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

Desperate Measures

written by

Laura Summers

published by

Piccadilly Press Ltd

All Text is Copyright © of the Author / Illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Desperate Measures

LAURA SUMMERS

PICCADILLY PRESS • LONDON

CHAPTER NINE

When I woke up, Jamie was standing over me with his finger on his lips.

'It's time to go Re,' he whispered.

I looked over at Vicky. She was curled up asleep in her bed. I didn't feel like going anywhere but Jamie picked up my school rucksack and we tiptoed out so she wouldn't wake up. We crept down the stairs in the dark. The house was fast asleep. I couldn't see where I was going so I grabbed Jamie's arm. I tripped over Vicky's shoes in the hall and banged my knee on the little telephone table. It hurt so bad I wanted to cry but Jamie put his hand over my mouth to stop me. We put on our trainers and coats. Then really quietly he undid the front door.

Out in the street it was quiet and still. The black cat from next door came up to us and rubbed his back round

my legs. I gave him a quick stroke and he stared at us as we disappeared off down the street. I bet he wondered where we were going. A car came up the road so we hid behind the letterbox but the man driving never saw us. Nobody did.

When we got near the woods everything was even darker so Jamie said he would switch on his torch to light the way. I don't think it was working properly because it only made a little tiny circle of yellow on the pavement.

'It'll warm up,' Jamie said, but it didn't.

I don't like the dark. When we first went to Paul and Sarah's they said we could each have our own room but I didn't like the shadows that came at night-time so I used to creep into Vicky's bed and snuggle up next to her. She'd give me a hug and stroke my hair. If I shut my eyes tight sometimes I could pretend it was Mum back home. In the end Sarah said that we'd better move my bed in and share the room so Vicky could get some sleep. Now my old room is painted ready for the baby and there are lovely new curtains with rabbits and ducks on them but I don't care, I'd rather be with Vicky.

The path down into the woods looked like a big black mouth.

'I don't like it,' I told Jamie, 'I'm not going down there.'

'It'll be OK. Anyway we'll be at the camp soon.'

I wouldn't budge so he got cross.

'We can't go back now Re!' he said, taking my arm and trying to pull me in.

I was stronger than him. He couldn't make me so in the

end he started walking down the path into the woods on his own. I watched him go and then looked around. I didn't know which way to go. I wanted Vicky. She always knew what to do. Suddenly I heard a really scary noise. The shadow things were coming to get me now I was on my own. They'd waited for Jamie to go off and now they saw their chance. I screamed then ran after Jamie as fast as I could.

When I caught up with him, he told me to stop bawling my head off or he'd whack me and then I would have something to cry about.

'But I'm scared of the monsters!'

He laughed. 'I'm not! If any monsters try anything I'll just give them a karate kick in their rudey bits then finish them off by thumping them one.'

Jamie's really brave. I'd just run away if there was a monster standing in front of me ready to pull my arms and legs off or suck out my blood.

It started to spit with rain but Jamie said it didn't matter because when we got to his camp we'd crawl inside his den and be warm and dry like two snug bugs in a rug. He got out two penguin bars that he'd pinched from the biscuit tin. He let me have the one with the red wrapper. The red ones taste the best. He said we'd have a competition to see who could make theirs last the longest. I won by loads.

I'd just finished the last little crumb when we got to the camp. It looked different in the dark. Some of the branches of the den had caved in and some had blown away. He said he'd mend it and he started pulling them all off and

piling them up on the roof again. It took him ages and he kept swearing when they fell off. When he'd done it we got out our sleeping bags, unrolled them on the floor of the den and crawled inside.

'I can smell dog wee,' I said.

'Shut up Re.'

It was like lying on prickly hedgehogs and my hands still felt cold. Jamie said he'd blow on them to warm them up. He made a funny 'hhrrrrr' noise like a dragon blowing out smoke. Ollie Stanmore nicks fags from his dad and he can blow smoke rings. He showed Jamie how to do it once but Jamie just took a couple of puffs and started coughing. Smoking is bad for you. Mrs Edwards told us that in our Healthy Bodies lesson. We watched a video of some lungs filling up with black stuff just like Marmite and a voice said 'smoking kills' really loudly. I kept telling Dad that after Mum had gone but he said he needed them to go with his beer. I said, don't have your beer then but he said he needed it to go with his fags. I said his lungs would fill up with Marmite and then he'd get really ill but he told me not to worry.

The good thing was that he did stop soon after that. He went off beer and just had a bottle of whisky every night instead. Sometimes Maxine lets me have some of her break-time drink from her bottle so I let her have some of mine. It's nice to have a change. Dad drank the whole bottle really quickly and didn't even bother about having a smoke. So that was OK. Jamie tried some once. Dad had fallen asleep when we were all watching Pet Rescue on the telly and

Jamie tried the last drops at the bottom of the bottle. He said it tasted like cough medicine but worse. I love cough medicine. Especially cherry flavour. Jamie was a right meanie, he didn't leave any for me to try.

I was just falling asleep when Jamie jabbed me with his elbow. 'Stop taking up all the room!' he hissed.

'I'm not taking up all the room!'

'You are, you fat lump!'

'I am not fat! Don't call me fat because I'm not fat!'

'Move over!'

He started pushing me. I pushed him back so he gave me a whopping great shove right in my side.

'Stop it you conkhog!' I yelled. He shoved me again. Harder. I rolled into the wall. Some of the branches fell down on my head. Jamie started going balloony.

'You're trashing my den!'

'It's a rubbish den!' I yelled back at him. 'You said we'd be as snug as bugs in a rug!'

Then we heard the noise outside.

'It's the monsters Jamie!'

'Shush!'

'With stabby beaks.'

'Shut up Re!'

'They can stab their way through branches.'

'Rhianna! Put a cork in it!'

'You've got to do something!'

But Jamie didn't get up. He just wriggled down in his sleeping bag till I could only see the top of his hair. Then he said in a funny wobbly voice that he wasn't going anywhere.

'But you said you'd do karate kicks if any monsters came. You promised!'

'Will you shut up!' He sounded really cross. I told him it wasn't my fault the monsters were outside waiting to bite off our heads. Jamie hissed if I didn't shut up straight away he'd bite off my head himself and save the monster the job of it. I started asking him how because he hasn't got pointy teeth but then we saw something coming towards us.

Jamie picked up one of the branches. He crawled out and started to wave it around his head. He didn't look very scary and his arm was shaking.

'Quick!' I screamed. 'Kick it in its rudey bits!'

CHAPTER TEN

'Just you try it, Jamie Davies!' I shouted, flashing my torch at him. 'And put that stick down before you hurt yourself!'

'What are you doing here?' asked Jamie.

'I've come to take you home.'

'Oh yeah?' said Jamie. 'That'll be interesting. Seeing as we don't have a home at the moment.'

'Jamie and me have run away,' said Rhianna. 'And now you can too.'

'I'm not staying,' I said, avoiding Jamie's eye. 'You've both got to come back.'

'Why? Who's going to miss us?' he muttered. 'No one wants us now. Can't you see that, Vicky? We're just in the way, that's all. More paperwork for Mrs Frankish.'

'What about Dad?' I said.

'What about him?' asked Jamie, pulling a face.

I looked down at the ground and kicked at some leaves with my trainer.

'Maybe he wouldn't want you to run away,' I said awkwardly.

But Jamie wasn't listening any more. He'd turned round and walked back to the shelter.

'I'm not going and you can't make me,' he muttered as he crawled back inside.

I looked at Rhianna. 'Come on, Re. If we go back now we won't get in trouble. No one'll even know we've been out.' I took my hand in hers. It was freezing.

'OK,' she grinned. 'If you come to my new school with me.'

'I can't, Re. They won't let me.'

'I'm not going without you and Jamie.'

'It might not be that bad, Re. They've got a pool. You love swimming. And you'd make lots of new friends and it won't be for ever . . .' My voice went all funny. Like I was fighting with the words and they were winning. I stopped and turned away.

'What's the matter?'

'Nothing,' I snapped, 'I've got something in my eye. That's all.'

I couldn't do it. I couldn't pretend any more that when we were split up it was only going to be for a while. It was all a big fat porky and I knew it. I'd known it when I'd packed my rucksack (just in case) and followed Jamie and Rhianna out the front door and down to the woods. Deep down I knew I wouldn't be coming back. Jamie was right.

We weren't wanted. I just hadn't wanted to admit it. Not out loud.

When we first went to school, the authorities thought Re could manage without any help but every morning at the school gate Mum would whisper to me, 'Keep an eye on your sister, Vicky.' So I did. I looked out for her. Kept the bad kids away. Protected her from danger. Every single day. And now Mum was dead I would always have to look out for her. For ever and ever. Amen. I took a deep breath.

'So let's see this fantastic den,' I said quietly, a few seconds later. With a big grin on her face, Rhianna took me over to the entrance and pulled me in. It looked a bit of a mess. Ten to one it was chock full of creepy crawlies too. Ugh! I hate things like that. I took my rucksack off my back and pulled out my sleeping bag.

'I thought you wanted to go "home",' said Jamie in his 'I won, so there' voice.

'I'm not leaving you two here on your own,' I said, unrolling my sleeping bag and laying it next to Rhianna's. 'Anything could happen.'

CHAPTER ELEVEN

When I woke up everything was green. It was like being in the Emerald City in The Wizard of Oz except it was cold and the top of my sleeping bag was all damp. I bet Dorothy didn't have a soggy sleeping bag. I bet hers was all nice and cosy and warm. Something tickly was crawling in my hair and I could hear Jamie and Vicky laughing somewhere. Then I remembered. I wasn't in the Emerald City, I was in Jamie's little den in the woods. We'd really done it. We'd really run away together. I wriggled out of my sleeping bag and crawled outside.

'Welcome to Camp Fun,' said Jamie in a funny posh voice when he saw me. 'And would modom care for some breakfast? I'm afraid we're all out of cereal.'

'Good!' I said. 'Cereal is pantyhose.'

'But we do have a bag of the finest jam doughnuts.'

He brushed some mud off the bag and opened it. Yippeee! I love doughnuts. Things were getting better and better. (I bet Dorothy didn't have jam doughnuts.) I put my hand in and pulled out a lovely, squishy, jammy blob.

'There's two and a bit each,' said Vicky, pulling out another one. 'And there's milk to drink.' She sniffed the carton then took a big swig. Milk dribbled down her chin.

'Vicky you mucky mess pup!' I laughed.

'Who cares?' said Jamie. 'This is *our* camp. We can do what we like. There's no rules, no adults to boss us around and no worries!'

'No worries! No worries! We've got no worries!' I grabbed Vicky's arm and we danced round and round, laughing and giggling.

Suddenly we heard a noise. Someone was coming. Vicky quickly pushed me back into the den and dived in after me.

'Don't make a sound!' she hissed in my ear.

Jamie pushed his way in and we sat there all in a tumble like we were playing musical bumps. Vicky had trodden on my foot and it was hurting like mad. What if it was Mrs Frankish? She would be so cross she'd turn us all into frogs. I didn't want to be a frog. I hate frogs. This wasn't how running away was supposed to be. Jamie said we weren't going to have any worries. I started crying and Vicky put her hand over my mouth. We listened for a few seconds. Someone was outside walking around. A face appeared at the little doorway.

Vicky and I screamed but Jamie laughed. It was his friend Sam.

'I was going to knock for you, like we said yesterday, but they're going barmy back at your house. There's a police car and everything.'

'A police car! Great!' said Jamie.

'It is not great,' snapped Vicky, 'It's awful. Think what Paul must be going through.'

'What's going on?' Sam asked.

'Sarah's in hospital,' Vicky told him. 'They can't foster us any more. We were going to be split up so we came here.'

'I'm not going back,' said Jamie.

'I know,' I said, 'maybe we could phone Paul up on Vicky's mobile and tell him we're OK but we've just run away.'

'Great idea,' said Jamie. 'The minute we do that, they'll find us.'

'They'll soon find you anyway,' said Sam. 'They're going to do a search – I heard the policeman telling some woman.'

'Mrs Frankish,' said Vicky.

'She's really a witch Sam,' I said. Someone had to tell him.

'Oh yeah?'

'Yeah. She'll probably get her broomstick out and fly overhead like in The Wizard of Oz,' I said, feeling all shivery.

'Don't you worry Rhianna – we'll just chuck a load of water over her and she'll melt into a trail of green slime.'

'Thanks Sam.' I liked him.

Vicky looked up. 'We can't stay here. We've got to go somewhere where they won't be able to find us. Somewhere a long way away. Somewhere we'll be safe.'

'Where's that?' I asked.

'I don't know, but if we don't get going right now, we won't have a chance.'

She started stuffing things back in my rucksack. 'Rhianna what the hell is all this?' she exclaimed suddenly, pulling out one of my baldy Barbies.

'Jamie told me to take all the things I needed. So I did.'

'I give up,' sighed Vicky, bundling the rest of my stuff out of the rucksack.

'Watch my Furby!'

She grabbed the photo Great Auntie Irene had taken. Jamie looked at it.

'That's it!' he shouted. 'We'll go and stay at Great Auntie Irene's.'

'But she's really old,' said Vicky.

'So? We can help her with chores and things she can't do any more . . . Carry heavy shopping and take Jip for long walks for her. It's perfect!'

'How are we going to get there Jamie?' asked Vicky. 'She lives miles away out in the country. Don't you remember the journey there, with you throwing up all the time and Rhianna asking if we were nearly there so many times that she drove Dad bonkers. Anyway, how much money have you got?'

'Twenty pence.'

'Rhianna?'

'Nothing.'

Vicky put her hand in her pocket and bought out some money. 'Forty pounds. Our birthday money. That won't get us far.'

'I've got an idea,' said Jamie, stuffing his sleeping bag back in his rucksack. 'Get your things together. We've got to hurry.'

Sam helped me bundle all my stuff back in my rucksack but Vicky was getting cross because Jamie wouldn't tell us where we were going. When we were all ready he just said, 'Follow me!' and charged off at a hundred miles an hour.