

Greta Thunberg and the Seagull

By Max Wilkinson

CHARACTERS

NADIA - An NHS councillor, forties, British-Asian. She likes to keep positive and make a few jokes. Slight cockney accent.

MALIK - A man in his early thirties, British-any ethnicity. Intelligent, sensitive, a lot more serious. Lower-middle class.

GRETA THUNBERG AND THE SEAGULL

MALIK talks to NADIA, his NHS councillor via a video call. The connection is weak.

MALIK is in his early thirties, British-any ethnicity. Intelligent, sensitive. Lower-middle class.

NADIA is older, British-Asian. She stares at him, dumbfounded as to what he is saying. She has a slight cockney accent.

MALIK

So I'm in Brighton. On the beach. And it's sunny. And there's people swimming in the sea. And sitting on the beach. But when I look closely. I realise all these people are dead. And the sun's gone green.

NADIA

(shocked)...When did this happen?

MALIK

...No... it was a dream.

NADIA

Oh right, sure.

MALIK

I've been talking about it for ages.

NADIA

Yeah, sorry, just your connection is very bad. You look a bit like vomit.

MALIK

Oh.

NADIA

You're not streaming anything are you? Netflix, pig videos, that annoying clip of celebrities singing imagine?

MALIK

No.

NADIA

Or downloading anything...sensitive?

MALIK

Er...-

NADIA

Seems to be a bit better, go on.

MALIK

...So. I'm sitting on the beach. Everyone's dead, from the poison in the air, but I don't care, cos I got this big bag of chips.

NADIA

Sure.

MALIK

And this seagull flies down from nowhere and tries to eat my chips. But it's got the head of Greta Thunberg!

NADIA

(disbelief) What?!

MALIK

In the dream!

NADIA

Sure, sorry!

MALIK

And-

NADIA

You've gone again.

MALIK

Fuck sake!

NADIA

Malik, you have to understand, our mental health system is overloaded at that minute because of COVID-19

MALIK

Of course.

NADIA

Lot of desperate people out there, (under her breath:) people with real problems.

MALIK

Sorry?

NADIA

Please carry on.

MALIK

(Quickly) So, the seagull comes down, it's got the head of Greta Thunberg and it wants my chips.

NADIA

Right.

MALIK

(Slower) And...Greta starts crying, cos she's starving.
But I still won't give her my chips. And I look around.
And I realise, the sea's boiling!

NADIA

Sure.

MALIK

And Brighton's on fire. And I've got this feeling that
I could save the Greta gull, and stop the fire, and
revive all the dead people, but I don't. I just eat my
chips!

NADIA

Malik, I think what's happening here is, your
dream, is about something else.

MALIK

...Sure.

NADIA

I don't think it's literally about chips. I think it
represents. Another thing.

*NADIA looks through her notes, desperate for a
reason.*

MALIK

Yes, yeah Corona!

NADIA clicks her finger: she's cracked it.

NADIA

Or...like Erectile Dysfunction.

MALIK

...Sorry?

NADIA

I think this is all wrapped up with your Erectile
Dysfunction.

MALIK

...I haven't got...that.

NADIA

It's what I've got.

MALIK

Well it's wrong.

NADIA

So why have I got Erectile Dysfunction written down,
with a big ring around it.

MALIK

I don't know!

NADIA

Are you sure you don't have it?

MALIK

Yes, pretty sure.

NADIA

Right, sorry. I must have just...assumed. Go on.

MALIK sighes.

MALIK

I think the dream's about-

NADIA

And you're gone.

MALIK

Jesus.

NADIA

You're not Facetiming your mum at the same time are
you?

MALIK

No.

NADIA

Must be us. So many desperate people right now, wanting
a shoulder to cry on. People really on the brink.
Everyone's trapped. Some don't want to carry on living.

MALIK

Sure.

NADIA

Tell me about Greta and the pidgeon.

MALIK

Seagull.

NADIA

What do you think it's about?

MALIK

Well, you know. Corona.

NADIA doesn't understand his dream at all and becomes increasingly worried. As he speaks she looks around desperately. MALIK speaks quickly.

NADIA

Obviously.

MALIK

Everyone's dying around me, and I'm being selfish, by ignoring social distancing and eating chips on the beach.

NADIA

...Sure.

MALIK

And the sea's boiling, that's climate change. And the chips. That's global capitalism, right?

NADIA

Of course.

NADIA, not understanding anything, looks nervously around, looking for a way out. Finally, she clicks her screen off. Her screen goes black.

MALIK

And I'm civilisation, just gobbling up the chips- and you've gone.

Beat. MALIK looks at the black screen.

NADIA

Sorry?

MALIK

(louder) Your camera's gone.

NADIA

Oh no! This always happens. Sorry, I can still hear you though.

MALIK

So...um...anyway. I think it's the fear about...when this is all over, do we just carry on? Burning the planet, eating the chips-

*NADIA's camera goes back on:
NADIA is preparing a Ploughman's lunch on a plate:
a sandwich, crips. She doesn't notice MALIK and
the camera.*

Beat.

MALIK

What are you doing!?

NADIA

...Um. Listening?

MALIK

You're assembling a Ploughman's!

NADIA

...What?

MALIK

Your camera's not broken. You switched it off. Didn't you.

MALIK stands up to terminate the call.

NADIA

Um-

MALIK

This is a joke!

NADIA

Malik, it's not my fault if the technology is useless-

MALIK

No, you're useless! It's you. I've been seeing you for weeks. I don't feel better. I feel worse.

NADIA

Malik-

MALIK

You don't listen, you don't get it. You accuse me of impotency. I feel you're taking the piss, or you're an idiot.

NADIA

I try to keep it light.

MALIK

How did you even get this job?

NADIA

I...sort of fell into it.

MALIK

Fell into it? It's not a job at Budgeons.

NADIA

I'm a volunteer, ok. I do this for free.

Beat.

They needed people with... people skills.

MALIK

You haven't got any.

NADIA

I care, Mr Lines. Malik, I care about everyone I see.
And maybe, maybe I'm not...perfect.

Malik scoffs. NADIA starts to well up.

But I try, I try to be there. On the end of the line.
For you. Because that's better than nothing. And yeah,
I might try and keep it a bit light.

Do you know what it's like, listening to people in tiny
rooms? Their lives', disintegrating? Do you know what
that sounds like? Every ten minutes? Every day?

MALIK

Look-

MALIK

Trying to sneak in a sandwich when I can.

MALIK

I'm just saying-

NADIA

You're saying I'm crap, yeah I get it. Yes, I am crap.
But I'm all you've got. And who have I got?

MALIK

...

NADIA

What do you think I see when I close my eyes? What do
you think I dream off?

*Pause. NADIA wipes her eyes and MALIK sits up,
ashamed. NADIA becomes very professional.*

MALIK

...Look.

NADIA

I have another patient, Mr Lines-

MALIK

Look, I'm sorry, Ok? I didn't...think about you. In all of this. I mean I can't blame you for the crap connection can you.

NADIA

...Actually, you can, I've been streaming cat videos this whole time, sorry.

MALIK

(smiles) Eat your sandwich. Tell me about your dream.

NADIA

My dream?

MALIK

Go on.

*NADIA takes her sandwich and begins to eat it.
MALIK listens. As NADIA speaks, the music and
image fades.*

NADIA

So, I'm in a bath, but the bath is full of dogs, and the dogs are singing!

MALIK

Ok.

NADIA

And I've got the legs of Natalie Portman! But the hands of a chimp.

MALIK

Sure...

*Fade out as NADIA keeps on talking and eating her
sandwich.
End.*