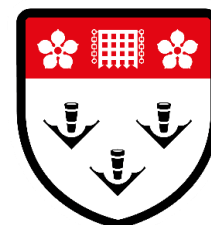


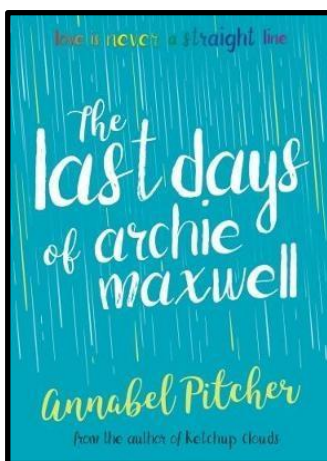
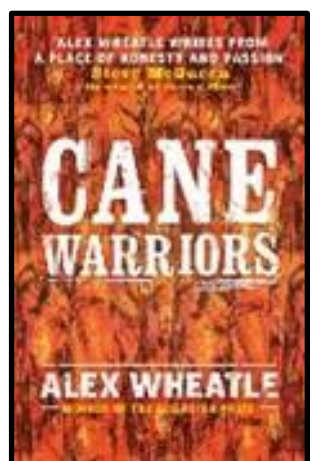
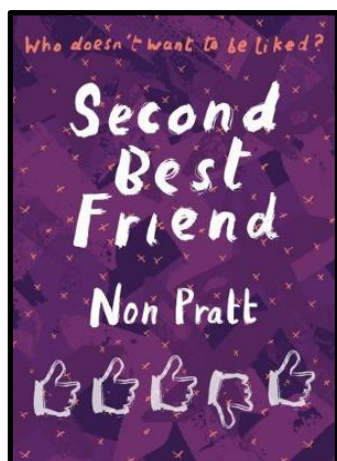
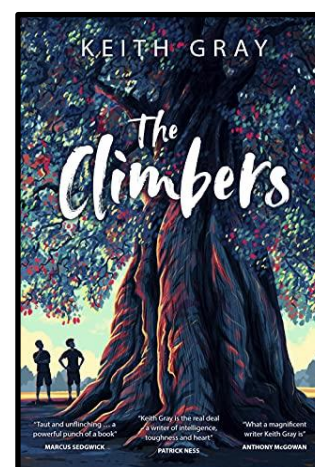
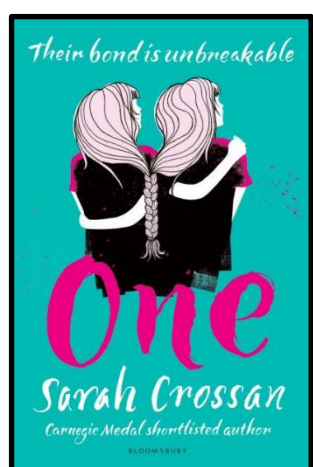
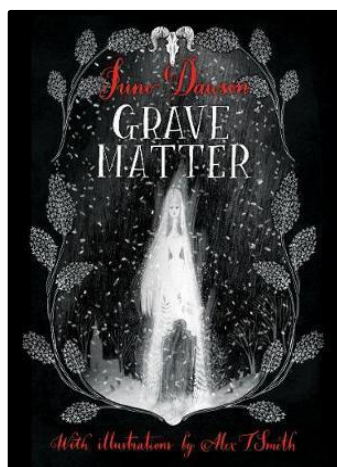
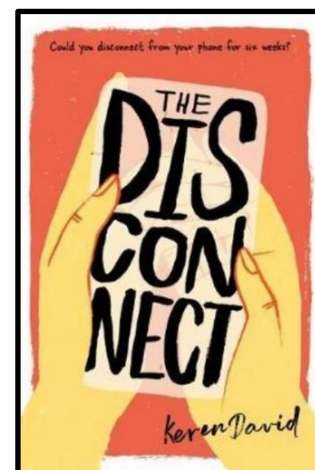
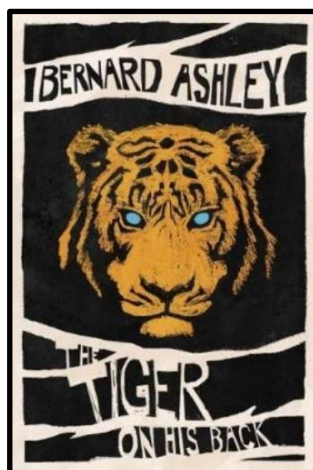
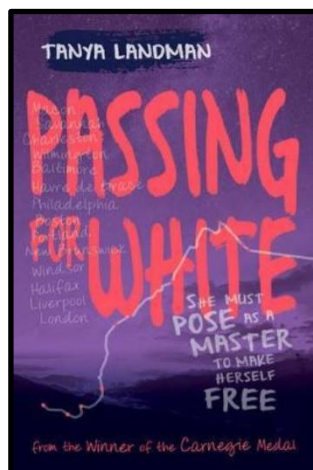
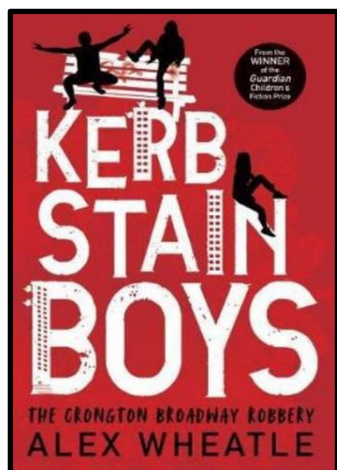
Rushcliffe Spencer Academy

Reading for Pleasure

Key Stage 4 Extract booklet



RUSHCLIFFE
SPENCER ACADEMY

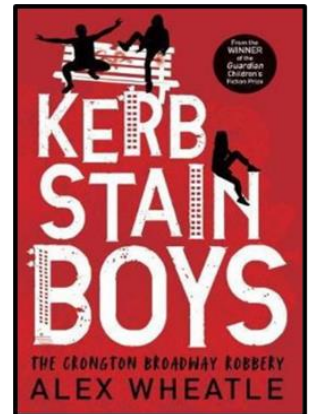


Name: _____

English Teacher: _____

Extract 1: 'Kerb Stain Boys' by Alex Wheatle

Life on the Crongton estate can be rough for Briggy. Dad's lost his job, Mum's always working to make ends meet and big brother Kingsley just wants out. Then Briggy's best mate Terror cooks up a plan to impress the coolest chick in the year, Caldonia Lake. Briggy doesn't want to lose face by chickening out and, who knows, maybe they'll make a quick buck. So what is Terror's master plan? Robbing the post office ... What could possibly go wrong?



CHAPTER ONE

Detention

It was almost home time. Sixty seconds to go before we went missing for the weekend. Then, boof. A bottle of water slapped the back of my head.

I spun around. I felt water dripping down my back. I heard mad giggles. I could feel the heat of Caldonia Lake's eyes burning gas-rings into me. Her tongue was ripe for a cuss attack.

"Don't you ever make jokes about my eyebrows, Capleton!" Caldonia spat.

So I had just branded her the blue forehead smurf queen, but she had called me a skinny runner bean first.

I shot out of my chair and hyper-footed over to her.

She stood up. "What?" she challenged. Her gob spray polluted my cheeks. "You wanna fist-off now? Some man you are, wanting to war with a girl."

"I'll quit yabbering on about your brows if you stop going on about my height."

Terror shot out of his seat as if it had an eject button. He rushed up to me, chin in the air. "Lay one thumb on my queen and your lips are gonna be separated," Terror warned.

I body-barged Terror out of my way. "Get out of my space!" I said to him. "This has got shit all to do with you."

"*Fight, fight, fight,*" the classroom chanted.

"Stop!" Mr Wyatt intervened. He snapped a textbook shut and marched towards us.

"Caldonia, Terry and Capleton, you're staying. The rest of you can go."

Table legs and chairs screeched and scraped. The buzzer sounded. My year ten Maths class barged out of the classroom. Terror, his green eyes sizzling, looked at me like he wanted the bell to clang to start round two. I wasn't sure if I was up to it. He was shorter than me but ripped and crusty. His fists weren't small. Caldonia sat back down and took out a small make-up mirror from her rucksack. She checked her eyebrows – tattooed blue. They dipped and curled like micro roller-coasters.

"I'm warning you, Briggy," Terror said as he pointed a finger at me. "*Don't* trouble my queen."

"I'm not your freaking queen," Caldonia cut in. "And I don't need you to do my warring for me. I can look after myself."

"Stop," Wyatt barked.

"But ..." Terror began, and tailed off. He returned to his seat.

"What's a matter with you three?" asked Wyatt. "I thought you were friends?"

Terror and me had been bredrens since we were both wrapped in nappies. But ever since Terror had locked on his lust for Caldonia Lake, issues had short-circuited between us.

Wyatt glared at me. "Capleton, can you apologise to Caldonia? And Caldonia, say sorry to Capleton."

I looked away. *Why should I be the one to apologise first? Caldonia started this shit. I just wanna get out of her cussing range.*

"OK," I said, facing up to her. "Sorry for branding you the blue forehead smurf queen."

Caldonia grinned an *I got the better of you grin*.

"Caldonia?" said Wyatt. "Apologise."

Caldonia gave me an evil eye-pass, scoping me from my baby toe to eyebrow corner. She then kissed her teeth for ten seconds and shook her head. Finally, she said, "Sorry." I could barely hear her. "Sorry for calling you a long skinny runner bean with a crusty bread forehead."

Did she have to repeat the full cuss?

Wyatt scoped Terror hard. "Terry," Wyatt said. "You owe me an apology too."

Terror stared at the floor. "Sorry."

Wyatt returned to his seat. "You all still have detention," he said. He tip-tapped his fingers on his desk. There was an uneasy silence. Terror broke it.

"Why it's only us three doing time?" Terror asked. "Early B and Flabba Holt were raging at each other."

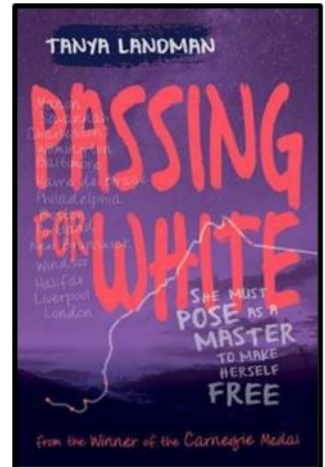
"A bottle was thrown," said Mr Wyatt. "You have to have boundaries."

"I didn't fling any bottle," I said. Wyatt looked at me like I ate his logarithm charts. To avoid his spotlight, I looked out the window. Two teachers in Day-glo yellow were on patrol at the school gates. A male fed stood on the other side of the road – there had been a shanking outside school a few weeks ago. The kids of South Crongton High streamed out. A 250 bus pulled up and there was a mad rush to get on it.

I sensed Terror's temper brewing behind me. I glanced past him. Caldonia sat cross-legged, examining her nails. I couldn't lie. She was the coolest chick in our year. And the prettiest. Long black curls topped her off neatly. Thick mascara glammed up her eyes. Chocolate-brown lipstick sexed up her lips. Even year eleven bruvv peeked a second glance at her curves. Chicks wanted to look like her and Terror wanted to star on *Love Island* with her.

Extract 2: 'Passing for White' by Tanya Landman

It's 1848 in the Deep South of America. Rosa is a slave but her owner is also her father and her fair skin means she can 'pass for white'. With the help of Benjamin, her husband, she disguises herself as a young white man - and Benjamin's master. In this guise, the two of them must make their way out of the South, avoiding those they have encountered before and holding their nerve over a thousand miles to freedom. Inspired by the amazing true story of Ellen and William Craft, this is a powerful tale of danger, injustice and unimaginable courage.



Benjamin

She was standing on the step.

Scaring me to death.

A white woman. Talking nice. Acting polite.

Looking at me.

Looking at me, straight in the eye.

Looking at me, straight in the eye and smiling.

What in the name of God was going on?

The Cornwells were new in town. Husband and wife had taken the big house on the corner by the church. I'd been sent along to measure up for new cabinets and shelves – there was a whole heap of work to do. My master told me their girl would show me the rooms.

"Rosa," he said. "She's called Rosa. That's who you got to ask for, boy."

I went to the back door. Knocked. When it opened, I was expecting to see a slave.

So I looked her full in the face. She sure was a beautiful thing, tall, with straight black hair. Brown eyes. White skin.

White skin. White skin. White, white, white.

Hellfire!

Not Rosa. No slave. She was the lady of the house! Oh Lord! And I was looking right at her! A man like me could get himself killed for less than that.

I dropped my head, my heart bang, bang, banging against my ribs. I felt sick to the stomach.

"You must be Benjamin," she said. Polite. Warm. I could feel her smile burning into the top of my head. "Won't you come on in?"

I was expecting her to call the girl, Rosa, but maybe she was running errands. It was just the two of us.

She led and I followed. We went down along the corridor to the parlour, where she pointed

to the fireplace.

"Right there," she said. "Mr Cornwell wants two cabinets about so high, either side. And shelves just here. Think you can manage that?"

"Yes, ma'am."

My mind was pumping like a steam train. I'd seen ladies like her before. They acted kind.

Generous. But put a foot wrong and they'd be calling for a whipping. Heck! It didn't have to be a foot wrong. It could be a toe. A toenail. The hair on a big toe. Not even that.

Sometimes, you didn't know what set them off. They'd go at you for no reason at all.

White folks could do whatever the hell they pleased. I knew that. And then they'd say it was your own damned fault. They'd lie so well they'd have themselves believing it. I was praying for that woman to go away. Thinking, 'Get out of here. Go someplace else. Leave me alone to do my work.' But she stayed to watch me. And out of the corner of my eye I could see she was smiling again.

Then she started talking.

I couldn't make any sense of it. I was too darned scared.

I was on my own in a room with a white woman.

One word of hers could kill me.

My hands were shaking. When I got out my tape measure I dropped it. I had it wound into a ball and it rolled across the floor. Stopped right at her feet.

"Here, let me." She picked it up. Came on over. Held it out for me to take.

I froze. Couldn't move a muscle.

So she reached out. Took my hand in one of hers.

Her white palm cupping the back of my hand. Giving me the tape measure, the tips of her white fingers brushing my brown skin. Standing so close I could smell her sweet breath.

And her touch did something to me. I was feeling all those things you're not supposed to feel. All those things you're not allowed to feel.

"There you go," she said.

Then she was smiling again.

Talking. Chattering. The words didn't make any more sense than birds screeching.

What the devil was she doing? Playing with me? Testing me? Trying me out? Was this some kind of trap?

I wanted to get away! My heart was thumping so hard I thought my ribs would crack.

Then I heard a creak of floorboards upstairs. A voice called, "Rosa? Where are you?"

And the woman whose hands had touched mine was saying, "I'm down in the parlour, Miss Abigail. The boy's here about the cabinets like Mr Cornwell said."

"Well, come up here." The upstairs voice whined. "My hair needs fixing."

She turned to go. But before she did I said, "Rosa? You're Rosa? The house girl?"

"Yes." She was already on her way out of the door. But she looked back at me. "Who'd you think I was?"

I couldn't reply. She was already running up the stairs.

To Miss Abigail.

Her mistress? Her owner?

Everything flipped on its head.

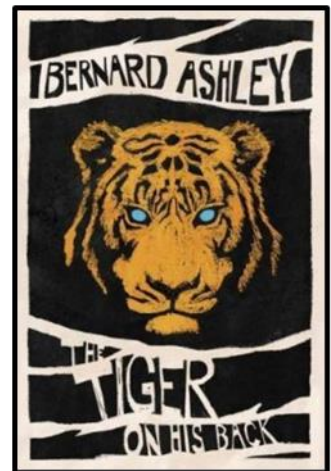
Rosa.

She may have looked white. But to them?

That woman was as black as me.

Extract 3: 'Tiger on His Back' by Bernard Ashley

When feisty student Sofia Drake gets a secret tattoo of a tiger on her leg, she can't imagine the chain of events it will set in motion. It turns out the stunning image has been used before and was never supposed to appear again. So who did create the original tiger picture? And what lengths will they have to go to in order to prove it?



CHAPTER 1 Sofia's secret

"Will it hurt?" Sofia wanted to know.

"'Course it will," her friend Lydia told her.

"What am I doing?!" Sofia asked. Her heart was thumping wildly, because Help! Here it was! The Covent Garden Tattoo studio.

Lydia grabbed Sofia's arm. "Come on, animal rights girl! If you want a tiger tattooed on your bum, you've got to suffer for it!"

"I'm not having it on my bum!" Sofia exclaimed.

"Wherever."

Sofia's stomach flipped every time she thought about her tattoo – this secret that would soon be out of her head and inked into her skin. It was something that would be there on her body for the rest of her life – yes, until the day she died.

"Come on, Sofe," Lydia said.

"It's all right for you ..." Sofia hung back.

"This guy's brilliant. If he can light up his colours on me, he'll dazzle away on you."

Lydia was talking about her skin being black while Sofia's was white. But the real difference between them was that Lydia's tattoos didn't have to be secret. Her mum and dad had tattoos and they showed them off, while Sofia's mother pulled a face every time she saw one.

"You're making a *statement*, girl," Lydia said.

"An' it's going to be a clear and strong statement about you, Sofia Drake. That's what you told me." And that was true – it was exactly why Sofia wanted her tattoo. If her exam results were OK, she would go to university in September to study Wildlife Conservation. And her secret tiger's head tattoo would be her promise to herself that she would devote her life to keeping rare animals alive on this earth.

"So, are we going in or not?" Lydia said. Her patience had begun to run out.

Sofia found her tiger spirit. "In. Of course in."

The studio was near Covent Garden Market in an arcade of shops and cafes – all such *painless* places. Lydia led the way inside. The ground floor was for piercing, and Annie, the piercer, told them to go on up to the first floor to find Sol. The stairs were steep, every step asking Sofia, *Are you sure, girl?* They went up to a small landing where an open door showed a tattooing bed with a length of surgical paper on top. Ready for someone. But it wouldn't be Sofia. *No way! Not today!*

"Go in." A man had come out of a room behind them. He was tall, with no piercings or facial tattoos. "You'll have to squeeze up."

"Hiya, Sol." Lydia bounced a bit and seemed very pleased to see him.

"Hi," Sol replied.

"This is Sofe – Sofia," Lydia went on.

Sol shook Sofia's hand. He was a couple of years older than her and wore a baseball cap with a light strapped around it. He threw a pair of disposable gloves into a bin as he followed them into the room with the bed, then waved an arm at a small settee against the wall – an invitation to sit. From speakers in the ceiling, Amy Whitehouse was singing "Tears Dry On Their Own".

"Sofe's dad's a famous actor," Lydia announced.

"*Lydia!*" Sofia groaned.

"Tony Drake. You know, *Murder HQ* on TV."

Lydia carried on regardless.

"Sorry, I don't," Sol said. "Overdosed on TV as a kid. So ..."

He sat in a swivel chair next to the bed. "You tell me what you want," he said to Sofia. His folded arms were tattooed like beautiful works of art, Japanese designs that could have been done on silk. "Lydia said something about a tiger?" he prompted.

Sofia told Sol what she wanted. "A fully grown tiger's head and nothing cuddly. It's got to be defiant and dangerous – not vulnerable as if it's in someone's gunsights."

"Why?" Sol asked.

"Why, what?" Did he want an argument about killing wildlife?

"Why do you want it? What's it for? A badge of belonging? I used to tattoo gangs at another place, all with the same Russian star. Or is it for credibility?"

Sofia stiffened her body in self-defence. This guy really did come to the point! "Yes!" she said. "My own credibility."

Sol didn't frown; his face was open, neither friendly nor unfriendly. "It'll remind me of what I'm about when things get hard," she went on. "Exams, people, tricky situations."

Sol nodded. "So where do you want this badge? Do you want to display it?"

"No – it's just for me," Sofia explained. "It needs to be somewhere ... *discreet*."

"Discreet ... Do you mean secret? If you do, a good place is the outside of the leg, high up." Sol's voice was as matter-of-fact as a doctor's. "It's not too tender there and it can be hidden beneath your clothes."

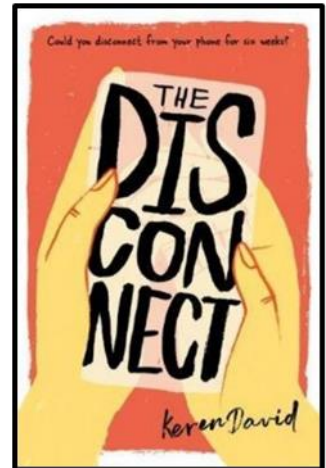
Sofia wanted time to think but Sol stood up – the meeting was over. "Give me your phone number, I'll send you a couple of designs and we'll go from there. I'll tell you the price, book you in and I'll do it in one session. And don't forget your passport. I need to see proof that you're over eighteen." He had recited his list like the end of a radio advert. Then he looked her right in the eye. "So why's your tattoo a secret? Wouldn't your parents be proud of your commitment to wildlife?"

Sofia was ready for this. "They are – but they'd rather they saw it in a picture frame." Talk of her parents made her stomach churn again. Now she had to go home and start telling the lie of a lifetime. She was good at bending the truth, but this was on another level. And as for saying sorry? No, ma'am!

Extract 4: 'The Disconnect' by Keren David

Could you disconnect from your phone for six weeks? Six weeks without sharing photos, without group messages, without being kept in the social media loop?

An eccentric entrepreneur has challenged Esther's year group to do just that, and the winners will walk away with £1,000. For Esther, whose dad and sister live thousands of miles away in New York, the prize might be her only chance to afford flights for a visit ... But can she really stay disconnected long enough to win?



Decisions

I take a selfie.

And another.

I look awful. I can't go out like this. It's the top I'm wearing. Shaquilla can wear sexy stuff like this, but on me it just looks silly. I haven't got the body for it. I don't fill it up. It makes me look stupid. Like a kid dressing up.

I change my top to a plain white T-shirt. Apply more bronzer. Try to remember how to contour my cheekbones.

Selfie.

My lipstick's wrong. Too pink. Where's that other one?

Selfie.

OK, that'll do.

I find our group – me, Natalie, Sophie, Shaquilla. Press send.

Wait. One ... Two ... Three—

My phone buzzes with a message from Dad. Ignore it. I haven't got time right now for a long chat.

Message from Natalie: *Gorgeous as per, babe, but what is that top?*

I message back: *Just an old one of Rosa's. Not going to wear it ...*

Panic. What can I wear?

Message from Shaquilla: *What about that black one from H&M you bought last week?*

She's reading my mind. That was the one I had on first of all.

I message back: *Not sure it works.*

Messages from Shaquilla, Natalie and Sophie, all saying the same thing: *Show us!*

I pull the top on. It's too tight. It's too low cut. It's not me. I should never have bought it.

Selfie.

Oh God. Try again.

Selfie, leaning forward, looking down. Send it.

Natalie: *That's the one!*

Shaquilla: *Stunning!*

Sophie: *Yes! Babe!*

I look in the mirror. What do they see that I don't see? But three against one ... OK. It works. OK, I'll wear it.

I message: *Thanks, guys!*

Dad's Face Timing me. I press the red button to decline.

I message Dad: *Sorry, I'm busy now. Talk later.*

Deep breaths. Find word game app. Play three rounds. Feel calmer.

I go downstairs. Mum's having breakfast, looking at her phone.

"New pictures of Zack!" Mum says, beaming. She's the proudest grandma in London.

"I know," I reply. "Rosa sent them to me too. So cute!" I'm the proudest auntie as well. It's so sad that we've never met Zack. My sister Rosa lives in New York now, which was where Zack was born – and Dad lives there too. Half my family is a whole ocean away.

"But there's another nasty review of the cafe," Mum says. "It's terrible. Avi's sure these reviews are fake. He's so worried."

Avi is my stepdad, and he and Mum opened their own cafe six months ago. It was their dream. But things aren't going to plan, and they're struggling to get customers. I try to help out as much as I can, but you can't drag people in off the street and make them eat. And even one bad review seems to scare people off.

"Oh, that's awful," I say.

Mum looks up.

"Esther!" she says. "What are you wearing?"

"It's my new top. I like it!" I try to sound as if I mean it.

It's ... " Mum begins. "You look like you're going to the beach!"

"It's a crop top, Mum."

"More like a bikini top."

"Well, I like it," I tell her. "And I'm wearing it. So you'll just have to cope with it."

"Do you really think it's suitable?" Mum asks. "I don't want old men leering at you."

"Yes, it's fine," I say, and I blow her a kiss.

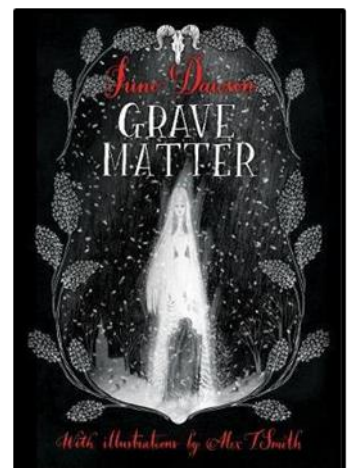
"I'm 16, Mum. I can choose my own clothes."

"Well, I'm not sure about it," she says. "Oh, hang on, Avi's texted me."

And Mum goes back to looking at her phone.

Extract 5: 'Grave Matter' by Juno Dawson

Since the car accident that resulted in the death of his girlfriend Eliza, Samuel is devastated and blames himself for the crash. He is drowning in grief and his overwhelming need to reunite with Eliza drives him to the forces of black magic, in a bid to bring her back to life. But he has difficult choices to make and the terrifying consequences of dark magic are about to raise their head...



There is still snow on the ground when they lower her into it. The same snow, I suppose, as the night she died.

Everything is fuzzy at the edges. My eyelids are sore and swollen, my blinking sluggish. The snowy graveyard swims in and out of focus. If I squint, grey stick-men cluster around her grave.

All is black and white, with only the lilacs atop her coffin for colour. They were her favourite.

Don't let me go.

I won't.

She gripped my hand. Pale fingers, ebony nails.

Please, Samuel ...

I promise I won't. I won't let you go.

Her grip went slack.

My father is sombre, professional, as stiff as his vicar's collar. It is his job to be solemn, but I wonder if today he means it. I think he must – everyone who met Eliza loved her.

"In the Name of God," my father begins, "the merciful Father, we commit the body of our daughter and friend Eliza Grey to the peace of the grave."

Mrs Grey is wailing, burying her face in the lapel of Mr Grey's coat. Her pained cries – animal somehow – soar and swoop through the naked winter trees, shaking crows from the branches. Tears stream down her chin. No one knows what to do to comfort her. Other mourners politely ignore her grief. They shift from foot to foot, unsure of what to do with their hands.

My limbs feel too long and limp, like over-done spaghetti.

The coffin is lowered into the earth. At the flick of a switch, the device cranks and wheezes to life and the coffin descends. It seems too small by far to contain Eliza. It's all wrong. To box her is grotesque, like caging a hummingbird.

Are you OK to drive in this weather?

Of course, it's not that bad.

I don't know, Sam, that snow is pretty seriously snowy.

It'll be fine, it's not even settling. Promise.

We'll be home in ten.

Every time I close my eyes I see that moment play on a loop. Eliza looked out of the bay window at Fish's house, watching feathery flakes swirl under the street lights. That was the fork in the road. We could have spent the night at Fish's.

But we didn't. We took the other prong. I made her.

Father stands where the headstone will be. He goes on and on.

"Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. May the Lord bless her and keep her, the Lord make his face to shine upon her and be gracious unto her, the Lord lift up his face upon her and give her everlasting peace. Amen."

Amen.

My father throws the first dirt on top of Eliza's coffin. We must all play our part in burying her. The mud rains down on the lilacs, spoiling them. Next, Mr Grey steps forward, Mrs Grey still under his arm. He too throws dirt over his daughter.

It's all too much. We can't ... we can't smother Eliza like this. How ... how will she breathe down there? She doesn't belong in the dark and cold. She was scared of the dark.

I fall to my knees. I feel icy slush seep into my trousers. "No!" I cry, and I reach for Eliza's coffin far below. I scramble to the edge of the grave. "No, you can't! Eliza!"

Burly hands grab my arms and drag me away. I kick and struggle, but strangers hold me back. Mrs Grey wails anew. Father looks so disappointed.

Mother's hand unfurls and I see that a tiny, pale blue pill rests in her palm. "Here," she says. "Take this. You'll feel better."

Her lips are taut, her eyes stern. She – Dr Beauvoir – knows best.

"What is it?" I ask.

"Just take it, Samuel. You need to rest..."

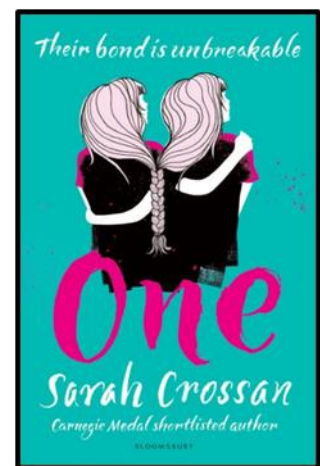
Extract 6: 'One' by Sarah Crossan

Grace and Tippi. Tippi and Grace. Two sisters. Two hearts. Two dreams. Two lives. But one body.

Grace and Tippi are conjoined twins, joined at the waist, defying the odds of survival for sixteen years. They share everything, and they are everything to each other. They would never imagine being apart. For them, that would be the real tragedy.

But something is happening to them. Something they hoped would never happen. And Grace doesn't want to admit it. Not even to Tippi.

How long can they hide from the truth—how long before they must face the most impossible choice of their lives?



Sisters

Here

We Are

And we are living.

Isn't that amazing?

How we manage

To be

At all.

The End of Summer

Summer's breath begins to cool.

The ink of night comes earlier and earlier.

And out of the blue

Mom announces that Tippi and I

will no longer be taught at home.

'In September

you'll join a class of juniors
and go to school
like everyone else,' she says.

I don't make any

ripples.

I listen
and nod
and pull at a loose thread in my shirt
until a button

falls away.

But Tippi doesn't stay silent.

She detonates:

'Are you *kidding* me?
Have you lost your *minds*?' she shouts,
then argues with Mom and Dad for hours.

I listen
and nod
and bite at the skin around my fingernails
until they start to

bleed.

Finally Mom rubs her temples, sighs, and gives it to us straight.

'Donations from well-wishers have dried up
and we simply can't afford to homeschool you.
You know your dad hasn't found a job yet
and Grammie's pension
doesn't even cover the cable bill.'

'You girls aren't cheap,' Dad adds,
as though all the money spent on us

—the hospital bills and special clothes—

could be saved if we'd both
only

behave a little better.

You see,
Tippi and I are not what you'd call normal—
not what you see every day
or *any* day
for that matter.

Anyone with a jot of good manners
calls us 'conjoined',
though we've been dubbed other things, too:
freaks, fiends,
monsters, mutants,
and even a two-headed demon once,
which made me cry so hard
I had puffy eyes for a week.

But there's no denying our difference.

We are literally joined

at the hip—
united in blood and bone.

And
this
is why
we never went to school.

For years we've been cooking up chemistry potions
on the kitchen table
and using our yard for P.E.

But now
there's no getting out of it;
we *are* going to school.

Not that we'll be in a state school
like our sister Dragon,
with kids who pull knives on teachers
and drink Tipp-Ex for breakfast.

No, no, no.

The city won't fund our homeschooling but
they'll pay
for a place
at a private school
—Hornbeacon High—
and Hornbeacon is willing to have that one place
count for the two of us.

I guess we're supposed to feel lucky.

But lucky isn't really how
I would
ever
describe us.

Extract 7: 'Welcome to Trashland' by Steve Cole

Theo lives and works in Agbogbloshie in Ghana, a vast dumping ground for the world's broken electronics. He spends his days scouring the trash for scraps of metal to sell for cash, while dreaming of going to school and escaping this harsh life. The money Theo makes is barely enough to pay for lessons, so when Emmanuel turns up with talk of buried treasure, Theo sees a chance to get out of Trashland.

But Emmanuel's presence draws the attention of a local gang, and Theo starts to wonder if his new friend is keeping dangerous secrets ...



CHAPTER 1 Welcome to Trashland

If your phone goes wrong, do you throw it away? How about your TV or your tablet or your speakers? Or do you recycle these things?

I bet you recycle. You're told it's the right thing to do. It's kinder to the earth, right?

Sure it is.

It's funny, the way the world works. Companies spend millions making cool electronic stuff like smartphones. The bits inside have to be exact, or they won't work. People working on factory production lines carefully put the whole thing together so it's perfect: sleek and shiny and brand new. You buy it. You love it.

But when the thing is old or stops working, it's not sent *back* to the factory. There's no production line waiting to take it apart again and rescue the bits inside that still work, or take out the precious metals so they can be used again. Getting rid of this thing is not the company's problem. They made it real good, and you bought it. It's yours. If it doesn't work any more, it's your problem.

So you take it to the dump and you go home and it stops being your problem.

Instead, it becomes ours.

I like it best here at night cos you can't see so much. There are small fires blazing in the dump 24/7, but I'm in a tiny shack with a sheet over it, which keeps out some of the smoke.

I guess I'm lucky cos I have a sack for a pillow and some cardboard to lie on. Thing is, I share the shack with five chickens and they are noisy. I guard them for this guy during the night so he lets me stay in the shack for free. Unless something happens to one of the chickens, then I pay plenty. I've still got bruises from the last time a chicken got out and a dog killed it, and that was almost a month ago now.

I have a headache too, but that's the bad air. The smoke fills you up and makes you sick.

I dream of living in a proper house. When I look out through the holes in the sheet, I can see dark shadows behind the fires. They could almost be buildings, you know? Buildings with no lights at the windows. A shut-up city, all empty.

But they're not buildings.

The sun rises, big like an orange spilling bright juice between the clouds, and I wake up coughing. The sunlight shows you what the firelight can't: there are no real buildings out there behind the smoke. There are just piles of trash. Stacks of fridge-freezers and dishwashers piled up high. Mountains of TVs and hard drives. Teetering towers of tyres waiting to be burned. The waste stretches out as far as I can see.

I'm Theo. I'm thirteen, I think. I've been stuck here in the mega-dump for more than a year. Living. Working. Watching the chickens.

Waiting.

Dad brought me here and then he left. He said he was coming back. He was waving to me and he definitely said it.

I guess something happened.

Stuff does happen, doesn't it? And some of it's crazy.

Like, I bet you never thought that useless DVD player you threw out could end up all the way over here in Ghana, huh? Or that old Xbox 360. Or that crappy mobile your friends made fun of.

Well, chances are it did end up here. From Europe and America, all the way here to West Africa. I hope you're listening, cos this stuff is true. Mr Ghazi told me, and he knows lots cos he runs things here in the dump.

Mr Ghazi's my boss. He organises us child workers. It's not easy, cos there are hundreds of us kids here. And thousands more who are older. And we're all scrabbling about in the dirt and the muck for the tatty treasures that can bring us the cash we need to eat each day.

Mr Ghazi says we're heroes. We're the ones who are really saving the planet.

See, if you bury electronic trash it doesn't rot away. It stays where it is and makes the soil bad. No country wants to bury that stuff in their own soil, but there are laws to stop people sending away their trash to other countries.

Some of the recycling companies get around that by not calling it trash. They call it "used electronics" instead and load up big boats full of it. Some of it ends up in Accra, the capital of Ghana. Some of it can be fixed and sold on. Some of it can't.

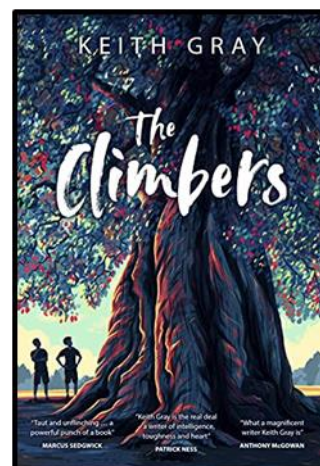
If it can't, then it gets dumped here in Agbogbloshie. That's a big name, but you don't have to worry about how to say it.

I call it home, but you can just call it Trashland.

Extract 8: 'The Climbers' by Keith Gray

Sully is the best tree climber in the village. He can scale Twisted Sister's tangled branches and clamber up Double Trunker with ease. But when new kid Nottingham shows up and astonishes everyone with his climbing skills, Sully's status is under threat and there's only one way to prove who's best.

Sully and Nottingham must race to climb the last unnamed tree. Whoever makes it to the top will become a legend. But something spiteful and ugly has reared its head in Sully ... Is it worth losing everything just to reach the top?



CHAPTER 1

The sun was in my eyes. I had to squint to see the new kid clinging on. He was high up among the branches of the tree we called Twisted Sister. It was a corkscrew willow tree and its name had been well chosen. It was a crooked and tangled maze of brown and green above me. The new kid had his arms wrapped around its trunk over halfway up.

Down on the ground, five of us had our necks cricked back to watch him climb. I stood next to Mish. She was wearing the leaf earrings I'd got her last Christmas and her favourite black T-shirt. She pushed up the fringe of her curly hair and held her hand like she was giving a salute, shading her eyes to see.

"I told you he was a good climber," Mish said. She'd been the one to call me and I'd raced to the park on my bike.

It was Friday afternoon. Zoe was there too, standing on the other side of the tree with her boyfriend Marvin and his twin brother Harvey. Zoe had told Mish at school that there was a new climber hanging around.

The five of us stared up at the new kid. He was at least seven metres above us. He sat on a

branch with his legs dangling down each side. He looked out of breath to me. He looked stuck too. I didn't think he was going to make it any further.

"What's his name?" I asked Zoe.

"He said to call him *Nottingham*," she told me.

"He said it's where he comes from and that's what everybody calls him."

Zoe was in the same class as me and Mish. Marvin and Harvey were in the year above us. Zoe was lanky, skinny and fearless. She was a better climber than her boyfriend and his brother put together. She was the only one out of those three who'd ever made it to the top of *Twisted Sister* before.

"How long's he been up there?" I asked.

"Not even ten minutes," Zoe replied. "He climbed two of the smaller trees first."

"He's fast," Marvin said.

"Real fast," Harvey agreed.

They might have been twins, but they were opposites in loads of ways. Harvey's brain was bigger than his muscles. He was the only person I'd ever met who got excited about taking exams and he often went into a sulk if he didn't get top marks. Marvin's muscles were bigger than his brain. He never got top marks in class but didn't really care. He was a short, chunky rugby player. When he held hands with Zoe, he looked like a brick that was in love with a golf club.

"Maybe this new kid's faster than you," Zoe said to me.

Mish glanced at me out of the corner of her eye.

I shrugged, not wanting to admit just how fast Nottingham must be if he'd already made it halfway up *Twisted Sister*. It wasn't the tallest tree in the park, but that didn't mean it was an easy climb. There were plenty of us who had tried and failed, tried and failed, tried and failed. And failing mostly meant falling.

We watched as Nottingham searched for a way up in the brown and green maze. He shuffled his backside this way and that. The branch beneath him shuddered. Flutters of leaves fell.

Nottingham was wearing a black baseball cap and a green sweatshirt. Both of these things were good for climbing. The cap helped keep flies out of your eyes – or falling bits of twig and bark dust. Green clothing stopped too many leaf stains from showing, and that meant parents wouldn't always spot how filthy you were when you went home. But Nottingham was also wearing cargo shorts and that was a big mistake. His shins and ankles could get ripped to shreds by thorns and jagged branches. Hungry insects could chew down like he was KFC. I wished I could see what kind of trainers he had on.

"I bet you he makes it," Marvin said. "All the way up."

Harvey nodded.

Mish looked at me to see if I agreed.

"He's the wrong side of the trunk," I said to Mish. But I spoke loudly so Zoe and the twins would hear

too. "If he was on the other side of the trunk, he could go for better branches." I pointed to show where I meant. "See there? The branches on this side are too tight to climb in between."

I was the youngest climber ever to make it to the top of *Twisted Sister*. I'd done it last summer when I was fourteen. But I'd fallen seven times before I'd made it. Could New Kid Nottingham really reach the top in one go?

I hoped he fell.

Extract 9: 'Second Best Friend' by Non Pratt

Jade and Becky have always been best friends. But when a spiteful comment from an awful ex pushes Jade to the edge, she begins to see that she might always have been second best in everything. When the school election offers her the chance to finally be number one, Jade learns just how far she is willing to go to beat her closest friend.



1

Dumping Rob King

Rules for breaking up with the hottest guy in school.

1. Know your reasons

2. Look fierce

3. Take your best friend for moral support

(even if she puts up a fight)

"It's not like I'm going to be there when you do it, creeping up behind Rob, giving you a thumbs-up and whooping, 'You go girl!'" Becky says. She's sitting on my bed, the back of her hand a rainbow of colour from testing all the different eyeliners I've tried and rejected for tonight's look.

"But could you?" I ask. "Because that would be awesome."

"Jade ..." Becky pleads, and I turn from my reflection to look at her.

"Please," I say. "I need you."

"I didn't exactly come prepared for a night out."

She holds out the hem of her giant *Adventure Time* T-shirt. It's old and faded and covered in moth holes.

"Good job we're the same size," I say. Same everything, pretty much. Same golden blonde hair, same height, same style.

I reach into my wardrobe and pull out a galaxy-print cami that Becky's borrowed so many times it may as well be hers. She looks unsure.

Time for the big guns.

There's a tangle of necklaces hanging over the corner of my mirror and I hook out my favourite – laser-cut acrylic planets on a silver chain.

Becky looks from the necklace to my hopeful expression and rolls her eyes.

I win.

It's standing room only in the bit of the cinema that can't decide whether it's a bar or a coffee shop. Becky and I push past the popular lot on the leather sofas, and find some space by the window where Willow from orchestra is chewing a straw and guarding a pile of bags and coats dumped at her feet. She's wearing a bright yellow tennis dress and purple satin bomber jacket – the kind of outfit only someone with Willow's deep brown skin and sky-high confidence could ever carry off.

"Cute necklace!" Willow says. She stops chewing her straw long enough to wave it at Becky.

"Thanks, it's Jade's ..." Then Becky stage whispers, "... for now."

The look I give Becky makes it clear that 'for now' means 'for ever'. Becky might be my favourite person, but that doesn't mean I'm prepared to give her my favourite necklace.

"Heads up." Becky nudges me. The lads are on the move from where they've been messing around at the counter.

"Jade!" Coxy, the loudest of the lot, directs to Becky, then he turns to do his trademark finger guns at me. "Becky!"

"You're hilarious," I say.

He isn't, but it's routine for him to make the joke and me to be sarcastic about it. Not that it matters – like the rest of his mates, Coxy has turned to talk to Becky and Willow, leaving me to face Rob King, my soon-to-be ex.

Rob slips a hand under the hem of my top, his fingers tracing a line across the skin of my back as he murmurs, "Looking good, Jade."

If you'd told me a month ago that Rob King, a boy so hot he should be measured on the Scoville scale like a tasty little chilli pepper, would touch me like this, I'd have melted into a puddle of lust. I mean, he's *gorgeous*. Dirty blond hair brushed up into an effortless, scruffy quiff, cute smile and a dimple to die for.

All things best admired from afar. Get any closer and you discover his moves are cut and pasted from a '*How to Make Girls Fancy You*' Wikihow, the quiff is more product than hair and, after he's had a beer or two, that cute smile is a cover for some epic fish breath.

"Let's go somewhere quiet," I say, hooking my fingers with his.

I glance back to see Becky mouth, "*You got this!*" as Rob and I weave our way around the crowd from school and towards the darkened doorway of a fire exit.

As Rob dives in like a haddock on heat, I twist away so all he gets is my cheek.

"Everything OK?" He brushes aside a strand of hair that's fallen from my pony-tail and gives me his Serious Eyes.

When you're as fit as Rob you *really* shouldn't have to try so hard.

"Not really," I say, then let everything out on the next breath. "This has been fun, and you're gorgeous and all, but I'm just not feeling it."

"Feeling what?" Rob has a funny little smile, like he's not taking me seriously.

"This." I wave at the space between our bodies. "Us."

Rob's face stays the same – the puckered brows, the patronising smile – but there's a tightness to it as his humour pulls back. Like a bow tensed before the arrow is fired.

"You aren't feeling *us*?" Rob asks. Before I can reply, he shrugs and steps back. "Whatever. Like there would ever have been an 'us' if your mate had been up for it."

I stand there, too stunned to process what he's saying. Which mate? Up for what?

"What do you mean?" I manage.

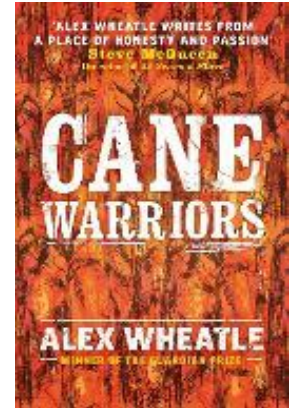
"Everyone knows Becky's the hot one." Rob reaches up to pat my cheek and I slap his hand away. He laughs, a nasty hiss through his teeth. "Everyone except you, Jade"

Extract 10: 'Cane Warriors' by Alex Wheatle

Nobody free till everybody free.

Moa is fourteen. The only life he has ever known is toiling on the Frontier sugar cane plantation for endless hot days, fearing the vicious whips of the overseers. Then one night he learns of an uprising, led by the charismatic Tacky. Moa is to be a cane warrior, and fight for the freedom of all the enslaved people in the nearby plantations. But before they can escape, Moa and his friend Keverton must face their first great task: to kill their overseer, Misser Donaldson. Time is ticking, and the day of the uprising approaches . . .

Irresistible, gripping and unforgettable, *Cane Warriors* follows the true story of Tacky's War in Jamaica, 1760.



Chapter 4: The Job

Louis shook me awake. I opened my eyes and he pressed a broad finger to his lips. He peered out of the window and we could see the tops of the trees dimly lit by the plump moon. Mosquitoes buzzed around us. 'Come, mon,' Louis said. 'Let we step outside.'

I followed him through the door and we made our way to a tall tree. We sat down, resting our backs against the trunk. The insects in the fields were mighty loud this night. Strange birds squawked their squawks. Louis looked here and there before he spoke. We heard the distant crunching from the millhouse. 'Moa,' Louis started. 'Your body good?'

'What do you mean if me body good?'

'You cyan't bruk out if you cyan't run good or if you cyan't kill ah white mon when you need to.'

I swallowed spit, gazed into Louis' eyes and said, 'Me body good, mon. Me cyan run as far as me need to and me cyan kill ah white mon. Me nuh have no problem wid dat.'

I did have a problem with that. *Could me really kill ah white mon?*

'Dat is what me want to hear,' said Louis.

'What is me job?' I wanted to know.

Louis checked over his shoulders. No one was about. I guessed there were overseers patrolling near the entrance of the plantation at the bottom of the hill. We couldn't see them.

'Your job,' Louis said, 'and Keverton's job is to kill Misser Donaldson on Sunday night just after de sun drop.'

I didn't reply. It felt like those big wooden rollers that Papa feeds the cane into were now grinding in my belly. Sweat drowned my face. My pulse banged my temples.

'Use your billhooks,' Louis continued. 'Aim straight for de gut or de chest. Use two hands and dig deep. And then twist it like you're meking ah fire. Mek sure he don't breathe one dutty breath again.'

It took me a while to answer. *Kill Misser Donaldson?* I guessed he might've asked me to run somewhere when de bruk- out start. My heart kicked my ribs and didn't stop.

'But we have to put dem inna de sack when we finish work,' I pointed out.

Louis shook his head. 'Not on Sunday you won't.'

Sunday was only two dawns away.

Papa would never agree. He would say *'It's not worth the agonies that will come to you.'*

But Pitmon never raise ah hand or ah fiery tongue to anyone 'til Misser Master trouble him daughter.

And Miss Pam was like ah second mama to everybody but dem just fling her inna de pit after she drop.

Me must lend me good foot and hand to de cause.

'Who's going to kill Misser Master?' I wanted to know.

Louis took his time in answering. 'Tacky,' he said. 'Everyting start when de sun tek cover behind de hills.'

'Me will dig Misser Master hole wid me own hands if me have to,' I said. 'And fling him inside wid plenty chicken claw.'

'There will be no time to dig anyting,' Louis said. 'We have to forward on quick- time to Fort Haldane. It's by de blue waters. Tacky say dem have guns there.'

'Guns?' I repeated. 'Dem tings dat fire quick deat'? Me remember me papa talk about it one time.'

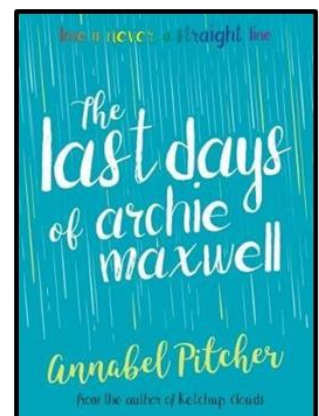
Louis nodded. 'Yes, mon. Dat is de plan. Now, return to your hut and catch some sleep.'

'Me cyan't sleep now, Louis,' I said. 'Me head full of tomorrow's worries and de day after.'

'Mine too,' Louis admitted. 'Try to empty your head and sleep good.'

Extract 11: 'The Last Days of Archie Maxwell' by Annabel Pitcher

Dads leave home all the time. It's not that unusual, really. Jack's dad ran off with another woman. So did Mo's. But Archie's? That's a different story - a story that Archie must keep to himself. If Tia found out, let alone his mates, his life would be over. But other people are guarding much deeper secrets of their own, secrets that will change the course of Archie's days for ever ...



"So, that's what we've decided. It's for the best," Dad said, after two or ten minutes of talking, Archie couldn't tell. Time was standing still, or going fast, or doing both. That wasn't

possible, but Dad's words hadn't seemed possible that morning, and yet here they were, discussing divorce over Mum's homemade chicken stew.

Not that anybody was eating the stew. Five plates cooled on the kitchen table. Their dog, Huxley, sniffed the chickeny air and let out a whimper. It was a desolate sound. Archie felt it in his bones.

Archie buried his bare feet in Huxley's thick fur and glanced at Maisy. Her face was unreadable. Anything could have been happening beneath the layers of brown stuff covering her spots. The false eyebrows she'd painted half way up her forehead made her seem startled, like this was as big a shock to her as it was to Archie, but he couldn't be sure. Her real eyebrows might have looked less surprised.

Amy's expression was the opposite, heartbreak written all over her face. Archie never touched his sisters if he could help it, but today he squeezed Amy's pudgy knee. She looked surprised then grabbed Archie's hand with both of hers and didn't let go.

Dad cleared his throat.

"What I mean is – that's what I've decided. It's my fault, for reasons that ... Well, we'll come to." Dad swallowed. "The important thing is to be good for Mum. This isn't her fault. Do you understand? I take full responsibility."

Dad didn't sound like himself. He didn't look like himself, either. On a normal Friday, he'd have changed out of his work clothes the second he got home, but today he had a job to do, and he was wearing his suit to prove it. Dad's coat looked ominous, hanging on the back of his chair, rather than in the cupboard under the stairs. His bunch of keys was a silver spider next to his plate. Poised. Ready to dart off into the night. Archie downed his water, imagining trapping the spider beneath his glass.

"No, Tim," Mum said. "It's nobody's fault. Not really." It was the first time she'd spoken since Dad had broken the news, and she sounded calmer than Archie had expected. A flicker of irritation licked his insides. Why wasn't Mum crying? Or Dad, for that matter? This was an emergency, wasn't it? A disaster? They should have been frantic, out of control.

But Dad was smiling. "Thanks, Jo. Honestly. I appreciate you saying that, especially in front of the kids."

"Well," Mum said. "There's no point in pretending, is there? The writing's been on the wall for so long."

Archie wondered why they weren't trying to scribble that writing out. He looked around for a pen. He wanted to scrawl a new message on that bastard wall that said something about love and something about forever and something about staying together for the sake of the children.

That's how Archie felt – like a small, frightened child. He was glad of Amy's hand in his.

"It's sad," Mum said. "But there you are."

She let out a long sigh, and then there was silence, broken only by Huxley, whining softly as the stew went cold.

The clocks had gone back the day before, and the kitchen seemed too dark for teatime.
Mum and Dad's words hung in the gloom. Mum and Dad's words were the gloom.

It was unbearable...

Extract 12: 'Punching the Air' by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam

From award-winning, bestselling author Ibi Zoboi and prison reform activist Yusef Salaam of the Exonerated Five comes a powerful YA novel in verse about a boy who is wrongfully incarcerated.

Suddenly, at just sixteen years old, Amal Shahid's bright future is upended: he is convicted of a crime he didn't commit and sent to prison. Despair and rage almost sink him until he turns to the refuge of his words, his art. This never should have been his story. But can he change it?

With spellbinding lyricism, award-winning author Ibi Zoboi and prison reform activist Yusef Salaam tell a moving and deeply profound story about how one boy is able to maintain his humanity and fight for the truth, in a system designed to strip him of both.



BIRTH

Umi gave birth to me
at home
She has a video
and every birthday
she makes me watch

When I was little I would run away
Umi would laugh and say
Come here, boy
You gotta remember
Where you came from!

She'd chase me around that small apartment
and I'd cover my eyes
and pretend to be gagging
That's nasty, Mama, I'd say

That's life, Amal
You have to respect it
she'd say

Umi was in this inflatable pool
in the middle of our living room
with the midwife next to her
My father was holding the camera

She was taking deep fire breaths
eyes closed tight,
not even screaming
almost praying
Then the midwife plunged

both her hands into the pool

And then
there I was rising out of water
Squirming little brown thing
barely crying
big eyes wide
as if I'd already done this before
as if I'd already been here before
Umi says I was born
with an old,
old soul

OLD SOUL

The thing about being born
with an old soul is that

an old soul can't tell you
all the things you weren't supposed to do
all the things that went wrong
all the things that will make it right again

The thing about having an old soul
is that
no one can see that it's there
hunched over with wrinkly brown skin
thick gray hair, deep cloudy eyes
that have already seen the past, present, and future
all balled up into a small universe right here,
right now in this courtroom

COURTROOM

I know the courtroom ain't the set of a music video,
ain't Coachella or the BET Awards,
ain't MTV, VH1, or the Grammys

But still

there's an audience
of fans, experts, and judges

Eyes watching through filtered screens
seeing every lie, reading every made-up word
like a black hoodie counts as a mask
like some shit I do with my fingers counts as gang signs
like a few fights counts as uncontrollable rage
like failing three classes counts as being dumb as fuck
like everything that I am, that I've ever been
counts as being

guilty

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