



KATHERINE RUNDELL

Rooftoppers

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The cello they bought was small, but still too large to play comfortably in her bedroom. Charles unstuck the skylight in the attic, and on the days on which it did not rain, Sophie climbed on to the roof and played her cello, up amongst the leaf-mould and the pigeons.

When the music went right, it drained all the itch and fret from the world and left it glowing. When she did stretch and blink and lay her bow down hours later, Sophie would feel tougher, and braver. It was, she thought, like having eaten a meal of cream and moonshine. When practice went badly, it was just a chore, like brushing her teeth. Sophie had worked out that the good and bad days divided half and half. It was worth it.

Nobody bothered her up on the rooftop. It was flat grey slate, with a stone balustrade running round the edge. The balustrade came up to Sophie's chin; people below, looking up, could see only a shock of bright hair, and a bowing elbow.