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The Butterfly Club

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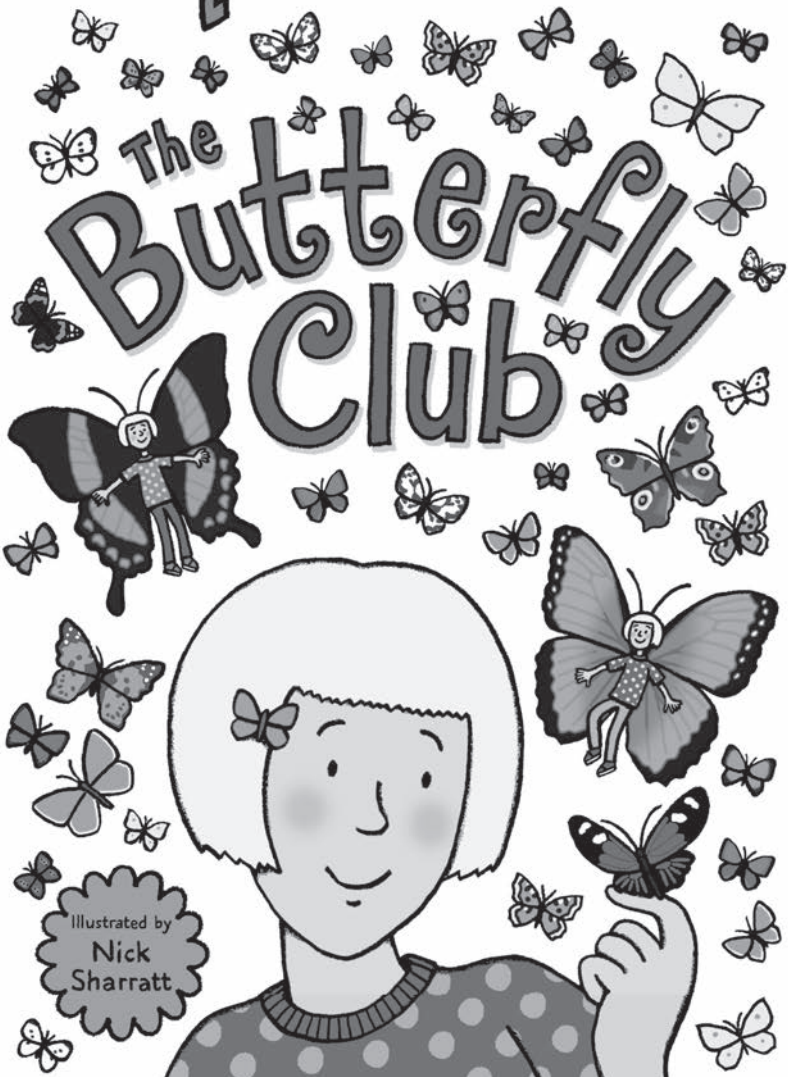
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Jacqueline Wilson

The Butterfly Club



Illustrated by Nick Sharratt

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Chapter One

There are three of us. Phil and Maddie and me.

We all have fair hair cut in fringes. I once tried to cut mine myself. Whoops!

We have blue eyes, and Dad says we have button noses. He sometimes pretends to pinch them but it doesn't hurt.

Phil's proper name is Philippa. I sometimes forget how you spell it and get the 'l's and 'p's muddled up.

Maddie's proper name is Madeleine. Her name's hard to spell too. I put the 'e's and 'i's in the wrong place.

My name's Tina. It's easy-peasy to spell, thank goodness.

We are triplets. *Surprise!* Everyone thinks I'm the little sister. It's very annoying. I was the littlest even when we were born. I was very, very little.

I didn't grow big enough when we were all inside our mum. I think Phil and Maddie must have sat on me and squashed me. When we were born I was too little to go home with Mum and Phil and Maddie. I had to stay all by myself in a tiny metal cot with a lid on it called an incubator. Well, I expect I had my teddy. I couldn't wear proper baby clothes, and I had to wear a silly little hat to keep my head warm.

The doctors found out that I had something wrong with my heart. Perhaps it was too small, like me. I had to have an operation. They put a tiny little box in my chest to make my heart pump properly. Thank goodness they put me to sleep so I didn't know anything about it.

I nearly died. I did, truly. I'm not meant

to know but I've heard the grown-ups whispering about it. Mum and Dad came to visit me every day, while Gran and Grandad looked after Phil and Maddie. Mum cried because she couldn't give me a proper cuddle. I had to stay inside my incubator.

But I got better! I was even allowed out into the open air!

I grew nearly big enough to go home, but then I got a chest infection and had to have lots of medicine. I didn't have it in a spoon like I do now – the nurse just dripped it straight into my arm. I'm sure she was very gentle. I like nurses. I still have to go to the hospital for check-ups and they always make a fuss of me.

Anyway, I got home at last. I could be with Phil and Maddie again. They were still much, much bigger than me.

They stayed bigger.

I was a bit scared when I started school because I was so much smaller than all

the other children. I wasn't used to lots of big children. I'd never played their kind of games.

Mum was a bit scared too. She had a word with the Reception teacher, Miss Oxford.

'I'm worried about Tina because she's still very delicate. She's got a w-e-a-k h-e-a-r-t and can't take too much rough and tumble. Phil and Maddie know they have to be gentle with their sister, but perhaps the other children won't understand. Do you think you could keep a special eye on Tina?' she said. She spelled out weak heart, but I knew what she was talking about even though I couldn't read yet.

Miss Oxford was very kind.

'Of course, Mrs Maynard. Don't worry. How lovely to have triplets in my class! You all look very special girls. Would you like to sit together?'

'Yes please!' we said.

Miss Oxford watched over me in the playground whenever she could.

Phil and Maddie looked after me too. If the big boys played chase and barged into me, my sisters got very angry. If the girls – like horrible Selma Johnson – wouldn't let me join in their games, then Phil and Maddie shouted at them.

Oh goodness, that Selma! I hated her. She was the biggest girl in the class with a great red scary face. Her hair was pulled back in such a tight ponytail it made her look even scarier, especially when she pulled a silly face. She was boss of the whole class, even the boys. She pushed and she poked and she called people mean names. She couldn't even be bothered to work out the difference between Phil and Maddie. It's easy, even though they are very, very alike.

Look closer!

Phil has a tiny mole on her cheek. She doesn't like it, but Gran says it's her

beauty spot. Maddie has a scar on her chin from when she fell over the first time she tried to skateboard. She's absolutely brilliant at skateboarding now. Phil gets annoyed because Maddie is better than her. I don't know if she's better than me because I'm not allowed to do skateboarding.

Maddie's always the best at sporty things, especially football. She jokes about a lot but she's very brave. She always stands up for Phil and me. Phil is the sensible one. The teachers always pick her to run errands. She's top of the class. She nearly always gets ten out of ten and a gold star. Maddie gets at least nine out of ten. I'm not going to tell you what *I* get. Sometimes Phil and Maddie help me.

Selma calls both Phil and Maddie Dim Twin – which is very stupid, because Phil and Maddie aren't dim at all, they're very clever. It's especially stupid because they're not twins, they're triplets.

Selma calls *me* Little Bug. This is even

more insulting, though actually I quite like bugs.

I don't mind worms. I can pick them up. It's great fun, because Phil and Maddie run away screaming. I'm good with spiders too. Do you know something – even Mum is scared of spiders! And I like caterpillars, with all their little feet. They tickle when they go for a walk up your arm. I particularly like ladybirds because they're so pretty. I've got a red dress with black spots and I call it my ladybird dress. Phil has a pink dress with white spots and Maddie has a blue dress with yellow spots. I like mine best. We wear our spotty dresses to parties.

We just go to little parties. There's a funny boy called Harry in our class, and when we were in Year Two he invited us all to a football birthday party. Phil and Maddie and I wanted to go – especially Maddie because she loves football.

'I'm sorry, chickies, it's out of the

question,' said Mum. 'You know Tina isn't allowed to play rough games like football.'

'Why can't Phil and I play?' asked Maddie. 'Tina could watch us. You wouldn't mind, would you, Tina?'

I would have minded a little bit, because it's rubbish not being able to join in, but I shook my head.

'Maybe I could go to the football party too,' said Dad. 'I could kick a ball about with Tina on the side lines while the other kids play. Then she can have a bit of fun too.'

We all thought this a great idea, but Mum still said no. It's because she worries about me. She can't help it.

So we couldn't go to Harry's party. It was a great shame, because I like Harry a lot. One time we had to clear up the paints together and we got a bit carried away. I painted him a black moustache and he painted me great red lips so that we looked like two grown-ups. I painted

Harry with red on his nose because lots of old men have red noses – my grandad does. Harry thought I might like to dye my hair like a big lady and so he started painting it black.

Miss Evelyn, our Year Two teacher, hardly ever got cross, but she went a bit berserk when she saw Harry and me. We had to be washed very thoroughly.

Then Phil and Maddie and I had *our* seventh birthday. Mum and Dad gave us *our own iPad*! We thought this very cool and grown up, though we wished we had one each. We've got used to sharing and taking turns, but it's very boring having to wait for the iPad. Especially for me, because I nearly always have to wait till last.

Mum and Dad *did* give us new flowery satchels for when we started in the Juniors. Mine didn't hold quite as much as Phil's and Maddie's, but Mum said a proper big one would be a bit too heavy for me.

Gran gave us three Victorian dolls with frilly dresses. This was a weird present because we were getting a bit big for dolls, weren't we? Though we still liked to play games with our Monster High dolls.

We couldn't play games with our Victorian birthday dolls because they were too precious. They just had to sit on our windowsill like ornaments. It was hard to pretend they were real, but we did give them names.

'I'll call mine Rosa, because she's carrying a bunch of roses,' said Phil.

'I can't call mine Hankie!' said Maddie.

'Perhaps you could call her Sneezy, like that little man in *Snow White*?' I suggested.

'Why don't you call your doll Primrose, Maddie, because she's got a pale yellow dress. And then you can call your doll Rosebud, Tina, because she's a bit smaller than ours. There – they've all got three lovely matching rosy names,' said Phil.

We told Gran what we were going to call our dolls and she was very pleased.

I thought Rosebud was a bit boring, but I liked her little baby. I took off her tiny dress. She wasn't wearing any knickers! I gave her a red swimming costume with my felt tip and took her for a swim in the bath.

Baby's scarlet swimming costume faded away but she didn't mind swimming naked. I had to keep hold of her or she sank. *I* didn't mind. Dad has to keep hold of me when we all go swimming or else *I* sink.

Baby liked playing all sorts of games. She flew, she climbed the curtains, she parachuted off the top of the wardrobe, she explored the great dark cave of the fireplace. She even braved ferocious wild beasts. They're not *really* wild beasts, they're our new birthday hamsters! Grandad gave us some money and we decided we all wanted to buy a pet. So we went to Pets at Home with him.

‘I want the brown one in the corner, chomping away on all the food! I shall call him Nibbles,’ said Phil.

‘I’ll have that fawn one racing round and round. I’ll call him Speedy,’ said Maddie.

‘I’ll have the really, really big yellowy one right there,’ I said, pointing. ‘He’ll be the boss of the other two and help them do everything. I shall call him Cheesepuff.’

We decided we really, really liked being seven.