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

Sylvie and Star

Written by

Julia Green

Published by

Oxford University Press

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk



OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP
Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Text © Julia Green 2013
Inside illustrations © Paul Howard
The moral rights of the author and illustrator have been asserted

Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN: 978-0-19-275796-8

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in Great Britain
Paper used in the production of this book is a natural,
recyclable product made from wood grown in sustainable forests
The manufacturing process conforms to the environmental
regulations of the country of origin

Chapter 1



London: May

Sylvie half-walked, half-ran along the pavement on her way home from school, taking care not to step on the joins between the paving slabs. The words of a song jiggled round her head in time with her feet: *Don't step on the cracks, only on the squares, or you'll get taken by the bears . . .*

She ran past JJ's hair salon, past the Fat Friar fish and chip shop and the Express supermarket. She paused to catch her breath at the old-fashioned fruit-'n'-veg shop. Cauliflowers and aubergines, sweet potatoes, bananas, and mangos were piled outside on a table covered with pretend green-grass matting.

The nearest *real* green grass was a mile away, at the park, and it wasn't very green even there—patches of mud and yellowing grass where boys kicked footballs and teenagers swung and smoked on the swings, looking bored.

Sylvie started running again and kept going until she got to the traffic lights. She stopped to wait for the lights to change so she could cross the road. She looked up. High above the shops and office blocks that lined both sides of the street she could see a slice of pale blue sky. Sunlight glinted off the plate-glass office windows. Down here at pavement level you'd hardly know it was a sunny afternoon. Cars and lorries belched out diesel fumes. An empty plastic bag got sucked up in the after-draught of a passing bus, and whirled into the air for a few seconds, flapping like a wounded bird.

I hate it here! Sylvie thought fiercely.

But it was nearly the May holiday: just one more school day to go. And holidays meant *Italy*, and Nonna and Gramps's house in the middle of fields and woods with mountains all around and a silence so deep and beautiful that Sylvie could almost cry at the thought of it. All that, and Bella.

Bella was Nonna and Gramps's dog: a German Shepherd cross with silky fur: a mix of black and silver-grey and squirrel brown. She had brown eyes and pointed ears and the gentlest face. When Sylvie stayed at Nonna and Gramps's house, Bella hardly left her side. She padded after her round the garden. She walked with her over the fields and up through the trees in the forest . . .

The lights changed. Sylvie crossed with everyone else: a crush of people all scurrying home from shopping or school or work.

It was the thing Sylvie wanted more than anything, a dog of her own. But you can't keep a dog if you live in a flat, in a city, and your mum and dad are out at work all day. *It's not fair on the dog,* Mum said every time Sylvie asked.

It's not fair on me, either, Sylvie thought.

She turned off the main road, went down the tree-lined street with its large houses on either side. The trees had overgrown the circles of ground they'd been planted in years ago; their roots had pushed up and spread and made the tarmac buckle and crack. Poor trees! Did it hurt, pushing their roots up against the hard pavement?

Nearly there, now. She hurried down another smaller street where the houses were all joined together in terraces. Four red doors in a row, then a cut through to the estate and the blocks of flats where Sylvie lived with Mum and Dad, three staircases up.

She checked who was hanging about today. Mr Patel from the ground floor flat was putting a small bag of rubbish into one of the big green wheelie bins. He waved at her. She waved back. She pushed the heavy door to the stairwell and started to climb. Twelve steps to the first landing. Then another twelve. And twelve more. There was her blue front door. She was home.

She smelt onions and garlic the minute she opened the door. Mum must be back from work already. Good. Sometimes she was late on Thursdays—staff meetings, after-school clubs, whatever. Mum was a teacher at a comprehensive school. The same school where Sylvie would go in just over a year.

'Hi, Mum!'

'*Ciao, bambina!*' Mum's cheeks were flushed. She was stirring tomato and basil sauce at the stove. 'Good day at school? What did you do today?'

'Nothing much,' Sylvie said, the same as she always did after a school day. 'I'm just going to change.'

Taking off school uniform was like stepping out of the wrong skin and becoming *her* again. The real Sylvie. She pulled on jeans and a T-shirt. She undid her hair so it tumbled down her back, messy and comfortable. She went back into the kitchen and sat down at the table.

'There's a postcard for you,' Mum said, moving a pile of books out of the way.

Sylvie picked it up. The picture was a photo of the medieval bridge over the river Serchio. She turned it over.

We are looking forward to seeing you!
We will be waiting at Pisa airport.
Bella is getting excited about all the long walks
she'll have when you're here.
Sunny and hot today. 30°C.

Love
Nonna and Gramps.



'You could start packing,' Mum said. 'Just a small bag this time, seeing it's only for one week. Then we can take it as hand luggage and that will speed things up at the airport.'

Something began to unwind, deep inside Sylvie. Two days to go. She went to the living room window at the front of the flat and opened it wide. The sounds of the city drifted up: traffic, sirens, the constant roar that never stopped, even at night. Far above her, a silver streak of an aeroplane climbed up into the blue

sky. Hard to imagine the people inside, it looked so tiny. That would be Mum and her, in two days' time. The happy, excited feeling bubbling up inside her made her feet want to dance.