



## Eric and the Bookshelves

Eric padded into the kitchen. He looked up and down but he could not see his parents anywhere. He wasn't hungry as he had found a bar of chocolate in his father's study. His face was already covered in a sticky, brown mess and so was his top and tights.

"Mama! Papa!" he shouted.

No one answered.

"Mama! Papa! Where are you?"

He waited for a reply but none came. There was only silence. His face scrawled up, he fell backwards onto his bottom and he started to cry.

"Andrea," he whispered desperately but he had seen his nanny leave earlier through the bars on his play pen.

Eric sat on the kitchen tiles in his warm nappy and continued to cry. When his tears had dried up he clumsily stood and approached the door to the dining room. It was shut.

The handle was too high for him, so he pushed a kitchen stool from the breakfast bar towards it. He climbed up, pulled the handle down and jumped through the doorway as the door swung open.

In the dining room, he hollered again, "Mama! Papa!"

There was still no response, so he walked under the mahogany table and out into the hallway.

His eyes were red and a river of yellow snot was trickling down from his nose. With no one around to wipe it away, he licked it off.

"Mama! Papa!"

There was still no response and he walked down the hallway past the expensive works of art hanging on the walls. A tickle in his nose led to an almighty sneeze. He had not yet been taught to put his hand in front of his mouth; spit and mucus hit the Warhol painting and slowly dripped down it. At the end of the hallway, he found an open doorway into a room he had never previously been allowed into.

"Mama! Papa!" he shouted and went in.

The room was silent, like all the others. Shelves lined every wall and the room was full of books from floor to ceiling. Eric looked around with wide eyes in amazement. All thoughts of his parents disappeared and he scanned each and every shelf. His eyes were drawn to a book with a silver-spine on a top shelf over two metres above him. He had had to have it.

Carefully he gripped the shelf above him and hoisted himself up. There was just enough room for his little feet but nothing else.

The next shelf was not high. He reached up to grab hold of a World Atlas and stepped up. Above him, he could just see his prize but the next shelf was so full of books that there was no space. Without any concern for their cost, Eric sent priceless first editions flying through the air as he made space for himself.



He was moving up and was nearly there. Finally, by balancing on precariously on an original Les Miserables manuscript, he was able to reach the top shelf.

The top shelf was higher and emptier than the rest. Eric sat down, dangled his legs over the side and picked up the silver book. He looked at the words on the front cover but he could not yet read them which was a pity as they read, 'View from the summit by Sir Edmund Hillary'.

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