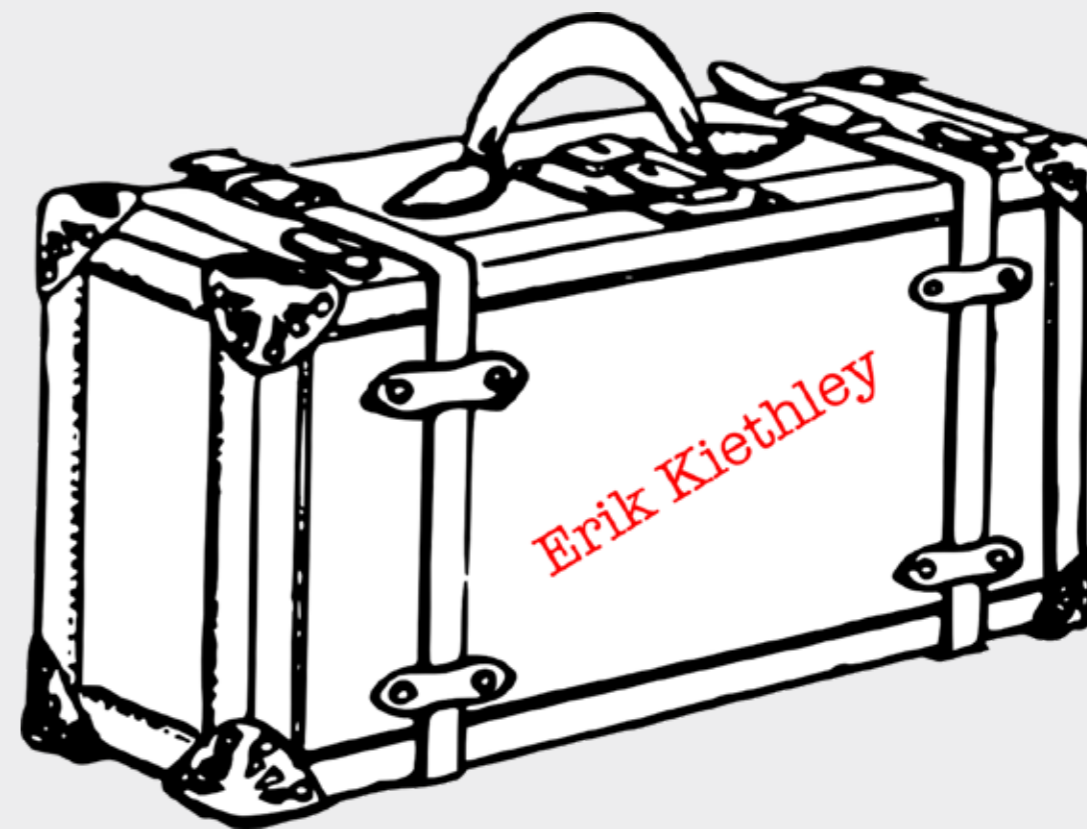


# The Suitcase

Max Vigar



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## PROLOGUE

Many children are quiet, but not many go on an adventure as crazy as this. Living on the run is no easy thing, and neither is coping with being framed. Whether it's for coping with these two things, or for uncovering the true criminal, Erik, I congratulate you. This is his story.

## CHAPTER 1

Erik plodded up the stairs and went to look out of the window. The spring blossom mingled with the city hustle and bustle surrounding the orphanage. This was no surprise, as Birmingham was always busy. Erik turned away from the window, sat on his bed and began to read.

His books, as always, whisked him away to another time, place and world altogether. But just as he was settling into his book, Emily, a fellow orphan, burst into the dormitory and said, "Lunchtime!"

Erik sighed, put his book down, and wandered downstairs.

Lunch was jacket potato and sausages, and Erik was very happy to find that.

"Hey, Erik, there's a seat over here," a boy said, smiling and beckoning for Erik to sit down.

Lunch was OK, but Erik hated noise and groups of people, so he never really looked forward to it. He tended to focus on his food and leave as soon as he could.

Erik decided to volunteer for the washing up so that he could get some peace and quiet. He went over to Mary, who was like the dinner lady of the orphanage.

"Mary," Erik asked, "d'you want me to do the washing up?"

"If you're sure, Erik, that'd be great," smiled Mary.

After Erik had finished the washing up, he fled back to the dormitory, where he found a huge suitcase with his name on it! Erik threw it open, excited and surprised to have received a gift!

"WOW!" he exclaimed, "It's full of money!" Then Erik noticed a printed note on the inside of the suitcase.

This should get you  
in trouble. Now  
you'll be arrested  
for the theft  
instead of me!

"What?!" Erik exclaimed, "NONONONO!!!"

## CHAPTER 2

Erik had to think, and quickly. Can I tell Mary? No, it'll look like I'm trying to frame someone else. *What about leaving it in the other dormitory? Oh, no, the case has my name on it.* Erik paced back and forth, panicking and trying to think of a way out of the situation. Then he spotted one of his books, 'Carrie Lockford and the Framing'.

"I know!" Erik suddenly squeaked. "I'll dump it in the river, just like in my book." Erik strapped the suitcase closed as tightly as he could, then threw it to the ground and descended down the front of the orphanage. Once he had reached the floor, he bolted to the roadside, crossed over, and then, without thinking, threw the suitcase. However, instead of landing on the river, as Erik thought it would, the suitcase crashed down onto the riverbank, sending notes flying everywhere! People walking along beside the river were shocked.

"It was him!"

"A young lad!"

"He's a thief!"

"GET HIM!"

Erik made a run for it and quickly ducked into an alleyway to lose the crowd.

After a long, tense wait, Erik carefully checked that no one was there and then made his way over to the suitcase, scooped up some of the money, and ran off. *I suppose I'll need this now I'm on the run*, Erik thought, terrified.

## CHAPTER 3

Erik had been hiding in an alley for three long days, and he had found a newspaper. He was shocked to see the headlines:

ERIK KEITHLEY, AGE 12, HAS STOLEN 100,000 IN NOTES AND IS LOOSE ON THE RUN.

“What have I got myself into,” Erik sighed. Just then, a police officer walked into the alleyway and bellowed, “STAY WHERE YOU ARE AND PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR!”

Erik leapt to his feet, and bolted down the alley, away from the police officer, but another one leapt out, blocking him in. Erik looked up, and pulled himself up onto a wheelie bin, then onto a gutter, and then up a drainpipe. He soon reached the roof, and leapt from one rooftop to another, with the two astonished police officers trying to chase him from the ground. But Erik quickly outran them, as there was no way that they could trap him. Erik descended a Costcutter and spotted an inn, tucked away, deep in the shadow of an alley. He carefully went up to the door, and pushed it open.

“You!” a tired-looking bartender pointed at Erik. “Stay where you are! This isn’t a normal inn, it’s crims only in here”.

“I-I am a crim right now,” Erik replied, trying to steady his shaky voice.

“What? Sinister Sweep? As if! You’re not fooling me, mate. Now leave- wait a minute. No, it couldn’t be you... You’re not...” The bartender said, eyes wide.

“Erik Keithley,” Erik squeaked. “I just outran the police using the rooftops”.

“Erik Keithley?! The kid that’s been hiding from the cops for three days! Whatcha want, mate, I’ve plenty o’ beer left, and the inn’s pretty empty,” the bartender said, his mouth hanging open.

“I-I just need somewhere safe to hide, thanks,” Erik stuttered. He had no idea that a crime he hadn’t committed had got him such a reputation.

“Of course! 20 quid a night, mate,” the bartender said, and Erik gave him a twenty-pound note.

Erik rested and hid in the inn for five days, until there were the voices of the bartender and three other people coming up the stairs.

“He’s just in here. I swear, he scared the life outta me when he opened the door...” the bartender said, and the door burst open. Three police officers bolted in and dived for Erik, who ducked underneath them, grabbed what money he had left and shot out of the room and downstairs. He tried to

open the front door but found that it was locked! Then he checked the window, but it was the same! After a frenzied panic, Erik realised something. If this was a criminals-only inn, then surely there would be a secret escape! Erik threw himself over the counter as the police officers chased after him. He pressed every button, turned every dial and flicked every switch in the kitchen, until a hatch in the floor opened up beneath him, and he fell into a train cab! He found the forward button and pressed it. Wherever this goes, Erik thought, It’s my only chance of escape.

## CHAPTER 4

The train cab sped up, and soon, Erik stopped at the end of the tunnel. He found the door out of the train cab, opened it and got off. He clambered up a ladder, opened the hatch at the top and found himself in yet another alley. *That was a... strange way to escape, Erik thought. I wonder why that bartender would've reported me to the police, though?*

"Yeah, I know, mate," a man walking past spoke into his phone. "It's good they've put a bounty on that Keithley fella, ennit?"

*No, no no NO! Not a bounty... Everyone'll be out to get me now...* Erik thought anxiously. He went deeper into the alley, until he was completely hidden in darkness. *What do I do now?* Erik thought.

After a few hours, Erik had formed a plan to uncover the true thief. He would use the remainder of the money to hire a forensic scientist to check the money for fingerprints and then the real thief would be revealed. Hopefully...

Erik had read about a private forensic facility in one of his books and luckily it had included the address. Once he arrived, Erik pulled on a hoodie that he

had found out on the streets and grabbed a face mask from the lobby as he entered, to disguise himself.

"Hello, how can I help you?" the receptionist asked.

"I'd like to arrange a forensic check for an object, please," Erik replied, making his voice sound as deep as possible.

"Can I take your name please?" replied the lady suspiciously, with one eye raised.

Erik thought frantically, "Keith Erikson" he said, trying to steady his voice.

"The next free slot is with Doctor Hayman at 3 o'clock today. It'll be £500 for an appointment," the receptionist explained, and Erik nodded and handed over the money.

"Can I wait here until the appointment?" he asked.

"Of course," the receptionist nodded.

When it was time for Erik's appointment, Doctor Hayman beckoned for him to come in. "Hello. You booked a forensics appointment?" Doctor Hayman asked.

"Yes," Erik replied. "A thief attempted to steal this money and I'd like to find out who they are".



“Well, I’d say that a fingerprint check would be best for that,” Doctor Hayman explained. “Please could I have some of this money?”

Erik handed the doctor a £10 note.

“This fingerprint powder should uncover the thief,” the doctor said, sprinkling powder on the note and dusting it with a small grey brush. “I can’t say for sure, but the fingerprints match very closely to two people.” He squinted slightly as he read the names, “Kevin Harvard and...” Doctor Hayman’s eyes widened, “Erik Keithley! You could have been robbed by Erik Keithley! Now, you must go, I have to alert the police of this.”

Erik was rushed out of the lab, and then said, “Kevin Harvard, here I come.”

## CHAPTER 5

Erik was outside Kevin Harvard’s house – Kevin had served his time in prison and had – supposedly – gone straight. Erik carefully watched Kevin from outside his window. He clambered slowly and silently up his wall and squeezed in through an open window. Erik found himself in an art studio and he navigated his way out of the studio and downstairs. He hid behind the door to the living room and spied in on Kevin, who was watching TV. When Erik was ready, he leapt out from behind the doorway and bolted towards Kevin!

“What the-“ Kevin exclaimed, as Erik leapt on top of him and tried to pin him to the ground. “What?! What’s going on? Who are you? Why are you doing this?” Kevin demanded.

“You don’t frame me and get away with it!” Erik said angrily.

“What do you mean? I didn’t frame anyone – I went straight, I swear!” Kevin exclaimed, “who are you?!”

“Erik Keithley,” Erik growled.

“What! You weren’t framed! You pulled a robbery and now you’re blaming me! I had nothing to do with it! Just please, please leave me alone...” Kevin

sighed. There was a truth in Kevin's voice that Erik couldn't deny. He let Kevin go, and stood in front of him.

"I didn't commit the crime," Erik said quietly, looking deep into Kevin's eyes. "I was framed. But not by you. I know that now, but I still have one question. Why were your fingerprints on this note?" Erik held it out, and a photo from the forensics lab showing Kevin's fingerprint on the note.

"What? Wait a minute, that's an anti-theft ink-stained note... I stole that money just before I was imprisoned. Someone must have missed the stain somehow and put it back in to the monetary system after I was caught and now it's been taken again!" Kevin said, shocked. "And only one person would steal stained notes..."

"Who's that?" Erik asked, his whole body shaking at the thought of finally solving the mystery.

"See those other fingerprints? They're of the exact person I thought. Mary Exmoor, the undiscovered thief and, for a time, my sidekick".

Could this finally be the real culprit?

## CHAPTER 6

Erik was running as fast as he could back to the forensics lab, Kevin following him. They eventually got there, and they burst through reception and into Doctor Hayman's lab.

"What is the meaning of this?!" exclaimed Doctor Hayman.

"I'm Erik Keithley," Erik panted. "I'd like you to look at this note again."

"Again?" Doctor Hayman asked, puzzled. "You certainly haven't come before".

"I have," Erik replied. "You studied this note and found my fingerprints and Erik Harvard's. But you missed Mary Exmoor's. This is the money that I supposedly stole. But I never stole it. I was framed. Framed by Mary Exmoor. It all makes sense. She works at the orphanage that I live in, you see. She used to be Kevin Harvard's unknown sidekick. I was never a criminal. She was."

"And I can prove it," Kevin said, stepping in. "My fingerprint dates back 15 years, just before my imprisonment. Mary's fingerprints are from the day the money went missing. Erik's fingerprints are from three days after the robbery, which shows that both me and Erik are innocent and Mary Exmoor is guilty".

"I-I am so, so sorry that I, and the whole world blamed you and tried to hunt you down when you were innocent, Erik Keithley. And, I must say, you did a very good job of the investigation. You're a clever young boy, and you'll grow into an amazing scientist. Now, I must inform the police of this terrible incident right away," Doctor Hayman apologised, and then turned to his computer.

## EPILOGUE

Well, Erik was safe, Mary was arrested and imprisoned, and everything was even better than it was in the first place. You see, I adopted Erik! As you might have guessed, I'm Kevin Harvard and, as I said before, many children are quiet, but not many go on an adventure as crazy - as insane, as difficult - as the one Erik Keithley went on. However, if he hadn't, we would never have found each other. So, I'm really glad he did.

We hope that you, your family and friends enjoy the book you have created. This project was co-ordinated and facilitated by author Nikki Young for members of her Storymakers writing club.

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When Erik Keithley finds a mysterious suitcase full of money, he is plunged into a dazzling and dangerous adventure of framing and investigations! But where did the money come from?