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

The Book of Lies

Written by

Mary Horlock

Published by

Walker Books Ltd

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

My name is Catherine Rozier, please don't call me Cathy. If you do I'll jump. Don't think I'm bluffing. It's a 3000-foot drop and even though I'm fat, I'm not fat enough to bounce. I'll dive headfirst into ye ancient Guernsey granite outcrops and then my mashed-up body will be washed out to sea. Of course, if I get the tides wrong I'll be stranded on the rocks with seagulls eating my eyes. I know for a fact they'll eat anything.

Killing myself wouldn't be too clever, but then neither was killing Nicolette. It's been a fortnight since they found her body and for the most part I am glad she's gone. But I also can't believe she's dead, and I should do because I did it. Yes. That's right. I killed Nicolette on these very cliffs and I'm frankly amazed that no one has guessed. When her body was dragged out the water, the verdict was she'd fallen. Ha-ha. (Only I'm not laughing.) Why hasn't anyone worked it out? The Germans were right, the people on this island are a bunch of half-wits. When they landed here in the Summer of 1940 they must've thought they'd won the War already. They called Guernsey A SMALL PARADISE.

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

Excusez-moi, but since when did a few manky palm trees make a paradise?

And when everyone finds out what I've done there'll be no more pretending what this island is. If you want me, come and find me. Assume I'll be skipping along Clarence Batterie, stretching out my hands towards St Peter Port, preparing to take the plunge. If this counts as my last will and testament I hereby bequeath my unspent book tokens from last year's prize-giving to my mother. I'd also like to make it clear that although my disappearance from this miserable rock coincides with Christmas, it has nothing to do with her New-Recipe Mexican Turkey.

Obviously she'll be upset. I was supposed to be the first in the family to go to university.

But at least I made front-page news (kind of, sort of, almost). Nic's death was all over the *Guernsey Evening Press*[1] for four days on the trot, and they even used one of the photos I took of her – the one in Candie Gardens where she's leaning back against a tree with her hair spread out across her shoulder. Did I mention she was beautiful? She got a full page because of how she looked. When you saw her perfect face, it was hard to imagine that she was ever such a Bitch. But she was. My so-called best friend was a Liar and a Traitor who deserved everything she got. I won't go into the details of how I know this, but I won the Inter-Island Junior Mastermind so, trust me, I'm rarely wrong.

Nicolette Louise Prevost had to die.

1 'Schoolgirl Killed in Cliff Fall at Clarence Batterie', *Guernsey Evening Press*, 3rd December 1985.

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

I now realise we should never have been friends, but some things are destined, as per Shakespeare and his tragedies. When she found me that night, on these very cliffs, I knew she was planning something deadly lethal. Do not think for a minute I am a violent person. Just because I like watching mindless violence on television doesn't mean I want to go round cutting throats (or that I know how to). I was scared and I panicked – do you blame me? It was pitch-black, and the rain beat down so hard I could barely open my eyes. When she came at me out of the darkness it was like my worst-ever nightmare. I screamed but the wind just took my voice away, and there was no one there to help me, which is how she always liked it. We fought, we kicked. She grabbed my hair but I grabbed hers too because I'm not stupid. It was like *Friday the 13th* (*Part 1* or 2). If only I could've ripped her head off and had fake blood spurt everywhere.

But, of course, it never happens like that. All I did was push her. Honest. That was all it took. One big push and she was gone. Gone. I still can't believe it. She vanished into blackness, and the churning sea swallowed her. How cool was that?

And fair enough that a part of me is glad. It's how it should be. I was doing the world (or Guernsey) a favour. Bullies should be punished, right? They are like the Nazis, picking on poor, isolated people and pulling them to bits. What I did was not an Abomination (excellent word). I should even feel a teensy bit happy and proud. So why do I feel cheated? Nic's gone and left me with this guilt, and I know I should go, too. Then somebody else on this stinking rock can feel guilty in my place.

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

But don't think I'm going quietly. First I'll write this down so that everybody knows. It's such a good story I could turn it into a book, and perhaps it won't look so bad once I see it there in black-and-white. After all, being a murderer isn't such a big deal for this little island. This is Guernsey, please remember, where there are plenty of secrets no one's ever meant to talk about. If you're British you'll know how us Guernsey people have been accused of all sorts. Usually we blame the Germans. Me? I blame Dad.[2]

The trouble started with him dying and no, I didn't kill him, although I admit I thought about it. Dad was the expert on Guernsey's Guilty Past – he had boxes full to bursting on that very subject. He was the one who first told me that History has a bad habit of repeating, and he had a bad habit of always being right. Mum was never interested, though, which was/is a bit of a problem.

Mum doesn't care much for real-life events and says the newspapers are just too depressing. She prefers her crime and murders bought by the yard from the Town Church jumble. It's funny, because she's a total prude and won't even swear but she'll plough through any amount of blood and gore as long as it's not real.

I'd love to pretend that none of this is real for her sake, at least. Poor Mum. How do I even begin to tell her what I did and why? If Dad were still here he'd know what to do. He'd start by saying that you have to go way back. Perhaps if Mum had done that sooner

[2] Emile Philippe Rozier (1938–84), late of Sans Soucis, Village de Courtils, St Peter Port; Guernsey's most famous/only Local/Modern Historian and the founder/editor of The Patois Press and author of its many historical guides to Guernsey and the other, less important Channel Islands.

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

she would've seen what was ahead. If I'm writing this for anyone I suppose I'm writing it for her. She knows what happened to Dad, and what happened to Dad is definitely connected to what happened to Nic. It's amazing, really, how everything connects. But what would you expect on this tiny island? We all know each other, or worse, we are related.

We talk about getting away and seeing the world, but we never do. We stay here making the same mistakes, over and over. I'm a murderer and it's not just my fault. I can blame the Germans, and I can blame my parents, and I can blame my parents' parents. Don't you see? Once you know your History, it does explain everything.

It turns out I was a murderer before I was even born.

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

12th December 1965

Tape: 1 (A side) 'The testimony of Charles André Rozier'
[Transcribed by Emile Philippe Rozier]

Faut le faire pour le register: this is the testimony of Charles André Rozier, a useless wretch now often thought a half-wit, the eldest son of Hubert Ebenezer Wilfred Rozier and Arlette Anne-Marie of Les Landes. Back when people talked to me, they only called me Charlie. I was born the year of Our Lord 1928, when this island of Guernsey was still that small and perfect paradise. Would that we could go back to that time, would that I was never born at all!

But I was born and I did live, and this miserable life is all I cling to. The rest was taken from me by one I counted as a friend. He was just a kid, like me, when he stole everything I valued. I call him many things. Murderer. Traitor. You can call him Ray Le Poidevoin. As solid a name as Guernsey granite, but common for this island. Let's hope he meets a common end.

Eh me, Emile, I want the wrongs righted but you won't read my story in the *Press*, and I don't want it printed there, neither. They say I am the guilty one, only out for revenge, but they have been lying since the War began and don't think it's over yet. Only today I

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

was on them cliffs by Clarence Batterie, knee-deep in pink campion and squinting at the sun, but every view was framed by German concrete. It is an abomination what has happened to this island! And as I stood there I imagined Ray was aside of me, watching the black clouds of death rise up from the horizon. It was just like in that summer of 1940, a hot summer that chilled me to the bone. I looked down into the crystal, twinkling sea and near surrendered to it. I felt my knees buckle and the ground slip away, but you know what stopped me? It was old Ray pulling me back like he did that once before. Emile, it is a curse on me! I am *ever* in his clutches.

Why is it we find this little rock so hard to leave? If only I were again on the streets of St Peter Port, the kid that I once was, holding tight to our mother's hand. I remember how we pushed our way through the chaos of weeping and shouting. It felt like the whole island was on the move and if ever there was a right time to go, it was then. The Germans were too close for comfort. Everyone knew what they was doing to France – we heard the guns loud and clear – so I was to be packed off to England with my classmates. But as I stood with my teachers on the quay I didn't feel scared. Words like war and death didn't mean too much to me, and England meant the ends of the earth, a million miles away.

Reckon there must've been something evil in me even then, since that day was the first time I'd ever felt special. Before, I was just p'tit Charlie with too-pale skin and twiggy legs who got poked and teased and laughed at, but as we marched up the gangplank I felt

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

something stirring deep inside. I've spent a long time trying to explain what it was that made me do it, and I cannot find a simple, single reason. Perhaps it was the fear and mayhem, perhaps it was the heat, or perhaps it was a bit of island madness. As that bright sun beat down I felt my cheeks burn up, and then I started screaming.

'I shan't go. You can't make me! You put me back!'

Back then I had a pair of lungs, me, and I could shout myself inside out. I was lashing out with my elbows and kicking like a donkey. Quel tripos! The boat was already moving as I lunged for the side and started going over, and I would've ended up in the water had it not been for Ray. He was right at the edge of the pier, holding on to the railings, leaning over to me. All I saw was a big, brown hand and then I felt this grip so tight it cut off all the blood. I was safe, or so I thought, as Ray Le Poidevoin reeled me in.

'What the hell do you think you're doing?' someone asked.

'He's going to stay and kill some Jerries!'

I laughed although I didn't know why, and I clambered with my new friend up onto the harbour wall. Someone tried to grab my shirt. Did I hear my mother shout? I turned to watch the boat move off and the sea open up. Then I turned back to St Peter Port, to the crowds that thronged forward. Nobody could touch me and I thought I was so clever: this was history in the making and I would help to make it. Did I realise then what a dark and damnable history it would be? No, but I should have had an inkling when Ray pointed upwards, into the rich blue, cloudless sky.

'Look!'

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

I lifted my head and nearly toppled backwards from the effort.

There were German planes circling high overhead, and they looked like little silver fish. The world itself was turning upside down and would never be righted.

'Now, *man amie*,' Ray whistled. 'Now the party's starting!'

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

13th December 1985, 5.30 a.m.

[My bedroom, 2nd floor, Sans Soucis, Village de Courtils, St Peter Port, Guernsey,[3] The Channel Islands, The World]

I'm not a party person. I've never liked crowds of people: all that pushing and shoving and possible sweat. But if I'm faithful to the facts, that's where my story starts. Saturday, 25th November 1984 to be precise. The day Nicolette had that stupid party. I should never have been invited, and everyone was morbidified that I was.

And by everyone I mean my classmates at Les Moulins College for Cretins, the only all-girls school on the island. They mostly hate me for no good reason. Just because I sit at the front of the classroom and get all the questions right and hand my homework in early. And they call me Cabbage because of it. Teenage girls are *très* mega horrible, and Nic was exactly like that but prettier. She'd been moved from the Grammar School, having been put down a year on account of her dyslexia. For some people (me) this would've been embarrassing, but

[3] To be more exact: Guernsey is part of the Bailiwick of Guernsey, which is part of the Channel Islands, which is only vaguely part of the United Kingdom and does not want to be part of Europe, and on maps of the World we don't even exist, so the World can bugger off.

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

my classmates took one look at her long blonde hair and big green eyes and turned dyslexic too.

It was pathetic how they fought to be her friend, scrambling to sit near her and jostling to get her attention. No better than boys now I think of it. I didn't join in because I never do, and maybe that impressed her. I was also busy with my Festung Guernsey[4] timeline, which secured me an A+ in our Living History project. There was a bit of a fuss over it, actually, because I'd included quotes from local people who'd had to work for the Nazis, and some of my classmates didn't like seeing their surnames underlined in luminous green. Nic thought it was hilariously funny, though.

But that wasn't why she invited me to her party. The truth is, she was the new girl in class and she invited everyone.

Even Vicky. Vicky Senner lives down the road from me and our mums have been friends for ever. She's called Stig because she's dark and hairy and is a champion builder of dens. Before Nic came along, she was the closest thing I had to a best friend, and we agreed to go to the party together.

I was (I'll admit) excited, and I was curious to see inside Nic's house. She lived on Fort George, one of those modern fancy housing estates[5] Dad used to call

4 Aka Fortress Guernsey, so-named by the Nazis after they occupied the island in 1940. FESTUNG denotes (excellent word) the vast amounts of building work ordered by Hitler to fortify/destroy Guernsey's natural beauty (see E.P. Rozier, THE CONCRETE TRUTH, The Patois Press, 1970).

5 Guernsey has a lot of these modern estates now, and the houses are very elaborate because they are funded by Swiss bankers whose vast/immoral earnings fiddle the local tax laws. Not that there are any tax laws, and not that the bankers are Swiss.

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

a TRAVESTY, and as per ever he was right. Les Paradis looked exactly like Nic's birthday cake – all sickly-rich and cream-coloured. It had chandeliers in every room and gold-plated knobs on the banisters.

Therese Prevost, Nic's mother, gave me the full guided tour.

Therese is very important to this story although I'm sure she'd rather not be. She's extremely beautiful, like an older and more French-polished version of Nic. You could easily make the joke that they were sisters, except that Therese had done all the fussing older women do: she'd had her hair multi-coloured at *Josef's* in Town Church Square and her lips tattooed a dried-blood red. And she always wore heels – this explains why she walked so slowly. I sometimes thought she floated across a room, and she had this way of holding her hands out to each side like she was waiting for her tan to dry.

The first time we talked properly was at the party. I was hiding in the kitchen, chatting away merrily to absolutely no one, and Therese wafted in. When she realised I was alone she smiled politely.

'Is everything OK?' she asked.

I made a joke about how I had lots of imaginary friends who were all very funny and not remotely dangerous.

'Ah,' she nodded, 'I'm always talking to myself as well. I say you get a better class of conversation that way. People frown on it but I find it therapeutic.'

I spread my hands flat on her Italian maybe-marble worktop and told her she had excellent good taste. That's when she showed me around the house. I was especially impressed by the automatic blinds in the

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

conservatory and the impulse jets in the shower. There were also mirrors everywhere, which reminded me of the house of Victor Hugo, the famous/tortured writer.[6] He'd lined his walls with mirrors so as to spy on his family and send them all mad. This was after he was thrown out of Jersey for smoking cannabis and kidnapping street children.

Therese was definitely riveted when I told her all of this, and I'm sure she would've liked to hear more if Nic hadn't interrupted.

'Sounds like a fucking perv to me,' she said, leaning against the doorframe.

I remember how she smiled as I spun round to face her. She could say the meanest things and still look so angelic.

Of course I told Nic she was very wrong, and that Victor Hugo was an artist-genius type, and therefore eccentric/not appreciated until dead.

After an awkward silence (which I'm used to), there came the screams from the sitting room. I hoped someone had been mutilated, but they were only playing Twister. We found Vicky crushing Shelley Newman, who had straddled Isabelle Gaudion, whose skirt had somehow vanished. And they thought I had problems.

Nicolette looked at me, rolled her eyes and nodded to the stairs. She didn't look back as I followed her up to

6 Victor Hugo (1802–85) is the most famous person to have ever lived in Guernsey (apart from Oliver Reed, who is an excellent drunkard and actor). He (Victor Hugo, not Oliver Reed) lived at Hauteville House in St Peter Port, which is now a museum, which is never open (see E.P. Rozier, VICTOR HUGO'S HOUSE – AN INVENTORY, The Patois Press, 1978).

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

her bedroom, she didn't even turn round once we were inside – she just went and stood by the window with the light surrounding her. Then she raised up her arms to pull her hair off her shoulders and spun back, flashing all of her midriff. That was one of her little moves. She always wore short tops that gaped and therefore showed her skin.

'Sit down.'

I plonked myself on the deluxe-goose-feather-down-duvet-you-can't-even-buy-in-Creasey's and watched Nic crouch in front of me. She was rummaging under the bed for something.

'Your mum's nice,' I said, trying not to look down her bra.

'She's a dumb whore.'

I'd only ever heard of whores in the Bible and Jackie Collins, so I got a bit excited.

Then Nic stood up and I saw the bottle – whisky. It had been hidden in a sock. She unscrewed the top and took a long gulp, and then offered it to me.

'Thanks,' I pretended to examine the label. 'Whisky is my favourite tipple.'

She laughed. 'Do you always talk like an old man?'

People are generally impressed by my use of the English language, so I was annoyed and drank quickly and half-choked. It's funny because now I can drink a small bottle of it a day, and often do. Well, that's not funny. Anyway, as I coughed up my guts Nic sank onto her bed and twirled strands of hair around a finger.

'Pathetic party, isn't it? Next we'll be pinning the tail on the donkey. I'd rather slit my own throat.' I felt her eyes turn to me. 'You're a funny one: always on your

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

own, acting like you know better . . . how come you weren't joining in downstairs?'

I focused on the glossiness of her lips.

'Because I do know better and I don't like games.'

She nodded. 'Mum thought it was something else. She thinks you're sad because your dad died.'

I stared at Nic's lovely oval face. I scanned her chin with its tiny dimple, the glossy lips, the outlined eyes.

'I don't feel sad at all.' I took another swig of whisky. 'Besides, my dad always said we carry the dead with us, so in theory he's right here.'

Nic blinked. 'If you're trying to freak me out it won't work.'

I handed the bottle back to her.

'Who taught you to do your make-up?'

'Taught myself.'

I must've felt brave on account of the whisky.

'Teach me.'

Nic pulled a shiny red bag off her dresser and made me sit up straight. We were suddenly very close, facing each other. She sucked her bottom lip.

'Where to start?'

I stared into her eyes, probably (definitely) hypnotised. I remember how her bangles clinked against me, I remember the smell of her perfume (she called it *Anus-Anus* but actually it smelled like lilies). She had different coloured creams and powders and pencils and she used a bit of all of them. It was strange, letting her prod at my cheeks and pull back my eyelids, but it made me feel dead special.

Then Isabelle burst in and ruined it.

'There you are! What are you doing? *Oh-my-God! Oh-my-God!*'

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

(Isabelle was very keen on her amateur dramatics.)

She grabbed the whisky and threw herself on the floor, giggling.

Vicky was standing behind her.

'A private party, is it?'

NB: A lot of Guernsey people end their sentences with 'eh?' or 'is it?', which I think sounds common-as-mud. Dad said it demonstrated the fact that we are more French than English.[7] It is also possibly a sign that Vicky/French people are simple-minded.

'Come on in,' Nic was smudging blusher on my cheek, 'I've finished. You look great, Cat. Much better.'

No one had ever called me Cat before and I liked it a lot, but Nic was so close it was like she was going to kiss me and I thought she had to be teasing me. There'd been some rumours, you see. Aside from associating me with a leafy vegetable I was also sometimes called G.A.Y. A few months earlier I'd been in the hockey pavilion having a lively chat *toute seule* and two girls in the Fourth Year had caught me. They'd claimed I was rifling through their gym gear when I was only sitting on it. Very upsetting, it was. Especially since I didn't ever think about sex, unlike every other girl in my class. They might've gone round pinging each other's trainer bras and pretending to smoke their tampons but I wasn't bothered with any of that.

Nic wouldn't let anyone else near the whisky but she made me drink a lot. I gulped back as much as I could, and was feeling queasy by the time she stood up.

[7] The French only ever shrug and say 'n'est-ce pas?' They also add on an extra 'me' and 'te' just for effect and sadly Guernsey people do the same (e.g. 'Where are you going, you?' or 'I've got three heads, me'). It's just embarrassing.

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

'OK, I'm not playing nanny to you lot anymore. I'm off to have some *real* fun.'

Real fun meant having sex with someone called Simon, who was 17 and worked at Fruit Export and drove a lime-green Ford Capri. They did it at Jerbourg Point and Pleinmont and Le Gouffre and he was very good with his tongue but his willy had a kink in it. (I have no idea what that means.)

Nic asked us to name our best sex positions. Isabelle suggested doggy-paddle and Vicky collapsed under the weight of her own giggles. I felt I had to say something.

'If you're going to do it out-of-doors, don't go on the cliffs near me. They found evidence of a mass grave left over from the German Occupation.'

Isabelle rolled her eyes and muttered 'Here we go', so I swore on Dad's (more recently) dead body and made everyone embarrassed.

Par le chemin, although I have sometimes made things up, this is rock-solid-Guernsey-granite truth. They were found five years ago, and were believed to date back to the 1940s. Dad said it was obvious they were the bodies of poor foreign slave workers[8] who'd been brought over by the Nazis to build their secret bunkers and possible gas chambers but the Guernsey Tourist Board hushed it up because it was in big trouble.[9] Of

8 Between 1941 and 1944 about 16,000 foreign slave workers were brought over to the islands to build new defences. A lot were starved, beaten and worked to death. Dad had tracked down some survivors and recorded interviews with islanders telling him what they'd seen. It was properly gory and I can't believe people let it happen. (But they did.)

9 'The Costa Brava Costa Nothing' according to the *Guernsey Evening Press*. (Tourism is in a slump due to cheaper flights to/cheaper cocktails in places of guaranteed sunshine.)

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

course, Dad hypervented as per THE SHOCKING WHITEWASH and wrote a trillion letters to the newspapers on this very subject, but his letters were never published, which made him hypervent more. (I had a theory that all this hyperventing killed him, but that's just one of a few.)

Nic liked my little story of shameful lies and death and licked her Boots 17 Cherry Pie-coated lips.

'Where do you go with your boyfriend then?'

Vicky said I'd never had much luck with lads since I'd always so closely resembled one. (Ha. Ha.)

My supposed-to-be best friend then explained how, on our last outing to Beau Sejour Leisure Complex, I'd been stuck in the turnstiles until someone had given me a push, saying: 'There you go, young man.'

My hair was Evidently (good word) too short back then. I hate my hair. It's very fine and straw-like.

Nic chuckled. 'Some people go for pale and interesting. That's what you are: pale and interesting.'

She winked at me then, and it felt warm and light, like in photosynthesis.

That was all it took, really: the drink, the smile, the wink. I was different and Nicolette liked different.

Maybe she sensed the cosmic and magnetic connection between us.

Maybe she guessed I was ocean-full of deep-sea depths.

Or maybe she wanted someone fat and frumpy to make her feel better than she already was.

The plain fact is, I didn't care – it felt better than the Yellow Sash of Excellence, which I'd already worn three terms on the trot – so I decided not to think too

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.

much about it. Nic was like the sister I'd never had but always wanted.

And remember: two sisters, like two brothers, can be completely different.

Copyright © 2011 John M. Cusick and Walker Books Ltd. All rights reserved.