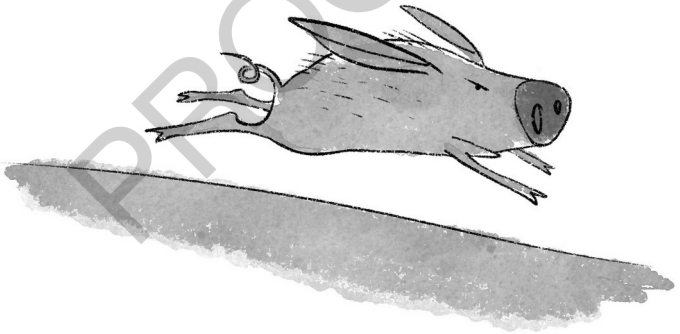


Unlucky  
for  
Some



13 Tales with a Bite  
for Vengeful Hearts!

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# Fur Elise

I never liked Elise, not from the first moment I set eyes on her, even though I had no idea of the truth about her.

It didn't help that she was a girl – I don't have much to do with girls these days. I used to play with them back when I was in Infants. Never her though. Now I'm in Year Five, our class is pretty much divided, boys v. girls. Some of the girls are okay, I suppose. There certainly isn't anyone else as annoying as Elise.

Elise was one of those girls who wear stupid big bows in their hair, and suck up to the teacher all day long. "Of course, Miss March. Can I take that to the office for you, Miss March? Would you like me to lick your face clean, Miss March?"

I couldn't stand her! Sometimes, I'd daydream about

## FURELISE

strangling her, especially when she was book-monitor for the week. She'd make such a thing about giving the books out! "Here you are, Mo!" she'd say. "Here's your book for you!" And she'd give me that sugary smile that made me want to slap her!

I had a feeling Miss March couldn't stand her either. Maybe that was why she gave Elise the class hamster to take home for the Easter holidays. You see, it wasn't the treat it is in some schools, or even in other classes in our school. You really didn't want to be the one who had to look after our class pet, because Rookie was a vicious little git!

Miss March said hamsters are nocturnal, which makes you wonder why a school would get one, since nobody's even in the building at night. I don't suppose Rookie cared, though. He probably loved spinning round crazily in his wheel while we were all safely out of the way. I imagined him with glowing red eyes, scheming to take over the world as he went round and round.

All day long, of course, he'd be asleep inside the little plastic house in his cage, not even visible. If you tried to get him out, if you even just poked around with your finger to check he was there, he'd bite you. I don't mean a nibble either! He gave Tariq a full-on razor-fanged chomp when he put his hand in.

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It was stupid of Tariq, really. He should have known better than to listen to Daniel telling him Rookie was just a cuddly little fluff-ball. Surely he knew that nobody contradicts Daniel! That was why nobody said anything. Of course, Daniel totally knew what a evil little fiend Rookie was, but he's as vicious as the hamster! He thought it was hilarious that Tariq had to go off to the hospital to get his finger stitched up and have some iabs!



So anyway, I wasn't sure Elise actually wanted to take Rookie home for the holidays. Lola said she'd heard her asking Miss March, but I didn't believe it at the time. I

## FURELISE

mean, why would you volunteer to look after an animal that would like nothing better than to take your hand off? Afterwards, I realised Lola had been telling the truth. Elise knew exactly what she was doing.

It was a Friday, and own clothes day for the end of term. Elise was wearing this prissy sort of fairy dress. I mean, really! She's ten, or will be quite soon. Hasn't she realised that fairy outfits are for little kids? I wasn't the only one who thought she looked stupid: Ewan said so, really loudly. She pretended not to hear him. It seems so weird, looking back – the two different sides of her character were so totally different. At the time, though, I didn't know there was another side. I thought this was just Elise just being her usual, annoying self, swishing her skirts and flicking her hair around, wanting everyone to look at her.

Unfortunately, we live on the same street as her family, and my mum would never listen when I told her what Elise was like. She thought that because she liked Elise's mum, us kids would automatically get on. Every time I tried to explain, she'd say I was being narrow-minded. The fact that Elise's family is English and we're Asian doesn't mean anything, she'd say. As though that had anything to do with it!

## FUR ELISE

Elise's house is diagonally opposite ours, but fortunately my bedroom's at the back, so I can't see into her room from my window. Imagine that! I might have seen her tying the awful bow in her hair! Or something much worse, I realise now.

Elise's mum picked her up by car on that Friday, because of the hamster cage and all the food and everything, and she offered to give me a lift home. Elise's mum is as bad as mine for thinking we're bound to be friends – I guess she can't imagine someone not adoring her darling daughter! I said no thanks, I was happy to walk, and made something up about stopping off at a friend's house because Elise's mum wasn't going to take no for an answer otherwise.

It turned out, though, they hadn't collected everything from school for Rookie, because at about seven o'clock that evening, Elise's mum messaged my mum to ask if we had one of those water bottles that fixes onto the side of the cage. It seemed that Little Miss Perfect had forgotten to pack it. Did she forget though? I keep wondering that. Or did she just not bother? She bothered with the food, but I guess it would have been a bit obvious if she hadn't taken that.

We do have one of those bottles, as it happens, left

## FURELISE

over from when my brother used to keep gerbils, before he moved on to breeding scorpions! Mum went and found it and gave it to me to take over the road. I started to ask why Elise couldn't come and get it – it was her mistake, after all – but I saw that glint in Mum's eye which means it's best to shut up. I took the bottle over to Elise's house and rang the doorbell, praying it wouldn't be her who opened the door.

It wasn't. It was her dad. He looked a bit vague. I explained why I'd come and he told me to go on up to Elise's room where they'd set up the cage. That was even worse than if she'd answered the front door herself! I was pretty desperate not to see her, especially not to go into her bedroom, but her dad just disappeared off down the hall, and I thought it would seem rude if I didn't do as he'd said.

I went slowly up the stairs, sort of hoping, I guess, that someone else in the family would come past and take the bottle from me. Nobody did.

I must have been quite quiet, I suppose, though not on purpose. Elise's dad had told me which room it was, and the door was slightly open. I peered through the gap. I wasn't spying – I just wanted to know what she was doing before I walked in on her.

Rookie's cage was on the other side of the room from the door, and I noticed the lid was open. Elise was standing



## FUR ELISE

in front of it, with her back to me. The way her arm was moving, and the little clicking noises, I guessed she was cutting something up, maybe a carrot for Rookie. I waited. I know it was mean, but I wanted to see her put her hand in the cage to feed him. It would be so funny to watch her get savaged! I didn't think it was very likely, mind you. Since Tariq, the whole class knew what Rookie was like. Besides, the hamster was probably asleep and wouldn't come out.



After a bit, it occurred to me that Elise had spent quite a long time doing whatever she was doing. Her head was bent over the table, like she was concentrating, and now and then, her left hand moved upwards. I edged into the gap and nudged the door with my toe. It was quiet in the room – she seemed to have mostly finished the cutting up – but I thought I could hear a crunching sound. Maybe Rookie was awake and had started on the carrot. Only there was

## FUR ELISE

something about the noise that wasn't quite right.

I nudged the door a bit wider, and this time it creaked. In the split second before Elise whipped round, I realised what was wrong with the crunching sound. It wasn't coming from the cage. It was coming from higher up.

Elise's jaws were still moving as she spun to face me. I'd been right about her cutting something up. The knife was still in her hand. Its long, sharp blade had something red on it. The fingers of her left hand were red too, and wet.

Worst of all was what was at the corner of her mouth. Fur.

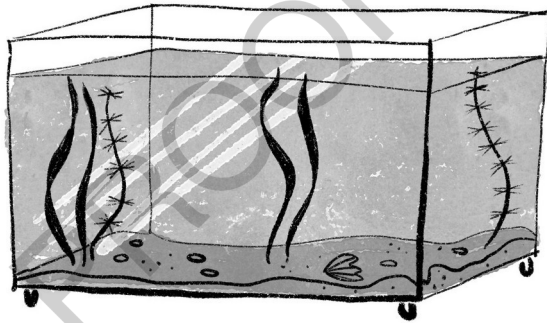
I dropped the bottle and ran.



Rookie had got out and vanished, she said, when she brought the empty cage to school on the first Monday back. She managed to cry when she told Miss March. She felt so bad, she said. Poor little hamster, stuck under the floorboards all on his own, wasting away with nothing to eat! Her parents had turned the place upside down apparently, but they couldn't find him. That bit was probably true, of course. They'd believed her just like Miss March believed her. I mean, you would, wouldn't you?

## FURELISE

While Miss March talked to the class about Rookie's disappearance, in a serious voice that didn't quite hide her relief, I looked at Elise. She was dabbing her eyes, drying her fake tears. From behind the tissue though, she shot me a look that could have turned me to stone! I knew what she was thinking: don't you dare say a word! That was the message, loud and clear! And how could I? Who'd believe me?



A week later, the Class Three goldfish vanished from their tank. There was a school inquisition, but nobody owned up. In the end, Mrs Poplar decided that a sea-gull must have got in when the windows were open and no-one was around. (A James Bond seagull, I thought. It would have had to be – stealth, timing, speed! And it took the lid off the tank and put it back on afterwards!)

## FURELISE

I knew it was Elise, but I couldn't prove it, so there was no point saying anything. Every time it was mentioned, she went all wide-eyed and started on about how frightened the poor little things must have been. She ought to know, I thought. But I kept quiet.

I thought maybe it was over after that. I hoped so. But then, the day before yesterday, our cat disappeared. I know cats do that sometimes, but not Jamal. He's getting on a bit, and he hardly goes out at all. He hasn't missed his dinner a single time in the last couple of years at least!

Mum's been outside the last two nights, calling for him, and my brother's posted about it online. My sister's been printing 'Missing' notices to put up all round the area. The trouble is, I'm pretty sure there's no point. I reckon it's too late to save Jamal.

The reason I say that is because the first evening he didn't come home, an ambulance turned up opposite. A few minutes later, it whizzed off with sirens going and lights flashing. We didn't see who they'd picked up, but Elise was off school yesterday. Miss March didn't say anything about it, but there are rumours that Elise is in a coma in hospital, after she blacked out. People have heard she choked on something, but nobody seems to know what. I bet I do. And I bet it was black and white.

## FUR ELISE

So I'm really sad to say that it's probably RIP Jamal. I'll never know for sure, I guess, unless he suddenly turns up. I'd be astonished, though. Surely this was it for him. It wasn't a good way to go, was it? Poor old cat!

All the same, if he takes Elise down with him, it won't have been in vain. I've got my fingers crossed. Hopefully, Jamal's death is going to make the world a better place!

PROOF

# VIPERS Questions for Teachers



Question sheets can be downloaded free from  
[www.juliaedwardsbooks.com](http://www.juliaedwardsbooks.com)

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

### FURELISE

Before reading

- What do you think the title means?
- What do you think this story will be about?

For the prediction questions, stop at the indicated point for each question.

Vocabulary

- What does 'vicious' mean?
- Define 'nocturnal'.
- Explain what 'contradicts' means.
- Give a synonym for 'fiend'.
- What does 'prissy' mean?
- Suggest a synonym for the word 'vague'.
- What does 'savaged' mean?
- Explain what 'to waste away' means.
- Give a synonym for 'disappeared'.
- What does it mean, if something is 'in vain'?

Inference

- Why does Daniel tell Tariq that the hamster is a 'cuddly little fluff-ball'? Pick out words or phrases from the story

## VIPERS: FURELISE

that give that give the reader clues about Daniel.

- Why might Elise not have bothered with Rookie's water bottle? If she left it behind on purpose, why did she bring Rookie's food?
- What exactly does Mo think has happened to Jamal? Find evidence in what he says that shows this.
- What might be the narrator's full first name? Give evidence from the story for your answer.

### Prediction

- Stop at the paragraph ending, 'Elise knew exactly what she was doing.'What do you think Elise is planning?
- Stop at the paragraph ending, 'Besides, the hamster was probably asleep and wouldn't come out.'What do you think is going to happen?
- Stop at the line, 'I thought maybe it was over after that. I hoped so.'What do you think is going to happen at the very end of the story?

### Explain

- Does Elise really ask, "Would you like me to lick your face clean, Miss March?" Why does the narrator say this?



## VIPERS: FUR ELISE

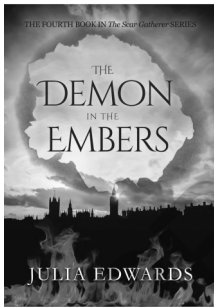
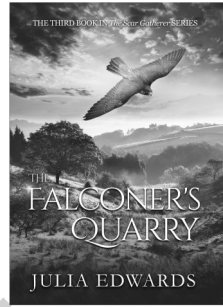
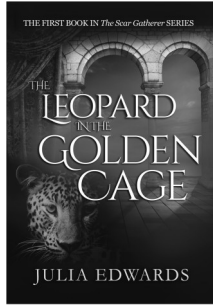
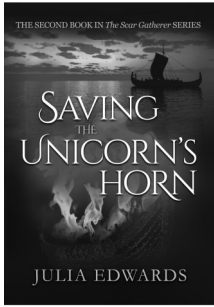
- Give two reasons why Rookie is a particularly bad choice of class pet.
- Why does Elise's mum offer Mo a lift home from school?
- Why are Elise's jaws moving when Mo goes into her room?
- What has happened to the Class Three goldfish?

### Retrieval

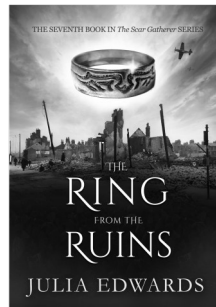
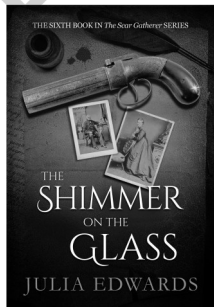
- What is the teacher's name?
- What is the narrator's name?
- What animal is Elise going to take home for the holidays?
- Which holidays are these?
- What happened to Tariq?
- What has Elise failed to bring home from school?
- What does Mo think Elise is cutting up?
- What school pets go missing next after Rookie?
- Who is Jamal?
- Why is Elise taken to hospital?

### Summarise

- Describe Elise in three words. Explain your choices with evidence from the text.
- Summarise the story in no more than ten words.



WHERE  
WOULD  
YOU  
LIKE TO  
GO?



## Who is Julia Edwards anyway?

Julia writes books (hopefully you'd realised that) and lives in Salisbury in the UK. Although the city was briefly famous for some Russians poisoning people, it is usually a lovely place to live. She is married to a kind but eccentric man who makes giant models of creepy-crawlies for fun. Julia has finally persuaded him to design these so they can live in the garden, which is a big improvement to the house. They have three sons aged seven, ten and thirteen who are mostly excellent humans, and who between them own two ferrets, two budgies and nine chickens. Julia feels this is definitely more than she signed up to.

Unlucky for *Somés* the first book in which Julia has revealed to her readers how nasty she really is. She previously wrote the much less vengeful Scar Gatherer series, seven time-travel adventures which allowed her to spend several years in parts of the past she's always wanted to visit. You can find out lots more about these books on the series website: [www.scargatherer.co.uk](http://www.scargatherer.co.uk).

Julia regularly visits schools, both in person and via Zoom, Teams and Google Classrooms. Find out more at [www.juliaedwardsbooks.com](http://www.juliaedwardsbooks.com).