

Option One: © T.M.Clark - Extract from: Fearless – The Monkeys' breakfast.

Chapter Book: Aimed at 9 – 12 years.

Madison and her family have just relocated from Australia to a safari camp in Zimbabwe, Africa. Her mother is a chef, and her father is a mechanic. Fearless is a stuffed elephant.

Madison woke early to a sound that was much like a Kookaburra, but louder and more constant. She lay in her new bed and held Fearless tightly. She could tell it was sunny outside from the slither of light shining through the side of the blind that didn't quite fit in the window of their cottage.

The noise continued, in fact, she was sure it was getting louder.

She put her pillow over her head, trying hard to shut out the sound.

But it didn't go away.

Madison reached out for her phone to check the time – six-thirty. She pulled back the sheet, untangled herself from the mozzie net that hung like a princess's curtain around her bed and marched out the door towards where the noise was coming from. Surely she could chase whatever it was making such a noise away.

She stomped through the lounge and pushed open the kitchen door.

And stopped.

There were monkeys inside the kitchen.

At least she hoped they were monkeys. From the books, she'd read she knew gorillas lived much further north in Africa. Anyway, these were too small to be gorillas.

A monkey had the fridge open and was pulling the food out, throwing the eggs one at a time over its shoulder. Splat. Next came the cheese, but this time it took the wedge of gouda, and bit into it, wrapping and all. Then using its fingers, it ripped open the packaging and bit into the cheese again.

The monkey spat out the red wax and then ate two mouthfuls of cheese before it tossed that over the shoulder to join the eggs.

She looked around. They'd made a mess everywhere. Some were sitting on the kitchen table eating fruit from the big wooden bowl, half-eaten bananas and apples discarded on the floor. One monkey sat in the sink, playing with the tap.

Water on. Water off.

The largest of the monkeys saw her as he was ripping into a packet of chips and bared his teeth. He ran towards her.

She screamed, turned and ran out of the room, slamming the door and held the handle up. Too scared to let it go, just in case the monkeys knew how to open it.

'Dad! Dad! Come quickly.'

No answer. Then she remembered her dad had plans to go out early.

'Mum?'

No reply. Of course – mum was starting work at the hotel restaurant today and would have been out when the sun was rising.

She was alone in the house.

Alone. No one was coming to rescue her.

Her instructions had been to go join Tandai and Jose in the main boma when she woke up. They were going to find a painted dog pack and fix one of their tracking collars.

No one was coming to look for her for – at least not for another half hour or so.

She was on her own.

Well, not quite. There was the room full of monkeys.

She pulled the nearest chair she could find and pushed it against the door to hopefully keep the primates from accessing the rest of the house. Letting herself out the front door, she ran for the main boma.

Maddie looked behind her one last time to make sure no monkeys were running after her. Not that she knew if they would or they wouldn't, but she knew that she couldn't get them out of her house alone.

The main boma's floor was cool on her bare feet after the sand, which was quickly heating up under the bright African sunshine. Jose sat at a table and Tandai stood with his back to her, but she recognised his silhouette.

Jose was about to put a fork of food in his mouth when he saw her and was already lifting himself up from the chair. 'Maddy? What's wrong? What are you running from?'

'Monkeys. There are monkeys in the kitchen. There's one playing in the sink, and they're even in the fridge!'

Jose and Tandai both burst out laughing.

'Come on,' Tandai said. 'That explains the pyjamas and no shoes. Have breakfast here with us, then we can all go and sort out your new friends, although perhaps by then they would have left, and there will just be their mess to clean up. Who left the back door open?'

'Not me. Mum or Dad.'

Jose grinned. 'Are you sure they're monkeys and not baboons?'

'Please don't tell me the baboons come into camp too? Helene pointed them out on the runway yesterday, they were mean looking.'

'They can be. And they are smart,' Tandai said. 'Never underestimate a baboon.'

Kevin appeared at her elbow. 'What can I get you Miss Madison?'

Madison shook her head, 'Just Madison, no Miss. Please can I have...' she looked to what Jose was just finishing off his plate. 'Whatever Jose had and a glass of chocolate *Nesquik*.'

'One full safari breakfast coming up,' Kevin said.

‘Before you get that from the buffet, please let our new chef know that Madison is safe, but there are monkeys in her kitchen,’ Tendai said. ‘We will deal with the monkeys after breakfast, but she needs to give housekeeping the heads up about the mess.’

‘Yes,’ Kevin said then left in the direction of the main kitchens.

‘Mum is not going to be happy,’ Madison said. ‘And on her first day of work.’

‘Maybe. But she’ll get more of a fright when she sees what a mess the monkeys made. I bet you that after today, your mum and dad will learn to close the kitchen door properly behind them,’ Tendai said.

‘But we’ll make sure that we all disappear before they look to us to clean up the mess,’ Jose said. ‘Eat quickly when your food comes Maddy, before the other adults decide we are on clean up duty.’ Jose lifted his hand and high fived Tendai as if they were both proud of getting out of cleaning up.

‘What is it about monkey clean up you don’t like?’ Madison asked.

‘They throw their poop around. It’s not pretty.’

Madison gasped. ‘Our kitchen will smell like poop now?’

‘Housekeeping will clean all that, and there’ll be no smell when they are finished. We just don’t want to be roped in to help, it stinks, big time,’ Jose admitted.

‘So much for monkeys being sweet animals that do tricks and swing around in trees-’

‘They are sweet, just not when they get into someone’s kitchen,’ Tendai said.