irreversible

Scene Eighteen: Millie

Millie : When the east wind blows across the Fens you can feel the mood of the locals change. With no high ground to act as a break, the wind comes in straight from the North Sea, straight from Scandinavia, straight from Russia. In winter it's a much colder wind and the older folk always say that "the East wind blows no good". In December, January and February when the wind blows that way there'll be snow, and often not just a dusting... Locals button their coats to the top and put on scarves and hats but the cold wind still bites through you...

Sound : wind

Today the wind has really got up and changed direction so it's coming from the east. I think of David out in the boat. Hear the window frame rattle with each gust... hear the wind singing in the phone wires in the lane outside the cottage....

Millie : I'm working on the bar of the Green Dragon tonight and it's really quiet so I knock on Rachel's door to see if she fancies a drink with me in the bar. The hours drag when David's out at sea and I feel like I need company. I knock a couple of times, leave it half an hour and knock again but there is no reply...

Sounds : Conversation – the phone rings

Millie: Hello: The Green Dragon....

Laura: Oh hi, I was trying to get Rachel Woods. I believe she's staying there this week.

Millie: She's not here at the moment I'm afraid. Can I get her to call you when I see her? Did you try her mobile?

Laura : Yeah I did try but there was no answer. It just went straight to voicemail.... If you could get her to call me that would be great. My name's Laura Michaels.

Millie : Yes, will do Laura. Thanks.

Sounds : chatter, background music....

Millie : Evening Jack. How are you tonight?

Local (Jack) : Winds really getting up out there. East wind too....

Millie : Don't! David's out on the trawler tonight. I hate it when the weather turns when he's at sea.

Local (Jack) : Rather him than me.... Give us a pint of best would you please love?

Sounds : chatter, background music..

Millie : That's time please ladies and gents. Let's have your glasses.

Millie : and I realise I haven't seen Rachel come in. She'd have to walk through the bar to get to the stairs at the back that lead up to the rooms. She'd have been sure to say hello if she knew I was working on the bar...

Sound : chatter.. national anthem plays....

Millie : I clear up, usher out the last few locals and creep upstairs for one last tap on Rachel's door...Maybe she was asleep when I knocked earlier... maybe she had her headphones on and didn't hear me...

Sound : tap tap...

Millie : (whispering). Rachel... Rachel ...

(Sound). Wind, footsteps

Millie : But nothing. I lock up the bar and walk back to the cottage on my own. The treetops are bending alarmingly in the wind, the weathervane on the church spire spinning in the gusts.... I wonder if I'll manage to sleep tonight, what with the wind and thinking about David and where on earth Rachel might be...

Music : fades to

Scene Nineteen : Millie Walk

Sounds : Alarm goes off ... Radio playing..

Radio : It's 6AM and this is the Radio Fenland news. Coastal areas are being buffeted by a storm. Overnight lifeboat crews from Hunstanton and Wells were scrambled to attend to boats in trouble off the North Norfolk Coast. In Cambridge the chancellor of Fitzwilliam College says that the number of racially motivated attacks on overseas students in the city has continued to rise in the last year. And in Sport, Peterborough United were beaten 2 – 0 at home by fellow strugglers Bournemouth in last night's league 2 fixture.

Millie : The wind is still whipping up outside. I actually love walking in stormy weather. I love the dark skies when bad weather is on the way. I love to feel rain lashing me or my hair blown in all directions in a gale. I guess I love those things knowing that I can be warm and dry at home inside half an hour if it starts to get really bad. Not like being out in a trawler or camping out in a flimsy tent....

Music : sound effects - wind

Millie : I set out this morning with this ominous, heavy feeling in the pit of my stomach. I think of David out there on the sea, I think of Awara and her friends camping in the woods and Rachel, wherever she might be. Everything seems perilous and uncertain. A queasy, uneasy feeling. Nothing I can control, nothing I can do anything about other than worry... I felt like this before my school exams, the night before my father died. (softly) The night before our wedding...

I've gathered a few items of food, juiced up a portable charger and put a couple of large bottles of water into my rucksack to take to the tiny camp in the woods. I can hardly keep myself in a straight line as I walk out across the Fen towards the distant wood. Crows and ravens like crazy kites dart and shear across the path in front of me, the wind roars in my ears and as I draw close I can see the treetops bending almost double, hear the storm howling through the leaves and branches.

As I enter the wood, I immediately know something is wrong. Two sets of tyre tracks have ripped open the soft, earthy soil of the main path into the wood. I can see tents torn down: possessions strewn across the clearing. Boot marks and the signs of something being dragged through the mud away from the camp...

I imagine Awara's terror, her children screaming and crying as the thugs – government thugs or thugs acting of their own volition, smashed up the camp and bundled its occupants into vans to be taken god knows where....

I sink to my knees. Sink into the mud with the storm roaring around me and sob uncontrollably...

Muisc :

David : (voicemail message). Millie. Why aren't you picking up? We're back in Kings Lynn but, listen, there's been an accident. I. need to talk to you... Call back when you get this.

Music :

David : (voicemail message). Millie: where are you? I need to talk to you urgently. Please give me a call...

Music:

Scene Twenty : Laura's office in New York...

Laura : Yeah, hi, I'm trying to reach Rachel Woods please. (pause: getting more animated). No, no, she definitely was staying there! I spoke to someone that sounded like you a couple of days ago who told me that she wasn't in her room so that would suggest she was there then. (pause). (getting angry now). What do you mean she never checked in there? I know she was there! I've spoken to her on this number at least ten times over the last week!!! Look, can you call me back please? I need to speak to someone there who was aware that Rachel was actually staying there.... Thank you!

Sounds : Phone

Laura : Hey Jen, can you do me a favour? I need you to see if you can contact local police where Rachel was staying in England and report her missing please. Yeah – I’ve spoken to the place she was staying and they’re denying she was ever there. I’d be happy to speak to the police if they need more detail. Get back to me and let me know what you find... Willa, what have you found out?

Willa Watson: Laura, I’ve just spoken to the local police and they say they have no reports of any missing people and no record of anyone having reported Laura missing. I gave them Laura’s description and asked them to look into it, but they didn’t seem very interested. They said maybe she just doesn’t want to speak to us...

Laura : Oh for god’s sake! That’s ridiculous. Leave me the number, I’ll phone them myself later.

Sounds : Phone

Laura : Hey Matt. Yeah, it’s Laura. I need you to pull the Rachel Woods piece from today’s lunchtime show. I know, I know. I’m really sorry, but she’s missing. We have no clue where she is and until I get to speak to her, I don’t want anything of hers going out. (pause) Sure, the moment I hear from her I’ll get back to you. Probably just a misunderstanding and me being paranoid so please just bear with me... Thanks Matt, I owe you one.

(Pause)

Laura: Come on Rachel.... Call me... please...

Music :

Scene Twenty One: Millie and David’s cottage

David : How are you feeling ?

Millie : What did you do to her? What did you do to Rachel?

David : I told you, she fell overboard – you heard the wind last night – the boat was pitching and tossing like I’ve never seen before, she was out on deck and this wave just came over us and...

Millie : (shouting) why wasn’t she wearing a harness for god’s sake? How was she allowed out on deck in a gale not wearing a harness? This is going to look terrible when they investigate it David. The skipper will lose his safety license. You’ll lose your job and how are we going to make ends meet then? How could you not have looked after her? She was my friend... I really liked her!

David : There’s... there’s not going to be an investigation... It’s all sorted...

Millie : What do you mean “it’s all sorted”? How can it be all sorted? Someone’s died David!!! My friend has died!!

David : Missing.. only missing so far Millie

Millie: Oh, for god's sake, of course she's dead! Was she wearing a life vest? Was she a strong swimmer? She fell into a raging sea David of course she's dead...!

David : Well, maybe.. probably... But it's sorted. We had a government official on board the boat. It's in his interest to hush up what went on...

Millie: Hush up what went on! What do you mean? You can't "hush up" someone's death!!! People will be looking for her. Her editor back in New York is wanting to know where she is. Her family will want to know about her. David, you can't just keep this quiet...

David : So you want me to lose my job?! Want us to be destitute? We couldn't afford to keep up payments on the cottage on your pay alone. The money I get from the odd-job work is just pocket money compared to what I get for fishing...

Millie: I'm calling the police. I don't care about the consequences, someone has died and the police need to know...

David : (shouting) Pick up that phone and i'll.... (softens) Millie, listen, the police know about it and are turning a blind eye. PC Harris's brother Joe was on the crew last night. The government guy, Davis has spoken with the King's Lynn police station and it's all sorted...

Millie : (desperate.. upset) How can it all be sorted when someone has died David? She stayed here for a week. People will have seen her...

David : People have short memories... There's a long tradition of travellers just disappearing in the Fens

Millie : Don't give me that crap David, You disrespect the traditions of this place and its' folklore by using it to justify you small minded attitudes! This is the real world! Someone has died!

David : You know what she was saying about us don't you? Saying we were mistreating the migrants. Painting us as a bunch of thick racists. It was all about the migrants and nothing about us...

Millie: So, because she was saying what she found, just doing her job as a journalist, she deserved to die?

David: I'm not saying she deserved it... just that lots of people round here won't be sorry she's gone...

Millie: They may not but I will....she was... she was lovely... (breaks down crying)

Music :

Scene twenty two: The bar of the Green Dragon

Sounds : Phone rings :

Millie : Hello, The Green Dragon

Laura: Hello, Can I speak to Rachel Woods please?

Millie: (dispassionate) I'm sorry there's no one of that name here.

Laura : Wait. She's a guest there... you have a guest staying there called Rachel Woods. She's American. Blonde hair...a journalist

Millie: (dispassionate) No, I'm sorry. I'm sure I would have remembered an American.

Laura : (incredulous, getting angry) You're kidding me! I spoke to you just a couple of days ago and you told me she wasn't in her room... implying she had a room there! Stop messing with me... where is she?

Millie : I'm sorry madam...

Sound: phone being put down...

Millie : (sobs). Oh god, Rachel.. I'm so sorry Rachel...

Music

Epilogue 1 : David

David : Have you ever walked somewhere and felt the hands of your ancestors on your shoulder? Their presence all around like a tangible force – as real as the trees and hedges, the mud beneath your feet. The sky above you...? Have you ever felt that there's something there that you can't see or touch but can feel...? the spirits and entities that inhabit the fens and marshes can make strange things happen... can make the weird and extraordinary seem normal... the supernatural seem commonplace. The disappearance of a traveller is sad, of course, but everyone knows that people do vanish here. The locals raise an eyebrow perhaps, but they aren't really surprised. It's happened for decades... centuries and it will keep on happening. That's just the way of the fens.

The storms of the last couple of days broke the dyke at Gedney and the sea rushed in flooding acres and acres across the Lyndsey Levels.... Three farms, two villages gone: wiped from the map in a moment. We may be losing these battles to the sea and to migrants and maybe even to public opinion. We may be in retreat, but we won't stop fighting. We'll never stop fighting.

Epilogue 2 : Millie, Awara, Laura and Rachel

Millie : Hello, may I speak to the news room? Yes, I need the postal address of your offices please.... Got it. Thank you. My name? Doesn't matter...

Sound : Phone being put down...

Music :

Willa : Post Laura ... snail mail – that’s novel!

Sound : An envelope being torn open

Laura: (reading). One of the women from the pub took me for a walk one morning. She said there was something I had to see but that I was to keep it a secret. She led me across the fields to a wood where my friend showed me a small encampment of refugees.

Fades into...

Awara : Kurds from Northern Iraq who had made the perilous journey across two continents and then braved the North Sea in a tiny boat to reach shore. I spoke to a woman called Awara: a medical doctor who had fled her homeland along with her husband and two children. Their friends included an architect, a writer, a second doctor. And here they were, cowering in this cold, windswept woodland in Eastern England, terrified of being thrown into jail in a country desperate for the very skills they possessed. We compared our respective statuses.

Fades into...

Rachel: I too was a woman far from home but because my skin was white and because I was a citizen of a so-called friendly state I was welcomed here. For Awara and her family the future was only bleak. The chain of migrant processing camps all along the East coast of England act as detention centres for those entering the country illegally. Entering the county without appropriate permission is deemed a crime and therefore all migrants arriving by boat are seen by the UK government as criminals and therefore due for deportation to their country of origin regardless of their status as refugees or asylum seekers. It’s a sick case of catch twenty-two, a kind of legal “original sin”. They know that applications via the prescribed route will take years and be met with a blanket rejection yet to turn up without permission will result in criminalisation and deportation. Effectively Britain’s government has closed its border to most nationalities.

Fades into....

Music

End