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

Undead Pets 3: Night of the Howling Hound

Written by

Simon Hay

Illustrated by

Simon Cooper

Published by

Stripes Publishing an imprint of Little Tiger Press Group

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk



CHAPTER ONE

THWACK!

Joe gave the tent peg a thump with the mallet, then tugged the rope to make sure it was secure.

"Awesome!" said Matt, who was pegging in the other side. "Looks like we're the first to finish!"

It was the first day of their school camping trip to the Wolf's Leap Activity Centre on the edge of Brockton Forest.

"Not even a tornado would shift this thing!" said Ben, poking his head out of the tent.

But just then a tornado did shift it; a tornado in the shape of Bradley Piker, or Spiker, as he was known. He raced over, and hurled himself at the side of the tent, making it bulge inwards.

"Hey!" yelled Joe. "Watch it!"

"Says who? This is my tent, too," said Spiker. "I'm in with you guys tonight!"

"What?" Joe groaned. He really didn't want to share a tent with Spiker – he was the gobbiest trouble-maker in the class.

"Yep! Mr Hill says I'm with you. I hope you're not going to wet your pants and call for your mummy when it gets dark tonight, Joe Edmunds!"

Joe shot him a dirty look.

"Especially if the wolf starts howling," smirked Spiker. "The ghost wolf of Brockton Forest…"

"Yeah, yeah," said Joe. "I know… Hundreds of years ago a wolf escaped from some hunters by leaping off some rocks." As he spoke he glanced over Spiker's shoulder and noticed that there was

UNDEAD PETS

a jagged rock face, just above the tree line.

"But don't forget the best bit," said Spiker, in a spooky voice. "After it escaped, the wolf came back and stalked the hunters, catching them one by one, ripping out their throats and crunching their bones…"

Matt grinned. "You made that bit up."

"And people say," added Spiker, his voice dropping to a ghoulish whisper, "that you can still hear the ghost of the wolf, howling in the woods at night…"



As he spoke, the wind picked up and a cloud drifted over the afternoon sun, darkening the sky. Joe shivered. After all the weird stuff he'd seen, thanks to Uncle Charlie's Egyptian amulet, he could just imagine a ghost wolf lurking in the forest watching and waiting…

"Hey, you lot!" came a shout. "If you've finished setting up your tent, I need some volunteers to help collect firewood!"

It was Lizzy – one of the campsite activity leaders. She was small and wiry, with short red hair and a nose stud. According to their teacher Miss Bruce, she was a champion rock climber. "Come on! It'll be dark before we get the fire built!"



By the time they had built the fire, the camp helpers had prepared a campfire dinner.

"I'm starving," said Joe, sitting down next to

UNDEAD PETS

Matt, with a plate piled high with bangers and beans. There were twenty children from Joe's class there, along with Miss Bruce and the headmaster, Mr Hill. They sat together on logs arranged in a circle round the fire, tucking into their dinner.

As Joe shovelled in his last spoonful of beans he heard a strange noise in the distance…



"What was that?"

Matt took a bite of sausage and shrugged. "I didn't hear anything."

AWWWHOOOOOOOOOO...

"Listen! There it is again!" Joe peered out, but it was getting dark and he couldn't see anything. "It's coming from over there."

Matt stopped scoffing for a second, and listened. Then he smiled impishly.

"You're hearing things, Joe! Must be all the talk of ghosts – freaking you out."

But before Joe could reply, Mr Hill blew a whistle to get everyone's attention.



"When everyone's finished eating, I want you all to help tidy up. You lads over there," he said, pointing to Joe, Matt and a few others,

UNDEAD PETS

"collect the plates. And that group over there, you'll be on dishes tonight..." There were groans from the dishwashing group but Mr Hill went on. "You'll be swapping jobs tomorrow night! Remember, camping is about team work – and everyone has to help. I remember when my wife and I went camping with friends in the Cairngorm Mountains. Everyone had to pitch in – especially when the blizzard started..."

Joe and Matt grinned at each other and rolled their eyes. Mr Hill had already spent the entire coach ride boring the class silly with stories about his camping adventures, and now he was off on another one. They quickly stacked the plates and carried them to the sinks.

"Want to hear a ghost story?" Ben said, putting his torch beam under his chin so that his face lit up like a ghoul. "It was a dark, stormy night, and a group of kids were camping in a creepy forest..."

AWWWHOOOOOOOOOO...

"Hey," Joe interrupted. "Did you hear that?"

"Not again!" giggled Matt. "What is it this time Joe, not another ghostie?"

"No, it sounds like an animal howling."

"A ghost wolf?" said Matt. "Yeah, yeah, very funny, Joe!"

"Let's go take a look in the forest!" said Joe. "Come on."

"What? Now?" Ben glanced at the trees. "In the dark?"

Joe nodded. "Why not!"

"I'm in!" grinned Matt. "What about you, Ben?"

"Definitely!"

Joe pulled his torch out of his pocket. "Head for the tents," he whispered. "Everyone will think we've gone to fetch something. Then we can double back to the trees."

As they walked into the forest, the darkness

UNDEAD PETS

closed in. There was a distant rumble of thunder.

"This way," whispered Joe, heading for a path he'd spotted earlier. He flashed his torch left and right, the beam catching movements in the bushes. "Did you see that rat?"

"Yeah, it was massive," breathed Matt.

As they went deeper into the woods, the trees grew denser and the undergrowth thicker. There was no light from the moon now. Joe's heart beat faster. This was how Uncle Charlie must feel when he set off on an expedition!



There was another rumble of thunder, closer this time. And Joe heard the howling again, followed by the sound of twigs breaking and bushes being pushed aside. Something crashed through the bracken.

"I think it's over there!" Joe hissed, flashing his beam at the bushes. "Spread out."

Matt moved off left, Ben headed right, their torch beams bouncing around the trees. After a few minutes, Matt called back, "Do you see anything?"

"No!" Ben shouted.

Their voices were much further away than Joe expected. He was just about to call them when there was a sudden crack of lightning, and he saw a shape lunging towards him, its sharp teeth flashing white. It crashed into him, sending him flying.

He gasped, waiting for the wolf to lock him in its jaws and sink its fangs into him…



CHAPTER TWO

Then he felt a big scratchy tongue lick his face. He opened his eyes – it was a big hairy dog!

"Hello Joe," growled the dog. "I need your help!"

Joe gasped. The creature wasn't a ghost wolf – but it wasn't much better either. *Not another undead pet,* Joe thought. *They wouldn't leave him alone!*

Joe wriggled free, wiping sticky drool off his face with his sleeve. He flashed his torch in the animal's face. It wasn't a pretty sight. Green drool

hung from its chops and its red eyes bulged out like snooker balls.

"Look, I'd like to help you, really I would," Joe shuffled uncomfortably, "but I'm on a school trip. I'm off duty as protector of undead pets, OK!"

But it wasn't OK. The dog gave a deep throaty growl. Then its tail drooped. Its eyes boggled. And it started howling again.

"Stop it!" Joe hushed. He was pretty sure no-one else could hear it. But the noise was horrendous!

AWWWHOOOOOOOOOO...

As the dog howled, its fur stood up on end.

"Look!" said Joe. "I can't help you. Clear off into the woods and stop making that noise!"



The dog did stop howling. But it wasn't listening to Joe any more. It was staring at something over his shoulder. Then its ears picked up and its tail began to wag. And…

"Squirrel!" it suddenly yelped. And it took off like a bullet.

For a few seconds Joe just stood there, wondering if the dog would come back. It didn't.

"Joe…? JOE!" Matt suddenly appeared by his side. "Are you OK? I thought I heard you shout."

"Yeah," said Ben, arriving a few seconds later. "You sounded like you were talking to someone."

"Er… I just tripped over a tree root," mumbled Joe.

Matt grinned. "And what about the noise you heard? Did you see anything?"

"Nope." Then Joe felt a few drops of rain on his head. "Maybe we should head back to camp. It's starting to rain…"

But as they retraced their steps, they saw

UNDEAD PETS

two shadowy figures waiting for them. An enormous flashlight shone in their faces, making them blink. It was Mr Hill and Lizzy.

"Where have you been?" demanded Mr Hill.

Joe took a deep breath. "Er… We heard a noise, and thought we'd take a look."

Lizzy smiled kindly. "Well, you're not the first, and you won't be the last. But it's camp rules – you're not allowed to head off on your own, OK?"



They nodded, studying their shoes intently.

"Go on then," said Mr Hill sternly. "Back to camp! And don't let me catch you wandering off by yourselves again, or you'll be on the first bus home!"

When they got back to their tent, Spiker was smirking. Joe's eyes narrowed. "Did you tell Mr Hill that we'd gone to the woods?"

Matt nudged him. "Better drop it, Joe. We don't want to get in more trouble tonight."

Joe scowled and rummaged in his bag for his wash bag. They got ready for bed in silence.



When Joe opened his eyes the next morning, the sun was shining. He wriggled out of his sleeping bag and pulled on his jeans. Just then a bell rang…

"Breakfast in ten minutes," Miss Bruce called. "Mr Hill's doing a fry-up!"

Spiker groaned. Ben buried his head under his covers and Matt looked groggy. Joe grabbed his toothbrush and headed for the wash rooms.

But as he passed Mr Hill's tent, he heard a strange chomping noise. Joe froze. No! No! He groaned. Please don't let it be that dog…

Joe glanced across the camp. He could see Mr Hill busy cooking breakfast on the barbeque. He looked around to check no one was watching and stepped inside the headmaster's tent. He gasped. It was chaos. Clothes were strewn across the floor and right in the middle was the dog, chomping through a packet of biscuits.

"What are you doing in here?" Joe said, grabbing the biscuits out of its mouth.

"Brian won't mind!" said the dog.

"Brian? Brian who?" Joe felt a lurch in his belly. "You don't mean, Brian Hill? My headmaster?"

A stringy piece of green drool dribbled from the dog's mouth to the floor. "Yeah," it growled.

"My name's Dexter. I was Brian's dog."

Could this crazy animal really once have been his headmaster's pet?

"JOE EDMUNDS! WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?"

Joe spun round. Mr Hill stood in the doorway, his face pulsating with rage.

Dexter started barking with excitement at the sight of his owner. But Mr Hill couldn't see or hear a thing.

He snatched the biscuits from Joe's hands. "How dare you go into someone else's tent and

UNDEAD PETS

touch their things? What on earth are you doing in here?"

A few weeks ago Joe had taken the blame when a zombie hamster had devoured Mr Hill's lunchbox. And now it looked like he'd have to do the same again.

"Er… Well…" Joe stammered, desperately trying to think of an excuse.

Mr Hill shook his head. "I'm not interested in hearing any of your feeble excuses. As punishment, you can wash the breakfast dishes! Now help me tidy up this mess."



CHAPTER THREE

As soon as Mr Hill let Joe go, he marched off to a quiet corner of the camp. He checked no one was around, then turned on Dexter. "You're nothing but trouble!"

"It's not my fault!" growled the dog. "You should help me!"

"I can't!" Joe sighed. "People will think I'm nuts if they see me talking to myself." He glanced over to the table where the class were lining up to collect their breakfast. He saw Spiker smirking over at him.

"And what's he looking at!" said Joe, scowling back.

"Who? Snot Shot?" said Dexter.

"What?"

"Snot Shot."

"What are you talking about?"

"That's what Brian calls him – he's got names for all of you! Silly names he uses when he's not at school."

Joe's brain boggled. "Funny nicknames? I didn't know he had a sense of humour." Then he glanced over at Spiker again. "So why does he call him Snot Shot?"

But Dexter didn't need to explain, because right at that moment Spiker stuck his finger up his nose and had a good poke around, before taking out a bogey and flicking it at the kid in front of him.



"Come and have your breakfast," Miss Bruce yelled, spotting Joe hanging back from the group. "Before it's all gone."

"Before Hoover Head eats it!" added Dexter.

"Who's that?"

"Hoover Head – him, over there. That's what Brian calls him."

Joe glanced over to see Nick the Stick – the tallest lad in the class, piling his plate high with food.

"Come on, Joe!" called Miss Bruce again.

"Look, I've got to go," hissed Joe to Dexter.

Joe went to join the others and didn't look back.

"Hey Joe, want a biscuit?" called Leonie, one of the girls in his class.

"No, he's already had some," giggled Harry, Spiker's best mate.

There were a few more sniggers and giggles as Joe got his breakfast and went to sit down

next to Matt.

"What's going on?" he hissed.

"Spiker heard Mr Hill telling you off for taking his biscuits," whispered Matt. "And he's told everyone about it."

Joe looked around for Spiker, but he was nowhere to be seen. Dexter had disappeared too. He just hoped it was for good this time!



"Right!" called Lizzy. "Gather round and I'll tell you what we've got planned for you today!"

Joe cheered up. This was more like it!

"In a few minutes we'll be starting the aerial adventure! The first part involves tackling the giant climbing wall, followed by a tree-tops wire walk…"

"YES!" Joe breathed.

"…When you reach the end, there's an amazing zip wire over the woods!"

The kids whispered to each other excitedly.

"Wait a minute!" said Lizzy. "There's more! After lunch you'll be going underground into our tunnel trail for a treasure hunt. And finally – my favourite bit," she beamed as she spoke, "tonight, we'll be taking you on a moonlight safari through the woods to see what wildlife you can spot."

"Like wolves?" Spiker shouted.

"Awhoooooooooo!" howled Harry.

"Who knows?" said Lizzy. "But before you go looking, you've got to get yourselves up that wall, so come on, follow me!"

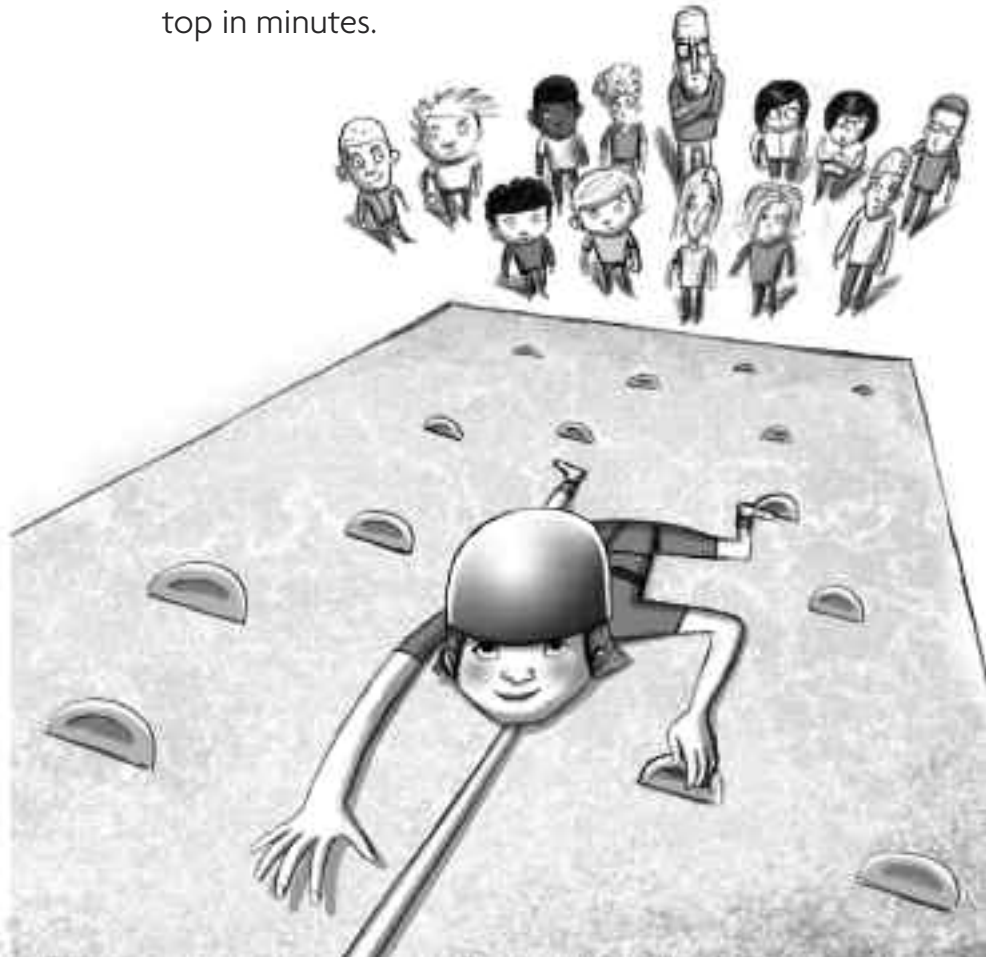
"I'll never get up there!" wailed Leonie, as soon as she saw the climbing wall.

It was thirteen metres tall, with several routes up the side, colour-coded for difficulty. Two more instructors, Finn and James, were waiting for them at the wall and a third, Chrissie, was already at the top.

UNDEAD PETS

"I'll climb first," said Lizzy, after showing them how to put on the safety harness. "Then you can follow, one at a time."

Lizzy was an amazing climber. Joe watched her stay close against the wall, her hands and feet easily finding the holds. She reached the top in minutes.



"I definitely can't do that!" wailed Leonie. "It's too high!"

Joe was just about to tell her to put a sock in it when he spotted something even more annoying. Bounding through the trees towards him was Dexter.

"Who's next?" Lizzy called down.

Spiker shoved Joe forward. "Go on, superman!" he said sarcastically.

Joe was glad to go first so he could get away from Dexter! But the dog was too fast. He arrived just as Joe was stepping into the harness.

"Are you ready to help me now?" barked the dog, leaping about at Joe's feet and letting off an enormous fart.

Joe tried to ignore Dexter, but it was impossible to ignore the stink that surrounded him.

"Urghhh!" groaned Spiker, holding his nose. "What's that?" Then he sniggered. "Have you

UNDEAD PETS

pooed your pants, Joe? Is the climb too scary for you?"

"Shut up, Spiker!" said Joe, but some of the other kids were already sniggering.

"Settle down," said Mr Hill sternly. "Come on, Joe! Get going!"

Joe found the handholds easily and in just a few minutes, he was halfway up. Another five minutes and he was pulling himself over the top.

Lizzy beamed at him. "You're a natural!"

But before Joe could say anything, he heard a howl from the bottom of the wall. He could see Dexter scrabbling about, as though he was trying to climb up after him, before finally giving up and bounding away.

