

A story from
THEATRE

ALIBI



Blank Bird

by Daniel Jamieson, Illustrated by Trina Bramman

It was lockdown. Lola had been off school so long she could hardly remember what it felt like. The thing which she missed the most was that feeling you get at playtime when loads of you start running along in a gang and shouting your heads off. That was it, that running and shouting with lots of others. They said school was starting again, but then it was just reception, year 1 and year 6. Lola was year 5 and anyway, Mum said no way, it didn't feel safe yet, so that was that. No school for Lola. She felt like she was getting so little practice at being nine, she was forgetting how to do it. Maybe she would have to stay in the house for the rest of her life and all the colour would drain out of her. She would go blank.





Then one day Mum got this kit which you could make into a bird with flappy wings.

"Come on Loll, let's do it together," she said, "It'll be a laugh." But then Jamie's nappy was full and Mum had to sort him out, so Lola just made the bird herself. It was white paper and the wings went up and down like a sort of puppet. When it was finished, Lola worked the wings and looked at it close up as if it was flying along and she was flying behind it. It felt nice. "Oh," said Mum, "You were meant to colour it in before you put it together."

"Yeah well," said Lola, "It's a blank bird. Like me."



That night, Lola left the blank bird poked in a jam jar on her window sill. Next day she woke up very early, when it was first light. The window was open a bit and she could hear all the birds cheep-cheeping outside in Mrs Brady's lilac tree next door. There was her blank bird, like it was looking out of the window. Lola shut her eyes again and dozed off.

The blank bird looked out at the flutter of sparrows in the garden. They kept flying from bush to shed to fence and back to bush, cheeping their heads off just 'cause they felt like it. The blank bird watched. Then, little by little, her wings began to twitch. And her throat began to cheep. Then one of the sparrows must have noticed because he flew up to the edge of the open window.

"Come on!" he cheeped.

"I can't," cheeped the blank bird, so the sparrow flew down and started pecking at where she was attached to the stick.

"Come on, come on," until suddenly...



...she was free! She lay stunned on the window sill, then the sparrow flew out of the window and... she followed! The flutter of sparrows flew off together with the blank bird in the middle of them and they veered over fences, through bushes and right under a cat's nose and all the time cheeping, "Come on, come on!" Then the first sparrow flew up and up and the blank bird followed until all the houses lay below like an enormous jigsaw, and the blank bird could see where Lola's house fitted into the whole rest of the world with all Lola's friends waiting for each other in their own jigsaw pieces, all still attached. Then the blank bird ran out of flap and floated down on her back, her eyes full of sky.



When Lola opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was the stick in the pot with no blank bird attached. She was goggling at it when Mum called from the garden.

"Hey Loll, this is amazing!"

"What?"

"This!" She held up the paper bird.

"Why'd you chuck it out of the window?"

Lola rubbed her eyes. Wait... what? It couldn't be. She ran outside in her bare feet and took the bird from Mum's hand. All its feathers were filled in with sparrow colours - blue, black, brown and grey. So Lola ran around the garden with it, shouting and cheeping.

"Someone's cheered up a bit then," said Mum, and the sparrows watched from Mrs Brady's lilac tree and cheeped, "Come on, come on, come on!"







Theatre Alibi

info@theatrealibi.co.uk

www.theatrealibi.co.uk



@TheatreAlibi



@TheatreAlibiUK



Instagram: @theatrealibi



LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Exeter
City Council

Published by Theatre Alibi ©Theatre Alibi 2020

Text © Daniel Jamieson 2020

Illustrations © Trina Bramman 2020

Designed by Joe Pieczenko

With thanks to Annie Chave and Rob Sved