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

Inside

written by

Julia Jarman

published by

Andersen Press Ltd

All Text is Copyright © of the Author / Illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

CHAPTER 4

All I wanted to do was get my head down, but the baldie screw had other plans. After the van had been searched – they pushed this little trolley with a mirror on it underneath – he frogmarched me to a brick building that stood separate from another bigger one.

Granny was puffing by the time we reached the door, where Baldie went into the double-locking routine.

'In the room we are about to enter, young persons are searched thoroughly before proceeding to reception and the wing. If you have anything on you that you shouldn't have – weapons or drugs, tobacco or chewing gum – it's best to say so now.'

I said, 'I've been searched already.'

But that made no difference.

It was the same as before – with extras. 'Face me. Look up.' He pushed up my eyelid, then pulled the bottom bit down. I thought he were going to turn me inside out.

Granny ticked the boxes.

'Right, all facial orifices clear. Now bend over.'

I said, 'There's nothing up my arse.'

He said, 'I'll be the judge of that.'

Afterwards he handed me a bottle and told me to go and fill it in the karzy in the corner. I couldn't do it at first, not with him watching. When I did come out, Granny held up a grey tracksuit, three sizes too big.

'You have a choice now, Lee. You can continue to wear your own clothes. Or you can put this on. But I'd advise the tracksuit. You won't look so much like a new boy and you're more likely to see your own clothes again.'

My legs looked like a baby elephant's in the trackie bottoms.

Reception could have been anywhere, school or the health centre on the estate. We had CCTV cameras there. Granny handed over the red bag

to a blonde female screw, who emptied all my stuff onto the counter.

'Check if it's all there, lad, and if it is, sign the list at the bottom.' She pointed to a Biro on a chain.

Then the three of them started talking about me as if I weren't there.

'How is he?' The blonde one looked worried. 'We can't do the health check because Health Care have gone home.'

Granny mumbled something and Baldie shook his head. 'Looks perky enough to me. How're you feeling, Lee?'

'OK.' *Not*. I'd have killed for a cig or a Red Bull. Joke.

Baldie leaned over the counter to where they were looking at a computer screen. 'Now, ladies, where are you putting him?'

Granny shook her head. 'No cell free. Seems a couple of lads have smashed theirs up. May's trying to sort something out.'

Cell.

All the nice rooms must have gone.

'Give me the camera then. I'll do another one for the rogues' gallery while we're waiting. Stand over there, Lee, in front of that screen, and hold this board.'

He laughed as I crossed the room. 'Nothing wrong with him. Struts like a bantam cock. Got a good opinion of himself has Lee.'

Good, if that's what he thought.

'Hold up the board, Lee, number facing forward. Don't smile. Look.'

He showed me myself on the little screen. P4340. Like someone on death row.

'Sorted.' The blonde screw handed him a key. 'C-wing, Number 27. You're in luck, Lee. A mate of yours, Darryl, says he's willing to share.'

Darryl! Was my luck turning at last?

Baldie fixed the key to the bunch on his belt. 'Come on.' He unlocked a door. 'Quick march.'

It's not the screws you have to look out for, lad.

But Darryl would show me the ropes. Make sure the others knew I were one of them. Wouldn't let the side down.

'Steady on.' Baldie was locking the door we'd just come through.

I was at the next door looking down a long corridor.

'Not down there. It'd take all night.' He opened a door at the side. 'We're going—'

But the rest of his words were drowned by

chanting and yip yipping and loud rhythmic banging.

Afterwards I thought it must be like stepping out of the players' tunnel into a football stadium – if your team were losing and you'd just scored an own goal. I didn't catch all the words. Some I caught but couldn't repeat here. Mostly it were just hooting and jeering. From three tiers of little square windows. With the dark shapes of faces pressed to them.

But I kept my head up. Kept a spring in my step. Kept my arms swinging as I tried to get my bearing.

Don't let them see you're fazed. That would be asking for it. Same as on the estate. *Look confident. Walk tall.* Though I weren't that tall. Not titchy. Average. We were crossing a triangle-shaped yard, buildings on two sides, making a V-shape. Heading for a door in the middle.

The screw said, 'C-wing. B spur's the one on the right.'

Inside, the noise throbbed right through you.

'Pipe-banging,' said the screw, closing the door we'd come through. 'You'll get used to it.' He opened another door. 'Upstairs, right to the top.'

The metal stairs vibrated under my feet and

by the time I got to the top I were sweating. I were dead keen to see Darryl.

Then he opened a door.

What had the old bat said? Modern? Purpose-built? Well, think of all the prison films you've seen. Think long lines of metal doors with spy hatches. Think landings on four sides of a rectangle. The only modern bit was the mesh strung between them.

'Safety,' the screw said. 'We're very hot on safety. We do try to take care of our young persons.' He pointed to the space below. 'That's the Association Area where you meet up for an hour a day. Walk on.'

What did they do for the rest of the time?

Number 27 was near the end of the line, in the corner. When we reached it, Baldie stood with the key in his hand.

'This cell is temporary, Lee. You will have your own soon. That's the policy at Parkhall. We think single occupancy is best, but over-crowding sometimes makes that difficult.'

Get on with it. Open up. I don't mind sharing. Darryl's my mate.

'Two more things. Firstly my name is Mr Sampson and from now on you'll use my name

when you speak to me. Not Slaphead or Baldie or anything else—'

'I never.'

'No, but you probably thought it, and what you think, you tend to say.'

Don't know why he was so touchy about it. It's the fashion. Mine's shaved really close. Mind you, I ain't got fuzz halfway round my face.

'So I'll think of you as a young person,' he went on. 'Not prisoner, inmate, con or yob or any other rude word, and I will call you Lee. You will think of me as an officer, not screw, guard or warder, and you will call me Mr Sampson. Some officers allow "guy" or "boss". That's up to them. The idea is you show respect to us. We show respect to you. That's how it works in here. Right? Right, Lee?'

'Right.' Anything to get rid of him.

'Right?' He tapped the floor with his heavy black boot.

'Right, Mr Sampson.' *Arsehole.*

'That's better.' He slid back the hatch.

'OK, Darren, I'm coming in with your cell mate now.'

Darren? I said, 'Hold on a sec.'

But the door was open and I could see inside.

'Hello, Leesie.'

Someone sat hunched in the shadows on the top bunk.

Leesie? I hadn't been called that since way back, and it gave me bad vibes.