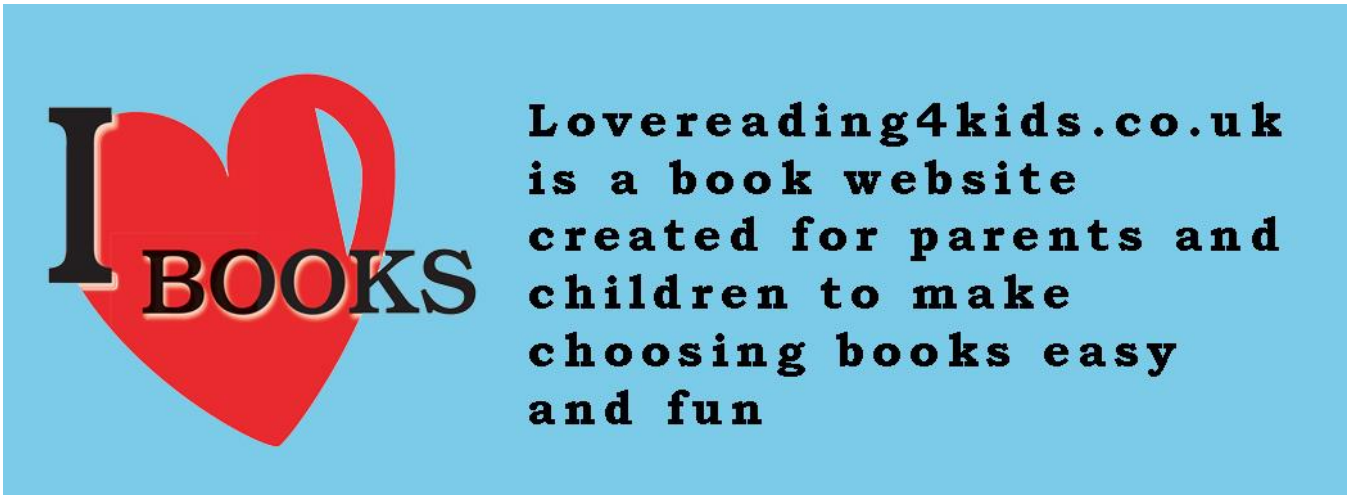


Opening extract from

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Gameplay

on the pitch, lightning fa**S**t,
dribble, fake, then make a dash

player tries t**O** steal the ball
lift and step and make him fall

zip and zoom to find the spot
defense readies for the shot

Chip, then kick it in the air
take off like a Belgian hare

shoot it left, but watch it **C**urve
all he can do is observe

watch the ball b**E**nd in midflight
play this game fa**R** into night.

Wake Up Call

After playing FIFA
online with Coby
till one thirty a.m.
last night,
you wake
this morning
to the sound
of Mom arguing
on the phone
with Dad.

Questions

Did you make up your bed?
Yeah. Can you put bananas in my pancakes, please?

Did you finish your homework?
Yeah. Can we play a quick game of Ping-Pong, Mom?

And what about the reading. I didn't see you doing that yesterday.
Mom, Dad's not even here.

Just because your father's away doesn't mean you can avoid your chores.
I barely have time for my *real* chores.

Perhaps you should spend less time playing Xbox at all hours of the night.
Huh?

Oh, you think I didn't know?
I'm sick of reading his stupid words, Mom. I'm going to high school next year and I shouldn't have to keep doing this.

Why couldn't your dad

be a musician
like Jimmy Leon's dad
or own an oil company
like Coby's?
Better yet, why couldn't
he be a cool detective
driving
a sleek silver
convertible sports car
like Will Smith
in *Bad Boys*?
Instead, your dad's
a linguistics professor
with chronic verbomania*
as evidenced
by the fact
that he actually wrote
a dictionary
called *Weird and Wonderful Words*
with,
get this,
footnotes.

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* **verbomania** [vurb-oh-mey-nee-uh] *noun: a crazed obsession for words.* Every freakin' day I have to read his "dictionary," which has freakin' FOOTNOTES. That's absurd to me. Kinda like ordering a glass of chocolate milk, then asking for chocolate syrup on the side. Seriously, who does that? SMH!

In the elementary school spelling bee

when you intentionally
misspelled *heifer,*
he almost had a cow.

You're the only kid
on your block
at school
in THE. ENTIRE. FREAKIN'. WORLD.
who lives in a prison
of words.
He calls it *the pursuit of excellence.*
You call it *Shawshank.*
And even though your mother
forbids you to say it,
the truth is
you
HATE
words.