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Opening extract from

The Girl with the Sunshine Smile

Written by

Karen McCombie

Illustrated by

Cathy Brett

Published by

Barrington Stoke Ltd

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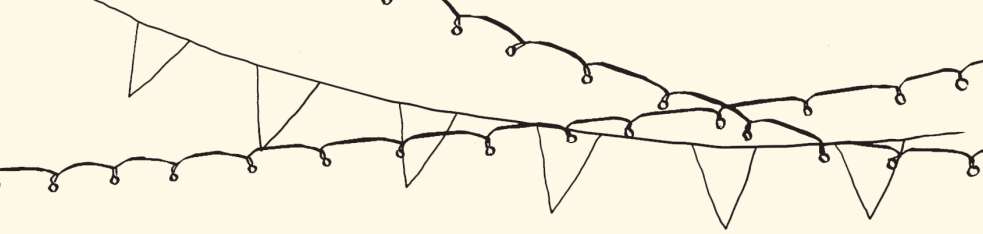

Karen McCombie

The Girl with the Sunshine Smile

With illustrations by
Cathy Brett

Barrington Stoke

For Gözde, who always has a sunshine smile

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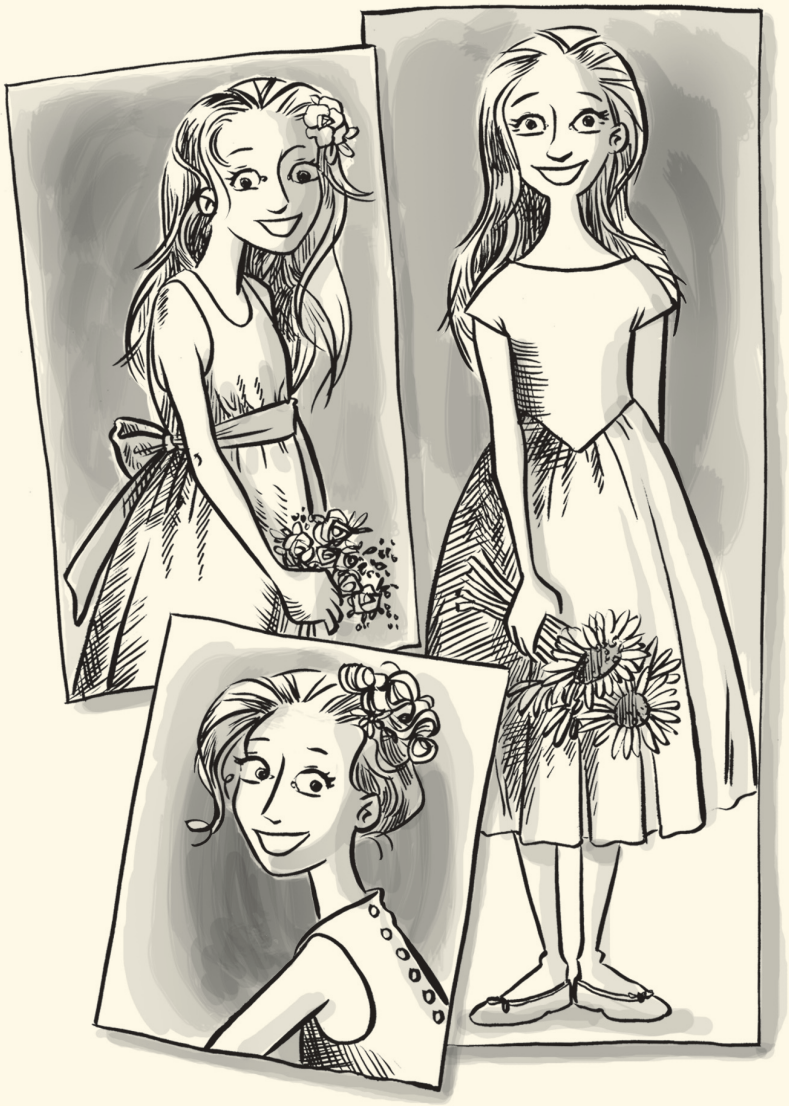

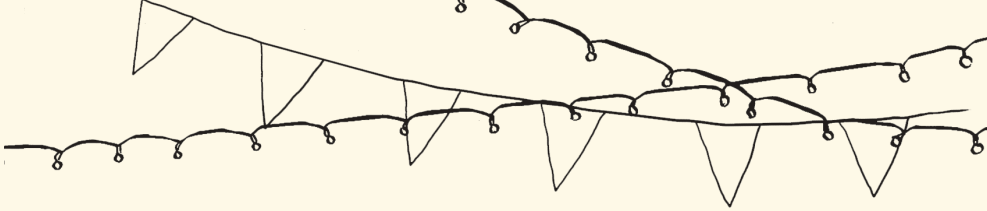

Chapter 1

Bad to Be Good?

I have a secret.

A secret *talent*.

I don't ever speak about it – well, only to my best friend Bex.

If I told anyone else, I'd sound like I was a total show-off. A girl with a head the size of a planet. I'd sound like I was all, "Look at me! Look at me!"

That's because my talent is looking … nice.

What I mean is, I'm good at looking pretty in photos. *And* I'm good at smiling.

See?

That makes me sound bad, doesn't it?

But my nice smile – and the fact that I look pretty in photos – is really important to my family. My family of me and Mum.

When my dad left, he just walked out the door and didn't look back. He didn't come to visit us. He didn't send any money. I was only a toddler, and Mum had to get a job, *fast*.

Mum's special talent is sewing. She set up her own business, making dresses for bridesmaids and flower girls. Work was slow at first, but that changed when Mum got a stall at a wedding fair. She had to take me with her, and I played while grown-ups wandered around and looked at fancy things they could buy for their Big Days.

While we were at the fair, a woman at the next stall gave Mum some advice.

1) Get a website.

2) Post photos of a cute child on it, modelling the dresses.

3) Use *me* as the model, cos of what the woman called my "sunshine smile"!

Mum took the woman's advice.

She dressed me up, put flowers in my hair, posies in my hands and – *snap!* – took my picture.

I was nearly 3 then and I'm 12 now, and I *still* model for her. At weekends, we go to lots of wedding fairs in posh hotels, where they call me "the girl with the sunshine smile".

We're at one of those posh hotels today, and Mum is looking me up and down, to check I'm perfect.

“Hey, do you want our customers to see what you had for breakfast, Meg?” Mum asks me.

I peek in the mirror and grin. Sunshine smiles don’t look so good when you have toast crumbs in your teeth!