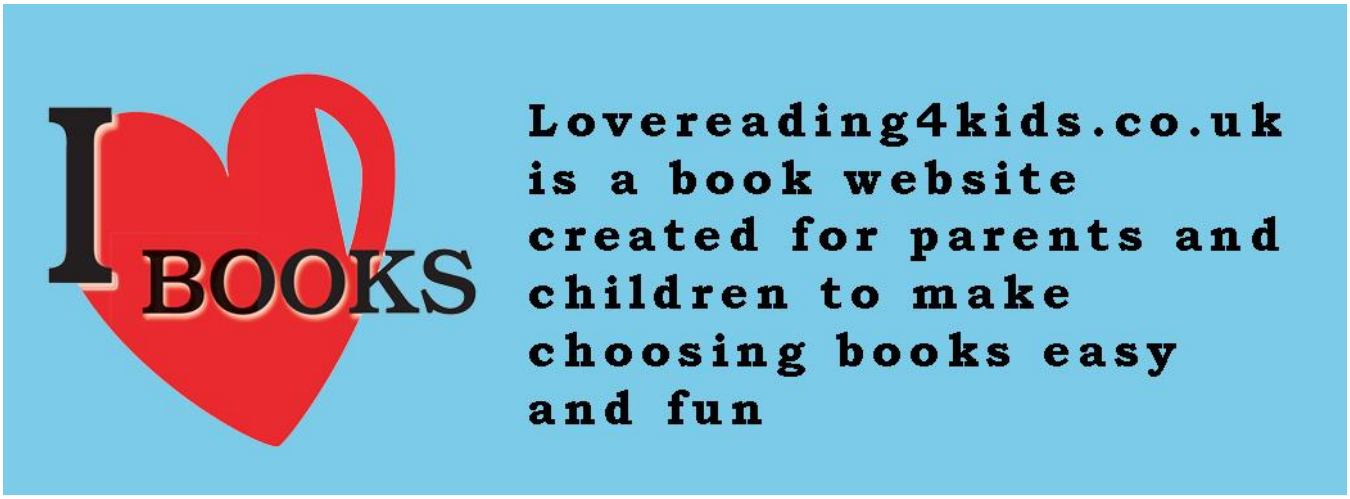


Opening extract from

Spangles McNasty and the Fish of Gold

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For all the sooopa people who live in my house.

Except the cat. The cat is an idiot.

SW



For Steve's cat.

CM



1
The Spangler

Spangles McNasty was nasty to everyone and everything, everywhere, all of the time.

He had a heart as cold as a box of fish fingers in a supermarket freezer, a brain brimming with badness and a head bristling with baldness.

There was only one thing Spangles liked more than being nasty, and that was collecting spangly things: shiny, sparkly, glittery, spangly things.

Of course, when he said ‘collecting’, he meant ‘taking without asking or paying’, or as everyone else calls it, stealing.

A perfect day for Spangles McNasty would start with a handful of his favourite breakfast – cold, greasy chips, scooped from a bin on the seafront so he didn’t have to pay for them. He’d follow this with pulling faces at old ladies, shouting at babies and, if at all possible, farting in the local library. But, best of all, it would end with collecting something spangly on the way home.

If he could collect something spangly from an old lady with a baby in a library, whilst eating cold chips, farting, pulling a face and shouting all at the same time, it would quite possibly be the happiest day of his entire nasty life.

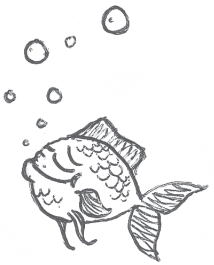


Sadly for Spangles, that day had so far escaped him, but each and every morning he awoke with a new nasty hope in his frozen-fish-finger-box heart. ‘Maybe today’s the day, Trevor,’ he would say hopefully.

Trevor was a goldfish. He lived with Spangles in a rusty old camper van, which had ended a long adventure-filled travelling life at a scrap yard, where it would have been recycled, had it not been for Spangles McNasty walking in one afternoon and '**collecting**' it while no one was looking.

He had been doing his nasty collecting business in it ever since.

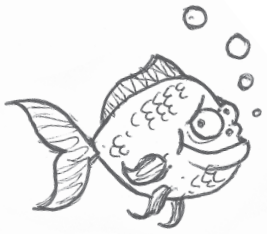
Camper vans are, of course, little completely mobile homes (like tortoises, but faster and with more seat belts). However, Spangles' camper rarely left his home town of Bitterly Bay, except when he was away on special collecting business. Nestled in a curve of coastline between the Jelly Cliffs in the north and Sandylands to the south, Bitterly Bay was '**home spangly home**' to Spangles McNasty. An expression he liked so much, he'd written it with his finger in the dirt that covered his van, just above where he'd written, '**Trevor is a stinker**'.



Trevor swam in tiny contented circles round and round a small glass bowl hanging from the camper's rear-view mirror, where most people hang air fresheners shaped like Christmas trees.

Spangles kept Trevor hanging in the window of his camper van for two reasons. Firstly, so he had someone to talk to, and secondly, to watch the sunshine spangle on his shiny golden skin, which it was doing magnificently on the sunny Saturday morning our story begins.

Trevor swam on peacefully in his fish-bowl camper-van home, parked outside a newsagent's. He was as happy as a fish, as the old saying goes (well, it doesn't, but it should). Spangles, meanwhile, was inside the newsagent's, buying the local newspaper. He too, was as happy as a fish.



Trevor stopped swimming momentarily and watched the familiar baldy figure of Spangles approach.

Spangles strode purposefully through the newsagent's, swinging his patched-up pinstripe-suited arms and legs almost high enough to flick his threadbare baseball boots at the ceiling.

He whistled merrily at his naughty reflection in the glass door as he was leaving, wriggling his



large handlebar moustache and allowing his bushy caterpillar eyebrows a quick dance before trying to slam the shop door behind him. Rather annoyingly, it had one of those self-closing-smoothly mechanisms. Muttering something nasty under his breath, Spangles climbed back into the driver's seat of his camper and slammed that door instead. The van shook, setting off its ancient alarm, which wailed like an unhappy elephant at Weight Watchers. He then leant on the horn accidentally-on-purpose just to be sure.



The sunshine, the newsagent, the milkman,

Trevor and Spangles were all awake, but the rest of the world was still tucked up in bed, sound asleep. Well, they had been.

'**Wakey, wakey**,' Spangles said brightly, unfolding his newspaper, before turning to Trevor. 'Hello there, my spangly friend,' he beamed. 'And may I say how super-shiny you is lookin' this **beautiful sunny mornin**'!' Spangles was feeling unusually cheerful, and it wasn't just because he'd woken 146 local residents somewhat earlier than they'd like on a Saturday. He had nasty plans for the day ahead, and nothing made him happier than carefully prepared nastiness.

'Imagine when you're fully growed!' Spangles said, grinning manically at the shiny fish. He believed completely that goldfish grow to the size of



whales, and are, in fact, made of solid gold. 'Imagine the spangles on that, Trev!' he said, but Trevor wasn't listening, he was busy swimming in and out of his little castle, playing soldiers.

'Have you seen today's headline in the paper?' Spangles held up the front page of the **Bitterly Daily Blah Blah** for Trevor to read. Trevor said nothing. He couldn't read.

'Says here, "More goldfish thefts! Sandylands is the third seaside town to be hit by the **mysterious goldfish thief**".' Spangles chuckled to himself. 'How very strange, eh, Trev. Some people are right peculiar, ain't they? What kind of a nut box would collect shiny golden fish?'

He waited a polite second or two for Trevor's response and then shouted over his shoulder to the living area, 'All right in the back?'

There was **no reply**.

There was no reply because there was no one living in the living area. No one apart from **326 goldfish**, and they never spoke. This was something that did not especially worry Spangles. As long as they all grew as big as whales and made him rich, he'd be happy.

