

NELLIE BLY
Episode #4 Transcript
Written by Gabrielle Mirabella
Music by Ernie Bird

GABRIELLE: Before we begin we want to give a HUGE shoutout to everyone who donated during our Fundraiser. Thanks to your contributions we are now able to continue our show through to Episode 7. And, if you'd like to see our show go even further, head over to our Patreon Account, where for as much as one cup of coffee a month, you can allow us the sustainability we need to keep bringing you the best of both Broadway and Women's History. Become a sustaining member today at Patreon.com/whatwillshedonextpodcast. That's Patreon *p-a-t-r-e-o-n.com*. Thanks!

INTRO MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Hello! And welcome to another episode of "What will she do next?" I'm your host Gabrielle Mirabella and together with composer Ernie Bird, (**ERNIE:** Hello!) we've created a musical podcast that celebrates some of our favorite historical women! On today's episode we follow a woman who used the strength of her talents to overcome a series of difficult disappointments. This episode was written & narrated by myself with music & production by Ernie Bird (**ERNIE:** Hello!) Today's very special guest star is actor, comedian & writer Matt Lucas (**MATT:** Hello, that's me!) And playing today's leading role we have ...(**KARA:** Kara Lindsay)

GABBIE & ERNIE: Enjoy!

GABRIELLE: Are you feeling...stuck? Does the challenge presented before you seem pretty "unsolvable"? Or, perhaps, like many of us right now, you feel confined; with no place to go, no room to grow? Well, don't worry, you're not alone. Join us, as we investigate seemingly "impossible" situations from the lives of history's most famous women, and ask ourselves...what *will* she do next?

THEME SONG PLAYS:

*"What will she do next?
What will she do next?
Her aim is true but will she see it through?
Oh, what will she do... next?"*

GABRIELLE: Today's historical woman: Nellie Bly. American Journalist, Business Owner & Inventor.

Now, before she gets too "stuck", let's see where she's coming from...

NELLIE BLY
Episode #4 Transcript
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Nellie Bly was born Elizabeth Jane Cochran on May 5th, 1864 in the Pennsylvanian town of “Cochran’s Mills.” As a young child, Nellie enjoyed a peaceful life on her family’s farm, and earned the nickname “Pinky” for her love of all things pink. Nellie was never the “star-student”, but she did have a passion for storytelling and creative writing.

(SFX: Gentle “Knock, Knock, Knock”)

MOTHER: Nellie, dear, are you still up writing?

(YOUNG) NELLIE: Of course I am, Mother. This magical kingdom won’t save itself!

GABRIELLE: Just as Nellie’s peaceful life was beginning, tragedy struck, after her beloved Father Michael passed away, leaving Nellie’s Mother, Mary Jane, and fourteen siblings without money or property. With no source of income for the family, Nellie put her dreams of writing on hold to become a teacher, and soon entered the “Indiana Normal School” to begin her studies. But, after just one year at school, disappointment struck again; Nellie had run out of tuition money, and was forced to return home.

NELLIE: It’s so frustrating!

GABRIELLE: Nellie exclaimed.

NELLIE: I need to finish school to make money, but without money I can’t finish school! Everything feels so impossible right now.

MOTHER: It may *feel* impossible, Pinky.

GABRIELLE: Her Mother responded.

MOTHER: But, before you give up, lay out the facts. Sometimes the solution is right under our nose.

NELLIE: Lay out the facts?

NELLIE SINGS.

NELLIE:
THE FACTS ARE:
MY FAMILY NEEDS ME,
SO, I NEED A JOB TO GET THIS DONE,

NELLIE BLY
Episode #4 Transcript
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BUT! THE FACTS ARE:
WITHOUT EDUCATION,
MY EMPLOYMENT SITUATION'S LOOKING SLIM TO NONE.

SO, WHAT DO I DO NOW?
SHOULD I SIT AND WAIT TIL' THE TIME IS RIGHT?
I WOULD FIGHT, IF ONLY I KNEW HOW.
AND, WITH NO FANCY DEGREE, WITHOUT NAME OR PEDIGREE,
THE ONLY THING THAT'S LEFT TO DO IS (*Light Bulb!*) WRITE!

NELLIE: That's it! Perhaps I can use my *writing* skills to make money! But, how do I start?

MOTHER: You can start by writing to the newspaper. Their reporter, Mr. Wilson, seems to think that...

WILSON: "Any woman found *working* outside her sphere in the place of a man is a *monstrosity!*"

(Beat)

NELLIE: Where's my pen?...

"Dear, Sir" ...
CAN "THEY" THAT HAVE PLENTY FOR ONCE RECOGNIZE
WHAT WOMEN ARE STRUGGLING TO DO?
YOUNG MEN MAY RISE QUICKLY,
THEIR FUTURE SECURED
WHY NOT US, TOO?
CAN WE NOT AFFORD THE SAME AS YOU?

GO AND TRY TO UNDERMINE US,
THERE IS SO MUCH MORE WE CAN DO.
NO MATTER HOW FAR WE FALL, THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER WAY THROUGH!

MOTHER:
ANOTHER WAY THROUGH!

NELLIE:
ANOTHER WAY...

NELLIE BLY
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NELLIE + MOTHER:
THROUGH!

GABRIELLE: Nellie's letter to the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* was so effective, not only was it printed, Nellie earned herself a paid writing position at that very same newspaper!

WILSON: *Why, I never!*

NARRATOR: And, she didn't stop there. Nellie knew she had the talents to make journalism her full-time career, so with her Mother's blessing she traveled from Pittsburgh all the way to New York City, and immediately began searching for a paid writing position.

(SFX: Loud Knock, Knock, Knock!)

NELLIE:
THE FACTS ARE:
YOUR PAPER NEEDS ME,
SO, GO RIGHT AHEAD AND HIRE ME.

(SFX: Door slam!)

NELLIE: Fine!

(SFX: Loud Knock, Knock, Knock!)

NELLIE:
THE FACTS ARE:
THERE'S NOBODY LIKE ME,
JUST LET ME IN AND YOU WILL SEE!

(SFX: Door slam!)

NELLIE: Why won't they hire me?

NELLIE:
WHAT DO I DO NOW?
SHOULD I SLOW IT DOWN, AND JUST HOLD TIGHT?
I COULD FIGHT, IF ONLY I KNEW HOW.
BUT, WITH NO SORT OF CHANCE, WITHOUT ONE PASSING GLANCE,
THE ONLY THING THAT'S LEFT TO DO IS *(determined)* WRITE!

NELLIE BLY
Episode #4 Transcript
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WOMAN WRITER: It's no use, Nellie! If we can't make it past the door, how will women writers make it on the page?

NELLIE: I have an idea...

"Dear, Editors"...

CAN "THEY" THAT HAVE POWER FOR ONCE COMPROMISE,
AND PUT OUR PERSPECTIVE IN VIEW?
WE'VE PROVEN OUR TALENTS,
TIME AND AGAIN.
GIVE US OUR DUE!
DON'T WE ALL DESERVE THE SAME AS YOU?

YOU CAN TRY, YOU CAN'T IGNORE US.
WE ARE STRONGER THAN THEY THE FEW.
NO MATTER HOW LONG YOU STALL, THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER WAY THROUGH!

WOMAN WRITER: ANOTHER WAY THROUGH!

NELLIE: ANOTHER WAY...

PULITZER: (*gruff, interrupting*) Nellie Bly, is it?

GABRIELLE: Nellie's article on the treatment of women journalists was so popular that even Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of *The New York World*, was eager to meet.

NELLIE: Y-yes, Mr. Pulitzer.

PULITZER: There have been reports of mistreatment at the Women's Asylum on Blackwell's Island. I need a reporter to go in undercover, and find out the truth. It will be *extremely* dangerous. But, if you do this, you're on my paper... What do you say?

NELLIE: (*spoken*) Dangerous?

NELLIE:
EVEN WHEN IT ALL FEELS HOPELESS,
EVEN WHEN THE DOUBT OUTWEIGHS THE GOOD,
EVEN IF I WANT TO WALK AWAY NOW AND THEN...
THERE'S A MASSIVE WORLD TO EXPLORE.

NELLIE BLY
Episode #4 Transcript
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AND A FEELING THAT TELLS ME TO GO FIND MORE!
WHATEVER THE RISK, THESE WOMEN ARE WORTH FIGHTING FOR!

PULITZER: Welcome to *The New York World*, Ms. Bly!

NELLIE:
THEY CAN TRY TO HIDE THEIR SECRETS,
I WILL PUSH, AND I WILL PURSUE.
NO MATTER HOW HIGH THE WALL, THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER WAY THROUGH!

PULITZER: ANOTHER WAY THROUGH!

NELLIE: ANOTHER WAY...

NELLIE + PULITZER: THROUGH!

TRANSITION MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: With the use of her writing talents, Nellie had gone from poverty, to the front pages of New York's greatest paper all within a few short years. And, her undercover work at the Women's Asylum led to widespread healthcare reforms all across the city. But, she wasn't done, yet. In order to secure her career, and continue supporting her family, Nellie needed an even *bigger* story. One that would take her from local celebrity, to global phenomenon.

NELLIE: I'm going around the world!

GABRIELLE: Nellie declared, bursting into the offices of John Cockerill, editor-in-chief.

COCKERILL: You're what now?

NELLIE: Look!

GABRIELLE: Nellie brandished a copy of Jules Verne's novel "Around the World in 80 Days".

NELLIE: I'm going around the world like the character in this book. Isn't it grand?

COCKERILL: (*hurrying along*) Yes, sure. It is a good idea, Nellie...

GABRIELLE: The editor began.

NELLIE BLY
Episode #4 Transcript
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COCKERILL: But, it's not your story.

NELLIE: *(laughing)* Oh, come now. Of course it is! For, you see...

(she begins to sing)

THE FACTS ARE:
THIS STORY NEEDS...

COCKERILL: *(interrupting)* I said no, Nellie! It is impossible for you to do it.

NELLIE: *(taken aback)* Impossible? But, I...

COCKERILL: No one but a *man* can write it. End of story.

TRANSITION MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Until this point, Nellie's skill as a writer had seen her through many "impossible" situations. But, standing in her editor's office, having had her travel request denied, Nellie knew this time was different.

NELLIE: *(defiant)* Why a man?

GABRIELLE: She insisted.

NELLIE: What does a man possess that I do not?

(Voices interrupting)

COCKERILL: The facts are: this assignment calls for *speed!* And, with all your "womanly" luggage you'll never meet the deadline.

NELLIE: But, I need no more than a few...

(Voices interrupting)

COCKERILL: The facts are: you will have no *guardian!* And a woman cannot travel alone! It's too dangerous!

NELLIE: But, I have much experience in the ways of...

NELLIE BLY
Episode #4 Transcript
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(Voices interrupting)

COCKERILL: I've already given the story to Henry Jarrett! I'm sorry, Nellie. But, you can't write your way out of this one.

NELLIE: But, I...

(Musical Beat)

GABRIELLE: Nellie stood frozen. For the first time in years, she couldn't find her solution.

NELLIE: *(internal)* It's right under my nose, I know it! Come on Nellie, think! What will you do?

UPBEAT MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Great question, Nellie. What *will* you do?
Before we find out, let's first take a look at her options....
Will Nellie choose Option 1?:

NELLIE: *(dejected)* I guess he's right. It seems I have no choice but to find another story.

GABRIELLE: Or, will she choose option 2?:

NELLIE: If I'm not "technically" allowed on this trip, perhaps I'll hide myself in a suitcase!

GABRIELLE: Or, will she choose option 3?:

NELLIE: Why do I need his permission? If I have to quit the paper to write this story, I will!

NARRATOR: Now that we can clearly see Nellie's options, which one do YOU think she will choose? Take a moment to think it over...

THINKING MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: Alright, got your answer? Now, let's find out which option Nellie will choose...

NELLIE: Start your man Cockerill, and I'll start the same day for some other newspaper, and beat him!

NELLIE BLY
Episode #4 Transcript
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NELLIE:

I KNOW WHAT TO DO NOW.
NO MORE “SHOULD” OR “COULD”, WHEN I KNOW I’M RIGHT!
I WILL FIGHT, I FINALLY KNOW HOW.
I NEED NO CHAPERONE,
NO DIRECTION, BUT MY OWN.
THE ONLY THING FOR ME TO DO IS...

COCKERILL: You’re right, Nellie! We can’t lose you! The assignment is yours!

NELLIE:

IF I KEEP ON MOVING FORWARD
THE IMPOSSIBLE WILL COME TRUE!
I’M READY TO SEE IT ALL! FOR, THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER WAY THROUGH!

VOICES: ANOTHER WAY THROUGH!

NELLIE: ANOTHER WAY THROUGH! (*Repeated*)

GABRIELLE: Nellie Bly was faced with a seemingly impossible situation. But, instead of folding in the face of disappointment, she used the strength of her talents to find a way forward, allowing her to become one of America’s greatest journalists.

So, the next time you find yourself feeling “stuck”, I wonder...what will *you* do next?

KID’S CORNER MUSIC.

GABRIELLE: At the end of every episode we are featuring a very special guest star...*you!*
Today we have Reece from Pittsburgh!

GABRIELLE & ERNIE: Hi, Reece!

GABRIELLE: Tell us all about your favorite historical woman!

REECE: Katherine Johnson was born on August 26th, 1918 in West Virginia. Katherine’s nickname was computer. She was a math genius. Katherine started high school at ten-years-old and started college at fifteen. She graduated college at eighteen. Katherine is most remembered as being one of the first not only women but African American women to send NASA around the earth and land on the moon. At that time it was hard for women and African

NELLIE BLY
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Americans to go to college and get a really good job, but she never gave up. That is truly inspiring.

End of Episode.