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

Worldshaker

written by

Richard Harland

published by

Templar Publishing

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

from templar publishing

I am thrilled that we are publishing Richard Harland's first book for young adults. Already an experienced fantasy writer, Richard's incredible imagination has constructed an alternative history where, after revolution and repression, Europe has become a wasteland and the great powers roam the earth in giant juggernauts. The ruling elite live in comfort on the top decks, while the 'filthies' power the giant engines down 'below'.

Richard's style of writing really brought the characters alive for me, capturing the stuffy formality of the top decks and the sweat and grime of 'below'. Even better, there's a sequel on the way!

Clare Gambell
Fiction Manager



Down, down, down. His very worst childhood nightmare had come true. Utter helplessness, nothing to clutch onto. Scrabbling at the smooth metal of the chute, he only added a corkscrew twist to his fall.

By the time he hit bottom, he was travelling at tremendous speed. All he knew was that something caught him under the feet and bounced him back up. For a moment he was spinning, over and over. Then he landed once more, this time on his back.

He lay winded. There was a rotten-egg smell and a dull pounding of machinery. He tried to open his eyes, then discovered they were already open. The world was a blur of hellish red and black.

'Somethin' else come down!' roared a voice nearby.

'Food!' cried another.

The red and black separated out into a band of red sky

between towering cliffs. The cliffs were actually walls of iron; the red sky was a glow reflected on smoke.

Then faces appeared, hideous faces with glinting eyes. One was disfigured by crinkled scar tissue, another lacked teeth, a third was clotted with yellow grease. As they loomed over him, Col had an impression of bare, sweating shoulders and chests. Surely they were hairy and dark as beasts!

Panic took over, his deepest fears re-surfaced. They had called him food! Filthy cannibals!

He struggled to rise up off his back. But he was in some kind of net and couldn't get a purchase. His left foot sank through between the cords, leaving him snagged and trapped.

'What we got here?' growled Scarface.

'Must be one of 'em,' said Greasy.

'Urr, fell down from above,' agreed Toothless.

Col could hardly hear for the noise of machinery, but he could read the words on their lips. Toothless was holding Col's book on mountains and volcanoes under his arm. He had already torn off the paper and string.

A wiry hand caught hold of Col's chin and twisted the angle of his head. 'Let's have a look at 'im,' said Scarface.

With a frantic tug, Col managed to pull his foot free. He felt the side of a hand in front of his mouth and bit down with all the strength of his jaws. Teeth into flesh, teeth meeting on bone.

'Aaaaaghh!'

As Scarface snatched his hand away, Col rolled

sideways on the net. Over and over – he didn't try to stand but kept rolling until he fell off.

'Gettim down!'

The three Filthies were on the opposite side of the net. Scarface stood wringing his hand and the other two had to run around him. It was just enough time for Col. He scrambled to his feet and fled.

Massive blocks of black metal ringed him in, but he found one narrow gap like a ravine. He darted along it, came to a T-junction, swung right into another ravine.

'Gettim down! Gettim down! Gettim down!'

He heard the yells of his pursuers, felt the vibration of their footsteps through the floor. Vague impressions flashed past, of pipes, bolt-heads, iron plates. But he had eyes only for the gaps between the black metal blocks. If he ran into a dead end, he was finished.

Catapulting round corners, he kept banging into bits of machinery: some oily, some grimy, some burning hot. He ducked under projections that seemed to leap out at him, jumped over ground-level ducts and sills.

All at once, the floor came to an end and there was nothing ahead but void. He skidded to a halt on the very edge. Through smoke and flying sparks, he made out the monstrous shape of a cylindrical steel tank, so big that he could see neither its top nor its bottom.

His pursuers were almost upon him when he spotted a ladder attached to the outside of the edge, going down. He flung himself onto it. Missing more rungs than he touched, he half-slid and half-fell for twenty feet.

A succession of floors rushed past in front of him, narrow passages between the dark bulk of the machinery.

Choosing a floor at random, he swung off the ladder and ran back in reverse direction. He had to run in a crouch because the ceiling was so low. The light dimmed: no longer a glow of red but a sickly yellow from occasional bulbs along the passage.

On either side were niches like wire cages, stacked one on top of the other. Four levels of them, each barely a couple of handsbreadths high – yet Filthies lived in them. Col glimpsed bodies curled up under rags, their backs turned to the passage. Sometimes they lay huddled in groups or pairs, pressed tightly up against one another. Col didn't like to think about what they might be doing. Dirty, disgusting Filthies!

He took a turn to the right, then a turn to the left. Shouts rang out behind: 'Where'd he go?' 'Which way?' Scarface, Greasy and Toothless were still on his trail. Glancing back over his shoulder, he saw bodies roll over and heads pop out of niches. With squinting eyes, the Filthies stared after him.

'Wassa noise?'

'Who's shoutin'?'

They were rousing up ahead of him too. It was hopeless. The news was travelling faster than he could run.

He came to an intersection and turned left again. Here rags hung across the roof of the passage, Filthy clothes spread out to dry. Forced to duck even lower, he noticed a row of empty niches on the bottom level. He flung himself

into one before his pursuers came round the corner, rolling as far as possible away from the light.

Lumpy objects jabbed into the small of his back. He dug them out and discovered three tiny figurines carved from pieces of coal.

The niche had other forms of decoration too. Lengths of string had been knotted onto the wire in a pattern round the sides, and tufts of hair had been fastened onto the wire overhead. Human hair? Col shuddered at the thought. What else could it be down here?