



Episode 1

Written by Sam Grabiner

CHARACTERS

TOMMY

She/her

14 year old girl, Black British, has a sweet voice, new to the world

JESSI

She/her

Mid-40s. Black British. Old time raver

Distant eerie melody underscore

We hear a voice (she/her)

This series contains swearing, references to alcohol, smoking and drugs, and contains some listeners may find claustrophobic.

Fast beat builds, with bassy crashes, as the underscore builds into more of a techno track and then cuts out as we move into...

1.

TOMMY

She sounds amazed

The sound of deep creaking

I am deep underground. The concave roof above my head must support hundreds of meters worth of concrete and earth. My feet are bare and I can feel the damp mud between my toes.

I move down the narrow passageways, ducking my head as the cave gets lower and thinner.

And then.

With growing wonder

Light. Up ahead. I turn, and turn, and turn once more and...

A high note comes in

I'm in a room. A shaft of light from somewhere up above illuminates the thing before me. I am standing in an underground garden.

There is the sound of ethereal music, and running water.

I try to wrap my brain around the strangeness of it all. Like no garden I've ever seen before. Rows and rows of bizarre plants stretching out into the distance. Great big purple leaves. Thick vines that glow like fire-flies. Fat bulbous things half sunk into the mud like unexploded bombs.

And then I see it. Standing in the middle of it all. As strange as it is beautiful. A kind of flower. Four foot tall, maybe. And glowing. The most unimaginable thing I've ever seen. I reach out to touch it and as I do an overwhelming feeling comes over me. There is something I must do here. There is a job for me here.

But wait.

With growing panic

A distorted, threatening sounding note grows in volume

What's that? That sound? An alarm is ringing. Low at first but now it's growing. A kind of piercing sound. I look up and in the domed roof above my head I see something horrifying.

A crack.

There is the sound of creaking and rumbling.

Which groans. And grows. Like some terrible vine. A rumbling now, and soon – surely – this roof will give –

There is the sound of the roof starting to collapse, which is interrupted by the sound of the alarm. And then suddenly...

The sound of TOMMY, a girl in her early teens, waking up. An intake of breath as she emerges roughly from her dream. She groans with tiredness.

2.

TOMMY lights a very old and not very well functioning stove.

TOMMY Right.

***She pours beaten eggs into the pan. They start to crackle.
She might be young, but she's a competent cook.***

Calling out

Mum! Breakfast'll be ready soon!

And we need to get started.

Muuuum.

Frustrated

Urgh please don't do this to me today.

3.

TOMMY *knocks on a bedroom door.*

TOMMY

Mum? Are you up?

She knocks a little louder.

Breakfast's ready.

More knocking.

We need to start. Like, now. We need to start / or we'll -

From the other side of the door JESSI, a woman in her forties

JESSI

Sleepily

Coming, coming.

4.

Over the following, the sound of JESSI eating. The radio plays quietly in the background.

TOMMY

We've lots to do. We're actually already a little behind schedule but I think we can make it up by cutting into the time I accounted for lunch. I planned the schedule with space for that kind of flexibility.

I was thinking we could move through room by room. Clockwise to limit the possibility of missing anything. We'll start with the kitchen and finish with the bathroom. They're bringing this truck tomorrow but / I've

JESSI

Pass that chilli stuff would you –

She passes it. TOMMY sounds increasingly stressed as she continues speaking.

TOMMY

And there's so much junk in here so we should use it as an opportunity to streamline / I

JESSI

Eat your breakfast

TOMMY

They've got the bulldozers at the ready out there, so really it's absolutely crucial that we have it all done by tonight.

JESSI

TOMMY. Eat.

TOMMY picks up her cutlery. And starts to eat.

There you go.

The song on the radio changes to a techno track.

Oooooooooohhhh yes! Do you know this song?

She goes over to the radio and turns it up.

You'll love it. I mean it is actually humanly impossible to not ABSOLUTELY LOVE THIS SONG

5.

TOMMY and JESSI pack things into boxes. As they speak, we hear the intermittent sound of JESSI's phone buzzing with texts.

TOMMY

Do you really need that?

JESSI

This is vintage, young lady.

TOMMY

It's a traffic cone Mum.

JESSI

It's a vintage traffic cone.

TOMMY

It'll take up too much space

JESSI

God it's like being with your Dad.

What are you going to do about your plants?

I suppose there won't be space for them either –

TOMMY starts to speak increasingly quickly.

TOMMY

OK I'm all done with these shelves I think I'm going to move onto the cupboard because we really are running out of time.

JESSI

We've got plenty of time

TOMMY

If you look at the schedule you'll see that it's only another twenty minutes before I need to start preparing lunch –

JESSI

Tom –

TOMMY

I'm afraid it's fried eggs again but it's best we get rid of them I don't think they'll travel too well –

JESSI

TOMMY –

TOMMY

I think, in fact, that they would travel very badly indeed. God look at the time it's really flashing past at this rate we're going to be packing all / day

JESSI

TOMMY!

Silence.

I'm sorry.

Are you OK, my darling?

TOMMY

What are you talking about *am I OK* of course I'm OK I'm just concerned about the time is all.

JESSI

Hey. Tom Tom. Slow down. Deep breaths.

She comes over to her.

Come here.

They embrace. She kisses her forehead. A practiced routine.

How are you feeling?

TOMMY

I suppose I'm feeling like...

She struggles to get the words out.

I suppose I'm feeling a little like...

JESSI's phone starts ringing.

JESSI

Oh for fuck's sake. Sorry darling I should...

TOMMY

Sure.

JESSI

To the phone

Yes Jesus what is it.

As she talks we hear her leave the room and close the door behind her. The distant sound of another door closing.

Alone, TOMMY lets out a sob.

She gathers herself. She goes over to the window and opens it.

As she does we hear the sounds of the estate. She leans out and tends to her garden a little.

TOMMY

To her plants

Sorry you. I'd take you if I could. Promise.

To herself

Jesus Tommy, speaking to a plant.

She closes the window.

She moves over to the door. We hear the muffled sound of conversation. As quietly as she can, TOMMY turns the door handle and walks out towards the bedroom.

As she approaches the bedroom door we hear the following conversation come into earshot, a little muffled... JESSI's trying to resist but finding it increasingly difficult to do so.

JESSI

I told you I can't come...

Because we're leaving tomorrow. Some of us have children, babe.

I said don't tempt me.

She laughs, charmed by something on the other end of the phone.

How can everyone be going, everyone is gone.

Ha! You sound like you did in the nineties. Anyway, aren't they dangerous now? Cave-ins and collapses and that kind of stuff?

Oooooooooof. You have always been the devil on my shoulder young man...

She lets out a delighted laugh at something.

6.

TOMMY *does the washing up.*

In the background we hear JESSI flitting around the flat.

JESSI

You should be off to bed darling.

TOMMY

Can we watch something?

JESSI

What's that hun?

TOMMY

Why are you putting on your coat?

JESSI

Huh?

TOMMY

Why are you putting your coat on?

JESSI

I'm popping out.

TOMMY

Why?

JESSI

I promised I'd help Dave with his packing.

TOMMY

You're going to a party aren't you

JESSI

Tom...

TOMMY

You're going down there aren't you.

Mum. You shouldn't go under there you know it's dangerous

JESSI

It's an important place for me TOMMY

TOMMY

So?

JESSI

And it'll all be gone tomorrow

TOMMY

It'll all be gone tomorrow because it's a shithole that should have been knocked down years ago!

JESSI

LANGUAGE!

Silence.

TOMMY

Let me come with.

JESSI

It's not really –

TOMMY

If it's so amazing I want to see it. I want to come with.

JESSI

You're too young. Besides. It's not exactly your scene. I won't be long.

An hour or two. It's the last one. And tomorrow we'll be in a new place. New house. No underground raves for your Mum to slip off to. We can watch whatever you want.

Alright? Hey. Listen. You were brilliant today. Couldn't have done it without you.

Best team in the land? Oi. Best team in the land?

TOMMY

Best team in the land.

JESSI

Damn straight.

Hey. I've left something out for you. A book from your grandma's house. I think you might enjoy it. It's by the window.

We hear the front door close behind JESSI as she leaves.

7.

TOMMY opens the window and climbs out onto the balcony. The sounds of the city come in as she does.

TOMMY tends to her plants.

TOMMY

Is it weird that a balcony of plants is the thing I care about the most in the world?
Don't worry I'm not expecting you to reply.
Right. What even is this book?

TOMMY leans back and gets the book from somewhere. She reads the cover:

TOMMY

Plants And How To Harvest Them.

She opens the book. And reads:

Collecting flower seeds from your favourite plants is an ancient art, and an essential skill to master for the budding gardener. And the best thing of all? It's as simple as anything. What the... All you need is a pair of scissors and a favourite plant.

She puts the book down and climbs back inside. Pulls a draw open, taking out some scissors. Then back out to the balcony, where:

Reading

Take the seed head of your flower between your finger and... OK... Place the scissors below the...

Like... this?

Snip.

Seeds fall everywhere with a gentle patter.

Wow.

She reads some more.

Now carefully package your seeds in wax paper and store them well. Alternatively, you can do what the guerilla gardeners do...

To herself

Guerilla gardeners?

Reading

You can do what the gorilla gardeners do, stick a few seeds in your pocket and throw them down when you find a good spot.

A good spot huh?

8.

TOMMY lies in bed. She reaches to the light switch and turns off her bedside light.

TOMMY to herself

So. Eight hours. That's... one, two, three, four...

Alarm at 6:30am.

And then another for safety at 7.

And for absolute security another at... Great. Ok.

She takes a deep breath.

Suddenly we are in the dream world of the opening. Ethereal music plays.

TOMMY

I run my hand through the foliage. Somehow, light pours down into this underground cavern and the place is full of life. Thick hedges bearing fruit that look like skulls. Trees – crammed up against the low ceiling – burst into flower. I reach up and feel the strange sticky leaves. From a branch I pluck a round looking thing. Something like an orange? But red and soft and –

TOMMY jolts awake out of her dream. She is panting.

TOMMY

Right. Come on TOMMY. You can do it.

We hear the sounds of her moving about the flat.

She opens the front door. She takes a deep breath...

..And slams the door behind her, walking out into the night.

9.

We hear a group of young people walking down the opposite side of the street, they're heading to the rave. Their voices get louder.

TOMMY's breathing is shallow and we hear her walk through the estate, moving round corners and climbing up stairs.

As she walks we hear the sound of the underground rave growing.

The sounds grow and grow until...

TOMMY is hidden behind something, looking at the entrance to the rave. From a distance, she listens to the following:

HAROONA

Are you expecting me to climb that fence? I cannot climb that fence I spent too long getting ready to climb a fence and rip this thing open.

SECURITY

Oi. Keep it down. You wanting to go under?
Good. Follow me.

TOMMY

to herself Come on TOMMY. Now or never.

TOMMY follows them in, keeping a little distance. She clambers over a gate and then jumps down, making a splash as she lands. We are in a dark, damp space now

TOMMY

What the...

The sound of the music louder now.

And TOMMY starts to walk through shallow water in a tunnel.

She clambers up a little ladder and pulls herself through a tight space.

And then down another ladder.

The music loud now.

She walks down another tunnel, feeling the walls with her hand until...

She finds something.

TOMMY

Is that...

Oh God.

She takes a deep breath.

Best team in the land.

The sound of TOMMY opening a door and...

We are right in the thick of a rave.

Bodies up against each other. Heavy electronic music. Snatches of conversation.

TOMMY moves out into the space tentatively at first. We explore the space with her.

As she moves nearer the centre of the space we start to feel her disorientation as she's thrown around, taking in sights and smells she's never experienced before.

The music gets louder and the bodies gets denser.

We feel her panic as she realises she's right in the middle of something...

And then, she breaks free.

The music gets a little quieter and the conversations calmer as TOMMY has found her way into a side room.

We hear snatches of conversation.

ROSA

Hi

FINN

Oh, Hey

ROSA

I'm Rosa

FINN

I'm Finn

[...]

ROSA

a tenner?

FINN

If you don't want it, no worries, all the more for me

ROSA

No, no, it's fine. I don't have any cash. You got monzo?

FINN

Monzo? Listen, listen, don't worry about it. This one's on me...

From somewhere up above we hear the following conversation, muffled.

JAMAL

HAROONA, right? You're oak tree court

HAROONA

Yeah

JAMAL

Jamal

TOMMY

What is this place... Mum?

HAROONA

I'm telling you we shouldn't be down here.

JAMAL

What would you know?

HAROONA

The ceiling is all cracked I want to go home

JAMAL

It's always like that, stop worrying

Another strange groaning sound from somewhere very deep indeed.

TOMMY

Wow what was –

And then.

***The world collapses. The sound of a cave system collapsing in on itself.
This lasts as long as it lasts.***

Until. Silence.

Then, a hoarse sounding TOMMY:

TOMMY

Hello?

Mum?

What happened?

Where am I?

Mum? Where am I?

– End –

Eerie melody swells back in

We hear the same voice as the beginning (she/her)

You've been listening to Beneath Our Feet - a Jump Spark and no more superheroes. production funded by Arts Council England. This episode was directed by Fay Lomas and Tash Hyman and written by Sam Grabiner. This episode was developed through a collective writing process between Zia Ahmed, Subika Anwar-Khan, Sam Grabiner, Ellie Kendrick, Tiwa Lade and Amelia Stubberfield - with Janina Matthewson as lead dramaturg and Ella Watts as consultant producer. With sound design on this episode by Alice Boyd and music by Oliver Vibrans.

Starring Nkhanise Phiri as Tommy, Diveen Henry as Jessi, Jetsun Lama as Finn, Francesca Amewudah-Rivers as Rosa, Bhavini Sheth as Haroona, Ragevan Vasan as Jamal with additional voices from Abby Russell

Thank you for listening.