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Into the Clouds
[MRS. BLOEM]
By Julia Britton

CHARACTERS

MRS. BLOEM, 45
ANDREA STEVENS, 37
ROB STEVENS, 40
JOSS, 36
EMERALD, 12
EVA, 16-25
NURSE

SCENE 1

- MARBURG, A SMALL UNIVERSITY TOWN, GERMANY 1929. EVA IS SIXTEEN.

EVA: **(To audience)** I'm starting my journal today, because today's the first real day of my life.... the day I started flying. When I was twelve, I told my father I wanted to learn to fly so I could be a medical missionary. I reckon I'd need to fly if I'm going to work in Africa. Tanganyka, our colony, is what I'm heading for.

Father was keen on the medical part, he's Professor of Surgery at the University. But about the flying - he said, don't say a word about it until you've got your school leaving certificate, if you still want it, I'll pay for your lessons. I did well, and he gave me a beautiful gold and amethyst necklace. But I handed it back. I got my lessons. Of course it was gliding lessons. Ever since that wicked treaty of Versailles we can't build powered planes. But everyone's mad about gliders. There are a few ancient planes, they've repaired and got into the air again. But for us beginners, it's gliding.

Gliding's so wonderful. I don't think I'll ever want to fly a powered machine. And today was the day of days. I passed my "C" test. That's it. I'm a real flyer! Of course I did my "A" test before... broke a few rules, I shouldn't have tried to climb into the clouds. Then the "B" test... easy that. And now this. I had to stay up five minutes, but the wind took me up so gently it was like climbing to heaven. I can't describe the sensation. It was wonderful. I lost all sense of time. I was a bird. When I looked at my watch I was horrified. I'd

been up for more than an hour. There was a lot of cheering going on the ground. I couldn't think what it was about. I soon knew. I'd broken the national record!

Next week a new glider, a much improved model is coming to our club, and our chief instructor is going to let me fly it. I'm not telling him, but I'm going to try for the world record. I know I can keep the glider up. I know. I know. If I get this, father's got to take me seriously. And one day, Germany will rise again. We're already first in the world in gliding. One day that rotten treaty will be scrapped... and then we shall see!

SCENE 2

- ANDREA AND ROB'S HOME, ROSE BAY, SYDNEY, 1991. LATE AFTERNOON. ANDREA IS SITTING WRITING A LETTER. SHE SCREWS UP THE PAPER AND BEGINS AGAIN. SHE THROWS THIS ONE AWAY TOO. SHE IS STARTING A THIRD ONE WHEN THE DOOR BELL RINGS AND SHE LETS IN MRS. BLOEM.

ANDREA: Oh, Mrs. Bloem... Come in. I'm sorry there's been a change of plan. We won't be needing a baby sitter tonight. I'm really sorry. It was all rather sudden. I couldn't let you know in time.

MRS. BLOEM: Don't worry. Another time.

ANDREA: Later in the week, if that's convenient.

MRS. BLOEM: Oh yes... any evening.

ANDREA: Thank you. **(Pause)** I'd better explain. I won't be here... in the flat, any more. Emerald and I are going away for a while.

MRS. BLOEM: For a holiday?

ANDREA: No. But we'll be living somewhere else...

MRS. BLOEM: I see.

ANDREA: **(She looks in her bag and takes out some notes)** Please take this. I'm sorry you came for nothing.

MRS. BLOEM: It isn't necessary... really. Just make it next time.

ANDREA: Oh no. I wouldn't feel happy about that. Please.

MRS. BLOEM HESITATES, BUT DOESN'T TAKE THE MONEY.

MRS. BLOEM: It's all right.

ANDREA: No. You've got your fares, and time. Of course you must be paid. Take a taxi home. I'm sorry. I'm sure we'll need you again soon. I'll ring you in a day or two.

MRS. BLOEM: Anytime you want me, I'm always free. I don't sit for anyone else these days.

ANDREA: I'll be calling you soon.

MRS. BLOEM: Can you give these to Emerald for me?

SHE HANDS HER A SMALL PACKET.

ANDREA: Of course. Thank you. You're very kind.

MRS. BLOEM: Well, I'll be on my way.

ANDREA: Goodbye. I'll keep in touch.

MRS. BLOEM GOES. ANDREA STARTS WRITING AGAIN ROB ENTERS.

ROB: Oh. I didn't think you were here.

ANDREA: I've had that feeling for a long time.

ROB: What are you doing back so early? You're not sick, are you?

ANDREA: No. I just left work early. And you? I didn't expect you till midnight.

ROB: Ah. Count Dracula risks all for love. **(As she repels him)** Just on my way to the blood bank, actually. I've got to be out tonight. Two of our bosses from Tokyo are here. Like to be a geisha girl? M'm? No? Perhaps as well. You don't giggle at bad jokes do you? Feeling a bit fragile, as a matter of fact. I could do with an Alka Seltzer.

ANDREA: You know where they are.

ROB: Oh yes, yes. Up there with the Valium, Serepax, Mogadon and the rest of last night's Ecstasy. I hope I didn't disturb your correspondence Madame de Maintenant.

ANDREA: Now that you're here, it won't be necessary. I was writing to you.

ROB: Me? If it's so urgent, why don't you just send me a fax?

ANDREA: I'm leaving you.

ROB: Leaving me what? All your worldly goods, mayhap?

ANDREA: Leaving. Now. This afternoon. I was writing to tell you.

ROB: Why this passion for writing? Joining the Trappists?

ANDREA: I'm actually serious, Rob.

ROB: What are you talking about?

ANDREA: I've told you before and you wouldn't believe me. I'm going. **(She gets up to move away. He takes her arm)** Please.

ROB: Where?

ANDREA: Where doesn't matter.

ROB: Have you been at the mescaline again?

ANDREA: Stop this bullshit. I am leaving you. I have packed my case and am about to call a cab.

ROB: You mean you want a little time on your own. Very understandable. Why couldn't you say so? We'll have a second honeymoon when you come back. Come to think we never had a first one, did we? Why the writing nonsense?

ANDREA: I didn't want an argument.

ROB: Oh.

ANDREA: We've argued before and got nowhere.

ROB: Sometimes we went to bed. What's wrong with that?

ANDREA: Nothing. But it's not the solution to everything as you seem to think. People wake up in the morning. I'll ring you later in the week.

ROB: If you are serious and I can't think you can be, we have to talk this out. Perhaps we should see a marriage counsellor. Oh yes, of course, *you* are a marriage counsellor, I had forgotten.

ANDREA: Just accept it. I'll ring you up in a few days.

ROB: Who is he?

ANDREA: I'm not answering questions.

ROB: Who's the man?

ANDREA: No one you know.

ROB: So there is a man.

ANDREA: You can talk.

ROB: I'm open and above board. You know all about my affairs. We said we'd be free.

ANDREA: I'm being free for once.

ROB: You're not. You're being deceitful. You've done all this behind my back.

ANDREA: I've done nothing behind your back I'd be ashamed of.

ROB: Oh you have, you know, you have.

ANDREA: If you try to stop me, I'll just go tomorrow.

SHE GETS UP AGAIN. HE GRABS HER BY THE SHOULDERS.

ROB: So you've been cheating for years. Quel slut.

ANDREA: I have not. This is the first time. Unlike you.

ROB: I wouldn't leave you. You know I wouldn't. These affairs of mine aren't serious. You know that.

ANDREA: That's a nice point. You think a lot of shonky affairs don't matter. It's just fun. Kids half your age. They don't matter. But when I'm serious. When I've met someone I really trust and respect, then I'm a slut. Right?

ROB: I love you, Andrea.

EMERALD ENTERS WITH HER SCHOOL CASE AND STANDS IN THE DOORWAY.

ANDREA: Love, did you say?

ROB: Yes I did. Love. I love you. I always have. I need you. I would never leave you and you know it. You can't leave me like this.

ANDREA: I can.

ROB: You'll not go without a struggle. Do you hear? **(HE GRABS HER AGAIN.SHE KICKS HIM. HE HITS HER. SHE STUMBLES AGAINST A CHAIR HURT. EMERALD RUNS TO ANDREA)** I'm sorry. I didn't mean... have I hurt you?

ANDREA: Now you've made your point, perhaps you'll let me call a taxi. Come on, Emerald. We'll go now. We'll come back for our things later.

EMERALD: I'll just get my cello. I need it for tomorrow. And Zeppo. I can't leave him behind.

SCENE 3

- JOSS'S FLAT. ANDREA LETS HERSELF IN FOLLOWED BY EMERALD. BETWEEN THEM THEY CARRY SMALL CASES, A CELLO IN ITS CASE AND A CAGE WITH A SMALL ANIMAL INSIDE.

ANDREA: Are you there, Joss? Joss! **(Pause)** It's a bit early for him. I don't suppose he'll be in till six.

EMERALD: Are we going to stay here Mum?

ANDREA: For tonight, yes. Afterwards, maybe or maybe not.

EMERALD: Where shall I put these?

ANDREA: There's a little room off there to the right. It's Joss's workroom. Put them there for now. **(EMERALD takes her cello and cage. ANDREA pours herself a drink. EMERALD returns. ANDREA lights a cigarette and looks around for an ashtray)** Sit down Em. I want to talk to you. I'm sorry you saw that scene at the flat. It must have been a

bit of a shock to you. But I want you to try not to take it too seriously.

EMERALD: I hate him. He hit you.

ANDREA: Yes, but that isn't the important part. He was just angry I was going without telling him. I knew if I didn't make a clean break I'd never go. I meant to leave a letter and do the talking afterwards.

EMERALD: He's a rotten pig to hit you. I never want to see him again.

ANDREA: It's just the heat of the moment. He said he was sorry.

EMERALD: He stinks. Are you going to get a divorce?

ANDREA: I expect so. I don't know. Probably. But I do mean to leave him for good which comes to the same thing. I've been meaning to do this for a long time.

EMERALD: Are you going to marry Joss?

ANDREA: I can't answer that one. It's all in the future. It depends on a lot of things. But whatever happens I shall consult you. You're very important to me and I won't do anything you don't like.

EMERALD: Don't mind about me. I'll be okay. I'll be leaving home soon anyhow.

ANDREA: Oh.

EMERALD: I know kids, fourteen, sixteen living on their own in flats. They're okay.

ANDREA: I know about them too. One day, when you're going to University.

EMERALD: I don't want to go to Uni.

ANDREA: All right. But you'll do some training. Something you want to do... your cello maybe.

EMERALD: I want to learn to fly.

ANDREA: I know. You've told me. And I hope we'll be able to get lessons for you when you're old enough. But you'll scarcely be able to make that a career.

EMERALD: I've been thinking about that. I want to be a pilot.

ANDREA: Well... a pilot.

EMERALD: Why not?

ANDREA: No reason, I suppose. Yes, we can aim at that. **(Pause)** You like Joss, don't you?

EMERALD: Yeah. He's okay.

ANDREA: Good.

EMERALD: I've got to practise my cello. Can I do it in that room?

ANDREA: Yes, that's all right.

EMERALD: I've got to learn a part for tomorrow. We're doing a quartet for the end of term. Did you know MRS. BLOEM plays the piano?

ANDREA: No. I didn't. By the way, she gave me this for you. **(Takes a packet out of her bag)** I nearly forgot.

EMERALD: Oh, the pancakes. She's made some special German pancakes. Did you know her mother is German?

ANDREA: No. She never talks about herself to me.

EMERALD: Her mother taught her how to make these. They're lovely. Have one.

ANDREA: Thank you.

EMERALD: When is Mrs. Bloem coming again?

ANDREA: Want some more pancakes? Is that it?

EMERALD: No. Well, I do of course, but it's not that. She's going to bring me some pictures of Germany. She promised.

ANDREA: Next week, I suppose, if you can wait that long.

SCENE 4

– EVA. MARBURG.

EVA: **(To audience)** This year has been a hectic one, and I've hardly had time to keep my journal. But this event I must record. I've been accepted for the Civil Airways Training course at Stettin. The first and only girl. The officers aren't too pleased about it and I get into trouble sometimes doing drill. But the other trainees don't seem to mind.

I can't get a uniform small enough. This cap comes right down over my eyes, and my boots are like barges. I have to stuff the toes with newspaper.

Father let me give up medicine. I was spending all my spare time flying anyway. The thing that clinched it was the soaring championships up in the mountains, for gliding. I didn't win... I never expected to. But I attracted quite a bit of notice, and got the chance to appear in a film. I didn't know whether to take it or not. But the money was good. I did. This meant I could pay my way to go with the team on a trip to South America. We were going to show the paces of the new German gliders. And they're good.

It was fabulous! Though I did run into a bit of trouble. Once I had to force land on a football field. That was all right, except that there was a match going on. I really had no choice. The players ran for their lives, and I shot straight through the goal posts. That took a bit of explaining away. But it all ended in a great party.

One day, practising, I managed to stay up for eleven hours. That was a world record for women. Of course it wasn't recognised as it wasn't planned. But I did it, and I could do it again. It doesn't matter anyhow, because I fly because I love it. For that incredible feeling of freedom... of getting away from the earth.

I've already taken up a twin-engined plane on a cross-country flight. Soon it will be loops and rolls. And one day, if all goes well, I want to train on the Heinkel 46, to do night flights for the Met. Department. Night flying's fabulous. Sounds a bit ambitious, I know. But I think I could do it.

Germany's getting on her feet again. All those unemployed street kids are getting jobs. Whatever people say about

Hitler, he's getting on with it. My father doesn't like him. He likes that dreary old Hindenburg. But what did he ever do for us? Hitler's got a vision- to rebuild Germany. I want to be part of this. To help my country start again. If I can learn to fly well, I'll make my contribution that way. The more I learn about flying, the more I love it. I could never, never have too much of it. Now I must run. It's time for class!

SCENE 5

- THE SAME. LATER. SOUNDS OF CELLO PRACTICE WITHIN. JOSS AND ANDREA.

ANDREA: Must have been a bit of a surprise finding me here.

JOSS: A good surprise. I'm glad you made the break. You must, if you're going to survive. I said, come anytime, middle of the night... whenever. I'm glad you did.

ANDREA: You've taken it marvelously. I meant to give you proper warning.

JOSS: You don't have to. Just move in.

ANDREA: And Emerald...

JOSS: *And Emerald.*

ANDREA: It's wonderful. You have no idea how good it feels to be with you. I don't know how I stood it all those years. I should have left long ago.

JOSS: It's hard to make a break... even when things go wrong.

ANDREA: Sometimes it was all right. Rob can be great company when he wants to. But the last few years have been pretty bad. I always hoped if I gave him enough love and support it would all come good. But it never did. I suppose the truth is, I failed him.

JOSS: That's all over. Now you can start again and live.

ANDREA: I wonder if people ever do start again. There seems to be a depressing pattern.

JOSS: You see too much of it. That's half your trouble. You see only those who don't make out. It's bound to affect your attitude.

ANDREA: They care so desperately, some of them. It's tragic. And the more they care, the worse it seems to get.

JOSS: Some relationships follow the law of inverse proportions. That's one of them. Try to take the simple view. Look at today. It's turned out well, hasn't it?

ANDREA: You make things sound so simple, but of course they're not.

JOSS: You'll sort them out. You're a very sensible, intelligent, self-sufficient person.

ANDREA: I think I'm weak and helpless and dependent.

JOSS: That's the last thing you are. You'll come to terms with it.

ANDREA: I mean to try. Now it's all happened, I've got a lot of thinking to do.

JOSS: Suppose I hadn't been around. Would you have left ?

ANDREA: Eventually. It was getting worse and worse. At one time I thought I could live with it. That it was my problem. That I was too self-obsessed. That I didn't give enough. But now there's Emerald to think of. I don't want her to be involved with the sort of life Rob leads.

JOSS: No. I can see that. It could all happen too soon and not the right way.

ANDREA: That's about it. He's good to her. I'll say that. But any minute it now it will be boyfriends, the pill, drugs and... God knows what else!

JOSS: I hope I won't be a difficulty.

ANDREA: I don't think so. She likes you. There'll be no problem there.

JOSS: I hope not.

ANDREA: Of course, there are a few practical ones. Where I'm going to live, for a start.

JOSS: You can stay here as long as you want to.

ANDREA: No. That wouldn't be fair. I don't want to dump myself on you. The flat's too small.

JOSS: We'll get a bigger one.

ANDREA: No, no. Why should you disrupt everything? I'd never considered being here for any length of time. Just a temporary haven. At the weekend I'll look for a flat... nearby, perhaps. I like this part of Sydney. I still think it's fun going on the ferries.

JOSS: Incurably romantic. Wait until it's winter.

ANDREA: I saw a flat to let on our way here. It looked big enough for all our stuff. I need a study and Em really needs a room to practise in... and somewhere for all her things. She's got more junk than I have, believe it or not. But we won't be too far away.

JOSS: Don't be in a hurry. Wait and get something you really like. I'm sorry I won't be here this week-end to help you look... We're going to look at a location.

ANDREA: Far?

JOSS: A fair distance.

ANDREA: Who's going?

JOSS: The whole unit, practically. James, Alistair, Sue, Rosette, Wolfgang. But we'll be back Tuesday or Wednesday.

ANDREA: Oh. I'd looked forward so much to having this week-end together.

JOSS: There'll be other times.

ANDREA: Of course there will.

JOSS: Lots and lots and lots of lovely times. **(He kisses her. EMERALD comes in and watches)** We're going to be very happy.

ANDREA: I know, I know. It's a wonderful feeling. **(EMERALD shrugs her shoulders and retreats)** I haven't felt like this for a long, long time. **(There is a sudden burst of music as EMERALD puts on a tape. ANDREA breaks away)** You see. No peace!

JOSS: Come on. Dance! **(They laugh and begin to dance. EMERALD comes in again and watches. They smile at her. JOSS waves her in)** Come on Emerald, dance!

HE TAKES HER HAND AND DANCES WITH HER FOR A TURN, THEN TURNS BACK TO ANDREA.

EMERALD: Will I do the vegetables?

SCENE 6

- ANDREA'S NEW FLAT. A FEW WEEKS LATER.

EMERALD: **(To audience)** Do you remember what it was like to be twelve, going on thirteen? And how you felt about your parents? I mean even in families that don't break up like mine there's always something going on. Mum's worried about me, of course. But she should hear what other kids have to put up with. But I won't go into that. It's pretty boring.

I may only be twelve, but I can look a good bit older. It's mostly the clothes. Wait! This is something Rob bought me. **(Holds up a frock and high heeled shoes)** See? In this and my shoes I look eighteen... well, say sixteen. Rob used to take me out sometimes to the Hilton with his friends. This and my earrings and some eye make-up. What do you think? Rob likes me to look old when I go out. But not Mum. I know. I wear school type stuff when I go out with her and her friends. She takes me out a lot... or she did till Joss turned up. We go to see her friends and I'm supposed to play with their kids. Some of them are pretty drippy. Some are actually only eleven... ten even! Imagine! I think she feels guilty because I'm an only child and wants to make up for it.

Anyway, my friends can come here for weekends and I go to them. That's better. I don't know about this flat... it's a bit small, but I suppose we'll manage. I can put a mattress on the floor for Fiona. The kids'll like to come here because it's

on the beach. Most of them live in boring suburbs. Bit far out, though. Hope it's not too far for Mrs. Bloem to come...

We've done a lot of talking, Mum and Rob and me. I hate these talks. They don't make any difference to this break-up business. Rob wants to grab on to me, but it's mostly to spite Mum. I'd only be a drag to him really, and he knows it. I don't mind seeing him. He's not that bad, I suppose. He takes me to places where I can wear lipstick and paint my nails. He says he'll let me drive his red Porsche, off the road, somewhere out of town... and he takes me yachting, that's cool and I can take Fiona.

Mum thinks all this will make me funny about sex. Turn into a dyke or a baby basher. Can you imagine? If you're a pilot you just can't be bothered with all that. I mean you can't be having babies all over the cockpit

Things are changing too. Everyone says so. I wouldn't be surprised if all that went out of fashion. I mean getting married and having kids. Mum and her friends were taking a lot about I.V.F. or something, it means getting babies in test tubes and even men getting babies. I hate going out to dinner with her, but at least the food's special. Sex is okay. I suppose pilots get a lot of it. Anyway I can go on the pill soon and make up my own mind. Fiona's going on it next year. She's nearly fourteen.

They don't have to fuss about me, product of a broken home. I know all about that. There's not much you don't know if your Mum's a marriage counsellor. I used to read all her cases. The ones she kept locked up in her desk. Wow. What a mess most people's lives are. Who'd want to get into all that? When I'm sailing though the air, I'll look down and say I'm glad I'm not mixed up in it.

You should read some of those cases... ordinary people like you. Maybe you're in the files? Could be. This one thing, sex... getting it right... you'd think it was something madly difficult. It's unbelievable. And Mum... after all these years. You'd think she'd know all the answers. I mean anyone could see that she and Rob would never hit it off. I've known for ages. And now Joss. Doesn't she ever learn? All those degrees and talking about it every day. I mean, I like Joss, he's cool, but anyone can see, I mean, you can't you? It's not on. I can't tell her. Anyway she wouldn't want to know. But at least Joss isn't likely to come in at two in the

morning and wake us up. And he's not on the booze. But she'll get knocked... too keen on this guy. That's her trouble.

So - it's lots of nights with MRS. BLOEM for me. That's if she can get here. I don't mind that. I really like her. We've got a lot to talk about and she really listens. She understands about flying. She lent me some books. Some are in German but there's lots of pictures and diagrams. I wouldn't mind it if she lived here. But then there's her mother. She can't leave her. But you're not interested in our baby sitter. I'd better get back to my cello. I've got a lesson tomorrow. I just wish I could get the message across. It's not me they've got to worry about... it's them!

SCENE 7

- ANDREA'S FLAT. A FEW WEEKS LATER. EMERALD IS SITTING DOING HER HOMEWORK. MRS. BLOEM IS READING.

EMERALD: Mrs. Bloem! Help me with my homework.

MRS. BLOEM: What are you writing on?

EMERALD: "Why the World Needs Rain Forests". Do you know anything about rain forests?

MRS. BLOEM: Not much. Didn't you have a lesson on it?

EMERALD: Yes, but I wasn't listening. I always turn off when it's Miss Morris. She's *really* boring.

MRS. BLOEM: Haven't you a book on it?

EMERALD: It's at school. I was going to the library, but Mum said she wanted me to come straight back. I know it's got to be about Brazil and the Amazon and all that.

MRS. BLOEM: There are rain forests here. Write about those.

EMERALD: They don't count. There's no Indians in them. Read it for me and see if it sounds all right.

MRS. BLOEM: There's a lot of spelling mistakes.

EMERALD: That doesn't matter. She never takes them in. We just have to read them.

MRS BLOEM: I don't think it's a very practical idea to bring the Indians to Queensland.

EMERALD: They could eat all the kangaroos.

MRS. BLOEM: They don't live in rain forests.

EMERALD: Well, it's just an idea. They could go to the Simpson Desert... and rabbits. They could eat all those.

MRS. BLOEM: You don't really think that, do you?

EMERALD: No. But you have to say something. It takes up six lines.

MRS. BLOEM: You could talk about making paper.

EMERALD: Give it to me. **(Writes)** "Everyone should stop using paper and they wouldn't have to cut any more trees down." That's enough.

MRS. BLOEM: Is that all you have to do?

EMERALD: Only learning. I can do that in Social Studies. Did you hate school?

MRS. BLOEM: I liked some things. I used to play in the orchestra like you.

EMERALD: Yeah. That's okay. It's all the rest. I want to leave as soon as I can. Mum and Rob are set on me going to University. They did. That's why. I don't see why I should do things just like them.

MRS. BLOEM: No, but you might want to one day.

EMERALD: I don't mind going to Tech and learning about aircraft engines until I'm old enough to train. Aerodynamics. All that. I've read lots already, don't really understand it. But I try. I got a book out of the library, but it's too hard. Here. **(She takes a large book from among her school things)** Look. All this bit's about the theory. It's difficult. Do you know anything about it?

MRS. BLOEM LOOKS AT THE BOOK.

MRS. BLOEM: I'm afraid I don't.

EMERALD: **(Turns the pages)** That's a Spitfire engine. Merlin. Rolls Royce. Isn't it... it beautiful?

MRS. BLOEM: It looks very technical to me.

EMERALD: Look at this. Flying Fortress. It's weird. All the last parts about jets. It'll take me ages before I understand about them. But one day I'll fly one. One day. I'll be able to take you up. Here's the Concorde. But I suppose they'll scrap it before I get my licence.

MRS. BLOEM: You should put your school things in your bag. Is this your music for tomorrow?

EMERALD: That's my exam piece. And this is what we're doing for the end of term concert. Yuk! "Heigh-ho! Heigh-ho! and Back to Work We Go!". If I have to play that once more I'll be sick. They think the parents will like it.

MRS. BLOEM: They probably will.

EMERALD: All parents are stupid. Did I tell you I'm learning to drive? I can do most of it now. That's one good thing about Rob. He let's me try. Fiona's father's got a Volvo. Think of it a Volvo! Anyway he won't let her go near it.

MRS. BLOEM: I'm going to start making tea. Why don't you do your practice?

EMERALD: No. I want to help you.

MRS. BLOEM: There very little to do. You mother's left it all ready on plates.

EMERALD: I don't want to eat now. I just want a doughnut. **(She gets some)** Do you want one?

MRS. BLOEM: Not now, thank you. Aren't you practising?

EMERALD: I hate doing it without the piano. Do you know Fiona's learning the bassoon? If we had a piano we could play together.

MRS. BLOEM: There's not much of a repertoire for cello and bassoon.

EMERALD: What was your Dad like? Did he go on like Rob?

MRS. BLOEM: I never saw him. He died before I was born.

EMERALD: You were lucky. You didn't have to listen to all that yak-yak-yak. I'm sick of talks with Mum and Rob. They seem to think they have to keep explaining everything. I mean it's quite simple. She's pissing off. That's it. Let them just get on with it and let me get on with it. Did you get yourself all worked up about sex when you were a kid? I bet you didn't.

MRS. BLOEM: I was a bit confused and I did worry sometimes. When I was a teenager people didn't talk about it so much - so openly anyway. My mother never mentioned it. I just read a few books.

EMERALD: I've got books too. Full of stupid pictures - all pink and red. They're disgusting. I mean what does it matter about all those things inside you? I don't want to see inside people. Most of it's covered with skin anyway!

MRS. BLOEM: Don't you want something to drink?

EMERALD: I'll get something. What about you? Like a Coke?

MRS. BLOEM: No, thank you. I'll make some coffee soon.

EMERALD: I like talking to you. You don't say *anything*.

MRS. BLOEM: **(Laughs)** I don't get a chance when you get going.

EMERALD: Go on then. Say something. Tell me about your mother. When she was flying?

MRS. BLOEM: My mother? My mother didn't talk to me about flying. All I knew was she flew planes during the war.

EMERALD: What sort of planes?

MRS. BLOEM: Stukas, I suppose and Messerschmitts.

EMERALD: If I'd flown a Messerschmitt I'd never stop talking about it. Those were crash hot fighters. Did your Mum fight? I mean only men fight. Did she dress up as a man?

MRS. BLOEM: No. She just worked with them. But she wouldn't talk about it. She just said: "Remember we are Australians now. That's all in the past. I want to forget it all. This is a new life. No one wants to know about the war. We were fighting for

Germany and don't talk about it to anyone. If your school friends know you'll never have any peace. You have nothing to do with Germany. " She told me I must just get on with my music. " It's hard for me," she used to say: "I'll only make it out here if I put all that behind me. It never happened. Just remember that".

EMERALD: But it did, didn't it?

MRS. BLOEM: Not to me. And I didn't ask any more questions.

EMERALD: Have you got a photo of her?

MRS. BLOEM: Not a proper one. I found a newspaper cutting once in an old scrap book.

EMERALD: Can you bring it next time?

MRS. BLOEM: I'll try.

EMERALD: You must. Tie some string round your big toe.

MRS. BLOEM: All right. Did you feed your hamster?

EMERALD: No. I'll give it some lettuce off the salad. **(Laughs)** Hope it likes French dressing.

MRS. BLOEM: Do it now.

EMERALD TAKES SOME LETTUCE INTO THE NEXT ROOM AND MRS. BLOEM PUTS HER SCHOOL THINGS IN HER BAG. EMERALD RETURNS.

EMERALD: I don't think he likes this little flat.

MRS. BLOEM: He'll get used to it. Has he got plenty of water?

EMERALD: Buckets of it.

MRS. BLOEM: I see on your list: "History Homework"

EMERALD: I can do that in class.

MRS. BLOEM: Better get it done now. What are you doing in history?

EMERALD: World War Two. We did World War One last week.

MRS. BLOEM: Is it learning?

EMERALD: **(Looks at notebook)** Write notes on three of the following. 1. Hitler. 2. Dr. Someone... Gobbles. 3. Rudolf Hess. 4. General Eisenhower. 5. Churchill. 6. General Rommel. I saw him in "The Desert Fox." Nothing but tanks and tanks. Not a single plane. Boring. **(Mutters)** Hitler... Gobbles - he's out- never heard of him. Rudolf Hess... **(Sings)** "Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer, had a very shiny nose..." I know about him. **(Writes)** Rudolf Hess was a Nazi pilot and... **(Pause)** had a very shiny nose. **(MRS. BLOEM turns away)** He flew to England in a ME 109. This a single engine fighter made by Messerschmitt. Did you know some German planes had Rolls Royce engines? The ME 109 has a cruising speed of 320 m.p.h. Hess landed on a castle in Scotland. After he was dead they thought he was somebody else. Tick him off. Eisenhower. Was he at Pearl Harbour?

MRS. BLOEM: I don't know. Just try to get on with this yourself.

EMERALD: **(Shrugs)** I know about the Japanese fighters. Kamakasis and all that. Better leave him. Churchill. Churchill had a big cigar. He was Lord of the Sea or something. We've got a set book called: "Lord of the Flies." It's pretty stupid. He fought the Battle of Britain with Spitfires. Did you know Spitfires fire through their propellers? Smallest fighter planes... not so fast as Messerschmitts but turn faster. He also had Bristol Bombers and Hurricanes and the Yanks gave him Venturas and Flying Fortresses. Next. It's got to be Hitler. Mrs. Bloem, you know about Hitler. Please!

MRS. BLOEM: I think you should do this for yourself.

EMERALD: All right. Hitler was the top Nazi... Do you watch "Hogan's Heroes"? It's funny. **(She looks at MRS. BLOEM who makes no response. Sighs)** He made people wear brown shirts and say: "Zieg Heil!" **(She mimics this several times as in "Hogan's Heroes")** What does 'zieg' mean?

MRS. BLOEM: Leader.

EMERALD: How do you spell it?

MRS. BLOEM: **(In a dead voice)** Z-i-e-g... Please don't ask any more questions.

EMERALD: He invented the buzz bomb and buzzed London. That's enough for him. Finished!

MRS. BLOEM: We really must have tea now Emerald. It's after six.

EMERALD: I'm not really hungry.

MRS. BLOEM: There's some salad and fruit. You'll be able to eat some of that.

EMERALD: There's a series on old planes starting. Sort of history of flying. We can eat quick and then watch that, if it's not too late? Anyway Mum won't be back for ages.

SCENE 8

- LIGHTS DOWN AND THEN UP ON SAME SCENE LATER THAT EVENING. MRS. BLOEM AND EMERALD ARE WATCHING T.V. ANDREA ENTERS.

EMERALD: Why are you back so early?

ANDREA: Hi Em! Had a good day at school? How did your music go?

EMERALD: Please don't talk Mum, they're just getting the very first flying machine into the air. Look! Isn't it mad? I mean it's just bits of wood and wire. Look at this one!

ANDREA: Mrs. Bloem, I'm not going to the meeting tonight, so I won't need you any longer. Thanks for coming. See you on Friday, if that's all right?

SHE HANDS HER AN ENVELOPE.

MRS. BLOEM: Yes, I've reserved Friday, I will see you then. **(She picks up her bag and jacket)** See you Friday, Emerald.

EMERALD: See you, Mrs. Bloem. Don't forget.

MRS. BLOEM: Bye now.

ANDREA: Can you turn that off now?

EMERALD: What for? I want to watch it.

ANDREA: I want to talk to you.

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