

EXTRACT 1:

Stealing Sweets & Punching People by Phil Porter

The park. BEN stands on a diving board above an empty old outdoor swimming pool, flying his kite. Steps lead up to the board. One of his shoelaces is untied. EMILY approaches quietly and stands a little way off. She watches his hands. He tugs on the rope and they watch the kite somersault. He does it again.

EMILY: Is that all it takes to make the kite somersault? Just a little tug on the string?

BEN: Yeah, when the wind's right.

EMILY: That's clever.

Pause.

BEN: It's ever such a beautiful thing, isn't it? And you're really fantastic at flying it.

BEN: Thanks. It's only really a matter of practice.

EMILY: Monica was surprised that there's enough wind. All those high buildings and trees.

BEN: Yeah, the wind's not really blowing from that direction.

EMILY: That's what I said. Not that I know anything.

BEN: And this is quite an easy kite to fly. It doesn't really need too strong a breeze.

EMILY: Monica's my boss. My name's Emily.

BEN: Hi there. My name's Ben.

Pause. They watch the kite.

EMILY: Actually, a band played in the bandstand until this year. Just on Wednesday evenings in the summer. But the conductor died in some kind of sleepwalking accident. The band's heart wasn't really in it after that. One of these benches is in loving memory of him. I don't know why you'd be interested in any of that, but I've said it now.

BEN: Would you like to fly the kite?

EMILY: No thank you.

BEN: Just for a moment. I need my hands to tie my shoelace.

EMILY: I'll tie your shoelace if you want.

BEN: There's no need for that. If you just hold onto the kite for a moment... I promise it's not very difficult. Come up.

EMILY: Okay.

EMILY joins BEN on the diving board.

BEN: Okay, hold out your hands.

EMILY holds out her hands with trepidation. BEN puts the kite into EMILY's hands, also keeping hold himself.

BEN: My goodness, your hands are on fire. Are you ready for me to let go?

EMILY: I think so.

BEN: It pulls a bit harder than you probably think.

EMILY: Maybe I shouldn't –

BEN: But as long as you keep your hands down by your body and your fingers quite tight round the handle... That's it. You'll be fine. Three. Two. One.

Slowly, BEN takes his hands from around EMILY's. EMILY is thrilled. BEN bends down and ties his shoelace.

BEN: How does that feel?

EMILY: Lovely. Really lovely.

Pause.

EMILY: It's like some kind of animal, the way it jerks about. It's like a dog on a lead in the sky. Have you ever been blown off your feet?

BEN: Not that I remember.

EMILY: It makes me feel quite fluttery myself.

Pause.

EMILY: Do you think that there was ever any water in the swimming pool?

BEN: I suppose there must have been once.

EMILY: What a stupid question. Looks horrible with all that broken glass and flaky paint.

Pause.

BEN: Look at that. Your knuckles are white.

EMILY: That's because I need to be careful not to let go. My fingers have brains of their own sometimes. Like if I hold a

teacup, my fingers sometimes decide to drop it without even asking me first. Just a sudden rush of blood to the fingers. And I work in an antique shop, so it's hardly ideal.

BEN: I can imagine.

EMILY: Halfway between antiques and junk really. Nobody ever comes in.

BEN: I'm exactly the same with eggs. If I hold one in my hand, I can't help crushing it.

EMILY: Really?

BEN: Yeah, absolutely. The more I try to hold it gently, the stronger the temptation is to squeeze.

EMILY: That's exactly like me and the bat.

BEN: What bat's that?

EMILY: Oh, it wasn't anything really. I found a bat with a broken wing and looked after it until it was better. But when I picked it up to let it go, I squeezed too hard and it broke again.

Short pause.

EMILY: I don't know why I'm telling you things like that. I'll make you think I'm mental.

BEN: You're flying it like you've been flying kites all your life.

EMILY: I wish I had been. Do you want it back now?

BEN: No thanks. I'll watch you and pick up some tips.

EMILY: Watch me? Don't be ridiculous. It'll probably nosedive and plonk on the bandstand roof in a minute. I'm just amazed that it stays in the sky at all.

BEN: It hardly weighs anything really. It's just a few sticks of wood with some Japanese silk stretched across.

EMILY: Japanese silk?

BEN: And then with the aerodynamics...

EMILY: How much did it cost? I bet I can't afford one.

BEN: Oh, I didn't actually buy this one, I made it. The materials cost a little bit but –

EMILY: You're joking. You actually made it?

BEN: Yeah, it's much more fun if you make your own.

EMILY: But it's beautiful. The shape of it and the colours are just so –

BEN: Obviously, I bought the silk.

EMILY: But it's beautiful. If I could make something as beautiful as that...

BEN: It's honestly just a few sticks and some silk. I could show you some time if you wanted.

EMILY: Really?

BEN: Of course. I could teach you to make all sorts if you wanted. Box kites, man-lifters, dragon kites, all of that. I learnt it all off my Dad, you see. He used to sit at the kitchen table and –

EMILY: Is he dead now?

BEN: Who?

EMILY: Your Dad.

BEN: No, he's still alive.

EMILY: Sorry. I'll shut my mouth.

BEN: Why did you ask that?

EMILY: Sorry. What a stupid thing to say.

BEN: I'm just curious –

EMILY: My mouth, it's like my fingers. It's like a stupid runaway train. I'd better go back.

BEN: No, stay.

EMILY: Take the kite back.

BEN: No honestly, I'm not offended, I'm just curious. Because it's funny you should ask. Because in some ways he might as well be... dead, in a way. I mean, I never really see him any more.

EMILY: Oh.

BEN: He left my Mum for another woman a couple of years ago. Moved abroad and we haven't spoken since. I just thought perhaps you'd picked up on that. You seem like perhaps the sort of person that might.

EMILY: Really?

BEN: Yeah. You seem... like the sort of person that might.

EMILY: Oh. I don't know if I did or I didn't.

BEN: He's a hairdresser.

Pause.

EMILY: I wish my Dad would pay a bit less interest. Sorry, I didn't mean that.

BEN: It's okay.

EMILY: I just mean he's quite suffocating. I think his biggest wish would be to freeze me as a ten-year-old. But the more he wraps me up in tissue, the more I feel like breaking free. I love him more than anything but... Can you take the kite now? I need to scratch my head.

BEN takes the kite. EMILY scratches her head, then begins to wind her hair around her finger.

EMILY: Even though it's sticks and silk, it must be heavier than air.

BEN: The kite?

EMILY: Yeah. So why does it float?

BEN: Oh, that's just a matter of aerodynamics really. The air that passes across the upper side travels faster than the air beneath, so the change in the air pressure pushes it upwards.

EMILY: That's clever.

BEN: There's more air underneath, so the kite gets pushed up higher. It's exactly the same with aeroplanes, but they're quite a lot heavier.

EMILY: Yeah. What an interesting thing.

BEN: Have you ever seen the magic paper trick? That's just a matter of aerodynamics.

EMILY: I don't think I have.

BEN: It's not really magic, it's just a matter of science. It's probably quite boring –

EMILY: Show me it.

BEN: Are you sure?

EMILY nods.

BEN: Okay, have you got a bit of paper? Just a little bit of paper?

EMILY: I don't think I have.

EMILY feels in her pocket and takes out a shopping list.

EMILY: Yes I have, I've got a shopping list. Well, it's not really a list. It just says margarine.

BEN: That's perfect. Okay, tear a little slit just in the middle of it.

EMILY tears a slit.

EMILY: I've done that.

BEN: And give it to me.

EMILY gives the paper to BEN, who pushes the handle of the kite through the hole in the paper, so that it sits at the bottom of the string.

BEN: Now, gently put your hands around the paper. Just like you'd put your hands around a grasshopper.

EMILY puts her hands around the paper. BEN puts one hand on top.

BEN: Close your eyes and make a wish.

EMILY closes her eyes.

BEN: Your hands are shaking.

EMILY: My whole body's shaking for some reason.

BEN: Have you made a wish?

EMILY nods.

BEN: Then very slowly, open your eyes and move your hands away and watch the piece of paper.

EMILY does this. The piece of paper quickly dances up the string and out of sight.

EMILY: That's amazing!

BEN: I love it –

EMILY: It's the best thing in the world! How did you do that?!

BEN: Exactly the same principle. The air underneath –

EMILY: It knows exactly where it wants to go! You do one and I'll hold the kite. I've got a big receipt from the margarine.

EMILY pulls a receipt from her pocket. She tears a slit in it and gives it to BEN, who puts it on the string.

EMILY: I don't think I've ever seen anything better! It's like a little dance or something! Hold onto the paper and I'll take the handle.

EMILY takes the handle from BEN. He cups the receipt.

EMILY: And close your eyes and make a wish.

BEN closes his eyes.

BEN: I wish –

EMILY: Don't tell me! If you say it out loud then it won't come true.

BEN: Okay.

Pause.

EMILY: Tell me. Tell me what you're wishing for.

BEN opens his eyes and smiles at EMILY. He lets go of the paper and it dances up the string.

EXTRACT 2: **BLOOD WEDDING by LORCA**

The hallway of the Bride's house. The doorway is at the back. It is night. The Bride appears wearing a white petticoat heavy with lace and embroidery, and a white bodice. Her arms are bare. The Maid is similarly dressed.

MAID: I'll finish doing your hair here.

BRIDE: I can't stand it inside, it's so hot.

MAID: In this place it's not even cool at dawn.

The Bride sits on a low chair and gazes at herself in a hand mirror. The Maid combs the Bride's hair.

BRIDE: My mother came from a place where there were many trees. Rich land.

MAID: She was so full of life!

BRIDE: But she wasted away here.

MAID: Her fate.

BRIDE: As we all waste away. Even the walls are on fire.
Ay! Don't tug so hard.

MAID: It's so I can get this wave right. I want it to fall
over your brow.

The Bride gazes at herself in the mirror.

MAID: You're so beautiful! Ay! *(Kisses her passionately.)*

BRIDE: Finish my hair.

MAID: You're fortunate. You're going to embrace a man,
and kiss him, and feel his weight!

BRIDE: Hush.

MAID: And the best is when you wake and feel him
beside you, and his breath brushes your shoulders, like a
nightingale's feather.

BRIDE: Will you hush?

MAID: But, child! A marriage. What else is it? A marriage
is such and nothing more. Is it sweetmeats? Is it sprays
of flowers? No. It's a shining bed and a man and a
woman.

BRIDE: You shouldn't say it.

MAID: Perhaps not. But that's the true joy of it.

BRIDE: Or the true bitterness.

MAID: I'm going to place the orange-blossom here, so
that the garland sets off your hair. *(She tries out a spray
of orange-blossom.)*

BRIDE: Give it me. *(She takes the orange-blossom and
looks at it and lowers her head disconsolately.)*

MAID: What's this?

BRIDE: Leave me alone.

MAID: This is no time for sadness. Give me the blossom.
(The Bride throws it to the floor.) Child! That's tempting
fate, throwing your garland on the ground. Raise your
head! Don't you want to be married? Speak. You can still
say no.

BRIDE: It's clouded. An ill wind at the heart of it: who
does not feel it?

MAID: You love your man.

BRIDE: I love him.

MAID: Yes, yes, it's true.

BRIDE: But it's such a huge step.

MAID: You have to take it.

BRIDE: I've promised I would.

MAID: I'll fix your garland for you.

BRIDE: Make haste, because they'll soon be here.

MAID: They've been on the road two hours already.

BRIDE: How far from here to the church?

MAID: Two miles by the river bank, double that if you go by the road.

(cont...)

EXTRACT 3:

Pericles by William Shakespeare

Enter PERICLES on board a ship.

PERICLES

Thou god of this great vast, rebuke these surges,
Which wash both heaven and hell; and thou, that hast
Upon the winds command, bind them in brass,
Having call'd them from the deep! O, still
Thy deafening, dreadful thunders; gently quench
Thy nimble, sulphurous flashes! O, how, Lychorida,
How does my queen? Thou stormest venomously;
Wilt thou spit all thyself? The seaman's whistle
Is as a whisper in the ears of death,
Unheard. Lychorida!--Lucina, O
Divinest patroness, and midwife gentle
To those that cry by night, convey thy deity
Aboard our dancing boat; make swift the pangs
Of my queen's travails!

Enter LYCHORIDA, with an Infant

PERICLES

Now, Lychorida!

LYCHORIDA

Here is a thing too young for such a place,
Who, if it had conceit, would die, as I
Am like to do: take in your arms this piece
Of your dead queen.

PERICLES

How, how, Lychorida!

LYCHORIDA

Patience, good sir; do not assist the storm.
Here's all that is left living of your queen,
A little daughter: for the sake of it,
Be manly, and take comfort.

PERICLES

O you gods!
Why do you make us love your goodly gifts,
And snatch them straight away? We here below
Recall not what we give, and therein may
Use honour with you.

LYCHORIDA

Patience, good sir,
Even for this charge.

PERICLES

Now, mild may be thy life!
For a more blustrous birth had never babe:
Quiet and gentle thy conditions! for
Thou art the rudeliest welcome to this world
That ever was prince's child. Happy what follows!
Thou hast as chiding a nativity
As fire, air, water, earth, and heaven can make,
To herald thee from the womb: even at the first
Thy loss is more than can thy portage quit,
With all thou canst find here. Now, the good gods
Throw their best eyes upon't!

Enter two Sailors

FIRST SAILOR

What courage, sir? God save you!

PERICLES

Courage enough: I do not fear the flaw;
It hath done to me the worst. Yet, for the love
Of this poor infant, this fresh-new sea-farer,
I would it would be quiet.

FIRST SAILOR

Slack the bolins there! Thou wilt not, wilt thou?
Blow, and split thyself.

SECOND SAILOR

But sea-room, an the brine and cloudy billow kiss
the moon, I care not.

FIRST SAILOR

Sir, your queen must overboard: the sea works high,
the wind is loud, and will not lie till the ship be
cleared of the dead.

PERICLES

That's your superstition.

FIRST SAILOR

Pardon us, sir; with us at sea it hath been still
observed: and we are strong in custom. Therefore
briefly yield her; for she must overboard straight.

PERICLES

As you think meet. Most wretched queen!

LYCHORIDA

Here she lies, sir.

PERICLES

A terrible childbed hast thou had, my dear;
No light, no fire: the unfriendly elements
Forgot thee utterly: nor have I time
To give thee hallow'd to thy grave, but straight
Must cast thee, scarcely coffin'd, in the ooze;
Where, for a monument upon thy bones,
And e'er-remaining lamps, the belching whale
And humming water must o'erwhelm thy corpse,
Lying with simple shells. O Lychorida,

Bid Nestor bring me spices, ink and paper,
My casket and my jewels; and bid Nicander
Bring me the satin coffer: lay the babe
Upon the pillow: hie thee, whiles I say
A priestly farewell to her: suddenly, woman.

Exit LYCHORIDA

SECOND SAILOR

Sir, we have a chest beneath the hatches, caulked
and bitumed ready.

PERICLES

I thank thee. Mariner, say what coast is this?

SECOND SAILOR

We are near Tarsus.

PERICLES

Thither, gentle mariner.
Alter thy course for Tyre. When canst thou reach it?

SECOND SAILOR

By break of day, if the wind cease.

PERICLES

O, make for Tarsus!
There will I visit Cleon, for the babe
Cannot hold out to Tyrus: there I'll leave it
At careful nursing. Go thy ways, good mariner:
I'll bring the body presently.

EXTRACT 4:

BLINK by Phil Porter

SOPHIE:

Okay, so when I'm twelve my gums begin to itch and
keep me awake at night. So I tell the dentist and she
says my teeth are overcrowded, and she'll take two out
to make room. And she gives me a choice between a
local, so a needle, and a general, meaning gas. And I'm
scared of needles so I go for the gas, which they don't

do any more, but basically they hold this mask down over your face and you have to breathe in this stuff. And it's got a kind of rubber taste, like an old rubber ball or something. And as you breathe you can hear this buzz getting louder, like a chainsaw getting closer, so I fix my eyes on this nurse and watch as she merges into this giant picture of autumn that covers one wall. Then when I wake up I'm okay for a second. Until this horrible, groggy feeling hits me. And as we leave I throw up this pool of frothy blood on the doorstep. And we get to the car and I'm sick in the car, and we get home and I'm sick in the porch, and I'm sick about five times more, and it's Pancake Day but I'm too sick for pancakes, so basically it's just a really bad experience. But at least the itching goes away, until two years later when it comes back, and the dentist says she'll take two more out. And again I get the choice, and again I go for gas, only this time I ask my dad if, when we get home, I can have my bed in the garden. I want to lie outside and clean my lungs in the air. And I know it's mad what I'm asking. It's not a real request, more just an idea. But when we get back my bed's there on the lawn. And this is The Isle of Man in April, so the weather's not warm. But there it is, with an extra blanket, and Winston, my bear, on the pillow. And there's even a bedside table, with fizzy water and a working lamp, and I'm telling you this so you understand the kind of man he was, my dad. He made me feel seen.

EXTRACT 5:

Lucky Dog by Leo Butler

Christmas Day. 5pm. Eddie and Sue sitting at the table eating Christmas dinner. Silence.

Sue: Where'd yer take 'er?

Eddie: Nowhere. Around. Up woods n' back.

Sue: Won't eat 'er giblets.

Eddie: She will.

Sue: Can hardly stand, poor thing. (*Silence.*) Didn't hear yer leave. Were up n' about by eight. Must've left very early.

Eddie: Not really.

Sue: Had me worried, not a word all day. Thought yer might be in some bother.

Eddie: No.

Sue: Thought yer might be gone for good.

Silence.

Eddie: Took 'er round park.

Sue: Oh.

Eddie: Round park f' ten minutes.

Sue: Gussed as much.

Eddie: Down Crabtree Pond. Up through woods. Over heliport n' back.

Sue: You work that dog too hard.

Eddie: She's alright.

Sue: Paw marks all over the carpet.

Eddie: She's not bothered.

Sue: Only bathed her Sunday, state of 'er already. *(Silence.)*

Save me some o' them parsnips, won't yer? *(Silence.)* Many up there?

Eddie: Few.

Sue: That's nice.

Eddie: Couple o' terriers.

Sue: Oh.

Eddie: Staff.

Sue: Not many then.

Eddie: Not many. No. *(Silence.)* Retriever.

Sue: What?

Eddie: Golden retriever. Cone round its neck. Stop it scratchin'.

Sue: Oh dear.

Eddie: Skin infection.

Sue: Oh dear. *(Silence.)* Hope yer washed yer hands.

Eddie: Saw a robin.

Sue: What?

Eddie: Robin redbreast. Perched on bench by playgorund. Had to put 'er on lead, stop 'er chasin' it away. Tiny little thing.

Sue: Thought you might've popped round Pam's.

Eddie: Ay.

Sue: Lovely fit. *(Silence.)* Does wonders f' yer waistline.

Eddie: Does it?

Sue: Seen it meself, in the window. TK Max. One o' the bargains.

Eddie: Oh.

Sue: In the bargain bin. Didn't think it were quite you. Didn't think it were quite your style.

Eddie: Didn't know I 'ad a style.

Sue: Not o' yer own choosing, no. (*Silence.*) Very thoughtful of 'er.

Eddie: Ay.