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

Have a Little Faith

Written by

Candy Harper

Published by

Simon & Schuster Children's Books

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

First published in Great Britain in 2013 by Simon and Schuster UK Ltd
A CBS COMPANY

Copyright © 2013 Candy Harper

This book is copyright under the Berne Convention.
No reproduction without permission.
All rights reserved.

The right of Candy Harper to be identified as the author
and illustrator of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with
sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Simon & Schuster UK Ltd
1st Floor
222 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8HB

Simon & Schuster Australia, Sydney
Simon & Schuster India, New Delhi

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

PB ISBN: 978-0-85707-823-0
EBook ISBN: 978-0-85707-824-7

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters,
places and incidents are either the product of the author's
imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to
actual people living or dead, events or locales
is entirely coincidental.

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

www.simonandschuster.co.uk
www.simonandschuster.com.au

MONDAY 5TH SEPTEMBER

That's it. I am never going to school again.

I was woken up this morning by Dad doing some brutal curtain opening and entirely unnecessary breathing and existing. He said, 'Wake up, sweetheart. First day back at school!'

Urgh. He only calls me 'sweetheart' when he wants me to do some hideous job like laying the table or kissing Granny. Then he started his New Term Lecture.

'Let's put last term behind us. I want you to really do your best for me, Faith. That's all I'm going to say. That and be good.' He tried to look stern. 'Be *really good* because you wouldn't like the uniform at military school.'

Please. My elderly relatives (AKA: Mum and Dad) have made such a fuss about me treating Year Ten as a 'fresh start' that you would think that my school career so far had consisted of maiming and mentally scarring teachers on a daily basis.

Whereas, we all know it was just that one time.

Despite all this nonsense, I was actually looking forward to going to school this morning. I even made the effort to straighten my hair *and* open my eyes *and* get out of bed (not in that order because the last time I tried that there was some sheet scorching and Dad warned me that the fire station are getting fed up of him ringing them 'every five minutes').

So, there I was, arriving in my tutor room on the dot of 9.07 (ish), quite prepared to do my best at ignoring Mrs Hatfield dribbling on, so Megs and I could have a good chat about important things like finding some actual male-type boys to spend time with this term, when our head of year, Miss Ramsbottom, appeared and glared at me. Miss Ramsbottom is about nine-foot tall with shiny black hair and very pale skin. She looks like a supermodel who died and was brought back to life by vampires. Her eyes are always rimmed in eyeliner and it is quite hard to ignore her glaring at you, so once I'd finished explaining to Megs how to apply blusher to create the illusion of cheekbones, I was forced to give Miss Ramsbottom my attention. Miss Ramsbottom does not like me and she was clearly enjoying herself while she told us some truly tragic news.

Megs and I are being split up!

It is outrageous. Megs has been my best friend ever since Year Seven; I don't think I could cope without her to carry out all the most special duties of friendship like feeding me sweeties when my hands are busy texting and checking my hair looks good from the back. But Miss Ramsbottom doesn't care about any of that. She is moving me to a different tutor group with no thought to how I will live without my best friend. Now who will give me

piggybacks when I'm tired or tell me when I've got one of those dangly bogies?

What, you may ask, could we possibly have done to deserve such despicable treatment? I asked the same question, in a polite yet assertive fashion, 'Why, Miss? *Why? Oh why? Oh why?*'

The evil Miss Ramsbottom did some wittering and blithering and nonsense-talking about some 'incidents' last term. When are they going to let that go? A few hilarious limericks posted on the school website, one teacher with a radical new haircut (which was an improvement anyway) and a minor explosion. You'd think they'd be pleased that we're so lively and innovative, but no, they have torn me away from my best mate. I am devastated.

In the afternoon we had an assembly with our ancient headmistress Miss Peters. Miss Pee is one of those older ladies who pretend to be nice by wearing pastel colours and taking an interest in the Special Needs group's poems about autumn, but behind closed doors I reckon she would tear off her own mother's head if it improved the exam grades of the school. The woman is pure steel.

At the start of assembly Miss Pee silenced us all with her death-laser stare and patted her helmet-like grey perm to make sure that no hair had dared struggle its way out of eight layers of hairspray,

then she started banging on about how our rubbish school provides opportunities for us to blossom. How can I blossom without Megs? They shouldn't be allowed to inflict such torture on me. To make them pay I have decided I will not be returning to school.

Now all that's left to do is to tell Mum and Dad.

Might just eat a HobNob (or six) to keep my sugar levels up during my announcement.

LATER

They don't seem that keen.

LATER STILL

In fact, Dad threatened to cut off my allowance and several of my limbs if I don't go to school tomorrow. I thought that my hippy-pants mum might be supportive of me educating myself, but she was on Dad's side.

I said, 'I thought you believed that life is an education and that the landscape around us is nature's great university. Don't you think that a child should be educated in a home environment?'

Mum sniffed. 'I do, but only if the child isn't likely to burn the home environment down if she's left alone in it.' Which is a very unfair reference to a little accident I had when I tried to create a

romantic atmosphere for my parents' anniversary by lighting a few candles.

I started losing my cool at that point and Mum said perhaps I should try some meditation to calm down (I'd rather have my arms chopped off) then Sam, my little brother from hell, said, 'Dad, perhaps you should think about it. If Faith can't cope at Westfield High, maybe you should send her to one of those special schools where they have people to help you to go to the toilet.' Then he started whining that his arm was broken, which is nonsense because I didn't hear it crack when I was twisting it.

LATEREST

I've been sent to my room.

This is all that Ramsbottom woman's fault. Why does she hate me so much? Obviously I hate her right back, but she started it. Actually, on my very first day in Year Seven when I saw Miss Ramsbottom I thought she looked kind of cool with her nice haircut and her super-high heels, but that afternoon she made me look like an idiot and I have never forgiven her. It happened in one of her ridiculous assemblies where she thinks what she is saying about not walking on the grass or remembering to curtsey when we see her is so important that we must use every fibre of our being

to listen and therefore not breathe, blink, discuss last night's TV, or any other vital thing.

In the morning we'd had PE; the teacher, Miss Williams (AKA: Killer Bill), had enjoyed torturing us so much that we finished late, which meant we barely had time to get changed before we were whizzed off to assembly. I was already busting for the loo, but I didn't dare wander off because I wasn't sure if I could find the assembly by myself. So I filed into the hall and sat on a bench with my legs crossed while Ramsbottom launched into a list of thirty-seven things we must always remember to do, followed by a list of seventy-two things we must never do. I wasn't sure how much longer I could hold on. I couldn't just slip out either because I didn't know where the loos were. (You'd think that they'd point that sort of thing out on a school tour, wouldn't you? Much more helpful than where the library is, who needs to know that?) I tried to be sensible and mature about my predicament – which didn't come easily – by discreetly sidling up to my new form tutor, Mrs Hatfield, and asking if I could go to the loo. But Miss Ramsbottom is so insecure in herself that she couldn't compete with even a tiny bit of whispering in the corner. She stopped in the middle of what she was saying about fire alarms and stared at me, which meant everyone in the hall turned around and stared at

me too. Then she said, 'I'll wait for you to finish because obviously the safety of the entire year is not as important as your full bladder.'

By this point, I was actually having to wiggle a little bit to stop myself from peeing, so it was pretty obvious that I did need the loo, and everybody laughed. Fortunately, my form tutor wasn't a total witch so she pulled me out of the hall and pointed me in the direction of the toilets. But for a long time my nickname was Full Bladder Faith.

No wonder I hate Miss Ramsbottom. I just don't know why she would hate such a delightful person as myself.

TUESDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER

It's awful being away from Megs. I'm sure Miss Ramsbottom looked particularly smug today because she knows I'm suffering. She obviously thinks that she is superior to us just because she is tall and has manicured nails and really expensive shoes. (What use are they to her? She must be at least thirty, she'll be dead soon, she should give them to someone who still has time to enjoy them.)

But, even though she has thrown us into different tutor groups to keep us apart, Ramsbottom seems to have forgotten that Megs and I are both geniuses. (Actually she did once call us geniuses, but she put the word 'evil' in front so I don't think

she meant it as a compliment.) Anyway, because we are both so smart I still get to see Megs in top-set English, Maths and Science, which I suppose is better than nothing.

The one good thing about my new tutor group is that my friend from primary school, Lily, is in it. I love Lily, I really do, but she is a bit what the teachers call 'special' and everyone else calls utterly bonkers. I like hanging out with Lily, but she's not Megs.

I thought Lily was odd, but then I spent some time with the rest of my new class. They really are weird. Mostly, it seems that 10SW like hanging around talking about what the teachers are wearing and what answers they got for last night's Geography homework.

Like I said, weird.

LATER

When I got home I rang Megs.

'Megs, do you realise that we have spent a mere two hundred and seven minutes chatting today?' I said.

'I'm not surprised. It's all part of a pattern. You never bring me flowers any more. You don't notice when I get my hair cut. Sometimes I wonder if you ever really loved me. I try to reach out to you, but it's like you're on another planet.'

'I am. I am on planet 10SW. Do you know that for charity week they want to do a knit-a-thon?'

'I hate Miss Ramsbottom.'

'It makes me happy to think that the universe must hate her too. After all she is called Rams*bottom*.'

'You're right. It is quite helpful when people are named in a way that tells you what they're like. They should do the same thing with boys.'

'Megs, it would get very confusing if *all* boys were called Thicky McSmelly.'

WEDNESDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER

I was almost in tears at the breakfast table this morning. I said, 'Please try to understand, Mum: being without Megs is making me very sad. I also think that it may be affecting my academic performance.'

'Why's that?'

'I've got French this morning and I really can't do French without Megs.'

Sam interrupted with a mouth full of Chocolate Crispies. 'You're always saying how brilliant you are at French.'

'I am. But the only person who understands the French I speak is Megs. Madame Badeau speaks the old-fashioned kind where you're not allowed to use any English words.'