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

Eva & the Hidden Diary

Written by

Judi Curtin

Published by

O'Brien Press Ltd

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

First published 2013 by The O'Brien Press Ltd,
12 Terenure Road East, Rathgar, Dublin 6, Ireland.
Tel: +353 1 4923333; Fax: +353 1 4922777
E-mail: books@obrien.ie
Website: www.obrien.ie

ISBN: 978-1-84717-588-5

Text © copyright Judi Curtin 2013
Copyright for typesetting, layout, editing, design
© The O'Brien Press Ltd

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or in any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
13 14 15 16

Layout and design: The O'Brien Press Ltd
Cover illustration: Woody Fox
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY
The paper used in this book is produced using pulp from managed forests

The O'Brien Press receives assistance from



Chapter One



I was nervous as I walked towards the front door. After all, I was the one who'd brought this family together, and if they were unhappy, it would be partly my fault.

I took a deep breath and knocked. There was no answer. They probably couldn't hear me above the sudden burst of laughter that came from inside. I took a step closer and peeped through the open door. Inside, my friend Kate and her step-mum Zoe were doubled over laughing like they were going to die. Kate's Dad, Patrick, and her little brother, Simon, were rolling on the floor, having some kind of noisy play-fight that

involved lots of stuffed toys and cushions and armfuls of shredded newspaper. In the corner, Kate's granny, Martha, was calmly knitting, as if nothing much was going on.

I knew it was rude, but I stood there for a while and watched. I remembered when I'd first met Kate. Back then she'd lived with Martha, while Patrick, Zoe and Simon lived in London. Kate was lonely and sad, and in the end, I stepped in and managed to get the family back together. When they appeared, Kate's worst summer magically turned into her best summer ever.

I was wondering if I should just walk away, leaving them to their happy family stuff, when Kate looked up and saw me.

'OMG!' she squealed. 'You're here. At last you're here! Hey, everyone, Eva's here.'

I stepped inside, and they all said 'hi' (except for Simon, who was busy attacking his dad's leg with a furry dinosaur). I couldn't answer

though, as Kate had raced towards me and almost knocked me to the ground in a great big bear hug.

'I'm guessing you missed me too,' I said when I finally escaped.

'A small bit,' she said, looking embarrassed.

It was great to see her again. Kate lives in Seacove, and my family only goes there for the holidays. The rest of the year Kate and I communicate by text and phone and Skype. It helps, but it's not the same as being together.

Kate wiped the tears of laughter from her eyes. 'Beach?' she said.

I nodded. I felt all warm and excited as we waved goodbye and set off for the beach. Three whole weeks in Seacove! I knew it was going to be amazing.



'Why did Lily have to go on holidays *this* week, of all weeks,' I said, as soon as we were settled in

our favourite spot on the beach. 'I'm dying to see her. When does she get back?'

'Not for another week and a bit,' said Kate. 'And even then we probably won't see much of her. Her mum's catering business has got really busy, so Lily has to help her most days.'

'So what have you been doing with yourself?'

She shrugged. 'Mostly just hanging out with the family. Dad and I go for walks and stuff. Sometimes I stay home and play with Zoe and Simon. It's not very exciting, but I like it.'

I smiled to myself as I lay back on the sand. I felt a special responsibility for the whole family, and was glad to see that things were working out OK.

'So it's all happy-ever-after around here these days?' I said.

'Yeah, kind of, but …'

I sat up again quickly. 'But what?' I asked. 'Happy-ever-afters don't end with buts. What's wrong, Kate?'

She smiled a forced kind of smile. 'It's nothing,' she said. 'I'm probably just being stupid.'

I put my face right up next to hers. 'Tell me,' I said. 'Tell me what's wrong.'

She sighed. 'You're not going to give up, are you?'

I shook my head. 'Never. You might as well tell me now, before I drag it out of you.'

'It's Zoe,' she said.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

'*Zoe!*' I said. 'But Zoe is lovely. She's always been really nice to you. Just tell me what she's done and I'll sort her out for you. I'm not afraid of her. I could easily—'

Kate giggled and I was glad to see that she hadn't lost her sense of humour in the time we'd been apart.

'Zoe is still lovely,' she said. 'That hasn't changed. She's the best. She's smart and funny and kind. She always backs me up when Dad's being an idiot.'

I giggled. 'What is it about dads? Mine's great, but sometimes he drives me totally crazy.'

Kate laughed too. 'Tell me about it,' she said. 'Luckily, Zoe always defends me when Dad's going ballistic about stupid stuff. It's really cool the way she's always on my side.'

'That's great, but I don't get it. I thought you said there was a problem with Zoe?'

'Well, she loves spending time with Dad and me and Simon, and when Martha's bones are hurting, and she's in a bad mood, Zoe is the best at making her come around—'

'I'm still not seeing the problem here.'

Kate gave a big sigh. 'Sometimes I think Zoe might be bored. She hasn't made any friends in Seacove. She never says so exactly, but I can tell that she misses London. She misses her job.'

'That's kind of normal, though, isn't it?'

'Yeah – of course it is. Oh, Eva! I love Zoe and I really want her to be happy. But what if she can't be happy here with us in Seacove? What if

she needs to be in London to be happy?'

I was still figuring out how to answer that, when she continued.

'And there's another thing too.'

'What?'

'Zoe coming here was always only supposed to be a temporary arrangement, remember? Zoe and Dad only came to help out while Martha was sick – and Martha's better now. What if they decide to go back to London? What will I do then?'

I hugged her. 'Try not to worry,' I said. 'It'll be fine. I'm sure of it.'

I wasn't sure of it at all, so I couldn't meet Kate's eyes when she smiled back at me.

'You're right,' she said. 'I'm just being stupid. I'm worrying about nothing. And besides ...'

'Besides what?'

'Besides, when you're around everything always gets better. Now that you're here, Zoe will see what a totally exciting place Seacove can

be. All I've got to do is sit back and wait for you to work your magic.'

'So no pressure then?'

She giggled. 'No, Eva. No pressure at all.'

Chapter Two



Next morning, we were still having breakfast when Kate called over. She said 'hi' to Mum and Dad, and gave Joey a huge hug. He pretended to be embarrassed, but I knew he was pleased. He really likes Kate.

'How's your mum?' she asked him.

Joey's mum, Monica, owns the cottage we stay in. She often has to go to hospital, and that's why Joey usually comes on holidays with us. He's really cute and is kind of like the little brother I never had.

'Mum's OK,' he said. 'Her last operation was a big success.'

'I'm glad,' she said. She stepped forward to

give him another hug, but he ducked away. I guess little boys can only cope with the occasional hug.

Kate turned to me. 'What do you want to do for the day, Eva?' she asked. 'We could go back to the beach again, or we could go see Jeremy if you like.'

Believe it or not, Jeremy's not a person or a pet – it's a tree! One that's very special to Kate. One summer, a developer wanted to chop it down, but, with the help of the locals and some tourists, Kate and I had managed to save it.

Kate was grinning at me, and I thought back to when I first met her. In the beginning, I thought she was totally weird and when I heard that she actually called a tree by a boy's name I decided she was completely crazy. That was all a long time ago though. (Now, I couldn't help thinking that Jeremy was an especially good name for a tree.)

'So make up your mind,' said Kate,

interrupting my thoughts. 'Beach or Jeremy? The suspense is killing me.'

Before I could decide what to do though, Mum stepped in.

'Not so fast, Eva,' she said. 'Remember you promised Monica that you'd clean out the old shed in the back garden? Since she's nice enough to let us stay here, the least we can do is help out with some odd jobs while we're here.'

I groaned. 'I know I promised Monica, Mum,' I said. 'And I *will* clean the shed. But do I have to do it right now?'

Mum folded her arms, a dangerous warning sign. I wondered if it was worth having a row – especially as Mum was sure to win. (It's easy to win rows when you've got all the money and all the power and can do totally mean stuff like banning sweets and confiscating mobile phones.)

'I'll help you, if you like,' said Kate suddenly. 'It'll be fun.'

'Fun?' I made a face at her. 'If cleaning out dirty old sheds is your idea of fun, maybe you need to get out more.'

Kate made a face back at me. 'Maybe we'll find some ancient treasures,' she said.

'I very much doubt that,' said Mum, handing me a roll of black rubbish bags. 'I expect that shed is full of junk. I peeped in last night, and it looks like no one's stepped inside there for many years. Just pack everything into these bags, and we can leave them out for the bin men to take away.'

I took the bags and followed Kate out to the back garden. I wasn't happy to be wasting a precious morning in a stinky old shed.

'Let's just get this over with as fast as possible,' I said. 'And then I can get on with my holiday.'

I slid back the rusty bolt and pulled the shed door towards me. It opened with a horrible screechy scratchy sound.

Kate grinned. 'That's the ghost of the shed

welcoming us,' she said. 'If we're not careful, it will haunt us for the rest of the summer.'

Even though it was a lovely sunny day, I suddenly felt cold. I don't like thinking about ghosts and creepy stuff like that.

The shed was quite small, and it had shelves all along one side. There was a window on the back wall, but it was cracked and dirty and hardly let in any light.

I stepped inside and picked up a cardboard box, which immediately fell apart in my hands. I jumped as heaps of rusty old nails and screws clattered to the ground and rolled into the dark, cobwebby corners of the shed.

'Brilliant,' I muttered. 'A great start.'

Kate didn't answer as she was already on her knees filling the first rubbish bag. I gave a big sigh, and then I rolled up my sleeves and began to help her.



Hours later, Kate and I were almost finished. We'd filled up ten rubbish bags, and apart from an ugly old china vase, we hadn't found anything worth keeping.

'Here, this is the last thing,' I said, as I reached into the furthest, darkest corner of the shed to pick up an old biscuit tin that was almost covered by layers of dust and cobwebs.

'Maybe there's treasure inside that tin,' said Kate. 'Maybe it's a secret stash of gold and silver and diamonds and pearls. Maybe we're going to be rich!'

I grinned. 'If it was treasure, it would belong to Monica – not that it matters. This tin is probably full of useless junk, just like everything else we've found in this dump.'

'You've got no imagination, Eva,' said Kate. 'I bet there's something amazing inside. Bring it out onto the grass, so we can have a proper look.'

I did what she said. It was nice to be back in

the sunshine again. The two of us sat on the grass and looked at the box for a minute.

'This is so amazing,' said Kate. 'It's like going back in time. I bet no one has seen or touched this box for years and years and years.'

She was probably right. The corners of the box were all rusty, and the flowers on the lid were dull and faded.

A cloud came over the sun and I shivered.

'Let's get this over with so we can go see Jeremy,' I said.

Kate held the bottom of the box, while I used both hands to lift the lid off. Flakes of rust blew away in the breeze as the lid came free. Suddenly I couldn't help feeling a little flutter of excitement. Maybe there was going to be something amazing inside after all.

'Oh,' I said, disappointed, as I saw the rolled up piece of white material inside. 'It's only a dirty old rag.'

I reached in and took out the fabric. As I did

so, something tumbled out of it and onto the ground next to me.

I picked it up, half afraid that it was going to fall apart in my hands.

'What is it?' said Kate impatiently.

It was a grubby old leather-covered book.

'It's just …' I said, and then I stopped talking as I turned the book over in my hands, and read what it said on the cover.

'OMG!' I said. 'It's a diary. We've found someone's ancient old diary.'