

eyes and I tried with all my heart to *forget my Mother's name*. But, in my sleep, I said it again. So the next night they took me to the barn. And they stuffed cloth in my mouth. And, they all stood around me while I slept. I tried to stay awake. I tried not to think about her, or her face, or her voice. *I tried to pretend my Mother was dead*. But in the middle of the night, they woke me up and tied my hands to a post. They told me I'd said her name again in my sleep. And I swore I'd never do it again—but they said it was too late. That I would have to be taught a lesson. *(Pause)* They took off my shirt. *(Pause)* One of the men took off his belt. *(Pause)* And he started hitting me. *(Pause...)* And I didn't cry. Because I could hear my Mother's voice, saying: *You'll be home soon, my beautiful boy*. *(Pause, softly)* You'll be home soon.

(Darin stares at Joyce. She says nothing. He walks back to the wheelbarrow. Lifts it.)

Joyce They say you know a secret trail.

(Darin looks back at her...looks at her for another moment, then pushes the wheelbarrow past...)

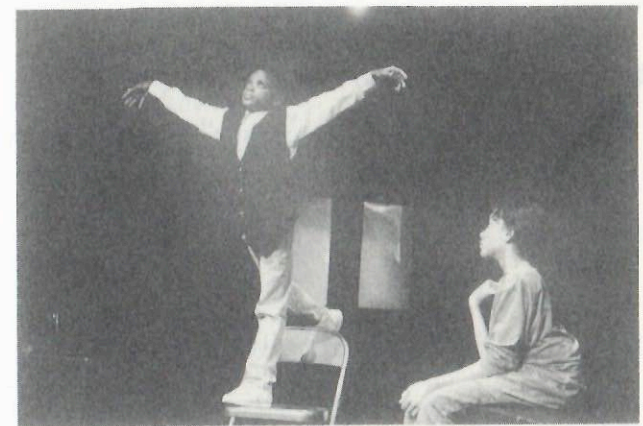
THE RISE AND RISE OF DANIEL ROCKET

BY PETER PARNELL

The play *The Rise and Rise of Daniel Rocket* is about a 12-year old boy named Daniel Rocket who discovers that he can fly! Because of his special gift, however, the other children are jealous of him, and he does not fit in at school. Daniel has one best friend named Richard—and a crush on a girl, named Alice, who is in his class at school. All three characters are in the sixth grade.

When the play opens, Daniel is intent on building a mechanical pair of wings for his school science project. He plans on flying as part of his assignment for the science class. But Richard has never seen Daniel actually fly, and he is extremely worried that when Daniel finally *does* try his wings in front of the class that he will crash and hurt himself. What Richard *doesn't* know is that Daniel has been able to fly all his life, ever since he was a baby, and that he doesn't even need the wings. They are just for show.

In the following scene, Richard, concerned for Daniel's safety, tries to persuade him not to attempt to fly for the science project. He goes over to Daniel's house and meets him in the basement where Daniel is building his wings.



Scene 1
2 Boys
Daniel and Richard (both age 12)

Basement. Work area with photographs, diagrams, models, etc. Daniel is work finishing huge wing. Knock at cellar door.

Daniel Who is it?
Richard It's me. Daedalus.
Daniel No. Daedalus was last week.
Richard Icarus, then.
Daniel Icarus?
Richard Son of Daedalus.
Daniel I know who Icarus was.
Richard Well...
Daniel But, he's not the password.
Richard Come on, Snood, open up!
Daniel Though he *could* be the password...
Richard Amelia Earhart.
Daniel Oh, well, I suppose she'll do. *(Daniel unlocks cellar door. Richard descends.)*
Richard Who was it?
Daniel Who?
Richard Who was the password?
Daniel Otto von Lilienthal.
Richard Oh, yeah, I was just reading about him.



Daniel In that book you're carrying?
Richard Yes.
Daniel *Great Air Disasters.* Richard! You're taking an active interest in my work!
Richard Yes, well. I found him pretty interesting, too.
Daniel Well, how do you like it?
Richard It looks great.
Daniel Will you help me try it on?
Richard You shouldn't before you've finished it.
Daniel I can't wait. Will you help me?
Richard If you want me to. *(Richard helps affix wings to Daniel's shoulders.)* Where does this go?
Daniel Try under my arm.
Richard Should I wrap it around?
Daniel Try under it.
Richard It *is* under it.
Daniel It's over it.
Richard Okay, I'll try under it.
Daniel Wrap it around.
Richard I've already wrapped it around.
Daniel Wrap it around again.
Richard Okay. Okay.

Daniel Are you ready?

Richard Wait, wait. I'm almost through. *(Richard finishes tying Daniel to wings. Stands back. Daniel stands on top of workbench. Flaps his wings slowly. Up and down. Up and down.)* How does it feel?

Daniel It feels incredible. How does it look?

Richard It looks incredible.

Daniel It can't look as incredible as it feels.

Richard You look like a bird.

Daniel I feel like a bird.

Richard That's incredible, Snood.

Daniel I do! *(Daniel flaps. Richard laughs. Daniel jumps down and "flies" around the basement.)*

Richard Careful, Snood! You'll break things!

Daniel I don't care! I don't care!

Richard Your diagrams! Your plans!

Daniel I don't care! I'm finished!

Richard You're *almost* finished!

Daniel I'm finished! I'm finished!

Richard Watch the paint! Watch the model!

Daniel I'm finished! I'm through! *(Daniel slips. Falls in heap on the floor.)*

Richard Snood! Are you alright?

Daniel Fine, I'm fine.



Richard You've got to be careful. You're not yet used to the weight of these things.

Daniel But I've been practicing all these weeks.

Richard But it's still not the same.

Daniel No, it's not.

Richard Snood.

Daniel Yes, Richard?

Richard I know you've been working hard.

Daniel Yes.

Richard And I know you know what you're doing.

Daniel Mmn.

Richard But, are you sure, are you completely sure, that it's going to fly?

Daniel I *told* you it would, Richard...

Richard Yes, I know, but...

Daniel I told you to trust me...

Richard Well, of course I trust you...

Daniel I'm going to need your help getting out there, and if you're not going to trust me...

Richard It's just that in this book I've been reading...

Daniel *Great Air Disasters.*

Richard Yes...

Daniel Which you've so suddenly taken an interest in—

Richard It says that these wings, these—ornithopters—were really the most primitive of fliers. No matter how strong the pilot, no matter how wide the wing span, no matter how good the design. People have tried for centuries—

Daniel Da Vinci.

Richard Yes.

Daniel Lilienthal.

Richard Yes. Exactly.

Daniel Wright. Stehling. Von Hauser. Chanute. Langley. Herring.

Richard Yes, Snood. Yes.

Daniel I know about them, Richard! I know about them all!

Richard And none of them succeeded. None of their gliders ever worked. Did they, Snood? *(Pause)* You know that all along, didn't you?

Daniel Einstein, Richard.

Richard Einstein?

Daniel Where Da Vinci went wrong was in watching the flight of birds. He didn't know about the space/time continuum.

Richard The space/time continuum?

Daniel Men can't just build wings—they have to build webs of gravity.

Richard Webs of gravity?



Daniel There's a star in space, Richard, that, when I fly, I'll be moving towards. *(Pause)* I'll show you, Richard.

Richard You'll *show* me?

Daniel Tomorrow night. If you trust me. If you promise to keep it a secret. Do you promise?

Richard I...okay. I promise, Snood. *(Pause)*

Daniel Meet me at Hatch's Cliff tomorrow night.

Richard Snood! Hatch's Cliff?!

Daniel Just trust me, Richard. Trust me. Just meet me there at seven-thirty. *(Richard nods. Turns to leave.)* Oh, and Richard?

Richard Yes.

Daniel When you come, bring that stupid girl with you.

Richard Girl? Which stupid girl?

Daniel You know. The one in Mrs. Rice's class.

Richard Judy?

Daniel No.

Richard Claudia?

Daniel Uh-uh.

Richard Penny?

Daniel No, the other one.

Richard You mean, Alice?

Daniel Yes. That stupid girl. Bring her along.

Richard You want me to bring Alice with me?

Daniel Yes.

Richard Snood, Alice?

Daniel Bring her along, too. *(Pause. Richard realizes.)*

Richard Snood!

Daniel *Just bring her along, okay?!*

Richard Okay. Okay.

Daniel Thanks, Richard.

Richard Goodnight, Snood.

Daniel Yeah, Richard. Sleep well.

Richard You, too. *(Richard exits. Daniel watches after him.)*

Scene 2

● 1 Girl and 1 Boy

Daniel and Alice (both age 12)

Just before this next scene, Daniel has been seen flying in public for the first time, and now all the other children are aware of his special abilities. Afterwards, Alice returns home by herself, feeling a little lonely, and thinking a lot about Daniel. Much to her surprise, when she enters her room she finds Daniel there waiting for her in the darkness! He has flown all the way from Hatch's cliff through her bedroom window, just so he can ask her a very special question.

(...Alice enters bedroom. Stands in darkness. Goes to close window.)

Daniel Don't close it, Alice. I won't be able to get out.
(Alice cries out.)

Alice Who's there?



Daniel It's me, Alice.

Alice How did you get in?

Daniel How do you think?

Alice I don't know.

Daniel Oh, Alice. You do. I flew straight through your window, into your bedroom. As if it was something I've always dreamed of. *(Pause)* Which, of course, it is, Alice. You know that.

Alice Yes. I do. *(Pause)*

Daniel I won't accept less than what I want, Alice.

Alice That's good, Daniel.

Daniel I've decided that.

Alice That's good if it's good for you. *(Pause)* They were looking all over for you. The boys.

Daniel Yes.

Alice They've given up now, I think.

Daniel Then I can go home.

Alice You can.

Daniel Yes.

Alice But I'd stop off at Richard's and tell him you're alright. He was very worried about you.

Daniel Was he?

Alice Yes.

Daniel Poor Richard. He worries about me a lot. Too

much, I think. Because I...I can pretty well take care of myself, Alice.

Alice I know that.

Daniel I think you're beginning to. *(Pause)*

Alice So, you can fly.

Daniel Yes.

Alice You can actually fly.

Daniel Mmn.

Alice You built wings and with them you've flown *(Pause)* Where...where are your wings, Daniel?

Daniel I left them down by the rushes.

Alice The rushes?

Daniel Yes.

Alice But, then—how...

Daniel A secret, Alice. There's something else nobody knows. And I'm going to tell *you*. *(Pause)* The truth is, I can fly without the wings, Alice. I can fly all by myself. It's something I've...always been able to do... *(Pause)*

Alice I thought so.

Daniel Yes.

Alice I just thought so.

Daniel Mmn.

Alice I remember that time I walked in on you, standing on top of Mrs. Rice's desk...



Daniel Waving my arms.

Alice Waving your arms.

Daniel Up and down.

Alice Up and down, yes. I saw this look, in your eyes, when you turned towards me. It was then, I guess, that I knew. *(Pause)* When did you first realize...

Daniel A long time ago.

Alice When you were very little?

Daniel First grade, Alice.

Alice First grade?!

Daniel It's true.

Alice You were lying in bed...

Daniel I was in my pajamas.

Alice And you just floated?

Daniel Well, I felt like I wanted to fly.

Alice You just felt like it?

Daniel I *wanted* to. A lot.

Alice So, you stood on the bedpost.

Daniel And I lifted up my arms.

Alice And then what happened?

Daniel I flew. *(Pause)* It's been even scarier these times.

Alice These times?

Daniel Scarier than the first time, I mean.

Alice The first time?

Daniel The very first time. When we were in kindergarten I floated once, around the sandbox. I was glad I didn't go very high. Besides, Mrs. Klinger saw me.

Alice Mrs. Klinger?

Daniel She had her heart attack the very next day.

Alice You're kidding, Snood.

Daniel No.

Alice That's terrible.

Daniel Yes.

Alice And you blamed yourself.

Daniel All these years.

Alice That's *terrible*, Snood.

Daniel For a long time I didn't want to fly. But I want to fly now. *(Pause)* It's just something I've had locked inside me, Alice. And now that I've let it out, there's no telling what wonderful things I can do...

Alice Besides, with wings you can control wherever you're going.

Daniel Yes. With wings I can go wherever I want to. *(Pause)* It's a nice night out, isn't it?

Alice Yes.

Daniel With the stars. And the moon. A nice time for a little flight, don't you think?

Alice I suppose.



Daniel Would you care to join me?

Alice Are you serious?

Daniel I could lift you up. On my back. I'm strong enough now. I've been practicing.

Alice Have you?

Daniel So I could take you with me.

Alice Where are you going?

Daniel I don't know. Away. Far away.

Alice When?

Daniel Soon. Very soon. *(Pause)*

Alice We can't do that, Snood.

Daniel Why not?

Alice Because. We're only twelve years old.

Daniel Yes.

Alice We've got another twenty years in us at least.

Daniel At *least* another twenty years.

Alice Yes.

Daniel Well, yes. I guess. That's true. *(Pause. Daniel lowers his head. Sobs. Alice is surprised. Moves to him. Touches his head.)* It's going to be horrible...being with the other kids.

Alice Yes.

Daniel They already hate me.

Alice They don't hate you.

Daniel They do! And now that they've seen me fly... I can't stay here, Alice. I've got to go, I think. Don't you? *(Pause. Alice embraces Daniel.)*

Alice It will be alright, Daniel. Everything will be alright.

Daniel You sure you wouldn't like a ride?

Alice Not tonight, Snood.

Daniel But soon?

Alice Soon.

Daniel Soon! Alice! Soon! We'll both be flying, Alice! You and me! We'll both live in the sky! *(Pause)* If I do decide to go away, Alice, I'll come back for you someday.

Alice You will?

Daniel Yes. Will you come with me?

Alice I...Yes, Daniel.

Daniel Do you promise?

Alice I...I'll think about it.

Daniel Good.

Alice We...we have a whole lifetime ahead of us, Daniel.

Daniel Yes, I guess. We do. And now, I'm going to show you what I've wanted to show you. All these years. The special secret between you and me, Alice. The secret of what I can *really* do. *(Pause. Daniel closes his eyes. Lifts up his arms. Utters low sound. Almost a hum. He floats to the ceiling. He flies around the*



room. Alice watches, spellbound. Daniel flies out bedroom window. Alice rushes after him. Looks out window. Waves. Dog heard barking, off.)