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EFUA TRAORÉ on

AISHA BUSHBY on

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THE
STUPENDOUS
SONNY

Books by Ellie Clements

The Wondrous Prune
The Stupendous Sonny

THE
STUPENDOUS
SONNY

ELLIE
CLEMENTS

BLOOMSBURY
CHILDREN'S BOOKS

LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP, UK
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain in 2023 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: PB: 978-1-5266-3837-3; eBook: 978-1-5266-3836-6;
ePDF: 978-1-5266-3835-9

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Typeset by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

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For Dylan

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CHAPTER 1

Have you ever had a dream that felt so remarkable and so real, that you woke up wondering if it really was a dream?

Well, I have!

I've had this type of dream three times now, except each dream was a little bit different from the other. The first dream was two weeks ago, the night of my twelfth birthday party. In the dream, I was lying flat on my bed when suddenly I began to float upwards. I felt completely weightless, just as I imagine it would feel to be an astronaut on the moon. I must have reached about a metre above my bed before I woke up.

I'd never had a dream like that before, yet there was something about it which made the dream feel like it had

really happened. Of course, it couldn't have, because people can't levitate, right?

I wondered if my VERY REALISTIC LEVITATING dream was caused by all the cheese sandwiches I'd eaten at my birthday party. After all, cheese is supposed to give you NIGHTMARES. Not that my dream was a nightmare. It was *splendntaculous*, which is a word I made up, only because there are no words in the dictionary that are incredible enough to describe what levitating had felt like. And anyway, the cheese I'd eaten was made out of coconuts and not dairy, which I'm allergic to.

So then I started wondering if my dream was all down to how miserable I'd been feeling after my mum had to leave my party early to catch a flight to Jordan. She's a movie make-up artist and she was off to join the shoot of the sequel to my favourite film ever, *A Mission to Mars*. It's such a cool job because she gets to make actors and actresses in films look like werewolves, zombies, aliens, you name it, plus she gets to work in different places all over the world! But this means she spends a lot of time away from home, which to me is the uncool part of Mum's job because I always miss her loads. I wasn't going to be seeing her for three whole months! So I suppose you could say I had flying on my mind, because I did think how great it

would've been to have flown off with Mum, just to avoid another sad goodbye. And of course, I would've got a nice, sunny holiday too!

So that had to be the explanation for my dream. Right?



CHAPTER 2

My second VERY REALISTIC LEVITATING dream happened six nights ago. Once again it was the middle of the night and I felt wide awake, and this time I was higher in the air, my face practically touching the ceiling.

As I shifted upright, I discovered I was able to move, and went over to my wardrobe. All the while my heart was drumming in my chest because I was ... FLYING! And even though I was shocked by it all, I felt elated because it was so amazing.

And there's more, because not only was I flying but so was half the contents of my room!

My jacket that was hung on the back of my door suddenly sprang off the hook, and it was as if an invisible

person were wearing it as it swung and swayed through the air, while the blanket that had been on my bed was flying about like a magic carpet. Some of my books and comics had come whizzing off the shelves, their pages flapping like wings, and a pair of socks I'd left on the floor raced round the room, one chasing the other as if they were playing a game of It. I had an old space rocket orbiting around me, and a small globe that had been on my desk was spinning on its axis in mid-air. And the rubbish in my waste-paper bin was floating up like sky lanterns. I can't tell you how fantastic it all was, but it was a little stressful too, if I'm being honest. I also had this weird buzzing sound in my head.

Was it me making everything move? I thought.

I called out to my dad because he needed to see this. Suddenly something struck my head. I think it was one of my flying books, or it might've been my toy rocket. The next thing I knew, I was back in my bed, Dad gently shaking me awake.

'Looks like you were having a bad dream, kiddo, but I'm here now,' he whispered.

I sat up, looking around my room, which was no different from how it usually looked and there was certainly nothing flying about. My jacket was on the back of the door, my books were on the bookshelves, and my globe and space rocket were on my desk.

Now you're probably thinking that I *had* to have been dreaming, but it had all felt very, very real.

'You were calling me in your sleep. What were you dreaming about?' asked Dad.

'I was ... flying,' I murmured slowly.

'That doesn't sound like too bad a dream. I happen to think flying dreams are the best type of dreams a person can have!' said Dad. 'They're certainly better than those dreams where all your teeth fall out,' he mumbled, rolling his lips in to do an impression of someone with no teeth, which made me giggle.

My dad is very good at doing impressions and accents. He's an actor, so he can do them easy-peasy. I like his animal impressions the best, particularly his horse and bald eagle.

'Would you like me to stay with you for a bit or do you think you'll be OK?' he asked.

'I'll be OK.'

Dad nodded. 'Well, try and get some sleep,' he said, switching off my lamp. 'Night, night, Stupendous Sonny,' he whispered.

That was my mum and dad's nickname for me – Stupendous Sonny. They've called me that ever since I was a baby because on the night I was born, my parents saw a shooting star which they reckoned meant I was a pretty special kid, one meant for greatness.

As soon as Dad wandered out, I switched my lamp back on and stayed awake, my eyes scanning the room, waiting for a book to launch up into the air or something else. But my eyes must have started to close, and I was fast asleep again.



CHAPTER 3

My most recent VERY REALISTIC LEVITATING dream was just last night, and it was even more extraordinary than the first two. This time, I was levitating above my bed again, and there was this tingly feeling in my arms and legs which was even more random. Next thing I knew, I was standing in the garden. I was shivering, because it was quite chilly and I was in my PJs. The grass was tickling the soles of my feet, and as I walked towards the house to get back inside, my arms and legs began to tingle again, and a second later I was in the kitchen. Only I hadn't gone through the back door, so I don't know how I managed to get there so fast, and bizarrely, I was holding a tub of butter. But before I had the chance to figure out what was happening, my

body started tingling again and I was in the bathroom, sitting in the bath. I got another tingly feeling, then a split second later I was waking up in my bed. When I checked the time on my alarm clock it was 2.34 a.m.

I told myself it was just another dream and tried to get back to sleep. But here's the crazy thing which brings me to today: when I woke up this morning at 7 a.m., the same time I normally wake up, and looked at my feet, they were dirty. And trust me, they didn't look like that before I went to bed. So it left me wondering if my dream was actually something else entirely. Something amazing, something *astrobulous*! Which is a word I made up to mean something better than anything in the whole galaxy!

Was it possible that I, Sonny Lawson of 22 Eden Avenue, Delmere, the most boring town on earth, had ... SUPERPOWERS?! And I should know all about superpowers, considering I'm a big fan of superhero films and comics.

I'm guessing this probably sounds impossible, and I honestly wouldn't blame you for thinking that, seeing as I'm just your ordinary, average kind of kid. In fact, I'm so ordinary and average that if there were ever an award for the Most Ordinary and Average Kid in the World, I'm sure I'd stand a good chance of winning. So even though my nickname is Stupendous Sonny, there's very little I'm

stupendous at. I've never won a competition, unlike my ten-year-old sister Ramona, who's won several writing and magazine competitions. And I can't even beat my brother Oscar, who's seven, at my favourite video game, *Star Stacks*. So far, he's collected 52,000 stars while I've only collected 38,000.

I'm pretty average in most of my subjects at school, unlike my best friend Elliot Wilkins, who's a proper brainbox. I'm not popular, nor am I good at sports, even though I'm in my school's athletics team – more on that later. And there really isn't much that's interesting about me, not even my name. I'm named after no one, whereas Ramona's named after our granny (our dad's mum) and Oscar's named after the coveted award that my mum hopes to win one day. Plus, there's nothing that would make me stand out from a crowd, not even the lightning bolts shaved into my hair.

So believe me, I'm the last person you'd ever think would unexpectedly and extraordinarily gain superpowers!

I realised I was going to need some help in working out if my dreams really were superpowers, and luckily there was someone I knew who'd be up for solving my BIG DREAM MYSTERY – my best friend Elliot.



CHAPTER 4

‘The dreams have been different but at the same time similar. They’re probably what you’d call a recurring dream,’ I said to Elliot as I was explaining it all to him during break at school.

‘But you can’t work out if the dreams were real or not, is that what you’re saying?’

I nodded.

‘So you reckon you can fly and, by the sounds of it, teleport?’ said Elliot.

His face looked completely disbelieving, which made me realise how ridiculous I must’ve sounded.

Still, Elliot was intrigued by what I had to say, and we continued the conversation during lunch.

‘I also think I must’ve moved the tub of butter with

my mind, because what other way is there to explain it being on the kitchen table this morning?’

I remembered putting the butter on the table just before I somehow ended up in the bathtub. The butter is always kept in the fridge and Dad was quick to notice.

‘Who left this butter here?’ he had asked when we all came down for breakfast.

‘Not me,’ said Ramona, taking a box of Rice Krispies out of the cupboard.

‘Or me,’ said Oscar, and when Dad looked at me for an answer, I could only shrug.

‘How many times have I told all of you about leaving stuff out that belongs in the fridge?’ he responded with a sigh.

Elliot thought about what I said. ‘Did you make yourself some toast before you went to bed? Because maybe you just forgot that you left the butter out.’

‘No, I didn’t have any toast! Plus, that butter wasn’t even the one I eat. My butter is dairy-free and that one *was* in the fridge.’

‘You’re not making this up, are you?’ said Elliot, his face looking cynical.

I shook my head at him. ‘I can’t believe you’d think I’d make something like this up. How long have we been friends?’

‘Since the Ice Age, I know,’ he replied, blowing out his cheeks.

That was something me and Elliot liked to say, seeing as we’ve known each other for longer than we can even remember. We first met at playgroup when we were two years old.

‘Well, it’s certainly a mystery,’ said Elliot, stroking his chin. ‘But you have to know, Sonny, that it’s just not scientifically possible for people to have superpowers. So I really don’t think that’s what’s behind your BIG DREAM MYSTERY.’

‘They don’t feel like dreams though,’ I persisted. ‘And why did my feet have mud on them this morning if—’

‘I’ve got it!’ Elliot interrupted. ‘I think I know what’s going on.’

‘What?’

‘I think you might’ve been sleepwalking.’

‘Hmm,’ I murmured, considering this. ‘But that still doesn’t explain the dream where stuff was moving around my bedroom, and I was able to fly.’

‘I still think you dreamed that. But when you found yourself in the garden and bathroom, I reckon that was you sleepwalking.’

‘DO YOU SLEEPWALK?’ a voice suddenly boomed behind us.

It was a boy in our form called Parvin Singh, who was with another boy called Zeki Osman.

Parvin's my arch-nemesis and we've been enemies since primary school. So the last thing I wanted was for him to tell the whole cafeteria that I sleepwalk. And thanks to Parvin, kids started looking at me and giggling.

'I don't sleepwalk!' I retorted.

'So why did I just hear Elliot say you do?' said Parvin.

'We were speaking hypothetically, if you even know what that means.' Elliot sprang to my defence.

'I do, yeah,' Parvin replied, but with an unsure expression.

'Anyway, didn't your parents ever tell you that you shouldn't go around eavesdropping on other people's conversations?' said Elliot.

'No,' said Parvin bluntly. There was an awkward silence for a moment. 'So is there any chance of you guys getting over the high jump bar today?' Parvin said, then burst out laughing, along with Zeki.

I did say I'd tell you more about how I came to be in my school's athletics team, and this is despite being rubbish at the high jump, which is my sport. Elliot does the high jump too, but he's not much better. Parvin and Zeki are both runners – Parvin the 400m, and Zeki the 200m – and unlike me and Elliot, they're really good.

'Yeah, the way you fell on to the bar last week had me cracking up for days!' said Zeki to me. 'But I guess you must be used to it now, seeing as you can't jump to save your life!'

'How on earth did you ever get on the team?' said Parvin as he and Zeki shook their heads.

They well and truly knew how I did. Mr Jarvis, head of PE and our school's athletics coach, had desperately been looking for some high jumpers. Hardly any kids took part in the trials except me, Elliot and a boy called Liam Sidwell, who was even more hopeless than we were. Still, I was pleased that I made it on to the team, especially after my unsuccessful try-outs for the boys' football and basketball teams.

But despite all the effort and practice Elliot and I put in, neither of us has ever cleared 1.30m, our goal height.

'I think you *are* a sleepwalker,' said Parvin, then paused for a second in readiness for the punchline, a smile creeping across his face. 'You've been sleepwalking into the high jump bar ever since you joined the athletics team!'

'Oh, you're so funny. NOT!' I said as Parvin grinned with glee, a grin I annoyingly saw again during our after-school practice session when I failed to clear 1.26m for the fifth time that afternoon.

As I'd strode towards the bar to take my jump, I'd extended my upper body too early.

CLANK!!!

For what felt like the millionth time, the bar came down.

'Aw, what a shame,' said Parvin as he and Zeki gave me a patronising applause. 'When will you realise, Sonny, that you're just not meant for greatness like myself?'

'Oh shut up!' I replied but it was so humiliating.

Now, I'm not one for showing off, but I would've loved to have blurted out to them that I probably have superpowers. It would've been so good to have had the last laugh, even though I know that, just like Elliot, they wouldn't have believed me.

But I came to a decision that there was in fact no BIG DREAM MYSTERY and that I truly did have superpowers. And as far as I was concerned, neither Elliot nor anyone else was going to change my mind.



CHAPTER 5

I was certain my brother Oscar would believe I had superpowers, so I couldn't wait to tell him when I got home after high jump practice. As soon as I stepped into the house, I was greeted by a familiar but irritating smell. It was Mrs Armstrong's chicken stew. She's our next-door neighbour who often babysits us. I had hoped, now that I was twelve, I wouldn't need any more babysitting, but annoyingly my mum and dad thought differently.

It was so unfair because it's not as if I'm a little kid like Ramona and Oscar. I'm almost a teenager! Plus, I was sick of eating chicken stew! It was Mrs Armstrong's speciality dish but was literally the only thing she ever cooked.

'The stew is just heating up, so dinner will be ready soon,' she said when I went into the living room, where

she, Ramona and Oscar were. She was watching the news, which was basically all she ever watched.

I tried my best to look enthusiastic that we were having chicken stew yet again, though honestly, a plate of cold baked beans would've been more exciting. Not that I expect Mrs Armstrong to make us that for dinner any time soon. In her opinion, no other meal comes close to being as tasty and as healthy as her stew. But there's only so much stew a boy can eat, and trust me, I've had more than my fair share.

Ramona was busy doing her homework on the carpet while Oscar was watching his favourite cartoon series, *The Power Piglets*, on the family iPad. I pretended to snatch the iPad as I said hello, and he turned round and thumped me on the arm.

'Oscar!' Mrs Armstrong scowled. 'What are you doing punching Sonny?'

'He was trying to take the iPad from me!' Oscar bleated.

'I was only joking, Osc,' I said, rubbing my arm.

I should've known not to come between Oscar and *The Power Piglets*. They're a group of superpowered piglets that can fly and shoot lasers out of their eyes. Oscar has the full set of fluffy toys, as well as sticker books, a Power Piglets lunch box, a Power Piglets duvet set and a Power Piglets lamp that projects colourful

flying piglets on to the walls. He also has a pair of Power Piglets pyjamas that he reckons gives him powers of his own – the ability to stay awake beyond eight o'clock.

'They give you the power to be cheeky,' I've heard Mrs Armstrong say to him more than once.

Even though Oscar's a little kid, he felt like the right person to talk to about my superpowers, and unlike Elliot, I was sure he'd be much more excited for me and wouldn't try to convince me that I'd been sleepwalking.

'Hey, Osc, do you want to hear a secret?' I whispered, leaning over the sofa.

'What secret?' he said, without looking up from the iPad.

'It's about superpowers like what the Power Piglets have.'

He turned round again.

'I know someone with superpowers,' I whispered, then beckoned him out to the hall.

'Who do you know with superpowers?' he asked impatiently.

'Me!'

Oscar threw me a mocking look.

'You don't have superpowers!' he snorted.

'I do, Oscar, seriously. Like the Power Piglets. I can fly.'

Oscar crossed his arms. 'Show me then. Fly now.'

'Erm, it doesn't quite work like that. It only happens at night, for some reason, and before you say anything,

I wasn't dreaming it! I did think that at first, but I just know my powers are real.'

'I don't believe you,' said Oscar.

'You don't?' I whispered, feeling crushed.

I thought Oscar of all people would've believed me, considering he believes in the Tooth Fairy, Father Christmas and the Easter Bunny. He flat out refuses to believe it's so obviously our parents putting money under his pillow or presents under the tree or a chocolate Easter egg at the foot of his bed. Even when my parents confessed to being the Tooth Fairy when Oscar's money demands became way too steep (he was threatening to write a very angry letter to the Tooth Fairy because they were leaving his friend Dominic three pounds per tooth while he was only getting one pound), Oscar still wouldn't accept that the Tooth Fairy wasn't real.

'What are you two whispering about?' said Ramona, coming out into the hall.

'Sonny's trying to make out he has superpowers,' said Oscar, which made Ramona laugh snidely.

'You're such a donut,' she said, rolling her eyes at me.

'It's true, I do have powers!' I insisted, despite knowing I stood no chance of convincing Ramona.

If only there was a way I could make my superpowers appear at a time that wasn't the dead of the night, then they'd believe me.



CHAPTER 6

Trying to get my superpowers to appear again was feeling harder than the high jump. Over the next few days, I can't tell you the number of times I stared at a pencil or a book, trying to make them move with my mind. And jumping off my bed one morning in the hope I'd soar up to the ceiling only led to Dad having a go at me after I came crashing down to the floor with a thud.

'SQUASHED TOMATOES! What on earth was that noise?!' he said, marching into my room. 'You sounded like you were about to come through the ceiling!' he added dramatically. Well, he is an actor.

'I was just doing some exercises,' I told him quickly.

'But why do you have to make such a racket?' he asked, and shook his head.

It was so annoying the way Dad was making such a fuss. I mean, he never fusses when Oscar is singing *The Power Piglets*' theme tune at the top of his voice or when Ramona's moaning about something – which is why I have this nickname for her: Moaner.

My twelfth birthday party was almost ruined because of all the moaning she was doing, all because she wasn't happy there was no sweet chilli sauce to go with the duck spring rolls Mum had made. I was fine to have them with tomato ketchup, seeing as I absolutely love ketchup, but Ramona just kept going on and on, and she wouldn't stop complaining about all the sandwiches being coconut cheese. She wanted Dad to make her some stinky egg mayo sandwiches instead and had a big pout on her face when Dad said there wasn't time. I mean, we were already an hour into my party, and I was just about to blow out the candles on my cake.

You'd think my parents would've been cross with my sister for all the moaning she was doing. Except it was me they were cross with. It was *me* who got into trouble at my own birthday party for simply asking Moaner to STOP moaning!

'Sonny! Will you not call your sister that name?!' said Dad. 'You know it's not nice. Now, tell her you're sorry.'

'But why should I? It's my party and she's trying to