

# Spike

A play.

Created by Action Transport Theatre Co.

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Rehearsal Draft.

# Spike

## Characters

- Ruby** Age 11. Lives with her Dad in an isolated house by a beach by the sea.
- Ruby's Dad (Pete)** Mid 30s. Single-parent. Lost his job. Stressed, not coping very well.
- Grandad Jeff** 63. Ruby's Grandad. Lives a coach-ride away.
- Spike** Ruby's imaginary friend. Looks like a real boy a year or so older than Ruby. She has met him before, but not for some time.
- (**Spike** and **Ruby's Dad** are played by the same actor.)

## Location

Ruby's house (by the sea) and the garden with a tree – and a tree house - and the beach and the old hut on the cliff. Also, the imaginary places where spike and Ruby go.

## Time

The present. A few days in the summer holidays.

# Spike

## One

Play opens on PETE, standing at the sea and staring blankly at it. Inside his head, he is confused and disturbed, desperately seeking an escape. Music is a swirling mix of sea and emotion. Ruby runs on to the jetty. She is in a hurry.

RUBY: All right, Dad?

He doesn't hear her. She runs straight past and up the ladder to her tree house. She takes out a pair of binoculars and looks inland.

She focuses and scans the horizon, then whoops for joy.

She runs down the ladder and back to Dad.

Ruby: Dad. Dad. He'll be here any minute.

Pete: [still elsewhere in his head] What?

Ruby: The coach is coming along the cliff road. He'll get off at the end of the lane. Shall I go and meet him?

Pete: (not really connecting) If you like.

She goes to go.

Pete: Is the table set?

Ruby: I've been tidying the front room. You get the tea ready and I'll meet him

**Spike Second Draft**

Pete: I can't do it on my own. I'll get the food going, you do the table.

Ruby: But dad-

Pete: You know what he's like, if it's not all ship-shape, he'll go off on one won't he?

Ruby: I've done the box room, cleaned the bath, and the toilet. It was mingin'. Can't I just run down and help him with his case?

Pete: He can carry a case. But I can't run the whole house and make the tea and everything can I?

Ruby: Five minutes. I'll be back.

Pete: Ruby. Cutlery, cups: table, now!

Ruby: You'd want someone to meet you.

Pete: Tell you what, Ruby: don't bother about me, you run off, and I'll cook the tea AND do the washing AND set the table AND look after you, and while I'm runnin' round doin' that, I'll stick a broom up my backside and wipe the floor behind me.

Ruby: (Begrudgingly) I'll do the table.

Pete: Don't push me.

RUBY sets the table. Pete is starting to cook the tea.

Pete: Not that one! You know he won't drink out of a chipped cup.

Ruby goes and looks out the window.

Pete: And if you don't help proper I'll clobber you one. [Angry, RUBY stares at PETE, then slams the cup on the table and crawls under it]

Pete: Ruby, no! I'm sorry, I didn't mean...Ruby...

(The kettle whistles. Dad seems to be on the edge of breaking down. His hands are shaking. He is angry, yet pathetically needy)

Pete: Flamin' 'ell...Get out... (walks to the stove and burns his hand.) OWWWWW!

(In pain and anger, he slams his hand down on the table)

Pete: Now look what you've made me do. Get out from under that table. Now!

[RUBY ignores him.]

Pete: You think you're so big, don't you, eh? It's all you you you, isn't it? You're the sun and we're all spinning round you eh? All summer all daddy's got to do is I dunno, whatever you want, games, clothes, buy the food, do the shopping get the plane out and fly you to Alton Towers. I can't do it, Ruby. You know that. Hell why don't you get it, eh?

Runy comes out from the table. She looks at her dad.

Ruby: I don't want any tea.

Pete: Please yourself.

She walks out.

Oh come on, Ruby, don't let your Granddad see us like this.

[PETE returns to his chores in the kitchen.]

JEFF: [off] Hello!  
Hello, all! By 'eck, I swear those coach seats are getting' smaller...

PETE: Hello dad. Tea's on. Want a cuppa?

JEFF: You bet. I'm as dry as a desert. Where's my little girl then? I thought she'd meet me down the lane. Is she all right?

**Spike Second Draft**

Pete: Course. Just, you know

JEFF: What? What've you said to her now? You've flown off the handle again an't ya?

PETE: Tea's coming.

JEFF: You need to get a job, Peter.

PETE: I know.

JEFF: Sort yourself out.

PETE: I'm trying.

JEFF: Not hard enough it seems. Look at this place. Paint peeling off, smells of damp.

PETE: Can't afford it to put it right can I.

JEFF: Well get a job.

PETE: Doing what?

JEFF: Anything. Fishing. Lobsters, crabs and stuff. Sea's on your doorstep.

PETE: And what about Ruby, while I'm out at work?

JEFF: Other folk manage. You can't lie down on your back like a turtle and give up.

PETE: Dad, you're not helping.

JEFF: I'm here aren't I? You phoned me up, I'm here.

PETE: You didn't have to come.

**Spike Second Draft**

JEFF: You were blumming crying on the phone, man.

PETE: I wasn't.

JEFF: Nearly. I could hear it in your voice. You're a wooden man made of smoke you are.

(Pause.)

I'm here. I'll give you a hand.

I can't pay your mortgage mind, my pension is all I've got.

PETE: I don't want money.

JEFF: You do. Tomorrow get job hunting. I'll hold the fort – look after Ruby, start on your garden, do a bit of diy.

PETE: I want... just a bit of...

Enter Ruby.

JEFF: (Changes) Come here.

RUBY: Yayy!

She runs to him and they hug.

JEFF: Are you all right?...

RUBY: Fine.

PETE: Come on, Rubes. Your Granddad's had a long trip, he doesn't want you smotherin' him.

JEFF: You been weeping?

**Spike Second Draft**

PETE: No she hasn't. Come on, everyone. I've laid the table.

JEFF: Good job I'm here. This boat needs an experienced captain at the helm, I reckon, someone who can get things straight and not upset the crew every five minutes. That's your problem, Peter, you've as much tact as a bulldozer. You don't talk to people proper so you wind 'em up. (To Ruby) What's he been doing to you?

PETE: We've both been busy trying to get everywhere ready for you for the weekend.

JEFF: So I'm an inconvenience before I even arrive am I?

RUBY: I've got your room ready, and everything.

PETE: We're happy you're here.

JEFF: (deciding to make the best of it) Good. I know, let's get out of here and do summat.

PETE: But I've made the tea. It's a fry-up.

JEFF: It'll wait. (He leads the way out doors, his arm round Ruby) Now is it to be body-boarding or water ski-ing or... I reckon I could manage a game of French cricket.

RUBY: I'll bat.

JEFF: And I'll bowl.

RUBY: You're fielding, dad.

JEFF: Did I ever tell you when I played for England and scored six sixes in a row.

RUBY: Thirty-six?

**Spike Second Draft**

JEFF: Thirty-seven. They gave me an extra run cos I was holding the bat upside down.

(He's standing on the sand, legs together, the bat upside-down. They play, but the actors pretend the ball)

JEFF: No bouncers now. And watch my bad knee.

Ruby bowls, Jeff hits it and Pete misses the catch.

RUBY: Dad!

PETE; Sorry.

JEFF: Couldn't catch a cold your dad. Never could.

Peter picks up the ball.

RUBY: You bowl, and it's got to be underarm.

Pete bowls, Jeff whacks it, Pete runs off to fetch it.

JEFF: Run rabbit run!

RUBY: Can you stay forever, Granddad?

JEFF: Maybe I can stay a bit longer than the weekend.

RUBY: Great. We can we go fishing.

JEFF: But I've got things to do back at home. A greenhouse won't look after itself you know.

Pete returns and bowls again. Jeff hits it. They try to get him out, but can't. (NB if you hit the ball, you can turn your legs to face the bowler; if you don't, you have to play with the bat at the side/back etc). Ruby bowls; Jeff tanks it, she runs off after the ball.

JEFF: So what are you gonna do, boy? Any plans?

PETE: Dunno. I thought I'd have a look at the jobs in the paper.

**Spike Second Draft**

JEFF: You can't catch, you can't bowl, you shout at your girl. Ruin your own life if you have to, but not hers, I say.

Ruby returns.

RUBY: When's it my turn?

JEFF: When you get me out.

She bowls it at him. Jeff hits it up to the heavens.

The three of them follow the flight of the ball up to the sky.

RUBY: Catch it, Dad!

The music we heard when Dad was standing on the jetty is heard again. Dad is lost in another world. Time stands still as we see his anguish. Then the ball comes down, the music stops... and he misses the catch.

Jeff laughs.

RUBY: Dad!

JEFF: Can I smell smoke?

Pete doesn't answer. He's fuming inside.

JEFF: Hold on, something's burnin'.

The smoke alarm goes off.

RUBY: Dad! The smoke alarm. You've left the frying pan on.

JEFF: [to PETE, just standing there] What the hell are you doin', son?

[The smoke alarm gets louder. ]

RUBY: Dad! Do something!

PETER is flustered, shaking almost.

JEFF: Pete, what's wrong with you? Do summat!

DAD: I am doin' summat. Haven't you noticed?

JEFF: It'll burn the house down.

DAD: I don't care. I don't care! I can't catch, I can't bowl, or do nothing, absolutely nothing. If this is you helping, and she's your goddamn little princess, well, just

**Spike Second Draft**

stick it. (He grabs the bat and chucks it down, takes off his jumper and chucks it down, takes his wallet out of his pocket and chucks it down.) You sort it out!

He storms out.

RUBY: Dad, come back! DAD!

JEFF: What the hell's he doing?

JEFF runs back into the house, takes the pan off the stove.

JEFF: Open the windows!

They flap towels and their hands to clear the smoke. A lot of confusion and instructions from Grandad Jeff. At last, the smoke alarm stops. Jeff flops down into a chair. Ruby, not sure what has happened, runs out on to the jetty to look for her dad, then – confused - off up to her tree house.

## Two

(Time, continuous)

RUBY is in her tree house. Her back is turned and she is rocking to and fro.

JEFF picks up the jumper and the bat and the wallet. He realises that this might be more than just a 'stomp off' by his son. He goes out to call Ruby in.

Granddad Jeff: Ruby. Come down, love.

No reply.

Granddad Jeff: Want a drink or something? How 'bout a nice custard cream?

No reply.

Granddad Jeff: Or hot chocolate?...with a flake in it an all?

Ruby: We haven't got any.

Granddad Jeff: C'mon, love; tell granddad all about it.

RUBY: Go away!

Granddad Jeff: Please sweetheart. You'll catch your death up there.

RUBY pulls some blankets over her.

Granddad Jeff: Oh, darlin'.... He'll be back in a minute and we'll all... have a game of Monopoly or something. And we'll let your Dad land on Mayfair and Park Lane eh, and stick on an hotel. That'll cheer him up.

We'll all take some deep breaths, say sorry, and it'll all be OK.

Ruby looks over her shoulder. Is she about to thaw? But Jeff has run out of options, and is starting to feel the cold himself.

Jeff: Come on now, You're up a tree, your dad's off his, and I'm left standing here like a plonker.

Ruby: Go after him.

Granddad Jeff thinks about this. Pause.

Granddad Jeff: Stop being so flamin' stupid, and do as you're told.

Ruby: Leave me alone!—I'm not coming out!

**Spike Second Draft**

Granddad Jeff: Well, if that's the way you want it! Catch pneumonia for all I care, blow ya!

He walks back to the house, then turns and shouts:

But I'm not going anywhere until we've sorted this out.

No response from Ruby.

Granddad Jeff goes in. He looks at the burnt pan, and chucks it in the bin. He looks for something to eat, but the cupboards are pretty empty. He finds a Weetabix at the bottom of a packet, but it's stale. He finds a jar of pickled onions and a jar of Jam. He puts the jam on the pickled onions and takes a bite.

RUBY: (from outside) Granddad are you still there.

GRANDDAD: (With a small smile; she's come round.) I think so. Yes, love, I'm here. Are you going to come out now? I can't have you going bonkers on me an' all.

RUBY: (Coming in) He's not bonkers, he's just got a lot on his plate at the moment.

Granddad Jeff: (Looking at his own plate.) I'm glad somebody has. There's thirty quid in his wallet, why's there no grub in the house?

RUBY: He doesn't like shopping, you know going out and stuff.

Granddad Jeff: When I was in the war and they were torpedoing us and it was getting a bit tough we didn't all chuck the bat down, take off our jumpers and run away. If you ask me, there's a lot of people in this world a damn sight worse off than-

RUBY: Leave him alone!

She runs off, nearly crying.

GRANDDAD: Flippin' 'eck!

And don't worry about granddad, he'll carry his own case to his room, OK?

He takes his case and goes upstairs (off) to unpack.

## Three.

(Time: continuous)

Ruby is in a heap in her tree house. She gets up, looks out with her binoculars, but sees nothing no-one.

She swings down to the ground.

She goes to the house, but decides definitely not to go in.

She goes down to the jetty and looks out to the sea.

She has never felt so alone.

RUBY: (Not shouting) You pig. You pig. Pig! Pig! Pig!!

From somewhere comes a shuffling noise, a grunting noise, a loud squealing noise. Half on all fours and with huge animal energy, Spike bursts on to the decking. He faces Ruby, eyeball to eyeball... then he transforms in an instant from pig into cat, winding himself round her legs.

RUBY: (Stroking him as he purrs) Spike. Where have you been?

SPIKE: Purrrrrrrr! Rubee! Rubeeeee!

He sniffs her, strokes her. There is something animal, comforting going on.

She breathes out a sigh, of relief maybe. He copies her.

She shrugs; he copies her.

She tilts her head on one side. He copies her.

This copying/play continues. Eventually she says:

RUBY: Finished?

SPIKE: No, just starting. (in a gentle whisper, kindly) You got noise in head, me come make it quiet, quiet, quiet.

Suddenly he barks hugely and howls like a wild dog. She is startled, and laughs. He goes back to an enormous pig grunt

SPIKE: (Leaping on to high ground) Squeal! Squeal! Squeal, piggy squeal!

RUBY: I'm on.

She chases him. (Dialogue to be improvised.) It is frenetic and fun, then they come to a stop looking out front. All the troubles with Dad and Granddad seem to have been pushed away.

SPIKE: What do you see?

RUBY: I see... the sea. Brrrr icy.

**Spike Second Draft**

He holds her hand. He breathes in the smell of the sea

SPIKE: It's like fish and chips with lots of salt on – but without the fish. Or the chips.  
(He looks around; he's so happy to be alive) Wood! (he bites the jetty.)  
Spit on me.

RUBY: No.

SPIKE: Spit!

She does so.

SPIKE: Well good.

He reaches under the jetty, and scrapes something off and pulls it out on his hand.

Slimy stuff.

He rubs it on himself, delighted.

Look, a shark.

She looks away, and he kisses her cheek, then runs off

You're on.

She chases him. They both whoop like Indians. Jeff appears with a torch, and in his pyjamas.

JEFF: Who's out there? What the blummin' 'ell's going on?

RUBY: (Standing as a wall in front of Spike, so Granddad won't see him) It's me. Only me.

JEFF: You coming in?

RUBY: Not yet.

JEFF: What's all that racket?

RUBY: Nothing.  
'Night.

JEFF: You should be in here, asleep.

Pause. He goes back in, knowing she's not going to obey and he can't make her.

SPIKE: What do you want for your birthday?

RUBY: It's not my birthday.

**Spike Second Draft**

SPIKE: Could be. Grown-ups lie. Make up any date and tell you that. They choose a day that's convenient for them. You know, like when the sales are on.

RUBY: So presents are cheaper.

SPIKE: Or when the charity shops are fullest of second-hand cards.

RUBY: Or when they're at work so they don't have to take you anywhere. Or when you've got exams.

SPIKE: Or when it's too cold for a picnic or anything. Or a day when your mates can't come.

RUBY: Or a day when they're not there.

(Pause)

SPIKE: What do you want?

RUBY: I want-

He stops her saying it.

BOTH: A plane!

They go on a plane ride. It is huge fun. (improvised, including:)

RUBY: Faster, faster!

Higher, higher!

Through the clouds...

To the land of cotton wool.

SPIKE: Ladies and gentlemen this is Captain Spike. Fasten your safety belts because we're heading for turbulence.

The plane rolls and lurches. Ruby falls out of the plane, and into Spike's arms, as if he's just dipped her in a dance.

Spike: Madame. May I have this dance?

Ruby: Oui, Monsieur.

They salsa.

RUBY: Have you been practising?

**Spike Second Draft**

SPIKE: I might have.

He sings to her, a beautiful song, and as she falls asleep...

SPIKE: All OK now, little one.

She falls asleep in his arms. He lays her down....

He goes off singing a song about morning.

## Four.

Next Morning.

(Granddad is laying breakfast down on the kitchen table. He bangs a plate with a spoon.)

Granddad: Breakfast!

(Granddad lays a place for both himself and Ruby.)

Ruby: Coming!

Ruby: (Enters) She sees the wallet on the table, and the two places set.) Is dad here?

Granddad: Listen sweetheart, sit down why don't you. (She does so) It's probably nothing, but your dad didn't come home.

Ruby: He's been gone all night?  
Normally he just goes and sulks on the jetty.

Granddad: I've been up all night. I've looked, no sign of him. (Putting Pete's phone on the table) And he didn't take his phone either.

RUBY: (edgy, cutting him off) Put a bowl out for him. He'll be back in a minute.

Granddad; (Putting the third bowl out) Maybe he... lost his way a little. Probably needs a bit of space. We all did get a bit hot-headed last night didn't we? Things were probably said which shouldn't have been - I'm not mentioning any names.

Ruby: Not just me.

Granddad: Listen love, your dads' not here. And anyway, I'm your granddad. That's what I'm here for. To look after you.

Ruby: I'm not a baby.

Granddad: And your dad, too. Maybe it's a little more serious this time, pet. Sometimes in the heat of the moment people feel the need to get away from it all and clear their heads.

Ruby is clearly troubled by all this. Granddad back-pedals a bit.

Granddad: ... And I can guarantee that is precisely what your father will be doing right now. Now how about... (he brings over two jars) a pickle with jam on it? (He smirks with a grin.)

Ruby: You're disgusting granddad.

Granddad: That's what they tell me. What about Corn Flakes? (he turns the box upside down – it's empty.)

**Spike Second Draft**

RUBY: No thanks.

Granddad: The cupboard's pretty bare. (He pulls out some old bread) It'll have to be toast with penicillin on it.

RUBY: I'm not hungry.

Granddad; By heck, I've never met such a fussy eater in all my life.

(She stands up and walks towards the window and stairs out. She is thoughtful.)

Ruby: He will come back.

Granddad: Well I hope so. (with certainty) No, he will come. He will. Today. Definitely.

(Ruby sees the wallet again on the table.)

Ruby: If he hasn't got his wallet and his phone, then he'll have to come back to get it, won't he. He'll come back and we'll finish off the cricket match. And he'll get us a special kite to fly and stuff like we do every summer holiday.

Granddad: Well I don't think that's going to be your dad's main priority, sweetheart.

Ruby: But that's what me and dad always do.

Granddad: Well for the time being we'll have to think of new things to do and then when your dad's been found we can start afresh together.

Ruby: Once he's been found? We don't have to find him cause he's coming home.

Granddad: Of course he is love. One way or another, I'll make sure of that, don't you worry. Even if it means-

Ruby: What? What?

Granddad: That we might have to get someone to help your dad.

Ruby: He's not mad or nothing.

Granddad; Did I say he was?

Ruby: You're thinking it.

Granddad; So you're a mind-reader are you? As well as mad yourself: I heard you, last night talking to yourself in your tree house. Get it, love: your dad's gone off, absent without leave. We'll need to phone the police or social services or somebody.

It all goes quiet. Ruby thinks.

**Spike Second Draft**

Ruby: Don't tell anyone.

Granddad: Not yet, but if worst comes to worst-

Ruby: Which it won't. If you tell them he's gone off they'll... (She thinks through the consequences. Serious stuff)

Granddad: Eh, steady on, lass, you've got me.

Ruby: I bet this is perfect for you. As soon as you get the chance to put dad down again you go for it.

Granddad: Eh, now that's out of order-

Ruby: I don't want to be on my own. I want Dad.

Granddad: I know. But it's you and me for now, and I'll be needing your help because he's ran off and we've this huge mess to sort out. So you get the table cleared and the washing off the line, and I'll do some serious planning and thinking. And to sort it out I need you to be a little more grown up.

Ruby: There wouldn't have been anything to sort out if you hadn't come. You get here, slag him off, and he went. And now you want to get social workers in and everything. You've just made things worse. Go away. Me and dad are fine on our own.

(Ruby rushes out.)

## Five.

Granddad clears the stuff off the table; breakfast hasn't gone well at all. He picks up Pete's jumper, looks at it, then goes up to the window and stares out.

Spike creeps in the room behind him and watches.

A tear comes to Granddad Jeff's eye. He wipes it clear then goes back to the table and sits in the chair with his head in his hands until he dozes off, exhausted by everything. As he falls asleep Spike comes over to him. He is moved by the old man's tears. He wipes a tear from Jeff's face, tastes its saltiness, puts it on his own face, and feels it run down his cheek. In sympathy with Jeff, he puts his head on the table and sleeps.

Ruby comes in with the washing. She shakes Spike awake. She sits on the table in front of Granddad Jeff.

RUBY: (As she puts a peg on Jeff's beard) This is for calling him a wooden man made of smoke.

(As she puts on another) This is for laughing at him when he couldn't catch.

(As she puts on another) This is for coming in like a fat king and expecting tea on the table., and not drinkin' out of chipped cups.

(As she puts on another) This is for... I dunno what, just coming here and frightening him away.

Spike: (Recognising the injustice of her words) But his face, look at it. There was drops of sea on it.

RUBY: Spike, get a life. He's gonna phone the cops isn't he?

Granddad Jeff starts to wake up. Ruby and Spike scarper. Jeff realises he's got pegs on his beard.

Granddad: Ruby? Ruby! What the hell's you playing at?! No wonder your damn dad did a runner! Wait till I get my hands on you, girl.

He chucks the pegs down and stomps off.

Ruby: Let's leg it. I'll sneak back in, get dad's wallet and we'll run away. Get away from this dead-hole.

Spike: (Ironic) Good idea, he runs away from you, then you run away from him. So Spike and Granddad Jeff stay here by the jetty and live happily ever after.

RUBY: You'd have to come with me.

**Spike Second Draft**

Spike: Would I? And never see the sun fall in the sea? Or dive with dolphins? Or climb the cliffs to the smugglers hut?

RUBY is interested in this, the idea of another adventure, another escape.

Spike: Race you to the top. Come on!

He springs off and up, then turns to wait for her. She follows, catching hold of his hand. They scramble and leap around the whole place like climbers on a climbing wall.

Spike: That's it! Now, your left foot – good – and your right. Now use your legs to push up the rock face. Reach out. Here! That's it.

Ruby: (giggling) Where are we going?

Spike: To touch the clouds at the top of the world.

Ruby: Hey wait up!

Spike: Keep going. When we get there, you can see the horizon, it's so peaceful so calm. The best bit? You can see the edge of the world – and you can see for miles, but no one can see you. And don't forget, don't look down.

Ruby looks down, and wobbles.

Spike: Hurry up before the wind picks up. Come on. Just past this ledge, and on to Sticky Rocks.

Ruby: Why's they called Sticky rocks?

Spike: Cos this is where you get stuck.

Ruby: Spike...

Spike: Wha?

Ruby: I'm stuck. Help me.

Spike: Can't. I'm stuck too. (They are like flies on flypaper, but then he starts to slip) I'm slipping. Rube! You gotta help me.

She struggles, takes a big breath. Suddenly she is in the position of rescuer.

Ruby: Don't let go. Hold on with your fingers. Just got to get round here...

She leaps onto a flat shelf of rock and reaches out and grabs Spike to stop him falling.

Ruby: I've got you.

He smiles a wicked smile: maybe he wasn't slipping after all.

Ruby: (Climbing ahead now) Come on Spike! Keep up!

Spike: Nearly there – woah!

He falls. Instinctively she yells:

**Spike Second Draft**

Ruby: DAD!

But Spike is rolling around on the floor rubbing his bum

Spike: Ow

She jumps down. They laugh. The adventure is over.

Enter Granddad Jeff with a basket and a bag. He has a shopping list, so doesn't look up. Anyway, he is not interested in looking at the girl.

JEFF: I'm off to get some food in. See you later. Don't suppose you want to come.

She doesn't reply.

JEFF: Thought not.

He goes.

Ruby goes to follow then changes her mind. She watches him go. She goes back to the tree house, confused. Spike follows her, in step, mirroring, without talking. They lie on the floor, covered in blankets.

Stillness.

Time passes.

## Six

The morning.

Granddad Jeff bangs a frying-pan with a spoon.

Grandad Jeff:      Come and get it! Come and get it!

Ruby wakes up. She pulls back the other blanket; Spike has gone.

She gets up and goes over for breakfast.

GRANDDAD is laying the table with great gusto. He's decided to heal the rift. He comes to the table with two bowls.

RUBY:              He's still not back then.

GRANDDAD shakes his head

JEFF:              I asked around at the shops (She gives him an accusing look) – I didn't say anything - but no sign of him.

Pause.

JEFF:              But I got you, and you got me. And the shop had just what my little girl needs to cheer her up.

With pazzazz he produces a box of Coco-Pops from behind his back.

RUBY:              I'm not a baby anymore, Granddad.

JEFF:              What then? Bacon, eggs, mushies, black pudding, tommy-r-toes, full English yeah?

RUBY:              No thanks.

JEFF:              Pickled onion with jam on?

RUBY:              Why hasn't he been in touch?

JEFF:              I've told you. Somebody's got to look for him.

Ruby:              No.

JEFF:              We'll give him 24 hours, then we've gotta do something.

RUBY:              'We'?

**Spike Second Draft**

JEFF: You're not a baby anymore are you?

She pours a bowl of Coco Pops.

RUBY: I haven't ate anything since dad went.

JEFF: Go on love get em down y' neck.

What are they like?

RUBY: Dried chocolate ants eggs.

JEFF: Mmmm.

RUBY: What are you having?

JEFF: (Producing his breakfast) Pork pie faces and crackers. Now where's the jam?

Jeff turns and looks for the jam. SPIKE clammers in through the window.

SPIKE: Morning Rubes, what's that?

RUBY: Pork pie faces and crackers.

JEFF: That's what I said.

SPIKE has got his head bent over to one side.

RUBY: What's wrong with your neck?

JEFF: (Still looking for the jam) Nothing. Why?

SPIKE: It's got a crick, I slept bad.

She takes SPIKE's head and straightens it.

SPIKE: Yeoww!

But she has fixed him. She laughs.

JEFF: That's better, girl.  
I'm sorry, I've been...shouting and stuff. Only I didn't plan on coming here, your dad baling out, you sleeping up in that tree like a bird.  
If we have to call in, you know, help, tell me you won't still be up in the crows nest will you.

RUBY: Cos they'll definitely stick me in care.

JEFF: Or in an aviary.

They smile at each other – the first since Pete left.

JEFF: And we don't want that do we, my little pigeon?

RUBY: Thanks, Ganddad.

JEFF; What for?

RUBY: For being Granddad Jeff.

JEFF: We'll get through this, girl, if we stick together. And if you stop talking to yourself up there till midnight. Can't have you going off your rocker an' all.

RUBY: I'm not. And neither was he.

JEFF: All right. But he's gone off and you're living in a tree. I'm only trying to understand. Then I can get my head round it and stay here and I'll look after you and you'll look after me

RUBY: No social services.

JEFF: Not if we can get on... we won't need 'em.

RUBY: And you won't phone the coppers?

JEFF: If you're straight with me. I'm on your side.

RUBY: (She looks at Spike, then back to Jeff. She decides to tell him) Last night, the talking... I've got a friend.

JEFF: (Relieved) Why didn't you say? What's her name?

RUBY: Spike. His name's Spike.

JEFF: Oh. A boy. From a nearby farm or something? Well you did say you were growing up. And I'm pretty open-minded for an old un. Not a hippy is he, with a name like that?

RUBY and SPIKE: No.

JEFF: Good. Cos I might be open minded but I'm not having my granddaughter messing about with some lad with long hair and jeans with rips in the back side.

RUBY: He's not like that.

JEFF: Good. What time did he go home?

RUBY: He didn't. He sort of stayed

**Spike Second Draft**

JEFF: Sort of?! What do you mean sort of?! Where did he sleep then?

RUBY: With me, under a blanket.

Spike knows this is the wrong thing to say.

JEFF: (This is too much. He can keep the lid on the bottle no more) For heaven's sake, you're just a kid, and you're sleeping with ... (he can't say it) ... We've got a family crisis going on and you're... I won't have it. Your dad's not here so it's my word that goes, so you can tell your hippy boyfriend to hop it or I'll have a word with his father. Understand?

He bangs his fist on the table – it's a copy of what happened in the first scene with Dad. ?

JEFF: No more, no flippin' more. I'm the captain of this ship. That's it. End of story.

RUBY: It's not a story. And it's not a ship. My dad's gone and you're... useless! Old and useless.

Ruby rushes out .

Granddad: (Shouting after her.) Am I? Am I? At least I don't abandon ship every time a storm blows.

He picks up his pork pie and eats – for comfort and out of anger and frustration. Ruby and Granddad Jeff are at complete loggerheads.

Spike, who has been very still, watches and watches. He sees the trouble in granddad but can't do anything about it. He calls to Ruby;

SPIKE: Ruby! Ruby!

Granddad Jeff doesn't hear at all. Outside on the jetty Ruby covers her ears. Spike goes to Jeff, unseen, and strokes him, holds him, till the worst of the anger is gone.

Then Spike – right in front of Jeff, but still unseen – sits on the table and pretends to fish with a rod. Spike sings 'Summertime' or some gentle fishing song. Then Jeff, who has been thinking about Ruby and everything then has an idea. He picks up the fishing rod and tackle and a fishing net in the corner and goes out to the jetty.

He gets the rod sorted out and starts fishing while...

Spike leaves the house. Ruby is waiting for him. She trips him up and holds a bit of driftwood to his throat like a sword.

Ruby; Whose side are you on?

Spike: Eh?

**Spike Second Draft**

Ruby: Whose friend are you? (before Spike can answer) Mine. So just watch it or you can naff off. I'll just stop thinking about you. Geddit.

She goes.

Spike, unsure, goes to a place on the edge of things.

## Seven.

Grandad is sitting on the jetty, fishing.

Ruby comes up to him and watches, still holding the sword.

Ruby: Caught anything?

Jeff: [With a glance at Ruby, passing her the net] Sort of.

Ruby: Oh.

I haven't been, you know, what you think, with a boy.

Jeff: You said you had. Don't go back on it now. Or you'd be lying wouldn't you?.

Ruby: [calling off] Spike!

Spike: [On very fast] Scooby-dooby doo!

Ruby: He's here.

Jeff: I'll tan his backside if he is.

Ruby: Here. On the jetty with me and you. Right next to you.

Jeff: Oh, yeah?

Spike jumps in front of Jeff.

Ruby: Now he's in front of you.

Jeff: [ironic] Is he?

Ruby: Now he's...

Spike does something unrepeatable.

Jeff; What?

Ruby: [stopping Spike] Oh nothing.

Spike: [To Jeff] I think you need new glasses.... And an' hearing aid.

Ruby: He's my mate, and he's all right. Dad couldn't see him either, but sometimes he'd put out a bowl for him at breakfast. Once when I was little I didn't want to go to school, but Spike said he'd come with me, so we went, me and dad, in the car. We got as far as the cliff road and I'd forgotten Spike.

**Spike Second Draft**

Spike: [shooting Ruby a dirty look] I was still eating breakfast.

Ruby: So dad turned the car round and we came back and got him.

Jeff: Oh, I get it now. He's that sort of friend.

Ruby: And he likes you.

Jeff: I'm glad somebody does.

Jeff is relieved that Ruby's friend is (imaginary and) not a local farm boy.

Spike Come on, Granddad. Or the fish'll all go to bed.

Ruby points at the rod, and Granddad pulls it out the water.

Jeff: Blighters've nicked my bait.

Ruby sits down next to him, puts down the sword and picks up the net.

Ruby: What were you using?

Jeff: The best of course: pork pie.

Ruby: Me and dad used to sit here.

Jeff: And now it's us two.

Spike coughs.

Ruby: Us three.

Jeff: Course. [Looking to the side where Spike isn't] Is he alright?

Ruby: He's this side.

Jeff: [As Spike nips round the other side] Course he is.

Ruby: He's fine.

Spike lies down on his front and points a fish out to Ruby, who sways her net in that direction.

**Spike Second Draft**

Jeff: I'm surprised you're not mucking around in that hut up on the cliffs. Couldn't keep me out of there when I was young.

Ruby: We like it here, it's good for being smugglers.

Spike: And pirates!

He picks up the sword and stands in a fighting stance, then starts waving it around – cutting it a bit close to Ruby.

Ruby: Spike! Careful.

Spike: Sorry.

He lays it carefully on the ground, pointing towards the cliffs.

Ruby: Dad told me there were sea-monsters living under the jetty.

Jeff: Too right. And bloomin' vicious those blighters can be, too. When I was a lad one damn near got my leg.

Spike: And mine. [He tucks his leg up and hops about]

Jeff: We were coming in from a four-month voyage. Weather was awful; rain pounding on the deck, fog so thick we couldn't see our own noses. And the wind! Stronger'n I've ever seen it. Swept us right onto the rocks. Crash! And we were pitched over the side. The waves were fifty foot high, and they tossed me from one to another like a rag doll.

Ruby: Is this true? How did you survive?

Jeff: Eventually I was chucked into this bay. Just over there.

Spike: What about the sea monster?

Ruby: Yeah, what about the sea monster?

Jeff: I were coming to that. I was about to climb out and wait for the storm to pass when I felt something brush past my leg.

Spike looks alarmed, and glances around as if trying to see what's around him.

**Spike Second Draft**

Spike: What did you do?

Jeff: First rule with sea monsters is, don't move.

Spike stops moving.

Jeff: It thinks you're dead then, see, and swims away.

Ruby and Spike: Oh.

Jeff: Only this one was too clever for that. It swam a little way off, and just when I thought I was safe and tried to scramble ashore, it shot back through the water and wrapped itself around my leg.

Spike is imagining a monster has his leg.

Ruby: Did it squeeze like a boa constrictor?

Jeff: It did, girl, and that's why I've had a bad knee ever since. It tried to pull me under, but it didn't stand a chance, I'm far too tough. Instead, the hungry beast reared out of the water; opened its mouth wide, ready to plunge its fangs into me.

Spike is transfixed, as if the monster is above him.

Ruby: How did you escape?

Jeff: Er, lightning. Flashed out the sky, and got him right between the eyes.

Spike is 'hit' by lightening and is sent sprawling. He lies, playing dead. Granddad still can't see him.

Jeff: So you'd better hope the monsters around here aren't feeling too hungry, eh?

Ruby: [with a laugh] Yeah.

Jeff: [looking out at his float] Not that the fish seem to be very hungry today, either...[he sighs]

There is a brief silence, in which Ruby swishes her net around in the water. Spike looks at the water mistrustfully.

Ruby: I think Spike's gone off fishing, granddad.

Jeff: Well, what would he rather do?

Ruby looks at Spike.

## Spike Second Draft

Jeff: How about...

Jeff and Spike: Hide and seek.

Ruby: [laughs] Alright. You two hide, I'm on.

She stands up, brushing herself off, closes her eyes and begins to count.

Ruby: 1...2...3...4...

Spike immediately runs towards the rock pools, where he crouches behind a rock. Granddad, after looking around for an idea, heads in the same direction and crouches behind the rock with Spike.

Spike looks at Granddad next to him, and stands up.

Spike: [irritated] Of all the rocks you could've hid behind... she'll find us if we share this one.

He quickly heads for another rock, diving behind it just as Ruby says:

Ruby: Coming, Ready or not!

Ruby opens her eyes and looks around her and begins to search. In this game, Spike gets forgotten for a while – as Ruby and granddad Jeff are engrossed in each other's company. (To be improvised).

Maybe Granddad is hard to find, then pretends to be a rock, or a tree or something, or says he's wearing an invisible suit. They are just having a silly time – but Spike is ignored.

Eventually, Spike is found too, but he feels a bit of a spare part.

Jeff: [standing up] Sorry. I don't think hiding's my strong point.

Ruby: [to Granddad] You count with me then. Spike you hide.

Spike stands there, not moving.

Ruby: Go on, get lost.

[She covers her eyes] 1...2...

**Spike Second Draft**

Grandad stands next to Ruby. She holds his hand.

Ruby and Jeff:               3...4...5...

Spike stands for a moment, looking at the two of them, together, happy. He suddenly turns and sprints away.

Spike:                         I'm history! Waaaargh!

He cartwheels off.

Ruby and Jeff:               6...7...8...9...10!

Ruby:                         Coming, ready or not!

Jeff:                         (Doubtful) So we look for him, do we?

Ruby:                         Course.

Jeff casts around for an idea.

Jeff:                         [pointing] How about over there?

Ruby:                         OK!

They go a-searching.

Ruby:                         Can you see him?

Jeff:                         [peering around some dunes] No, I – I don't think so. Can you?

Ruby:                         No. He's not here. Maybe he went into the caves.

She runs off towards the 'caves', and Jeff lumbers behind her. Ruby gets onto her hands and knees and starts crawling.

Ruby:                         Watch out, the ceiling gets really low in here.

Jeff promptly follows suit, although he can't get as low as Ruby.

Jeff:                         Is that him?

Ruby:                         Where?

Jeff: Straight ahead. Behind the rock pool.

Ruby: No, that's just a stalagmite. Oh! Look out for the sea-slime. [She shakes her hand as if to get it off, then gets to her feet, sighing] I can't see him.

Jeff: [painfully – standing up stiffly] Maybe...he's hiding...in the sea.

Ruby: That's it!

She runs back to the shore and gazes out to sea, as Jeff hobbles behind her.

Ruby: [as Jeff reaches her] No sign.

Jeff: [breathing hard] Isn't that his head, right there?

Ruby: That's just a buoy, Grandad.

Jeff: Oh, well, he'll turn up. I need to get some washing done. [Ruby doesn't move] And there's a storm blowing in.

Ruby: [Calling] Game over. You win. You've gotta come back now.

Silence.

Jeff: Rain's coming. He'll come back when he gets wet.

Ruby nods reluctantly, and picks up her fishing net. Grandad picks up his rod and tackle box, and the two of them start walking back to the house.

Ruby: Are you going to make a feast with all the fish we caught?

Jeff: Well, I can probably catch some fish fingers, from the bottom of the freezer. How's that?

Ruby nods, distractedly, and looks back over her shoulder for Spike.

Jeff: And we'll even save some for Spike.

Grandad goes into the house to put the gear away and make tea. Ruby looks around for Spike, including up the tree house, but he's nowhere to be found. The storm is getting up. She puts on her thick black waterproof coat.

Ruby: I've got to find him.



## Eight.

[Beach. Violent storm. RUBY, looking desperate. Shouting, she's barely heard over the storm.]

RUBY: Are you out there? In the sea?

RUBY: [looks up] Or are you up there?

RUBY: [almost knocked over by a gust of wind, and screaming with rage] What's your PROBLEM?

RUBY: [exasperatedly] I'm HERE...

[caught between emotions, she laughs, almost hysterically]

RUBY: You're not the only one who can change, you know...you can't hide forever...YOU HEAR ME? I'LL FIND YOU!

[RUBY runs back to the house. JEFF is sitting in the kitchen, asleep. RUBY looks everywhere. Dejected, she shakes JEFF awake.]

JEFF: Wh...huh...oh, hi, Rubes. You alright? Get the kettle on, would you?

RUBY: Granddad...

JEFF: And get me a pork pie an' all, if you would...

[JEFF rises, but RUBY tugs his hand]

RUBY: I still can't find him.

JEFF: Well, I've got to hand it to him – he IS good at hide-and-seek.

RUBY: I've looked everywhere...

[JEFF breaks free of her arm; goes to walk away]

JEFF: Don't fret, love. He's probably just having a pint down the Imaginary Arms with his mates.

RUBY: The imaginary Ar-? Oh, don't be stupid, this is serious –

JEFF: Ruby, we've been on the beach, we've had a story and a mess about; it's grown-up time now! [muttering] An'I'll get me own ruddy pork pie, an' all...

**Spike Second Draft**

RUBY: He's my best friend. He must be out there, somewhere. You've gotta help me find him, you've got to –

JEFF: It's freezin' outside! I'm not goin' out there, with me bad knee, gallavantin' along the beach, lookin' for some lad in a pirates bandana -

RUBY: (insulted) He wears a hat, not a bandana!

JEFF: Well, whatever. Go to bed...

RUBY: NO! I'll find him by myself, then. Blow ya!

[she goes to walk out]

JEFF: It's blowin' a gale. Don't you dare walk out that door.

[she lingers]

JEFF: I'll count to three, and if you're not here, by my side, madam, by the time I'm done...one...

RUBY: Granddad...

JEFF: Two...

RUBY: No...

JEFF: [snarling] Two and a half...

RUBY: I need him! I'm going...

[RUBY exits. JEFF stands, dumbstruck]

JEFF: Aaarrgh...damn and blast! Rubes, wait for me!

[RUBY saunters back in]

RUBY: Thank you.

[JEFF gets his coat and shoes on]

RUBY: What about your bad knee...?

JEFF: Bad knee?! I've fought off sea-monsters, girl! Come on...Let's go find our friend.

[they leave]



## Nine

(SUNDAY NIGHT. GRANDDAD AND RUBY ARE ON THE BEACH. Time, continuous)

(RUBY HUNTS AROUND. SHE FINDS SOMETHING. GRANDDAD IS LOOKING AT THE STORM WITH DISDAIN.)

GRANDDAD: Oh this storm... We'll never find anyone in this!

Ruby finds a battered, washed-up shoe.

RUBY: It's one of Spike's shoes! He's left it for us. It's a clue.

(THEY HUNT AROUND AGAIN. GRANDDAD PICKS UP A CLOTHES PEG, LOOKS AT IT AND IT CHUCKS IT AWAY.)

RUBY: Wait! Don't throw it away.

GRANDDAD: It's only an old clothes peg, love.

RUBY: But it's important.

GRANDDAD: Eh? Why?

RUBY: It just is.

GRANDDAD: If I were Spike I'd be back home now, all toasty by the fire...Why don't we just nip back and... (she cuts him a filthy look) No, maybe not. Now what about this, here? It's his bandana.

RUBY: No, it's a piece of seaweed... And he wears a hat!

GRANDDAD: Oh come on now girl...

(RUBY DARTS OFF AND PICKS UP A BIT OF DRIFTWOOD.)

RUBY: Spike's pirate sword.

GRANDDAD: It's just a bit of driftwood.

RUBY: It's his sword! It was pointing towards the cliffs.

GRANDDAD: Enough of this...

(RUBY IS STARING UP AT THE CLIFFS.)

GRANDDAD: What now?

**Spike Second Draft**

RUBY: There's smoke coming from the hut! Spike's sending us a signal. There's never been smoke before.

GRANDDAD: Oh it'll just be a drunk or something...

(RUBY RUSHES OFF. GRANDDAD LOOKS AT THE HIGH CLIFFS AHEAD OF HIM AND LIMPS OFF AFTER HER.)

GRANDDAD: Hang on, Ruby. Wait for me.

RUBY: (Giving him instructions) Get a grip on that bit. That's it! Now, your left foot – good – and your right. Now just use your legs to push off from the rock. But don't lean out, Don't lean out!

Grandad: Where are we going?

Ruby: To touch the clouds at the top of the world of course. No. reach out, that's it. Watch this bit. Yeah, put your feet where mine go.

Grandad; Ruby...

RUBY: Oh I forget, don't look down.

Grandad looks down – and goes all wobbly.

RUBY: Come on, before the wind picks up. Come on just past this ledge.

GRANDAD: How much further? (Falling) Ruby! I'm slipping – quick!

SHE RUSHES TO HIS RESCUE.

Ruby: I've got you. But you're too heavy. I can't hold you. Help!

Grandad; Hold me, hold me!

Ruby: I can't! I-

GRANDAD SLIPS, RUBY'S HEART LEAPS TO HER THROAT.

LUCKILY GRANDDAD MANAGES TO FIND HIS HANDS AGAIN, AND ALTHOUGH BASHING HIS LEG, DOESN'T FALL TO HIS DEATH.

GRANDDAD PAUSES FOR BREATH. HE RUBS HIS KNEE.

RUBY: Are you all right?

GRANDDAD: Just about... Oh my... I thought I were a gonna for sure...

RUBY: Don't say that!

GRANDDAD'S BREATHING IS HEAVY AND STRAINED.

RUBY: Come on, he's up there; I know it.

**Spike Second Draft**

GRANDDAD shakes his head.

GRANDDAD: No more Ruby... we've played this silly game long enough.

RUBY: He's up there all alone! He might be hurt!

GRANDDAD: We'll all be hurt in a minute, lass. You'll slip, land on me; I'll lose my grip; then that's the end of us...

RUBY: He'll be freezing. He's on his own. I bet he thinks we don't care about him.

GRANDDAD: I know you do... and I care about you, but...

Ruby looks at Granddad, frustrated. Silently, she turns away and continues to climb.

GRANDDAD: Ruby...! Ruby come back! (A moment of realisation. He realizes how important Spike is – and unconditional love is - ) OK if you've lost him, and you need him.

Ruby: I do.

GRANDDAD: Then we'll find him. (Calling) Spike! Spike, where are you, lad? Spike!

Ruby struggles on to the top. She stops for breath, not taking her eyes off the hut.

RUBY RUSHES FORWARDS. SPIKE'S HAT IS ON THE GROUND OUTSIDE THE HUT DOOR.

RUBY: It's his hat. Told you.

SHE TURNS AND REMEMBERS GRANDDAD ISN'T THERE. SHE IS FINALLY SCARED.

RUBY TAKES THE HAT IN HER HANDS, STUFFS IT INTO HER POCKET THEN SLOWLY GOES INTO THE HUT WHERE SHE FINDS A FIGURE WRAPPED HEAD TO TOE IN COATS AND BLANKETS. THE FIGURE DOESN'T MOVE.

RUBY: Oh no... no...

SLOWLY RUBY APPROACHES THE FIGURE. SHE REACHES OUT FOR IT- SUDDENLY IT MOVES. SHE JUMPS BACK, AND SHRIEKS.

THE FIGURE ROLLS OVER, THE FIGURE REVEALS ITSELF. IT IS PETER. HE IS VERY SHAKEN. RUBY GRABS HIM AND HUGS HIM.

RUBY: Dad! You're alive!

PETER: Ruby...

RUBY LOOKS HER FATHER UP AND DOWN, HE'S NOT LOOKING GOOD. SHE HUGS HIM. HE HUGS HER. BUT HE IS VERY POORLY.

RUBY: Granddad! Come quick! Help! Please help!

**Spike Second Draft**

GRANDDAD WHOM HAS RELUCTANTLY CLIMBED THE MOUNTAIN, RUSHES IN.

GRANDDAD: Ruby get back!

RUBY MOVES. SEEING HIS SON, GRANDDAD RUSHES FORWARD.

GRANDDAD: Peter! By heck son... You're a state!

RUBY: We found you, Dad!

GRANDDAD: Just look at you. What a damn foolish thing to do!

(ALL PETER CAN SAY IS 'COLD, SO COLD'. HE REPEATS IT OVER AND OVER)

GRANDDAD: Such a mess! He's shaking, like ice you are.

PETER: Cold... cold...

RUBY: You look so ill... if you hadn't lit the fire, you'd be dead.

PETER: Too cold. I didn't light a fire. Couldn't. No matches. Nothing. Too cold. Too cold.

GRANDDAD: We'll have to get him back. What were you thinking lad? Damn fool!

RUBY: Don't shout at him, Granddad.

GRANDDAD: I'm not, Rubes, it's me, I'm the idiot who drove him away.

PETER: Sorry, I'm sorry...

RUBY: But we found you, didn't we. Spike brought us here, didn't he grand' didn't he?

GRANDDAD: Lean on me, son. We'll go inland, down the cliff road, find a phone, get help.

RUBY: Yes.

GRANDDAD: I've got you, come on.

PETER: Dad, I... (He can't say it)

GRANDDAD: Come on now... Let's get you home.

## Ten.

(Following straight on.)

THE STORM PASSES. RUBY STANDS ON THE JETTY LOOKING AT THE HORIZON.

RUBY TAKES SPIKE'S HAT OUT OF HER POCKET.

SHE HOLDS IT OUT TO THE SEA AND WHISPERS THE WORD "THANK YOU".

SHE SMILES BROADLY AND PULLS THE HAT ON HER OWN HEAD.

SHE RUSHES OFF WHOOPING – AS SHE HAD DONE WITH SPIKE EARLIER.

Le fin