Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

Hacking Timbuktu

written by

Stephen Davies

published by

Andersen Press Ltd

All text is copyright of the author

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

'Peace!' cried Omar, backing away with his hands up. 'Tranquillity! Harmony!'

The security guard arrived, breathing heavily after his swift ascent. 'What's going on here?' he said.

Redvald stepped forward and showed his student ID card. 'These thugs just assaulted me,' he said, 'and they are in possession of a valuable stolen manuscript.'

The guard licked his lips and moved towards the boys. 'All right, lads,' he said. 'Come with me.'

Danny caught his friend's eye and raised an eyebrow. Omar nodded. It was not worth trying to explain. Escape was clearly the best policy.

Omar was first to move. He hopped up onto one of the stone islands, and then jumped from rock to rock, gathering speed as he went. The guard tried to intercept him, but Omar was too quick. He crane-jumped onto a tall water basin and leaped for the wall.

'Go Grimps!' shouted Danny.

Omar grabbed the parapet and hung there a moment, gathering his strength. Then in one explosive move, he pulled himself all the way up onto the top of the wall.

The guard kicked over the water basin and turned to face Danny. 'What about you?' he said. 'Got any tricks up your sleeve?'

Danny looked at the wall and compared it in his mind's eye to jumps he had done before. *A traceur knows intuitively if he is able to execute a move. Doubt*

is his friend, not his enemy. Without the water basin as a kick-off, the wall was simply too high.

Redvald sneered. 'What's wrong, Danny? Has monkey-boy escaped and left you in your cage?'

The two men opened their arms wide and began to advance. Danny stepped onto a slab of larvikite in the middle of the garden and looked left and right. *Parkour vision is an illness – la maladie du traceur – when you start to parkour, you begin to see things differently. You see alternative paths to your objective. The longer you practise the more paths you see.*

Robin Redvald was approaching on Danny's left. The guard was on the right, fingers reaching out to grab his collar.

The pergola.

Danny ducked and bolted through the small gap between the two men. He ran the length of the garden, kicked up off the low stage and grabbed hold of the trellis overhead. It groaned under his weight and released a shower of purple flowers over the stage. Danny changed his grip and began to wriggle up through the trellis.

'No, you don't!' snarled the guard, but it was too late. By the time the pursuers reached the pergola, Danny's feet were disappearing through the slats.

'HELP!' yelled Redvald. 'THEY'RE GETTING AWAY! STOP THEM!'

Danny precision-jumped onto the wall and cat-balanced along the top of the parapet towards

Omar. His friend was leaning over the side of the building, looking for a way down.

'Hey, Danny,' said Omar. 'You remember the multistorey car park on Queen's Road?'

'Yes.'

'And the south chimney at Battersea Power Station?'

'Yes.'

'Tricky descents, weren't they?'

'Yes.'

'Well, so is this. But don't worry, you'll be fine.'

Omar turned around and bent down as if to touch his toes. He gripped the parapet and shuffled his feet a little way down the face of the wall. Danny realised what his friend was about to do – he was going to drop down onto a fourth-floor window ledge, a strip of wood no more than six inches wide.

'Don't do it, Grimps.'

Omar dropped. The balls of his feet landed on the narrow ledge and he grabbed the window frame to catch himself. Then he bent down and prepared for the next drop. Typical Omar – never gave himself time enough to panic.

Danny crouched, held onto the wall and moved his feet into position. He watched his knuckles whiten on the parapet and again his mind flashed back to Battersea Power Station. A couple of months ago, Baz, the leader of the Kinetix, had climbed the south chimney of the power station, and Danny had gone up after him because he

wanted to impress the girls. But when Danny had reached the top of the chimney and looked down, his initial euphoria had turned to dread. Climbing a tall building took strength; going down took guts.

Omar was now at the third-floor window, leaving Danny clear to jump. *Here goes,* breathed Danny. *Fall like a cat.* He let go of the wall and landed on the fourth-floor window ledge. It was all wrong, he was totally off balance. Frantic fingernails scrabbled on the windowpane. He fell off.

What had Omar said to him that day at Queen's Road? *Keep your hands on the wall, even in free fall. The friction will slow you down.* As Danny fell he reached out to brush the rough bricks in front of him. He landed hard on the next ledge and grabbed the frame to catch himself. His knees smacked the windowpane and it cracked from corner to corner.

'You okay, Danny?' shouted Omar.

'No!' shouted Danny.

'There's a grip down there on your right.'

Sure enough, there was a college crest bolted to the wall high above the entrance to the building. It looked sturdy enough. Danny jumped towards it, and winced as his sore palms made contact with the rough cast iron.

'Too tense!' shouted Omar, who was already on the ground. 'Loosen up. Flow along your course.'

Danny hung from the SOAS crest and took

deep breaths to calm himself. He was staring straight ahead at an engraving of a camel and an elephant, both standing on their hind legs. They held a coat of arms between them and around their legs there curled a scroll which bore three words: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.

Danny clambered across the crest and jumped towards the next window ledge. He landed with one foot on the ledge, dropped down to swing on it, chose his spot on the lawn below and let go. This was a big jump and he was shocked at how quickly the grass rushed up to meet him.

'*Roulade!*' cried Omar.

Danny landed on the lawn, bent his knees and rolled forward – hands, shoulders, back, backside, foot. It was a good roll and hardly hurt at all.

Someone was shouting. It was the security guard, leaning out of a fourth-floor window and pointing at Danny and Omar. 'Stop them!' he cried. 'Stop, thieves!'

Several passers-by had stopped to watch the boys' daring antics on the face of the SOAS building. One or two had even applauded Danny's successful dismount. But when they heard the guard's shouts, the admiration of the crowd turned quickly to alarm. One or two started forward towards the boys and then stopped. Did they really want to get mixed up in this? After all, maybe these crazy acrobats were carrying.

Four Chinese students were exercising on the lawn not far from where Danny had landed. As