

First Opinion: A Day in the Life of a Pre-School Daredevil

Buckley, Michael. *Kel Gilligan's Daredevil Stunt Show*. New York: Abrams, 2012.

Kyle Eveleth



There are some days when even the most minute of challenges can seem insurmountable. *Watch and be amazed as I wake up to my alarm on only the third snooze (So brave!)! Tremble in terror as I make the commute home (Not the I-75 business route!)! Strap on your facemasks as I clean my cat's litter (How can he survive?!)* On days like this, we all need to pull on our helmets, zip up our flame-retardant skinsuits, and grin like Evel Knievel as we take on the day—or like Kel Gilligan, the star of *Kel Gilligan's Daredevil Stunt Show*, a fearless youth whose name will be in the record books for all the obstacles and stunts inherent in preschool life.

Written by Michael Buckley and illustrated by Dan Santat, *Kel Gilligan's Daredevil Stunt Show* celebrates the monumental daily victories of preschool children and parents alike. Buckley and Santat take readers on a wonderful journey in this perilous day-to-day life with a wit and artistry that will appeal not only to those making their own death-defying attempts at the Potty of Doom (can they beat Kel's record of only one hour, twenty-three minutes, and fifty-eight seconds?) but to those wonderful people who make it all possible (bring your coloring books, parents). Readers will see Kel survive not only vegetables and potty training, but also getting dressed all by himself, miraculously managing to entertain himself while his mother carries on a phone conversation, braving bath time like a real trooper, and—by far his most incredible and awe-inspiring stunt—going to bed without checking for monsters! Well, maybe just once wouldn't hurt.

Entertainment value aside, the creators are careful to balance Kel's self-sufficiency with a healthy dose of humility, making him an ideal role model for younger readers. Kel knows when he needs help in a situation that could be dangerous: his father helps bathe him, and he leaves it to "the professionals" to check for bed monsters. In this respect, Kel demonstrates sensibility as well as fearlessness—a good combination for parents to stress as children move on from the mundane stunts to those more potentially dangerous ones.

Overall, *Kel Gilligan's Daredevil Stunt Show* has all the elements of a rollicking good children's book. The visuals and topic matter will keep kids demanding re-reads, while the sly commentary that is just for parents ("New foods are horrifying!") should let even the most experienced of daredevil readers get a good chuckle every time. As your stunt-kids get older, be sure to check out other offerings by both Buckley (*NERDS*, *The Sisters Grimm*) and Santat (*Attack of the Fluffy Bunnies*, *Sidekicks*, and *Oh No! Or How My Science Project Destroyed the World*). So get your helmet and your flying trike ready—it's going to be a great show!

About the Author

Kyle Eveleth is a lecturer and PhD candidate at the University of Kentucky. He does, in fact, own a flying trike, and he has miraculously eaten broccoli without any ill effects. When not performing insane stunts, he studies popular culture and ethics.