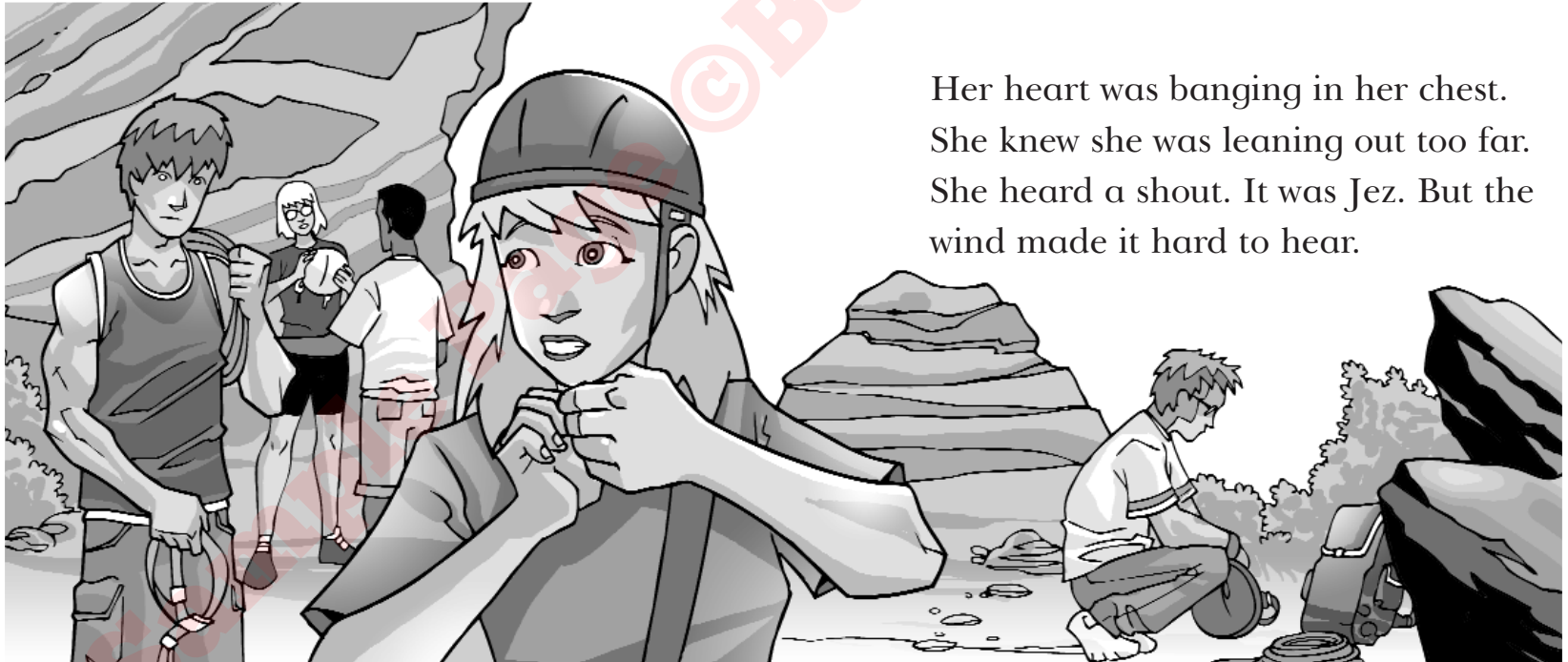




## Devil's Drop

The week flew by. Lexie felt stronger every day. But she faced her hardest test yet. On the last day, they were climbing Devil's Drop. Lexie had seen pictures at the club. It looked a nightmare. Then she found out she was climbing with Jez. There was no backing out now.



Jez was leader. Lexie watched him climb. He made it look so easy. He reached the first pitch. He gave her the signal. She started to climb. It felt really steep. She couldn't see any footholds. She began to panic. She was leaning out. She knew she mustn't lean too far. It was hard pulling back in. Her arms already hurt.

*Don't look down.*

Her heart was banging in her chest. She knew she was leaning out too far. She heard a shout. It was Jez. But the wind made it hard to hear.

Then she made a mistake.

She looked down.

A toy town valley lay below. It looked so far away.

Lexie panicked. She lost her footing. Her knees banged against the rock face as she fell. Then she felt the rope jerk and lock. She was swinging in space.

Lexie hung there. It seemed like forever. The belay rope creaked. The wind boomed around her.

*Don't panic. The rope will hold you. Don't panic.*

She felt dizzy. Her mouth was dry. Her hands were wet. They slipped on the rope. What if it snapped? What if she fell?

