

Emily Rising

By Dan **Rebellato**

A play for puppets

2nd draft (August 2016)

For Ethan Blue, long may you rise.

1.

A cold, cold wind. Ice.

EMILY I'm on a frozen lake
There's frozen water all round me
Big blue mountains
Big white sun.

And if I look closely
Bend down and rub my mitten on the ice
There's water underneath
And I can see down for miles

And who's that?
A boy and a girl
With seaweed round their ankles
They're underwater
And waving at me
I think they want me to come and get them.

So I try to break the ice but it's too thick
I need...
I need...

Sound of a drill.

And now I've got a drill
From somewhere, a drill
A power drill and I push against the ice and
drill

Drilling sound rises in intensity, a
high, teeth-jarring whine.

But the ice is too hard, it's like diamond
I'm trying to help them but I can't get
through...

VOICES (distant) Emily!

EMILY I'm trying!

VOICES (distant) Emily!

2.

Drilling turns into an alarm clock, primed
to play Beyoncé. Monday morning.

SARAH (off) Okay kids! School time! You need to get
up!

Emily sits up in bed.

EMILY (to radio) I tell you something, Beyoncé, my feet feel really weird.

Emily lies down again. Knock on the door.

SARAH Are you getting up, Emily? You don't want to be late.

Emily sits up again.

EMILY (to audience) That's me. I'm Emily and I'm ten and I live with my mum and my little brother Robbie in a council flat off the Essex Road and my feet still feel weird.

She sticks her legs up in the air and examines her feet.

They look normal.

She prods them with her hands.

They feel normal.

She sniffs them.

They smell normal.

She swings her feet out of bed.

So maybe they're okay.

She stands up. Immediately she slips right over and lands on her bum.

Wow. What happened there?

She stands up again. She slips and lands on her front.

Come on Emily. Concentrate. It's only standing up. It's not hard.

She stands up. She slips and wobbles like a bad ice skater but just about stays upright.

I'm up! I've done it!

She falls over again.

SARAH (off) Emily! What are you doing in there?

EMILY I'm trying to get up!

She stands up again, holding onto anything she can. Then she carefully lets go and wobbles but stands up. She takes a couple of wobbly steps.

My feet definitely feel weird.

The door opens and SARAH comes in.

SARAH Emily! You're not ready for school!

EMILY Mum, my feet feel weird.

SARAH What way weird?

EMILY Can't feel the carpet.

SARAH You probably just slept funny.

EMILY Can you take a look at my feet?

SARAH looks down and up again.

SARAH There's nothing wrong with your feet.

EMILY Closer maybe? There's definitely something weird going on.

SARAH gets right down and looks closely at EMILY's feet.

SARAH As I thought, there's absolutely nothing wrong with your...

Pause. SARAH is staring at EMILY's feet.

EMILY Mum?

Pause.

Mum?

ROBBIE barges in.

ROBBIE I'm ready! (looks) What's wrong with Emily now?

EMILY (to audience) This is my brother, Robbie. He thinks he's Superman. He's sweet except when he's really, really annoying.

SARAH Robbie, knock on Jean's door and see if she can take you to school. I need to take Emily to the doctor's.

ROBBIE Okay!

Goes out.

EMILY Mum? What is it? What's wrong?

SARAH Don't worry, darling. Dr Jeffreys will know what's going on.

3.

Doctor's surgery. DR JEFFREYS appears.

DOCTOR Well well well, this must be little Emily.

EMILY (affronted) I'm the second tallest in my class.

DOCTOR Jolly good! Jolly good!

EMILY (to audience) This is Dr Jeffreys. He's our family doctor. I'm not an expert but I don't reckon he's a very good doctor.

DOCTOR So what can I do for you, Mrs Connor?

EMILY (to audience) Cos all he ever says is take an aspirin and drink lots of water.

SARAH Well, Doctor, this is going to sound very strange.

DOCTOR Don't worry! Fire away!

SARAH It's about Emily. The thing is: her feet don't touch the ground.

DOCTOR Oh you're right, they don't. I'll get her a smaller chair. (into intercom) Danielle, could you bring in a smaller chair –

SARAH (interrupting) No – sorry, doctor. That's not what I meant. What I meant was, Emily's feet don't touch the ground at all. Any more.

Pause.

DOCTOR (into intercom) Danielle, cancel the chair.

Pause.

I see, so, what you're saying, Mrs Connor, is that Emily's feet... is this right Emily? Your feet don't ... touch ... the ground ... any more?

EMILY Yeah, when I woke up this morning, my feet felt funny and when I stood up, my feet didn't touch the ground.

DOCTOR Right.

He looks confused at EMILY then at SARAH, then at EMILY again.

I see.

He looks down at EMILY's feet then up at EMILY.

Right.

Pause.

Well, I suppose we better have a look at you. Why don't you pop yourself up on my desk?

EMILY Okay.

EMILY gets up onto the doctor's desk. He listens to her feet with his stethoscope. He switches on her head torch and examines them closely. He pulls her feet down, but she boings up again. He repeats this.

Can you see what's wrong?

DOCTOR I want to try something.

He picks up a bit of paper and places it on the desk.

Now if I just...

He slides it across the desk.

Slide it along the desk...

It passes right under EMILY's feet.

Well!

He passes it under her feet again.

Well well.

He passes it back and forth under her feet repeatedly.

Well well well.

EMILY Can I get down now?

DOCTOR Oh! Yes, of course.

EMILY gets down.

EMILY What do you reckon, Dr Jeffreys?

DOCTOR So it looks like there is a small gap between your feet and the floor.

EMILY Is that bad?

DOCTOR (trying to seem professional) Well... it's only a very small gap. Is it stopping you walking?

EMILY It did at the beginning, but I've got used to it.

DOCTOR So it's not actually a medical problem. Just sort of ... odd.

EMILY So what should I do?

DOCTOR Um. Well. Fill your pockets. Eat lots of potatoes. (sternly) No fizzy drinks! And most of all: take an aspirin twice a day and drink lots of water.

EMILY (to audience) I told you he wasn't a very good doctor.

DOCTOR Go to school as normal and I'm quite sure you'll have touched down by the end of the day.

SARAH Thank you, Doctor.

4.

School classroom. EMILY sitting at a little desk.

EMILY (to audience) I thought I'd at least get a day off school!

TEACHER No talking, Emily! How many times do I have to tell you? (pointing at members of the audience) Don't chew gum, Jalisa! Stop looking at your phone, Lemarr! Don't yawn, Ethan!

EMILY (to audience) This is Mrs Foster. She's very strict but my mum says she has to be with a bunch of kids like us.

TEACHER (at members of the audience) Finish your conversation at lunchtime, Mia! Tuck your shirt in, Liam! Take your finger out of your nose, Madison!

EMILY (to audience) I quite like her. She's better than Mr Moore who we had last year. He smelled funny and had hair growing out of his ears.

TEACHER Now yesterday I asked you to imagine you had a pen pal and to write them a letter. Who wants to read out their letter?

Pause.

Come on, who wants to go first?

Pause.

Someone must want to go first.

Pause.

Emily! Thank you for volunteering!

EMILY Ah Miss! I didn't volunteer. Jamila kicked me.

TEACHER Never mind about that, Emily. Why don't you come out to the front and read out your letter?

EMILY No, Miss...

TEACHER What do you mean, no?

EMILY I mean, Miss, I want to read it from here. Can I read it from here, Miss?

TEACHER Oh very well.

EMILY (reading) From Emily Connor
15 Martin Luther King House
Canonbury Estate
London
England
Britain
Europe
The World
The Solar System
The Universe
N1 2NS

TEACHER Thank you Emily, that's very complete.

Laughter.

EMILY Dear Edmund Fitzgerald –

TEACHER I beg your pardon, Emily?

EMILY 'Dear Edmund Fitzgerald.'

TEACHER Emily, The Edmund Fitzgerald is a shipwreck. A shipwreck in Lake Superior. We did a project on it last term. Don't you remember?

EMILY Yeah but you said we could write to anyone we wanted, Miss, so I chose that.

TEACHER But you can't send a letter to a ship. Who would read it? How would the postman deliver the letter?

Laughter.

EMILY I don't have to read it if you don't want.

TEACHER No no. (sighs) Go on Emily.

EMILY Dear Edmund Fitzgerald, sorry to hear about your shipwreck. It must have been very scary but very exciting. Like Jurassic World which my Dad let me watch on DVD cos he didn't realize it's a 12. My favourite song is called 'Sweet Dreams' which is by Beyoncé who is the best singer in the whole wide world.

Boy making groaning noises.

Shut up Liam, you like Justin Bieber.

TEACHER Carry on, Emily.

EMILY I bet you're like dead rusty now and you've probably got fishes swimming in and out of you and dead bodies and stuff, but I bet you look really cool and big and one day I wanna go diving and visit you. Love, Emily Connor (Age 10)

TEACHER Thank you, Emily. That was very ... strange ... but very good. You can sit down now.

EMILY sits and tries to put her legs under her desk but is having trouble.

EMILY Ouch! (stands up)

TEACHER I said, sit down, Emily.

EMILY tries to sit down again.

EMILY Ouch! (stands up again)

TEACHER Sit down and stop showing off, Emily.

EMILY Sorry, Miss.

EMILY sits sideways on the chair.

TEACHER Jamila, perhaps you would like to read out your story.

EMILY (to audience) I wasn't showing off. I couldn't get my legs under the desk and, no Lemarr, it's not cos I've got fat legs thank you, it's because I'm more off the ground than I was this morning. I'm rising!

5.

Ice rink. Chart music playing on a bad PA. Coloured glitter-ball-like effects.

EMILY (to audience) After school, as a late birthday treat for Robbie, mum took us ice-skating. Robbie loves skating – the problem is he is rubbish at it.

Robbie skates by, just visible over the barrier.

ROBBIE Look at meeeeeeee! Aaagh!

He slips and falls out of sight.

SARAH Be careful, Robbie.

JEAN Hello, Sarah.

SARAH Oh - hello Jean.

EMILY (to audience) This is Jean. She lives next door with her perfect daughter Vicki. And she always has to be better than us.

Robbie goes by.

ROBBIE Weeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeaaaaaaaaaaaaaargh!

He falls over again.

SARAH Emily, why don't you go and help your brother?

EMILY (reluctantly) Do I have to?

SARAH Yes you do.

EMILY goes.

I'm afraid neither of my kids are very good skaters.

JEAN What a shame. My Vicki is an excellent skater. Look she's over there.

SARAH Oh yes, she's very good.

JEAN Yes, she's won medals and all sorts. Oh dear, your Robbie's fallen over again.

SARAH (calling) Don't worry, Robbie, Emily's coming.

JEAN So how are you coping, Sarah?

SARAH What do you mean?

JEAN I heard that you and Greg were getting divorced.

SARAH Oh – yes. It’s not easy coping on your own, but I’m surviving, thanks.

JEAN I don’t know what I’d do if my Howard moved out, not that he ever would!

SARAH (under her breath) I bet he wouldn’t dare.

The music changes to Beyoncé’s ‘If I Were a Boy’.

JEAN Let me give you a piece of advice: paint the house.

SARAH Paint the house?

JEAN Yes! We’ve got some decorators in at the moment. They’re painting every room a different colour of the rainbow and I feel like a new woman.

SARAH Thank you, but we can’t afford anything like that at the moment –

JEAN Wait a second.

SARAH What is it?

JEAN I thought you said your children couldn’t skate?

SARAH They can’t.

JEAN Well they seem to be skating now.

EMILY and ROBBIE glide by.

ROBBIE Mum! Look!

JEAN Emily’s a natural!

EMILY and ROBBIE glide the other way, backwards.

ROBBIE Look mum!

SARAH That’s brilliant Robbie!

JEAN It hardly looks as if she’s touching the ice!

ROBBIE and Emily glide back the other way again, this time back to back.

ROBBIE Woo hoo!

SARAH Oh Jean, look. Over there. Vicki's fallen over look.

JEAN Your Emily: gliding across the ice like a swan. Like she's not wearing skates at all. Like she's just dancing through the air!

Build the music. EMILY and ROBBIE glide back: EMILY holding ROBBIE above her, he arms outstretched like Olympic figureskaters. They spin and swoop. Fade on them.

6.

Tuesday morning. Kitchen. Kettle boiling. Music radio on. Through the door, sounds of boisterous laughter.

SARAH Come on, you two. You need to get ready for school.

ROBBIE bursts in, with hand arm outstretched, apparently holding EMILY on the palm of his hand.

ROBBIE Look at me! I'm Superman!

SARAH (laughing) Yes very good, but you're going to be late!

ROBBIE I am the Man of Steel!

SARAH Come on now. Put her down.

ROBBIE moves his hand away. EMILY is still hovering in mid-air.

I said: put her down!

ROBBIE I have!

SARAH I don't have time for this.

ROBBIE Look! I'm not touching her!

SARAH takes in what she's seeing.

SARAH Oh my days.

EMILY Look at me!

SARAH But – you can't go to school like that!

EMILY Why not? It would be sick.

SARAH Because you can't.

ROBBIE Yay! Day off school!

SARAH Oh no. Emily's staying home but you're going to school, Robbie. Get your bag ready. Your Dad'll be here soon.

ROBBIE That's not fair.

SARAH Don't be silly, Robbie.

ROBBIE I never get any fun.

Doorbell goes.

SARAH That's him. Emily, he can't see you like this, go to your room.

EMILY But –

SARAH No buts. Now.

Opens door. GREG is waiting.

GREG Heyyy Superman!

ROBBIE (strikes a pose) I am the Man of Steel!

SARAH Go and get your school bag, Man of Steel.

ROBBIE Yes, mum.

He goes.

GREG Sarah.

SARAH Greg.

GREG Alright?

SARAH Fine. You?

GREG Yeah fine.

SARAH Emily's not going in today. Got a bit of a temperature.

GREG Want me to pop my head round the door.

SARAH Better not. She's asleep.

GREG Right.

ROBBIE comes back with school bag.

Just you and me today then, Superman?

SARAH You be good at school and I'll see you tonight, okay? (Kisses top of his head).

GREG Come on then, Superman.

7.

At home.

EMILY (to audience) Dad don't live with us no more because - reasons? He rents a tiny flat up Archway and when we go there he's always playing classical music like The Beatles. I think he's alright but I don't know.

TV noises.

Getting a day off school is like well boring. The telly's a complete load of -

SARAH (off) Oi -

EMILY (to audience) complete load of rubbish and you can't talk to your friends. I tried whatsapping Chloe at lunchtime but mum made me turn my phone off cos like I'm supposed to be ill or whatevs.

Mum appears with a tape measure.

In the morning mum measured me against the edge of the door, but she didn't like measure on top of my head, she measured under my feet.

SARAH One foot eight inches.

EMILY (to audience) We had baked potato and cheese for lunch which is my favourite. In the afternoon I watched Beyoncé at the Superbowl on YouTube for the literally squillionth time and then mum measured me again.

Mum appears with a tape measure.

SARAH Two foot five inches.

Evening. Change of light?

EMILY (to audience) In the evening I can't get into bed because I'm floating too high up so mum has this brilliant idea and makes me a bed on the ceiling.

SARAH (off) Alright Emily I think it's ready!

EMILY (to audience) So I get to sleep upside down, which is so cool I can't even.

EMILY gets into her upside-down bed.
ROBBIE comes in.

ROBBIE Wowwww! Can I have an upside down bed?

SARAH No Robbie, you've got a perfectly good bed of your own.

ROBBIE Can I sleep in here though?

SARAH As long as Emily doesn't mind.

EMILY Long as he doesn't snore!

ROBBIE I'll put my sleeping bag underneath, in case she comes down in the night.

SARAH Very thoughtful.

ROBBIE I'll look after you, Emily!

SARAH Sweet dreams, Emily...

8.

Dream.

EMILY And suddenly...
I'm on a ship.

And I look out of the window and there's water
We're sinking!
And I get out of bed and I run up and down the
deck banging on the doors
WE'RE SINKING!
And I run to the lifeboats
WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST!
And then I'm running round the side of the boat
SAVE YOURSELVES!
And I'm running under the boat
UPSIDE DOWN
But the ship is sinking deeper and the
pressure's getting stronger and stronger
I try to swim up but the water's crushing me
HELP! HELP! HELP ME!

9.

Back in the bedroom.

ROBBIE Mum! Mum!

EMILY HELP HELP!

SARAH What's the matter?

ROBBIE It's Emily!

SARAH She's pressed right up into the ceiling. We've
got to get her outside. Robbie, you grab her
legs. I'll grab her arms. Emily?

EMILY Yes, mum?

SARAH Can you get to the window?

EMILY I reckon.

SARAH You gonna be warm enough.

EMILY Yeah – Wait: Robbie, pass me my skipping rope.
(Robbie grabs it)

SARAH What's that for?

EMILY Robbie can tie it round my ankle and tie the
other end to the window. That way I won't drift
off.

ROBBIE does that.

SARAH (tearfully) Brilliant. You're amazing, Emily.
And you, Robbie. Amazing.

Emily gets to the window and with great
difficulty climbs through.

10.

Outside. EMILY in the air. Quiet, trees,
distant sound of night traffic. MUM and ROBBIE
looking through the window at her.

SARAH You alright, Emily?

EMILY Don't worry mum. It's all gonna be alright.
It's all a big adventure!

SARAH Do you need anything else, poppet?

EMILY Don't worry about me. I'll just sleep up here
on my rope.

SARAH If you need me, give me a shout. I'm just here.

ROBBIE And me!

EMILY What do I do in the morning, what if people see
me?

SARAH Just ignore them. Pretend you're not there.

EMILY (considers this and then) Okay. Night.

SARAH Night night, darling.

EMILY (to audience) I don't reckon no one's gonna see
me.
Cos no one looks up really.
Miss Gregory, who takes us for art, she reckons
that in London, yeah, people walk around
looking at the pavement.
And she reckons if just once in a while they
look up, they'd see like a totally different
city.
More beautiful or whatever.
More weird.

Night sounds, fade into daytime:

11.

Home. Wednesday Morning. Kitchen. SARAH's phone rings.

SARAH Hello, Sarah Connor?

EMILY (on phone) Mum? I'm bored.

SARAH Emily? Where are you?

EMILY I'm on my mobile mum. Keep up.

SARAH What are you doing?

EMILY Floating. But I can see Jean, next door, nosing around. I think she seen me.

SARAH Oh no! I'm on my way.

12.

Garden. JEAN's dog is barking at something up in the air.

JEAN Calm down, Boris!

Dog barks some more.

Boris! What's the matter with you?

Dog barks. Sarah comes out into the garden.

SARAH (nervous) Hello Jean.

JEAN Oh there you are, Sarah. I'm sorry about Boris, but he's rather upset by what he's seeing here. And I'm afraid, Sarah, I don't blame him.

SARAH I – well – I can explain –

JEAN Some sort of kite is it?

SARAH I'm sorry?

JEAN A kite is it? For the kiddies?

SARAH A kite?

JEAN Up there?

Dog barks.

Be quiet, Boris, it's only a kite.

SARAH Yes! It's a kite! That's what it is!

JEAN Well I'm not happy.

SARAH No?

JEAN No. It's a matter of sunlight. I have a right to my fair share of sunlight, Sarah, and your kite is blocking the sunlight from my conservatory.

SARAH I'm so sorry, Jean.

JEAN It's not me, it's my Howard. He likes to read the paper in the conservatory of a Sunday.

SARAH I'll see what I can do.

ROBBIE bowls in.

Hey Robbie, how was school?

ROBBIE How's Emily doing? Emily!

SARAH (intensely) No. Robbie. The kite.

ROBBIE What?

SARAH The kite.

JEAN Yes, Robbie. Your mother and I were just discussing the kite in your garden.

All three look up slowly. They look down again.

SARAH Yes, Robbie, the kite.

ROBBIE Oh!

JEAN Anyway, I'm going out now. I hope it will be gone when I get back.

SARAH I'll see to it, Jean.

She goes.

That was a close one.

ROBBIE Wow! Emily must be about a hundred miles high!

SARAH It's about 30 foot, Robbie.

ROBBIE (waving his arms) Emily!

SARAH Try calling her on her mobile.

ROBBIE takes out his phone and calls. Up in the air, EMILY answers.

EMILY Um, Emily Connor, Superfly Girl!

ROBBIE Woooooooooooo!

EMILY You don't have to shout Robbie – that's what phones are for!

ROBBIE Superman calling Superfly!

EMILY You alright, Robbie? How was school?

ROBBIE Yeah it was good.

EMILY Anything special happen?

ROBBIE Not really. Oh wait - I had a long chat with my teacher after school.

SARAH Did you?

ROBBIE Yeah it was a really great chat.

13.

School. TEACHER is on the phone.

TEACHER Hello, Headmaster. It's Mrs Foster here. Look, I've just had a really strange chat with Robbie Connor and I don't know what to make of it.

We know he's a very imaginative boy, of course, but this felt slightly different.

Usually he talks about being Superman and fighting Batman and that sort of thing but this time it sounded like what he was saying was real.

Well... he said that his sister, Emily... he said she's ... tied up in their garden...

Yes, good idea, Headmaster. I'll phone social services right away.

14.

Home. Inside.

SARAH You said what?

ROBBIE I didn't say nothing!

SARAH Look, it's okay Robbie, you're not in trouble, just tell me what you said.

ROBBIE I just said that Emily was learning to fly.

SARAH Oh Robbie, you didn't.

ROBBIE And Mrs Foster tried to make a joke and said maybe she would fly away...

Doorbell goes. SARAH goes to answer it.

And I said she couldn't do that.

SARAH Right.

ROBBIE Because mum tied her up in the garden.

SARAH Oh Robbie...

Opens the door. There stands a SOCIAL WORKER. She has a series of faces.

SOCIAL (friendly face) Mrs Connor? Mrs Sarah Connor?

SARAH That's right.

SOCIAL My names Jacky Hargreaves. I'm from Child Protection, mind if I come in?

SARAH Well actually I'm a bit busy –

SOCIAL (stepping in) Won't take a minute.

SARAH Did you say Child Protection?

SOCIAL That's right. Hello! You must be Robbie.

ROBBIE Yeah.

SARAH Am I being investigated?

SOCIAL (reassuring face) Oh no, Mrs Connor – or may I call you Sarah? – this isn't an investigation-type situation; this is a routine enquiry-type situation. Can I take a look at your garden?

SARAH My garden?

SOCIAL (stepping out) Won't take a minute.

 15.

Garden.

SARAH Sorry, Miss Hargreaves, what's this about?

SOCIAL Just routine?

SARAH Why do you want to inspect my garden?

SOCIAL Oh! (laughing face) I see your confusion. Mrs Connor, Sarah: this isn't a horticultural-type situation; this is a child safety-type situation.

SARAH Child safety?

SOCIAL We've had a report that there may be a child in trouble in this garden.

SOCIAL WORKER looks left and right, front and back.

SARAH Oh...

SOCIAL (smiling face) But as I can see, there's no problem at all, so I can tick that off the list.

SARAH Oh, good.

SOCIAL All that remains for me is to see Emily.

SARAH Emily?

SOCIAL That's right.

SARAH Why do you want to see Emily?

SOCIAL The report I received concerns your daughter Emily and to totally satisfy my enquiries I would like to see her.

SARAH She's a bit busy right now.

SOCIAL (sceptical face) Busy?

SARAH Well she's a bit tied up.

SOCIAL (horrified face) 'Tied up'?

SARAH I just mean: she can't come down to see you right now.

SOCIAL (suspicious face) I'm afraid I'm going to have to insist, Mrs Connor-may-I-call-you-Sarah.

SARAH It's really not very convenient.

SOCIAL (stern face) I'm afraid Mrs Connor, if you do not produce your child immediately, I am going to have to issue a child protection warning and then we would not be in a positive-type situation; we would be in a negative-type situation.

SARAH But –

SOCIAL (angry face) Go and get your child, this instant!

SARAH There's no need...

SOCIAL Oh but there is, Mrs Connor!

SARAH She's already here.

SOCIAL She's what?

SARAH She's right here.

SOCIAL WORKER looks left; she looks right.

SOCIAL Where?

SARAH In the garden.

SOCIAL WORKER looks in front of her and behind her.

SOCIAL I don't have time for games, Mrs Connor.

SARAH Not down here. Up there.

She points upwards. SOCIAL WORKER looks up. She looks down. She double takes and looks up. She stays looking up. Pause.

Are you okay, Mrs Hargreaves?

The SOCIAL WORKER looks down and to the audience. Stunned face.

SOCIAL She's... she's...

The SOCIAL WORKER faints.

SARAH Robbie! Go and make a cup of sweet tea for Mrs Hargreaves!

She bends over the SOCIAL WORKER and GENTLY slaps her face.

Are you alright, Mrs Hargreaves? Talk to me!

The SOCIAL WORKER slowly recovers.

SOCIAL (dazed face) Wh – where am I? Oh, hello, Mrs Connor. I was having the strangest dream –

She looks up. She screams.

SARAH Do you want to talk to her?

SOCIAL Wh – what?

SARAH It was Robbie's idea. She doesn't get a good mobile phone signal up there, but if you tie two baked bean tins together with string, you can talk to her.

And tin can is hanging on a string. SARAH passes it to the SOCIAL WORKER.

SOCIAL Um, hello?

EMILY Hello.

SOCIAL Who is this?

EMILY I'm Emily Connor – the Superfly girl from the planet Awesome. Where are you from?

SOCIAL (confused face) Islington Social Services.

EMILY Pleased to meet you.

SOCIAL And you.

EMILY Byeeee!

SOCIAL Bye...

SARAH I'm sorry, Mrs Hargreaves, I tried to warn you.

The SOCIAL WORKER snaps out of it.

SOCIAL (standing up, serious face) Mrs Connor-may-I-call-you-Sarah! This is not an acceptable-type situation; this is an unacceptable-type situation.

SARAH I know, but what can I do?

SOCIAL I shall alert the emergency services! I will fill in forms! I will submit reports!

SARAH You mean, you're going to get her down?

SOCIAL (confused face) Yes. Somehow, we're going to have to get her down. Good day, Mrs Connor!

She flounces out, inasmuch as a SOCIAL WORKER can ever really flounce. ROBBIE rushes out.

ROBBIE Mum! Mum! Did it work? Did it work?

SARAH Yes, darling.

SARAH picks up can.

ROBBIE Can I talk to her?

SARAH In a minute, darling. Emily?

EMILY Hi mum.

SARAH Are you okay?

EMILY I'm hungry.

SARAH I'll pass you some food from the upstairs window. Anything else?

EMILY A book? It's quite boring up here.

SARAH Robbie, go and get some bread and cheese, there's some plastic boxes under the sink.

ROBBIE But I want to talk to Emily!

SARAH Well you can't, not now. Just do as I say please.

ROBBIE It's good isn't it? The phone?

SARAH Hurry up, Robbie.

He goes, dejected.

EMILY I'm never going to be on the ground again, am I mum?

SARAH Emily, of course you will.

EMILY When then?

SARAH The lady from the council said they'd get you down.

EMILY Yeah reckon.

SARAH You will, darling, I promise.

EMILY (to audience) My mum is definitely the best mum in the world, but I don't think even she can promise that.

16.

Car. Thursday morning. GREG is driving ROBBIE to school.

ROBBIE I'm just saying –

GREG Girls can't fly.

ROBBIE Yes they can.

GREG No they can't.

ROBBIE Yes they can.

GREG Robbie, they can't.

ROBBIE Why can't they?

GREG They just can't. It's a rule.

He drives in silence as ROBBIE sulks.

You know what today is, Robbie?

ROBBIE No.

GREG Bonfire night.

ROBBIE Whatever.

GREG You coming over to Clissold Park? See the fireworks?

ROBBIE Don't think so.

GREG Oh.

Silence.

You know who *can* fly though, don't you?

ROBBIE (sulkily) Who?

GREG You can, Superman!

ROBBIE No I can't.

GREG Yes you can.

ROBBIE No I can't.

GREG Course you can. Up, up, and away!

ROBBIE (angrily) NO I CAN'T! I CAN'T FLY! I CAN'T DO ANYTHING!

GREG drives on in silence. Distant sound of helicopter outside the car.

GREG Hey, Robbie, look up there.

ROBBIE What?

GREG You know what that is?

ROBBIE Helicopter.

GREG That's right.

ROBBIE So what.

Brings car to a halt.

GREG There you go. School awaits.

ROBBIE Bye.

Opens the car door.

GREG Hey hey hey. What about a kiss for your dad?

Sulky silence.

Look, I tell you what I'll do. If you *promise* you'll get mummy to help you, I'll get you some fireworks today. Then you can have your own firework display. But you've got to promise.

ROBBIE Okay...

GREG That's better eh? Nice smile. Now, go and knock 'em dead, Superman!

17.

High above the garden.

EMILY (to audience) No I did not sleep well, thank you very much for asking. There was this pigeon that started flapping about round my head and then it started twittering at about four in the morning and then all the birds for like miles around started joining in!

SARAH (from a window) That's the dawn chorus, darling.

EMILY Well, it makes a right racket. If they do it again, I'm gonna blast 'em with some Beyoncé, see how they like it.

SARAH Can you hear something?

EMILY What? Oh yeah. It's a helicopter?

SARAH I wonder what that's doing?

EMILY I think it's coming this way.

18.

Helicopter. Whirr of the blades, patriotic music (like the theme from The Great Escape), lights flashing. The PILOT's voice comes from a speaker.

PILOT (radio) This is not just any helicopter. I am Flight Lieutenant Roger Madison of UK Search and Rescue and this is a D.A.G. AirProwler F-600 RotorCat. We're coming to get you, miniature flying girl.

EMILY Oh no. Who is this idiot?

PILOT Negative, tiny floating youth. I am not, repeat not, an idiot. I'm going to get you down.

EMILY This is so not going to work.

PILOT Wrong again, diminutive airborne child. The RotorCat is the most powerful helicopter in the British air fleet. If this doesn't bring you down, nothing will.

EMILY Okay. But don't say I didn't warn you.

PILOT This is the plan:
1. I fly alongside you with the door open
2. You step inside
3. I land the RotorCat on Islington Green
4. You are saved
5. I am a hero. Do I make myself clear?

EMILY Well, I guess.

PILOT You say: SIR, YES SIR! Do I make myself clear, pint-size hovering female?

EMILY SIR, YES SIR!

PILOT Roger that! Now standby to be rescued by Flight Lieutenant Roger Madison of UK Search and Rescue!

EMILY Roger, Roger.

PILOT Untie the rope!

EMILY Roger, Roger!

EMILY unties the skipping rope from her foot.

PILOT Here we go!

Huge noise, lights flashing, more music, blades hammering the air. The helicopter draws alongside EMILY.

Step inside the craft! Nice and easy!

EMILY Roger, roger!

She gets inside.

PILOT And down we go!

Cut music. Helicopter sounds very constipated. The craft seems to have difficulty descending.

What the heck?

EMILY I told you.

PILOT Holy smokes! It's not going down.

EMILY I said it wouldn't work.

PILOT This is a D.A.G. AirProwler F-600 RotorCat. Nothing in the world can stop it.

EMILY Apparently, I can.

PILOT But this is impossible!

EMILY I'll get out shall I?

PILOT Give me one more go!

Great sound of metal in distress. The helicopter is groaning and the rotor blades don't sound healthy.

I don't believe it.

EMILY Well you better cos it's true.

PILOT But you're just a girl.

EMILY Amazing innit?

Sounds of mechanical dysfunction. Emily steps out of the helicopter which immediately bounces up, the blades start whirling freely, the music resumes, the lights flash.

PILOT Listen, diminutive aerial youngster, you are to tell no one about this.

EMILY SIR, YES SIR!

PILOT Thank you. Now I'm going to rescue some people from a mountain to cheer myself up.

The helicopter zooms away. She watches it go.

EMILY (to audience) And now I'm on my own. And ohmagosh I'm higher up than ever!

She looks down and tips over, doing an unintentional somersault in the air.

Woah. This is quite tricky without the rope on me.

She does another somersault in the air.

I'm going to make myself dizzy!

She does a backflip.

Or sick!

EMILY leans a little to one side and she glides a little to the left. She leans a little to the other side and she glides a little to the right.

Hey – I'm flying.

She grows in confidence and she starts to stretch out her arms and flying properly.

Look at me!

She does an elaborate series of swooping movement – figures of eight, arabesques,

great arcs across the sky (and above the audience).

Wheeeeeee! Whoooooooooooo!

Emily flies but then comes to a halt.

EMILY (to audience) I tell you something they never tell you. Flying is bloody knackered!

SARAH I heard that!

EMILY (to audience) It really took it out of me. Worse than going for a run or playing netball. So I had a little sleep.

She instantly falls asleep, hanging in the air, snoring. Lights change and it becomes:

19.

Evening. EMILY wakes. She stretches. She looks down.

EMILY Still rising then.

She looks down again.

Who's that down there?

She squints.

As that you, Robbie?

She looks harder.

What's he doing?

20.

Down in the garden. ROBBIE is fiddling with a box of fireworks.

SARAH (From inside the house) Robbie? What are you doing out there?

ROBBIE Nothing mum.

SARAH Five minutes, and then you come in.

ROBBIE Okay mum. (whispers) This is for you, Emily!
A match being struck. Sulphur spluttering.

ROBBIE Tell me what it looks like up close!
A firework shoots up in the air.

21.

High above the garden. A firework explodes with colour.

EMILY Wowwwwww! Again again!
Silence. Then another firework shoots into the air, towards us this time. Explosion.

Wooooooooh!

22.

Garden.

ROBBIE One more, Emily.
Lights the firework.

SARAH Robbie!
SARAH comes out of the house.

Robbie! What the hell do you think you're doing?

ROBBIE It's Bonfire Night. I'm doing a firework display for Emily.

SARAH You might hit her. For God's sake, Robbie, don't you know how dangerous it is? Stop that now!

ROBBIE But mum, it's already lit.

SARAH Well, put it out.

ROBBIE But you said you should never go back to a lit firework –

SARAH Well if you won't, I will -

ROBBIE Too late -

SARAH Emily!?

The firework soars up into the sky.
Splattering explosion. Pause.

EMILY (in the air) Woohoo!

SARAH Robbie! You could have hurt her. You could have blinded her. Where did you get these?

ROBBIE Dad gave them to me.

SARAH Oh I might have known.

ROBBIE I was really careful. I didn't point them at her.

SARAH I'm very cross with you, Robbie.

ROBBIE This is so unfair. I thought of the baked bean telephone. I always have to get all her stuff. And I didn't even get to see the helicopter. I hate you.

SARAH Never say that, Robbie. You don't mean it.

ROBBIE I do. I hate you.

SARAH Go to your room, Robbie, until you're ready to say sorry. (loud, brooking no argument) Right now.

A second of stand-off, then ROBBIE turns sulkily and goes inside.

EMILY (Still enjoying the firework) It's beautiful. Sparks in the air. Like glitter hanging in the sky. Then fizzing out into darkness Like there was never anything there.

SARAH appears at a window.

SARAH Emily? You okay?

EMILY I'm fine, mum.

SARAH That could have been very dangerous.

EMILY I know, but he meant well.

SARAH It gave me such a fright.

EMILY Yeah I know.

SARAH You're higher than you were this afternoon.

EMILY I know.

SARAH You're as high as the roof.

EMILY I know. I can see that football Robbie kicked up here last summer.

SARAH Maybe you could throw it down!

EMILY How high do you think I'm going to get?

SARAH I don't know. You can't keep going on up for ever.

EMILY I guess not.

SARAH You'll probably just start coming down again soon.

EMILY Yeah.

SARAH I hope so.

EMILY I hope so too.

SARAH I just want us to be together again as a family. You, me and Robbie.

EMILY And Dad.

SARAH I don't know about that, Emily.

EMILY What about for my birthday?

SARAH I'll think about it.

EMILY Do you think Robbie's had enough time in his room?

SARAH I suppose so.

EMILY Let me say goodnight to him.

SARAH Alright. I'll go and get him. You wait there.

EMILY Not much else I can do!

SARAH Be back in a minute.

She goes.

EMILY (to audience) Mum always thinks she has to be strong for us. She doesn't like to cry in front of us but the first night Dad moved out I heard her crying in her room. I want to tell her she can cry. I won't think she's weak or nothing. I think it's good to cry sometimes.

SARAH returns in a panic.

SARAH Emily! Emily!

EMILY What is it?

SARAH It's Robbie! He's gone!

Little sequence of Robbie running, schoolbag on his shoulder, running up the walls and down the walls, across the fences and maybe into the audience. Then:

EMILY Gone?

SARAH He's not in his room! And he's taken his school bag!

EMILY Are you sure?

SARAH Of course I'm sure.

EMILY What are you going to do?

SARAH I could call the police but he could be miles away before they get here.

EMILY I'll go.

SARAH What?

EMILY I'll go looking for him.

SARAH Oh Emily, you can't do that.

EMILY Course I can. I'll be the eye in the sky.

SARAH Are you sure?

EMILY 110%, mum.

SARAH You got your watch?

EMILY I have.

SARAH Well I want you back here by nine, whether you've found him or not.

EMILY Sir! Yes sir!

23.

High above North London. Rush of air, distant sounds of traffic. EMILY is flying.

EMILY New North Road. Upper Street. Holloway Road. Liverpool Road. Highbury. Where are you, little brother?

Robbie, I promise, come back, and we'll fly over London.

I promise, we'll hold hands and fly over the rooftops, spook the people in the London Eye, and wave hello to the aeroplanes.

I promise you, Robbie, we'll fly together. Just please come back.

(Shouts) Robbie!

Her voice echoes emptily in the night sky.

24.

Home, evening. SARAH's on the phone.

SARAH It was just on the off chance.
No, well, thank you Jean.
Well if you do, then—

Doorbell.

That's the door. I'll have to go.
Thank you. I will. Bye. Bye.

Puts down receiver. She runs to answer door.

Greg?

GREG Hello, Sarah.

SARAH Look, what do you want? We're having a crisis here –

GREG I know. I'm bringing back our little wanderer.

SARAH Robbie?

ROBBIE comes in.

ROBBIE Mum.

SARAH Robbie, darling, what happened, where were you? Where was he?

GREG I came back home from work and there he was sitting there on the doorstep, weren't you Superman? I did try to call, but –

SARAH I know, I've been ringing round everywhere.

GREG Come on, Robbie, what do you say?

ROBBIE (quietly) Sorry, mum.

SARAH Robbie, please promise me you'll never do that again, you have no idea how precious you are to me, you mustn't run off like that–

ROBBIE runs upstairs.

Robbie! Robbie, please! Robbie come back down here!

GREG Leave him. He'll be alright.

SARAH 'He'll be alright.' Like you'd know – did you give him fireworks?

GREG Yeah.

SARAH How could you?

GREG He was all miserable in the car this morning. I thought it would cheer him up. But look Sarah –

SARAH He could have hurt someone.

GREG Sarah –

SARAH You are so irresponsible—

GREG Sarah!

SARAH What?

GREG What's going on with Emily?

Pause.

SARAH What's he said?

GREG Robbie? Some crazy story. Some nonsense.
Flying and stuff. I don't know.
It is nonsense isn't it?

Pause.

It is, isn't it?

SARAH I don't know what to say.

GREG Well, where is she?

SARAH She's out.

GREG Out? She's 10 years old. What do you mean
'out'?

SARAH She's looking for Robbie.

25.

High above the city at night.

EMILY Look at all the parks.
Buckingham Palace goes back for miles.
Woo! The London Eye!
But I'm too high to see the people now.

I reckon you only know how great your friends
are.

When you can't never hold their hands again.

Chloe and Rachel and Siobhan and Jamila
Rachel, I'm sorry I called you a cow that time.
And Chloe, I promise I didn't steal your pencil
case. I know you think I did but I didn't.

She has a moment.

My heart feels so sad.

Sad and heavy, like it's gonna sink in my
stomach
Maybe that's it! That's what'll pull me down
again!

She waits.

No.
Still rising.
Gotta go home.

26.

Home. Inside.

GREG When did it start?

SARAH Beginning of the week.

GREG Do you know why? Did something happen?

SARAH I hope you're not trying to blame me!

GREG Course not -

SARAH Because if you're going to come here and start
throwing blame around, you can walk out that
door right now -

GREG I didn't mean anything!

SARAH Well. Good.

Pause.

I'm sorry.

GREG Don't be sorry.

SARAH (emotional) I feel like I've been smiling for a
thousand years. Trying not to show Emily I'm
scared. But I've been crying inside all weeks.

GREG I don't know what to say.

SARAH You can't say anything. You weren't here. To
watch her, every day, just lifting and every
day my hope that she'll just come down, come
back into my arms, just fades and fades. She's
not coming down. And all the things I've always
thought about, now they'll never happen. I

wanted to watch her grow up. I wanted to see her off to the big school. I wanted to help her when she was scared of the exams. I wanted to be disappointed by her and make her go to her room. I wanted her to treat this place like a hotel. I wanted to tell her not to use language like that while you're under my roof. I wanted to disapprove of what she's wearing but not say anything because I'm not that kind of mum. I wanted to hold her and say not all boys are like that. I wanted to phone her and know she's too busy to reply. I wanted to grow old watching my beautiful daughter.

GREG Sarah.

They hug. Hold it. They break.

SARAH What time is it?

GREG Just gone nine.

SARAH She'll be back! Emily'll be back!

GREG What?

SARAH The garden! Quickly!

27.

The garden. EMILY floating hundreds of feet above them. Ground and air can't hear each other.

EMILY You took your time!

SARAH Emily!

GREG Blimey, is that her?

EMILY Is that Dad? Dad! Woooo!

ROBBIE looks out of a window.

Hey, it's Superman! You're back!

ROBBIE Superfly Emily from the planet Awesome!

EMILY I'm blowing you kisses, little brother!

GREG I can hardly make her out.

SARAH Try and see her against the moon. Stand here.

GREG In the flowers?

SARAH I'll get some more, don't worry.

EMILY It's like my dream! Boy and a girl, seaweed round their ankles, waving at me. Dad! Mum! Can you see me?

GREG Can she see us?

SARAH I don't know. Just keep waving and shouting.

GREG (shouting) Emily! Emily!

SARAH (shouting) We love you Emily! (Keep waving, Greg!)

GREG She's getting higher. She can't hear us.

ROBBIE Goodbye Emily!

28.

EMILY (shouting) I love you Mum. I love you Dad.

Winds getting more fierce. Sounds of night on earth dim as she lifts higher into the sky.

That's it. I can't see them any more.
And I'm still rising.
Rising so high now I can't make out my garden.
Bye house, bye street.
Bye Chloe and Rachel and Siobhan and Jamila.

Winds swirl.

It's cold.
I can't see streets no more.
The clouds are in my eyes.
And the lights.
Look at London's lights.

Winds howl.

But London's smaller than my hand now. Can't see streets. Just rivers and fields.
Bye South, bye North, goodbye England and Britain

Bye Scotland and Wales and Ireland.
And Europe!
Those shapes are amazing.
Italy and Greece and France and Spain.
This is the best map in the world.
Europe goodbye.
America and Canada.
Bye Edmund Fitzgerald.
Goodbye clouds.

Softening of the sound and the winds die
down, quiet, eerie, distant sounds.

And up, keep rising, going so fast now.
And from the corners of my eyes, I can see the
edges of the whole world.
Goodbye earth.
And the stars. Look at the stars.
The planets.
The moon.

Sounds change. Emptiness, space. Her voice
echoing in the vast darkness.

Where am I going? What's going to happen?
I don't know but it's going to be an
adventure.

Because look at this.
Look at all this.

It all gets more and more beautiful.

THE END

