



Stories for the Train

Tales on the go

0:8:00

A Young Boy's Tall Tale

Author: David Rowlandson

We were both left dangling high above the River Liffey, sixty seven metres above the water below.

Hold on. You must be asking how that happened. Well, let me start from the beginning.

Dad's office had moved into the tallest building on Dublin's Capital Dock. It had a restaurant on the roof top and Dad said it had the best views over the whole of the city. As children of office employees we were welcome to visit. That's how my twin sister, Niamh and me ended up there in the first place. By the way, my name's Conor. Yes, only one 'n'. We're thirteen years old, and nearly didn't make our fourteenth year. Mum would've been so disappointed if we hadn't been confirmed.

Mum dropped us off outside the building as she was going shopping in St. Stephen's Green and we really didn't want to walk around shops. Reception checked us in and we reached the roof top by a really speedy lift. After gorging ourselves on cakes and 7Up we went over to the rails around the rooftop to get a bird's eye view of the city. Most of the office crowd, having finished their lunch had gone and a few of the staff were clearing the tables, folding up some

of the white tablecloths and well, pretty much leaving us with free reign of the top of the building.

Did I say we we're thirteen? We are, but we're probably the smallest in our class at school. We take after Dad, He's such a short a\$\$e. I don't expect I'm allowed to write the full word here, but you'll know what I mean. Our height gave us a problem up there. We couldn't quite get the full view as the rails were too high. Niamh suggested that I give her a bunk up so she could have a better view. We are good pals so I obliged quite readily. With both arms over the rail Niamh began looking around.

She suddenly shouted down to me. "Conor. There's a bird stuck on the ledge below. Poor thing it looks like it has a damaged wing."

"What do you want me to do?" was my smart Alek answer.

Niamh didn't wait for an answer. Impulsively she swung a leg over the rail, followed by her other and dropped onto the ledge below. I couldn't see what was going on so I pulled one of the chairs over to the rail and standing on it peered below. Niamh was edging her way towards the bird. Below her the traffic looked like coloured ants moving back and forth to their nest.

"Be careful" I encouraged, but I had no faith in what I said. The ledge was only about thirty centimetres wide and except for the bottom of the rail there was little to hold on to.

As Niamh got closer to the injured bird it shifted, nervously. I watched as she leant down to pick it up. Suddenly it began to flap and took off, right into the face of Niamh. The bird flew off to land further down the ledge, but Niamh had lost her footing at the suddenness of the flight and slipped off the edge of the ledge, only missing falling the sixty seven metres below as the hood of her

hoodie had caught on one of the bolts holding the rail structure upright.

OMG. “Don’t move Niamh. You might rip your hood and that wouldn’t be good,” was all I could utter.

“Don’t just gawp you idiot. Help me,” was the shouted response from my twin.

My mind went into a spin. What could I do? I wasn’t Spiderman. I couldn’t climb down walls with suckers on my hands. That thought gave me an idea. I looked around the empty restaurant for some rope. No! Nothing like that was there. I considered using forks and digging into the brickwork like I have seen mountain climbers do, but those forks looked a little bit thin for that.

I jumped down from the chair and ran around the top of the building like Wile E Coyote on speed. I looked to see if there was a fire hose I could pull out and swing down to my sister’s rescue. I didn’t think the Fire Extinguisher they had would enable me to do that.

Ping! I had a brainwave. All those tablecloths. I thought if I tied some together I could climb down and rescue Niamh. I pulled several of them off tables that hadn’t yet been cleared. Have you ever tied tablecloths together? No! Neither had I. I just hoped my knots wouldn’t come undone.

“What are you doing up there Conor? Have you gone the loo or something? Have you forgotten I’m dangling in mid-air?”

Niamh sounded somewhat frustrated. “Stay Cool. I’m working on a rescue,” I shouted back, less than confident in my ability. By then I had three cloths tied together. I climbed back onto the chair

by the rail. "Ok Niamh. I am going to tie this tablecloth to the rail and climb down. Don't move."

"Don't move! Where do you think I'm gonna go? The cinema? Just hurry up."

With fumbling fingers I tied one end of a tablecloth to the rail above where Niamh was located and threw the length of the tied tablecloths over the rail.

"Careful! Shouted Niamh. "I moved out of the way and felt my hood rip."

Panicking, I climbed on to the top of the rail. Looking down made me dizzy. I could see a crowd of people gathering below, looking up. I expect they were waiting for us both to go splat on the pavement below. I gave a tug on the tied cloth. It felt ok. "I'm coming Niamh. Hold on." Inside my head I was wondering if the tablecloths would hold the weight of us both.

Gingerly I climbed down the length of the first tablecloth, but was still too high to grab hold of my sister. Holding my breath and hoping the knot would hold I moved down on to the second length. It was then I realised that I had tied the end of the tablecloths too far over on the rail for me to be able to easily reach Niamh. There was nothing I could do about it. I could hear the crowd below, as the traffic had been halted and people were 'ooing' and 'aghing.'

I worked out if I climbed on to the third length and swung towards my sibling I could grab hold of her, but then I'd have to work out how we could both climb up again. I kept telling myself it would all work out in the end, I'd seen it done in plenty of movies, so down I went. I was now parallel with Niamh. "See if you can grab hold of me if I swing towards you," I instructed. I began to swing and below

me I could hear people getting more anxious. I was getting a decent swing going and finally reached Niamh. “Now!” I shouted.

Just in time too, as I heard her hood rip just as she grabbed me around the waist, holding on so tight she winded me. Phew, I thought. Part one over and done with.

It was then I felt the knot on the third tablecloth begin to slip. No sooner had I felt it than we were falling. Without really thinking, I shoved one end of the cloth into Niamh’s hand and hauled up the other into my hand. I shouted as we fell. “Let go of me and hold out the ends wide in both hands.” She looked at me as though I was mad, but she did it. With a jolt our descent slowed down and the tablecloth, acting as a parachute ballooned above us and we gently floated down to a cheering, clapping crowd below, landing safely on the pavement.

As the crowd dispersed we saw Mum coming towards us. “Hi Kids. What have you been up to?”

It was Niamh who got in first. “Oh! You know. Just hangin’ about mostly.”