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

Quick Silver

written by

Sam Osman

published by

Marion Lloyd Books

All Text is Copyright © of the Author / Illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

QuickSilver

SAM OSMAN



PART ONE
The Progeny


Observation Point
Dodds Hill
THORNHAM COMMON
Harrison's Scrapyard
Garden Centre
Blackstone Comprehensive School
Allotments
Whitley Road
Blackthorn Drive
Corset Factory Industrial estate
Vicarage
Church hall
Church
Gas works
Flower-bed
The Wish Hound
Bus Park
Rockery
Rag Tree Road
Pond
Foundations of Thornham Hall
Tala's House
Cycle path
Greyfriars Crescent
Playground
Sweetshop
Dry cleaners
War Memorial
NORTH
W
E
S
Stonegate Street
Station
High Street
Library

1

Wolfie

When wasted lie the pathways of the wise
The Book of Light

Wolfie Brown awoke to the familiar smell of burnt toast and the grim prospect of delivering papers in the rain. No lightning flashed, no strange shadows played across his bedroom walls and no ghostly voices drifted through the floorboards. In fact, there was nothing to give him the slightest hint that this drizzly October Thursday had been awaited for a thousand years.

Ducking under the blankets, he pulled on the clothes he had been warming all night with his feet and ran downstairs. In the poky storeroom wedged between the kitchen and the sweet shop he found his mother bent over her easel, dabbing delicate white curls on to a portrait of a giant poodle.

"It's Mrs Poskitt's Monty. What do you think?"

Sarah Brown had a knack of making the pets she painted look just like their owners without the owners ever noticing. Wolfie stepped over a jar of brushes and a squashed tube of purple paint to get a proper look. He grinned. She had captured Monty's likeness to perfection – the doleful expression, the glint in his little black eyes and the dome of puffy fuzz perched on his head. With a few more whiskers and a headscarf it would have been the double of Mrs Poskitt.

"It's great," he told her, glancing at the clock. "Have you sorted the papers yet?"

"I've done my best, but that idiot at the warehouse sent all the wrong ones again." Sarah scooped her thick dark hair into a hasty knot and pinned it with a paintbrush. "I've burnt the last of the bread. Can you get yourself some cereal?"

"Don't worry, I've got to go. But, Mum . . . I need some dinner money. Yesterday they wouldn't give me any lunch. And I still owe three pounds for the school trip."

Sarah looked at him guiltily and felt in the pocket of her pyjamas. She pulled out a crumpled tissue, a rubber and stub of pencil.

"Can you see if there's any cash in the till? I'm a bit short this week."

This week and every week, thought Wolfie. He thrust aside the worn velvet curtain slung across the low doorway to the shop and banged open the heavy brass till. It was almost empty. As he scraped together a handful of

coins he sneaked a look at the dog-eared accounts book lying on the counter. He knew things were bad, but not this bad. She was behind with the payments for the gas and electricity and hadn't paid the cash and carry for months.

Leaning against the sagging, half-empty shelves, he gazed around the shabby old shop where he had lived all his life. Maybe they could tempt some customers back with a themed week or a special promotion. One look at the jars of melted humbugs, the faded packets of tobacco and the greying slabs of coconut ice told him it would take more than Sarah dressing up as a liquorice allsort, or a two-for-one offer on bubble gum, to turn their fortunes around.

Sarah poked her head through the doorway. "Do you think the vicar will mind *Woman's Weekly* instead of the *Church Times*?"

"No problem," said Wolfie. "He could do with a makeover."

He was always saying things to cheer her up, though he knew it was Sarah who had messed up the newspaper order – she often did. Unlike her father and grandfather, she just wasn't cut out to be a shopkeeper.

Wolfie wheeled his bike through the back yard and round the corner of Stoneygate Street to the front of the shop. So much for *Thornham's Oldest Family Business*. The outside of the building was even more dilapidated than the inside. The gold letters spelling out the words *Stanley*

Brown & Son, Tobacconist & Confectioner were so faded you could hardly read them. Sarah had talked about repainting the sign for years but somehow she never got round to it. She said it reminded her of the days when Wolfie's grandparents, Stanley and Merle, were alive and the sweet shop was the pride of Thornham, filled with the smell of home-made fudge and the buzz of gossiping customers. He supposed he should be grateful. At least his mother's hankering for the past hadn't prompted her to call him Stanley. He rode away, fed up with everything: with the cold drizzle stinging his face, with his battered bike and with being the only kid in his class without a mobile phone and a computer.

They couldn't go on like this. He had tried telling Sarah to sell up, buy a flat on one of the new estates, and paint full-time. But she refused even to talk about leaving. It wasn't just that the shop had been in their family for generations or that she and Wolfie had been born there: it was as if there was something else that kept her tied to the dusty jars of peppermint creams, the dawn scramble with the papers and the growing mountain of debt.

He was speeding along Greyfriars Crescent, head down, pedalling hard, when a man in tweed plus fours carrying a stout walking stick stepped out into the road followed by a huge grizzled dog. They disappeared into the misty gloom of the common, hardly noticing as Wolfie slammed on his brakes and swerved into the gutter.

*

The clock of St Michael's Church struck seven. Beyond the far reaches of the now-known worlds something shimmered in the twilight: a fragment of a long dead star, a glowing sphere of gas and dust. Its inner flame began to flicker and flare and when it was blazing brighter than a tiny sun, a glistening wave of sparks erupted from its core, reawakening the age-old arteries of power that circled the earth.

Like a silent river bursting a dam, a quicksilver flow of primal energy trickled, then streamed, then surged across space and time and earth and sky, through oceans and forests, caverns and car parks, boulevards and bus stops, until it reached the ancient place of power once known as Thornham Magna, on the outskirts of London. With a tremor that rocked the gasworks, the deluge branched into three streams. Two flowed down the high street, past the dry cleaner's, and on through Norwood, Penge and Bromley in search of pyramids and deserts, cataracts and mountains. The third cascaded down Blackthorn Drive and swept across the common to the sweet shop, pouring up the drainpipes and through the plugholes in search of Wolfie Brown.