

# My Birthday Surprise

Charlie Hiller



Published by Saronti Ltd

Facilitated by Clare Ford at the Switched On Academy

## Acknowledgments:

Special mention to all my Grandparents for always encouraging me to read and buying me lots of lovely books.

Special mention to Mummy for helping me write this story and encouraging me to carry on.

## **My Birthday Surprise**

Written & illustrated by

**Charlie Hiller**

**Aged 11**

For Grandma,

Thank you for inspiring me to write this  
book and teaching me to be imaginative.

## Chapter I

### Me

It all started at home on the night of my 14th birthday.

The feisty wind blew throughout the day, whistling and howling as it has done for the last 13 years I've lived here. The town is stale and old; there is never any sunshine and I have no friends.

Mum says that 'some day this misery will change and life will be more bright, keep believing.' Although years have gone on without any change she still won't let that thought go. I never knew my dad, he left when I was little so my mother has been all on her own throughout my lifetime.

I have just remembered that I haven't introduced myself; how rude of me. I'm Danny and I'm going to talk to you about an exciting and rather peculiar journey that happened recently.

Let's go back to 2 days from now and I will share my story with you.

## Chapter II

### Home



It's a cold winter and a couple of spoonfuls of porridge is all my mother can afford. We have only a litre of water to share a day and ragged patchy clothes to wear. But no matter how poor we are, my mother will do anything to keep me happy. She means the world to me and I can't bear the thought of losing her.

I don't really spend a lot of time outside because there are no parks, all the fields are rotting and the clouds are burnt out marshmallows melting out tears of gloom.

Instead I am in my bed a lot, dreaming of ancient cities. For my 9th birthday my mother bought me a book full of historical places.

My personal favourite is Ancient Rome. Their wonderful togas are so elegant and their concerts are amazing. I'm not too keen on the Colosseum though. The thought of a mighty lion running towards me gives me shivers.

## Chapter III

### The Market

Tomorrow is my 14th birthday and I think I already know what I'm getting. Yesterday my mother and I were out in the market where we came across an amazing stall . It was almost made for me! There were books about all kinds of ancient history. One book was called: *The Story of Apollo*. Another was titled: *The Timeline Of Egyptian Kings*. There were so many cool things that were on show but the items that caught my eye the most were the Roman models!

The gigantic castles, the looming temples and the colossal Colosseum! I passed it in awe. From my expression my mother knew exactly what to get me.

## Chapter IV The Gift



I woke up that morning feeling more energetic than I ever had.

“Can I open my presents yet mum?” I exclaimed.

“Not yet Danny,” she replied, “after breakfast.”

So I ate my porridge as quickly as possible, although I had half the oats round my face, and eagerly ripped open my new presents.

For my first one I got a new notebook; it was exactly the one I wanted. Then I opened my second present and it was a scooter although it was second hand I loved it so much. My third and final present was shaped like a cup.

“Mum you haven't got me a tea mug have you?” I asked.

“Just open it,” my mother said, holding back her laugh.

I slowly opened the present and sure enough, as I thought before, she had got me the model Colosseum from the market.

“Thank you so much Mum!” I said in happiness.

“You're so welcome my darling.” she replied.

Although I hate what happens in the Colosseum I think structurally it's an amazing landmark. I was the happiest boy in the world that day. Little did I know what that model Colosseum had in store for me.

I went to bed that night feeling so much more joyful. I put down the model on my bedside table and brushed my teeth before I fell asleep.



## Chapter V

### Rome



The next morning my head was pounding; like a police siren wailing in my ear. I found myself lying on the pavement with no bed, mattress, or pillow. Confused, I saw tall figures wearing shiny armour and scarlet red helmets standing over me.

“Take him inside!” one of the men ordered gruffly.

The other men picked me up by my feet and arms and carried me inside this tall building. At first I couldn’t quite make it out but when my vision became clearer I knew it was the Colosseum.

I had a look around and judging by what everyone was wearing and the buildings I could see, I was in Ancient Rome! But I still didn’t know why this man was taking me to the Colosseum. Maybe he just wanted to show me around or maybe he wanted to check whether I had any injuries because I was lying limply on the floor?

But the thought I dreaded most was what if he was taking me to be a gladiator?

A few minutes later, I was shown to a very grand room with expensive paintings and fancy food. When I saw the bowl of grapes just sitting there, not being touched I couldn’t help myself but eat one.

After a while of awkward waiting, two ladies followed by an important-looking man entered the room.

When he sat down the guard who brought me in said nervously, "King Pompilius I was told to bring this boy in and ask you what to do with him. He was just lying outside on the street."

King Pompilius took a moment to decide and then replied saying, "We are very short on Gladiators and he looks like a strong boy. We shall put him in the arena".

"But I....," I tried to argue but I was cut off.

"You shall be trained for three days and then you will be put in the arena and that is final!" the King shouted at me, losing his temper.

I didn't sleep that night; I was up crying and sobbing. I missed my mother and I was going to die in the one place I loved, in the way I feared most!

As I was drifting into a fitful sleep, I heard my mother's loving words, reminding me, "You can do it Danny, I know you can."

## Chapter VI

### Training

The training was useless. There was me and six other boys; each a couple years older than me. We had to run 4 miles a day and didn't use any weapons, which I'm glad about because I don't like using them.

The food was awful, there was only soup and it was so cold. The beds were uncomfortable and there were no pillows at all.

I don't know what I really expected. I was basically in prison. Every day I watched as other people were being killed in that arena feeling more fearful of what was going to happen.

There was one person that kept my hopes alive though. His name was Glacious; he was an instructor and unlike the others he was so kind and helpful.

For the short period I knew him he was like a father to me. I don't know how, but we had a special bond. He would always tell me to carry on and try harder and believe in myself and never give up.

I guess he saw that I wasn't a criminal like everyone else in the training.

## Chapter VII

### The Fight



It was Tuesday morning and it was the day I was going to the arena. I felt sick to my stomach getting armoured up.

My hands shook, reaching out to choose my spear. The bloodthirsty atmosphere grew louder as I came closer to the field,

making my ears ring. There were dead gladiators everywhere, the predators roaring with rage.

A cold shiver ran down my spine.

I could feel a terrific storm brewing, spitting out rain and throwing out thunderbolts.

I knew this was my last breath.

It was kill or be killed.

Out of the shadows came a huge menacing lion with gnarly teeth that could tear through anything. Its mane was perfect and round making it look even stronger.

The lion darted towards me several times but I just kept running away, my legs aching and numb with the effort.

Eventually we came face to face.

I made my move and with all my might charged towards the lion pointing my spear fearlessly, ignoring the splinters that were scratching my bleeding palm.

I could hear Glacious and my Mother's voices echoing in my head. Chanting my name telling me I can do it. To believe in myself.

As I was about to make contact everything went dark.

Like I had been swallowed by a black hole!

## Chapter VIII

### Home Again

I woke up on a nice comfy mattress, under a warm cosy duvet and a soft, light pillow. I was back home!

What had happened? Was I dreaming? Was it all fake?

Something about it made it still feel very real. As I got out of bed, a loud cheering sound rang in my ear. My legs felt numb like I had just ran a marathon. When I turned around and looked in the mirror a long, deep scratch ran down my back releasing crimson red blood. I hobbled over to the bathroom and wrapped my back in tissue.

I made my way back to bed and felt something solid when I laid down.

I slid my arm under the pillow and felt something cold and metallic on the tip of my fingers. I ran my hand down the side of the object but cut myself. It felt like a blade; a quick and sharp pinprick. Whatever it was, it wasn't good. I took the object from under my pillow. It was a spear.

And not just any spear. It was the exact same spear that I had used in battle. Even the splintered handle had withstood the timewarp. I held it in awe and looked at it carefully. On the spear it read: "Face your fears, follow your dreams and believe in yourself."

Glacious must've carved it before the battle. The words could not have come from a wiser man.

We hope that you and your family and friends enjoy the book that you have created.

This project was co-ordinated and facilitated by Clare Ford, Founder of Switched ON! the global online academy which is re-defining education beyond academic success.

Find out more at: [www.switchedonglobal.com](http://www.switchedonglobal.com) and register for your next exciting course.

Publish your book at [www.saronti.com/switchedon](http://www.saronti.com/switchedon)

**Do you like to write stories?**

**Ever fancied publishing one of them?**

**It's easy with Saronti.**

**Get in touch to find out more about  
our publishing packages for young authors.**

**[www.saronti.com](http://www.saronti.com)**

**Need another copy of this book?  
Go to [www.saronti.com/switchedon](http://www.saronti.com/switchedon)  
Your book reference is Sar2721**

**saronti**



SWITCHED ON!

Hi I'm Danny and I would love to take you  
on my mystical adventure on the night of  
my 14th birthday.

Come with me and I will tell you all about  
it.