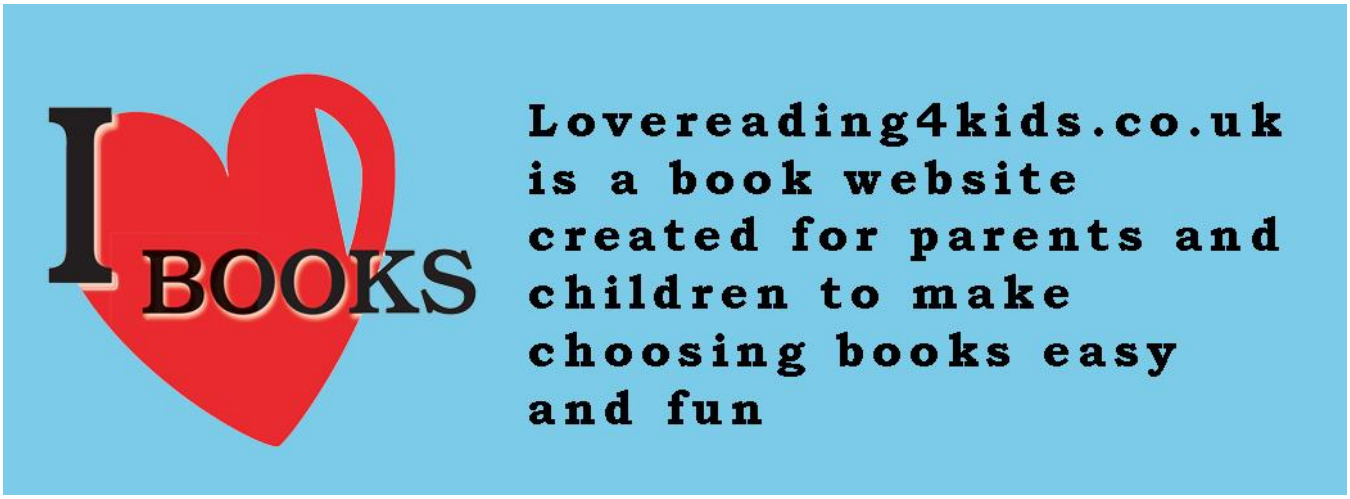


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QUICK NOTE FROM BICK KIDD

Before we launch our latest heart-stopping, nail-biting, globe-trotting Kidd family adventure, I just wanted to let you know that, even though our parents are both back in the picture, I'll still be the one telling you our awesome tales. My twin sister, Beck, will still be handling the pictures (including the ones that Mom and Dad are back in).



And get this—Mom and Dad have promised to take us around the world again before we grow up: Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, the Americas, North Pole,

South Pole, and all the points in between. Trust me, you'll remember going around the world with the Kidds for the rest of your life.

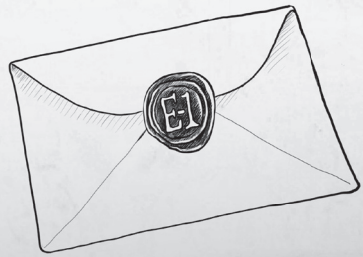
Beck says I should add, "Especially if you stand downwind of me." (Apparently, I reek in ways that are amazingly unforgettable.)

Now, can we get going? We're kind of in a hurry. Don't forget—we have a whole world to circle!



PART 1

THE TREASURE HOARDERS



Chapter 1



There are all sorts of art treasures in Florence, Italy—including the stolen kind.

That's why the six of us—the entire Kidd family—were crammed into an electric, solar-powered van staking out a garage on a dark cobblestoned street in the middle of the night.

The street was so old and narrow, it was probably built way back in the Middle Ages before the rich Medici family jump-started the Renaissance by sponsoring guys like Michelangelo, Raphael, Donatello, and Leonardo (the artists, not the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles).

Mom was behind the wheel. Storm was up front, keeping her night-vision goggles trained

on the garage entrance. Dad and our teenage brother, Tommy, were in the back, where you're supposed to stow luggage. They were both decked out in commando gear: black shoes, black pants, black turtlenecks, and black watch caps (Tommy complained his was giving him a serious case of hat hair).

Beck and I were in the middle seats. As the youngest, we were supposed to "sit still and observe" because this mission could, according to Dad, "go south fast."



"You guys?" I whispered as Mom and Storm focused on the parking-garage entrance. "This van is powered by solar panels. How's that going to work at night?"

"Batteries," said Storm.

"Something you might want to try for your brain," added Beck.

"Twins?" said Dad from the way back. "Can the chatter, please. We don't want to compromise our position."

That's spy lingo for *Don't get us busted with your loud yapping.* Dad and Mom used to work for the CIA, helping to keep America safe. Now we're on an even more important mission: saving the world's treasures—and I don't mean just ancient art and artifacts (or, in Tommy's case, this "awesome hair gel" he discovered in France).

Sometimes I think Dad and Mom want us to save the whole entire planet!

Chapter 2



We were in Italy staking out this particular parking structure because Mom had picked up a hot tip from the pirates who had kidnapped her in Cyprus.

The bad guys kept yakking about smugglers transporting an elaborately decorated 2,600-year-old mummy sarcophagus through Florence.

And it wasn't empty. There weren't any wrapped-up pharaoh remains in the ancient coffin, but Mom's captors said all sorts of precious pottery and sculptures were hidden inside. The "importers" would be handing it off to the "exporters" in this garage.

"EM 429TY," said Storm from her perch in the passenger seat. "It's them."

Storm has a photographic memory, so she's in charge of memorizing stuff like bad guys' license-plate numbers. Mom and Dad's spy friends (the kind of friends with satellites) had been tracking the smugglers' cargo truck as it made its way into Florence from the Mediterranean seaport of Livorno.

"They're pulling into the garage," said Mom as she flipped down her night-vision goggles. It's still weird seeing her with blond hair. She had to dye it so the bad guys wouldn't recognize her. Spy stuff. "Their arrival was expected. Two men just came out of the shadows."

"Let's roll," Dad said to Tommy. "Bick? Beck? Mic check."

Beck and I tapped our chests to activate our supercool tactical headsets.

"Testing, one, two, three…"

"Loud and clear," reported Mom.

"Tommy and I are going in," said Dad. "Bick and Beck?"

"Yes, sir?" we said at the same time.

"You two follow us and report back to Mom and Storm. However, you are not, I repeat *not,* under any circumstances, to enter that garage."

"No, sir."

"You mean 'Yes, sir'?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Okay, Tommy. Charge up."

Dad and Tommy slid battery packs into their Taser weapons. They didn't want to shoot any bad guys with bullets, but they'd stun-gun them if they had to.

Mom turned around in her seat.

"Thomas?" said Mom. "Be careful in there."

Of course, she was talking to both of them: seventeen-year-old Tailspin Tommy and Dr. Thomas Kidd (aka Dad).

But she meant my father particularly, and for good reason.

We'd just found out Dad was alive. We didn't want to lose him again.


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