

This play is © Hannah Kate Nicklin, 2009.

BIRD WOMAN

by

H. K. Nicklin

h.k.nicklin@googlemail.com
07834958418

CHARACTERS:

Interviewer M, early 40s RP

June F, early 40s Midlands accent

Woman F, late 20s, East End

Susan F, early 30s, RP with a hint of London

Thomas M, 12 and 17, Midlands, lazy.

Ellie F, 11 and 16, Midlands, articulate.

Terry M, mid 40s, Derbyshire Accent

Lawyer F, mid 30s, RP.

Journalists mixed.

Journalists and Woman can be played by other members of the cast.

The play is set in 2008, in a sleepy suburb of a larger town, somewhere in the Midlands, and 2013, in a series of interviews investigating the phenomenon of 'Bird Women'.

SCENE 1. : AN INTERVIEW ROOM, PADDED, SMALL. INT.

SILENCE. THEN A MUFFLING AT A MICROPHONE.
THE INTERVIEWER'S FOOTSTEPS TO A CHAIR.
HE SITS.

INTERVIEWER: this is Thursday the 17th of June, 2011. Time is... 3-oh-9 pm.
Interview number 19. Case number 1. Codename, Bird
Woman.

SHUFFLING OF PAPERS.

JUNE: do I speak now?

INTERVIEWER: hold on a moment please Mrs. Bradbury.

MORE SHUFFLING

JUNE: erm-

INTERVIEWER: are you ok Mrs. Bradbury?

JUNE: I was wondering if I could have a drink. Just water.

INTERVIEWER: you're not on trial here, please don't worry. Of course you
can have a drink.

THE PUSH OF AN INTERCOM BUTTON

Laura, could you please bring Mrs Bradbury a glass of
water? Thanks.

Right then, shall we begin? Now please don't be nervous at all, as I said this is simply procedural, we are interviewing people who were close to the, the – events- simply in order to get a fuller picture of what went on, yes?

JUNE: ok.

INTERVIEWER: good. Right, let's begin. Firstly please understand that am completely impartial, I will make no judgments, nor cast any kind of aspersions. I am simply here to record. Yes? This is a matter of scientific inquiry. Right. Now if you could please start by telling me a little about the Mackenzie household, any observations you have about their everyday life, your understanding of their situation prior to... to when things started to... change.

JUNE: erm, well, I suppose, well you know how it is, Susan and I- Susan was the mother-

INTERVIEWER: yes I know

JUNE: well, Susan and I had kids close to the same age- a year apart at school, they'd been playing together since Thomas was this high. They seemed a... pleasant family. Well, not exactly family, I mean it was just her and the girl. But they seemed to get by alright. Don't know how she did it myself!

INTERVIEWER: so you hadn't noticed anything abnormal?

JUNE: well, not beyond that, no. Just, just run-of-the-mill really.

SCENE 2.:

A SUNNY EARLY SPRING DAY. EXT.

'SUNNINGDALE CRESCENT' CUL-DE-SAC.

THE SNAP OF PEGS AND RUSTLE OF SHEETS AS
SUSAN PEGS OUT WASHING.

A CONSERVATORY DOOR SLIDES OPEN NEXT
DOOR, JUNE WALKS OUT, HER STEPS MUFFLED
BY SLIPPERS.

JUNE: Susan! Susan!

SUSAN: oh! Hi! You scared the life out of me

JUNE: I'm not surprised; you looked away with the fairies

SUSAN: sorry, sorry, bit busy

JUNE: Bright and early, eh?

SUSAN: everything's a bit hectic

JUNE: I can see, few more washes before that mud shifts I'd say.
Mind you, Tom was a right state those first few months.
How's she getting on?

SUSAN: well, apart from the cross country, ok, I think.

JUNE: she settling in?

SUSAN: yes, yes, well enough.

JUNE: I asked Tom to look out for her, give her a few pointers.

SUSAN: thanks-

JUNE: but he just shrivelled his nose up. It's their age see? Best friends one minute and then- well I can't pretend Terry was upset, he said it wasn't right, Tom having a girl for a best friend, and since Tom moved up to the comp, well, it helps being among your own kind, doesn't it?

SUSAN: yeah,

SHE DROPS A SHIRT ON THE FLOOR

oh shit.

SHE PICKS IT UP

Sorry.

JUNE: oh dear, it'll be right as rain I'm sure.

SUSAN CONTINUES TO PEG OUT.

SUSAN: Sorry, don't let me keep you.

JUNE: oh no, dear! I'll let you be, sure you've got a million things to do, have a nice day now!

JUNE LEAVES, CLOSES THE CONSERVATORY DOOR.

SUSAN STOPS. SIGHS.

SCENE 3. : INTERVIEW ROOM. INT.

INTERVIEWER: so, in the days leading up to the-

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

Come in.

THE DOOR OPENS

A WOMAN COMES IN, PUTS A GLASS OF WATER
ON THE TABLE

JUNE: thank you

WOMAN: is that all, gov?

INTERVIEWER: thank you, yes.

SHE LEAVES, SHUTS THE DOOR.

So, Mrs. Bradbury, What seemed a normal family-

JUNE: yes, erm, well, yes, just the two of them like I said. Susan was always perfectly pleasant- rushed off her feet of course but-

INTERVIEWER: what about the girl?

JUNE: erm...

INTERVIEWER: did you see her often?

JUNE: um, well now, the girl was always a bit of a... an odd one. Always quite odd. Tomboy of course. Yes. well, if I'd had a girl there would have been no room for that! Girls are quiet, gentle, you give them dolls to play with- that's how it works. But she was always out there, climbing trees, building things out of mud-

INTERVIEWER: and she was friends with your son?

JUNE: oh yes, joined at the hip, well-

INTERVIEWER: yes?

JUNE: oh, just they started to drift apart, when he moved up. There was a year gap you see. So he was gallivanting off at the big school, and she had nothing to do but sulk. Bit of a temper

INTERVIEWER: she-

JUNE: oh, no, nothing.... Nothing that made me think- I mean she was nearly a teenager- it's to be expected.

INTERVIEWER: but they argued.

JUNE: yes. She was too full of herself - needed the move to the comp, get a bit of sense knocked into her, whatsit, you know, perspective. Know her place in the pecking order.

SCENE 4. : A FRONT ROOM IN JUNE'S HOUSE. INT.

HOOVERING

SHOUTING FAR OFF.

THOMAS: (OFF) you don't know anything; you're just a stupid girl

ELLIE: (OFF) that didn't used to matter

THOMAS: (OFF) look, you're a year below me.

JUNE SIGHS, TURNS OFF THE HOOVER, WALKS
INTO THE HALL, THEY ARE CLEARER NOW.

ELLIE: (OFF) Peter Tompkinson is in my year, and you hang around with him

THOMAS: (OFF) yeah but his dad gives us whisky

ELLIE: (OFF) yeuch

THOMAS: (OFF) it's a man's drink.

JUNE OPENS THE DOOR, WE CAN HEAR THEM
NOW.

ELLIE: I don't care, you can keep it.

THOMAS: look, you're making me look stupid, people might see

ELLIE: but I've got something- something important to-

JUNE: now come on you two, what's going on here then?

THEY BOTH STOP, EMBARRASSED.

Lover's tiff?

THOMAS: shut up mum!

HE STRIDES PAST HER, SLAMMING THE FRONT DOOR.

SILENCE. BIRDS IN THE TREES.

ELLIE: sorry, Mrs. Bradbury.

JUNE: its ok, love. You alright?

ELLIE: yeah. Fine.

JUNE: how are you enjoying big school?

ELLIE: alright.

(PAUSE)

JUNE: you making lots of friends?

RUSTLING OF ELLIE'S COAT AS SHE SHIFTS ON THE SPOT

Finding the work hard?

ELLIE: No.

(PAUSE)

JUNE: right then, I best be getting tea on, nice to chat.

JUNE WALKS BACK INTO THE HOUSE, SHUTTING
THE DOOR BEHIND HER.

ELLIE: shit.

SCENE 5. : THE INTERVIEW ROOM. INT.

INTERVIEWER: ok, let's see, Case number 1, interview... 16, continued.
Thomas, it's been tricky getting hold of you.

THOMAS: don't see why

INTERVIEWER: your mother came in, she was very helpful

(PAUSE)

We just want to try and fit things together, it's for the best.

THOMAS: whatever.

INTERVIEWER: we got the background last time you were here, now we're
wondering if you could help us fill in the gaps -

THOMAS: look- I'm just a kid, ok?

INTERVIEWER: you're nearly 16, Thomas.

(PAUSE)

Now, tell me about the weeks leading up to- your mother said you argued?

THOMAS: that's what kids do, argue with their parents

INTERVIEWER: with the girl, argued with the girl

(PAUSE)

Is that true?

THOMAS: well, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: what did you argue about?

THOMAS: I dunno, stuff. She was just, she was always- she just didn't get it.

INTERVIEWER: get what?

THOMAS: stuff

INTERVIEWER: what stuff, in particular?

THOMAS: the whole school thing- like you know your place, and you gotta keep it, otherwise they – well they just make sure you do, yeah?

INTERVIEWER: who do?

THOMAS: y'know- the ones who run it all

INTERVIEWER: the teachers?

THOMAS: shut up, like the kids in charge yeah? The cool ones.

INTERVIEWER: they laid down rules?

THOMAS: nah, like, you just know, right? Know what you do and don't do- people know, there are different, like, kinds of people, and you stick with what you know.

INTERVIEWER: she stood out, rebelled.

THOMAS: she didn't *get it*.

SCENE 6. : ELLIE'S BEDROOM. INT.

GRAMS: 'ORIGAMI' BY ANI DI FRANCO PLAYS IN THE BACKGROUND.

**I AM AN ALL POWERFUL AMAZON WARRIOR/
NOT JUST SOME SNIVELLING GIRL/ SO NO
MATTER WHAT I THINK I NEED/ YOU KNOW I
CAN'T POSSIBLY/ HAVE A NEED IN THIS WORLD**

ELLIE: my mum's going to buy me a guitar

THOMAS: girls don't play guitars

ELLIE: yes they do

THOMAS: name three

(PAUSE)

ELLIE: Ani Di Franco... Janis Joplin... and... and... and I'll be the third.

(PAUSE)

ELLIE SCRATCHES HER BACK

THOMAS: you going to play hippy crap too?

ELLIE: shut up... so June sent you over to say sorry?

THOMAS: don't call her that

ELLIE: it's her name

THOMAS: she's my mum

ELLIE SCRATCHES

(PAUSE)

THOMAS: so what was it you wanted to show me then?

ELLIE: nothing.

ELLIE SCRATCHES AGAIN

THOMAS: it's that mangy old cat of yours.

ELLIE: what?

THOMAS: you've got fleas or something.

ELLIE: nah.

THOMAS: well stop scratching then.

ELLIE: Tom, did you ever feel like you- you

THOMAS: what?

ELLIE: like you didn't fit- like there was something just waiting, all
scrunched up inside you that just wants to scream and shout
and-

THOMAS: jeez-

ELLIE: I'm serious

THOMAS: I dunno

SHE SCRATCHES AGAIN

Yeuch! Stop it already.

ELLIE: Tom, I think I'm different.

THOMAS: and that's a good thing?

ELLIE: I mean really different.

THOMAS: right...

ELLIE: you know in X men three when that scientist has come up with a cure and to prove that it's safe he brings his son in to test it on?

THOMAS: that movie sucked.

ELLIE: yeah but-

THOMAS: like *really* sucked.

ELLIE: Tom!

(PAUSE)

Look.

SCENE 7. : THE INTERVIEW ROOM. INT.

TERRY: well it's just not done, is it?!

INTERVIEWER: calm down please, Mr. Bradbury-

TERRY: I never liked her, always tempting him off, playing girl's games and whatnot. I don't mind admitting that for a while I was worried he might be a bit of a – y'know – a bit like that. I mean what boy has a-? That's why I was so glad when he started hanging around with strapping young lads, school wrestling team I think.

INTERVIEWER: so Thomas said that she had shown him something

TERRY: as white as bone he was, almost shaking, blathering on about her having taking her top off, I mean how dare she-

INTERVIEWER: you though that there had been some kind of sexual transgression?

TERRY: nothing of the sort! If ever there was a lezzer in the making then-her and her bloody mother. I thought she'd been trying to scare him, some kind of sick joke, made something look weird with some, some play dough and make-up, I don't know. But I can tell you, it did the job, shaking like a leaf he was, like a grown man never should-

INTERVIEWER: so you-

TERRY: so I bloody well had words.

SCENE 8. : ELLIE'S ROOM AGAIN. INT.

GRAMS: 'NOT A PRETTY GIRL' BY ANI DI FRANCO PLAYS

SUSAN: (OFF) Ellie, turn it down will you, we'll have the neighbours 'round!

ELLIE TURNS IT DOWN

SO PUT ME DOWN PUNK / MAYBE YOU'D
PREFER A MAIDEN FAIR / ISN'T THERE A KITTEN
STUCK UP A TREE SOMEWHERE?

DRUMMING ON THE FRONT DOOR.

SUSAN: (OFF) see! I told you so-

DOWNSTAIRS SUSAN MOVES TO THE DOOR.

THE FOLLOWING IS HEARD FROM ELLIE'S POINT
OF VIEW

SUSAN: I coming! I'm coming! (mutters) I don't know, what time of night...

SHE GETS THE DOOR OPEN.

Yes? Oh, Terry.

TERRY: where is she?!

SUSAN: who?

TERRY: that little harpy...

SUSAN: I beg your pardon?

TERRY: you know what I'm talking about.

SUSAN: what?

TERRY: listen, missy,

SUSAN: no, you listen, you come banging on my door in the middle of the night, shouting nonsense and waking up the whole bloody neighbourhood- either tell me what's going on, or I'm shutting the door.

TERRY: you can't-

SUSAN: or calling the police. Breach of the peace

TERRY: I'll give you bloody peace!

SUSAN: that doesn't even make sense!

TERRY: it's that girl of yours

SUSAN: what about her?

TERRY: you ought to keep her under control

SUSAN: I ought to what, sorry?

TERRY: silly ideas, you've put stupid little silly ideas in her head

SUSAN: what is this about, Terry?

TERRY: my son, is in there, pale as a leaf

SUSAN: you shake like a leaf actually

TERRY: don't you, don't you-

SUSAN: they're growing up, Terry, let them do it in peace

TERRY: you've got to control her!

SUSAN: why?

TERRY: isn't it obvious?

SUSAN: no!

SILENCE, FILLED WITH THE INCOHERENT
SPLUTTERINGS OF TERRY.

Good night.

SHE CLOSES THE DOOR ONTO HIM.

(PAUSE, SHOUTS UPSTAIRS)

It better not have been bad, Ellie.

ELLIE SIGHS, AND TURNS UP THE MUSIC .

**GRAMS: _____ CONT... AND WHAT IF THERE ARE NO
DAMSELS IN DISTRESS/ WHAT IF I KNEW THAT
AND I CALLED YOUR BLUFF? / DON'T YOU
THINK EVERY KITTEN FIGURES OUT HOW TO**

**GET DOWN / WHETHER OR NOT YOU EVER
SHOW UP.**

SCENE 9. : THE INTERVIEW ROOM. INT.

INTERVIEWER: Mrs Mackenzie,

SUSAN: it's Ms. actually

(PAUSE)

INTERVIEWER: Ms. Mackenzie.

SUSAN: you can call me Susan if you like, if it would make you feel better.

INTERVIEWER: now please, this was part of the agreement, we've got to keep records, even if we can't do any kind of medical... yes. Well.

SILENCE

So, after Mr. Bradbury paid a visit, you didn't think to-

SUSAN: didn't think to what-? What exactly had he accused her of? He never liked us, simple as that, he didn't even like June talking to me, thought she might get 'ideas'. As if her head wasn't already filled with enough fluff.

INTERVIEWER: you left your first husband I believe?

SUSAN: that's not relevant.

INTERVIEWER: I am simply trying to gather a picture together of-

SUSAN: it's not relevant.

(PAUSE)

INTERVIEWER: right.

(PAUSE)

SUSAN: look, no I didn't know anything about it, so far it was only that boy that she'd showed them to. Don't ask me why.

INTERVIEWER: they were friends

SUSAN: she was his. But I could see it, see it kicking in when he moved up to the comp, she became, she wasn't a person anymore, just this alien thing

INTERVIEWER: well-

SUSAN: she's a human being.

INTERVIEWER: indeed. So it was...

SHUFFLING OF PAPER

The following night- the night Thomas met up with her for the second time?

(PAUSE)

SUSAN: the estate, it backed onto some woods, they're being built on now I think, chopping them down or something. It's where they used to play, used to run and build rafts and climb, and they had this place, this den- they saw how to make it on Ray Mears. Kept the rain out and everything. Reeds or something. The kind of stuff I wished I'd done when I was a kid.

INTERVIEWER: parents strict?

SUSAN: I lived in the city.

(PAUSE)

INTERVIEWER: and that's when he got the... \footage-

SUSAN: That little *insect*.

SCENE 10. : THE WOODS, AT DUSK. EXT.

SOUND OF THOMAS RUNNING THROUGH THE WOODS, EVENTUALLY, PANTING, HE SLOWS TO A STOP.

THOMAS: thought so

ELLIE: piss off

THOMAS: look- I've come to-

ELLIE: I don't need your help.

(PAUSE)

THOMAS: I thought you'd come here.

(PAUSE)

They're getting... really big.

ELLIE: you gonna run off?

(PAUSE)

THOMAS: what about your mum?

ELLIE: she's busy isn't she? Anyway, they still hide under a t-shirt.
Sort of.

(PAUSE)

THOMAS: I've not seen you at school-

ELLIE: well no, surprisingly enough, I've not been going.

(PAUSE)

THOMAS: look, I'm sorry I ran away

ELLIE: no you're not.

THOMAS: I am!

(PAUSE)

I mean, I'm sure someone could cut them off

ELLIE: no.

THOMAS: what?

ELLIE: I don't want them cut off

THOMAS: but- but-

ELLIE: I'm keeping them.

THOMAS: Ellie, you've grown, you've got, you've got *wings*. People are going to find out!

ELLIE: so let them. They're mine, they're part of me

THOMAS: you can't do this

ELLIE: you just don't get it do you?

THOMAS: get what?

ELLIE: I knew this- I knew it, I was special, that I'm going to change the world, actually be/

THOMAS: be what?

ELLIE: actually be someone! Not, not some stupid girl who has to wash and clean and can't ever do anything they want to-

THOMAS: not all girls do that

ELLIE: name three!

(PAUSE)

THOMAS: you could teach

(PAUSE)

can I see them?

ELLIE: what?

THOMAS: show me. I want to see.

(PAUSE)

A RUSTLING OF CLOTHING AS SHE LIFTS HER SHIRT

(PAUSE)

SCENE 11. : THE INTERVIEW ROOM. INT.

INTERVIEWER: and you took a camera

THOMAS: yeah.

INTERVIEWER: why?

THOMAS: lots of reasons

INTERVIEWER: such as?

THOMAS: well, so my, my dad would believe me, so, so her mum would- so they could do something about it, yeah?

INTERVIEWER: right.

THOMAS: look, look she just made me so angry, she didn't get it.

INTERVIEWER: get what?

THOMAS: that she was weird, that it wasn't right.

INTERVIEWER: so you filmed it.

THOMAS: yeah. I thought- I thought-

INTERVIEWER: what?

THOMAS: like, if I put it out, if more people saw it- if other people saw how much of a freak she was, then she'd, she'd- for her own good you know? 'cause then she'd be on telly, like all those other – like Paris Hilton or Pamela Anderson, yeah? She'd see herself, properly.

INTERVIEWER: quite.

SCENE 12. : THE DEN IN THE WOODS, EXT.

BREATHING.

ELLIE: What?

THOMAS: they're massive. They've grown

ELLIE: I know.

HE TAKES A STEP FORWARD AND TURNS BACK
'ROUND

Don't touch them!

THOMAS: they're all... I thought they'd have feathers on or something.

ELLIE: dunno, like a bat I guess?

THOMAS: can you move them?

A PAUSE, RUSTLING OF HER SHIRT AGAIN. THEN
ONE DISTINCTIVE FLAPPING NOISE. SHE DROPS
THE SHIRT

look, Ellie, you've got to do something.

ELLIE: no.

THOMAS: go to a doctor or something

ELLIE: why?

THOMAS: at least look like you're doing something

ELLIE: I want to k-

THOMAS: well you can't! You can't keep them!

ELLIE: why not?

THOMAS: because you're a freak!

ELLIE: Tom, I-

THOMAS: it's not, not, not natural-

ELLIE: but is. it's me!

THOMAS: well it shouldn't be

(PAUSE)

SUDDENLY THOMAS LUNGES FORWARD

ELLIE: Tom!

THOMAS: no, you're not, I'm not letting you. Take it off

THEY STRUGGLE,

ELLIE: get- off-

THOMAS: no, Ellie, I'm stronger than you now, I'm not- not going to let you make a freak of yourself

ELLIE: Stop it! Stop it! No!

HE SUCCEEDS, TAKES A STEP BACK.

THOMAS: there

ELLIE: give me my top back

THOMAS: no. and don't move, or I'll hit you.

ELLIE: you can't- you can't- it's cold, Tom-

HE DRAWS THE CAMERA FROM OUT OF HIS BAG
ELLIE FALLS SILENT, IT BEEPS QUIETLY AS IT
TURNS ON

Tom-

TOM: stay there Ellie, I'm warning you

ELLIE: please-

TOM: no. I'm, this- is for your own good. Shit, night shot.

TOM SHIFTS, ANOTHER BEEP.

Now turn around.

SILENCE

Turn. Around.

SHE SHIFTS AROUND, LEAVES AND TWIGS
CRUNCHING UNDERNEATH HER.

SCENE 13. : INTERVIEW ROOM, INT.

INTERVIEWER: everyone has seen it.

SUSAN: I daresay they have.

INTERVIEWER: the darkness around the edges, that weird little den, and the girl, topless, arms covering her- chest, slowly turning.

SUSAN: thank you for that.

(PAUSE)

INTERVIEWER: was it then she told you?

SUSAN: she came back, crying, all over the place, I didn't really know what she was going on about, I thought- I thought-

INTERVIEWER: you thought he'd raped her?

SUSAN: as good as.

INTERVIEWER: well he-

SUSAN: what is it do you think rape boil down to Mr? Is it about sex? Of course it isn't. It's about power, voyeurism, of looking at someone from a height, knowing that they're just an object, an object to be used up. She wasn't doing what she was told, so he stripped her- stripped her, and forced her to perform.

INTERVIEWER: but there's no record of any kind of weapon being-

SUSAN: he didn't need a weapon, he had the whole of history behind him.

(PAUSE)

INTERVIEWER: right... and so the boy, he showed his parents?

SUSAN: yes.

INTERVIEWER: and that's how you found out-?

SUSAN: he left her with no top, ran off with her jacket. She stumbled in muddy, and topless and, I saw.

INTERVIEWER: and your first thought was *rape*?

SUSAN: my first thought was to console my little girl. I knew something had been going on. I thought- but when it's there in front of you, I mean they moved and everything- accepting it was the only thing I could do. When you see them... there's no denying it. And honestly? I thought they were beautiful.

SCENE 14. : THE LOUNGE, SUSAN'S HOUSE. INT.

ELLIE IS CRYING, IN HER MOTHER'S ARMS.

SUSAN: there now, shh, shh, it's ok

ELLIE: he- he-

SUSAN: shh, it's ok, I'm here, he can't get you here

ELLIE: but I-

A BANGING AT THE DOOR. THEY FALL SILENT

SUSAN: its ok, we'll leave it

ELLIE: mummy,

TERRY: (OFF) I know you're in there, open up.

MORE BANGING

SUSAN: it's ok, we don't have to.

TERRY: (OFF) open up you little freaks

BANGING

ELLIE: mum-

SUSAN: (she takes a deep breath) honey, I'm not ashamed of you, far from it, and do you know what- I'm going to deal with this, once and for all.

SHE STANDS AND GOES OUT OF THE LOUNGE

WE FOLLOW HER INTO THE HALL, SHE OPENS
THE DOOR THAT IS BEING VERY NEARLY
KNOCKED IN.

What, Terry?

TERRY: don't you talk to me like that!

ELLIE: I'll talk to you how I want, it's a free country

TERRY: and more's the pity for it- if stuff like, like, *that girl* is allowed to exist-

SUSAN: allowed to exist! That's my daughter you're talking about!

TERRY: and what do you intend to do about it?

SUSAN: nothing.

TERRY: nothing! Nothing! She's got, got bloody wings growing out of her back!

SUSAN: so he showed you the tape?

TERRY: yes he bloody did!

SUSAN: and you believed it?

TERRY: it's there – plain as the eye can see- she's got- got-

SUSAN: he forced her to strip- like an animal

TERRY: she's as good as

SHE SLAPS HIM

(PAUSE)

SUSAN: get out of the way.

TERRY: I'm telling the authorities

SUSAN: do what you want

TERRY: it's just not right

SUSAN: move, or so help me I will slam this door into your face.

A SECOND OR TWO, THEN HE MOVES BACK

TERRY: you've not heard the last of this

THE DOOR SLAMS

SUSAN TAKES A DEEP BREATH, THEN MOVES
BACK INTO THE LOUNGE.

SCENE 15. : THE INTERVIEW ROOM, INT.

INTERVIEWER: so they released it?

SUSAN: yes.

INTERVIEWER: how?

SUSAN: Youtube I think.

INTERVIEWER: and it spread?

SUSAN: viral they call it. When videos are passed from person to person like that. Viral. At first people picked it up because they thought it was one of those- sex videos. A young girl in the dark- forced to strip. But then she turns around. And you see them.

INTERVIEWER: and the reaction?

SUSAN: well, it was, I think it was delayed a bit because people thought it was a hoax. It was just after that penguin video, you know, the one they did at the BBC, people just thought it was a late April Fool. Clever editing. People can do that.

INTERVIEWER: but the truth escaped?

SUSAN: It was the boy again. We didn't think at first, I came back from shopping one day and Ellie was in tears, a couple of his friends apparently, they'd broken in, she'd locked herself in her room, but not before they got some pictures. They went straight to the tabloids.

INTERVIEWER: how large would you say they were by this point?

SUSAN: I don't know... We had to cut holes in her t-shirts.

INTERVIEWER: and then people started to visit

SUSAN: visit is not the right word. We couldn't go out- we kept the curtains drawn, people threw stuff, shouted-

INTERVIEWER: the press?

SUSAN: not just that, there were religious nuts too, and perverts, all manner of... from all over the world

SCENE 16. : SUSAN'S HOUSE, THE KITCHEN. INT.

OUTSIDE WE HEAR MASSES OF PEOPLE,
JOURNALISTS SHOUTING QUESTIONS, PRAYERS
BEING SAID, PASSERS BY SHOUTING LEWD
REMARKS.

SUSAN: do you want any breakfast, love?

ELLIE: mum, I'm scared.

SUSAN: it's ok.

AN EGG HITS THE WINDOW, THEY BOTH JUMP

SUSAN PULLS A CURTAIN ASIDE

Piss off! Leave us alone!

ELLIE: when are they going to go away?

SUSAN: we just have to wait... sit tight. It'll blow over.

ELLIE: it's been a week. It's just getting worse

SUSAN: we just have to wait.

ELLIE: what about school?

(PAUSE)

Mum?

SUSAN: hm?

ELLIE: what about school?

SUSAN: look, one thing at a time-

A LOUD BANGING AT THE KITCHEN DOOR

Go away!

SHOUTS ETC CONTINUE, BUT ABOVE THAT, A
WOMAN'S VOICE IS RAISED, MUFFLED

LAWYER: Ms. Mackenzie, Ms. Mackenzie, please, open up.

SUSAN WALKS OVER TO THE DOOR

SUSAN: leave, us, alone!

LAWYER: I'm Renuka Singh, Ms. Mackenzie, I'm a lawyer, please let me in, I just want to help you.

SUSAN: oh, like we've not heard that one before.

LAWYER: please, I specialise in women's rights, I think this case, I think I might be able to help you

SUSAN: very nice, piss off.

LAWYER: please, please - someone called me, she said- look please- just let me in, I'm telling you the truth.

(PAUSE) SUSAN SIGHS.

ELLIE: let her in.

SUSAN: what?

ELLIE: let her in, mum

SUSAN: but, love, she could be-

ELLIE: she sounds like she's telling the truth. Please. We need help.

A SECOND, SUSAN SIGHS, AND SHE UNLOCKS
AND OPENS THE DOOR, THE SOUND OUTSIDE IS

ALMOST UNBEARABLE, WE HEAR CAMERA
FLASHES AND SHOUTS. THE LAWYER FALLS IN

SCENE 17. : THE INTERVIEW ROOM. INT.

INTERVIEWER: thank you for your time Mrs Singh.

LAWYER: that's fine

INTERVIEWER: I know you're quite busy

LAWYER: exceedingly, so if you could get to the point I'd appreciate it.

INTERVIEWER: I believe you've covered a lot of these cases

LAWYER: I have

INTERVIEWER: big business I guess?

LAWYER: the money helps, but that's not the point.

INTERVIEWER: and this one, this one was the first, yes?

LAWYER: it was.

INTERVIEWER: how did you come across it?

LAWYER: someone called me, a neighbour I think. She didn't give me her name, but she told me about the circumstances- and, well, true or not, these people needed help.

INTERVIEWER: but it was-

LAWYER: was what?

INTERVIEWER: true, I mean.

(BEAT)

LAWYER: yes. I wasn't expecting that.

INTERVIEWER: were you shocked?

LAWYER: naturally. But that wasn't why I was there- I was there to do a job.

INTERVIEWER: What did you suggest?

LAWYER: well the first priority was to shift the pressure, it took me 10 minutes just to get to the door, they were under siege, but so far it was just reporters, and the odd nutter, tabloid journalists mostly, we had to deal with it before the authorities, those high up, started to take an interest.

INTERVIEWER: you suggested a press conference?

LAWYER: yes. I thought it best.

INTERVIEWER: were they nervous?

LAWYER: of course they were- a single mum and this, this little girl. She was only 11, I mean bright- articulate, but still just 11.

INTERVIEWER: how big were they by this point?

LAWYER: well you can see, I think, on the news footage.

INTERVIEWER: how big though, did you think?

LAWYER: um, I would say... by that point her wingspan was about, 20ft. she was certainly an, an impressive sight. They were large. Leathery wasn't right, the same colour as her skin... But, elegant you know? But still, still just a little girl.

SCENE 18. : A LARGE TOWN SQUARE. EXT.

MUTTERINGS AND LOW CONVERSATION,
PEOPLE TALKING TO CAMERA CREW, ETC. A
LOT OF PEOPLE, THOUSANDS.

FOOTSTEPS AS THE LAWYER WALKS ACROSS
THE STAGE.

PEOPLE QUIETEN DOWN, BUT THE CROWD
STILL MURMURS.

THE LAWYER LEANS OVER TO THE COLLECTION
OF MICS.

LAWYER: Ms. Mackenzie and her daughter would like me to make a short statement. Following that, they will be answering questions from pre-selected journalists.

(PAUSE)

Ms. Mackenzie and her daughter, Ellie, would like me to begin by reminding everyone that they are first and foremost, human beings. The treatment that they have been subject to for the past few weeks has been nothing short of barbaric. They request that you respect their privacy, and also their right to be who they are, free from persecution or harassment.

Many of you will still not believe reports of the girl with wings. I'm here to tell you that it's true. She does have wings, but she is also a girl. She turns 12 soon, she is still young, and her mother also asks that you respect that fact.

Furthermore they wish to tell you that they will not be getting the wings removed. They are a part of Ellie, just as much as her arms or her feet.

They are unable to answer any questions on the scientific or political implications of this extraordinary phenomenon, and also wish me to add that they are in no way religious, and wish to hear nothing on the subject.

I am currently liaising with the government and several independent research committees, in order to ensure that the girl's privacy and general freedoms are respected. This is first and foremost an issue of human rights, and I have received an admission on all sides that Ellie's basic rights come before science. As such, detainment and experimentation is categorically out of the question. Although we do understand that such a phenomenon is deeply interesting and so we are negotiating a deal whereby the authorities could amass a body of circumstantial and

environmental evidence about these strange and astounding events.

Thank you.

SHE WALKS OFFSTAGE.

THE CROWD BREAKS IN MURMURS AND THE OCCASIONAL SNIDE COMMENT.

THEN ELLIE AND SUSAN ENTER, FOLLOWED BY THE LAWYER. AND WALK TO THE MICS.

THE CROWD FALL COMPLETELY SILENT.

LAWYER: ladies and gentleman, Susan and Ellie Mackenzie.

SCENE 19. : THE INTERVIEW ROOM. INT.

(PAUSE)

INTERVIEWER: thank you for joining us.

(PAUSE)

ELLIE: you're welcome.

(PAUSE)

INTERVIEWER: how was the- er-

ELLIE: flight? Perfectly pleasant. It's warm this time of year.

INTERVIEWER: right... erm

ELLIE: what is it you want?

INTERVIEWER: we-

ELLIE: I mean I told you everything at the beginning, when it first happened, I did weeks of interviews, samples, blood tests.

INTERVIEWER: well you see, Eleanor.

ELLIE: no one calls me that but you people.

INTERVIEWER: what we neglected to gather was a record of the experiences, of the people close to, we now believe that there may be some kind... emotional trigger, and we wish to try and understand how you, how it made you *feel*.

(PAUSE)

ELLIE: how it made me feel?

INTERVIEWER: yes.

ELLIE: how it made me feel?

(PAUSE)

Look, I know this is part of the agreement, but-

INTERVIEWER: please, we're trying to gather as much evidence as possible.

ELLIE: (small laugh) it's not a crime.

INTERVIEWER: no, no of course it's not.

ELLIE: there's legislation now.

INTERVIEWER: I know.

ELLIE: for all of us. We belong to ourselves, no one can experiment on us.

INTERVIEWER: please, we just need to know what changed, what might have triggered-

ELLIE: it wasn't a change. It was like becoming myself, actually filling in all the space. I always felt like... like there was something in me I couldn't let out, was always being told that I wasn't acting properly, not saying the right things, not being like I should be. But what should I be? I know who I am, I don't want to be told that there are only certain versions that's allowed.

INTERVIEWER: it must have been hard.

ELLIE: It's hard for all of us. But we're strong. All of us. There's more than a thousand cases now.

INTERVIEWER: we know.

ELLIE: all over the world. It's like all it took was me, speaking out, and suddenly I wasn't alone, it started happening everywhere, there were more, all over, every couple of days a new report. Girls sprouting wings. We're different, yeah, but only because we're not ashamed.

INTERVIEWER: do you harbour any resentment? Your neighbours, the boy-

ELLIE: they were scared.

INTERVIEWER: but-

ELLIE: I don't blame them. I mean people haven't had wings for centuries, right? It's history's fault. Tom was stupid. He was scared. That's it.

INTERVIEWER: and you weren't?

ELLIE: (laughs) What do you think!

SCENE 20. : THE LARGE TOWN SQUARE. EXT.

SILENCE

ELLIE LEANS FORWARD TO THE MICS.

ELLIE: hello.

(PAUSE)

Um, I believe, someone from the Herald, first.

JOURNALIST 1: um, yes, sorry. Ellie, how long have you been exhibiting these... symptoms?

ELLIE: erm, I don't think 'symptoms' is the right word actually. I'm not ill. But... I guess, I guess I always felt different... they started growing maybe... maybe about 4 weeks ago? Um. Who's next?

JOURNALIST 2: Ellie, are you happy with them?

ELLIE: well, they're wings aren't they? I think they're pretty cool.

NERVOUS LAUGHTER

JOURNALIST 2: do they hurt, though?

ELLIE: um, not really, they itched a bit at the start. What's worse is the way, the way people have reacted.

JOURNALIST 3: Ellie, what kind of tests have they subjected you to?

ELLIE: um, nothing too bad, there's always lots of people, lots of people talking- that's the worst thing you know? When people talk like I'm not there. But my mum, she sorts them out.

JOURNALIST 4: Mrs. Mackenzie.

SUSAN: um, it's Ms. Actually.

JOURNALIST 4: have you ever experienced similar-?

SUSAN: um, no, as you can see I don't have wings

LAUGHTER AGAIN

JOURNALIST 4: what I mean to say is that is there any history of mutations in your family?

SUSAN: no. and I would include Ellie in that answer.

JOURNALIST 4: what about the father? Where is Ellie's Father, Ms. Mackenzie, has he attempted to contact you at all following the media exposure?

(PAUSE)

SUSAN: um, yes. Yes he has.

JOURNALIST 4: and what did he have to say?

SUSAN: he asked what we were going to do about it.

(BEAT)

I said, 'help her learn to fly'.

SCENE 21. : THE INTERVIEW ROOM. INT.

ELLIE: but in a way, it wasn't scary. It was always my decisions; I was there because I wanted to be. I wanted to talk to people. My mum was right there, and the lawyer, all I had to do was stand there, answer a few questions. My mum said; 'you look people in the eye'. So I did. There's no reason to be

scared. People do stupid things when they're scared. I'm not scared. I love it.

GRAMS: 'JOYFUL GIRL' BY ANI DIFRANCO, PLAYS THE CREDITS OUT

I DO IT FOR THE JOY IT BRINGS/ BECAUSE I'M A JOYFUL GIRL/ BECAUSE THE WORLD OWES ME NOTHING / AND WE OWE EACH OTHER THE WORLD / I DO IT BECAUSE IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO / I DO IT BECAUSE I LEARNED IT FROM YOU / AND I DO IT JUST BECAUSE I WANT TO / BECAUSE I WANT TO.

END