

## SILVER ELECTRA

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### Cast

Soprano      Bindi Jonson, *Milly's daughter, Noah's mother, publisher, 40*  
Amelia Earhart, *pilot, later married to Putnam\**  
Graffiti friend 1  
Radio voice

Mezzo        Milly, *Bindi's mother, 80*  
Conference delegate  
Neta Snook, *Amelia's flying teacher*  
Radio reporter  
Mrs McCallion  
Engineer  
Commander Baker, *on board the Itasca*

Tenor        Noah Jonson, *Bindi's son*  
Plane 2  
George Putnam, *Publisher, later Amelia's husband*  
Newspaper seller  
Danny McCallion, *farmhand*  
Policeman

Baritone     Darrel, *Bindi's husband, Noah's stepfather*  
Doctor  
Puppeteer  
Edwin Earhart, *Amelia's father*  
Fred Noonan, *Navigator*  
Bush pilot  
Commander Thompson, *on board the Itasca*  
Graffiti friend 2

### Ensemble

Piano and MD

Violin

Viola

Percussion

**ACT 1**

SCENE 1	On the Beach, 1977	Milly and Bindi
SCENE 2	At home, Brisbane	Darrel, Noah, Milly, Bindi
SCENE 3	Downtown, Brisbane	Noah
SCENE 4	On the roof and doctor's visit	Milly, Noah, Darrel, Bindi, Doctor
SCENE 5	Conference	Bindi, Delegate
SCENE 6	Home, Amelia's childhood	Darrel, Milly, Noah
SCENE 7	Into the outback	Noah

**ACT 2**

SCENE 8	Long Beach, California, 1921	Amelia, Neta Snook, Puppeteer
SCENE 9	George Putman's office, 1928	Amelia, Putnam
SCENE 10	Transatlantic flight, 1928	News seller, Amelia, Reporter, Edwin
SCENE 11	Lecture Tour, 1933	Amelia, Putnam, Danny
SCENE 12	Preparations for final flight, 1937	Putnam, Amelia, Noonan, Engineer
SCENE 13	On board the Itasca, 1937	Thompson and Baker, Putnam

**ACT 3**

SCENE 14	At home, Brisbane, 1977	Bindi, Milly, Darrel
SCENE 15	Tangalooma Airfield	Milly, Bush pilot
SCENE 16	The Outback	Milly, Noah
SCENE 17	At home, Brisbane	Milly, Noah, Bindi, Darrel

**SCENE 1**  
**On the Beach**  
Milly and Bindi

*July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1977, near Brisbane, Australia. It's beautiful but chilly as it's winter. Despite the cold Bindi and her mum Milly are barefoot. Their dog Ziggy is with them. Bindi throws a ball for the dog. There are objects among the audience, which Milly picks up.*

*The sound of the surf. Milly laughs as it swirls over her feet*

Bindi           **Remember when we were little?**  
**We'd come here like this in the winter,**  
**Swim though the water was cold.**  
**You said we should feel the strength of the waves,**  
**Make the sea and the sky our friend.**

Milly           *Looking up.* **Is that aeroplane on fire?**

Bindi           **No. They're just contrails.**  
**Mum, what do we do about Noah?**

Milly           **Contrails.**

Bindi           **The school said he was dreaming in class.**

Milly           **Contrails.**  
**Light sails.**

Bindi           **Cloud streams made of vapour and gas.**

Milly           **Contrails.**  
**Light sails.**  
**White tails.**

Bindi           **Yes, of course!**  
**Smoke trails from an aircraft's exhaust.**

**But what about Noah?**  
**Mum, will you listen?**  
**He's not been the same**  
**Since his Dad died and Darrel arrived.**  
**They never stop shouting and fighting.**  
**He's obsessed with his painting and drawing.**  
**Ziggy, Ziggy? Ziggy!**

*Meanwhile Milly has been looking at the sand and picks up a jar. She looks closely at it and slowly reads the label.*

Milly           **Freckles. I never liked them.**

*She tries to open it but can't. Tries again. Gives it to Bindi to open.*

Bindi **Stupid old jar, it's been in the sea for years.**

*Bindi is about to throw it away when Milly grabs it back from her.*

**Mum, leave it!** *Milly holds onto it possessively.*

**Let's go, look Ziggy's up by the car.**

*Milly looks up at the sky again.*

Milly **Contrails.  
Light sails.  
White tails.  
Smoke trails.** *(The 'contrails' refrain could be sung by everyone).*

## SCENE 2

### At home, Brisbane

Darrel, Noah, Milly, Bindi

*There is a shelf of some kind with a pile of dirty objects fetched from the shore. Noah's drawing. Darrel is preparing dinner and is chopping vegetables. Darrel looks up at Noah.*

Darrel **Mate, do us favour, put that thing down.**

Noah **It's not a thing, 'mate',  
It's a Rotring pen: it belonged to my dad.**

Darrel **Don't you have homework?  
And what's with the graffiti?  
No wonder you're sleepy,  
Wandering the streets in the night,  
Can of paint in your hand:  
How many nights in jail?**

Noah **One.**

Darrel **And one should be none!**

*Darrel stops what he's doing and takes the pen from Noah, and holds up the drawing, which is incredibly fine and detailed, like a tattoo of an eagle in flight, with smoke coming off its wings.*

Darrel **Noah's Tattoo Parlour!  
Is that what you want?  
You could be an architect,**

**Or a publisher like your Mum.  
Something proper, not a doodler.  
Get it together mate.**

Noah **Oh great! Advice from my mum's latest date.**

*There's a stand off. Noah really can't be bothered and is not up for a fight. He puts on the radio. Darrel gives up. There is a news item about Earhart.*

Radio voice **40 years ago today the pilot Amelia Earhart  
Neared the end of her round the world flight  
And took off in her silver Electra plane.**  
*Darrel goes to turn it off. Noah stops him.*

Noah **I'm listening. Mate! It's the story from Mum's book.  
Not that you care.**

Radio voice **Bound for tiny Howland Island,  
3,000 miles from Brisbane, Australia,  
She was never seen or heard of again.**

**The facts of the crash have often been told,  
But could she be alive and well?  
If she had lived she would be 80 years old,  
Imagine the tales she could tell.**

*Milly and Bindi return. Noah this time turns it off.*

Milly **Contrails.**

*Milly is about to put the jar the other objects.  
Darrel goes to take it as if to throw it away.*

*But Noah takes the jar, they all look*

Noah **Doctor Berry's Freckle Ointment.  
That's an old, old jar.**

Darrel **More trash, more junk!**  
*Quietly to Bindi*  
**Isn't it time she was put in a home?**

*Milly – who doesn't hear – laughs and carefully arranges the jar on top of the other things as they sing.*

All **Contrails.  
Light sails.  
White tails.  
Smoke trails.**

*A knock at the door interrupts them. Darrel looks out the window.  
Noah springs up.*

Darrel        **The graffiti gang from Yeronga again!**

*Noah leaves*

**Look out for the trains and keep out of jail!**

*Noah returns – he’s forgotten something – there’s a tussle as he grabs  
the paint.*

**SCENE 3**  
**Downtown in Brisbane**  
Noah

*Noah spray-paints a beautiful outline (with the help of a stencil) of the  
Lockheed Electra onto a prepped piece of Perspex. 2 others in hoodies  
hold the Perspex. He finally adds the propellers, and the instruments  
make the sound of the engines.*

Instrumental/Vocalise

**SCENE 4**  
**On the roof and doctor’s visit**  
Milly, Noah, Darrel, Bindi, Doctor

*Milly is in a dressing gown on the roof, looking at the dawn. Noah  
returns and sees her and tries to coax her down.*

Milly        **Contrails**  
**Light sails...**  
**At dawn the trails look they’re flames.**

Noah        *Whispering and careful not to wake the house.*  
**Nan! Come down! Be careful!**

*Milly suddenly sees where she is. She gasps*

Milly        **Where am I?**

Noah        **You’re on the roof Milly! You should be in bed.**  
**Tell you what, we won’t tell a soul!**

Milly        **A smokescreen!**

Noah        **That’s it. Come down.**

*Milly suddenly looks closely at Noah*

Milly **You've got freckles like stars on your nose!  
Girls' faces should never have spots.  
You're a boy so you can have them.  
A good boy.**

Noah **No I'm bad, everyone says so.  
Give me your hand. Let's go to bed.  
Before I get into more trouble.**

*Milly is led off the roof.  
Suddenly Darrel is there.*

Darrel **Noah Jonson on the roof with his Nan!  
Just like Batman and Robin!  
One more step out of line mate  
You're in the back of a van mate: a police van.  
Bindi! Guess who I've found?  
That little jailbird of yours is on the roof with his nan!**

*Noah leads Milly off the roof, ignoring Darrel. Darrel leaves as if to go to work.  
Bindi is dressed and in a hurry – she has a small bag.*

Bindi **Please, will you two stop fighting?  
I'm going to be late.  
I'll be in Sydney for a week,  
The kind of conference I hate.  
Mum, you could come with me:  
Just this once? It's only a short flight.**  
*Milly shakes her head furiously*

Noah **She's afraid of flying Mum! You know that!**

Bindi **Noah, the doctor will be here in a moment.**  
*Noah has clearly forgotten.*  
**The doctor! You can go to school afterwards.  
See you next week!**  
*She kisses Milly and leaves*

*The doctor comes in – take a seat when asked. There are charts with diagrams about memory loss and early symptoms*

Doctor **How has she been?** *To Noah quietly. Milly hears.*

Milly **Nothing like a nutty fruitcake for breakfast.**  
*The doctor hears but carries on regardless*

Doctor **We want to find out about Milly's brain**

**And how well it's working.  
While I talk to Milly would you fill in this questionnaire?  
You have four options to choose from.**

*Noah reads and fills in the questionnaire as he sings to herself.*

Noah **Multiple choice?**

Doctor **That's correct. Just draw a circle around:  
Not at all, Sometimes, Frequently, Does Not Apply.**

Noah **Not at all, Sometimes, Frequently, Does Not Apply.**

Doctor **And Milly, I'm going to ask a few simple questions.  
Are you able to do your own shopping?**

*Milly thinks but doesn't respond, as if the question is a stupid one.*

Noah *To herself.* **Does she repeat herself over and over?  
Contrails. Contrails. So 'Frequently'.**

Doctor **What about current events?  
Do you know what's in the news?**

Milly **Oh yes. It was terrible so many people died.**

Doctor **Died? Where?**

Milly **Haven't you heard? The atom bomb?**

Noah *To herself.* **Does she get lost in familiar places?  
She was on the roof so that's probably 'Frequently' too.**

Doctor **You have a lot of clothes on today.  
Aren't you too warm?**

Milly **I like to be warm. Not like Hiroshima though. I wouldn't like that.**

Noah *To herself.* **Does she remember occasions?  
Well, nothing before the Second World War.  
Probably 'Does not apply'?**

Doctor **Milly, who makes the tea or the coffee?  
Is it you, your daughter, Darrel here,  
Or someone else in your house?**

Milly **Tea? Thank you, that would be nice.**

Doctor/Noah/Milly



**Sometimes your mind does a turn  
 You find yourself flying through clouds.  
 Looping the loop is fun now and then  
 But who knows what's up and what's down?**

Doctor *To Noah.*  
**Milly might have a disease that's only just been named.  
 It's called Alzheimer's Disease,  
 Would you be happy to take part in a study?**

Noah **Is there a cure?**  
*Doctor shakes his head*  
**A study? Sure.**  
*They shake hands and the doctor leaves. .*

**SCENE 5**  
**Sydney Conference**  
 Bindi, All

*Bindi has a copy of Silver Electra in her hands. She hands out flyers with details of the price and so on. We can see The Jonson Press marked as the publisher.*

Bindi **The Jonson Press is proud to announce  
 The publication of a new biography.  
 Silver Electra is not just about Amelia Earhart.  
 It is also the story of the electric pioneers  
 Who came before and after her.  
 Women who had to fight for their place in the world.  
 The book reminds us women and men are the same:  
 46 chromosomes in 23 pairs, just an x and y between them.**

Bindi/All **A life made by a chromosome,  
 A life made in an atom,  
 A life made in a different form:  
 Me first, said Eve to Adam.**

**When Amelia first flew the Atlantic,  
 Only men could touch the controls,  
 She finally crossed the pond on her own,  
 Touched down with a loop and a roll.**

**For a cause she'd be happy to die for  
 Emmeline Pankhurst spent time in gaol.  
 'All these men!' Garrett Anderson cried  
 When she saw every doctor was male.**

**Franklin saw the magical helix,**

**Crick and Watson were given the prize.  
And for her work on the shape of the virus  
She won nothing: well what a surprise!**

**When the bus came along in the South,  
Rosa Parks stayed sat on her seat.  
The driver said get up and move to the back  
She refused and he called the police.**

**A life made by a chromosome,  
A life made in an atom,  
A life made in a different form:  
Me first, said Eve to Adam.**

Delegate *Interrupting.*  
**Excuse me, Mrs Jonson?  
I looked at the book  
But there's nothing about the theory  
Earhart might have survived.**

Bindi **That's because this book deals with the facts.  
Wait for the follow up.  
*Golden Electra* will deal with all that!**

**SCENE 6  
Home, Amelia's childhood  
Darrel, Milly, Noah**

*Noah is reading Silver Electra, the Earhart biography.*

Noah reads **Amelia's childhood was in Kansas,  
And she loved sports and games.  
She was what's known as a tomboy,  
With freckles and a gap in her teeth.**

*Darrel and Milly return, take off jackets.*

Darrel **You should be in school.**

*Darrel leaves Noah and Milly to it.*

Milly **Rats, hundreds of rats,  
They spread plague,  
So you shoot them.  
Not like chickens,  
Chickens on the run,  
Traps are best for them.  
Shall I show you how to make them?  
Easy!**

*The dog starts barking madly*

**Well Mr Ferocious, what's got to you now?**

*She cuddles him.*

**Watch how I fly down that hill!**

**Boys can lie down on the sledge**

**While we're supposed to sit,**

**With our legs on one side,**

**Ladylike, ha!**

**That rollercoaster:**

**Here I go, watch out now!**

**Whoa....**

*Noah joins in the games with Milly as they re-enact some of these memories. They collapse together.*

*Darrel returns to find them on the floor.*

Noah           **Milly's having one of her moments...**

Darrel           **You're the problem round here mate.  
Every time, every single time!**

Noah           **You don't know a thing about me.**

Darrel           **You're a danger to your grandmother,  
You're a danger to the neighbourhood,  
If I were your father I'd give you a belting...**

*Noah's had enough and takes off...*

**SCENE 7**  
**Into the outback**  
Noah

*Noah's rage subsides as he goes walkabout*

Noah           **Got to go far,  
Go into the sun,  
Walk over the ancient stones.**

**Got to go deep,  
Go into the blue,  
Sit under the black gum trees.**

**Got to follow the trails,  
Go into the hills,  
And lie in their velvet shade.**

*He sees a beautiful bird.*

**A real kookaburra!**

*He starts sketching humming the same tune.*

*He stops to think.*

**Milly? What is it with Milly?**

**Now where am I...? He's lost.**

**SCENE 8**

**Long Beach, California, 1921**

Amelia, Neta Snook

*Neta hands out pamphlets advertising flights. Amelia grabs one.*

Amelia        **Are you Neta? Neta Snook?**

Neta            **You want a trip?  
Dollar a minute, minimum ten,  
That's 10 dollars to you, cash upfront.**

*Amelia pays Neta.*

**You got a name?**

Amelia        **Earhart. Amelia Earhart.  
I want to fly. Will you teach me?**

Neta            **What do you know?**

Amelia        **Nothing at all.**

Neta            **Alright, here are the basics.  
You got to know these before you sit in a plane.**

*There are models*

Neta            **Thrust versus drag,  
Weight versus lift.  
That's all there is to know.  
The birds can do it,  
The Wright brothers could do it,  
And so Jiminy cricket can you!  
But you got to have instinct,  
Feel the air on your wings,  
Have you got that?**

*Amelia is distracted*

**I said, have you got that?**

Amelia **Why yes, I think I do.**

Neta **Then it's time to take the controls Miss Earhart.**

*Amelia and Neta sit in the small plane, with Neta in front and Amelia behind. They take off. They have to sing loudly above the noise of the engines.*

**You've been flying three months.  
You're all on your own!  
You checked the fuel?**

Amelia **Mr Kinner always keeps the tanks full.**

Neta **But did you check?**

Amelia **Yup.**

Neta **But did you really, really check?**

Amelia **Alright, no I didn't.**

Neta **Well you should have!  
We're running low,  
Turn back to the field.  
NOW!  
We're going too slow,  
You're going to hit the trees!**

Amelia **What do I do?**

Neta **Pull up! Not that fast!  
Now we're in a stall...**

**Hold on....**

**It's going to be ground loop.**

**Over we go...  
I hate this bit!**

*They crash.  
Both get out.  
Amelia promptly starts to cut her hair.*

Neta **What on earth are you doing?**

Amelia **I've had my first crash so I'm a real pilot now.  
It's time to join the boys.**

Neta **You figure you're one of the boys now do you?  
Doesn't say much for all of us girl pilots.**

Amelia **Jee, I didn't mean that!**

Neta *Exasperated*  
**Do you read Miss Earhart?**

**'The air up there is very pure and fine,  
It is the same the angels breathe.'  
That's by Mark Twain.**

Amelia **'My soul is in the sky'.  
That's by William Shakespeare.**

Neta **Your soul will be in the sky soon enough  
The way you handle a plane Miss Earhart!  
That's by me. Neta Snook!**

### SCENE 9

**George Putnam's office, 1928**

Amelia, Putnam

*Amelia immediately straightens herself up as if for an interview*

Putnam **I'm Putnam. I guess you know about me.  
I publish books.  
The world in 1928 is hungry for adventure.  
I can do a lot for you Miss Earhart.  
You're a pilot – that sets you apart.  
But are you clever, are you smart?  
You want to be first to cross the ocean by plane?  
Do you think you are ready for that kind of fame?**

Amelia **Yes, sign me up. Put me at the controls.  
I'll guarantee you a victory roll!**

Putnam **Oh no. You won't be flying.  
The plane will be flown by a pro.  
You'll be just a passenger.  
The first woman to cross the Atlantic!**

Amelia **So... let me get this straight.  
You want me to sit at the back and drink coffee.**

Putnam **There'll be sandwiches as well.**

Amelia        **And the pilot? A man I guess.  
Am I supposed to serve him coffee too?**

*He nods. He goes to shake her hand. She resists.*

Amelia        **How much?**

Putnam        **Oh no, we can't pay you!  
But think of the book we'll write when you're back.  
You'll be rich and famous – I can guarantee that.**

*They shake hands on it.*

### SCENE 10

#### Transatlantic flight, 1928

Newspaper seller, Amelia, Reporter, Edwin Earhart

*We are in two places in America – Amelia on the east coast and her father on the west.*

Newspaper seller

**EARHART CROSSES THE ATLANTIC!**

*Edwin Earhart (hatted) buys a newspaper and reads the headline,  
EARHART LANDS IN WALES. HUGE CROWDS.*

*He is stopped by an NBC radio reporter with a microphone*

Reporter        **Mr Earhart, your daughter has crossed the Atlantic.  
She is the toast of London and Paris.  
You must be very proud.**

*Edwin thinks while (in another continent) Amelia signs autographs and hands out photographs of herself.*

Amelia        **No, really, it was nothing.  
It was the pilots who did all the work.**

Reporter        *To Edwin.* **Do you have any comment?**

Edwin        **The only time a lady's name should appear in print  
Is at her birth, her marriage and her funeral.  
Why she wastes her incredible brain I simply cannot explain.**

Reporter        **What about the tickertape parade in New York?  
Aren't you proud of her achievements?**

*Tickertape rains down on Amelia*

Edwin           **All she did was eat crab sandwiches and drink coffee!**

Reporter       **Is it true that Miss Earhart plans to fly the Atlantic alone?**

Edwin           **A woman fly the Atlantic? Alone? My daughter?**  
**That would be folly indeed!**  
**If she crosses the ocean alone I'll eat my hat.**  
*He laughs derisively.*

### SCENE 11

#### Lecture Tour, 1932

Amelia, Putnam, Danny McCallion, Mrs McCallion

*Amelia has an AE Clothing catalogue as well as a map.*

Putnam       **Friends, thank you for welcoming us to your beautiful town.**  
**This is my wife, the bravest woman in America,**  
**Miss Amelia Earhart, or as I like to call her, Mrs George Putnam!**

*Applause*

**Not only was she first woman to fly the Atlantic as a passenger,**  
**She is now, four years later, the first to pilot a plane alone.**

Amelia       **Ladies, I am here to tell you that the skies are yours.**  
**You might also be interested in my new brand of clothing,**  
**Available at Macy's and all good department stores.**

*Putnam can see the audience is not interested and gestures for her to change the subject.*

**You want to hear how I flew the Atlantic alone?**  
**There was only a chance I would make it to France.**

**Let me show you with the help of a young pilot.**

*The flight begins as a volunteer puts on flying helmet and goggles.*

**2 hours into the flight my altimeter failed.**

*They fly on as Amelia holds up broken altimeter.*

**Then there was a fire in the port engine.**

*They fly on as we see fire.*

**8 hours on the weather changes:**  
**Rain turns to ice, the ice bites the wings,**



**And the plane spins, it spins and spins...**

*They spin.*

**After what seems like an age  
I pulled out, and flew on into the night.  
Smelling salts kept me awake.**

*They sniff the bottle of smelling salts.*

**But land was still nowhere in sight,  
And the fuel was leaking badly now.**

*Fuel leaks.*

**Just then green in the distance,  
Fields and even some cows,  
Clearly not Paris, not even France,  
Bumping over the grass not far from a house.**

*A bumpy landing.*

*Farm labourer Danny McCallion appears*

**Where am I?**

McCallion **In Gallegher's pasture.**

Amelia **And where is that?**

McCallion **5 miles from Londonderry.**

Amelia **London, England?**

McCallion **Londonderry, Ireland.  
Have you come far?**

Amelia **From America. 4,000 miles that way.**

*Stunned silence as Danny looks.*

McCallion **Go way outta that! Would you have much rain beyont?**

*Stunned silence again as Danny looks at the plane.*

Amelia **Well, yes, quite rainy. That's my aeroplane.  
I'm very thirsty.**

McCallion **Cup of tea. Is that it?  
Mam! Go wet the tea for this young lady!**

*Mrs McCallion comes with tea and pours the two of them – Amelia and child – cups of tea.*

Mrs McC **You're that Earhart woman aren't you?**

Amelia **Why yes, I am.**

Mrs McC **I expect you will be flying around the world next!**

Amelia **That's it. That's exactly what I'm going to do!**

*Immediately into the next scene...*

## SCENE 12

### Preparations for final flight

Putnam, Amelia, Noonan, Engineer

*California. A press call. Putnam hands out cameras to a few in the audience and invites them to come and take photos.*

*There's an advertising board with a sign indicating the date – 1937 – and the flight.*

Putnam **The rumours you've heard are true.  
Miss Earhart will circle the globe,  
The first to fly the equator,  
In a brand new Lockheed Electra!  
With us the best navigator in the business:  
Torpedoed three times in the First World War:  
Mr Fred Noonan, master of maps.**

*Fred Noonan appears with navigation maps, shakes hands with Amelia and Putnam.*

Putnam **Photos for the press!**

Amelia *Quietly to Putnam.* **Wait! My freckles!**

*She powders her face. Then they pose for a photo. Flash!*

Amelia **First stop Miami!**

**How far is it from California Mr Noonan?** *To Noonan.  
She rushes off and Noonan runs to follow her with his map*

Noonan **2,343 miles. 80 degrees west. 25 north.**

Amelia **Well what are you waiting for?**

*Then leave to get in the plane. Putnam watches as Amelia tries to take off.*

**SHORT TAKE OFF AND CRASH (INSTRUMENTAL)**

*Amelia and Noonan re-appear with grease on their faces. The engineer hands them a newspaper.*

Putnam **You're not going to like this.**

*They read together*

Putnam **She lost control during take-off.**

Amelia **What!**

Putnam **She really can't handle a plane.**

Amelia **How dare they!**

Putnam **Hasn't sufficient technique.** *Amelia takes the paper*

Amelia **Is lacking a pilot's brain.**

**Is lacking a pilot's brain!!**

**Who wrote this?**

*Noonan takes the newspaper and reads*

Noonan **Major Al Williams.**

Amelia **Well he's a nobody!**

Noonan **He's a highly respected flyer and engineer.  
A leader in aircraft...**

Putnam **She said: he's a nobody!**

*They are interrupted by the arrival of the engineer*

Engineer **Fast. The repairs are finished.  
Have you checked the radios, altimeter and gauges?  
The fuel supply, flares and transmitters?  
Can you take bearings and tune the receivers?  
What's the procedure if you ditch in the sea?**  
*Amelia looks at her as if she is mad.*  
**What's the procedure if you ditch in the sea?  
What's the procedure if you...?**  
*The engineer gives up and leaves.*

*Amelia has photos in her hand.*

Amelia *To Putnam*  
**Darling, which would be best to give to the press?**  
*They choose and hold up the photo.*

*Amelia and Noonan try again*

TAKE OFF

All **The silver Electra flies off  
Into the golden sun.  
A course set for Miami,  
Twin engines rattle and hum.**

**And far below Electra  
The ships would hoot hello,  
A warning to Amelia:  
'Fly high and not too low'.**

**They dash into the evening,  
Storms are dead ahead:  
From Singapore to Darwin  
The skies are grey as lead.**

**Now Papua New Guinea,  
The hardest leg to come,  
Towards a tiny island:  
Twin engines rattle and hum.**

*As they sing Putnam pins string on a west-east world map to show the stages of the journey: Miami, Puerto Rico, Caripito, Natal, Dakar, Khartoum, Karachi, Kolkata, Rangoon, Bangkok, Singapore, Surabaya, Darwin, Papua New Guinea. He hovers over Howland Island.*

*Putnam and Amelia speak over the phone. The lines are bad.  
Noonan pours himself a whisky.*

Putnam **How are you feeling?** *Static etc*

Amelia **Tired!** Noonan's drinking.

Putnam **Where are you now?**

Amelia **Lae in New Guinea. On schedule.**

Putnam **Next stop Howland Island.**

Amelia **Two and a half thousand miles.**

Putnam **Remember. Look for the US Coast Guard Ship Itasca.  
It will guide you with plumes of black smoke.**

Amelia **Flumes of black boats?** *Noonan perks up.*

Putnam **Plumes of black smoke!**

Amelia **Tunes of black notes?**

Noonan **Plumes! Of black Smoke!**

### SCENE 13

#### On board the Itasca

Commanders Thompson and Baker, Putnam

*Night. Commanders Thompson and Baker on the Itasca are waiting for signals. Putnam waits by the phone in California. Amelia's voice is heard through a loudspeaker.*

Baker **UCGS Itasca. July 3. 1937. 0400 hours.  
20 miles out from Howland Island.  
Waiting for Earhart Electra.**

*Pause*

Loudspeaker *Faint.* **Itasca from Earhart,  
1,000 miles out. Will listen on 3,105.**

Thompson **When will you reach the island?  
Please acknowledge signals.**

*No reply, just static. Pause*

Baker **What is your position?**

Loudspeaker *Loud.* **Itasca from Earhart.  
100 miles out. Please take a bearing.**

Thompson **What is your position?**

Putnam *To imaginary friend next door.*  
**She should have landed by now.**

Loudspeaker *Loud.* **We cannot see you.  
Gas running low. Flying at 2,000 feet.**

Thompson **Look for Itasca black smoke.  
Please acknowledge signals.**

Putnam *Checking his watch.* **Enough fuel to last another half hour.**

*Pause*

Thompson **Repeat. Please acknowledge signals.  
Look for black smoke.**

Baker **Ship's log. Unanswered.**

*Pause*

Loudspeaker *Suddenly.* **Itasca from Earhart.  
No black smoke visible.**

Thompson **What is your position? How many miles out?  
Please acknowledge signals.**

Putnam **She should have landed.**

*Pause*

Baker **Unanswered.**

*Pause*

Loudspeaker *Faint and suddenly.* **We are running north and south. Low on fuel.**

Thompson **Electra, how many miles out from Howland?**

*Pause*

**What is your position?**

Putnam *Shouting into the phone.* **There must have sightings by now!**

Thompson **Repeat. What is your position?**

*Long pause*

Baker **Unanswered.**

Thompson **Time?**

Baker **09.30 hours.**

Thompson **Send this cable.**

*Baker starts to tap out Morse code. Putnam receives the message instantly and hands it to a child to read. He is momentarily speechless.*

**ELECTRA MISSING. SEARCH PROCEDURES IN PROGRESS.**

Putnam *As if to the reporters outside his house.*  
**I can only give you the facts.**

**We hope for good news.  
The plane should float,  
But we don't know for how long.  
There was a life raft on board  
Together with lifebelts and flares.  
Miss Earhart is a survivor!  
No more questions. Thank you.**

**SCENE 14**  
**At home, Brisbane**  
Bindi, Milly, Darrel

*Bindi returns from the conference. She's in a hurry.  
Milly is fairly distraught.*

Bindi           **Just give me the facts.  
How long did you say?**

Darrel           **A few days.**

Bindi           **Mum?**

*Milly thinks and holds up seven fingers*

Bindi           **A week? Have you asked Chris?  
What about Sam's?**

Darrel           **Look, I called the police.  
You know what he's like,  
He's done this before.**

Bindi           **Yes, but not for a week.  
Mum, listen, please think  
When did you see Noah last?  
What mood was he in?  
Was he upset, was he cross?**

*Milly and Darrel are speechless*

**Will someone please speak!**

Milly           *Finally*  
**I like Noah.**

Bindi           **Yes, but where is he?  
He might be lost in the bush,  
Might have broken his leg,  
Could be dying of thirst.  
Could even be worse...**

- Milly            **It was a terrible row!**
- Bindi            **What was?**
- Darrel           **It was nothing of the kind!**
- Siren. Police arrive.*
- Policeman      **So. 17 you say. Noah Jonson.**
- Bindi            **Jonson – no H.  
Brown hair. Tall for his age.  
He’s never done this before.**
- Policeman      **This isn’t his first brush with the law.  
We know all about Noah.                      *Milly leaves.*  
He’s spent a night in the cells.  
We’ve got burglars to catch,  
Drug rings to smash.  
This isn’t a crime,  
And it’s clearly a waste of our time.           *He goes to leave.***
- Bindi            *Trying to stop him leaving.*  
**Please, can’t you send up a helicopter or something?**
- She notices Milly has gone.*  
**Mum? Where’s Milly?  
Not another missing person!**

**SCENE 15**  
**Tangalooma Airfield**  
Milly, Bush pilot

*Milly is seen looking sheepish at the side of the airfield.  
There is a pilot wearing a headset in a small plane starting his engines  
and doing a final check list before taking off. He has a Cessna 150M  
Manual in his hand which he refers to. Milly watches and mouths the  
words as he sings.*

- Pilot            **Magnetos. Engage.  
Pilot. In command.  
Transponder. Standby.  
Carb heat. Cold.  
Headsets. On.**
- Milly            *Shouting above the noise.*  
**I think I am a little lost.  
Can you help me?  
I live at the Dolphin Care Home**



**And can't seem to find my way back.**

*The pilot takes off his headset so he can speak to her. He leans to her...*

Pilot

**How did you get over the fence?  
Go to the hut into the hut and ask Mick...**

*Milly hauls the pilot out of his seat, and takes his place.  
She immediately taxis off in the plane.  
The pilot is too shocked and stunned to do anything but watch*

Milly

**I can remember this.  
Flaps up.  
Trim set.  
Fuel. Good.  
Full power.  
VR! Pull back.  
Airborne!**

*The Cessna accelerates on the runway and takes off.  
We see the countryside receding as she flies*

**Contrails.  
Light sails.  
White tails.  
Smoke trails.**

**The silver Electra flies off  
Into the golden sun.  
A course set for Miami,  
Twin engines rattle and hum.**

**2,000 miles and dropping  
Towards a churning sea.  
Falling, turning, spinning.  
How could this happen to me?**

*She spots Noah.*

**There. Black smoke.  
Black smoke. I can see it.  
I can see black smoke!**

*She lands the plane.*

**SCENE 16  
The Outback  
Milly, Noah**

*On the ground Noah has been waving frantically. He's looking frightened and dishevelled. Milly gets out of the plane.*

Noah **Nan? Milly? MILLY?**

*Milly looks around and says nothing*

**Milly, how did you...?  
I thought you were frightened of flying.**

*Noah checks in the plane to see if there's another pilot.*

**Did you see the black smoke?**

*Milly nods, looks at the boy and the plane. She beckons him.*

**You really can fly?**

*She nods. They take off one last time.*

**So you are... you really are...**

Milly **Shhh! I think I might be.  
Honestly I can't remember a thing.  
Secrets. Black smoke.  
Promise you won't tell?**

Noah **Promise.**

Milly **Hat!**  
*Milly makes Noah give him his hat and sunglasses so she looks like him.*

Mil **Let's go!**

*The sound of them lifting off...*

## SCENE 17

**At home, Brisbane**

Milly, Noah, Bindi, Darrel

*They are home. Bindi is at the door as Milly and Noah return.*

Bindi **No more charges, that's very kind.  
No, it won't happen again.**

Darrel **You're the regular hero, aren't you?  
Let me get this straight.  
The pilot said he saw an old woman.**

- Noah           **He must have hit his head on the tarmac.  
I mean really. Milly fly a plane? How?**
- They all have a laugh*
- Look, I was at Martin's all week  
And heard on the radio Milly was missing.**
- Darrel         **And where did you learn to fly?**
- Noah           **Got it off computer games. Easy.  
And... And... Martin's dad is a pilot.  
He showed my one day.**
- Bindi          **So how did you find Milly?**
- Milly          **Black smoke!**
- Noah          **That's it! She lit a fire. Didn't you Nan?**
- Milly nods and pretends to fan the fire*
- Milly          **I like Noah. Noah gets the book, thumbs through to the photos.**
- Noah          **You see...**  
*Noah looks at Milly, has a think, and goes for it anyway.*
- That book you published?  
It got me interested in flying.  
If Amelia could fly why couldn't I?**
- Bindi          **We're thinking of a second.  
Golden Electra will look at her fate.  
Was she eaten by sharks?  
Did she live on an island?  
Was she picked up and brought onto shore,  
Her memory wiped out,  
Her face smashed in the crash?  
Perhaps she's alive to this day in Australia?**
- Darrel         **But that would be ridiculous.**
- Noah          **A book like that would never sell, would it Nan?  
And think of the fuss if anyone found out!**
- All             **Think of the smoke!**
- Milly          **Smoke trails!**

*Noah is still transfixed by the book*

Bindi            **What is it with the book?**  
*He tries to hide it. There's a secret look between Milly and Noah.*  
**And why the funny looks?**  
*She takes it and looks at the photo.*

Noah            **It's nothing!**

Bindi            **I get it - I look just like Amelia!**

Noah            **Just a bit!**

Milly            **Contrails.**  
**Light sails.**  
**White tails.**  
**Smoke trails.**

**Noah – we'll fly again soon, won't we?**

**END**