
ENGLISH

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Paper 2 Fiction

April 2019

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1 hour plus 10 minutes' reading time



This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

Text for Section A, an extract from 'Just in Case' by Meg Rosoff

The extract is about David Case and his one-year-old brother, Charlie.

David Case's baby brother had recently learned to walk but he wasn't what you would call an expert. He toddled past his brother to the large open window of the older brother's room. There, with great effort, he pulled himself on to the window sill, scrunched up like a caterpillar, pushed into a crouch and stood, teetering precariously, his gaze fixed solemnly on the church tower a quarter-mile away.

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He tipped forward slightly towards the void, just as a large black bird swooped past. It paused and turned an intelligent red eye to meet the child's.

'Why not fly?' suggested the bird, and the boy's eyes widened in delight.

Seduced by the fact that a bird had spoken to him, the boy threw out his arms and thought, Yes! Fly!

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David did not hear his brother think 'fly'. Something else made him look up. A voice. A finger on his shoulder. The brush of lips against his ear.

In the instant of looking up, David took the measure of the situation, shouted '*Charlie!*' and lunged across the room. He grabbed the child by the cape of his Batman pyjamas, wrapped his arms around him with enough force to flatten his ribs, and sank to the floor, squashing the boy's face into the safe hollow beneath his chin.

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Charlie squeaked with outrage, but David barely heard. Panting, he unpinned him, gripping the child at arm's length.

'What were you doing?' He was shouting. 'What on earth did you think you were doing?'

Well, said Charlie, I was bored just playing with my toys and you weren't paying attention to me so I thought I would get a better look at the world. I climbed up on the window which wasn't easy and once I managed to do that I felt strange and happy with nothing but sky all around me and all of a sudden a bird flew past and looked at me and said I could fly and a bird hasn't ever talked to me before and I figured a bird would know what he was talking about when it came to flying so I thought he must be right.

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The little boy explained all this slowly and carefully, so as not to be misunderstood.

'Bir-dee fly,' were the words which came out of his mouth.

David turned away, heart pounding. It was useless trying to communicate with a one-year-old, David thought. If I had been two seconds slower, he'd be dead. He pulled his brother close, tucking him in against his body, pressed his lips to the child's face.

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What if ...?

He became enmired in what if. The weight of it wrapped itself around his ankles and dragged him under.

A year earlier, David's father had woken him with a shout.

'David, your mother's home! Aren't you interested in seeing the baby?'

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Not really, David thought, burying his head in his pillow. I know what a baby looks like.

But then they were in his room, grinning and making inane noises in the direction of a small, serene-looking creature with jet-black eyes. David sat up with a groan and peered at his new brother. Ok, seen him, he thought.

David was about to go back to sleep when he noticed the new baby gazing at him with a peculiar expression of calm authority.

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I'm Charlie, said the new baby's eyes, as clearly as if he had spoken the words out loud. Who are you?

David stared.

His brother repeated the question slowly, politely. *Who, exactly, are you?*

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David frowned.

The baby inclined his head. Such a simple question, he thought. But if his brother knew the answer, he gave no sign.

This disturbed Charlie. Over the next few months, he tried approaching his parents for answers, but his father was always at work and his mother seemed strangely ill-informed on the subject of her older son. And when she caught Charlie staring at David, she merely thought, How sweet. They're bonding.

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But they weren't bonding. Charlie was comparing the David he knew with the Davids he saw displayed around the house in family pictures. The younger Davids looked cheerful and serene; they held books or bikes or ice creams and gazed at the camera with expressions of trust. The younger Davids kicked balls, swung from trees, blew out candles on birthday cakes. They had clear edges and cloudless eyes.

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But the David that Charlie knew now was watery and fizzy with nerves.

Charlie had spent a good deal of his short life worrying about his older brother. Now he paused in the middle of playing to gather his thoughts. He saw that his recent attempt to fly had been a mistake. It seemed to have nudged his brother past some invisible tipping point, and this filled him with remorse.

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