

## Script

*Music intro, which fades.*

One day a woman woke up and found herself in a small, dark room. The first thing she knew was that she was cold. The second thing she knew was that she was alone. The third thing she knew was that her name was Edith.

As she looked around at the bare stone walls and the bare stone ceiling and the bare stone floor, she couldn't remember why, or how, or when she got there.

The only light came from a small crack in the top corner of the room, which seemed very far away and impossible to reach.

She felt her way around the space, learning its shape, finding its emptiness, searching for answers.

Suddenly, she came across a small tray on the floor and on the tray she found some food. Bread, butter, jam, milk. She realised how hungry she was and quickly spread the butter, spooned the jam and swigged the milk.

At the first bite, the first taste, the first swallow, it seemed as though the whole room lit up; only it had transformed into something different. It had transformed into a kitchen. And Edith heard music playing (*music plays*) and saw a big woman washing up at the sink – or at least she looked big to Edith, who felt about three feet tall. The woman was singing along to the radio as she washed. (*Sings along*). She turned around to face Edith and said, 'Come on, my girl, my little Ditty, eat up quick, we need to get along if we want to get to the fête on time. Good thing it rained last night; got it out of the sky's system. Come on then, if you finish everything I'll let you have a turn on the tombola'. Edith looked down at her plate and saw the half eaten jam sandwich and the cup of milk. She hurriedly stuffed the rest into her mouth, but when she finished the last crumb, the kitchen dissolved and she was back in the other room.

She sat there in the quiet and tried to catch her thoughts. Her memories felt like little fish, darting down a stream that flowed too quickly for her to get a good look at them. Sometimes she caught the edge of one, but with a quick wriggle it was gone again. The only way she could tell how long she had been sitting there was by the changing light coming through the crack, which was beginning to dim.

She wondered where the tray of food had come from and felt along the wall until she found a flap of metal covering a hole, like a letterbox. She lifted the flap and tried to peer through, but the wall was so thick that she could barely see to the outside and the only sounds she could hear were distant rumbles and whispers of people moving about.

She felt tired and lay down to rest for a minute. When she woke, she found herself covered with a warm blanket. She looked around, but saw no one. As she pulled the blanket up tight and closed her eyes again, she was transported to another bed that felt like home. A familiar face appeared, gently shook her and whispered, 'Edie, are you awake?' It was her big sister, Josephine. Jo; at just ten-years-old.

'Yes, what is it?' said Edith.

'Well you got to get up if you want to come with us'

'Who's us?'

'Me and Sarah'

'Where you going?'

'To the park. We gonna see the gang'

'What you gonna do?'

'Jane's got a bat and ball from school, so we gonna set up some bases with our jumpers and play rounders. Do you wanna come or not?'

'Yeah!'

And an eight-year-old Edith rushed out of bed and ran to join Jo and the gang. (*Music plays*) She remembered them now. She remembered how they used to walk together from street to street, showing everyone that passed them who was boss. How they pooled their pocket money together for a pound of humbugs, or liquorice, or sherbet, which they split secretly before heading home for dinner. She remembered playing rounders and football and British Bulldog and running round and round in circles until she was dizzy. Most of all she remembered how they used to beat up the boys. They would come and try to ruin the girls' games, but they didn't stand a chance and always ended up well and truly thrashed. They were rough and tough and nobody messed with them except each other. They knew that one day they'd have to grow into ladies who wore dresses and gloves and hats and said yes please and thank you very much and oh I couldn't possibly, but that was tomorrow. Today they were girls, wild and free and covered in muck, and it was glorious. (*Music fades*).

Then Edith was awake again, but the laughter of her friends still echoed in her mind. She didn't feel so alone. They were there with her. A streak of daylight shone through the crack in the ceiling and there were tea and biscuits waiting for her by the hole in the wall. As she sat there munching, she heard a trickle of music (*Music comes through quietly*). This time it was coming from somewhere outside her room. She could barely hear it at first, but then suddenly (*Music gets louder*) it was as though someone had really turned up the volume and she was surrounded by the sound of it!

She looked around her and saw the live band dressed to the nines, with a grinning conductor and a room full of people. It was her first real dance. She was nineteen and feeling giddy. She was a year into her training as a nurse and she and her friends were on a holiday break and one of them was having a big birthday party. She was a little nervous, having grown up with a very different kind of crowd, and was worried about saying or doing the wrong thing. Then she saw a girl who'd had too much to drink vomit over the shoes of her dance partner and felt better about herself. She was wearing her very nicest dress and her hair had been done up by a friend, with curls that were just about holding, and she felt pretty and fun and excited. She danced and laughed until she could hardly breathe. It was one of those nights you wish could last forever and, in a way, always do. It was a night she would never forget (*Music fades*).

Then she heard a knock on the wall of her room. A note passed into the hole. It told her she had a visitor. She lifted the flap and tried to see who it was. She squeezed herself as close to the hole as she could, but could still only dimly make out the face of a figure at the other end. She could hear a voice, a man's voice, but she couldn't follow what he was saying. 'Can you speak up a bit?' she asked. The voice became louder, but it sounded fuzzier than ever. She heard the odd word, but couldn't work out the rest. There was something strangely familiar about him though.

When she turned around, she found herself standing in a church waiting for her fiancé to arrive. It was her wedding rehearsal and time was ticking by as the vicar sighed and her parents tutted and she felt humiliated. Eventually news came through that his stag do had got a little too adventurous and he wouldn't be able to make it back in time for the rehearsal, so they should plough on without him. He said he'd seen plenty of weddings in films so knew the gist of what he had to do. She swiftly sent back a short reply that if he was late to the wedding then she wouldn't stick around.

The following day, as she neared the church, she saw the vicar excitedly flying towards her with his vestments flapping wildly as he burst out saying, 'He's here, he's here!'

*(Music plays)* When she walked down the aisle with her friends and family all smiling around her and her husband-to-be waiting for her at the end, she was relieved to find that it was the happiest moment of her life.

The rest of the day would have passed without a hitch had her father not insisted on drinking his new son-in-law under the table at the reception. After seven too many 'Irish coffees', her husband accidentally locked himself into one of the back rooms and passed out. He missed their first dance and cutting the cake and probably would have missed the wedding night as well had Edith not kicked the door down and dragged him to their suite by his collar.

Despite these marital mishaps, Edith and her husband built a happy life together. Edith reflected that perhaps it was because her expectations were set so low by their wedding that their marriage could hardly help exceeding them. Her husband was kind, patient, hard-working, and fun, and they gave a new richness and meaning to each other's lives. *(Music fades)*

Back in her room, Edith's visitor seemed to give up on communicating and simply left a final note for her. Edith looked at it and saw that he had written 'I love you'.

She felt bewildered and angry. The darkness around her became heavy and imposing. She tried so hard to remember more of what happened after her wedding that her head began to hurt and she felt more confused than ever. All she could see was a thick fog that made everything seem hazy. She suddenly felt very scared and isolated. Then she thought she could feel arms pulling at her and voices up close and loud and she didn't know where to turn or what to do. She lashed out, hitting anything that touched her and screaming for help. Why was this happening? 'What are you doing? Get off me!' she cried. What had she done to deserve this?

Then, just as unexpectedly, the hands and voices left. It was as if nothing had happened. She could still feel the sting of her fists though. She knew she had hit something. Perhaps she had only hit the walls. She sat down and, as she rested her hands on the floor beside her, she came across something. She strained to see what it was and discovered it was a small packet. She peeled it open and found it was full of seeds. The feeling of each one as it passed through her hands echoed something she knew.

She was standing in a garden. *(Music plays)* Her garden. A garden brimming with flowers of every shape and colour, singing to the blue sky and the bright sun above. She walked around gazing at all the splendour. There were dahlias, daisies, tulips, asters, chrysanthemums, cowslips, marigolds, lilies, peonies, periwinkle, and hibiscus, with streaks of lavender spattered here and there and in one corner, a magnificent rose bush with a dozen delicate pink roses. Edith breathed in the scent and

could have burst. She touched their soft petals gently and then got out her clippers and set to work pruning, digging, planting, and taking care of a garden she had sown herself into. She could see where a cat next door had been digging and straightened it up with a quick mutter under her breath. If she could have got her hands on that cat! Her husband came out with a glass of lemonade and a smile. (*Music fades*). When the vision faded and she was back in her room, she could still see that smile, she could still taste that lemonade, she could still smell those flowers.

She still had the seeds in the palm of her hand and she noticed a small rift in the stone floor in one of the corners. She hurried over and found that the crevice had allowed for a small patch of rough soil. It wasn't ideal, but she pushed two or three of the seeds down into it. Over the next days and weeks, she carefully cultivated her little patch. She saved some of the water from the cups she was given and would spend hours watching to see if any of the seeds would germinate. She was a patient gardener and after two weeks, she saw the first sprouts emerge. She knew they would fight for competition, so she chose the strongest one and plucked out the others. People came and went, but she never really saw them. She was well taken care of, but she didn't know who to thank. Instead, she focused on her little garden.

The chink of light was just enough to feed her tiny plant as it grew and became stronger and stronger and grew taller and taller, until finally, after months of waiting, buds appeared and the first tiny flowers creaked out. When Edith woke and saw the blooms, she gasped. They were violas. Viola.

Viola, her daughter. Viola, her pink and perfect baby. Her crying, howling mess. A bundle placed in her arms, to hold, to cherish. Her Viola. She could see her now. She watched the first crawl, those first steps, her first words. She dealt with the tantrums and the sick and the nappies. Oh yes, the nappies! Piles and piles of nappies! Who would have thought such a tiny thing could produce so much! And as she rocked her gently, she sang her baby to sleep.

*(Sings)*

My Bonnie lies over the ocean  
My Bonnie lies over the sea  
My Bonnie lies over the ocean  
Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me...

Bring back, bring back  
O,Bring back my Bonnie to me, to me  
Bring back, bring back  
O,Bring back my Bonnie to me

Last night as I lay on my pillow  
Last night as I lay on my bed  
Last night as I lay on my pillow  
I dreamt that my Bonnie was dead

Oh blow the winds o'er the ocean  
And blow the winds o'er the sea  
Oh blow the winds o'er the ocean  
And bring back my Bonnie to me

Bring back, bring back  
O,Bring back my Bonnie to me, to me  
Bring back, bring back  
O,Bring back my Bonnie to me

The winds have blown over the ocean  
The winds have blown over the sea  
The winds have blown over the ocean  
And brought back my Bonnie to me

As Edith sang to her little flower, she wondered where her daughter was now. She wondered where her family had gone. She wondered if she would ever remember what had happened for her to end up here. Was this how things would be from now on? Whispers through a hole in the wall? Flashes of memories from times that had passed? She looked at the flower in the ground. The flower that had grown from almost nothing. The flower that was now with her, that wouldn't leave her. A living thing that couldn't see or hear or smell or touch or love or hate or understand or think about tomorrow or remember yesterday. Something that decided to live anyway. Something that was here regardless. Something that lived on this planet, that was part of this history, that was part of everything. Something that was alive, so alive!

When Edith looked up, she saw a hand coming through the hole in the wall. She saw a hand and quickly reached out her own and grasped it. It was warm and it held her tight. She heard a voice say, 'Hi mum, I've come to see you'.

Edith looked at the hand in wonder. She looked at her flower. She said, 'Viola!'

*Music plays.*