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 Day the World Went Loki

Written by

**Robert J.Harris**

Published by

**Floris Books**

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Kelpies is an imprint of Floris Books

First published in 2013 by Floris Books
© 2013 Robert J. Harris

Robert J. Harris has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act 1988 to be identified as the Author of this work

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without the prior permission of Floris Books, 15 Harrison Gardens, Edinburgh www.florisbooks.co.uk

The publisher acknowledges subsidy from Creative Scotland towards the publication of this volume



This book is also available as an eBook

British Library CIP data available
ISBN 978-178250-030-8
Printed in Poland

# 1. BAD LUCK AND WORSE LUCK

Neither of the boys strolling home from Madras High School in St Andrews had any idea that this was just about the last normal day of their lives. Greg McBride had something else on his mind.

"A maths test *tomorrow*!" he exploded. "How's that for bad luck?" He swung an angry fist through the empty air. "But then bad luck is all I ever get."

His younger brother Lewis made an absent-minded humming noise as he braced himself for more complaints. It was a long walk down Lamond Drive, but it seemed twice as long when Greg was on one of his rants.

"Some folk get hit singles, star in films, run big companies, but not me. Oh no, I never get that kind of luck."

"It's not luck," Lewis murmured.

"Huh?" Greg grunted. He hadn't expected Lewis to say anything. He usually didn't until his older brother had quite finished. "What are you mumbling about?"

"Maybe it's not just luck," Lewis said. He wished heartily that he hadn't opened his mouth, but now he had no choice but to tough it out. "Maybe they're successful because they work hard."

Greg shook his head. "If all it took was hard work, then everybody who worked hard would be rich. But they're not, are they?"

"I suppose not."

"You suppose not," Greg echoed mockingly. "That's your trouble, Lewis. You don't think things through. I mean, what chance have I got living here? St Andrews isn't exactly the centre of the universe, is it? It's not even the centre of Fife."

A large shadow passed over them as their enormous friend Arthur "the Chiz" Chisholm came loping by. "Guys," he rumbled by way of greeting.

The Chiz had pulled on his favourite red beanie with one hand so that it lay squint across the crown of his head like a UFO that had crash landed on a mountain peak.

"Hi, Chiz," the brothers responded as their friend's long strides carried him swiftly past them.

"Hey, Chiz, do you want to kick a ball around?" Greg called after him.

Kicking a ball around with the Chiz mostly involved searching for the ball after he'd booted it thirty metres

through the air in the wrong direction. Still, it was better than studying for a test.

Chiz glanced back over his shoulder. "Home... work... test tomorrow," he answered. Every word sounded like an echo in a coal mine.

He loped off and left Greg grimacing. "Even Chiz'll probably pass," he said. "You'd think they'd hang a big sign up to remind you a test is coming. I mean, what is the point of mentioning it weeks ago, in the middle of class when nobody's paying any attention, then never talking about it again until the day before? How is anybody supposed to remember something like that?"

There was a merciful thirty seconds of silence as they held their noses while passing Canny Dan's Snack Van. As soon as they were clear of the stench of grease, pickled onion and charred black pudding, Greg resumed.

"I'll bet Mrs Witherspoon kept this test a secret just to trip me up. She's always had it in for me."

"You mean because you never do any work."

"No, it's something more personal than that. She'd hang me up and use me for target practice if she thought she'd get away with it."

"You could still get a good four or five hours of studying in tonight," Lewis pointed out. "That might be enough."

"Is that right?" Greg answered with undisguised sarcasm. "You think it's that easy to study, like you can just sit down and do it? Have you learned nothing? You have to plan it in advance, draw up a timetable, or you might as well not bother."

"So you're not going to bother?"

"I didn't say that, I was just making a point. For your benefit, I might add."

At the corner of Largo Road he pulled up short as Lindsay Jensen popped up in front of him, as though out of thin air.

"Hi, Greg!" she beamed, like she hadn't seen him in years.

Her corn-coloured hair was tied in a ponytail with a pink ribbon. Behind her gold-rimmed glasses her eyes shone like sapphires, at least that's how they looked to Lewis.

"Oh hi, Lindsay," Greg responded distractedly. He was peering around from side to side, trying to figure out where she could have sprung from. She had an unsettling knack for ambushes.

Lewis cleared his throat. "Hello, Lindsay. That's a really pretty necklace you're wearing." He sighed when he realised that she hadn't even heard him. She was too busy watching Greg scratch his head.

"I hear your dad's gone away on a trip," Lindsay said.

"He's in Wales," said Greg, not meeting her gaze.

"Building a golf course," Lewis added, unnoticed.

Lindsay was in Lewis' class at school, but she only had eyes for his brother. Greg was a year older, taller, thought himself much better looking, and was definitely a lot louder.

"Greg, do you fancy going to that new 3D film tonight?" Lindsay asked breathlessly. "You know, the one about the dancing robots and the polar bear. It looks magic."

"I've got a big test tomorrow," Greg muttered, trying to manoeuvre around her. Lindsay moved expertly to block him.

"I could help you study, Greg," she offered sweetly.

"Lewis is helping me," Greg told her flatly. He grabbed Lewis by the arm and accelerated past her, dragging his brother behind him. Once they were across the street he asked out of the side of his mouth, "Is she gone?"

"Yes, she's gone," Lewis admitted glumly. "She's headed off into town with some of her pals."

"She must be a Japanese ninja or something," mused Greg. "That's the only way she could sneak up on us like that."

"Actually, I think Jensen is a Norwegian name."

"Norwegians don't sneak, Lewis, they ski. Everybody

knows that. And that reminds me, where did you sneak off to at break time?"

"I ran down to the library to get a couple of books Mr Calvert said he'd look out for me."

"More books? What are you doing? Building a castle out of them?"

"They're about time. It's for my school project."

"Time?" snorted Greg. "That's just what I need – more time."

He snatched a book that was sticking out of the top of Lewis' bag and squinted at the faded letters on the cover. "*The Folklore Of Time* by Lucas Oberon Key," he read out. "Maybe there are some tips in this."

"Give that back," said Lewis. He made a grab for the book but Greg whipped it away. "Mr Calvert says it's very rare."

"Mr Calvert says, Mr Calvert says," Greg echoed mockingly. "If I had a pound for every time I've heard you say that, I could buy the school and close it down."

Lewis shoved his fists into his pockets and trudged on with his head down.

"Hmm... it says here the ancient Egyptians had ten days of the week," said Greg, "and that in parts of Africa they have three, four or five days."

Lewis kept up a tight-lipped, silent protest as Greg flicked haphazardly through the old book.

As soon as they turned the corner into Bannock Street the Larkins' dog started barking its head off behind their two-metre high garden fence. The dog had got loose more times than anybody could count, even though the Larkins had done everything to keep it from escaping, short of putting up a guard tower and searchlights.

"Did you know that in 1752 they dropped eleven days from the calendar in England," Greg laughed, "and people rioted in the streets because they wanted their days back?"

"I know," Lewis burst out. "They were changing over from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. That's part of my project, remember?"

"I know how they felt," said Greg. "I'd give a lot for just one extra day." He turned the page and a huge grin spread across his face. "Say, here's something *really* interesting."

Whatever he was about to say, the words died on his lips and both boys froze in terror when they saw what was parked in the driveway of their house.

Aunt Vivien's car.

Numbly Greg closed the book and handed it back. "Lewis," he said, "I want you to take this book and beat me to death with it."