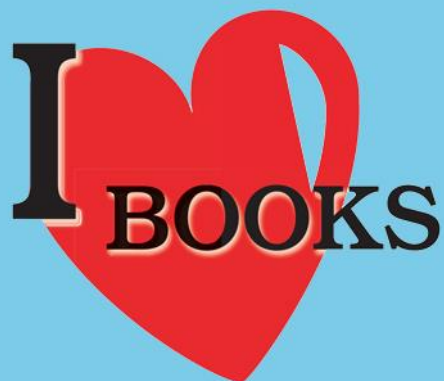




LoveReading4kids.co.uk
is a book website
created for parents and
children to make
choosing books easy
and fun

Opening extract from
Out for the Count

Written by
Anne Fine

Illustrated by
Vicki Gausden

Published by
Barrington Stoke Ltd

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.



First published in 2016 in Great Britain by
Barrington Stoke Ltd
18 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7LP
www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

This story was first published in a different form as
Countdown (Heinemann Young Books, 1996)

Text © 1996 Anne Fine
Illustrations © 2016 Vicki Gausden

The moral right of Anne Fine and Vicki Gausden to be
identified as the author and illustrator 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 in whole or in any part in any form without the
written permission of the publisher

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

ISBN: 978-1-78112-507-6

Printed in China by Leo

This book has dyslexia friendly features

Contents

1. A Perfect Cage	1
2. Ready?	11
3. A Box of Bricks	15
4. Chocolate Biscuits	27
5. All at Sea	36
6. Dreams of Escape	47
7. An Ear to the Door	61
8. Losing Track of Time	80
9. A Wise Decision	85



Chapter 1

A Perfect Cage

11.04 a.m.

Hugo James MacFee sat on the newspaper spread all over his empty bedroom.

“So, can I have a gerbil?” he asked his father.

“No,” his father said as he painted round the last corner.

“I promise I’d look after it properly.”

“I’m sure you would,” his father said.
“But that’s not the point. Think of the gerbil. How would you like to spend your whole life stuck in a cage?”

“I’d let it out,” Hugo said.

“But you’re at school all day.”

Hugo counted up on his fingers. “I’m only out for seven hours,” he said.

His father painted over the last of the yellow with the new blue.



“It’s a very long time to sit in a boring old cage all by yourself, with nothing to do,” he said.

“I could give it things to play with while I’m gone.”

“That might not be enough to keep it happy.”



“But it would be clean and safe and comfy.”

His father looked around at the four fresh blue walls. “This bedroom’s clean and safe and comfy,” he said. “A perfect cage, in fact, for someone of your size. But you wouldn’t want to spend seven hours in here, all by yourself.”

“I’d be all right,” said Hugo.

His father dropped the paint brush into the tin. “Prove it,” he said. “Spend the day in here.”

Hugo looked round the empty room. “In here? The whole day?”

“For seven hours,” his father said. “The time that you’d be out on a normal school day.”

Hugo looked at his watch. It was eleven in the morning.

“Start at twelve,” said his father.
“Take an hour to get organised, then see if you can stick it. Midday until evening. Twelve o’clock till seven.”

