

THE END OF THE SPARROWS

Full-length drama in one Act

by

Anonymous

DISCLAIMER: The opinions expressed are those of the characters and should not be confused with those of the author or the publisher.

The play is set far into the future, and is based on just one possible scenario and set of assumptions. In reality, there are a whole range of possible scenarios, and in this respect, the play represents a simplification of a myriad of possibilities.

This play is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, events and incidents are the products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental, except for historical events. Whilst some long-standing institutions, agencies, and public offices, state and/or trans-national actors are mentioned or identifiable, the ideas, characters, and views involved are wholly imaginary.

Although the author and publisher have made efforts to ensure that the information in this play was correct at press time, the author and publisher do not assume (and hereby disclaim) any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or any other cause.

Public Domain.

** Cast of Characters **

GRANDPA: aged 75-80. born post-war in England, emigrated to NZ aged 25. Qualified accountant, ESOL teacher, well travelled, lived in Hungary, Germany, Slovakia, Ukraine. Now retired, but spry, yoga thrice-weekly. Speaks some German, Russian, Hungarian. Inner conflict: unable to emotionally accept the meaninglessness of life, the inevitability of death, and the upcoming extinction of the human species.

TINA : Age 15, GRANDPA's granddaughter. Brought up on Auckland fringes, likes dogs, usual teenage issues, plus estrangement from GRANDPA's branch of family. Has not met GRANDPA until play opens. Talks to father.

SOPHIE: Aged 18, TINA's schoolfriend, is granddaughter of Hungarians who escaped to NZ in wake of 1956 revolution and reoccupation by Soviets. SOPHIE is direct, forthright, and bossy.

MAIA : Woman preferably with low, husky voice, ~27, well-qualified migrant. Ecologist.

COLONEL: journalist aged 60+. Male. PTSD. Obvious old injuries, or eye-patch. Wears beret. Climate-change denier. Often puts across uninformed general-public opinions. Inclined to bully. Accustomed to command, and not be questioned.

LIEUTENANT: Journalist aged 25-30. Male. Wounded in first action, invalided out. Cane? Much better informed on environment.

HANNA: Aged 21 girl, is SOPHIE's cousin, from the branch of SOPHIE's family who stayed behind in Budapest after the 1956 uprising and reprisals. HANNA's main aim in life was to find a rich German businessman, emigrate, and get a better life. HANNA speaks excellent English, but with little intonation, and equal emphasis on all syllables.

TAMARA: Aged 90 in 2099, deep voice, TINA's sister, five years younger. Only appears hooded. (Feasibly same actor as for TINA.)

SUNITA: Age 14 in 2099. SOPHIE's great-grandchild. (Same actor as HANNA or SOPHIE?)

Extras: Stage-hands dressed as security personnel.

** SCENE **

Two islands in South Pacific, North Island, and South Island. Also Budapest.

- 1) Prelude: 2023 Jan 27 Feb 1 Auckland flooding
second week: Cyclone Gabrielle
- 2) Intro 2023 GRANDPA meets TINA + SOPHIE
- 3) Propag 2024 outside motel unit GRANDPA TINA
SOPHIE COLONEL
- 4) PlanetK 2027 Post-Protest role-plays GRANDPA
SOPHIE LIEUTENANT MAIA
- 5) Weekzero 2027 press conferences SOPHIE MAIA
COLONEL LIEUTENANT
- 6) Weekone 2027 at station GRANDPA MAIA LIEUTENANT
- 7) Virus 2027 at station GRANDPA MAIA LIEUTENANT
- 8) Station 2027 At pass into valley in South
Island GRANDPA MAIA LIEUTENANT HANNA
- 9) Narra 2099 at graveyard TAMARA SUNITA
- 10) Blackbox 2099 in bunker TAMARA SUNITA
- 11) Greenhat 2129 at graveyard SUNITA
- 12) Epilog 2132 at graveyard PREGNANT TEENAGER

**** TIME ****

1982-83, 1997-98, 2012-13: droughts in Hawke's Bay
2003 GRANDPA invests in Hawke's Bay cherry orchard
2019 COVID epidemic begins.
2020 Severe drought in Hawke's Bay.
2023 Jan 27 Feb 1 Auckland flooding second week: Cyclone Gabrielle
2023 Feb 13,14 second week: Cyclone Gabrielle Hawke's Bay
2023 GRANDPA disinvests out of Hawke's Bay
2023 End: GRANDPA buys into cherry orchard in Otago
2025 Mid-East turmoil spreads. Pan Euro Defence Allies
2025 War in Ukraine spreads, intensifies. Hanna joins up
2025 Land war in Europe spreads. Blockade in South China sea
2025 Thwaites event sea level begins to rise half meter.
2027 Auckland harbor bridge north toll plaza tidal
2027 Post-Protest role-plays of Coalition press conferences
2027 Nipah-style virus spreads. At Chch bus station -> Farm
2027 Tactical nukes used in Europe. No contact with Hanna
2031 GRANDPA dies.
2033 SOPHIE dies giving birth to SUNITA's grandmother.
2034 TINA dies of grief.
2039 LIEUTENANT and MAIA meet HANNA at pass after town visit
2050-2060 Great climate refugee resettlement.
2060 Birth of SUNITA's mother.
2070 LIEUTENANT dies, World comms collapse. MAIA dies
2084 SUNITA is born
2098 Hanna (SUNITA's grandmother) dies.
2099 Epilog I TAMARA dies.
2132 Epilog II

Timings calculation in minutes, dialog @170 wpm + extras.

0 + 5 : Prelude
6.5 + 1.75 : Manifesto
22.2 + 2 : War aims
14.4 + 3 : Strategic planning
10.9 + 5 : Week Zero
14.4 + 2 : Week one
1.1 + 0 : Virus Day one
2.8 + 1.5 : Cherry Orchard
3.5 + 2 : Farmstead.
8.4 + 1 : Managed retreat
0 + 2 : Curtain call
0 + 2 : Epilog I
0 + 4 : Epilog II
84.2 + 31.25 = Estimated run time: 115.4 minutes.

Dialog as percentage of performance-time (excl. curtain call) : 74%

** Scene **#1

SETTINGS: Pre-dawn. Soud of strong wind, and heavy rain. Porch lights are on. GRANDPA'a cottage is in wings at stage left. Lights are on in house, and security lights outside as required.

AT RISE : PLACARD JAN-FEB 2023. No-one on stage.

(GRANDPA enters from stage left, dressed in underwear or striped pyjamas, rain-jacket and cap, all sodden with rain, and also heavy boots, struggling to carry sandbag. GRANPA staggers across stage and dumps sandbag in front of front door in stage-right wings. Then GRANDPA, breathing heavily, slowly returns to stage-left and exits. GRANDPA reappears with another sandbag and repeats. GRANDPA repeats sandbag delivery third time, then pauses in porch to recover breath and survey water rushing across garden. Streak of lightning, followed by

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF SCENE)

** Scene **#2

SETTINGS: Outside a coffee shop with a few tables. There are a few tables with chairs, but one table at the level of a bar (so that actors are less static).

AT RISE : Grandpa, upright, spry, with white beard, possibly dressed in camouflage top and cargo shorts, with bush hat, is standing at the bar-table, sipping a coffee, and pretending to read from a book. Grandpa's long wooden staff is leaning conspicuously against the bar-table.

(SOPHIE, wearing school uniform, with a straw school boater hat, walks in from outside the courtyard. TINA follows, also in school-uniform and hat. SOPHIE walks up to GRANDPA's bar-table, followed by TINA.)

TINA

(with hesitant, faint, polite smile)

Excuse me, Sir, are you perhaps my grandfather?

GRANDPA

(looking up and smiling broadly)

Indeed, your Grandfather I am: and Tina you must be.

TINA

(looking demurely down and hiding a smile)

Yes, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Good. Well, it's nice to meet you at last, Tina. Thirty years since the divorce it's been, and your mother still refuses all contact with me. Exactly why, I'm not sure. (gestures toward SOPHIE)

And this is?

TINA

(looking up brightly.)

This is Sophie, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Hello, Sophie. Nice to meet you.

(A waiter appears at the
table to take an order.)

This is my granddaughter and her friend. Give them
whatever they like. And another iced black coffee for my
neighbour, the woman at the next table.

SOPHIE

Iced long black coffee please, two cups.

(The waiter nods and
disappears inside the coffee
shop.)

GRANDPA

So, well, Tina, what made you decide that you would come
here today?

TINA

I was wanting to ask about this manifesto, Grandpa.
(Giving a sheet of A4.)

GRANDPA

Okay. Let me have a look.

(GRANDPA reaches into his
pocket and puts on reading
glasses.)

One moment, while I skim-read it all.

(Pause while GRANDPA
skim-reads.)

Okay. The gist is clear. Plastics and climate chaos.
Teenagers to protest and refuse to travel on
fossil-fuelled vehicles.

So, Tina, you'll be protesting, will you?

(TINA nods affirmation.)

SOPHIE

Both of us will.

GRANDPA

I see: and where did this manifesto come from?

SOPHIE

From the internet.

GRANDPA

Okay. Well, I'm not sure whether this is the right for my granddaughter. So I am a bit equivocal about the manifesto right now.

SOPHIE

Oh. Haha. How ironic. You post-war generation are all the same, all talk and no action. But this is about our life, our future, not yours, old-man.

GRANDPA

Of course.

TINA

You, Grandpa, won't have to deal with the consequences of climate chaos, plastics, and pollution, will you?

GRANDPA

No, that won't happen. But why've you come to me for advice? I belong to the post-war generation: I'm the enemy.

TINA

Daddy said that I was free to roam, and that you knew a lot about plastics and the natural world. So why not kill two birds with one stone?

GRANDPA

So, look, I'll pretend to be your father. You'll tell him first, I presume, and not in the house, at the beach or somewhere, walking the dog. And Sophie, you'll need to be there too, so that it's two against one. And then give him the manifesto to read.

TINA

(looking up)

Uhuh.

GRANDPA

(Pretends to be Tina's father walking the dog. Perhaps incredulously with some anger.)

What! Refuse to travel in any fossil-fuelled vehicle! How do you propose to get to school, Tina? It's about six kilometres, isn't it? That would take you an hour each way if you walked, Tina. What happens if it's raining? You'd get soaked, Tina. It's impossible to sit around all day at school in wet clothes.

SOPHIE

Don't worry, I'll look after her.

TINA

(looking up)

I'll be taking an umbrella with me every day.

(The waiter returns on stage,
bringing a tray with iced
coffees for the girls.)

TINA

I'll cycle to school, Daddy. The bike'll be much quicker.

(looking down)

And anyway, I am sixteen, and it's for me to decide what
to do with my life.

GRANDPA

(Pretends to be Tina's
father.)

Oh yes, but as your father, I pay the bills. ... You won't
be flying anywhere for holidays, darling. There'll be no
holidays afloat on Daddy's power boat. And you won't be
going to the theater in town either, unless you go by
tram, darling, or someone takes you there in an electric
car!

SOPHIE

We already know all that. You know, we're not idiots.
It's the post-war generation that thinks polluting the
planet is normal.

GRANDPA

(as himself)

Well, that will get his back up! Sophie, we need to keep
him onside, and ask him to talk to Tina's mother on our
behalf, and persuade her that it'll be okay.
As for the post-war generation, we just didn't know any
better. To our generation, it WAS normal.

(Shrugs.)

What was the problem?

SOPHIE

Is the post-war generation pleading ignorance or mass
dementia as an excuse?

GRANDPA

We are pleading addiction: addiction to pollution.

(Stands.)

My name is Grandpa, and I am a fossil-fuel addict,
recovering.

TINA

(with irony)

Oh, you poor thing, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Okay. What's the second item? Ah, here.

Refuse all plastic packaging, and plastic products. ...

Well, that's hard to put into practice.

TINA

(looking down)

Whatever.

GRANDPA

Myself, I avoid plastic packaging wherever I can, and especially in the supermarket. I choose products in glass jars, which can be fully recycled.

TINA

(looking up)

So it CAN be done!

GRANDPA

Not properly. But city-living necessitates industrialized food production. People can't get their food from local farmers, because there aren't any, they're many kilometers away.

Darling, you'll just have to go shopping with your mother and be prepared to check the recycling triangle on every item you buy.

TINA

(looking at SOPHIE.)

Whatev.

GRANDPA

And you'll have to check out all the different categories of plastic on the internet, darling, and really know which ones are truly recyclable. Most plastics aren't, they downcycle, but eventually end up in the natural world and in the food chain as microplastics or nanoplastics.

TINA

(looking at SOPHIE.)

It's that complicated?

GRANDPA

Yes, but that's how I've been doing my shopping for years. Darling, don't expect to achieve everything all at once: and be prepared to make some compromises pro tem.

SOPHIE

Sophie (cont'd)

Is that your best advice, old-chap?

GRANDPA

Well, darling, you can grow your own vegetables instead! I'm sure your parents would be happy to set up a vegetable plot for you. Ten minutes from garden to plate. Sans packaging. That's my motto.

TINA

(looking down)

Uh-huh.

GRANDPA

Second, paulatim ergo certe. That was my old school motto: it means 'slowly but surely'. Perhaps at my age, that should be very slowly, and somewhat un-surely! But anyway, that's enough advice for today. Would you girls like a bedtime story instead?

(TINA looks questioningly at
SOPHIE.)

SOPHIE

(to GRANDPA, whilst shaking
her head gently.)

The universe is a big place, old-chap.

GRANDPA

Yes, that's true, Sophie. Even at the speed of light, it would take twenty million human generations to traverse Lanikea, our super-cluster. We humans are utterly insignificant.

But, in two thousand twenty-two, there was a report about the Sixth Mass Extinction on this insignificant planet where we live: the ecosystem, our life-support system, is in dire trouble, worse than anticipated.

TINA

Well, that's not cheery news. It's not exactly what a girl wants to hear on her birthday.

GRANDPA

Is today your birthday?

(TINA: nods)

Well, in the larger scheme of things, it's not that important, is it.

Happy Birthday, by the way.

How old are you, darling?

TINA

Tina (cont'd)

Sixteen.

GRANDPA

Tina, you're too young to face reality: but old enough to drive. In some parts of the world, Tina, you would be old enough to marry, or join the paramilitaries.

.....
Anyway,

look, darling, how about a selfie together?

TINA

(looking up and smiling)

That would be cool.

(They all take selfies together, with both making cool gestures.)

(SOPHIE: her mobile pings loudly, and she checks the new message.)

SOPHIE

Okay. We've got to go now, Tina. Tamara is waiting.

TINA

We're off now then, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Okay! Stay in touch, darling, and come and see me whenever, or video-call me. In fact, I would like that very much. You need an old farter in your life, darling. High-five though?

TINA

Cool.

(GRANDPA and TINA high-five.)

GRANDPA

(TINA: turns to leave)

Tina, say hello to your father for me.

(TINA: nods affirmatively.)

Ciao babe!

(TINA and SOPHIE: the two girls walk toward exit. TINA looks back, waves, and both girls exit.)

GRANDPA

(To audience.)

Well, that was not the best moment to confess that the manifesto was originally written by me. Now I've failed as a grandfather, too.

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF SCENE)

** Scene **#3

SETTINGS:
front

Placard: TWO YEARS LATER. A

garden in leafy suburban area. One side of stage leads to house, and the other to the street: neither house nor street need be visible. Perhaps a garden fence as background. A couple of wooden garden chairs or stools, a wooden outdoor table. Perhaps a shade umbrella.

AT RISE :

No-one on stage.

(TINA enters from off stage, street side, followed reluctantly by SOPHIE, fashionably, but somewhat immodestly dressed and made up, who hangs back. Alternatively, both girls may be wearing judo, yoga, or karate gear. They walk somewhat uncertainly across the stage, SOPHIE waits, looking around uncertainly, while TINA exits toward house. Groan-squeak of a screen door opening from off is audible, and then someone knocking on a door with a heavy door-knocker: clunk, clunk, clunk. Pause.)

TINA

(from off-stage house-side, from the wings)

Hallo-ooooh! Anyone home?

(Pause. GRANDPA, wearing a bright red hooded rain-jacket, camo cargo shorts, walking shoes, and dark sunglasses, enters from street, walks towards SOPHIE, and tries to step past SOPHIE, who blocks and flashes a dazzling smile. GRANDPA does not recognise SOPHIE.)

SOPHIE

Hey there! How's it going?

GRANDPA

Good. Whassup? I'm not often accosted by young women on my doorstep.

(TINA re-enters from house
side, shaking her head.)

TINA

Oh, THERE you are, Grandpa! You remember my friend Sophie?

GRANDPA

What? Oh! Of course! Hello, Sophie, nice to meet you again.

Well, you two have a seat, I just need to pop inside, and make some tea for you both.

TINA

Yes. Sure. Herbal, please, Grandpa.

(GRANDPA goes into the house.
TINA and SOPHIE wander round
the garden, but do not sit
down.)

SOPHIE

Grandpa seems okay.

TINA

The post-war generation do seem well-behaved when one first meets them.

SOPHIE

That's true, are you sure, Tina, that Grandpa's so ecologically-minded and trustworthy?

TINA

Green, yes. Trustworthy? Absolutely not, I'm just glad you're here with me, Sophie.

(SOPHIE begins to perform
stretches, Tai Chi, or judo,
or yoga, and TINA copies

her.)

(GRANDPA returns with three mugs of herbal tea made using a tea bag, and some slices of avocado, a lemon, an A4 sheet of paper, and a large, fat, brown envelope. Everything is arranged on a wooden tray, and puts it on the table. GRANDPA has a smaller brown envelope stuffed full of dollar bills in his pocket.)

GRANDPA

There you go.

So, what brings you two here today?

(Both girls may continue with stretching.)

TINA

Daddy said you wanted to see me soon, because time was running out. So we just turned up.

Did you bring me here just to tell me, like, fairy stories then?

GRANDPA

Not at all.

I actually invited you here, Tina, to tell you some very serious stories, mostly about climate chaos in some way; about the causes of human-induced climate chaos, and what to do about it. Would that interest you both?

TINA

We had to learn all that stuff at school. We probably know all that anyway.

GRANDPA

Yes. Of course. That's understandable. ... Look, I have written it all out: if you gave me your email address, Tina, I could send it all to you, and you could maybe look at them later. Could we do that?

TINA

Maybe.

GRANDPA

Well, I've also printed them out on archival paper. I could give it all to you now, Tina.

TINA

Debatable.

SOPHIE

What's this all about, old-chap?

GRANDPA

It's about solutions to climate chaos and plastics pollution.

SOPHIE

(Stops stretching, stands.)

That's easy: just stop using oil. That means you, the government, the military, airlines, shipping, everyone. Not next year, not next week, but today, or tomorrow. The hard part is doing without oil for food supplies, cooking and heating. But stop dithering: walk home if you can. Or take electric public transport unless the electricity is generated from coal.

(To GRANDPA.)

Isn't that correct, old-man?

(SOPHIE sits down momentarily and looks up at GRANDPA, watching intently.)

GRANDPA

I do agree in principle. But these ideas are hard to put into practice overnight. I do agree though that for decades the oil industry has been playing each and every one of us for fools. And people need to take an ecological view of Planet Ocean.

TINA

Why are you banging on about the ecosystem, Grandpa: were you an ecologist?

GRANDPA

No, I don't find it that interesting. In any case, I messed up a chemistry experiment at school, and gave up science, except for Physics.

TINA

What happened?

GRANDPA

Oh, by mistake I used nitric instead of sulphuric acid, there was orange smoke billowing everywhere. I was a right twat in those days. Maybe I still am. Hard to tell. What do you think, Tina?

(SOPHIE and TINA continue
with stretching)

TINA

Whatev. But, Grandpa, you keep on lecturing me.

GRANDPA

That's what your mother used to say when she was your age. Well, the likes of us, our species, were hunters and gatherers for hundreds of millennia. So, it's very odd behavior for hunter-gatherers to chain themselves to a desk all day at work, or to coop their childer up in school, or wander round all day entranced by their mobile phone. And then after graduation, so many workers sit at a desk and stare at a screen for the rest of their life. Wouldn't people be happier and healthier chasing dinosaurs for breakfast?

(TINA: turns toward audience
and spreads her hands upwards
in a gesture of bemusement
and despair.)

Isn't it my job as grandfather to give you vision in life, to give you an outlook, darling, give you a mission?

TINA

No, Grandpa, that's not your job.

SOPHIE

Species come, species go. This blue planet just carries on regardless. There's no mission. Life's just fun while it lasts: like being on a carousel, until the music stops.

(GRANDPA attempts to join in
stretching, copying SOPHIE's
lead.)

GRANDPA

We could do a 'SWOT' strategic analysis instead, though.

SOPHIE

Is that, like, swotting for exams?

GRANDPA

Nah, it's about swatting flies.

SOPHIE

You're joking?

GRANDPA

Yes, that was a little joke.

SOPHIE

Oh. Haha. What does 'SWOT' really stand for?

GRANDPA

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

TINA

So what are your strengths, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

Er, er, a rabid, or slightly mordant humor.

TINA

Weaknesses?

GRANDPA

A weakness for women.

TINA

Opportunities?

GRANDPA

I squandered them.

TINA

Threats?

GRANDPA

I don't make threats.

But there's always the threat of disease, dismay, dismemberment, and decomposition.

TINA

What?

GRANDPA

Or in the progress of relationships: first, romantic delusion, after that: disillusion, followed by dysfunction, despair, and being cast asunder.

TINA

Is that right?

GRANDPA

Truly. I swear on the bones of my ancestors.

SOPHIE

But you're still just being facetious, old-man. How about a 'SWOT' analysis for the human specie?

GRANDPA

Oh shit! Strengths: technology. Weaknesses would be all the lying and despicable veniality, plus our constant bickering and warring with each other. Opportunities: well, squandered, we missed the boat for zero emissions; too little, too late. Threats: just extinction. That's the overview, Sophie.

(Short pause.)

GRANDPA

So What do you want from me, Tina? No ecology. No sermons. What's a grandfather supposed to do? Should he give the granddaughter expensive jewellery all the time? Or give you money, darling: and leave it all to you when I die.

TINA

Of course.

GRANDPA

You know, Tina, grandfathers always seem to take more interest in the grandchilder than vice versa. But all four of my own grandparents were all either dead or demented by the time I was twelve.

TINA

Whatev. Just tell me about your life, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Okay, I will: but under protest. My life is not important; and whether I am a hero, or an evil-monger, or somewhere in-between, does not matter.

TINA

Matters to me, though, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

What matters to me now is ecology and the natural world. That's where our society went wrong: people started glorifying humanity, and stopped worshipping the trees and the woods, the wetlands and the hills, the animals and the birds. That has been our downfall.

SOPHIE

Enough analysis, old-man. Tina asked about your life!

GRANDPA

(Crestfallen)

When I left school, I started working nights in a chocolate factory, just to sort my head out.

TINA

Were you allowed to eat the chocolate in the factory, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

Yes, as much chocolate as I liked. But I didn't even want to. I reeked of chocolate. No matter how much I showered, my girlfriend still complained that I stank of chocolate.

SOPHIE

And then what?

GRANDPA

I found another girlfriend, and emigrated here.

SOPHIE

So overall, without all the details, how do you feel about your life?

GRANDPA

There were good times, bad times, sad times, and then, much later, delusional happiness, followed by disillusionment, and then, recently, surprisingly, flashes of equanimity.

SOPHIE

And now?

GRANDPA

Occasionally, I still feel the rare flicker of normalcy.

TINA

And overall?

GRANDPA

I learnt nothing. I know nothing. Did that message not come across?

TINA

Oh.

GRANDPA

But in nineteen hundred and ninety, Tina, I accidentally picked up a book about the natural world and climate

Grandpa (cont'd)
breakdown. That book changed my outlook.
So, darling, you learnt about climate chaos at school.

SOPHIE

Of course.

GRANDPA

And?

SOPHIE

And what?

GRANDPA

Well, what did you two think?

SOPHIE

We just don't understand why your generation didn't try
to forestall it.

(SOPHIE moves to table to
drink tea, followed by TINA,
and GRANDPA)

GRANDPA

Neither do I. ... But, look, there was the Kyoto Protocol
in nineteen-ninety-seven, and then the Paris Agreement in
twenty-fifteen, and it seemed we would get the climate
under control in time. However, in two thousand and
seventeen, the USA pulled out. They just didn't care. ...

TINA

But you care, Grandpa.

GRANDPA

Yes. To me, it's madness to put so much time and effort
into raising children, into their welfare; and at the same
time be constantly destroying their future habitat, their
future agriculture and food supply.

TINA

Daddy says never to trust anything the government says.

GRANDPA

He said that, did he?

(TINA: nods)

I'd love to believe climate chaos is rubbish. But, well,
your father is your problem.
Tina, if I asked your father what the unit of measurement
for atmospheric methane was, would he know?

TINA

I doubt it.

GRANDPA

Exactly. But your question, darling, was why didn't we of the post-war generation try to stop climate chaos. Most of us were simply too busy with the latest hits, the latest fashion, the latest rugby game, the latest gossip. Back then, the post-war generation should've been paying more attention to the natural world, to ecology, to the non-human environment.

SOPHIE

That all sounds like laundry splashing to and fro in the washing machine. You'll have to come up with something better than that for an excuse, old-man.

GRANDPA

Alright. I'll try again. Our species has always been over-focussed on efficiency. That was our advantage over the Neanderthals. Even today, economics is focussed on the question of efficiency. Or, taking the easy way out, taking the short-term gains, and letting generations to come suffer the long-term consequences.

TINA

(Turning head from side to side like a washing-machine)
Splish, splosh, splish, splosh.

GRANDPA

You know, Tina, our species spent two hundred thousand years in Africa, and on the savannah it was no good worrying about the long-term. Living in the now was how humans survived. If someone was thinking about tomorrow and didn't notice the lion loitering in the long grass, well, they didn't survive. It's part of our make-up to focus on the present and ignore the long-term.

TINA

(Teasingly, with smile.)
Oh, you poor thing, Grandpa. Two thousand years wandering in the tall grass. That was tough, eh?

GRANDPA

Yes, so it was. Two HUNDRED thousand years, actually.

TINA

You're not doing too well with the excuses, are you, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

Grandpa (cont'd)

I'm sorry. We of the post-war generation were just hedonistic, witless ducklings.

TINA

(Nodding agreement and quietly clapping hands.)

So you're sorry, so what? You still have money invested in oil and plastics. What else ?

GRANDPA

In the future, maybe every last drop of oil will be extracted and burnt. Or maybe there'll be survivors inside the Arctic Circle; or high up in the Andes, or elsewhere. I'll write it all out for you, darling.

TINA

(quietly claps hands.)

Well, that shows some understanding, Grandpa, but it's still no justification for what your generation did. Is there anything else ?

SOPHIE

And then, one day in the future, decades from now, we can look back in anger and know what bastards your post-war generation were, old-man. But our generation will be in the frontline, and get to find out all the answers for real.

(SOPHIE stands up, moves close to audience.)

GRANDPA

So, darling...

SOPHIE

(Interrupting.)

Anyway, from an ecological point of view, neither economic growth nor population growth is helpful: these two factors are exactly what is destroying the habitat. Instead, what is needed is economic shrink, and a vastly reduced human population; that is, returning the human population back to pre-industrial levels. Only then can there be any chance of rebuilding a habitat safe for humans to survive in.

GRANDPA

But Sophie, perhaps a quarter of the richer people in the so-called developed countries don't even acknowledge climate chaos as being a result of human activity. So there's a huge social barrier to overcome.

SOPHIE

Yes, old-chap, solutions will be hard to come by, and massively expensive. Cities are fundamentally unsustainable, and so are the people that live in them. People cannot envisage returning to a pre-industrial lifestyle. And yet, that will be the extent of the change that people need to make.

GRANDPA

Well, of course, all that change is not going to happen: it will be just too big, and entail too much restructuring in the time available.

SOPHIE

So, what's the solution?

GRANDPA

One possible answer would be to retreat to a refuge. Not just a refuge from climate chaos, but also a refuge from political chaos and war, maybe even from a nuclear exchange. There's already constant war, chaos, and turmoil in the Levant and Eastern Mediterranean. The war in Ukraine has spread; so the Pan-European Defence Alliance is fighting on three fronts.

SOPHIE

Yes: my cousin Hanna in Budapest has joined the army. It's been seventy years ago since there were tanks invading Budapest, you know old-man.

GRANDPA

Oh yes. I remember seeing the uprising on television in black and white, when I was a child.

SOPHIE

Hanna is fighting the bastards near Ungvár. She is scared shitless.

GRANDPA

Oh dear God. I went through Ungvár by train on my way to Kyiv, years and years ago. You must be worried.

SOPHIE

Very. Every week I send an email to check that she is still alive.

GRANDPA

Yes. Of course.
But then there's the naval blockade in the South China Sea, at the moment, almost a war.
And there's also the growing chaos that comes with species

Grandpa (cont'd)

extinction: a quarter of all vertebrate species will go extinct in the next quarter of a century. Just wait. In your lifetime, Sophie, the rest of the world will doubtless be sliding down into the toilet bowl.

SOPHIE

Yes, old-man. But we are fighting for our future, not yours. We have already formed the Coalition Against Climate Chaos, Plastics, and Pollution.

GRANDPA

Wow. I didn't know that a coalition like that even existed.

SOPHIE

We organise and coordinate protests with various groups.

GRANDPA

But protests alone will never be enough.

SOPHIE

In time, young people like us will take over the government.

GRANDPA

Well, I wish you all luck with that, but convincing the rich elites around the world to change course is a big ask. There's just too much propaganda, and unreal thinking to overcome. People do not even understand the scale of the lifestyle change that is required. That's why I view a refuge as being more realistically achievable.

(Short pause)

GRANDPA

So that's why, decades ago, I bought into a farmstead-cum-cherry orchard in a remote little valley in the South Island. You could come and stay during the summer break, if you wish. Help gather in the harvest.

(SOPHIE and TINA look at
each other. TINA nods.)

SOPHIE

We'll be there, as soon as the summer semester finishes.

GRANDPA

Good. Don't let me down. You can help with the harvesting.

GRANDPA

So, you're at Uni, Sophie?

TINA

We both are.

I've just started. Studying Ecology mostly. Sophie too. There were endless rows with my parents, so I moved out into Sophie's apartment.

GRANDPA

Well, studying ecology is good news. ... But we are just about done then. Unless you wish to regale me with the details of your personal struggles, darling?

TINA

Nah. ... But I do have some, like, questions.

GRANDPA

Sure, darling, go ahead.

TINA

Well, first off, Grandpa, why don't you want to sit and chat with me?

GRANDPA

I thought we were chatting. What would you like to talk about, Tina?

TINA

Just tell me about your life, Grandpa: I'm curious.

GRANDPA

Oh! In what light would the story be painted? For instance, Tina darling, would you describe your own life as a lucky, rich Princess grows up in a wealthy white suburb in the most-desirable country of the world?

TINA

Being a princess sounds good.

GRANDPA

Or would it be the story of a lonely, only girl who grows up in a demented, repressive household, and struggles to find her place in society? The story could be told either way.

TINA

What?

GRANDPA

Darling, would you be a normal girl in a normal home in a

Grandpa (cont'd)

normal society, or would you paint your life as in some way less than normal?

TINA

What is less than normal?

GRANDPA

Was your relationship with your dog normal, darling?

TINA

What? My relationship with my dog: yes, of course it was normal. What kind of an idiot are you, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

How could the relationship have been normal, when dogs were domesticated forty thousand years ago, and since then have been bred for specific purposes, and no longer lead natural lives?

TINA

Whatever.

GRANDPA

How could your own life be normal, darling, when normal for a human being is to live as a hunter-gatherer. Whereas today people are shopping at the mall, or watching TV all the time, or mesmerized by social media? Our modern civilized world is by definition not normal. Our current lifestyle is an artifice of the last five thousand years, or the last few hundred. Theoretically, how could you possibly be a normal girl, princess?

TINA

What? What the hell are you talking about, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

Oh yes, you're a normal product of an abnormal society. But tell me this, darling: how come there're so many different breeds of dogs in various colors, shapes, and sizes? Whereas, apart from skin-color there's only one human breed alive today?

SOPHIE

Hey, old-man, Tina was just asking about you and your life.

(TINA wanders off around the garden: SOPHIE follows: they whisper together inaudibly: eventually the girls return.)

GRANDPA

Apologies. I'm not lactose-intolerant, but just plain, common-or-garden intolerant. I simply can't seem to emotionally accept that my life has been a complete waste of time. I'm stalked by my inner grump. But death and inner peace will come for me hand in hand, won't they.

(TINA nods with an ironic smirk.)

GRANDPA

So, one version my own story is that I was born into a middling middle class family in the capital of a worldwide colonial empire. How lucky was I! Born a privileged white male, with opportunities. Another version would be that something went psychologically wrong in my childhood, and I was forever emotionally crippled. Or yet another version might be that my childhood was nothing unusual, as everyone struggles to grow up. Take your pick darling.

(TINA nods slightly.)

GRANDPA

But then I'm just an elderly post-war person, and it's too late for regrets anyway. Just struggle through till sunset! Wake up tomorrow, or not! Don't brood about the past or agonize over the misdeeds of a lifetime! It's all long gone and irrevocable. What does one individual life matter, given that the Sixth Mass Extinction is underway? After all, Tina darling, in your lifetime one quarter of all vertebrate species will vanish.

TINA

Oh my God, Grandpa, why do you have to paint it all so gloomy and miserable?

GRANDPA

Because those few scientists who plead for optimism seem to rely on cherry-picked favorable data. For example, emissions per capita are down. But that doesn't mean emissions are down. It means population is up. And so on.

(Pauses.)

Look, girls, I could just keep on barking; or I could show you some photos instead.

(Lays out photos on table)

SOPHIE

(Flicking through photos.)

So who's this cool-looking blonde?

GRANDPA

(with feigned indifference)

A woman.

SOPHIE

(Flicking through photos.)

This photo here, the legend, what does that mean?

GRANDPA

It's in German. A woman without a man is like a head without headaches.

SOPHIE

Slay me dead. So cool. Where did you learn to speak German?

GRANDPA

At school.

TINA

Oh! Look! The young blonde is getting married. And you are dressed so smartly next to her. Best man or father of the bride?

(Grandpa smiles wistfully
and looks away.)

GRANDPA

It's a long story. But the point is that not all societies are the same. And they change over time. For instance, sixty years ago in England, girls sharing a flat weren't allowed to sign the lease: the official tenant had to be a man: and also, men earned more than women. In those days, an actress might be sacked from a film if she refused to take her blouse off: it was a different society, but it was considered to be a so-called normal society.

SOPHIE

(with beaming smile)

Perhaps there are no normal people.

Had we earlier been raised differently, we might now think like Muslim girls, or Tibetan Buddhists, and take a different view of life. But in reality, Tina is in fact still a young puppy, bouncing around, a teenage-girl, full

Sophie (cont'd)
of the joys of spring, thank God.

(Pause. GRANDPA sips coffee.
TINA checks her mobile phone.
SOPHIE walks round garden.)

GRANDPA
So, anyway, I'll be giving you some homework to do,
darling, if you are willing.
It's about Maslow's theory of Hierarchy of Human Needs.
It's a widely quoted theory.
Just see, darling, if you can find the evidence to support
it, please.

TINA
(Without enthusiasm)
Okay. No promises, though.

GRANDPA
That's normal.
So, what would you two really like to talk about?

SOPHIE
The War Against Climate Chaos.

GRANDPA
Why do we need a war? What does that mean?

SOPHIE
(Directly to audience.)
Because beating climate chaos will take so long, and
require so much effort, so much restructuring of the
entire world economy, except for the economy of some
indigenous peoples. It will take all our efforts and last
much longer than World War Two. It's not a war on people,
but it IS a war on pollution, a war on plastics, and to
some extent a war on the post-war generation, or their
philosophy. It's a war that will entail great losses, in
terms of population. And it's a war we're in the process
of losing right now.

GRANDPA
(Speaking slowly.)
Yup. I agree with that for the most part. I assume that
the term 'war' is just a metaphor, just a way of
conveying to the masses the scale of change to western
economies that is required. What about war aims? What are
they? How is one supposed to know whether we're winning?

SOPHIE

Sophie (cont'd)

(Directly to audience.)

The number one marker is atmospheric carbon dioxide. It's about four hundred and twenty-five parts per million right now.

GRANDPA

But atmospheric CO2 is still rising at about zero point six per cent per annum.

SOPHIE

Yes it is. When atmospheric CO2 stabilizes, then we will have turned the corner. It almost stabilized during the COVID epidemic, so it IS possible. But it takes big changes to reduce emissions. And then there's the other greenhouse gases, methane, nitrous oxide, sulphur hexafluorides to consider too.

GRANDPA

Yes. But it's now been thirty-five years since the Senate committee in the USA investigated climate chaos. And so far, SO little has been done to fix the climate. That's why a refuge would be a more achievable aim. And also there'd still be the ever-present threat of existing conflicts escalating into a nuclear bombardment. Though, to be fair, a nuclear winter would stop global warming.

SOPHIE

No more trying to save the world, then. Just trying to save ourselves.

TINA

That's pretty grim. So what's your plan, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

I've written out the whole plan, and it's in this package. Here you are, one fat, large brown envelope.

(Handing the large, fat envelope from the tray to TINA, who nods silently and accepts.)

There's a flash-drive inside too.

GRANDPA

Could you at least come and see me when you're twenty, darling?

TINA

No promises. Who knows what'll happen?

GRANDPA

Wise girl.

Sooner then, if it suits, darling.

(SOPHIE'S mobile pings.)

TINA

Maybe.

(SOPHIE'S inspects message on
mobile.)

GRANDPA

That's a 'no' then.

(GRANDPA sits at the table
opposite SOPHIE. Then TINA
sits too, beside SOPHIE.)

TINA

No, it was a maybe. I'm just not promising anything.

SOPHIE

(picking up the envelope)
Time to go, Tina. Tamara's waiting.

GRANDPA

Good. Also, darling, I'm handing you a small brown
envelope under the table. There's a few thousand inside.
No, don't look round. Don't open it now : just slip it
inside your trouser. Yours to do with what you will,
darling.

TINA

No way. Why are you so salty? Keep your bribe, Grandpa,
you can't buy me.

GRANDPA

I am not trying to, Princess. I am not quite that stupid.
But I can't give it to you, darling, when I'm dead, can I.
So, now or never.

TINA

What? You're one sick old man, Grandpa. ... Well, moot,
hand over the flickers then, Grandpa.

(TINA takes the envelope
under the table and stuffs it

inside her jeans, then lifts
the tea-bag from her mug.)

GRANDPA

So, darling, now ride forth to save the planet like a true heroine.

SOPHIE

Heroine? Why would anyone want to be a heroine? Why not just be a normal person? Painting someone as a heroine is always a distortion of reality. Life is not full of heroics, quite the opposite. Life is about wading through the daily shit, till one day, unnoticed, you fall flat on your face.

And the universe carries on as if you never existed. After all, that's what happens to sparrows, too.

TINA

Whatev.

(TINA is unimpressed, rises.)

Let's go, Sophie.

(TINA stands, hugs GRANDPA hesitantly. SOPHIE picks up the envelope, nods towards GRANDPA, puts a protective arm around TINA's shoulder as the girls move toward street side of stage. SOPHIE turns and waves, as SOPHIE and TINA exit to street. GRANDPA stares after the girls, and then carries the tray with mugs and exits slowly toward house side of stage.)

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

END OF SCENE

** Scene **#4

SETTINGS: Placard: THREE YEARS LATER. In
an

art gallery. There is a bar-table
and two bar-stools. There is also
a cleaner's trolley on stage, and
perhaps a rostrum. Actors may use
the rostrum at will.

AT RISE : GRANDPA is alone at the bar-table
reading a book.

(SOPHIE and TINA enter
together. TINA is carrying
six coffees in china cups on
a tray. SOPHIE and TINA move
to stand by the bar-table
with GRANDPA.)

GRANDPA

Hi there. How did the protest go?

TINA

There were so many police officers, grandpa.
We had to avoid them.

(SOPHIE and TINA hug gently,
and SOPHIE lays an arm round
TINA's shoulders.)

SOPHIE

And hello again to the post-war generation.

(LIEUTENANT, wearing a
PRESS-emblazoned jacket and
PRESS ID card hanging from
neck, and MAIA enter together
and move to join GRANDPA,
TINA, and SOPHIE at the
bar-table.)

SOPHIE

(To the latest arrivals.)

Did you get rid of the placards?

MAIA

(MAIA never smiles)

Yes, of course.

SOPHIE

And this is our Maia, by the way. She is an ecology
researcher at the University.

GRANDPA

Grandpa (cont'd)
(Exchanging nods with MAIA
and LIEUTENANT.)

Hi there. Did the police see you come in?

LIEUTENANT

No chance.

SOPHIE

Okay. Let's all just have a quiet coffee and wait a bit.
The demonstration is over. It is safe here now.

GRANDPA

Good. So, Tina, while we are waiting: how did you spend
the money I gave you?

SOPHIE

None of your business, Grandpa.
... But, for your information, she mostly got drunk and
woke up next to someone else. That's what happens to young
women.

GRANDPA

(crestfallen)

And Maslow, dare I ask?

TINA

Oh yes, Maslow's theory is not well-supported: so, it's
best to toss Maslow's theory into the plausible, but
unproven, basket. Why did the post-war generation carry on
teaching it as if it were gospel?

GRANDPA

Because it had become just another part of Western
business propaganda.

MAIA

From an ecological standpoint, the pyramid is upside down:
it should be big toward the top, and balance on a point,
because at the moment the whole human species relies on
just a few staple crops, such as wheat, rice, and cassava,
plus a few staple animals, such as chickens and cattle,
which are farmed on an industrial scale worldwide. If
anything goes wrong with our staple crops, our whole human
society will come crashing down.

TINA

Now it's my turn. So, Grandpa, you remember the Great
Crash of nineteen hundred and twenty-nine and the
depression that followed?

GRANDPA

Before my time, actually. I wasn't even a young dinosaur

Grandpa (cont'd)

then.

TINA

Anyway, what were we discussing? Ah, yes!
Grandpa, you remember the Bretton Woods agreement in
nineteen hundred and forty-seven that was meant to stop
the Great Depression happening all over again?

GRANDPA

In those days, I was just a hatchling.

TINA

And then the Agreement collapsed about nineteen hundred
and seventy?

GRANDPA

Ah, yes. Not my fault, though.

TINA

Why are you being so facetious? Anyway, the question is:
why wasn't there a second crash and depression?

GRANDPA

Ahhhh. Well, THAT'S a good question. Oh. Wait up. Is this
for an essay? Am I helping you with your homework?

TINA

That's what grandfathers are for.

GRANDPA

Oh. Well, for the essay, I'd put it down to technology
then: financial markets were more developed, computerised,
and able to react faster, and so on. But I would not view
it all in those terms myself.

TINA

(Exasperated)

How WOULD you see it then, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

Darling, step back, look at the big picture, and pretend
you and I are aliens on an orbiting spaceship, observing
the planet. What changed? Not a lot. It's like looking
down on an ant-nest, or a group of beehives. They are
scurrying around much the same as before. Even if they
would disappear, it would be hardly noticeable. Even if
the human population doubled, from space, only the growth
of cities would be visible. A world war? We humans look
down on ants fighting each other, or bees and wasps
fighting; but the fighting seems unimportant to us.

TINA

Tina (cont'd)

I wouldn't get any marks for that. God, you're such a nong!

GRANDPA

Hmm. I don't even know what that means. ... But at least I'm good at something.

TINA

And the papers you gave me, Grandpa. What exactly are they all about? What you were trying to achieve, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

I often wonder about that myself. Probably, a worldwide revolution in people's thinking about life on this planet.

SOPHIE

Revolution? How would you organize a revolution?

GRANDPA

I meant a revolution in people's thinking, not an insurrection.

TINA

(deadpan drily)

Oh, is that all.

The essays just seemed to be a load of stuff about Neanderthals.

GRANDPA

Yes, Neanderthals: what happened to them, our cousins?

No-one knows for sure.

Will our own sub-species tread down the same path, for the same reasons? That's the question. Will we, like bees, have our own version of Colony Collapse Disorder?

TINA

(Sighs)

Oh my God. I would need evidence, not speculation and scenarios of doom.

GRANDPA

I see. Well, I am just pointing out that species like us have disappeared in the past, and therefore it would be no surprise if the human species disappeared in the near future. It's happened before; and it will happen again.

TINA

(While busily checking her
mobile)

You're pretty downcast about it all, aren't you, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

Grandpa (cont'd)

To be honest, yes; but it would be more accurate to say that I'm frustrated with climate chaos deniers. Everything I did was such a waste of time. All that effort trying to bring up children and so on was so misguided, just a waste of my time, of my life. But at the time, everyone thought it was progress. And now I'm more worried and horrified about what the future will be for your generation.

TINA

(With airy confidence)

Oh, we'll be alright. We'll think of something.

GRANDPA

That's what people thought in nineteen hundred and seventy-three, during the first oil crisis. Things haven't got better since then. Your optimism is ill-justified, Tina.

TINA

But I am young and looking for hope. I won't go forward through life all the time thinking doom, doom, doom, can I? I'll have to find some small smidgeon of hope somewhere. The real issue is that ecology and classical economics seem to be at odds, because economics says that eternal growth is the answer to everything, and ecology says otherwise.

Sophie, I can't contact my sister, Tamara. She's not responding. Maybe the police arrested her?

SOPHIE

Tamara will be fine. What about my cousin Hanna in the European Defece Force: I'm really worried about her. First, she was MIA, then I got a message to say that Hanna was wounded, and was being evacuated to a hospital in Portugal. Since then I've heard nothing, and I can't contact her.

TINA

So what's the answer, Grandpa?

GRANDPA

I don't know exactly.

MAIA

Net-zero won't be not enough. Population and consumption levels will matter too. GDP per capita, women's education, family size, religion will all be factors. The education of girls and women will be the number one factor. Human fertility has critical and massive consequences for the entire biosphere.

LIEUTENANT

It'll also be a matter of geography, too, of population versus farming. For instance, the United Kingdom imports over half its food from abroad, and is thus vulnerable to whatever happens in supplier countries; whereas our homeland produces far more than enough food locally, and exports large quantities.

(SOPHIE ascends rostrum.)

GRANDPA

So what's the plan, Sophie?

SOPHIE

The plan is as follows: young people will take over: we'll move away from consumerism, leave the elderly behind to their fate. We'll build a refuge somewhere, and we'll find a new way of living. Somewhere where people'll grow their own vegetables and will tend their own animals, and where people will live a simpler life, without polluting the planet, and thus will survive the climate crisis.

GRANDPA

My generation sang much the same fifty years ago. But love and peace are not enough alone.

MAIA

The second part of the plan is political. The Coalition Against Climate Change and Plastics will target mainstream center parties, and will infiltrate them. Once we have the numbers inside a party, we'll take over, oust the post-war generation, and revamp all the policies for our own benefit.

LIEUTENANT

That sounds like more of a revolution.

MAIA

Yes, of course, a revolution in people's thinking is a prerequisite. After that, it'll be just a matter of organisation.

The best hope is that climate chaos will hold off till the post-war generation dies off, and that our generation will be wiser, and able to create a refuge.

GRANDPA

That's very kind of you, Maia, but it's more about the wisdom, foresight, and ecosystem knowledge of those in power than about which generation they belong to. Or it's about corruption in high places, and the ethics of

Grandpa (cont'd)

transnational corporations and their shareholders and investors. It's not indigenous tribes living traditional lifestyles in the rainforest who need to change. It's about city-dwellers and money-obsessed people.

SOPHIE

Anyway, there'll be several refuges around the world, and our homeland will be one of them. And that's all. It won't be necessary to fill our refuge to the maximum with human population.

GRANDPA

What about the other refuges?

SOPHIE

The refuges will be anywhere inside the Arctic Circle, or towards the southern tip of Argentina, and some places in the habitable, goldilocks zone at altitude in the Andes. But their viability will all depend on whether crops can be grown there into the future.

LIEUTENANT

And what about the rest of the world that's not a refuge?

SOPHIE

Don't know. In some places, every last drop of available oil will be used to prop up the current fossil-fuelled lifestyle for as long as possible. Elsewhere, people will flee the cities if there is no food supply there. That may have happened in previous disappeared civilizations: who knows? Cities can only exist as long as there is food and water flowing into them from a network of suppliers.

MAIA

So, the question is: if the fertility rate here is down to about one-point-six children per woman, then an overall population decline is to be expected, unless there is further immigration each year.

What is the target human population? Why does it matter? Those are the questions. Without answers, there'll be no viable plan for surviving climate chaos, except to bumble through from day to day with no plan at all. It is that bumbling approach that leads to housing shortages, and so on.

SOPHIE

Yes, but as climate chaos moves on, our homeland may become an even more desirable destination for migrants seeking a better chance of survival, and climate refugees will flood in from elsewhere.

TINA

Tina (cont'd)

It all sounds pretty desperate.

GRANDPA

Yes, it does. The human species shall have its magic mayfly moment in the sun, and then disappear from the universe quite unnoticed.
And so I wish you well, but, for the post-war generation, the carnival is over: not for all species on this planet, but for the human species, and many more.

SOPHIE

So how long have you thought like this?

GRANDPA

About climate chaos? For the last thirty-five years.

SOPHIE

No. How long have you believed the situation for the younger generation is hopeless, old-chap?

GRANDPA

For several years. Two thousand seventeen was the turning point, when the USA withdrew from the Paris Agreement. But hopeless is the wrong word: it's too black and white. Almost hopeless would be more accurate.

TINA

Yes, but technology has not saved the day yet. Have you got anything else, Grandpa? We're looking for answers, not problems.

GRANDPA

(Dejectedly, perhaps from
one extreme corner of stage.)

Not really. No magic wand. Just trying to survive in a refuge sounds like the only option.

TINA

Perhaps, humans are just a short-sighted species.

MAIA

All species are just too short-sighted. And the greatest infighting and competition exists within a species.

GRANDPA

Well, the short answer is: humanity's time is up, and any solution will require that the toothpaste be squeezed back into the tube.

LIEUTENANT

What?

GRANDPA

Oh, once internal combustion engines and nuclear weapons were invented, there was no going back to innocence.

TINA

Is that where the post-war generation went wrong?

GRANDPA

Maybe.

Well, again, very briefly: humans are a tropical species, and, just like some other great apes, grew up in Africa in tropical forest. Our minimal body hair is not an adaptation to temperate climates; quite the reverse. Tina, a question: why are you wearing clothes today?

TINA

What? It'd be a bit cold and rude without, wouldn't it?

GRANDPA

Exactly. You and I are both wearing clothes now because our ancestors originated in the tropics, and our bodies are not well-adapted to living in colder climates. By the way, it's not rude without them. That's just our culture.

(Removes cap and makes as if
to remove his T-shirt)

LIEUTENANT

(finding Grandpa tiresome)

Okay. That's enough already. No need to put on a show.

(Grandpa replaces cap)

GRANDPA

I'm just extremely pessimistic about the outcome of emissions control. But for you four, and your generation, it just means that the Coalition against plastics and climate chaos will need to go global. We'll need to find partners right across the world.

(LIEUTENANT's mobile phone
pings. LIEUTENANT checks,
looks up at MAIA, and nods.)

LIEUTENANT

Okay. Maia, let's go. The police've gone. Take care,

Lieutenant (cont'd)

everyone.

(TINA's mobile pings. TINA
checks the message.
LIEUTENANT and MAIA wave
goodbye and exit.)

TINA

Fantastic! What a relief! Tamara says she's making apple pie. That's code to say she's found a safe house. But what I wanted to know, Grandpa, was: how've you coped emotionally? How d'you live with this stuff and stay positive?

GRANDPA

With great difficulty. There is a great disconnect between the gloom that I understand intellectually, and how good it feels to walk along the beach in the morning light on a quiet and peaceful sunny day. I am always surprised by the scale of environmental disasters because, emotionally, I'm not ready for them. Intellectually believing something is not the same as emotionally believing it. It's probably better that way, isn't it? ...

TINA

Whatev.

GRANDPA

I just enjoy my twilight years as best I can.

TINA

And for me?

GRANDPA

Oh, you, darling, yes, of course. ... Dear God, I don't envy you in your position, Tina: you'll see the end of humanity, or the beginning of the end. According to mitochondrial DNA, once upon a time, thousands of years ago, humanity was reduced to just a tiny number of survivors. Perhaps this'll happen again, although this time round maybe our species won't come through at all. Given our recent track record, there is no reason at all to hope. Why would I mislead you, darling, by pretending that hope still exists?

TINA

(Quietly but distinctly)

And what am I to say now?

GRANDPA

Grandpa (cont'd)

I have no idea. I can't even imagine it. It's like a scene from Dachau. Nothing matters any more. So what, actually, do you think, Tina?

TINA

Oh, why didn't anyone do something?
What kind of stupid, heartless ducklings were you, bastards?

(Pause; sighs; then speaking
factually and quietly without
menace)

The post-war generation betrayed us. They stole our future. Why are they still here? They are truly just deadweight, overcrowding the lifeboat. ... Or else it's the wealthy and well-to-do, the big spenders, who are the enemy. ... If my generation is to survive, we would have to rid ourselves of ... of the excess baggage.

(Fades to longish pause;
Grandpa looks down and
finally sighs.)

GRANDPA

But maybe it's not too late to create a refuge.

TINA

I could tell myself there's a future for me, I suppose. But I know, in my heart, it's not true. There's not even a proper plan. ... Just wishful thinking and false optimism. Neither bravery nor true grit will save us. ... It won't be like a Hollywood epic.

(Pause; sighs; with slight
shrug)

Whatev. ... It'll be the end of the sparrows.
The end of the sparrows.

(Pause)

SOPHIE

(Standing close to TINA.)

Look, Tina, perhaps somewhere, in a refuge, you'll be able to see out your life in peace.

TINA

Oh, maybe. But there'll be no children. Never. Not even one child.
I just would've wanted one baby. But what would've been the point?

GRANDPA

Not my intention, darling, to dissuade you of that.

TINA

Of course. ... But that's what happened.

(SOPHIE puts an arm round
TINA, and they wander off
stage. GRANDPA pauses,
staring into space, and then
wanders off stage after
them.)

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF SCENE)

** Scene **#5

SETTINGS:

NEXT DAY. Abandoned warehouse that serves as Coalition headquarters and is used for meetings. There is a podium (made up of wooden pallets), with a music stand facing the audience, and a homeland flag, and a UN flag as backdrop,. Microphones and teleprompters can be used if available.

AT RISE :

COLONEL and LIEUTENANT, wearing civilian attire, are already seated among audience, either at the front, or in an opera box, where they can face the audience, preferably on opposite sides of the auditorium. They use microphones if possible. Security personnel are also evident. SOPHIE is standing at lectern: nearby is MAIA, who is wearing military-style outfit, with hair inside cap, and with visible pistol in a holster, without makeup. MAIA never smiles throughout this scene. The longer speeches can be read in the same way as at a press conference in real life, looking up and pausing naturally; alternatively, if

GRANDPA

Okay, Sophie. If you think you'll be able to takeover the government, then let's us hear your campaign speech. Just a role-play practice, you understand.

(GRANDPA retires to stand in auditorium aisle, preferably holding microphone.)

SOPHIE

The first topic is lifeboat economics, which is based on the idea that this planet is our lifeboat in space. The planet has two sources of energy: the sun, and geothermal energy. (COLONEL waves hand.) Apart from that, humans rely on thirty centimeters of topsoil, and on a layer of

Sophie (cont'd)

atmosphere a few kilometers high for survival; and also on the earth's magnetic field for protection from solar radiation.

(COLONEL waves hand wildly.)

Yes, Man-with-beret?

GRANDPA

And CUT! ENOUGH! I'm bored already.

The topic is lifeboat economics? Then we need a lifeboat!

LIEUTENANT

That's obvious! The audience are all sitting in the lifeboat already.

The stage is the quarterdeck, the command post. All aboard lifeboat number three!

GRANDPA

Thank you, sir, you're right, we're all in the same boat. So, what does the lifeboat represent?

SOPHIE

Our planet in space, and the ecosystem that provides our habitat, that gives us breathable air, and rainfall for our crops.

On our lifeboat, water is limited, and so is the food supply, and the lifeboat has a limited carrying capacity. There's no mother ship; and no-one's coming to rescue us. The term 'lifeboat economics' refers to all these aspects of human survival.

(COLONEL waves hand wildly.)

Currently, there are eight billion humans crowded onto one lifeboat, and no-one is in overall command.

(COLONEL points to flag with
UN logo, ascends stage,
removes flag and tosses it
off-stage into the ocean.)

COLONEL

I'm in command here.

LIEUTENANT

(standing and waving cane.)

Oh yeah, like the Titanic: You blind old fart! The earth is unsinkable. What iceberg? "I see no iceberg", says the Colonel!

COLONEL

Colonel (cont'd)

Sit down, Lieutenant, or I'll have you in irons. I'm in charge here.

LIEUTENANT

Oh no, you're not!

COLONEL

Oh yes, I am.

LIEUTENANT

Oh no, you're not!

COLONEL

Oh yes, I am.

(Security and/or stagehands
in yellow gilets escort
COLONEL back to seat in
auditorium.)

LIEUTENANT

Oh no, you're not!

SOPHIE

As I was saying, ordinary economics concerns itself with what happens inside the lifeboat: who gets what, who sits where; and how we humans squabble among ourselves.

(COLONEL waves hand.) But classic economics does not deal with keeping the lifeboat afloat; that is, keeping the ecosystem functioning properly.

Yes?

COLONEL

Environmental economics gives us the idea that the human impact on the natural world is a function of population, affluence, and technology. Why not just use those concepts?

SOPHIE

Those concepts are fine, but far too simplistic, and economics uses present value calculations to discount away long-term impacts on the natural world. A much more in-depth understanding of ecology is required.

For example, if one looks at agriculture a thousand years ago, the wheat yield was two-to-one, whereas today the yield is six-to-one. So it sounds as if the technology has improved. But maybe one side effect is that soil fertility is being depleted three times quicker.

(SOPHIE looks at MAIA
enquiringly.)

MAIA

The human population aspect is usually ignored. But it is impossible to deal with climate chaos without simultaneously managing the total headcount of humans on the planet. It's like a farmer trying to avoid overgrazing, without keeping tabs on the number of sheep and cattle vis-à-vis the acreage and pasture growth, or the amount of fertilizer run-off into the nearby stream. So the next question is how and why do we come to have too many people on this planet?

GRANDPA

(Loudly, and waving arm while
walking up aisle toward
stage.)

And CUT! ENOUGH! Just stop now.

Look, Maia, Sophie. It's a campaign speech, or a press conference. People don't need academics, nor deep explanations. They want promises, what, when and how much. They want slogans. They want you to sway them emotionally. They don't want facts and figures, nor some academic theory; they want someone, a person, to believe in. If they believe in you, if they trust you, they will vote for you. They think with their hearts, not their heads.

There's something else that is wrong too.

Look at our lifeboat: it's overcrowded. Where shall we grow our crops? Where are the forests? Where are the unspoilt conservation areas? Why do we have so many people in the lifeboat? Eighty percent of the area should be reserved for the natural world. Humans should only occupy twenty percent of available land.

(Stage-hands may fill the
stage with forest, birds,
parrots, animals etc.)

COLONEL

Then why don't you jump overboard yourself and give us more room, old-chap?

GRANDPA

Yes, Colonel: perhaps you'd like to help.

(Leads COLONEL onstage again,
and they stand side-by-side
near the front edge of

Grandpa (cont'd)

stage.)

Let's jump together, Colonel. In fact, let's everybody over fifty jump overboard together, and stop being such a burden on the planet and the younger generations.

COLONEL

What? Don't be daft, old-man.

GRANDPA

We're looking for heroes here, Colonel.

COLONEL

Ready, steady, jump!

(Neither actually jumps.)

COLONEL

I didn't think you had the balls for it, old-chap. And for myself, I don't see the need.

GRANDPA

If you are going to be in command of our lifeboat, Colonel, then your first task is to choose which people to throw overboard.

COLONEL

I'm not convinced that we need to throw anyone overboard, old-man. Where is your evidence for that? What is the carrying-capacity of our lifeboat-planet?

GRANDPA

A sensible carrying capacity would be under two billion people: we had no trouble feeding everyone when I was a child.

COLONEL

But we've made progress since then old-man. New technology, the green revolution, better yields, more acreage.

GRANDPA

Oh yes, I agree. But is our present agricultural system sustainable into the future? Or are we doing irreversible damage to our own habitat? That is the question, Colonel.

COLONEL

We're doing fine. You're worrying over nothing, old-man.

GRANDPA

Am I? And where is your evidence, Colonel? Why do we need

Grandpa (cont'd)

all these people? What is the point? Why meddle with danger? Why court disaster by constantly walking so close to the edge of the cliff?

(Short pause: stage-hands wheel one or two wheelie bins either onto stage, or just in front of stage. One bin has two gumboots sticking out, as if someone has been tossed head-first inside: use broomstick inside each gumboot for support.)

GRANDPA

I've got a better idea, Colonel. Instead of jumping, why don't we recycle ourselves? Look, there're the recycling bins. That's what I did with my last wife: just put her out for collection.

COLONEL

I'll dump you into a wheelie-bin, old-man. It's for the common weal. When is bin day for you, old-chap?

GRANDPA

Not today. Thank you for your help, Colonel.

(GRANDPA dismisses COLONEL with a wave. COLONEL returns to seat in auditorium, and GRANDPA to rear of auditorium aisle. Stage-hands remove bins. MAIA looks at SOPHIE.)

MAIA

Colonel?

COLONEL

Ma'am, the GDP of our homeland is a tiny percentage of the world economy and world pollution, so nothing that happens here can of itself save the planet. So, why should we put ourselves at a disadvantage on world markets compared to our competitors?

MAIA

Because climate is not the only issue. It's also about the industrialisation of food production and agriculture, and about the consequences of producing food which is 'never

Maia (cont'd)

out of season'.

Meanwhile, the clock is ticking: climate chaos has set in faster than anticipated. Neoliberal economics, which permeates world institutions, is flawed. After all, neoliberalism is what drove humans into this shit, this shit-hole in the first place.

World institutions talk of return on investment, sustainable development and so on: they seek a compromise between financial returns and damage to the habitat.

GRANDPA

(Loudly, and waving arm while walking up aisle toward stage.)

CUT! ENOUGH! Just stop!

Still not good enough, Maia. It's all theory. Just tell us what the new government will do, and when. Promises get votes, not theory.

(COLONEL raises hand)

COLONEL

So where is the evidence that the situation as bad as you paint it?

LIEUTENANT

(Waving cane.)

The level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is no longer normal: it has risen by fifty percent over the last sixty-five years. The other GHG gases also show increases. Any fool knows that. Do wake up, Colonel!

MAIA

All the relevant projections can be found via an internet search asking for the effectiveness of the Paris Agreement. Why haven't you done your homework already, Colonel?

MAIA

One might think that the world is run by elected governments, but many governments have sold out to big business ... No, that's putting it too strongly ... One can say that there is a lot of business lobbying, governments bear the responsibility for GDP, and a market-based approach to government effectively means running the homeland as a business. That would be my first proposition. It is called the financialization of life. Do you accept that proposition, Colonel?

COLONEL

Colonel (cont'd)

(Cautiously)

Absolutely not, Ma'am. Business is business. It's been like that ever since our ancestors climbed down out of the trees and set off across the savannah chasing dinosaurs for breakfast.

LIEUTENANT

(Briefly standing.)

Dinosaurs died out long before humans arrived on the scene. We don't need your fantasy, Colonel.

SOPHIE

Money (or the economic system) does not take the natural world or the ecosystem into account properly. One cannot, for instance, put a fifty dollar bill in front of a cow, and thereby incentivise the cow to produce more milk. It will not succeed.

COLONEL

(loudly and triumphantly.)

Of course not! The cow will just eat the banknote!

GRANDPA

(Loudly, and waving arm while walking up aisle toward stage.)

CUT! CUT!

Let's cut to the chase, Maia.

MAIA

But let us now move on to the main announcements.

SOPHIE

(Optionally reads from music stand or teleprompter; pauses and/or looks up between points.)

Firstly, a full Climate Chaos Emergency, and national emergency has been declared, and the Director has issued the following edict.

This edict applies to all personnel commenting, reporting, interviewing, or otherwise engaged in public media such as newspapers, online publishing, TV, radio, hosts and participants in live talk-back shows, newscasts, podcasts, videos, or similar.

All comment and reporting must be evidence-based, with traceable sources and references.

(LIEUTENANT raises hand.)

Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT

What about officials speaking on condition of anonymity?

MAIA

That won't happen.

(COLONEL waves papers. MAIA
and SOPHIE exchange glances:
SOPHIE nods.)

SOPHIE

Colonel.

COLONEL

This is an intrusion on our right to free speech! The
press association will fight all this in court.

SOPHIE

Indeed, the association will, Colonel. But that was not a
question.

MAIA

Coalition policy is constrained by public opinion.
(COLONEL waves hand.) Propaganda, and the way
environmental issues are socially constructed, must
therefore be controlled.
Colonel?

COLONEL

Define propaganda, Ma'am.

MAIA

Propaganda is characterized by: manipulative,
deceitful intent, a systematic campaign, and failure to
engage with evidence.
Propaganda changes history. Propaganda started the
Crusades, and the doctrine of discovery underpinned
colonialism. Propaganda feeds current international
conflicts.

COLONEL

(Standing to speak,
interrupting.)

Climate chaos has never been proven in court. Doesn't that
undermine your entire argument, Ma'am?

MAIA

Have you personally read the latest IPCC report, Colonel?

COLONEL

I don't recall exactly, Ma'am.

MAIA

Then, Colonel, you are hardly in a position to have an opinion; and in no position to disprove or question the evidence.

(COLONEL waves hand.)

Colonel?

COLONEL

Further question: what is the position with regard to religious activities? Surely, preaching falls within your definition of propaganda, Ma'am ! Does the government intend to close down all religious meeting-places? Won't that just drive religion underground? Will we have martyrs all over again? Will pious martyrs be fed to the lions?

MAIA

Colonel, the Coalition intends to disallow the registration of religious societies as charities, wherever their charitable work is, in part, proselytising, and constitutes anti-government propaganda.

(COLONEL raises hand.)

Publishing by any organisation, religious or not, will be subject to the same guidelines as mainstream journalism. Colonel?

COLONEL

Follow-up question: so what would happen to those who failed to comply, Ma'am?

MAIA

On a lifeboat, what would you do, Colonel, with those who would continually foment unrest? Would you toss them overboard, Colonel?

COLONEL

Why do we need to be ruled by technocrats, Ma'am? What happened to democracy and freedom?

MAIA

We still have democracy and freedom, Colonel. It's just that they are restricted for the duration of the climate emergency.

COLONEL

Follow-up question, Ma'am: when will the restrictions be lifted?

(GRANPA starts banging from
without on rear door to
auditorium.)

GRANDPA

FREEDOM! DEMOCRACY! FREEDOM! DEMOCRACY!

MAIA

At the end of the climate emergency, Colonel.

COLONEL

Follow-up, Ma'am: when will the climate emergency be over?

SOPHIE

Not in your lifetime, Colonel, nor even in the lifetime of your great-great-great grandchildren. Maybe in twenty or thirty generations.

COLONEL

(Standing: then loudly and
clearly)

I just don't care!

LIEUTENANT

(Standing: then loudly and
clearly, and rudely)

Shut your gob, you pile of shit!

GRANDPA

(Banging on rear doors to
auditorium.)

FREEDOM! DEMOCRACY! FREEDOM! DEMOCRACY!
And CUT!

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF SCENE)

** Scene **#6

SETTINGS: Placard: NEXT DAY. A mock press conference room and podium, with a lectern or music stand facing the audience, and a flag as backdrop. Use microphones and tele-prompters if available.

AT RISE : COLONEL and LIEUTENANT, both in civilian attire, are preferably sitting in front stalls or aisle seats where venue permits. Use (boom) microphones if available. Armed security personnel also evident. MAIA is standing at lectern. Nearby is SOPHIE wearing quasi-military camouflage, and a cap. The longer speeches can be read in the same way as at a press conference in real life, looking up and pausing naturally; alternatively, if possible, SOPHIE and MAIA move around the stage, using a microphone.

MAIA

The Coalition will implement Value Chain Emissions labelling. In the supermarket, each individual product will be labelled with the total greenhouse gas emissions incurred in production, stated as carbon dioxide equivalents. There will be an exemption for fresh fruit and vegetables.

(COLONEL raises hand)

Colonel?

COLONEL

What exactly do you mean by emissions, Ma'am? Vehicle emissions, or what?

MAIA

Greenhouse gas emissions.

COLONEL

And which gases are they, Ma'am?

(MAIA and SOPHIE exchange looks, SOPHIE nods.)

SOPHIE

Colonel, you can easily fact-check this on the internet. The greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and sulphur hexafluoride.

MAIA

Secondly, the Coalition will move our homeland from an open democracy toward a democratic noocracy; that is, toward government by the wise. In our lifeboat situation, as a refuge, our homeland, our people cannot be governed by unqualified, ignorant clowns. So, to this end, all elected members of government, and accredited journalists will be required to hold a professional qualification in science and technology.

COLONEL

What happens if a journalist is just too busy with reporting, Ma'am?

SOPHIE

You will lose your press pass, Colonel, and your media accreditation. The same will apply to radio and TV hosts, newsreaders, and presenters, and commentators. Disinformation on public media will not be tolerated.

(SOPHIE looks at MAIA, who
nods and takes over.)

SOPHIE

The Coalition will initiate a relocation process, called the NADIZ program. It stands for New Alternative De-Industrialised Zones.

(Colonel raises hand.)

At heart, it is about setting up new business parks in the Refuge area, and encouraging people to move there. Colonel?

COLONEL

Objection. Forced resettlement is a fascist tool.

MAIA

Overruled. This resettlement is voluntary. You may choose to remain behind, if you wish, Colonel.

SOPHIE

Overall, the NADIZ program is intended to support a well-planned, well-managed retreat from vulnerable coastal and storm-prone areas. Our biggest coastal city will become more of a winter holiday resort.

(COLONEL raises a hand)

Sophie (cont'd)

Colonel?

COLONEL

Surely all these issues are decades into the future? Why not leave it to the next generation?.

(MAIA looks at SOPHIE, who nods.)

SOPHIE

The Coalition IS the next generation, Colonel.

COLONEL

That's just all another grandiose scheme, another waste of taxpayer's money.

MAIA

That's just your own private opinion, Colonel.

(Very short pause.)

Next topic: our homeland faces an ageing population, and, under our present voting system, older voters dominate the political landscape, whereas it is the younger age cohorts that will actually have to deal with the consequences of climate chaos.

SOPHIE

Senior voters will therefore be placed on a separate, senior, electoral roll and have their own representatives, called senators, who will have the power to review legislation.

Voters will automatically migrate to the senior voting roll at age fifty.

(COLONEL raises hand)

Colonel?

COLONEL

What if I don't want to vote on the senior electoral roll, Ma'am?

SOPHIE

You still have the option not to vote at all, Colonel.

COLONEL

(Loudly, interrupting)

It's just not democratic!

MAIA

Democracy is not necessarily the best option in a lifeboat. Would you choose, Colonel, to put elite twats in charge of a lifeboat? Or trained crew?

COLONEL

People have rights!

SOPHIE

Oh yes, Colonel. That means that younger people have the right to do whatever is necessary for their own survival. That is all. The Coalition is not taking away your right to vote. We are merely putting you, Colonel, on a separate roll to elect representatives in a senate or Council of the Elders.

MAIA

Moving on to the next item, the Coalition will appoint a panel of seven Guardians of Nature to the Legislative Council; and every single piece of legislation will need to be signed off by one of them. These Guardians may also issue directives to Government, and force the government of the day to comply by going to the Supreme Court. These constitutional changes are needed to prevent backtracking on existing and future promises to protect nature.

SOPHIE

The seven Guardians of Nature will be appointed by an Electoral College, made up of sixty-three members with appropriate professorial qualifications, appointed for a period of thirty years. The quorum will be twenty-one members.

(COLONEL and LIEUTENANT raise
hands simultaneously.)

The idea here is to forestall any attempt to bias the Electoral College with members who favour business interests.

Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT

Why's all this extra bureaucracy necessary, Ma'am? What's the rationale behind it?

SOPHIE

Very simply to protect the natural world in the future, Lieutenant, and prevent business interests watering down the protections as time goes by.

MAIA

Next: the Coalition will advance age-threshold for state pension to seventy-seven, and the state pension will become means-tested.

(COLONEL waves a hand)

SOPHIE

For many years, it has been common knowledge that the

Sophie (cont'd)

present pension scheme is unsustainable and unaffordable. The post-war generation will no longer have their nose in the funding trough, to the detriment of younger people and their children.

Colonel?

COLONEL

Why seventy-seven, Ma'am?

SOPHIE

We could alter it to eighty-seven, if you wish, Colonel.

MAIA

The Coalition will also introduce legislation to make assisted dying legal for anyone aged fifty or over.

(COLONEL waves a hand)

Yes, Colonel.

COLONEL

Does this not amount to war on the elderly?

SOPHIE

Yes, Colonel.

COLONEL

But Ma'am, the Coalition've stolen my time in retirement, my pension payments, my future.

SOPHIE

Just like the post-war generation took away my own future, Colonel. And the post-war generation ruined my future, my children's future, and my grandchildren's future, the same for generations to come.

You have no grounds for complaint.

It's karma.

(COLONEL raises hand.)

Colonel?

COLONEL

If international co-operation is essential to fix climate change, how is the Coalition going to obtain universal co-operation, Ma'am? World peace seems to be a prerequisite, and that is unachievable. So what's the Coalition's plan?

MAIA

That's a very good argument, Colonel. Climate chaos cannot be solved on a global scale unless there's world peace first, I agree. But the prognosis is that world population will diminish by the end of this century by well over eighty percent, whether as a consequence of war, starvation, one-child per family, pandemic, a nuclear

Maia (cont'd)

exchange, or whatever. At that time in the future, when there may be less than half a billion humans left, then a sustainable society will become a possibility. That's why refuge is needed, so that our people here will be numbered among the survivors. We're not just idealists gazing at the stars; we just want to survive and our children and grandchildren to survive too. Is that clear, Colonel?

COLONEL

Yes, but how can you be sure that the human population will diminish by eighty percent by the end of the century? Where is the evidence?

MAIA

Of course, there's no absolute certainty in science, Colonel, but most projections show a substantial decline in human population by the end of this century. For instance, the population of China is expected to halve by two thousand and sixty, thanks to the one-child-per-family policy. The outlook for the twenty-first century is a great die-off; both of humans, and other species. Make no mistake, Colonel!

(MAIA looks at SOPHIE, who
nods.)

SOPHIE

From an ecosystem standpoint, no species can be an apex-predator and concurrently overrun the planet like rabbits. That'd be ecologically impossible, Colonel.

(SOPHIE looks at MAIA, who
nods.)

MAIA

Up till now, little's been achieved to lower greenhouse gas emissions. In nineteen hundred and ninety, greenhouse gas emissions were thirty-eight billion tonnes; in two thousand twenty-one, over fifty-four billion tonnes, a forty-four percent increase.

(Lieutenant raises hand)

SOPHIE

Of course, it's cumulative emissions that dictate climate;

Sophie (cont'd)

but annual emissions're still rising, and oil companies haven't been reined in or closed down.

(Lieutenant lowers hand)

MAIA

Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was measured at over four-hundred-twenty-five parts per million at Mauna Loa in April two thousand and twenty-three. This represents a fifty percent increase over the last seventy-five years, and is the highest for the last eight hundred thousand years, according to the evidence from ice cores taken in the Antarctic.

(COLONEL stands and waves
papers agitatedly.)

This evidence (and the work of the IPCC) predicts that the world'll achieve a plus one-and-a-half degree warming (which was originally our target for the end of the century) within the next few years.

MAIA

Sit down, Colonel.

(COLONEL sits down again.)

SOPHIE

Colonel?

COLONEL

At this point, I must object.

MAIA

What's the nature of the objection, Colonel?

COLONEL

The data was falsified.

MAIA

You cannot recall even reading the relevant report, Colonel, so how would you know?

SOPHIE

Do your homework, Colonel.

(SOPHIE looks at MAIA, who
nods.)

MAIA

So, the Coalition is banning all air traffic movements involving fossil-fuelled aircraft, from midnight tomorrow. There'll be an exception for military aircraft, military drones, and military helicopters, whether used by our own air force or our allies. There'll also be a short-term exception made for Police, Ambulance, Fire and Emergency services.

(LIEUTENANT raises a hand.)

Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT

What's the position on international flights and air-cargo that don't refuel in NZ? And what about private aircraft? And hydrogen-powered aircraft?

MAIA

The ban's not on refuelling. The ban is on landings and takeoffs. So it applies to international flights whether or not they refuel. As to private aircraft, the same rules apply: no exceptions.

SOPHIE

As for hydrogen-powered aircraft, a third-party certificate will be required which shows that the hydrogen was manufactured from non-fossil sources.

LIEUTENANT

One further question: what exactly d'you mean by 'fossil-fuelled' in relation to aircraft? What about sustainable aircraft fuels?

(MAIA looks at SOPHIE, who nods.)

SOPHIE

At present, there's no simple, single answer to jet fuel, Lieutenant. In principle, sustainable bio-fuels, are produced without using food crops, prime agricultural land, or fresh water. Aircraft claiming exemption because they're using sustainable fuel will need to produce third-party certification to prove it.

(COLONEL raises hand)

Colonel?

COLONEL

What about the inconvenience and disruption?

SOPHIE

Sophie (cont'd)

(Smiles quizzically, and
shakes head gently)

Your personal convenience is secondary to solving the
climate chaos issue, Colonel.

MAIA

With regard to land transport, all imports of fossil-fuel
vehicles, including hybrids, will cease as of midnight
tonight.

Second, for all registered vehicles already in-country,
whether new or old, there will be restrictions on the
amount of petrol, diesel, and other fossil fuels that can
be purchased each week. That means fossil-fuel rationing
for vehicles.

(LIEUTENANT waves order
paper.)

For private passenger vehicles, the weekly fuel
allowance'll be fifteen litres per vehicle. This is the
same as in the USA during World War Two.
There're extra allowances for vehicles weighing over
three-point-five tonnes; and the transition period'll be
longer.

Lieutenant?

LIEUTENANT

Will there be an exemption for classic cars, or
unregistered farm-vehicles?

SOPHIE

There're no special exemptions for classic cars,
Lieutenant. Farm vehicles will now need to be registered
under a new category called off-road vehicles, in order to
obtain a fuel allowance.

LIEUTENANT

What about the fact that some electricity generation is
based on coal?

MAIA

The last remaining coal-fired power station's being
mothballed for the foreseeable future. That means that
electricity generation will be all green.

(LIEUTENANT raises hand.
COLONEL stands, waving a hand
negligently, and remains
standing.)

MAIA

Sit down, Colonel!

SOPHIE

Lieutenant?

(COLONEL sits.)

LIEUTENANT

How're people supposed to live on fifteen liters of fuel per week? Most people cannot afford electric cars.

MAIA

Americans coped in the Second World War, Lieutenant. And electric cars're only a stop-gap solution. The answer is that we all have to change our lifestyle. Nothing else'll be good enough.

SOPHIE

Colonel?

COLONEL

Why was this not done earlier, with more notice, and with a longer transition period?

(Stage-hand in yellow gilet
leads SOPHIE off-stage.)

MAIA

As explained earlier, Colonel, the timetable has been moved up, because the rest of the world has not kept to their zero-carbon targets on time.

COLONEL

Why is a regulatory regime necessary? Surely, if the market were deregulated, then market forces'd find an equitable solution?

MAIA

There's no evidence, Colonel, to support your assertion.

COLONEL

Surely, the answer is more deregulation and privatisation!

LIEUTENANT

Shut your mouth, Colonel. That's a Neanderthal solution!

MAIA

(Tersely)

Speaking on behalf of all Neanderthals, we are deeply

Maia (cont'd)

offended by the slur, Lieutenant. After all, it was not us who screwed up the planet. Neanderthals were not that stupid.

COLONEL

You say yours is an evidence-based government. Where is the evidence for climate change?

LIEUTENANT

(Yelling.)

Shut your gob, old-man!

MAIA

Are you actually questioning whether scientific evidence for human-induced climate chaos exists, Colonel?

COLONEL

Yes. Show me the evidence!

MAIA

The original evidence was presented by James Hansen to a US Senate committee in nineteen hundred and eighty-eight. You have had ample time to study it, Colonel, and all the subsequent supporting evidence from the ice core samples. Have you not done this already, Colonel? Are you seriously implying that there's no evidence, Colonel?

COLONEL

Yes. Where is the evidence?

MAIA

Let us be clear. Are you denying the very existence of evidence for climate human-induced change, Colonel?

COLONEL

(Triumphantly)

Yes. For the third time, where's the evidence?

MAIA

It's not my job to show you the evidence, Colonel. It's your job as a journalist to do your homework.

COLONEL

(More triumphantly)

Just show me the evidence!

MAIA

If you continually and repeatedly question the existence of evidence for climate chaos, Colonel, you're undermining public trust in the government and good public order. That'd make your good self, Colonel, an enemy of the state. Please, sit down at once, Colonel.

(Stage-hand in yellow gilet catches MAIA by the sleeve and leads her off-stage.)

COLONEL

(Defiantly and looking round and moving somewhat toward the rear of the aisle in auditorium)

See! They have no evidence!

LIEUTENANT

(Ascends stage.)

You're lies and shit, eat your dick, you old bastard!

GRANDPA

(Rhythmically FREE-EE-DOM!
DEM-OC-RACY!)

(Encouraging audience to chant in unison; then advancing slowly up the aisle toward the stage.)

FREEDOM! DEMOCRACY! FREEDOM! DEMOCRACY! FREEDOM!
DEMOCRACY!

(Repeat ad lib.)

(GRANDPA gestures for audience to be quiet.)

(Short pause, then LIEUTENANT speaks to audience from stage.)

LIEUTENANT

Whatever happens, this Coalition will never get elected, or form a government. People don't want to change their lifestyle. People aren't interested in facts and figures either. Even if they ask for evidence, people won't look at it. They are just looking for any excuse to carry on as they have always done. People expect the government to do their job and sort it all out with some magical technical innovation, so they can get on with their lives in peace, or they are just too busy and desperate to earn a living, and have no thought for the future. That is our beloved species, humans. I guess we've always been like that.

GRANDPA

FREEDOM! DEMOCRACY! FREEDOM! DEMOCRACY! FREEDOM!

Grandpa (cont'd)

DEMOCRACY!

LIEUTENANT

Even if the Coalition somehow came to power, its ideas and policies are too far ahead of the majority of the public, and so there would be intense opposition. The Coalition's ideas and policies are effectively anti-business in many ways, so the business lobby would be against the government. Even if the Coalition succeeded in implementing its policies for a while, it would sooner or later fall, probably sooner, and then all the good work would be undone. In any case, the planet would still not be saved, as that is determined by what happens in the big polluting countries overseas. So the Coalition is all for nothing. Or at least it is almost all for nothing. And most importantly, there is now no time to persuade everyone to change their lifestyle overnight, that would take a generation. The necessary changes cannot be implemented fast enough.

COLONEL

(loudly.)

What a pile of feminist fantasy! Nothing that is provable science!

LIEUTENANT

If you believe in freedom, and free speech, Colonel, why not just shut up and listen?
In our earthly form, one isn't on this planet for long, just passing through. Agreed, we cause a lot of damage on our travels. But, most of our problems come from the mind, our beliefs, attitudes. It's near impossible to change someone else, only oneself, and that's challenging enough. Trying to make people give up consumer lifestyles would be like torture. We're addicted to distraction.

.....
We

cannot face reality. Worrying about the future is pointless, the future will come, be the next generation ready or not.

But, when it comes to survival, the only answer is to find a refuge.

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF SCENE)

** Scene **#7

SETTINGS: Placard: TWO YEARS LATER. At
mainline train station. On
platform ready to board.

AT RISE : GRANDPA with long staff, and MAIA
are standing, each with two
rucksacks, sleeping bag, hats,
hiking-boots, etc. Both are
wearing face masks, and surgical
gloves. MAIA is checking her
mobile.

 GRANDPA
 (Temporarily dropping
 facemask)
I always remember the words of Nemonte Nequimo, from the
rainforest in Ecuador.
"When you say that you are urgently looking for climate
solutions, yet continue to build a world economy based on
extraction and pollution, we know you are lying, because
we are the closest to the land, and the first to hear her
cries."

 MAIA
 (Temporarily dropping
 facemask)
Yes, yes, old man. But let's get on the train now. We
cannot wait any longer for the Lieutenant.

 (GRANPA and MAIA pick up
 their backpacks, and begin to
 move off-stage.

 GRANDPA
We'll have to go without him. We just don't know who is
infected with the virus yet.

 MAIA
Where are Tina and Tamara?

 GRANDPA
They're already down at the cherry orchard with Sophie:
they left last week for the summer break.
What's the latest on the virus?

 MAIA
There are outbreaks all through Asia and India, Europe,

Maia (cont'd)

South and North America. Apparently, it might be a new variant of the Nipah virus. The mortality rate is currently over fifty percent. With people still flying hither and thither, the virus will soon spread. Our own government has already shut down air travel: let's hope it's not too late.

GRANDPA

Yes, this is the last train South.

(Pause)

(Announcement from off-stage:
The train for the South is
about to depart.)

(Pause)

(LIEUTANANT, wearing
facemask, appears from
opposite side of stage, with
his own two backpacks, looks
around expectantly, then
hurries off toward train.)

** Scene **#8

SETTINGS: Placard: ONE WEEK LATER. At top of
pass to valley where farmstead
and cherry orchard lie.
Optionally, a log for actors to
sit on.

AT RISE : No-one on stage.

(LIEUTENANT enters, wearing
rucksack, frontpack, sunhat,
sunglasses, and hiking boots.
LIEUTENANT stops mid-stage
and unloads rucksacks. Then
stands, drinking from water
flask, and gazing forward
into distance. Pause. MAIA
enters wearing two rucksacks
etc, unloads rucksacks, and
flops to the ground, and
drinks from her own water
flask, breathing noticeably.)

LIEUTENANT
Not far now. Downhill. I can see the farmstead and the
orchards already. About two clicks. We should make it
before dark.

(MAIA nods.)

MAIA
Just as well we started early.

(Long pause. Then GRANPA
enters slowly with rucksacks,
using staff, and breathing
very heavily. LIEUTENANT
helps him to unload
rucksacks.)

LIEUTENANT
Well done, old-chap, bravo. We're taking a well-earned
rest.

(GRANDPA slowly, stiffly,
sits down, still breathing
heavily.)

LIEUTENANT

At one point, I thought you weren't going to make it,
old-man.

GRANDPA

(Between heavy breaths.)

Me too.

(Pause while GRANDPA recovers
to normal breathing.)

LIEUTENANT

(Gazing toward orchards,
possibly using
field-glasses.)

So, what's the story with the orchards, did you plant them
yourself, old-man?

GRANDPA

(May stand.)

No, the original orchard was started by the Lopakhin
family, in the nineteen-twenties. But these are sour
cherries, so the trees only last twenty years or so. Every
year we're replanting some new trees.

The other thing is: cherry trees must have a dormant
period in the winter: otherwise, they don't blossom.
Thus, over time, the warmer climate will dictate that the
whole orchard will need to be replanted with a different
crop.

LIEUTENANT

(Gazing toward orchards,
possibly using
field-glasses.)

What about the storms?

GRANDPA

(Gazing toward orchards,
possibly using
field-glasses.)

Tell me about it. The heavy rain keeps splitting the
fruit apart, and we can't sell it. We're gonna have to
diversify, find something else.

MAIA

Maia (cont'd)

So tell me, why do you call the cherry orchard a refuge, old-man?

GRANDPA

No, you've misunderstood, Lieutenant. This whole of this region is the refuge, because here it's usually cooler, subtropical, whereas the other island will become completely tropical, with tropical pests and diseases. And second, the hydroelectric dams here are still working and providing electricity for the north-south railway which everybody uses. So we can move food and supplies from the farms into the settlements, and support some workshops, like blacksmiths, farriers, and carpenters.

MAIA

Won't it become more and more difficult to maintain the railway as time goes by?

GRANDPA

Yes, but a new railway track is being laid further inland to guard against inevitable flooding, washouts, bridge collapses, and sea-rises. Much of this hard construction work will have to be done by hand, unless we import electric heavy machinery.

LIEUTENANT

So what's your vision for the future, old-chap?

GRANDPA

Probably half the population will work on small farms, doing manual labour. And some on the railways. Maybe two or three million climate refugees will be brought in to provide a large labor force for agriculture and the roads and railways. Something like that.

MAIA

But after a few decades the electric batteries will wear out. Will it be possible to bring in replacements from overseas?

GRANDPA

At first yes, but in the long term, I doubt it. Probably the global supply chain will crumble. And that means that the number of roadworthy vehicles here will dwindle too. Tyres will also be an issue, unless we succeed in growing our own rubber trees somewhere in the refuge zone. Ultimately, we will end up using miniature ponies and small carts, though.

LIEUTENANT

What about the cherry orchard then, old-chap?

GRANDPA

Instead of cherries, we'll need to plant macadamias,
because they are tropical. Or some other tropical plants.
Come on then. Time to move again.

(LIEUTENANT helps GRANDPA and
MAIA to put on their
backpacks again, and they all
move off-stage toward
farmstead and orchards.)

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF SCENE)

** Scene **#9

SETTINGS: Show placard: Year: 2099. Family graveyard on knoll overlooking farmstead and former cherry orchard. Graves marked for 'GRANDPA' 2031, SOPHIE 2033, TINA 2034, Tizedes HANNA 2049, LIEUTENANT F. C. Wereta 2070, MAIA 2076, HANNA 2098, These should not be stones or memorials, but a simple stake in the ground, perhaps with placard showing a name and date large enough for audience to read. Possibly tinhat for LIEUTENANT.

AT RISE : Tamara, elderly and leaning heavily on a long wooden staff, dressed in long, black, voluminous linen robe, with hood, or cape, and black veil, is talking to Sunita, who is dressed scantily and simply, in grass or wool skirt and old woollen homespun shawl. Both are without makeup, but mud on exposed areas - faces, legs, and arms as protection against mosquitoes and flies.

TAMARA

(To the various graves.

Slowly, with pause after each grave.)

Lieutenant. Ever dependable, bless you.

(Pron: New-godge-bay-kay-ben,
Hon-na.)

Nyugodj békében, Hanna. Rest in peace, darling. The peace we so needed but never got.

Maia. Love you.

Sophie, darling, it's me, Tamara.

Hi Tina, my big sis. Love you for ever..

Heroines one and all: not that it matters. The myth of the hero is just that: a myth.

Hi Grandpa, it's me, Tamara. I'm the very last of the originals now.

SUNITA

The originals? Who were they, Auntie?

TAMARA

Tamara (cont'd)

(To SUNITA.)

My Grandpa, my sister Tina, your great-grandmother Sophie, and me, Tina's younger sister. And then Maia, and the Lieutenant.

SUNITA

Yes, I know that, Auntie. I can read. But why originals? Originals of what?

TAMARA

The idea of the cherry orchard, the refuge.

SUNITA

What cherry orchard?

TAMARA

Once upon a time there was a cherry orchard here, in the industrial era, before the epidemics. We only survived, because we were living here at the back of beyond. Those were the days! We never went into town. We felled trees to block the pass, and listened to the radio once a week, if we had power. We learned to live without power most of the time, and without gasoline at all. We used horses, dogs, and grew our own vegetables.

(THUNDERCLAP ! No reaction
from actors.)

The biggest hurdle was collecting and keeping seed from one season to the next. In winter, vegetables were always in short supply, but the boys went off and hunted pigs, deer, and rabbits, which were everywhere in those days..

SUNITA

That all sounds very normal to me, Tamara.

TAMARA

Yes, it would. As time wore on, clothes wore out, even jeans; we needed things like cotton thread, a treadle sewing machine, new tools and utensils; and so on. But we survived ten years like that, Sunita: it became a way of life.

SUNITA

But tell me about the rest of the world at that time, Auntie Tamara.

TAMARA

The news was all bad. There was the Thwaites event, and sea-levels rose by half a meter in just two years. A lot of coastal land was lost to the sea, and there were millions of climate change refugees.

Sophie found out that her cousin had died of radiation poisoning in Portugal. So there must have been nuclear

Tamara (cont'd)

weapons used in Europe. There were long droughts in the Amazon. Did that get worse? Or did the Red Queen hypothesis kick in, too? I just don't know.

SUNITA

The Red Queen hypothesis?

TAMARA

Oh, the hypothesis that farmers lose the battle against bugs, pests, and diseases.

And then, during those years on the farmstead, they said on the radio that medical supplies had become erratic and scarce. After all, at that time, all pharmaceuticals and medical supplies were imported. Tetanus, measles, polio and tuberculosis returned, and more babies and children died young than before.

And then, later, on that farm, behind God's back, soon after childbirth, my sister's darling Sophie died. We just couldn't stop the bleeding. We didn't have the instruments, nor the expertise.

SUNITA

That must have been tough, Tamara.

TAMARA

Yes. Tina, my sister, was distraught. Sophie, your grandmother, dying so unexpectedly: that really destroyed Tina, she was never the same afterwards. But darling, as you know, the baby-girl survived, and we adopted the baby as our own. But that's how your grand-mother came into this world, darling. We called her Hanna, as Sophie would have wished.

(TAMARA sighs, waves away
flies and mosquitoes.)

SUNITA

The storm's getting close: we'd best be getting back, Aunt Tamara.

TAMARA

Yes, you're right.

Let me say goodbye first. I wish we had some flowers.

(To graves.)

Bye for now, guys. I'll be with you again soon. Tomorrow or the day after.

(Tamara turns toward exit.)

(Massive thunderclap. Lights go out. Flash of lightning. Sounds of torrential rain and stormy winds. SUNITA and TAMARA: the two women link arms together and both exit.)

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF SCENE)

** Scene **#10

SETTINGS: Placard: YEAR: 2099. In the storm bunker. Minimal electric lighting, preferably flickering.

AT RISE : TAMARA and SUNITA barely visible in the darkness.

TAMARA
What were we discussing, Sunita?

SUNITA
We were looking back to seventy years ago, Auntie, to the beginning, to Aunt Tina and your Grandpa and to my grandmother Sophie.

TAMARA
Ah, yes, Sunita.

SUNITA
I still have a question, Auntie, but.
Why couldn't people foresee what would happen? Why didn't they do things differently in those far-off days, back in two thousand and twenty-five, seventy-five years ago? Were they idiots or bastards?

TAMARA
Don't know. The truth would have come as a big shock to most people, who, in those days, had been accustomed to flying around the world for business or vacation, and all the other trivial pursuits of their silly lifestyles. But come whatever, the end of the sparrows, or a tragedy of the commons, the universe won't notice. Nothing will change the orbit of Uranus.

SUNITA
I don't care what your Grandpa thought or wrote: he was just a post-war baby, what did he know? Our circumstances today are totally different. None of those old writings apply to us today.

TAMARA
Yes, be it the Vedas, the Gospels, the Talmud, they may have been good advice in their day, but they're not automatically applicable today.

SUNITA
Our generation must decide for itself as to what be right or wrong, what be true or false, and what will work for us, but.

TAMARA

Yes, Sunita, you're right about that, dear, although some of those ancient texts actually say that humans are stewards of the natural world. People should be grateful for the blessed rains from the sky that make our gardens grow and bring us grain from the harvest. Thou shalt not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption.

SUNITA

As stewards of the natural world, the post-war generation screwed up, didn't they?

TAMARA

Completely.

(Pause)

TAMARA

So, Sunita, what will you tell your children on the topic of climate chaos?

SUNITA

Well, nothing: I don't have any children, and I'm not planning to. Even if there were children, there'd be no need to say something. They'd just need to know what grows here in today's climate; when, what, and where to plant; and when and how to harvest the crop. Farming isn't about climate chaos and grand plans to save the world. Farming's about what seed to use, what breed to use, how to mend fences, where to find water. It's about when it's safe to plant, how to protect the crops and animals, when and how to harvest, what to use for fertilizer, and how to collect and store seed and grains, and so on. Nothing else matters now. Survival is everything.

TAMARA

Yes, Sunita, trust me, I do understand, but you must understand that the long-term matters too. It isn't enough just to toil on from one day to the next, from one winter to the next, and in doing so, ignore the long-term issues.

(THUNDERCLAP ! No reaction
from actors.)

Ecology often takes a long-term view: it is partly about biodiversity and food security. First, pesticides and herbicides only provide short-term protection to crops. For long-term protection, a variety must be found that is resistant to the particular pest or disease that is causing problems.

SUNITA

What? How can one do that?

TAMARA

Someone has to go back to the area where the crop originated, collect all the available varieties, talk to the indigenous farmers about their farming systems, and bring back the seeds so that we can experiment with them. Then a resistant variety can be created which will work in our homeland and in our climate.

SUNITA

Don't be silly, Tamara: there's no chance of doing that any more: that world has gone, but.

TAMARA

Yes.

But darling, make no mistake, it's biodiversity which provided solutions for potato blight, mealy-bugs on cassava, similar issues with coffee and cacao, rust on wheat, disease on bananas, and so on. And that entails seed banks.

SUNITA

Weren't there any seed banks in our homeland before the crisis?

TAMARA

There were, my dear, but seed banks focused on preserving native plants, not on essential food crops and varieties. The seed bank must contain useful varieties of edible plants, be they native or not. So here we are in two thousand and ninety-nine, and everyone has to grow our own food, and now ecology matters, be it boring or not.

SUNITA

So why are you telling me all this?

TAMARA

Because I would teach you everything I know.

SUNITA

Whatev.

TAMARA

You're not keen?

SUNITA

To adopt a half-industrialised lifestyle? No thank you. I'm happy as I am.

TAMARA

The refuge is not really industrialised. We pick and choose what we need from technology.

SUNITA

I don't give a shit about your Grandpa, Tamara, or all this book-learning, or your damned refuge, Auntie: you belong to the generations that screwed up the planet, but.

TAMARA

Understandable.

SUNITA

I'm sorry, Tamara, I'm still not interested. To me, you have the wrong attitude, Tamara, you are still holding on to the old dream of an industrialised lifestyle. But that is wrong. It is a dream that brings war and alienation from nature. I want a simpler life, out in nature, not trying to control nature, or running away from nature. And I don't care if life will be shorter. At least I won't be shut indoors away from reality, but. I will be alive, and then later, dead. Whatev.

(THUNDER-CLAPS at random intervals from here on to end of scene. No reaction from actors.)

SUNITA

So, what d'you think of the post-war generation, Auntie?

TAMARA

(With quiet venom and bitterness.)

I shall never forgive. They all knew, why didn't they stop it all happening? In my head, I call them the evil Bastards. May they burn for eternity in hell ! And burn! Do not honour their graves! Let their burial grounds be razed, scattered, and destroyed, as they have done to us. Let their bones be ground into dust and tossed into the nearest pool of hot magma! Let their history, their names, never be spoken. Let them forever be non-heroes. For we ourselves are the spawn of the Evil Ones, and that, that it was our very own forefathers who bastardized this planet, that is a hard, hard truth to bear. ...

SUNITA

I could not live like that, with all that anger.

TAMARA

You're right, Sunita. I cannot carry this overwhelming resentment, this fire of revenge, this lust to avenge, forever. It consumes my soul. It blocks my mind, my thinking.

SUNITA

Exactly. But my generation, we have none of that, we never knew your world.

TAMARA

But it isn't that simple. ... If some of the Evil Ones could foretell the outcomes, then maybe they have something useful to say; maybe. But as for the rest, no, it is essential to reject all their humbug, their so-called wisdom, and throw their short-sighted ideas overboard. But not necessarily their knowledge. And we must be careful to sidestep their biases, their subtle propaganda. Otherwise, we shall fall into the same pit that they did.

SUNITA

I thought we already had!

TAMARA

Grandpa used to say: Light cannot exist without Darkness, and I shall be your Darkness, so that your Light more brightly shine: and anyway, Evil is more interesting. Was Grandpa joking or not? I'm not sure. He was an oddball guy.

SUNITA

Your Grandpa was certainly full of bull-shit!

TAMARA

He was often joking around. Look, darling, most people want roughly the same thing: a decent life, a decent start for their children, a decent future. ... There're just different ideas about what decent means, and how to get there.

SUNITA

(shrugs)

Whatev. The world is what it is.

TAMARA

Of course. For example, Grandpa sometimes talked about so-called Errors of Scope. That is, overlooking the big picture. Perhaps overlooking that there'll be another two-hundred years of climate chaos, before we shall even reach the alti-thermal phase. We haven't even reached the turning-point yet. Climate chaos will continue for several

Tamara (cont'd)
more generations at least.

SUNITA

Like, forever!

TAMARA

Grandpa's school motto was 'slowly but surely':
encouraging students to doggedly work away at studying,
just part of the whole propaganda illusion of so-called
progress. And then, Sunita, just recently, it dawned on me
what your Great-great-grandpa really meant. It was a
warning. Climate chaos comes slowly, but surely, squeezing
the human habitat niche ...

SUNITA

You're living in the past Auntie. It's all too late for
warnings now.

(Short pause)

TAMARA

So, taking all that into account, darling, do you not want
to learn about ecology?

(Short pause, then SUNITA
shakes head negatively,
followed by another short
pause.)

SUNITA

No, absolutely not. What can the very people who messed up
the planet teach us? I want nothing of your
semi-industrialized lifestyle. My place is here, with my
friends, my tribe. I shall live the life I choose, not
the life you would choose for me, Tamara. It may not be
much by your standards, but it's what I want that
matters, whether the outcome will be good or ill. And
there's an end to it all.

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF SCENE)

(Possibly take curtain call BEFORE Epilog scenes)

** Scene **#11

SETTINGS: Placard: YEAR: 2129. Family
 graveyard, as before, but with
 additional gravestone for TAMARA
 2099. Preferably with wilted
 flowers on each.

AT RISE : SUNITA at gravestones.

(SUNITA slowly and carefully
places new flowers on each
grave. Then stands deep in
thought for some time.)

SUNITA

(In low gentle even voice
with resentment without
extreme emotion.)

Bastards.

See you next week.

(Nods to each.)

(SUNITA backs away slowly and
exits.)

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF SCENE)

** Scene **#12

SETTINGS: Placard: YEAR: 2132. Family graveyard, as before, but including gravestone for TAMARA 2099. No flowers. All graves obviously untended. Débris and piled up dirt abounds. Preferably an additional skull and/or bones lying on-stage. Perhaps dust or sand blowing. Possible background: picture from 1930 Kentucky dustbowl showing abandonment without any sign of current human habitation. Alternatively sky at night with stars.

AT RISE : No-one on-stage.

(Thunderous dark sky: less than full lighting on-stage. Sound of gale, intermittent thunder, torrential rain.)

(Long, long pause, whilst thunder, rain and wind continue, and lighting fades. Preferably thunder, rain and wind then abate, and only crickets are audible, preferably very loud. Long pause. A PREGNANT TEENAGER, wearing crude loincloth, and carrying long staff, visits graves, stands motionless, just looking. Long, long pause. Leaves.)

(SCENE LIGHTING OFF : BLACK-OUT : Black-out)

(END OF DRAMA)