

# **Dramatised Scenes from *RUNNING ON THE CRACKS***

## **by Julia Donaldson**

*These scenes are suitable for acting out by Year 7/9 students.*

### **1 – CHAN CONVERSATIONS**

*Introduction: 15-year-old Leonora (Leo for short) has run away to Glasgow, Scotland, and is trying to track down her Chinese Grandparents, Mr and Mrs Chan, whom she has never met. She has decided to ring up all the Chans in the telephone directory.*

#### Characters

Leo

Voice 1

Voice 2

Voice 3

Voice 4

Voice 5

*Leo dials a number.*

**1** Hello.

**Leo** Hello, is that Mrs Chan?

**1** Who's speaking?

**Leo** It's . . . my name's Chan too. Um . . . I'm trying to do some research into my family tree and . . .

**1** Where did you get my number?

**Leo** From the phone book. It's just that . . .

**1** I'm sorry, I can't help you.

.....

*Leo dials again*

**2** The number you have dialled has not been recognised.

.....

*Leo dials again.*

**3** Tsiu twing. Tsiu fong. Wu Chan.

**Leo** Hello, is that Mr Chan?

**3** Cha twang. Chan . . . tsiu chong . . .

**Leo** I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch that. I'm looking for either Mr or Mrs Chan.

**3** Cha sing no help you. . . . liu chong.

**Leo** I'm sorry, I can't understand.

.....

*Leo dials again.*

**Leo** Hello, I'm looking for my grandmother or grandfather. Their surname's Chan.

**4** I don't think you've got the right number.

.....

*Leo dials again.*

**5** Hello.

**Leo** Hello, is that Mrs Chan?

**5** Mrs Chan, yes.

**Leo** I'm sorry if I've got the wrong number. I'm looking for the Mrs Chan who used to own a Chinese restaurant.

**5** This not a restaurant, no.

**Leo** No, I know it's not a restaurant, but I wonder if you used to work in a restaurant?

**5** I think you got the wrong number. This not a restaurant.

## 2 – THE BARRAS

*Introduction: Finlay is a 13-year-old boy who is often in trouble at school. During the week he does a paper round, and he also has a Saturday morning job in The Barras market in Glasgow, working in a doughnut van for a woman called Marina.*

### Characters

Finlay (13)

Marina (middle-aged)

Man

Child 1

Child 2

Leo (15, non-speaking in this scene)

China-seller

*Finlay and Marina are in a doughnut van at the Barras market. Finlay is stirring the doughnut mixture, while Marina fishes the doughnuts out of the hot fat and rolls them in the sugar tray. Finlay sighs.*

**Marina**        *(waving a bag of doughnuts)* Five for a pound! Five for a pound! *(She turns to Finlay.)* That's a long face for a Saturday. Cheer up, it may never happen.

**Finlay** It already has.

**Marina**        What is it this time? School or Mum and Dad?

**Finlay** Both. I keep getting these N of Ms.

**Marina**        I thought N of M was a rock band.

**Finlay**        That's Eminem and he's a rapper. N of M is short for Notification of Misconduct. They're these slips of paper the school give you, and your parents have to sign them. Mum said if I got any more she'd stop this week's pocket money. Then I was late for school on Tuesday and got one. So I forged her signature.

**Marina**        Finlay! This sounds like the slippery downward slope. Did the school swallow it?

**Finlay**        Yes, but then on Wednesday one of the other paper boys was off and I had to do all these extra houses, so I was late again.

**Marina** And you got another Eminem?

**Finlay** N of M – no, but I would have. I couldn't face that, so I wrote a note from Mum saying I'd been to the dentist.

**Marina** Finlay! I wouldn't have given you this job if I'd known you were such a hardened criminal.

**Finlay** Only the school went and phoned her.

**Marina** What gave you away? The handwriting, was it?

**Finlay** No, it was the Ps. Apparently there's only one in "apologise" and two in "appointment". What a stupid language.

**Marina** So now the pocket money's gone.

**Finlay** And Mum's going to stop me doing the paper round if I'm late again. I'll never be able to save up for that guitar, and Ross'll probably find someone else to be in his band. It's so unfair!

**Marina** (*waving a bag of doughnuts*). Five for a pound! (*To Finlay*) All that talk of Ps has gone to my bladder. Mind the van a minute, can you, son? (*She goes off.*)

**Finlay** Five for a pound! Five for a pound!

*Enter a man with 3 snotty-nosed children.*

**Child 1** I'm hungry.

**Child 2** Can we have some doughnuts, Dad?

**Man** All right, then. (*To Finlay*) I'll have three bags, son.

**Finlay** Here you are. That's three pounds.

*The man gives Finlay a five-pound note.*

**Finlay** I'll just get your change.

*Enter Leo. She grabs a bag of doughnuts and runs off.*

**Finlay** Hey! Stop! *He runs after her, into a shed full of china ornaments.*

**Man** What about my change?

*Re-enter Marina.*

**Marina** Can I help you, Sir?

**Man** Yes, you can give me my change. That lad of yours has run off with my fiver. Two pounds, you owe me.

**Marina** Finlay! FINLAY! Where's he gone?

**Child 1** He's a thief!

**Child 2** No – that girl's the thief.

**Marina** I'm sorry, Sir. Here you are. *(She gives him two pounds.)*

**Man** Ta. *(He goes off with his children.)*

*Re-enter Finlay with the china-seller. She is holding 2 broken mugs and a broken china seal.*

**Marina** There you are! That gentleman over there says you ran off with his change.

**Finlay** Oh no! sorry, I didn't mean to! *(He searches his pockets.)* I must have dropped it when I fell. I was trying to catch this thief, you see.

**Marina** Don't worry. I've given him his money, but it's coming off today's wages – and they're the last wages you're getting. Running off like that! Supposing someone had robbed the till while you were gone!

**China-seller** I knew he was up to now good. Look at these things he's broken. If you're his mum, you owe me fifty-five pounds. That's twenty-five each for the coronation mugs and a fiver for the seal.

**Marina** I'm not his mum – heaven forbid! But fifty-five quid sounds a bit steep to me. I'd have thought you'd keep your valuable pieces locked up or at the back of the stall. Here, you can have twenty for the mugs. That seal looks like something left behind at a jumble sale, but I'll give you a pound for it.

**China-seller** *(taking the money quickly)* That's pure robbery. That's less than I paid for them. *(But she hurries away.)*

**Finlay** Thanks, Marina – I'll pay it back out of my pocket money.

**Marina** I somehow doubt you'll be getting much pocket money with all these Eminems you keep getting. I'll take it out of the next couple of weeks' wages.

**Finlay** But . . . I thought you said . . .

**Marina** Aye, but I'm giving you another chance. Now, tell me what happened, you daft wee man!

*(Possible improvisation: Finlay tells Marina about the doughnut thief, and as he does so he realises where he's seen her before. It was in yesterday's paper: ORCHESTRA ORPHAN MISSING.)*

### 3 – MISSING PEOPLE

*Introduction: following on from the last scene, Finlay has realised that the girl who stole his doughnuts is Leonora Watts-Chan, whose disappearance has been reported in the newspapers. He decides to phone the Missing People office to report his sighting of her.*

#### Characters

Finlay (13)

Voice (speaking from the Missing People office)

Finlay's Dad

*Finlay dials a number.*

**Voice** Hello, you're through to Missing People.

**Finlay** Oh, hi . . . er, I've seen the girl that's gone missing.

**Voice** Can you give us the name of the missing person, please?

**Finlay** That one in the paper.

**Voice** We do have several thousand missing people in our files. We need to work from a name.

**Finlay** I'm sorry, I can't remember. It wasn't my paper, see. I just deliver them. But it was yesterday she was in it. She's kind of Chinesey-looking.

**Voice** Do you mean Leonora Watts-Chan?

**Finlay** Yes, that was it. I'm sure it was her. She nicked a bag of doughnuts from my van. Well, it's not my van really, it's

**Voice** Can I just take down a few details, first, please. What's your name?

**Finlay** Finlay Grant.

**Voice** And your address?

**Finlay** 58 Tiverton Road.

**Voice** Where is that?

**Finlay** It's in Glasgow . . . but you won't write to me, will you? I don't want you to write. My parents don't know about this, see. I broke some stuff when I was

chasing after the girl, and I don't want them to find out. Is there a reward, by the way? I don't mind you writing to me if there's a reward.

**Dad** (outside the room) FINLAY!

**Finlay** Oh no, that's my dad. I'll have to be quick.

**Voice** Can you tell me when and where you think you saw the girl?

**Finlay** Yes, it was at the Barras this morning.

**Voice** The barrows, did you say?

**Finlay** No, the Barras. It's a market. She nicked a bag of doughnuts and ran off. I nearly lost my job because of her.

**Voice** Can you remember what she was wearing?

**Finlay** It was some kind of anorak. Light-coloured. I think it had a hood. She had a great big bag, too.

**Voice** Was it a school bag?

**Finlay** No, not really.

**Dad** FINLAY! STOP HOGGING THAT PHONE!

**Voice** Can you describe the bag? Hello? Hello?

**Dad** (coming in) You know Mum's expecting a call.

**Finlay** Sorry, Dad.

**Dad** Who were you calling, anyway?

**Finlay** Ross. It was about the physics homework.

## 4 – LEO AND MARY

*Introduction: Mary is a woman in her mid 50s who has befriended the runaway Leo. Leo is in Mary's flat for the first time and has been telling her about her family background – how her musician parents were killed in a plane crash and she had been staying with her English aunt, uncle and spiteful cousins in Bristol and has run away to Glasgow.*

### Characters

Leo

Mary

**Mary** What about your uncle? What was he like?

**Leo** I used to like him when I was little. I thought I did, anyway. Maybe it was his birds I liked really. He keeps all these birds – about twenty of them. I used to like sketching them.

**Mary** Pigeons, are they? Wee puddie-does?

**Leo** No, budgies and canaries mostly. And there were these two yellow cockatiels called Clemmy and Lemmy. There's a picture of them here somewhere. *(She shows Mary a picture in her sketchbook.)*

**Mary** The wee rascals! Did they talk, aye?

**Leo** Not that I ever heard, but Uncle John talked to them all the time. He kept them in the spare room. That was where I slept, but their cages took up nearly half the room.

**Mary** Did the birds no keep you awake?

**Leo** No, because he'd rigged up a curtain across the cages to stop the light getting through. I liked sharing with the birds – at first, anyway. The social worker wasn't happy, though.

**Mary** Are they ever?

**Leo** She said it was against the law and I could get some disease off the birds – but I was just glad not to be sharing with Flo and Caitlin.

**Mary** Aye, the wee witches.

**Leo** I was supposed to be starting at their school the next day, but I ran away instead.

**Mary** Did they have a gang then, aye? Were they going to bully you?

**Leo** Oh, it wasn't them I was running away from – not really. It was Uncle John.

**Mary** The bird man?

**Leo** Yes.

**Mary** What did he do?

**Leo** Well, it's hard to explain. . . .He always used to bring me in a cup of tea in the mornings when he came in to feed the birds. Sometimes the tea would be a bit cold, but I just thought he'd been pottering about and had forgotten to bring it in to me – he was a bit absent-minded like that. But one morning I woke up and . . . he was kneeling there, leaning over me and staring at me. Usually he wears glasses, but he hadn't got them on, and his brown eyes were just inches away from my face. They looked smaller without the glasses, and all watery. It was so creepy. Of course then he started rummaging around under the bed, pretending he'd lost a packet of birdseed or something, but I knew he hadn't.

**Mary** Did you tell your auntie?

**Leo** No. I didn't know what to say. I didn't think she'd believe me anyway. And then I started wondering if it had really happened – until it happened again a few days later.

**Mary** Tried to mess about with you, did he?

**Leo** No – no, he didn't actually touch me or anything. Just knelt there, staring with his little watery eyes. The second time he didn't do the "Whoops, I've lost the birdseed" routine though. He just gave me this sort of sappy smile for a few seconds, and then he gave me my tea. It was cold again. He'd probably been staring at me for ages. Maybe he'd been doing it every morning. It was such a horrible thought.

**Mary** What did you do – throw the tea in his face?

**Leo** No. It was stupid really – I just whispered "thanks" like I usually did. And then he went away, but he still had that stupid soft kind of smile on his face. It was as if he was sharing a secret with me.

**Mary** I'll wipe that smile off his face if I ever see him, the dirty old man.

**Leo** I hope you never do see him. He thinks I'm in London. But I came here, to try and track down my Dad's parents.

**Mary** Your grandma and grandpa.

**Leo** Yes, but I've never met them. They fell out with Dad before I was born. I thought it would be easy to track them down, only it's not. I've been phoning up all the Chans in the phone book, but half of them put the phone before I've got going, and some of them never pick it up in the first place.

**Mary** You'd be better going to their houses.

**Leo** Yes, that's what I decided. I copied all the addresses out of the phone book and I bought an A-Z of Glasgow. But now I feel too scared.

**Mary** Why? They willnae bite your head off.

**Leo** It's not that. It's because my picture was in yesterday's *Sun*.

**Mary** You'll want to lie low for a wee while then.

**Leo** But where? I can't afford to go to that café any more. My money's run out. I'm so tired, and I feel so dirty! (*Near to tears*) I just want a bath!

**Mary** You can have a bath, hen. And you can have a bed too.

## 5 – FACE TO FACE

*Introduction: Finlay has tracked Leo down and taken a photo of her when she was out sketching early in the morning. Leo has snatched the camera from him and run home to Mary's flat. Finlay has chased after her. He has been in this block of flats before because he delivers papers to Mary.*

### Characters

Mary

Leo

Finlay

Neighbour (called "Dressing Gown" by Finlay)

*Leo lets herself into the flat.*

**Mary** Hiya, Leo hen! Did you do some nice pictures, aye? What's the matter?

**Leo** *(whispering)* Shh, Mary! Someone's seen me! He's there outside – he's on the landing!

**Mary** Who is? It's no the bird man, is it?

**Leo** No, it's that boy . . . I'm sure it's him – the one I told you about, the one from the doughnut van.

*The doorbell rings.*

**Leo** That's him!

**Mary** We willnae let him in!

**Leo** But I've got his camera, Mary! He took a photo of me and I just grabbed it . . . Oh, what shall I do?

*The bell rings again.*

**Finlay** Open the door! I know you're there! Open the door I'll call the police!

**Mary** Get in the wardrobe, hen! I'll stop his blethering.

*Leo gets into the wardrobe. Mary looks through the peephole.*

**Mary** *(laughing)* I spy with my little eye! It's my wee paper boy all the time! Can ye no put it in the letter box, son?

**Finlay** I need to talk to the girl you've got in there.

**Mary** What girl? There's only me and the moggie – there's nae lassie here. You've got the wrong house.

**Finlay** She is here! I saw her! She's got my mum's camera!

**Mary** Just give me my *Morning Post* and stop blethering. You'll be late for school.

**Finlay** I'm not going to school! I'm going to the police station!

**Mary** Aye, and I'll go with you and tell them you've caused a breach of the peace.

**Leo** (*opening the wardrobe door*) Ssh! Everyone will hear! You'd better let him in. I'll give him his camera back.

*Mary opens the door.*

**Finlay** Where is she? And where's my camera?

**Mary** (*to Leo*) Is it him, aye? Is it the doughnut boy?

**Finlay** No – she's the doughnut girl! She stole my doughnuts and now she's got my mum's camera. Give it back, you thief!

**Leo** Here you are, but stop spying on me.

**Finlay** I'd rather be a spy than a thief.

**Leo** Stop calling me a thief!

**Finlay** Well, you are one. Stealing things and running away all the time. I bet that's why you ran away in the first place isn't it? I bet you stole stuff from your aunt and uncle?

**Mary** What aunt and uncle? I'm her auntie.

**Finlay** You're not! You're not the one that was in the paper, anyway. (*To Leo*) I recognised you the first time I saw you, and now I'm going to get the reward.

**Leo** No . . . listen . . . you don't understand!

**Finlay** (*shouting*) You're the one who doesn't understand! You just go round stealing things, not caring how other people feel. How do you think I'd feel if I lost my job? How do you think my mum would feel if her camera was stolen? My dad gave her that camera for Christmas.

**Mary** (*turning on Finlay*) Your da! Your ma! You're lucky to have a da and a ma. How d'ye think this wean feels? She's got no da and no ma – all she's got is an auntie who's a snob and an uncle who's a pervert and two nasty wee cousins. She didnae want your ma's camera. She just diesnae want her photie splashed in all the papers. But you widnae think about that, would ye? Ye'd have her back with that perverted bird man, s that it?

**Finlay** I'm sorry . . . I didn't know . . .

**Mary** Christmas, you're on about! Christmas! What about the poor wee lassie? No ma, no da – what sort of Christmas do you think she's going to have?

**Finlay** All right. I won't tell anyone. I'd better go.

**Neighbour** (*outside on the landing*) Is everything all right, Miss McNally?

**Finlay** It's Dressing Gown!

**Mary** (*hooting with laughter*) Dressing gown! Aye, it's Dressing Gown! I'm fine, Dressing Gown! Never better! How's yerself, Dressing Gown?

**Neighbour** I'll be fine if you can just keep the noise down.

*Mary keeps on laughing.*

**Leo** Why don't you sit down, Mary? I'll make you a cup of tea. (*To Finlay*) Do you want some?

**Mary** Aye, of course he doesn, don't you, wee man? And I know what he'll be wanting as well – chocolate Hob Nobs!

## 6 – MACBETH

*Introduction: Leo and Finlay have become friends.*

### Characters

Leo

Finlay

Mary

*Leo and Finlay are in Mary's flat. Leo is helping Finlay with his English homework.*

**Leo** Where are you up to? Has Macbeth killed the king yet?

**Finlay** Yes, and now he's just had this other guy bumped off – you know, his friend, Banquet.

**Mary** *(cackling with laughter)* Banquet! That's a good name. How do you do, Banquet? Sit down, Banquet – have a cup of tea!

**Leo** It's not Banquet, it's Banquo.

**Finlay** Sorry, I was getting mixed up – we've been doing the banqueting scene.

**Leo** Oh, that's a great scene.

**Finlay** It is if you don't have to write an essay about it.

**Leo** What's the title of the essay?

**Finlay** "Is Banquo's ghost supposed to be real?"

**Leo** Well, what do you think?

**Finlay** Of course he's real. Shakespeare says so. Look, it says here "Enter Banquo's ghost."

**Leo** But don't you think that's really meant to be happening in Macbeth's mind?

**Mary** Aye, it's like with Ronnie on Ward Seven. One time he saw this chimney sweep talking to him out of the telly. There's that much funny stuff going on in people's heads.

**Leo** That's right. After all, no one else can see the ghost – and remember what Lady Macbeth says: "You look but on a chair."

**Finlay** (*a bit fed up*) I suppose you always come top in English?

**Leo** No I don't. As a matter of fact, I don't even go to school.

**Finlay** I know you don't any more, but I mean . . . well, before . . .

**Leo** I never did. I was home-educated. Mum and Dad used to take me to see a lot of plays and then we'd talk and talk about them.

**Finlay** (*slightly embarrassed*) Oh. Sorry. . . . So you think Macbeth's a bit mental then? I think that's what Lady Macbeth says too. She says something about how he often has these fits and how everyone should take no notice and just get on with the banquet.

**Mary** (*cackling again*) Take no notice and get on with the banquet! That's good advice, that is! Take no notice and get on with the banquet!

**Leo** But don't you see, Lady Macbeth is just trying to cover up for him. He doesn't really have fits. The real reason he sees the ghost is because he feels so guilty. I mean, he's just murdered his friend. Think how you'd feel if you'd murdered . . . well, me for example.

**Mary** Aye. Say you'd killed her after she'd taken your doughnuts. You'd feel guilty then, wouldn't you, wee man?

**Finlay** (*laughing*) No I wouldn't. It would serve her right.

**Mary** This play sounds a hoot! Take no notice and get on with the banquet. Aye, let's have a banquet. Let's get in a Chinky!

**Leo** Listen, Mary, you can't keep spending your money on us like this. You've already bought me all these clothes.

**Mary** I've just got my DLA and I'll spend it how I like. I'll spend it on a banquet. (*She picks up the phone.*)

**Finlay** (*whispering to Leo*) what's DLA?

**Leo** Disability Living Allowance. It's this money she gets every month from the government.

**Mary** (*on the phone, ordering.*) One spare rib special. One beef in oyster sauce. One sweet and sour king prawn. One chicken with ginger and pineapple. . . .

**Leo** We've got to stop her.

**Finlay** Hey – that restaurant could be the one your Gran and Grandad run.

**Mary** One crispy beef with noodles. Three egg-fried rice. Three spring rolls. Three spicy chicken wings.

**Leo** Mary, that's enough!

**Mary** 95 Struan Drive. Flat 2/1. And hurry up, we're having a banquet!

**Finlay** *(To Mary)* Ask them if they're called Chan.

**Mary** What are you? Chans? No? Sure there's no Chans lurking in the sweet and sour? You fish them out if there are any. My wee girl here is looking for her granny and grandpa. *(She puts the phone down.)*

**Finlay** I've just had a thought there. We could order food from a different place each week and ask each one the Chan question. That way we can track Leo's grandparents down without anyone sussing us out.

**Mary** *(clapping her hands.)* You're our Sherlock Holmes!

**Leo** That would take ages. There must be loads of Chinese restaurants in Glasgow.

**Finlay** Let's see. *(He flicks through the Yellow Pages.)* Restaurants, Chinese. *(He counts them.)* You're right, there's a whole column.

**Leo** So one a week would take over a year. Anyway, I don't even know if they've still got a restaurant.

**Mary** Sherlock! He's our Sherlock! Hand over the book, Sherlock! We don't need to wait a week. Let's try this one, the Amber Wok. I bet they do a good banquet!

**Leo** Mary, no! We're going to have far too much food as it is.

**Mary** We're having a banquet! We just need some more guests!