



COREY RICH/REDBULL CONTENT POOL

Dane Jackson battling for control as he drops the 40m high Salto del Maule waterfall in February 2020.

Falling in love with falls

ZACHARY JOHN writes about Dane Jackson, an extreme sportsman who kayaks down huge waterfalls.

Dane Jackson spends more time flying off ten-storey-high waterfalls in his pink kayak than he has ever spent sitting in a classroom. Dane, 26, has won more than 80 professional freestyle kayaking events and he is the current International Canoe Federation (ICF) Freestyle World Champion.

Last month, video footage of Dane descending the 40m high Salto del Maule waterfall in Chile made waves on the internet. “When I was shown Salto del Maule four years ago, it’s the most **obsessed** I’ve been with a waterfall,” Dane told Redbull, “It looks so perfect and the location is breathtaking.”

Dane’s father, Eric, is an Olympic paddler and the founder of Jackson Kayaks — the best-selling whitewater kayak brand in the world in 2018. The senior Mr Jackson and his wife, Kristine, homeschooled Dane while

traveling across the US and Canada in a mobile home. Dane said that while he might not have had a fixed home for years growing up, “wherever we were, we were near a river”.

His father first took Dane out in a kayak when he was just two years old. It did not take long before Dane gained recognition as a kayaking **prodigy**. He dominated junior kayak events before he started winning pro-level competitions in 2011 when he was still a teenager.

An extreme sport

Freestyle kayaking is an extreme sport, in which the paddler battles racing river rapids — not only trying to stay up-right and finish the course but doing tricks and stunts along the way. Kayaking off 40m high waterfalls is even more dangerous.

When asked how he manages to

keep a handle on his nerves before a drop, Dane said that his faith in his team’s preparation helps to keep him focused. “For (Salto del) Maule, the line looked amazing, there was solid safety, and it was a dream drop of mine, so I knew there was nothing else I’d rather be doing,” he said.

Both Jackson men were born with severe hearing disabilities — Dane has been 70-percent deaf all his life. Dane has never seen this as a setback or disability — instead he feels it gives him an edge over other kayakers. He said, “If anything, it’s an advantage as I am able to read lips, which means I can understand what someone is saying from across the river.”

When asked about his plans for the future, Dane says breaking Tyler Bradt’s world record — kayaking down the 189ft (57.6m) Palouse Falls in the US — is not as high a **priority** as conquering more waterfall drops that



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Dane looking pleased after dropping the Salto Del Maule waterfall in Chile.

no one has done before. He said, “My goal for this year is to try to break my usual routine, check out new places and find first descents.”

VOCAB BUILDER

obsessed (say “ob-ses’d; verb) = preoccupied with or constantly thinking about something.

prodigy (say “pro-di-jee”; noun) = a young person with exceptional abilities.

priority (say “prai-yo-ri-tee”; noun) = considered more important than other things.

TOP DROPS: DANE'S FAVOURITE FALLS

Name	Location	Height	Done?	Dane's view
Alexandra Falls	Northwest Territories, Canada	33m	✓	"You really do just fall off the face of the earth."
Rainbow Falls	Northland Region, New Zealand	27m		"This waterfall looks like it would be a super amazing drop with enough water."
Abiqua Falls	Oregon, USA	27m	✓	"I ran it my first time last year and thought I broke my hand on my helmet — I didn't even care (be)cause I was so stoked."
La Leona	Rio Claro, Chile	21m		"This was not run for a very long time because it has one of the narrowest entrance gorges in the world, which is nearly unscoutable."
Spirit Falls	Washington, USA	10m	✓	"The drop itself has a few challenges to keep it exciting and it's taught me things that I can apply to waterfalls all over the world."



This waterfall in New Zealand is on Dane Jackson's to-do list.

A BOOK YOU MAY LIKE

Loving a new brother



When Aleena's parents asks if she and her older brother Bilal would "welcome a three-year-old boy" into their family, Aleena immediately jumps up and says, "Yes!"

Aleena has been looking at photos and videos of the cute little curly-haired boy, Hakeem, since her mother visited the orphanage in Morocco. Now, she is in Morocco with her mother to bring Hakeem home.

The heat makes Aleena perspire as she and Mama walk up the stairs

of a squat grey building. A lady in a blue hijab greets them with a smile. She ushers them into a room with mismatched fabric sofas.

"Are you ready?" asks Mama, looking at Aleena.

"Naam," says Aleena, as she practises her Arabic for "yes".

Aleena has been jotting down Arabic phrases like "kan bgreek", which means "I love you", in her notebook. Hakeem does not speak English and Aleena is looking forward to helping him settle into his new family.

The door opens, and the lady in blue hijab walks in with a little boy. It's Hakeem. He clutches the lady's hand, unsure what to do. Aleena smiles brightly and holds out a raccoon backpack and soft toy she has brought for Hakeem. Hakeem glances at them briefly. He decides to play with a red bouncy ball in the corner of the room instead. Aleena is a little disappointed. Mama says to give Hakeem time.

When they bring Hakeem home with them, Hakeem cries himself to sleep. But, each day, Hakeem sits in Mama's lap a little longer and hugs Aleena a little harder. He says "kan bgreek".

One day, Aleena comes home from school and gets a rude shock. Her room is in a complete mess! "Mama," she yells, "Hakeem's messed up my room again!"

Aleena's Lego creations lie in broken pieces. Her books are all over the floor. And, her favourite bag of glittery orange slime is oozing into her cream-coloured carpet. Hakeem sticks his head inside the door and gives Aleena a cheerful grin.

"Get out!" Aleena shouts and slams the door shut. She ignores Hakeem for the rest of the day, even when he tries to make her laugh.

Aleena's birthday is around the corner. She has planned her art-themed birthday party for weeks, and her best friends are coming. "Mama, can you make sure Hakeem doesn't bother us?" Aleena says. She doesn't want her little brother to spoil her party.

Mama sighs. "Okay, I'll keep Hakeem with me."

Everything is perfect as Aleena's friends arrive. They wave to Hakeem, who is hiding behind Mama. "He's so cute," Priscilla says. But, Aleena quickly ushers her friends away from Hakeem.

Mid-way through Aleena's party, Hakeem appears. "Leeena! Play?"

What will Aleena do? Will her love for her little brother win the day? Read "Home" by Hena Khan, and other stories about everyday heroes in *The Hero Next Door*, edited by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich.

— Reviewed by NG SOCK LING

CONTEST

Aleena is excited when her family decides to adopt Hakeem, a three-year-old boy from an orphanage in Morocco. She looks forward to helping Hakeem learn English and settle in with them. But, her love for her new little brother is sorely tested when he turns her life upside down. Aleena comes home from school to find that Hakeem has smashed all her Lego creations. Even worse, Hakeem has spilled her favourite bag of glittery slime onto the carpet. Aleena's birthday party is coming up. She has invited her best friends. She is worried that Hakeem will spoil her special day. What do you think she should do? Write Aleena a note.

1. Email your note to ourcontest@whatsup.sg.
2. Include your full name, class, and school in your email.
3. Contest deadline: 3 April 2020.

You could win a copy of *The Hero Next Door*!



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