

Scene One. Stopped, Still, Frozen

MONA sits alone, head down, scrolling through images on her phone. The ENSEMBLE move around her, on tiptoe, crouching, peering at her from every angle. They compete for how much they know about MONA.

ENSEMBLE. You hear different things, don't you?

I heard she's really clever. Like 'scary genius' clever.

I heard she's got mental problems. Like a condition.

I don't know why everyone's talking about her.

It's not like she's famous.

People know her though. Her name. Her face.

I heard one day she just shut down.

Shut down like /

Stopped. Still. Wouldn't leave the house. Wouldn't move.
Wouldn't speak. Wouldn't eat.

I heard her mum left.

That's not why.

That was before – with her mum. Years before. I read about this stuff.

It was about the planet.

The burning planet.

Obviously.

One day she just couldn't stop thinking.

Couldn't stop looking. Pictures and pictures, flicking through her phone.

Through her mind.

The burning planet, the melting ice, the arctic fires.

Lights focus on MONA.

(Moving close to talk in MONA's ear.) The parched sand and soil.

The parched tongues.

The elephant flesh rotting in the sun.

The rising water and California burning.

And bush burning and jungles burning.

Wild cats and wolves like stalking skeletons /

ELIN steps out of the ENSEMBLE with a cup of water.

MONA looks up at ELIN blankly.

ELIN. Have a sip. Here.

ELIN holds the water to MONA's lips. MONA doesn't move.

Please, Mona. Just a sip. You must want it.

MONA doesn't react.

You can't go three days without a drink, Mona – your mind'll start messing with you. That's what this is, you know? If you'd just drink /

MONA. It'd all feel better? Everything'd be better?

ELIN. Some things are simple like that.

MONA. No they're not.

ELIN (approaching). You know I can't just have you off school forever?

MONA. What's the point of going to school?

ELIN. We'll have other people involved. Doctors, social services. They'll blame me 'cause I have to be the grown-up here. D'you understand?

MONA. I'm not stupid.

ELIN. Do you want that?

MONA grabs the water, takes a tiny sip and hands it back to ELIN.

MONA. There. All fixed. Go.

ELIN (approaching). Listen... I did speak to Miss McCarthy.
I know about the incident and /

MONA. What incident?

ELIN. Everybody laughing.

MONA. It's nothing to do with that.

ELIN. This panic attack you had in Science /

MONA. That's not why /

ELIN. You couldn't breathe?

MONA. That's not the point. That's not the problem.

ELIN. It sounds like a problem to me.

MONA. It's not about me.

ELIN. I saw the stuff online. The photos and the videos the other kids took /

MONA. It's not about people laughing at me.

ELIN. I know you think I'm your idiot big sister, but it's not that long since I was at school/

MONA. It's not about school.

ELIN. I know it must be hard walking back in again. All these pictures flying round – you choking and gagging and tripping over.

MONA. I don't care about them laughing at me.

ELIN. I care. It's alright to care (Moving closer.) Course you care.

MONA. There's no time.

ELIN. Has this been going on for a while? This bullying?

MONA. We're running out of time and you're talking about videos and yeah, they're laughing – everyone's laughing and drinking disposable coffees and driving diesel cars like nothing matters /

ELIN. I don't understand. Coffee?

MONA. Every day's a day less to fix it. Every second we're pumping the air blacker and thicker and dirtier. That's what she was saying. Miss McCarthy. That's what she was saying in that lesson.

ELIN. Well, she shouldn't. Okay? It's not for you to worry about.

MONA. *Worried?* You think that's what's going on? You think I'm a little bit *worried*?

ELIN. Yeah, I /

MONA. *You haven't got any idea.*

ELIN *stares at her sister, at a loss.*

ELIN. This is selfish. Whatever you *think* this is... it's selfish.

MONA *takes out her phone and begins to flick through pictures.* ELIN *moves away as the ENSEMBLE close in again.*

ENSEMBLE. She's stopped.

Still.

Frozen.

Barely eating, barely breathing. For weeks.

And doctors come.

They must've done.

They did. Therapists and councillors and /

Makes no difference.

Nothing. Not a flicker.

She's numb.

Like stone.

For months.

Three months. I read a thing about it.

She's trapped, losing track of time and place and reason...

Then /

MONA *sits up straight suddenly, staring at her phone. She stands up.*

MONA. Elin. (Beat.) Elin.

ELIN *approaches quickly.*

(Showing her phone.) Look.

ELIN. What? What's wrong?

MONA. *Will you come and look at this?*

ELIN *takes the phone, looks closely for a moment.*

ELIN. It's not her.

MONA. It looks like her.

ELIN. So what? So what if it even is?

MONA. At the protest. She's there, she's /

ELIN. It's out of focus. You can't even /

MONA. It was posted an hour ago. If I /

ELIN. No, Mona.

MONA. If I go right now /

ELIN. No. It's great you want to go outside but /

MONA. I don't want to go outside, I want to go and find her.