



Episode 5
Written by Tiwa Lade

CHARACTERS

TOMMY
She/her

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

Distant eerie melody underscore

We hear a voice (she/her)

You're listening to *Beneath Our Feet*. This series contains swearing, references to alcohol, smoking and drugs, and contains some listeners may find claustrophobic.

Techno beat builds, with bassy crashes, as the underscore builds and then cuts out as we move into...

SCENE 1. CAVE IN.

The world collapses. The sound of a cave system collapsing on itself.

This lasts as long as it lasts. Until. Silence.

And then.

A gasp for breath.

A brushing aside of debris.

A spluttering cough.

And then, a horse sounding Tommy (she/her):

TOMMY

She sounds frightened.

Hello?

“Hello” echoes into the dark world that reaches on beyond her.

Can anyone hear me?!

Tommy begins to cry and then stops abruptly.

No, no, no. That’s not going to help anyone.

A deep breath.

Okay.

Suddenly, footsteps on the wet ground run past - in another tunnel maybe, but close.

Who’s there? Hello? Hello?

Silence.

Tommy starts walking.

I don’t know which path to take... Oh no....

Panicked breathing.

Deep breaths.

Her breathing calms.

A high pitched siren. Not jarring, more calming, comes down one of the tunnels.

I know that sound

The sound continues to echo down the pathway

Here goes.

She steps into a puddle. SPLASH!

Fucksake!

She continues to walk. One foot creates an extra loud squelching sound.

Self-mockingly:

Do you know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna go to a rave. Why would you do that you ask? Oh I don't know, I heard that they'll be shutting down the entrance so I thought, go for it! Live on the edge. Love that. Just love that...

Why am I here?

Tommy's phone pings. She stops walking.

Mum? I have reception?!

"I hope you're sleeping now. Love you."

She presses a couple of buttons on her phone and tries to call her mum but it won't go through. Tommy sniffles, she's about to cry.

Slight crackle in her voice

I love you too mum...

Tommy goes back onto her phone. And starts to record a voice note to send to her mum. She presses a button: BEEP

Coughs the sadness from her voice

Hey mum.

FX: BEEP again. Stops recording.

Come on. Get yourself together

Coughs again

Hey mum.

Her voice breaks.

BEEP again. Stops recording.

Nope, not yet.

A metallic swish takes us into -

SCENE 2. DEEPER

Tommy is walking through the tunnel. She hums 'Pocketful of Sunshine'. She's talking to an imaginary crowd.

TOMMY

Doing an American accent:

Hello everybody! Thank you so much for joining me on the final night for the... for the, urmm 'City of Darkness' tour. You guys are so loyal to join me so deep underground. Boy! Risking your lives?! I love you... My last song is one of my faves.

Tommy starts to hum 'Pocketful of Sunshine' again.

Mimics a crowd cheering

AHHHHH! We love you Tommy

Singing:

I got a pocket, got a pocketful of sunshine. I got a love and I know that it's all mine, oh, oh- oh. Do what you want but you're never gonna break me. Sticks and stones are never gonna shake me, oh, oh- oh.

Take me away (Take me away), Take me away (Take me away), Take me away (Take me away),

Shouting now:

TAKE ME AWAY! Get me out of here

Tommy lets out a sigh. A sigh of defeat. She brings out her phone again. BEEP:

Hey. Ummm... don't be mad. I don't even know if this will send to you. Well, I'll completely get it if you are mad because, well I'm at the rave. *Was* at the rave, urmm- I went to the toilet and it caved in. Well, when you listen to this you'll probably know that... by now.

Sighs.

I was one of them. I think others crashed into this, this- urmm- but I can't see them. I think I can hear other people down here with me sometimes, but I hit my head pretty hard so maybe I'm just going crazy, I don't know. I'm so sorry mum. You don't understand how I wish I could just be at home right now sleeping. Wake up and make eggs for us in the morning. I'm already thinking of all the things I've taken for granted. Even the little things like me-

Tommy trips and drops her phone. It drops into a puddle.

No!

She grabs the phone but it slips, falling puddle again

Arhh!

She then grabs it again and frantically rubs it with her jumper

No no no. Please don't die on me.

She shakes it and rubs it with her jumper again. Blows into the crevices on her phone.

Deep breath

Okay, okay. Why are there so many puddles?! Wait a second-

She walks up the wall and rubs her hand across it. It's covered in moss.

Huh. This was in my dream. This might be crazy, but I'm following it!

BEEP: back to the voicenote.

Sorry mum. I just dropped my phone in the puddle. I hope the other message sends and that you'll hear this one eventually.

There's so much moss everywhere. It feels like... the green scrubby bit on the back of a sponge and now I'm hearing this sound.

The slight tingle of the mycelium.

Where was I? Well, seeing how this is... this could be my last message. I guess I can come clean right? You can't ground me anymore.

She laughs.

It wasn't Jackie's dog that broke the vase... it was me!

A sigh of relief.

You don't realise how long I've been wanting to say that. When I saw how mad you were there was no way I could tell you that it was me. You would've killed me! Well. Now you've got a long time to forgive me.

She laughs wryly.

A moment.

Sorry! That's not funny.

I'm feeling nervous all a sudden, even though you're not here. But this is something I've been wanting to tell you for a while.

And it's so silly because it's not even a big deal but even though you're my mum I always wondered if you'd think I was weird for this.

So urmm... the past year you, Aunty Rae, Uncle Tony everyone has been asking who I like. If I like anyone. If I have a boyfriend or girlfriend or kissed anyone. Everyone at my school constantly talks about people they've kissed. They have all these pictures on their phones and urhh, well... I don't like anyone.

She laughs, slightly nervously.

I'm waiting for a response even though I'm not going to get one. But yeah, I've never liked anyone... like that. Or had that feeling that people describe of wanting to kiss someone... Or be touched. I've been looking it up and reading about it. There are other people out there like me that feel the way that I do. They made me realise that I'm not strange. That it's okay. I just wish I could have talked to you about it. Because I know you would've been cool about it. I guess I just wasn't ready to get into it. But now I am.

Laughs with joy.

Wow. Okay. That feels good! So good. Thank you for keeping me company.

Tommy unzips her pocket and puts her hand in. She jangles her keys around. Something rattles.

What's that? Oh yes the seeds!

Beep: back to voicenote.

I read the book, Mum. It's nice to have a part of home with me. Anyway I'm rambling. Sorry. I'm gonna go now, I don't know how long my battery will last.

I'm going to get out mum, I have to. Everyone is leaving tomorrow and I'll be one of them. Bye. For now.

BEEP as she stops the voicenote.

Tommy rezips her pocket and starts to walk again. The ground beneath her turns into a damp soil and gradually gets wetter and wetter.

URHH! Gross.

In front of Tommy is now a huge pond.

How am I supposed to cross this?

She kicks the water in defeat. Tommy then hears a crumble behind her

Who's there?

The path Tommy took is starting to crumble behind her.

Oh shit.

She backs into the water slowly. BEEP.

Mum, this might be my last voice note. The tunnel is beginning to crumble and I'm backing into water as I speak. Gosh, it's so cold! It's round my waist now.

We can hear the crumbling getting louder closer to Tommy.

Okay, I think I can make it to the other side.

She continues splashing through the water. She speaks with pace.

Mum the water is up to my neck now. I'm going to hold the phone above my head. Hopefully I can keep the phone above the water.

We can hear the rubble falling into the water. Tommy is desperately trying not to panic.

Okay. 3,2,1.

She takes a deep breath and submerges herself into the water. Keeping her phone above the water, she swims to the other side. Breathing heavily, she gets out to the other side and runs out the water. The crumbling continues and sounds more aggressive. Tommy starts to run! Her clothes are drenched and heavy, squelching and dripping along the path.

TOMMY (CONT'D) No, no, no!

Tommy is now running frantically and comes to an abrupt stop. There's a huge drop and waterfall ahead of her. The crumbling hasn't stopped. Bigger chunks are falling and getting closer to her.

Tommy runs towards the waterfall then stops.

Oh my gosh, how am I going to do this? How do I do this?! Of course this is happening to me. Of course I have to jump a cliff, past a waterfall.

Tommy takes a couple of steps back. Exciting, fast-paced, action-style music underscores.

Here goes nothing.

Tommy runs towards the waterfall and jumps.

Arhhhhh!

Tommy makes it successfully to the other side. There is the sound of the waterfall. She catches her breath. She picks up her phone. BEEP:

Mum! You would not believe what I just did.

An ethereal chiming sound takes us into -

SCENE 3.

Tommy continues to walk. Every step we hear a squelch. She's shivering. The cold has reached her bones. BEEP:

TOMMY

I don't know if I'm just concussed but, the ringing in the tunnel. The moss on the walls. Earlier as I walked down a path I could feel the same pressure on my temples that I felt in my dream. But then again, I could just be going crazy. I've lost track of time, mum. I don't know how long I've been here but now I'm hungry and cold. I remember when I was younger, you told me if I ever got scared when you weren't around to close my eyes and think of happy thoughts... It's not working mum. Sorry. I don't think I'm going to make it.

Shaky breathing.

I just thought about dad. I have no idea how he's going to respond to this. In a weird way, I feel more sorry for him. I know this is going to hurt you but you've got friends, you've got Dave. You find it easy to mingle with people, to make friends. But dad is the complete opposite. Even though he says he enjoys his own company, everytime he drops me back home he gives me this look as though he doesn't want me to go.

She laughs.

He can be so awkward sometimes. Like, every Friday when go to get Chinese. How long have I gone to the same take away with dad, he gets the same spare ribs, special fried rice and steamed dumplings. He's known the owner for what, 10 years? But every single time he's always like 'Urhh, hey Chen! Ummm, what would I like... oohh, it's tricky. I guess I'll have to start with the spare ribs'.

She laughs.

You guys are so different to each other! I'll never understand how that happened.

She's trying to be brave but she's shaking with cold.

I'm going to miss you so much mum. Making you eggs in the morning... You always wondered why mine always tasted so good. Well, I use butter instead on oil. So much better. I use Maldon salt, black pepper and a little bit of the Italian seasoning. And then for the pancakes on Sunday. I found the recipe in the Guardian and kept it. I honestly can't remember the measurements. I

mean, it comes out well each time. But If you go into my room, the recipe is in my shoebox at the bottom on my wardrobe. I add my pinch of salt to mine and yeah fry it in butter instead of oil...

There is a change in sound quality. Ethereal music plays and a slight insect buzzing can be heard.

I think-

Tommy sighs in wonder.

Is this deja vu? I've seen this- mum I've seen this before. These mushrooms in my dreams!

She walks further in. The garden sounds, underscored by ethereal music, continue.

It's warm. Where am I?

A deep exhalation.

I can't believe I'm here. I can't believe this is real! I thought I was crazy when I kept coming back to this dream... but, here I am. I don't quite know how to explain everything I see but there's grass mum, mushrooms -

She laughs.

So many mushrooms!

It's like these threads, loads and loads of tiny threads that are spreading across the wall. I can't beli- I can't believe this. It's insane. It's beautiful.

I really wish you could see this... I wish we had more green like this in our home.

Tommy puts her hand back in her pocket. She brings out the seeds.

I want to leave a part of us here. I'm going to plant one of our seeds, mum.

The music of the lullaby gently starts to underscore.

Tommy creates a hole in the ground, places the seed in it.

Nothing.

Well obviously it's not going to grow instantly.

The sudden sound of growing. The lullaby picks up in pace and urgency.

Oh my gosh.

Sound of the earth moving, shifting, growing. Tommy gasps. The music swells.

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 written by Tiwa Lade. This series 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.

Thank you for listening.