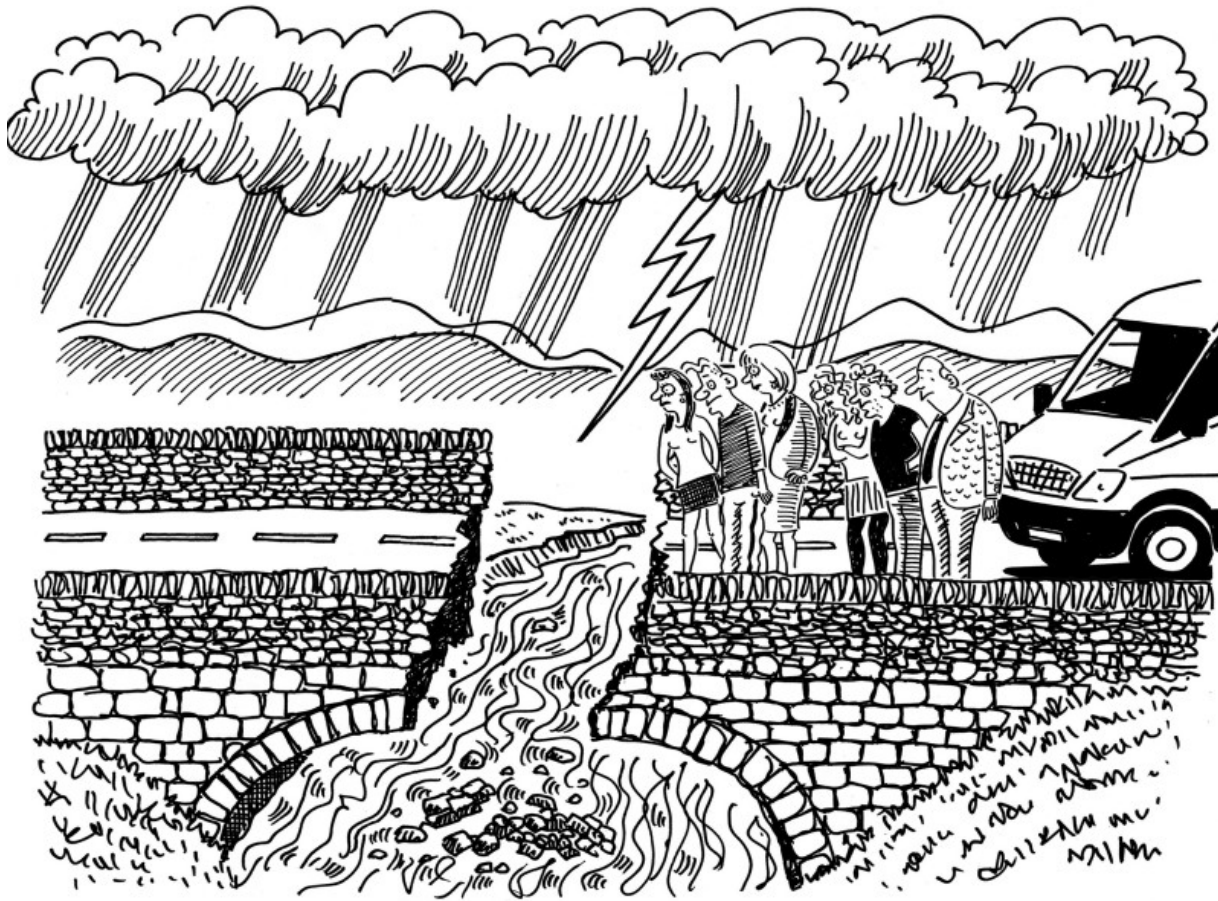


Beyond the Edge.



By Paul Symonloe

BEYOND THE EDGE

An optimistic school drama about climate change

By Paul Symonloe

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BEYOND THE EDGE

An optimistic school drama about climate change

By Paul Symonloe

Cast of Characters:

Miss Daphné Fiel: A poised, fiery French teacher in her mid-thirties, attractive and smartly dressed. She's completely bilingual with a very slight (but detectable) French accent.

Mr Mungo: A geography teacher in his fifties, somewhat overweight and sometimes prickly.

Myra: A school-girl

Dulcie: A Latina heritage school-girl

Jimmy: A school-boy

Jag: A school-boy

ACT 1 SCENE 1 (LIGHTING UP CURTAIN UP)

Setting: Rural Devon, England, to one side of an old bridge on a single-track road. The bridge has collapsed. On the "action" side of the stage is the bumper of a minibus, the rest being off-stage. In the far distance (SFX) Police sirens.

PROPS: (MYRA, MISS DAPHNE and MR MUNGO mobiles, set on-stage. Set off-stage, a pack of sandwiches, a can of Fanta, a plastic sheet, a few bags and back-packs) .

DULCIE: (On mobile, loud whisper) Myra!?

(Pause for reply, staccato, awed)

Oh - my - god My, you won't believe this! The bridge has caved, and I reckon a car went with it! Anyway it's not there now. Anyone inside will be freakin' history.

(Pause for reply)

Ok, ok I'm coming back. Can you see old Mungers?

(Pause for reply)

Oh Shhi...! (More fiery) ok chill, I'm coming! (DULCIE exits quickly) .

(Enter MR MUNGO and MISS DAPHNE. MISS DAPHNE is around twenty-five, MR MUNGO, a man in his fifties. Both are talking excitedly on mobiles. SFX Distant thunder and flashes of lightning) .

M.DAPHNE: (On mobile) It disappeared just like that! Mon Dieu! Ten seconds later and we'd all be dead right now! (MISS DAPHNE exhales deeply and leans against the minibus bumper) . Yes, yes of course ... it's the shock. I'm okay.

MR MUNGO: (On the other side of the stage on his mobile) I'm telling you Helen, it's completely gone! We can't get back unless someone comes up here.

(Pauses for a reply) No, no it's totally backed up, no one can move in either direction. The road narrows at

the bridge, and there's no space to turn round. Plus I think the way we came could be deluged any moment. There's no going back!

(Pauses for a reply) No! The water just took over! Helen listen, call the school. They need to know before one of the kids leaks it. Imagine what it would look like. Call now. **(Pauses for a reply)** Okay good.

(Ends call)

DAPHNE: **(Still on mobile).**
No, it's gone quiet. I don't know any more at the moment. I'll call as soon as I do.

(Pauses for a reply) Look, I have to go. I've told the kids to stay on the bus but you know what they're like?!

(Pauses for a reply) Yes, me too, bye.

(MISS DAPHNE and MR MUNGO, look over at each other. MISS DAPHNE continues to lean exhaling deeply against the bumper of the minibus).

MR MUNGO: **(Concerned)** Are you okay Miss Fiel?

DAPHNE: **(Ironical, with feeling)** Yeah, we nearly died! This is rubbish! The parents will go ape!

MR MUNGO: There's nothing we could've done is there? It's an act of god surely?!

DAPHNE: **(Cool).** You think this is down to God? **(More heartfelt).** You know what's awful though?

MR MUNGO: What?

DAPHNE: I think a car might have gone over the edge. I'm not sure. I couldn't see properly with the rain, and the river going nuts. Oh god! If it went over, people could have died couldn't they?

MR MUNGO: **(Alarmed).** No!? Did that happen?

DAPHNE: **(Not committing).** I'm not swearing to it. Like I said, the rain was coming down like crazy. I couldn't see. In

the end I stopped the bus out of instinct. Did you see anything?

MR MUNGO: No, I was at the back, keeping Jag and Dulcie from killing each other.

DAPHNE: (**Understanding**). Right. (**Changes tack quickly**) Anyway what are we doing about this?

MR MUNGO: (**MR MUNGO brisk**) Okay, so I've asked Helen to call the school urgently. Oh yes, and I've told the kids not to use their mobiles until we've had a chance to contact the relevant people ourselves.

DAPHNE: (**Sceptical**). Yeah right! These kids came out of the womb on their mobiles. Anyway, shouldn't you have contacted the school in person as the senior member of staff?

MR MUNGO: (**Guiltily**). Yes I know. I was so panicked by the bus stopping, dead... (**Diverts**). Look, Helen knows how to handle it... (**Tails off. New tack**). The police will tell us more, then we can update the school.

DAPHNE: (**Somewhat challenging**). You've called the police?

MR MUNGO: No, no I haven't. I thought someone further along the line of traffic would have.

DAPHNE: (**Business-like**). So you haven't and assumed someone else would?

MR MUNGO: (**Simply**). Yes. (**Adds**)... Though I can't see any other motorists. Maybe they've set off to the cutting we came through. Climb up there and you'd be out of danger. We're on low-lying ground here.

DAPHNE: (**Energetic**). So, I'm going to call! Somebody has to act right? (**She punches the numbers decisively in to her mobile**) Merde! I think I'm in France! (**Starts again**) It's the shock.

MR MUNGO: Don't worry, nobody can hear you, we're cut off.

DAPHNE: (**Cool, factual**). You're here aren't you? Anyway, I don't like being cut off. Wait, they're answering now.

(She walks off towards the bridge leaving MR MUNGO and the audience excluded from what she is saying. Every so often she gestures towards the collapsed bridge, to the water, and in the direction of the stationary minibus. Ends call and returns to MR MUNGO).

They know about it already, but have no idea when they can send help. They say we may want to keep out of our vehicles "in case of inundation", but it's up to us.

MR MUNGO: Up to us?! I think they should give clearer advice than that!

M.DAPHNE: What if there is no clear advice? Can't we think for ourselves?

MR MUNGO: Still, in a case like this, surely the authorities...

M.DAPHNE: **(Interrupting, angry)**. Damn, I was supposed to be doing something tonight!

(SFX distant thunder.)

MR MUNGO: **(Ruffled by MISS DAPHNE'S temperament)**. Er, yes... me too.

DAPHNE: Yes?

MR MUNGO: Well, yes. The neighbours were coming over to discuss the boundary fence. This is a real kerfuffle!

DAPHNE: **(Suddenly amused)**. A kerfuffle!? **(Pronouncing the word with a French inflection)**. A kerfuffle? You English!

MR MUNGO: **(With dignity)** Yes, I'm English. Is that okay?

DAPHNE: **(Still amused)**. Of course it's okay. We're in England aren't we?

MR MUNGO: Yes we are ... **(Tails off)**

M.DAPHNE: **(Looks at him appraisingly)**. Do you think I'm having a go at you? **(MR MUNGO doesn't respond)** Well I'm not. Differences are good. They can be the lightning; a connection in a storm. You react this way, I that. It can be exciting.

MR MUNGO: (**Irony**). Well, this weather's exciting! It's getting more exciting every year.

DAPHNE: Yes, its insanity!

MR MUNGO: The climate thing you mean?

M.DAPHNE: (**Incredulous**) Climate thing?! Yes, the climate thing!

(Enter two school pupils, **JIMMY** and **DULCIE**, in a state of excitement).

JIMMY: (**With relief**) Sir, miss, you're here! Did a car go over the edge!? Jag says it did.

MR MUNGO: (**Dismissively**). We don't know, and (**sharper**), you two really shouldn't be out here.

DULCIE: (**Directing herself to MISS DAPHNE**) Sorry Miss, we didn't know where you were. We were waiting on the bus but we didn't hear anything, so we just got off.

DAPHNE: Yes okay, but get back on now please.

DULCIE: But miss what happened? Was anyone injured?

M.DAPHNE: (**Firm**). We don't know, but it may not be safe out here. Please go back and wait on the bus until we've talked to the school.

JIMMY: (**Serious**). I don't know how you can know that miss. Anything could happen.

(**MYRA** and **JAG** enter. **JAG** looks and sounds cocky)

JAG: (**To all, referring to DULCIE**). Look, its Sugar!

MYRA: (**MYRA to Dulcie**) Sugar?

DULCIE: (**DULCIE to MYRA**). Dulcie means sweet in Spanish. The idiot calls me Sugar. (**To JAG**) Get lost Jag!

JAG: (**Quick**). Now that's one fiery Latina!

DULCIE: (**Louder**) I said, get lost Jag!

MYRA: High five Dulc! **(Speaks this. No hand-clap).**

M.DAPHNE: **(Loud)** Ok *enfants*, back on the bus.

DULCIE: **(Loud)** Miss, Jag smells of toilets.

JAG: Sir, Dulcie smells of sweet and sexy.

MR MUNGO: Stop the silliness you two. Back on the bus, now please!

JAG: **(Cocky)** Miss Daphné I'm hungry and thirsty. What if I die?

M.DAPHNE: **(Dry)** .If you die Jag we might get some peace, but since you look in disgustingly good health, back on the bus!

JIMMY: Can we use our mobiles now sir?

MR MUNGO: **(Irritable)** No **(sarcastic)** we can't. Now move!

(MYRA, DULCIE, JAG and JIMMY exit)

Miss Fiel, why don't I try the police again?

M.DAPHNE: **(Cool)** .You could.

MR MUNGO: I think I'll call Helen back first. She'll have spoken to the school by now. I hope they understand.

M.DAPHNE: **(Sharp)** Why shouldn't they? It's hardly our fault is it? You said so yourself.

MR MUNGO: **(Appeasing, holding mobile to ear)** .No, no it's not our fault. **(Gets a reply on his mobile)** Hi. **(Pause for reply)** No, don't worry, I'm fine. Does the school know? Who did you speak to? **(Pause for reply)** . Where was the head? **(Pause for reply)** Really? **(With growing emphasis)** Really?! At the school? **(Pause for reply)** . Yes I know they're worried. It won't help though will it? Okay yes, I'll call back. **(Ends call)**

M.DAPHNE: **(Showing she's guessed)** . So the parents are at the school?

MR MUNGO: Yes, for all the good it'll do. One of the kids must have texted.

M.DAPHNE: **(Assertive)**. It's what I'd do if I had a child. Go to the school I mean.

MR MUNGO: **(Taken aback. Quietly)**. You don't though do you?

M.DAPHNE: **(Reflective)**. Me? No, no.

MR MUNGO: Ok I'll call the police again.

M.DAPHNE: Okay. I'll see if rioting's broken out on the bus.
(MISS DAPHNE exits).

MR MUNGO: Damn! **(Pause while MR MUNGO tries to get a signal. MISS DAPHNE re-enters leading MYRA, DULCIE, JIMMY and JAG. They huddle together talking while the two teachers confer)**

MR MUNGO: **(Shocked)** Miss Fiel, I thought we just agreed to leave the children on the minibus? It could be dangerous out here.

M. DAPHNE: **(Assertive)**. Decisions need making Mr Mungo. We can't leave it to chance. Anyway we should make plans for tonight. Did you reach the police?

MR MUNGO: No. Maybe it's my 'phone. I can't get a signal.
(Peeved). It would've been nice to have been consulted about our plans though Miss Fiel.

M. DAPHNE: **(Hurriedly)**. Let's talk about it later. As I say, right now we have to get on. **(Addressing the pupils)** All of you gather round please. We have something to say.

(MYRA, DULCIE JIMMY and JAG gather round. They are clearly stirred in individual ways by the experience).

JAG: **(Confident, unfazed)**. What's going on then, sir?

MR MUNGO: **(With authority)**. All listen please. No talking.

MYRA: **(Looking intently at M. DAPHNE. She's clearly a fan)**. What's happening miss?

M. DAPHNE: Ok, so as you can see we're in a bit of hot water

JIMMY: **(Not joking)**. Don't you mean cold water Miss?

M.DAPHNE: (**Composed**) Yes Jimmy, I mean cold water.

JAG: (**Cocky**). Are we all going to die Miss?

(**MYRA starts to cry. Exits running. Dulcie follows**).

DULCIE: My. Wait! (**Looks back accusingly at JAG**) Idiot!

MR MUNGO: (**To JAG**). She's right. You're being an idiot Jag. Go after them. Say sorry, and bring them back. We've got to get on.

JAG: Ok, ok. I didn't mean it like that. She's such a freakin' baby! (**Exits**)

M.DAPHNE: (**Addressing MR MUNGO and JIMMY**). I'll come to the plans when they're back.

MR MUNGO: Perhaps you and I should talk about it first?

M. DAPHNE: (**Decided**). It would take too long. We need to act now, for the sake of the children.

MR MUNGO: (**Again peeved at being over-ruled**) It may be dangerous to be out here in the elements. Better to play it safe surely?

M.DAPHNE: (**Quick**). We can only play it safe if we know what safe is. The police say it may be just as dangerous to be inside our vehicles. How can we rely on the advice of those not in a position to judge?

MR MUNGO: Past experience must count for something?

M.DAPHNE: Except when the past has no experience.

MR MUNGO: (**Surprised**). A new event you mean?

M.DAPHNE: Yes, a new event...

MR MUNGO: (**Detached**). There isn't much new in the world Miss Fiel.

M.DAPHNE: (**Energetic**). Yet new events are coming up like mushrooms!

MR MUNGO: Floods you mean?

M.DAPHNE: Yes! I do mean floods; I mean wildfires, storms, and droughts.

MR MUNGO: **(Detached, informative)**. All of which have happened before. Geography tells us of such events across millions of years. If you look at...

M.DAPHNE: **(Interrupts, impatient)**. Yes, but we're in the here and now. Or at least some of us are.

MR MUNGO: **(Mildly offended)**. I presume you mean that I'm not? Maybe I've always played the long game. Some things can't be hurried.

M.DAPHNE: **(Explaining)**. And I'm saying we should wake up to change. I don't want to live forever, but I do want a life. These kids want lives.

MR MUNGO: **(Philosophical)**. Yes, of course. Mind you, years ago life expectancy was very low, and people still lived their lives. In Tudor times people often succumbed in their mid-thirties.

M.DAPHNE: **(Animated)**. Yes, all very philosophical. Is that what our youth can look forward to? And then what? Oblivion?!

MR MUNGO: **(Keen to be understood)**. That's not what I'm saying Miss Fiel. I want these kids to live long, full lives.

M.DAPHNE: **(Dry)**. I'm sure you do, but if things don't change they'd better learn to burn brightly, but briefly.

MR MUNGO: **(Upset)**. That's really not what I meant. I do care you know!

(Enter MYRA, not crying but serious, DULCIE and JAG. Mr MUNGO calms himself. M. DAPHNE unrolls a plastic sheet)

M.DAPHNE: Ok, all of you sit down.

(All pupils sit down on the plastic sheet).

MR MUNGO: Yes, all sit down. We need to make plans.

JAG: (Jokey). We are sitting down sir.

MR MUNGO: Thanks Jag, no one likes a wise guy.

JAG: Sugar does sir.

DULCIE: Shut up Jag!

M.DAPHNE: (Interrupting to stop a spat). As I said, we have *en petit problem*, (Looks at MYRA), but nothing to get upset about.

MR MUNGO: (Interrupting). Yes, as Miss Fiel says, nothing to worry about.

M.DAPHNE: (Tolerating the interruption). The school know about us; the police too. (MISS DAPHNE looks frankly round the group). Someone has already been on their mobile. (The pupils look round at each other). From now on, it's really important to let me or Mr Mungo know if anyone contacts you.

MYRA: (Upset again). But they can't miss. There's no signal!

(Mr MUNGO and M. DAPHNE exchange a look)

MR MUNGO: That explains my dead 'phone.

M.DAPHNE: (Calm). We're still okay though. As I say, the school and the police know about us. They'll be on their way by now.

JAG: (Mending fences) Chill My. We'll be out of here pronto.

M.DAPHNE: Yes, and now it's time to make plans for tonight, just in case we're not picked up before dark.

JIMMY: (Serious). So we could be here in the dark?

DULCIE: What about food and drink Miss?

M.DAPHNE: I'm just coming to that Dulcie. Quiet please while I run through what's happened, what food do we have, and what we do until help arrives.

MR MUNGO: **(Intervenes)** I shall add to Miss Fiel's points where required.

M.DAPHNE: Okay, so what's happened? All this rain tearing down the hills has swollen the river way beyond normal.

MR MUNGO: **(Intervenes)**.This soil is Ball Clay, which holds the water. It's used for making sanitary-ware etc.

DULCIE: Sanitary-ware? You mean...

MR MUNGO: No Dulcie. Sanitary-ware is things like washbasins and toilets.

DULCIE: **(Puzzled)** .But...

M.DAPHNE: **(Impatient)** . I'll explain later Dulcie. **(Continuing)** . It's taken out the bridge, and here the road is too narrow for me to turn the minibus round.

MR MUNGO: **(Helpful)** .That's right. Other motorists have probably walked up to the cutting we drove through, but we can't risk it with all of you.

MYRA: **(Panicky)** .What if the police can't get here? What if we're cut off for days?

M.DAPHNE: **(Gentle)** . Hush Myra, we'll look after you. As I said, the school know about us and your parents are being kept informed...

JIMMY: **(Interrupting)** Does my mother know?

M.DAPHNE: I'm not a hundred percent on exactly who knows Jimmy, but they'll all be informed.

JIMMY: **(Worried)** .She'll be in a state... because of my... I mean, she'll think... **(Tails off)** .

M.DAPHNE: **(MISS DAPHNE gives JIMMY a concerned glance, but continues)** . When we finish here I want to see what provisions we have. We can pool them. You need to get your stuff from the bus. Bring the food here. Mr Mungo and I will share it out.

JAG: Oh man! Wartime rationing!

MYRA: **(Calm now)** Miss, is the flood because of climate change?

M. DAPHNE: Good question Myra. That's something for us to discuss after these urgent jobs. We'll do a project on it when we're back at school

JIMMY: **(Still serious)**. Or *if*.

M. DAPHNE: **(MISS DAPHNE approaches JIMMY, looking frankly in to his eyes)** When Jimmy, when.

MR MUNGO: **(With renewed authority)**. Do as Miss Fiel says please. Bring all your bags here, and place them on the plastic sheeting. I need a volunteer. That's you Jag. Bring my bag too.

JAG: **(JAG complains)**. Sir! You treat me like your personal slave.

MR MUNGO: **(Gently sarcastic)**. I'm so sorry Jag, but life wasn't meant to be easy. Otherwise God wouldn't have given us teenagers would he?

(Exit MYRA, JAG, DULCIE and JIMMY. MISS DAPHNE HOLDS her mobile to her ear, pauses and looks at it frustrated)

M. DAPHNE: No signal, try yours again?

(MR MUNGO goes through the same motions with no success)

MR MUNGO: **(Glum)**. So we are cut off...

M. DAPHNE: **(With resolve)**. It's our job to reassure the children. Don't let on we're worried.

MR MUNGO: Agreed. Myra's already upset, and Jimmy's borderline morbid.

M. DAPHNE: **(Briskly)**. We can't acknowledge it though. Stay cheerful.

MR MUNGO: **(Jokey)**. You're pretty *au fait* with child psychology Miss Fiel. Are you sure you don't have children?

(Re-enter MYRA, JAG, DULCIE and JIMMY with backpacks. These they deposit on the plastic sheet)

M.DAPHNE: **(Energetic)**. Right, let's get started!

DULCIE: I still can't get a signal on my mobile Miss.

MYRA: Me neither miss.

M. DAPHNE: **(Matter of fact)**. No, nobody has a signal. It'll come back soon no doubt.

JAG: **(Serious for the first time)**. So we're cut off?

MYRA: How will anyone find us miss?

MR MUNGO: Surprise! Nobody had mobiles when I was your age, and **(gently sarcastic)** we all managed to survive, oh I don't know, somehow. Anyway, it'll sharpen your natural faculties.

MYRA: **(To Miss Daphne)**. What are faculties Miss?

M.DAPHNE: Your senses Myra, sight smell etc.

DULCIE: You mean like I can smell Jag from over here Miss? Is that my faculties working?

JAG: I'll get them working!

DULCIE: Shut up Jag!

JAG: Whoa, you started it babe.

MYRA: Miss, I think saying babe is disrespectful.

JAG: **(Facetious)**. Sir, I think saying "babe is disrespectful", is disrespectful.

M.DAPHNE: **(Brisk)**. Can we all just get on with the job please?

(MYRA, JAG DULCIE and JIMMY complete the task of placing items on the plastic sheet)

MR MUNGO: **(Brightly)** Right, let's see what we've got.

(The group look on while MR MUNGO itemises).

Okay, so, we've got, one two ... twelve packs of sandwiches. Plus... one two ... believe it or not, eighteen packets of crisps. Twelve, thirteen assorted drinks, none of them healthy. Ten bars of chocolate, three packs of chewing gum, six grapes and one apple. Who owns the apple?

JIMMY: Sir.

MR MUNGO: Well done Jimmy - an oasis of health in a desert of fat and sugar.

JAG: **(Cocky)** Do you like apples sir? **(MYRA, DULCIE and JIMMY snigger over JAG's insinuation MR MUNGO is far from slim).**

MR MUNGO: **(Ignoring them).** Quiet please. Let's continue with any items that may be useful to the group. **(Severe).** A knife! Whose is this please?

JAG: **(Shocked).** It must have fallen out of my pocket sir.

MR MUNGO: You do realise that you can be expelled for this Jag?

DULCIE: **(Unexpected support).** But it could be useful couldn't it sir? I mean, we may really need it.

MYRA: **(Worried).** You mean to defend ourselves against wolves or something?

JAG: **(With relish)** Yeah, or vampires.

MR MUNGO: **(Stern).** Stop the silliness please. We're in Devon not Transylvania. Jag, we'll talk about this next proper day of school. **(MR MUNGO puts the knife into his pocket).**

M. DAPHNE: Carry on Mr Mungo please. Are we paying attention? **(She scans the group. Urgently)** Wait! Where's Jimmy?!

JAG: **(Casual).** There. **(Points to the river's edge where JIMMY is looking down intently into the water)**

M.DAPHNE: **(Goes to him. Gently).** What's up Jimmy? **(Pause).**

JIMMY: Do you remember last year's school play miss, The Tempest?

M.DAPHNE: **(Softly)** I do. Why do you mention it?

JIMMY: **(Quotes)** .*Full fathom five thy father lies* and all that.

M.DAPHNE: Yes, well remembered Jimmy. Did you enjoy it?

JIMMY: No miss.

M.DAPHNE: No? What was it that...

MR MUNGO: **(MISS DAPHNE is interrupted by MR MUNGO. JIMMY clams up. MR MUNGO laughs, not sensitive to the mood)** . Don't get tempted by the river will you James? Some people get a fatal fascination like that, and the next thing you know...

(He whistles a downward cadence suggesting a fall)

Still, quite a spectacle isn't it? The terrible abyss! It's Triassic, a lovely red sandstone. Interesting no?

M.DAPHNE: **(Brisk)** . We should get back to the others and carry on. We'll ration out some food. **(Kindly)** Come on Jimmy.

(MR MUNGO, JIMMY and MISS DAPHNE re-join the group) .

Okay, **(Taking a pack of sandwiches)** . Let's start with sandwiches. I'm going to hand out the ones with the shortest use-by dates. If you don't like them its tough I'm afraid. **(General groans. MISS DAPHNE throws packs of sandwiches to each pupil in turn)** .

Jag: **(Highly exaggerated disgusted noise)** Ugghh! Rabbit food! I'm not eating these! **(Snatches DULCIE'S pack of sandwiches and runs off towards the edge. She follows.)**

MR MUNGO: **(Shouts, angry)** . Stop the nonsense you two. Come back!

DULCIE: **(Outraged)** Jag, you little...

(A chase ensues with JAG running in circles narrowly avoiding DULCIE. Finally they stop still at the river's edge where JAG holds the pack over his head, while DULCIE

jumps up repeatedly trying to reach it. JAG fumbles the pack, which goes in to the water)

DULCIE: (Speaking the letters). You D blank blank K Jag!
(Excitement over, JAG and DULCIE rejoin the group, JAG smirking).

M.DAPHNE: (Cool) All the worse for you Jag. Now you don't get anything to eat until next meal-time. Give Dulcie your pack please.

(JAG passes his pack of sandwiches to DULCIE. She looks at it and smiles).

DULCIE: My favourite! Good for the planet too! (DULCIE makes a face at JAG)

MR MUNGO: Pay attention please. We need to finish assessing what we've got.

MYRA: (To M. DAPHNE). That's my torch miss. (MYRA points to the sheeting).

M.DAPHNE: Good Myra. That'll come in handy when it gets dark. All of you have permission to use the lights on your mobiles.

JAG: (Mock contrite) Yes miss.

MR MUNGO: (Continuing with the collection of items). Anything else of use to the group here? One torch, a pack of... (Stops still, suppressing emotion) Let me guess... these are yours I suppose Jag?

JAG: (JAG approaches and looks closely at the selected item. We do not see, but can guess what it is). Oh those sir. Well, it's a man's responsibility isn't it sir?

MR MUNGO: (Dry). Really?

JAG: (Cocky. I may need them at any moment sir.

MYRA: Oh my god!

DULCIE: (Scoffs). Dream on!

JAG: (Cocky). I keep them on standby 365.

MYRA: Oh my god! **(Rapid fire)**. Control alt delete! Control alt delete!

M.DAPHNE: **(Intervening)**. Myra, Dulcie, please pack up the items Mr Mungo has separated, and put them on the long back seat of the bus. Put the food in my bag for safe keeping.

(She looks over pointedly at JAG. MYRA and DULCIE collect things and exit. JIMMY and JAG trail after them. To MR MUNGO).

I think we're holding it together. The usual Jag, Dulcie spats - nothing seismic.

MR MUNGO: There will be if we're here long enough, believe me. Once the rat's maze of kids' minds get going... It should be interesting.

M.DAPHNE: **(Annoyed)** Interesting!? Really?

MR MUNGO: **(Defensive)**. I think so.

M.DAPHNE: This isn't an experiment. These kid's lives are in our hands.

MR MUNGO: Yes okay, but pressure is revealing. Like metamorphism, that's pressure on rock, can cause strange changes. Jag and Dulcie have this thing going on. So long as we're stuck here, some kind of reaction is very likely.

(Re-enter MYRA and DULCIE in a state of panic)

MYRA: **(Emotional)**. Miss, Jimmy says there's a dam up there, **(gestures)** over that hill that could burst at any moment!

M.DAPHNE: **(Strong)**. Calm down please. What are you talking about? What dam?

DULCIE: It's called Tall Water miss. It could burst couldn't it after all the rain?

MR MUNGO: **(Sceptical)**. And just how does Jimmy know about it?

MYRA: He says his father used to take him up there.

MR MUNGO: **(Pauses)**... But his father's dead isn't he?

M.DAPHNE: **(Quick)**. That doesn't mean he didn't, but no need to panic. I'll talk to Jimmy. Ask him to come to me.

(Exit MYRA and DULCIE)

MR MUNGO: **(To lighten the mood)**

We're like the sea-farers in The Tempest, saved but muddled. That was last year's school play wasn't it?

JAG: Sir?

(JAG is interrupted by the entrance of MYRA, DULCIE and JIMMY)

M.DAPHNE: **(Approaches JIMMY, concerned)**. Are you okay Jimmy? **(JIMMY is quiet but nods)**.

JIMMY: Yes miss. **(MISS DAPHNE's eye dwells on him unconvinced)**.

MR MUNGO: **(Continuing)** Jimmy, Myra and Dulcie, we're just talking about The Tempest. Our storm, of course, wasn't summoned up by magic. Nor is it about sibling rivalry and betrayal...

MYRA: **(Interrupts)**. Miss Daphne says it's because of climate change sir.

MR MUNGO: I'm not so sure about that Myra. What do you think Jimmy?

JIMMY: **(Upset)**. I don't want to talk about it okay?! **(Walks away again)**.

MR MUNGO: **(Sees the need to change tack)**. Ok, let's move on.

M.DAPHNE: **(In control again)**. Yes, we need a firm plan for the next few hours.

JAG: I'm hungry miss.

M.DAPHNE: And whose fault is that Jag?

JAG: Mine miss, but I'm still hungry.

M.DAPHNE: If you pay attention Jag, you'll find out when the next mealtime is. We're on 7 O'clock now. I calculate the

light will be gone in about one-and-a-quarter to one-and-a-half-hours. We have one torch and all our mobiles.

DULCIE: I'm nearly out of battery miss.

M.DAPHNE: You can have the torch if Myra doesn't mind. It isn't cold today, so no need for a fire.

MYRA: Oh miss! I like fires, they remind me of home.

JAG: Of church you mean.

MYRA: **(Defensive)**. The church *is* my home.

M.DAPHNE: **(Angry)** Thanks for upsetting her jag!

JAG: **(Quietly)**. Okay sorry, sorry.

M.DAPHNE: You're lucky to live with your parents. Not everyone's in the same boat.

DULCIE: **(Bright, joking)**. Did we bring a boat miss?

M.DAPHNE: **(Light laugh)** No Dulcie, but one might be useful right now. Okay the plan. Until 7.30, for half an hour starting now, split in to twos and come up with suggestions that would help us in the current situation. At 8 O'clock we'll have something to eat. At 9 O'clock some rest; sleep if you can manage it.

MR MUNGO: **(Stern)**. No messing about please. Miss Fiel and I will be here trying to reach the authorities.

(JIMMY re-joins the group)

MYRA: **(Kindly)**. Come on Jimmy, you can pair with me.

DULCIE: **(Sarcastic)** Thanks Myra! That means I get the idiot!

MYRA: **(Quick, emphatic)** Oh don't pretend Dulcie!

(MYRA, DULCIE, JAG and JIMMY exit to the minibus)

MR MUNGO: You've never said anything about yourself Miss Fiel. You're half French and half English I understand?

M. DAPHNE: **(Coolly)**. I don't really discuss my private life.

MR MUNGO: (**Eager not to offend**) Of course, yes, sorry.

M. DAPHNE: (**Pause, relenting slowly**)... I did my teacher training in France, but decided I'd try my luck here. You?

MR MUNGO: (**Pleased to be asked**). I read geography at Oxford, and then went straight into teaching. I have one ex-wife and two grown-up children, one son, one daughter. That's the sum of it.

M. DAPHNE: And does that add up to divorce?

MR MUNGO: Yes. My wife and I grew apart after the children went to uni. I guess they were all that was holding us together. No good excuse for a failed marriage, but an explanation perhaps.

M. DAPHNE: I'm sorry. Does your geography degree help you understand what causes this? (**Points to the river**).

MR MUNGO: A little. I'm not sure if it isn't being overstated though.

M. DAPHNE: (**Shocked**) Overstated?! Maybe you could have used that line ten years ago, before it became so clear, but now?

MR MUNGO: The weather is a complex model. We can't necessarily say there's firm proof of global warming. The climate has always changed.

M. DAPHNE: So some scientists are making it up?

MR MUNGO: That's not what I said, Miss Fiel. But science has to be proved over time.

M. DAPHNE: (**Sharp**). So we wait and do nothing? Is that it?

MR MUNGO: (**Defensive**). Well it's not up to me to decide what we do.

M. DAPHNE: (**Fiery**). Who is it up to then? We all made this mess!

MR MUNGO: (**Taken aback**). Not intentionally, even if our youth blame us for trashing the planet and their future.

M. DAPHNE: (**Fiery**). I can see their point!

MR MUNGO: **(Still defensive)**.I can't, at least not enough to lay charges against everyone who came before. When you do have children, try second-guessing what they will blame you for.

M.DAPHNE: **(Still worked-up)**. You mean they're young and can't understand?

MR MUNGO: **(A little angry)**.No, but we didn't conspire to destroy the planet. How exactly would you have done things differently?

M.DAPHNE: **(Frustrated)**.I'll never know will I? Anyway, to fill in a few gaps in my life-story, I have one standard boyfriend. As for children, I wouldn't willingly bring them into a world like this would I? C'est finis.

MR MUNGO: **(Changing the mood. Looks at his watch)**. It's nearly seven-thirty. Shall we bring the children back?

M.DAPHNE: Soon. **(SFX loud thunder)**.

MR MUNGO: **(Reacting to the weather)**... Or maybe in a while
(MISS DAPHNE and MR MUNGO exit). **Lighting/Curtain down.**

SCENE 2. (LIGHTING UP CURTAIN UP)

(Between the river and the minibus bumper. MYRA and DULCIE are alone on stage, by the river. SFX The river in the background).

(PROPS on-stage MYRA has a bag of crisps and DULCIE and can of drink)

MYRA: Where were you born Dulc?

DULCIE: That's a strange one. Why? (Walks towards the river a few paces).

MYRA: (Alarmed). We can't get close to the edge Dulc, Miss Daphne said! (DULCIE stops. Pause) So, where?

DULCIE: Where what?

MYRA: Where were you born?

DULCIE: I was born here, but my mum's Brazilian and my dad's Irish.

MYRA: (Thoughtful). I want to know where I'm from.

DULCIE: Why does it bug you so much My? Loads of people like you, plus you're my best friend, aren't you?

MYRA: (Emotional). I thought I'd get used to it. I'm seventeen. That's seventeen years to get used to it, but I can't. I'll be leaving school soon without knowing Dulc!

DULCIE: (Soothing). Why don't you find your real parents then, if it's making you unhappy?

MYRA: They're called your birth mother and father.

DULCIE: Yeah okay, but why don't you?

(SFX Loud thunder. MYRA and DULCIE, move closer together).

MYRA: It doesn't work like that. You can't find out until you're eighteen. Plus there are loads of things you have to do. I'm scared of finding out... (Cries) what if they're dead?

Dulcie: What if they're not?!

DULCIE: (**DULCIE puts her arm round MYRA**). Don't get upset My it'll be alright.

MYRA: (**SFX Loud thunder. MYRA reacts**). That's God's own fury! What do you think's going to happen to the world? The bible says there'll be an apocalypse.

DULCIE: The end of the world you mean? Is that what they teach you in church?

MYRA: Sometimes. But you can find salvation, (**Quotes**): *Betwixt the stirrup and the ground.*

DULCIE: I don't understand My. What's salvation, and betwixt?

MYRA: It's an old-fashioned way of saying God can forgive you for all the bad stuff you've done, even if it's right at the last moment.

DULCIE: (**Puzzled**). Why?

MYRA: If you're forgiven, you can be with God.

DULCIE: Why do I want to be with God?

MYRA: He can save your immortal soul Dulc. You don't want to go to hell do you?

DULCIE: (**Shrugs, not comprehending**). What's my immortal soul?

MYRA: (**MYRA continues without answering this question**). At the end of days only God can survive. (**Quotes**): *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and Last.*

DULCIE: (**Sceptical, slightly irritated**). The end?! I don't believe it.

MYRA: (**Crying again**) I don't know if I do either! I don't know what I believe!

DULCIE: My, you're my friend, that's all you need to know!

MYRA: **(With ferocity, still crying.)** It's alright for you Dulc! You know who your parents are. You know what you believe. What you don't believe.

DULCIE: **(Trying to comfort her)**.But so can you, My.

MYRA: **(Fierce, still crying.)** I can't Dulc! I only believe what I've been told. In the church you just go along with it. For us, climate change is the wrath of God! It terrifies me. Maybe I've done something wrong and that's why we're all stuck here now! **(Cries)**.

DULCIE: That's just wrong My. Miss Daphne knows. This storm is down to Man not God!

(DULCIE comforts MYRA further. MYRA calms. Sudden change of tone, grins)

MYRA: Anyway, I know what you think about! Or should I say *who*?

DULCIE: **(Mystified)**.What do you mean?

MYRA: **(Cheeky)**. Jag!

DULCIE: **(Defiant, but faint smile)**.OMG My!

MYRA: Yeah right! He's so streaming your feed. **(Pulls DULCIE towards the minibus)** Come on Dulc, Old Mungy says we only get fifteen minutes out here.

(Exit MYRA and DULCIE. Pause. Enter JAG and JIMMY)

JAG: So what's up with you Jimbo? Is it your dad? What happened? **(No response from JIMMY)**.It's okay if you don't want to talk about it.

JIMMY: **(Quiet)**. Not really.

JAG: All water under the bridge right? **(JIMMY and JAG look at each other. A pregnant pause - finally they laugh)**.

JIMMY: What bridge?!

JAG: Yeah! Exactamundo! Still, loads of water!

JIMMY: **(JIMMY laughs, double-takes, serious)**. It's not funny though.

JAG: What, the storm?

JIMMY: Yeah, the storm; the damned great world storm. You ever think about having kids?

JAG: **(Cocky, thinks)**. Maybe, but for now I only think about the manufacturing process... YOLO!

JIMMY: **(Still serious)**. Don't you ever think, why bother?

JAG: **(More serious)**. Sometimes, but it won't stop me having kids. Miss. D says we're the solution not the problem.

JIMMY: Yeah okay, but it's a freakin' big problem.

JAG: Suppose, but I'm young. Think of all those girls man!

JIMMY: **(Following this new tone)** Like Dulc?

JAG: **(JAG grins)**. She may be in the queue.

JIMMY: **(Grins back)**. You're full of it Jag!

JAG: She doesn't know it, but she's already under the spell!

JIMMY: Come on time's up Jag - back to the mother-ship.

(JAG and JIMMY exit. Short pause. Enter MISS DAPHNE and MR MUNGO).

M.DAPHNE: I'm worried about Jimmy. I wish I knew more about his father.

Mr MUNGO: Would that help?

M.DAPHNE: **(Shocked)** Of course it would help! His father's death could hold the key to his state of mind. Do you think people die and leave no footprints in the sand?

Mr MUNGO: **(Stoic)**. I think that's exactly what happens in many cases. Do you believe in an afterglow Miss Fiel? A spiritual light spangling after death?

M. DAPHNE: **(Passionate)**. Yes, I do. Why so cynical?