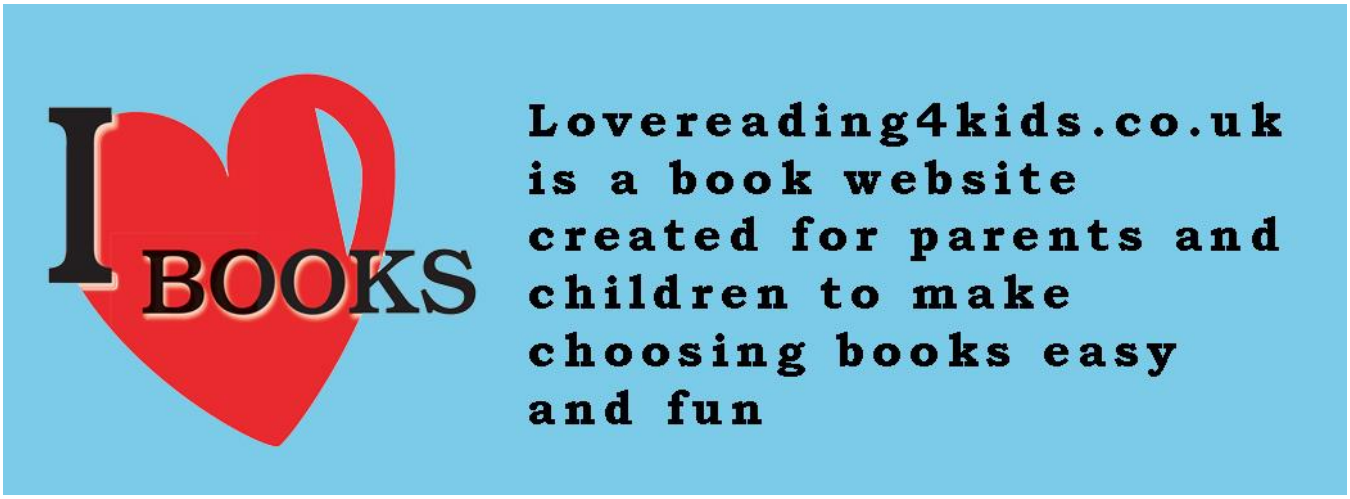


Opening extract from

The Icarus Show

Written by

Sally Christie

Published by

David Fickling Books

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.



The Icarus Show
is a
DAVID FICKLING BOOK

First published in Great Britain in 2016 by
David Fickling Books,
31 Beaumont Street,
Oxford, OX1 2NP

Text © Sally Christie, 2016

978-1-910200-48-3

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

The right of Sally Christie to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

David Fickling Books supports the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the leading international forest certification organisation. All our titles that are printed on Greenpeace-approved FSC-certified paper carry the FSC logo.



DAVID FICKLING BOOKS Reg. No. 8340307

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

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

CHAPTER 1
COMING SOON

I was on the school bus, going home, when I found it. I opened my bag to get out my book, and spotted it straight away. Someone had put it there, tucked it inside the secret pocket where I keep my spare pen and my money for lunch. There'd been 20p change that day. As I searched for my book, I did a quick check: still there. My fingers touched *it* as they felt for the coin.

All the way home I kept my book open and turned a page now and then. But I wasn't really reading. I was congratulating myself on my outstanding self-control. Don't React. That was my new Lambourn motto. Don't miss a beat.

I'd got the idea from Shadow, I think, who was

definitely the expert. If you put Shadow outside when she'd been on the sofa, she never tried to run back in. She'd just sit down and wash herself, then saunter away. She made you believe it was what she'd always wanted.

The opposite was what David Marsh had done on the first day of term. Alan Tydman had stuck out a foot to trip him up. He did it to everyone – but David Marsh had turned round and come back. Come right back to Alan and said, 'Was that you?' Big mistake. Now we all called him David Bog and he must have wished he'd just laughed and carried on, like a normal person.

I am a normal person. No one will ever change *my* name. I'm constantly on my guard to protect my status. It's hard work because you can be put to the test any time: scooped up and shoved out into the garden if you're a cat; tripped up and shoved in the ribs by Alan Tydman if you're a person in our year at Lambourn Secondary School.

Or have a sealed brown envelope put in your bag.

Don't React. Don't miss a beat.

When the bus reached my stop, I closed my book. No

one would notice my bookmark hadn't moved because no one was sitting beside me. Good. But Bogsy was already getting off. Bad. If he got off first, I had to hang back to make sure I didn't get off *with* him – since it was only us two at this stop. Once, I had waited too long and missed my chance to get off altogether. Everybody had laughed and I'd nearly panicked. But then I'd laughed, too, at myself – made a funny, 'Stupid Me' face and saved the situation. I'd had to get off at the next stop, and walk an extra kilometre home, but that didn't matter.

Today I just had to dawdle a bit to put distance between Bogsy and me. I got home safely, and went straight down the garden to Don's shed.

You need to understand about Don's shed. It's important, so I'll tell you: it's not really Don's shed, it's ours. Don's dead. He was old and he died and Maisie went into a Home. There. Now you know. Even though Maisie and Don had been our next-door neighbours – the houses are joined – we sold ours and bought theirs and moved in. We did it because of their garden, which is bigger than our old

one. Mum and Dad fancied growing their own vegetables, just like Don.

Anyway, Don's shed is nice. It's old and it's full of Don's stuff, which I like. Mum and Dad's stuff still stands in one corner, as if it's dropped by but hasn't been asked to sit down.

I sat down now – on an old wooden box – and opened my bag.

The strange thing about the envelope was it didn't have my name on. It didn't have anyone's name on. It was blank. Envelopes from teachers say, 'To the parents of Alex Meadows' – and anyway you get given them, they don't just turn up in your bag. Invitations to people's parties get put in your bag – Timmy still gets them – but people don't have that kind of party in my year any more. I think they go to the cinema with just one or two good friends. I'm not really sure.

Anyway, this envelope was mysterious – sinister, even. I was glad I'd handled the situation so well and was able to open it alone. I unsealed the flap and took out a slip of paper. A feather came out of the envelope, too, and fell to the floor.

Those were the only two things. The feather was grey and looked like a pigeon's. The paper was white, with computer writing on. But the writing didn't make sense. '`Coming soon!`' it said. '`A boy is going to fly! Do you believe it? *Can* you believe it?? Will you be there???`'

I quickly glanced up at the cobwebby window of Don's shed. Autumn sunshine filtered through dust. A largish spider in one corner. But nobody watching. No one (not counting the spider) there.

In a way, it *was* like an invitation. Invitations used to end with things like, 'Hope to see you there!' But invitations said where 'there' was – and also when – and who was asking. There was so much missing from this – it made me nervous. Somebody had a plan and I was in it but they weren't giving out the details and so I was at a disadvantage.

And what kind of plan was it, anyway? Crazy! A boy is going to fly? How? Like a bird? That's what the feather suggested, but that was mad. Or was this boy going to fly in a plane? Go on a holiday and I was to see him off? That made hardly more sense than the bird. What was the big

deal in that? There seemed no explanation between the boring and the totally unbelievable.

But maybe unbelievable was the point. I was being dared to believe. Someone was challenging me to react, watching to see what I'd do. I looked again towards the window. This time I noticed a fly had been caught at one edge of the spider's web. The spider was spidering over to take a look. Maybe finish it off.

I felt horribly trapped. This whole thing was a trap. Did I believe that a boy was going to fly? What if I did? Would somebody laugh? And what if I didn't? Didn't – or couldn't. Would somebody call me useless?

My stomach felt so tight, it ached. Flying boys: I didn't want to know. But here was this envelope, forcing the question. Could I believe it? Would I believe it? I squirmed on my seat. Was I *supposed* to believe it?

Well, was I? What was the right thing to do?