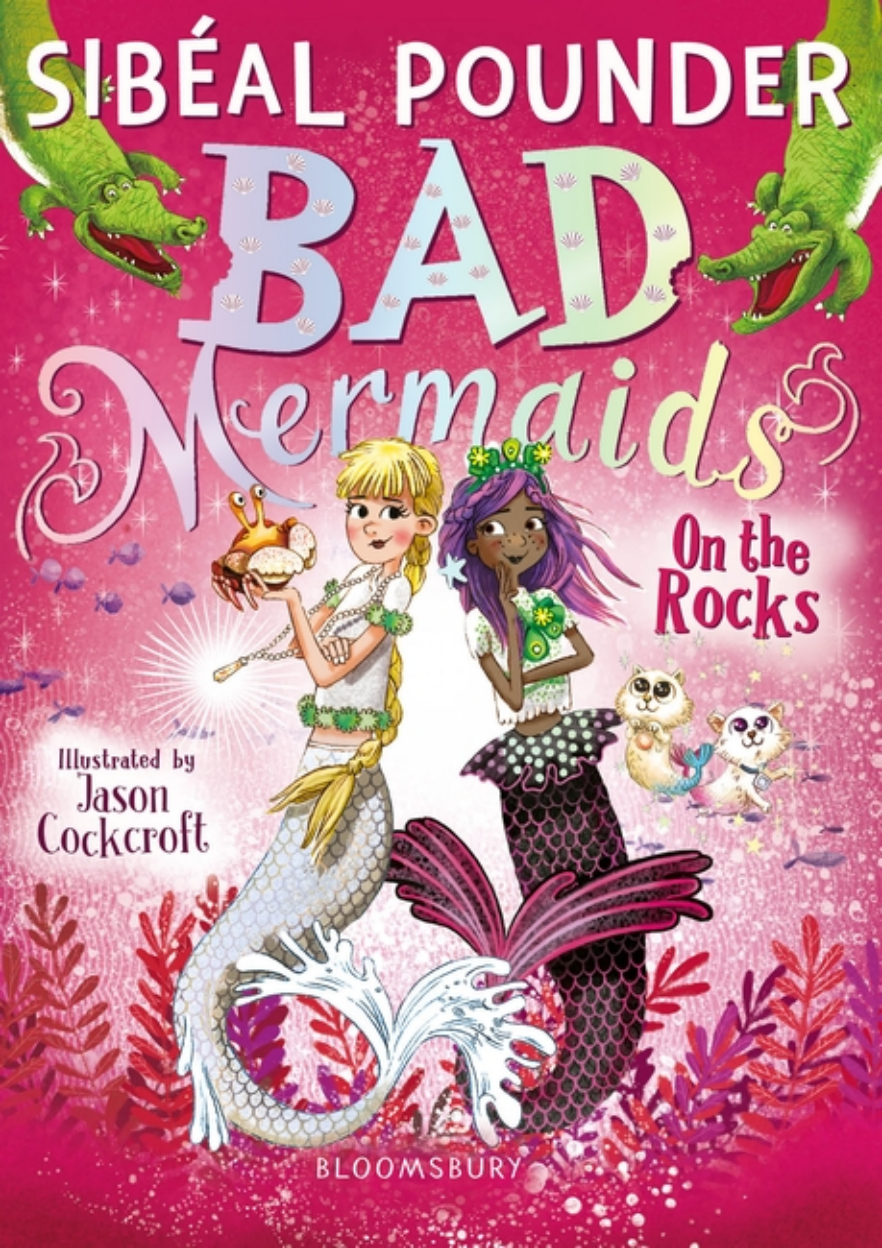
SIBÉAL POUNDER

BAD Mermaids

On the Rocks



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The Story So Far...

Last time in mermaid-filled waters, Beattie, Mimi and Zelda thwarted the plot of one seriously bad mermaid, and did a lot of driving in a *technically* stolen clam car.

But they failed to notice a very important thing – a small, human-shaped detail, right at the very beginning.

Maybe you remember?

There was a girl standing at the ice-cream stall as they raced to the beach to pick up a crabagram. The girl with the claw-shaped hand, bent forever from constantly holding ice-cream cones? The one with the smile and swirls of sunburn on her face? Well, her name is Paris, and it is of the utmost importance that she meets Beattie, Mimi and Zelda.

But there's a problem – Paris is a human on land, and when we left Beattie, Mimi and Zelda they were trapped

on a sunken ship called the *Merry Mary*, hurtling through the Upper Realms. They couldn't be further away from each other. Paris is about to open up her ice-cream stall for the day, and Beattie, Mimi and Zelda are about to discover that the mermaid world is a lot bigger than just their Hidden Lagoon.

And they are also about to discover that seahorses can get seasick.

But that's not important.

1

Would You Rather ...?

The *Merry Mary* sailed sideways through a hefty hulk of firefly squid. They danced around the old ship, illuminating it with their bright blue lights. Those squid had no idea just who was trapped inside.

'Would you rather,' Zelda said, slapping her tail against one of the ship's portholes, 'have a tail that shouted insults at you every hour for the rest of your life, or be followed around by a tiny troop of sea slugs?'

Hilma stuck her nose in the air. 'I've already told you, Zelda. I'm not going to answer your silly, pointless questions.'

'But if you had to choose,' Zelda pressed.

Hilma angrily crossed her arms and said quietly, 'Probably the sea slugs.'

Zelda shook her head disapprovingly. 'They'd slime all over your favourite hats, Hilma. They'd slime.'

At the other side of the boat's main cabin, Mimi, Zelda's twin, sat by the window, her nose pressed against a porthole and her multicoloured tail curled upward like a table. On it sat a pair of false teeth.

'There's got to be a way out!' Beattie shouted as she swam fast into the cabin. She'd searched all over for an exit – every corridor, every cupboard and door on the old sunken ship. 'It's completely on lockdown. Can you tell where we are yet?'

Mimi wiped her nose across the window, making a slightly wet smudge. 'Um … no.'

Beattie flopped down next to her and grabbed the false teeth. 'Steve,' she said as she opened them. A tiny trail of seahorse sick floated out, followed by a seahorse wearing a mermaid cone top.

'Excuse you!' he said, then threw up again.

Steve was the only seahorse in the whole lagoon

that could speak. No one knew why. He slept in the false teeth.

Beattie leaned back to avoid the tiny trail of seahorse sick. 'Are you seasick, Steve? I know we're on a boat – but we *are* still underwater …'

'Can seahorses even get seasick?' Zelda said as the trail of sick made its way past her. 'Ignore me,' she said as she watched it go. 'Steve has thrown up some evidence.'

'We're never getting off this ship,' Beattie said, stroking Steve's back. 'We're well and truly trapped.'

'Beattie,' Zelda said quietly, 'would you rather … have one of Hilma's hats stuck to your face forever or –'

'STOP ASKING THE POINTLESS QUESTIONS!' Hilma roared. 'They're stupid. And always vaguely offensive about me.'

The boat tipped, sending Hilma and Zelda sliding at speed across the cabin. They splatted into Beattie and Mimi.

'Oh look,' Mimi said casually, her face smooshed against the window. 'There's something out there.'

Beattie pushed her to the side and peered out. It was dark, apart from the occasional flash of luminous blue from the firefly squid, and a strange green glow, just beneath them in a rocky canyon covered in coral.

'What is that green thing?' Hilma said, pointing at it, her finger shaking slightly.

Beattie squinted and wiped the window. As they got closer, she could see the green glow was coming from the eyes of a large stone carved into the shape of a crocodile.

The *Merry Mary* dived into the canyon.

The crocodile statue's eyes began flashing.

'No way,' Zelda said. 'It's communicating with the ship.'

'Don't be ridiculous,' Beattie said.

'It might be a human device to trap us!' Hilma wailed. 'Humans are evil you know! They have toes! TOES!'

Beattie's tail shook as the ship was sucked downward, sinking fast. It connected with the stone crocodile with a strange clang.

Hilma whimpered as an emerald light engulfed them. 'The toes are coming,' she choked.

Zelda slapped her with her tail. 'It's not a horror film, Hilma, calm down.'

The ship started spinning. Then came a groaning sound and everything started to rumble.

'I don't like this!' Beattie shouted as Steve dived back into his false teeth.

'WHOA! Look at that!' Zelda cried.

In the side of the canyon the coral fell away, revealing a giant cave entrance, at least ten times the size of the ship.

'Toes,' Hilma said, sounding defeated.

'No human made this,' Mimi whispered, as their ship glided towards the rock opening and disappeared inside.