

**As Waters Rise  
by Ben Weatherill**

**Episode Two: Near the Surface**

## **Cast**

**BETH**

**JOSH**

**FRANKIE**

**RYAN**

**LOU**

**GEORGIE**

**HANNAH**

**AVA**

**HOST**

**PRIME MINISTER**

**SIMONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

**Reporter:** As flooding continues to devastate the country, parts of East London are now several feet under water.

**Lou:** It's 2025. We should've been prepared for this.

**Ava:** The water just kept coming. All we could do was run.

**Reporter:** Six people have died after barriers holding back the River Lea buckled.

**Reporter:** Remarkable footage has emerged showing water levels halfway up residences and, in some cases, up to roofs of buildings.

**Georgie:** The water. I'd never seen anything like it.

**Reporter:** With criticism building, there are tough questions for the government to answer.

**Prime Minister:** No one could've predicted this. This is climate change on an unprecedented scale.

**Reporter:** A second day of protests has begun.

**Lou:** The government don't care about us. They've left us to drown.

**Prime Minister:** The climate protestors are very nasty people with a nasty agenda. This should be a time of national unity.

**Reporter:** Environmental activists have been referred to the government's controversial anti-radicalisation programme...

**Prime Minister:** The Prevent programme forms part of the plans that we're putting in place to keep people safe. And you want people to be safe, don't you?

**Beth:** My mum wasn't safe.

**F/X: RAIN. A STORM THAT GROWS CLOSER. THUNDER.**

## **AS WATERS RISE**

### **Episode Two: Near the Surface**

#### **SCENE ONE. INT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING. MEDIUM SIZE ROOM.**

**Beth:** Am I in the right place? For prevent.

**Josh:** Yeah. You're the first.

**Beth:** I like to be early.

**Josh:** Mission accomplished.

**Beth:** My mum always said you look like a right twat if you walk in late. Shows you don't really care.

**Josh:** Well your mum will be proud.

**Beth:** Yeah. I'm Beth, by the way.

**Josh:** Josh.

**Beth:** Right. The security was a bit intense.

**Josh:** I'm used to it.

**Beth:** Although, I suppose if I was a terrorist, this would be the first place I'd want to blow up.

**Josh:** Maybe don't joke about blowing things up whilst you're here.

**Beth:** Yeah, okay, course.

**Josh:** People don't have much of a sense of humour anymore.

**Beth:** That's probably because none of this is very funny.

**Josh:** Do you wanna sit down?

**Beth:** I'm good.

**Josh:** Okay.

**Beth:** I'm lucky 'cos this is one of the only places I can get a direct *Overground* to. You live close?

**Josh:** I'm not allowed to tell you.

**Beth:** I'm not going to murder you or anything.

**Josh:** That's reassuring. But it's one of the rules. Sorry.

**Beth:** What are the others?

**Josh:** I can't tell you.

**Beth:** Is that one of the rules? That you can't tell us the rules?

**Josh:** I'm not technically supposed to be on my own with you.

**Beth:** Shall I wait outside?

**Josh:** The door's open.

**Beth:** Ah right. So people can walk past and see in.

**Josh:** Exactly.

**Beth:** I was just making conversation. Do you live close is one of those questions, isn't it. Did it take you long to get here? Did you have a good journey? It's just polite.

**Josh:** I know.

**Beth:** People get so offended by good manners.

**Josh:** I got a water taxi here.

**Beth:** Really?

**Josh:** Yes.

**Beth:** They're expensive.

**Josh:** The government pays for it.

**Beth:** Which means we all pay for it.

**Josh:** I guess.

**Beth:** No, that's literally how taxes work.

**Josh:** Taxes for taxis. That was a joke.

**Beth:** I know.

**Josh:** Anyway, the first thing I need you to do is sign for this.

**Beth:** What is it?

**Josh:** A Dictaphone.

**Beth:** Looks expensive.

**Josh:** That's why you have to sign for it.

**Beth:** What do I do with it?

**Josh:** Keep a diary. A thought journal.

**Beth:** Is it private?

**Josh:** What do you mean?

**Beth:** It's sad that it's not obvious what private means.

**Josh:** Yes, it's private.

**Beth:** So you're not going to be listening in?

**Josh:** They already know if you're up to something dodgy. That's why you're here.

**Beth:** People slip through the cracks.

**Josh:** Less and less. And you didn't.

**Beth:** I was forgotten about until I started causing a problem.

**Josh:** Do you mind signing for it?

**Beth:** Okay.

**F/X: BETH SIGNS FOR THE DICTAPHONE.**

**Beth:** What happens if I lose it?

**Josh:** You pay for it.

**F/X: A KNOCK ON THE OPEN DOOR.**

**Frankie:** Sorry. Oh, I'm not late. Is this the right room for the Prevent group?

## **SCENE TWO. INT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING. MEDIUM SIZE ROOM.**

**Josh:** Okay, everyone just leave their chairs where they are and sit down!

**F/X: PEOPLE PUT THEIR CHAIRS DOWN, SIT, THEN QUIET.**

**Josh:** Thank you. The next six weeks are all about providing support, really. The prevent programme isn't about catching anyone out. It's about reflecting on past choices and understanding the risk of extremism. I'm here to run the activities, but everything will be coming from you guys. We'll have lots of discussion, roleplays and time to explain your concerns in a safe space.

**Lou:** Will we need a notebook and pen?

**Josh:** Let's start by introducing ourselves.

**Georgie:** Seriously?

**Josh:** How else are you going to know what to call each other?

**Georgie:** Name tags?

**Josh:** There's no fun in name tags. Now, the first activity is being honest about what led you here in the first place. We'll go round the circle and explain what happened in the third person.

**Beth:** Can we get on with it? It's boiling in here.

**Josh:** Why don't you start, Beth?

**Beth:** No thanks.

**Josh:** It's really easy. It's just describing the events that led you to *Prevent*.

**Lou:** I don't mind going first.

**Georgie:** You're always so eager.

**Lou:** The sooner we start, the sooner we get it over with.

**Josh:** Precisely.

**Lou:** Shall I go?

**Ryan:** Somebody go.

**Lou:** Okay. My name's Lou. I'm a Capricorn.

**Frankie:** Oh my god, me too. When's your birthday?

**Josh:** That's not really relevant.

**Lou:** Second of January.

**Frankie:** Mine's the first. Such a crap birthday.

**Lou:** Solidarity.

**Josh:** Let's focus on what led you to being referred to prevent.

**Lou:** Lou was persuaded by her friend Georgie to hold some artworks hostage.

**Ryan:** Really?

**Lou:** Yeah.

**Georgie:** I didn't persuade you to do anything.

**Josh:** Georgie, why don't you go next?

**Georgie:** She's kind of stolen my thunder.

**Lou:** No, I didn't.

**Georgie:** Why don't you move on to someone else?

**Josh:** Because everyone has to contribute.

**Georgie:** Fine. Georgie stole some paintings from the Whitechapel Gallery, and she'd do it again if had the chance because I'd rather be here than let all that precious work go to waste.

**Lou:** We didn't steal them.

**Georgie:** No, we protected them. I wasn't going to let the gallery flood and leave the art behind.

**Josh:** Thanks Georgie. Who's next? Hannah?

**Hannah:** I threatened to decapitate the CEO of *Amazon*.

**Lou:** Seriously?!

**Ryan:** Epic.

**Hannah:** Chill out, of course I didn't.

**Josh:** Hannah, why are you actually here?

**Hannah:** Hannah went to a protest.

**Josh:** And?

**Hannah:** And what?

**Josh:** What else?

**Hannah:** If Josh is such an expert, why doesn't Josh tell Hannah what Hannah did?

**Josh:** You wore a t-shirt.

**Frankie:** What a monster!

**Hannah:** I know, bring back the death penalty.

**Ryan:** That's it? She wore a t-shirt.

**Josh:** It said destroy the government. And she started selling them online.

**Ryan:** Oh, I see. She's practically Osama bin Laden.

**Josh:** Let's no bring bin Laden into this.

**Ryan:** I was joking.

**Frankie:** Yeah, I don't think Osama is fair game.

**Georgie:** It's pretty insensitive.

**Ryan:** This is going to be so dry, isn't it?

**Josh:** Yep. Buckle up. Frankie?

**Frankie:** Me? I didn't do anything as naughty as wearing a t-shirt.

**Hannah:** What did you do?

**Frankie:** Wrote an essay. Sorry, Frankie wrote an essay. It freaked her teachers.



**Hannah:** Why?

**Frankie:** Because they're not used to original thoughts? I dunno. They reported it, here I am. Goodbye Tuesdays.

**Josh:** Thanks Frankie. Ava- why don't we go with you next?

**Ava:** Jog on.

**Josh:** You're wasting everyone's time.

**Ava:** Why are you here?

**Josh:** Um.

**Ava:** Are you meant to be like one of those drug addicts that come in to school and tell you not to inject yourself?

**Lou:** I always thought they made it sound kind of cool.

**Josh:** This isn't about me.

**Ava:** How old are you?

**Josh:** That's none of your business.

**Ava:** You look younger than me.

**Josh:** I moisturise.

**Ava:** With what? Foetuses?

**Ryan:** Wow.

**Lou:** That's disgusting.

**Josh:** Not that it's anyone's business, but I'm twenty-two.

**Ava:** Nah. You can't be. I'd have guessed thirteen.

**Josh:** Shall we get on with it?

**Lou:** Yes please.

**Josh:** Ava, when you're ready.

**Ava:** I'm not telling you anything.

**Josh:** It's your future.

**Ava:** What future?

**Josh:** Look, I get it, no one wants to spend their summer indoors. I didn't want to do the programme either.

**Lou:** You did it?

**Josh:** Yes. I found it really helped me, and I want to help you.

**Lou:** That's kinda sweet.

**Georgie:** Is it?

**Lou:** I think so.

**Ava:** I think he's been brain washed.

**Josh:** Enough! I don't care whether you want to be here or not, the point is you have to be. Now, it's up to you whether you want this to follow you round when you're applying to university, trying to get jobs, claim benefits. It's up to you whether you always want there to be a question mark against your name. You can moan at me for eight weeks, or you can suck it up and get your life back on track. I'm fine either way. It's your choice Ava.

*Beat.*

**Ava (matter of factly):** Ava's flat got flooded. Ava's family lost everything. Ava got moved into a hotel. Ava's mum lost her job as she had no way of getting to work. Ava got used to having to go to the foodbank, but people kept telling her she was lucky and should be grateful. Ava started a petition for a public inquiry that didn't have all of the Prime Minister's mates involved. Ava still doesn't understand what she's doing here. But you carry on and hold our futures over our heads when all we've been doing is demanding one in the first place.

### **SCENE THREE. INT. BETH'S BEDROOM.**

**F/X: THE CLICK OF A DICTAPHONE. WE HEAR BETH AS IF IT'S BEING PLAYED AS A RECORDING.**

**Beth:** This is Beth. Session One Reflection. Hello Josh, if you're listening. I know you told me this is all meant to be private, but I doubt I can trust a word that comes out of your mouth. You probably feel the same about me, so. Anyway, when it was my turn to explain why I'm there, I skimmed over the details. When you tell someone you're basically an orphan it does change the way they look at you. In Health and Social care, they did that thing where they make you look after an egg for a week and you try not to break it. You treat it like it's the most delicate thing in the world. People tend to do that with me once they find out about my mum. It pisses me off.

Before I started speaking, I told myself I don't care what any of them think of me. Ryan, the American, is, let's face it, a gobshite. To be honest, all he wants is to have the last word and next time they should let him have it. It's not like any of us are going to see each other again.

Georgie and Lou know each other. They argue like they're married. And neither of them can dress themselves. They're so East London it hurts. Frankie likes to talk about herself. Hannah's probably the only one I can tolerate being mates with. At least she seems to have a sense of humour. And then there's Ava. I don't know what to make of her.

Anyway, when it got to me, even though I didn't really want to, I told them about mum.

**F/X: THE CLICK OF A DICTAPHONE.**

## **SCENE FOUR. INT. GOVERNMENT BUILDING.**

*Josh is talking to the group.*

**Josh:** It wasn't *Guy Fawkes*' fault. It was *Robert Catesby* who was the lead plotter. He was the mastermind. *Guy Fawkes* was radicalised. He is a victim, just as much as he is a criminal.

*Beat.*

**Frankie:** Is this funded by the taxpayer?

**Georgie:** Can we go for lunch now?

**Frankie:** I haven't been radicalised.

**Josh:** That's why it's called *Prevent*.

**Ryan:** I didn't do anything illegal. It's not a crime to tweet your MP.

**Josh:** I would argue that would depend on the tone of your tweet.

**Ryan:** There's something called free speech.

**Josh:** I know, I think free speech is important.

**Ryan:** The villain would say that.

**Josh:** As much as I'm sure you'd all love it, there isn't some big conspiracy theory going on here.

**Frankie:** Oh please, this is some straight up *Princess Diana* bullshit.

**Josh:** People want the government to deal with extremism.

**Frankie:** I don't think there's anything extreme about wanting to save the planet.

**Josh:** Any young person who speaks aggressively about environmental issues is flagged with *Prevent*.

**Frankie:** You can't say free speech is important then try and brainwash anybody with a different opinion.

**Josh:** That's not what we're doing. It's about keeping people safe.

**Frankie:** We aren't safe! We had this huge event, this thing that everyone said was going to change the world. Coronavirus-

**Ryan:** Oh God, please don't bring up Miss 'Rona.

**Frankie:** I'm sorry, but if you refuse to see how the two are connected then you're just stupid.

**Ryan:** When you say you're sorry like that, you don't sound very apologetic.

**Georgie:** If I don't eat something soon, I swear I'm gonna faint.

**Frankie:** We saw what would happen if a government is too slow to act on science. Did you think climate change was going to be any different? We had a chance to do something about it, to change the way we live, and we didn't. And now it's here. Floods. Floods that are hitting poor people, disabled people, people of colour harder than anyone else and we knew, we knew it would happen because we'd already seen it, and we let them go back to business as usual. And I'm not going to apologise for pointing out criminal incompetence. That essay was well written, well researched and deserved a fucking A.

**Josh:** Everyone take half an hour. Back here by ten to.

**Georgie:** Hallejuah!

**F/X: JOSH EXITS. DOOR OPENS AND CLOSSES.**

**Lou:** Do you think we upset him?

**Georgie:** I try to pity him, but then he's so bad at this he makes it hard.

**Lou:** He's trying. I wouldn't wanna do his job.

**Ryan:** Do you fancy him?

**Lou:** No.

**Ryan:** I thought I'd ask the obvious question.

**Lou:** I feel a bit mean when we all gang up on him, that's all.

**Frankie:** Why?

**Lou:** Because he's trying to make a difference.

**Frankie:** Is he?

**Lou:** Yeah. He wouldn't be here otherwise, would he?

**Frankie:** He's playing for the wrong team.

**Lou:** He doesn't think that. You won't win him over by screaming at him.

**Frankie:** I wasn't screaming.

**Georgie:** Ignore Lou, she's always so reasonable.

**Lou:** Ignore me?

**Georgie:** You know what I mean.

**Lou:** I don't actually.

**Georgie:** Forget it, let's go eat.

**Lou:** I'm gonna stay here, I think.

**Georgie:** Lou.

**Lou:** You don't mind if I eat with you guys, do you?

**Hannah:** No.

**Ava:** Knock yourself out.

**Georgie:** Fine.

**F/X: GEORGIE EXITS. DOOR OPEN AND CLOSSES.**

**Ryan:** Are you two divorced now?

**Lou:** She'll be fine.

**Beth:** She gets on at you a bit.

**Lou:** It's her thing. Let's talk about something else.

**Hannah:** I wanna know something Ryan.

**Ryan:** What?

**Hannah:** What did you tweet your MP?

**Ava:** Good question.

**Ryan:** I don't wanna say.

**Hannah:** Why?

**Ryan:** Because it doesn't matter.

**Hannah:** Of course it matters.

**Lou:** I wanna know too.

**Beth:** How bad was it?

**Ryan:** Bad.

**Hannah:** I've been wondering since last week.

**Lou:** Come on, spill.

**Ryan:** Now who's ganging up on people?

**Hannah:** We're not going for lunch until you tell us.

**Ryan:** Fine.

**Ava:** We can just search it up anyway.

**Ryan:** Don't do that.

**Ava:** If you won't tell us...

**Lou:** It'll be easy to find online if it got that much attention.

**Beth:** Just tell us.

**Ava:** I'm searching it now.

**Ryan:** Please.

**Ava:** Too late. Found it.

**Ryan:** Alright! I told her I hope that she and her children drowned just like those six people.

*Beat.*

**F/X: BETH EXITS- SCRAPE OF A CHAIR.**

**Lou:** Beth, are you alright?

**F/X: DOOR OPENS AND CLOSSES.**

**Ryan:** Are you happy now? I told you I didn't wanna say!

**Hannah:** You sent it, not us.

**Ryan:** You all kept pushing.

**Lou:** Should someone go after her?

**Ava:** Give her space.

## **SCENE FIVE. INT. BETH'S BEDROOM.**

**F/X: THE CLICK OF A DICTAPHONE. WE HEAR BETH AS IF IT'S BEING PLAYED AS A RECORDING.**

**Beth:** I thought about heading home, but I didn't know what would happen if I didn't go back. When I walked back in, I knew everyone could tell I'd been crying. Ryan tried to apologise. I told him it's fine. Dick.

A few days after mum died, the front page of most newspapers had pictures of the six of them. They chose quite a nice one of my mum. They must've pulled it from *Facebook* or something. It's her at my cousin's wedding. I'd curled her hair. She's smiling, a glass of champagne in her hand. After that came out, it wasn't long before people were saying things online. Saying she deserved it. I would sit up all night, scrolling. People can be heartless. One night, I posted a video, explaining what had happened. How I tried to lift her out of her chair, but the water was too deep. How it pulled her down. How I begged people to help me. How I knew I had to try and keep her head above water. How I could see the panic in her eyes.

It didn't take long for the trolls to find that either. And then I promised myself I'd never talk about mum like that in public ever again.

**F/X: THE CLICK OF A DICTAPHONE.**

**SCENE SIX. INT. GOVERNMENT BUILDING.**

**F/X: BACKGROUND CHATTER AS THEY GET ON WITH A TASK. JOSH CALLS OUT ABOVE IT.**

**Josh:** Time is up!

**F/X: THEY ALL CARRY ON TALKING, IGNORING HIM.**

**Josh:** Okay then...

**F/X: A BAG UNZIPPING. JOSH TAKES SOMETHING OUT OF IT. A CLICK, THEN THE BLAST OF AN AIR HORN. THE GROUP JUMPS A MILE. JOSH LAUGHS.**

**Frankie:** What was that for?!

**Josh:** Fun. So, things you'd miss about this country. Which group wants to go first?

**Georgie:** We can go first.

**Josh:** Great, thanks Georgie. Timer going on... Okay Georgie.

**F/X: JOSH SETS THE TIMER. GEORGIE CLEARS HER THROAT.**

**Georgie:** We said we'd miss *Starbucks*.

**Josh:** That's not British though.

**Georgie:** I know, but we'd still miss it.

**Frankie:** I said *Pret*, does that count?

**Josh:** No. And it's not your group's turn.

**Frankie:** But it's British.

**Josh:** Is it?

**Frankie:** Yes.

**Hannah:** What about *Greggs*? And *Nandos*?

**Georgie:** *Nandos* is South African.

**Lou:** I thought *Nandos* was Portuguese?

**Georgie:** It's not.

**Josh:** Anyone put anything that wasn't food?

**Lou:** *IKEA*.

**Ryan:** The NHS?

**Josh:** The NHS. Great. Why do you love it?

**Ryan:** Because it's free.

**Ava:** Mostly. We used to clap for it every week a few years ago, and now we've sold most of it to your lot.

**Ryan:** The NHS had problems.

**Ava:** Yeah, mainly that nurses can't feed their families on applause.

**Ryan:** You guys have no idea what you've got.

**Josh:** Let's not get into us and them.

**Ryan:** I remember my granddad buying a lottery ticket one time and when I asked him what he'd do if he won, he said 'go to the doctor'. British people are so ungrateful.

**Josh:** What about your ideas Frankie?

**Frankie:** I'd miss English airports. Everything's always so organised, the loos are nice, and you've always got a *Boots* there when you need some emergency mini shampoos or a Meal Deal. I think they're classy.

**Josh:** Right. Thanks...

**F/X: GEORGIE HOLDS THE PAPER OUT TO RYAN.**

**Georgie:** Ryan, what does that say?

**Hannah:** Tea isn't British.

**Lou:** It's quite British.

**Hannah:** It's stolen.

**Josh:** This isn't really meant to be about colonialism.

**Hannah:** Isn't it?

**Josh:** Well what did you write Hannah?

**Hannah:** Okay...things 'British' people would miss about this shit hole of a country: tea, gin, the royal family, dancing dogs on the TV, being racist about the French, being racist in general and the class system.

**Beth:** If it helps, I think tea is shit.

**Lou:** Go wash your mouth out.

**Beth:** It's lukewarm leaf water.

**Lou:** It's a life saver.



**Beth:** Except it isn't. "You need a cup of tea" people say when you've witnessed some horrible car accident or got caught in the rain or done terribly in an exam. Do you know what the nurse said after my mum got diagnosed? "I'll make you a nice cup of tea" and it's never enough, is it? It's just brown slop you dunk cheap biscuits in.

**F/X: AN EGG TIMER GOES OFF.**

**Georgie:** Break time!

**F/X: THEY ALL START TO GATHER THEIR STUFF AND HEAD OUT TO BREAK.**

**Hannah:** Tea anyone?

**Josh (feebly):** Back in ten minutes please.

**F/X: PEOPLE EXIT. WE PICK UP ON AVA AND BETH'S CONVERSATION.**

**Ava:** Beth. I wanted to say sorry. About last week.

**Beth:** You didn't do anything.

**Ava:** I wound Ryan up.

**Beth:** At least he was angry about it. Most people shrugged their shoulders. 'It's only six people. What about my flooded kitchen?'

**Ava:** People are selfish. It's what got us into this mess in the first place. 'Be Kind' never lasts long.

**Beth:** Wouldn't it be lush to go to sleep one night, knowing that when you wake up in the morning, things aren't going to be worse?

**Ava:** That's depressing.

**Beth:** People tell me that a lot. It's why everyone here avoids me.

**Ava:** I don't.

**Beth:** I guess.

**Ava:** I don't think you're depressing. You've just got no time for other people's bullshit.

*Beat.*

**Ava:** Do you wanna go for a walk? I'm not that hungry.

**Beth:** Sure.

**SCENE SEVEN. EXT. PARK. DAY.**

**F/X: OUTSIDE. BIRDS. WE CAN TELL IT'S A PLEASANT, SUNNY DAY. AVA AND BETH WALK ON THE GRASS.**

**Ava:** I can't believe there's a park open round here.

**Beth:** North London didn't get it as bad.

**Ava:** I used to live right by *Victoria Park*. Before I was in temporary.

**Beth:** Sounds nice.

**Ava:** It's just all mud now. Gates closed. There's nowhere like this to go.

**Beth:** My mum used to like *Clissold Park*. You ever been there?

**Ava:** No.

**Beth:** It's by *Stoke Newington*. It's quite flat and it was easy with her chair. We used to feed the deer. I wonder what's happened to them.

**Ava:** They probably drowned.

**Beth:** Wow. Aren't you a ball of sunshine?

**Ava:** Sorry. Sometimes I don't think before I open my mouth.

**Beth:** It's fine.

**Ava:** I try to tell myself that this won't last forever, but sometimes...

**Beth:** It's hard when you know the only question they really care about is: who are we happy to sacrifice?

*Beat.*

**Beth:** Me and mum once watched this deer give birth. We'd go to the park most days and watch this mama deer as she grew. They're pregnant for like 200 days.

**Ava:** Do you not have Netflix?

**Beth:** Piss off. Anyway, one day, we come to the park and she's giving birth, right. The park isn't busy, so we stand back and watch as she does this amazing thing.

**Ava:** I wouldn't want to give birth to a deer.

**Beth:** Hooves first.

**Ava:** Exactly.

**Beth:** Anyway, the baby, arrives. All slimy and gross. And it goes quiet. We wait. The mum like, nuzzles it or whatever. It's alive, it's not dead or anything. And then, eventually, it gets up and walks. The thing's only been alive for twenty minutes and it already knows what to do.

*Beat.*

**Ava:** None of this had to happen, did it?

**Beth:** Nope. I wish I could look the Prime Minister in the eye and ask him if he can sleep at night.

**SCENE EIGHT. INT. GOVERNMENT BUILDING. MEDIUM SIZED ROOM.**

**F/X: LIGHT APPLAUSE.**

**Josh:** Thanks Lou. OK, when you're ready Hannah.

**Hannah:** My five hopes for the future. Number one: that people start being honest.

**Ryan:** Wow.

**Hannah:** No one said these have to be realistic. Number Two: That one day, I will meet the love of my life and they will be super-hot and have piercings and I can just lie in bed and have them bring me food.

**Georgie:** I think she's missed the point of the exercise.

**Hannah:** What a surprise, Georgie's interrupting. Number Three: We finally realise the rights of animals.

**Lou:** Preach.

**Hannah:** Number Four: They bring back *Ru Paul's Drag Race* but they allow trans contestants. Number Five: That *Dwayne Johnson* lives forever. And that concludes my five hopes for the future.

**F/X: THEY CLAP. HANNAH SITS DOWN.**

**Josh:** Alright! Thanks Hannah. Why don't I tell you about our next session? I think you'll like this Lou. The climate summit is next week. Lots of world leaders will be there, and we've been lucky enough to be invited. We'll be able to listen to some speeches, maybe even ask a question, and learn about what the government is doing to combat climate change in real terms.

**Lou:** That does sound good to be fair.

**Frankie:** Does it count as one of my days?

**Tom:** Yes.

**Ava:** Will we get lunch?

**Tom:** I'll have to check that.

**Ava:** If I have to listen to old white men spout lies, I want a decent sandwich.

**Tom:** I'm sure we can provide you with a sandwich.

**Ava:** Generous.

**Georgie:** Do we have to go?

**Tom:** Yes.

**Georgie:** What if we don't?

**Tom:** Then you'll be absent.

**Georgie:** Terrifying.

**Tom:** Funny, I thought you wanted to get into Durham.

**Georgie:** And?

**Tom:** I'm sure they won't be impressed to find out you have a criminal record.

**Georgie:** I don't.

**Tom:** Not yet. Anyway, I'll see you all next week. I can't wait...

**F/X: JOSH EXITS.**

**Georgie:** God, I hate him.

**Frankie:** I don't know why you have to give him so much shit. It doesn't get you anywhere.

**Georgie:** He just threatened me. They can't hold our futures over our head like that.

**Frankie:** Well, they are, deal with it.

**Georgie:** You know not everyone in this group is lucky enough to live away from the river. Some of us actually have to deal with the floods rather than write essays about them.

**Beth:** Let's not start.

**Lou:** I just think if Josh bothers you all that much, you should do something about it and stop moaning.

**Ava:** Agreed. Why don't we start next week?

**Georgie:** We're not here next week. You heard him say about the trip.

**Ava:** Exactly. Lots of world leaders. Press. I think it's the perfect time to take a stand, don't you Beth?

**Beth:** Why are you bringing me into this? Don't.

**Ryan:** Don't what?

**Beth:** Nothing.

**Ava:** This could be the perfect opportunity to get justice for your mum.

**Beth:** My mum has nothing to do with this.

**Frankie:** I'd be up for protesting, if that's what you're talking about.

**Ryan:** Protesting how?

**Ava:** They're taking questions from the public, aren't they?

**Frankie:** There's no way they'd take a question from one of us.

**Ava:** Then we interrupt.

**Beth:** This is a bad idea.

**Lou:** Agreed.

**Georgie:** Because you don't want to get Josh into trouble?

**Lou:** No. I just don't see the point of causing any more drama.

**Georgie:** What happened to you? You used to care about stuff.

**Lou:** I grew up.

**Ryan:** It has to be bigger than asking a question.

**Hannah:** Maybe we could buy water pistols and squirt him with them.

**Ryan:** Hannah, a brilliant idea.

**Georgie:** We're not five.

**Ryan:** It'd make headlines.

**Georgie:** What makes you think you'd get anywhere near the PM to do that?

**Ava:** Georgie's right. Security will be tight. And whatever we do, it has to be calm. They want us to look like we're the bad guy. We have to come at them with the truth otherwise it won't count. That's why you're perfect Beth.

**Beth:** Since when have speeches made a difference?

**Ava:** How about, all the time? *Pankhurst. Mandela.*

**Frankie:** *Martin Luther King.*

**Hannah:** To be fair, the civil rights movement had some blinders.

**Georgie:** And don't forget *Churchill. We shall fight on the beaches...* so great.

**Frankie:** Tell that to the victims of the Bengal famine.

**Ava:** The point is that they can change things. If you take a stand at the right moment, say the right thing.

**Lou:** Don't pressure her. It's not fair.

**Ava:** But Beth, people will listen to you.

**Beth:** They don't care about my story.

**Ryan:** Personally, I think you deserve to grow up in a world where no one has to go through what you had to go through.

**Georgie:** Me too.

**Hannah:** And me.

**Beth:** That's impossible.

**Ava:** But we should try, right?

## **SCENE NINE. INT. BETH'S BEDROOM.**

**F/X: THE CLICK OF A DICTAPHONE. WE HEAR BETH AS IF IT'S BEING PLAYED AS A RECORDING.**

**Beth:** I keep thinking about what my mum would say. I kind of play the scene in my head, you know, like I'm watching a movie or something. Does that make sense? Like, I rehearse it, rewrite it, over and over. Try and get the most truthful version. I wonder whether she'd tell me to keep my head down. Don't cause trouble. Then I start thinking she'd probably say do what makes you happy. But nothing has for a long time. Staying distracted is easy. Letting yourself feel the sadness is hard. It wasn't until I was lying here in the middle of the night that I suddenly heard what she'd say, crystal clear, as if she was lying right next to me.

Your voice matters.

**F/X: THE CLICK OF A DICTAPHONE.**

## **SCENE TEN. EXT. WESTMINSTER.**

**F/X: CROWDS. HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF PEOPLE MAKING THEIR WAY TOWARDS A BIG GATHERING. CARS. PEOPLE. NOISE.**

**Josh (further ahead):** This way- keep your passes round your neck!

**Beth:** I hate crowds.

**Ava:** Me too.

**Ryan:** I miss the days when everyone was indoors, and it was easy to walk places.

**Ava:** No you don't.

**Josh (heading towards them):** Hurry up! If we don't get a move on, we'll miss the start of the speech!

**Hannah:** We're coming. I didn't think he could get any worse, but now I see him the wild, it's truly disturbing.

**Josh:** What was that Hannah?

**Hannah:** Nothing.

**Josh (heading away again):** Now where has Frankie got to... I need to give her her ticket...

*We pick up on Lou and Beth.*

**Lou:** Are you gonna do it?

**Beth:** I told you, I'm not getting involved.

**Ava:** I think you're making a mistake.

**Beth:** If you're so into the idea Ava, why don't you do it?

**Ava:** I'm not the right person. It has to be you.

**Beth:** What if they arrest me?

**Ava:** For free speech?

**Lou:** I think it'd be legebld.

**Ava:** Do you really want to pass up a chance to confront him? People would kill for that opportunity.

**Lou:** Leave it. She doesn't owe us anything. Whatever you choose to do Beth, I reckon you're the bravest person I've ever met.

**Beth:** Thanks.

**Lou:** Anytime.

**Josh (from a distance):** Hurry up! And have your bags ready for security!

## **SCENE ELEVEN. INT. WESTMINSTER. AUDITORIUM.**

**F/X: APPLAUSE. CAMERA FLASHES.**

**F/X: AN AIDE SPEAKS THROUGH A MICROPHONE AS NOISE DIES DOWN.**

**Aide:** Thank you Prime Minister. Now, let's turn to questions from the public.

**Prime Minister:** Fantastic.

**Aide:** Let's go to Simone, from Manchester.

**Simone:** Prime Minister, there's flooding across the UK. All of your 2030 targets seem like a fairytale. What are you personally going to do to ensure more lives aren't lost, and thousands of people displaced, due to climate change?

**Prime Minister:** Fantastic question Simone. And pleased to hear from someone in Manchester. We can be too London focussed about these things. Manchester is a great city- great public transport. I am incredibly sorry that those six people lost their lives in East London. It's a tragedy. Climate change is something that we are gonna to have to live with and adapt to. It's a fact: some of us will suffer because of climate change. Our job now is to limit that suffering and look to the future. What am I personally going to be doing? I'm finally trying to eat less meat. No *KFC* for me Simone, let me tell you.

**Aide:** Thank you. I believe that was our last question-

**Beth (calling out from audience):** I have a question.

**F/X: MURMURING FROM THE AUDIENCE.**

**Josh (in audience, through gritted teeth):** Beth, what are you doing?

**Aide (on stage):** We're out of time.

**Lou (in audience, encouragingly):** Go on girl!

**Josh (in audience, through gritted teeth):** Sit down.

**Georgie (in audience):** She's going to get herself shot...

**Aide (on stage):** Prime Minister, thank you for your time.

**Beth (calling out again):** It won't take long.

**Prime Minister (on stage, trying to be amenable):** I can answer her question, it's no problem.

**Aide (off mic, leaning into PM):** Are you sure?

**Prime Minister (hushed voice):** It will look worse if I don't.

**Aide (on mic):** Okay. But this really is the final question. Can someone get her a microphone please?

**Beth (now on mic):** Hi. Thank you. My name's Beth. I'm from East London. My mum was one of the victims.

**Prime Minister:** I am very sorry to hear that Beth.

**Beth:** But are you as sorry as I am Prime Minister?

**F/X: THE CLICK OF CAMERAS BEGINS. A SENSE THAT THE MEDIA IS WATCHING THIS.**

**Aide:** Maybe we should wrap this up...

**Beth:** He said I could ask my question. We live in a democracy, don't we?

**Prime Minister:** Yes, of course, carry on.

**Beth:** You say it's a tragedy, but I'm wondering why? I didn't do very well in English, but I always thought a tragedy was something that wasn't really anyone's fault. But I guess you're the one who studied at Eton.

**Prime Minister:** Yes, well, it is a tragedy. And my heart goes out to you, Beth.

**Beth:** It seems like a choice, to me. It was a choice not to fund flood defences properly. It was a choice not to introduce environmental taxes. It was a choice to house people on flood plains.

**Josh (quietly):** Seriously Beth, sit down.

**Prime Minister:** Beth, lots of what you're saying is being discussed in detail today.



**Beth:** But it's too late, isn't it?

**Prime Minister:** Governments have to make difficult choices every single day. And sadly, more people will die of climate change.

**Beth:** But you'll get to choose who, won't you? Your friends and family won't die, will they?

**Prime Minister:** It seems you didn't want to ask a question at all. This is not a time for nasty politics, Beth. You're young, and you'll realise that not all issues should be politicised.

**Beth:** Really? People voted for men like you Prime Minister, who pretended to be 'just like us' and lied your way into government. And now you're going to abandon us when we need good government the most.

**Aide:** Thank you everyone for joining us. Prime Minister, we need to-

**Beth (hitting her stride):** You still haven't answered my question. Are you sorry? Are you sorry men like you have been able to destroy whole countries through propaganda and lies? Are you sorry that whilst your generation gets to die of old age, we'll probably die of climate change? Don't walk away from me Prime Minister. Are you sorry I'll never get to see my mum again because of your choices Prime Minister?

**F/X: CAMERAS CLICKING AND FLASHING.**

## **SCENE TWELVE. EXT. CLISSOLD PARK.**

**F/X: A NICE DAY. CHILDREN PLAYING IN THE DISTANCE. BIRDS SINGING. A PARK FILLED WITH PEOPLE. JOSH APPROACHES.**

**Josh:** Sorry, I couldn't find you.

**Beth:** That's alright. I was enjoying the sun..

**Josh:** No rain for three weeks.

**Beth:** Don't tempt fate.

**Josh:** Mind if I sit?

**Beth:** Sure.

**F/X: JOSH SITS NEXT TO BETH.**

**Beth:** Here. It's the dictaphone.

**Josh:** Oh. Thanks.

**Beth:** Didn't want to get charged for it.

**Josh:** Was it useful?

**Beth:** You mean you didn't listen in?

**Josh:** I told you I wouldn't.

**Beth:** Good. I called you every name under the sun.

**Josh:** I'm sure you did.

*Beat.*

**Beth:** I'm sorry. If I got you in trouble.

**Josh:** Oh, a shit load, but it's fine.

**Beth:** Did they fire you?

**Josh:** My job was to prevent things from happening, Beth.

**Beth:** You can't prevent what you can't predict.

**Josh:** That's true.

**Beth:** What I said won't make a difference anyway.

**Josh:** If it changed something for one person, would that count?

*Beat.*

**Josh:** It's a beautiful day.

**Beth:** Yeah. I'm glad they opened up the park.

**Josh:** The grass is beginning to grow back.

**Beth:** For now.

**Josh:** You have to take the good days when you can.

*Beat.*

**Josh:** I lost my mum, too. I know that makes it sound like I wandered off in the supermarket or something.

**Beth:** I'm sorry.

**Josh:** I know it's different for everyone, and I'm not pretending to know how you feel, because I don't. But I wish someone had told me that grief isn't like a cake.

**Beth:** What?

**Josh:** Hear me out.

**Beth:** I thought you were going to say something profound.

**Josh:** I'm not finished.

**Beth:** I hope not.

**Josh:** I mean, it's not a cake because if you take a slice of it, it's not like there's less for other people.

**Beth:** Right.

**Josh:** It sounds better in my head. You don't have to be anything for anyone, is what I'm trying to say.

**Beth:** Thank you. Do you want to get an ice cream?

**Josh:** Sure.

**Beth:** Come on, we'll walk by the deer.

**Josh:** There's deer?

**Beth:** Yep. It'll give you time to decide what flavour you want.

**F/X: THEY WALK. THE SOUNDS OF THE PARK GROW.**

**Beth:** I love this place.

## **THE END**

In ***Near the Surface*** by Ben Weatherill

**Beth** was played Pollyanna Knight

**Josh** by Tom Cadley

**Frankie** by Vigs Otite

**Ryan** by Joe Farino

**Lou** by Angel Studman

**Georgie** by Angelica Gayle

**Hannah** by Olivia Ferrari

and **Ava** by Marisol Rojas.

**The Prime Minister** was played by Ryan Early

**The Host** and **Aide** by Louie Keen

and **Simone** by Caroline Faber.

**As Waters Rise** is an Almeida Young Company production, with music composition by Fizz Margerison and sound design by Martha Littlehailes. The associate director was Abi Falase. It was produced by Simon Stephens, and directed by Alex Brown.