The Battle of the Blighty Bling



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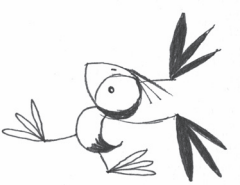
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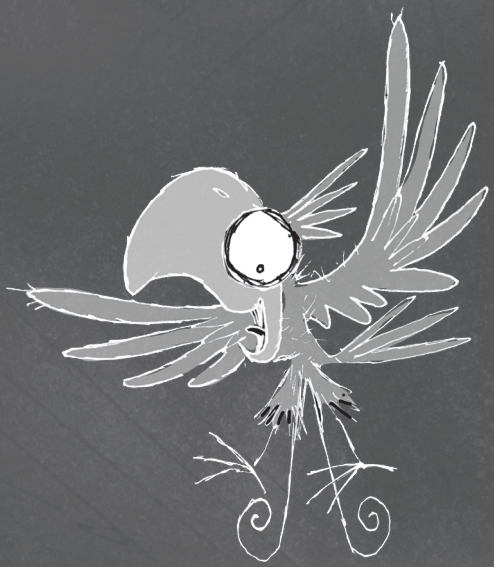


To my parents,

Prue and John Quayle – top skippers









CHAPTER 1

My name is Victoria Parrot McScurvy.

Last year my mum and dad sank our pirate ship and lost (nearly) all our treasure.

We used to be the most famous pirates in England. Now we live in a caravan on the south coast, and have a small leaky rowing boat.

Dad says we're the laughing stock of the high seas. Mum says at least we don't get seasick.

My little (I'd say very little) brother is called Bert Parrot McScurvy and our teeny sister is called Maud Parrot McScurvy.



As you can see we all have the same middle name. This is because my parents are lacking in the imagination department. Dad says he likes to keep things simple. Mum says you can't go wrong with a name like Parrot.

Most people just call me Vic.

Bert is extremely small for a pirate. He says he is only one inch smaller than me. That is small. And anyway, he's fibbing.

But he's not as small as Maud. She is tiny.



She's the cutest toddler in the world. Everyone says so. They say 'Butter wouldn't melt' and 'Look at those eyes' and 'What a cutie'.

Bert says he 'j'adores' Maud, and he hugs her too tightly. He thinks this makes her laugh but she's not laughing, it's just that her face is all squished.

Maud likes me better than Bert. Bert doesn't agree. He also thinks he is funny but he's not. So you see, he often gets this kind of thing wrong.

Sisters are much better than brothers.

Maud is so small she sleeps in the sink. In a plastic washing-up bowl that bobs around in the water. She likes to be afloat. We all do.

When we moved here, we got lots of funny looks and whispery comments from the people who live in the neat houses nearby. Once, Bert pulled down his trousers and showed them his bottom. Now they really hate us.

If we hadn't lost our pirate ship, this wouldn't have mattered. We could have made them walk the plank. Or we could have tied them to the mast and let the seagulls eat them.



Losing a ship is the worst thing that can happen to a pirate. You don't just lose your home; you lose all the stuff that matters a lot.

Bert lost a pet shark called Dave. I lost my award-winning collection of lobster claws. Mum lost her favourite pink bikini. Dad lost his marbles.

But Maud was the one who minded the most. Maud lost her nuggy.

Nuggy was Maud's favourite blanket. For five months after our ship went down the only words Maud spoke were 'Want nuggy. Want nuggy'.

Mum and Dad explained to Maud that nuggy was inside our old ship and we couldn't get it back. They stole lots of new nuggies for Maud but she never forgot the real one. Maud is very determined.

We used to sail the oceans. Now we have to wear shoes and do homework. Dad says it's a tragedy. Mum says get a grip.

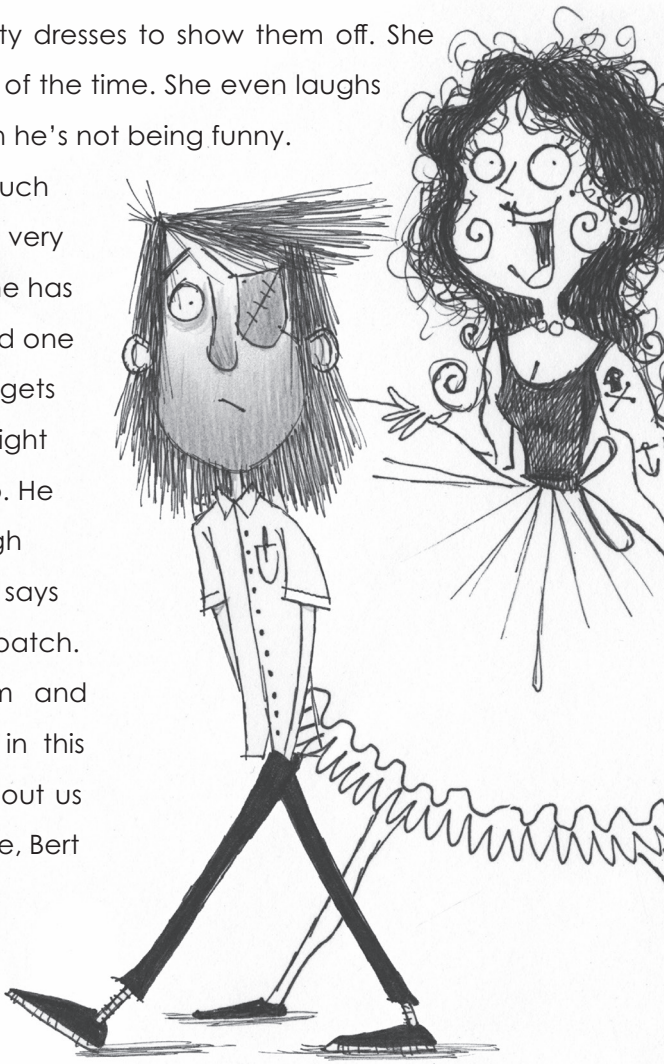
But we can't get a grip because we don't fit in round here. And the reason people round here look and laugh and chatter about us is because we DON'T LOOK NORMAL. Anyone can see that.

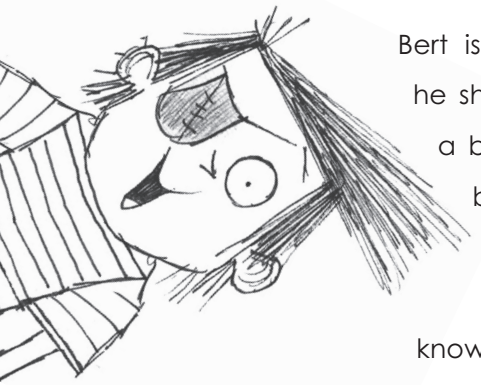


Let's start with my mum. She's enormous – six foot, three inches – which in case you don't know is massive for a woman. She's also muscly and has tattoos on her arms. And she always wears short-sleeved party dresses to show them off. She laughs most of the time. She even laughs at Bert when he's not being funny.

Dad is much smaller. He's very skinny and he has long hair and one eye and he gets his left and right muddled up. He doesn't laugh much. Mum says he's a crosspatch.

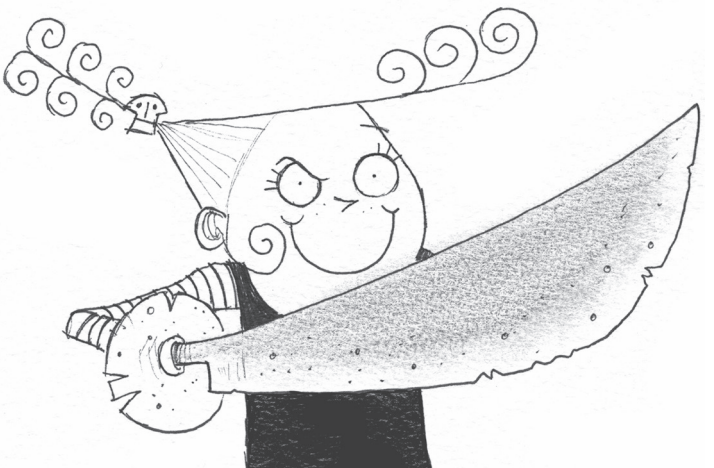
But Mum and Dad aren't in this story. It's about us children – me, Bert and Maud.



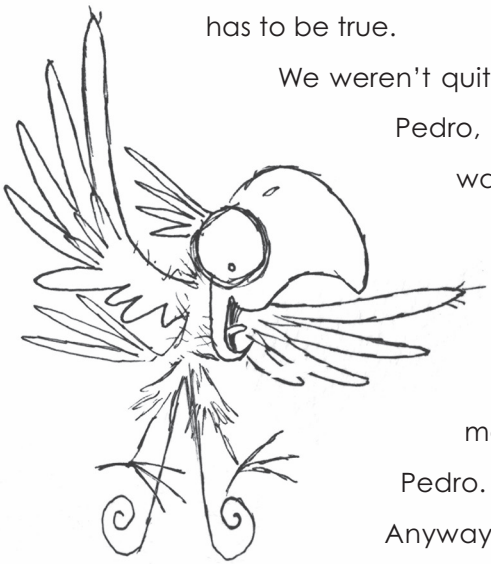


Bert is extremely naughty and he shouts a lot. He thinks he's a better pirate than me just because he has a lazy eye and has to wear an eyepatch. But everyone knows that real pirates don't wear eyepatches. Just the ones in picture books. I sometimes hide his eyepatch. He doesn't laugh then.

Maud has big brown eyes and bright blond hair and she smiles at everyone. But don't let that deceive you. One of her teeth is already rotten because she eats so many strawberry sherbets. She crunches through at least a hundred of them a day. She knows a lot of rude words, and not many normal ones.



But yesterday, when Mum and Dad were out at work, unpacking food at our local supermarket (and nicking the gone-off things for our dinner), something really exciting and actually quite piratey happened to us kids. Bert says it definitely wasn't a dream because we have actual real-life bruises so it has to be true.



We weren't quite on our own because Pedro, our very old parrot, was left in charge. Pedro has a nasty temper and a very sharp peck. Mum says you wouldn't mess with Pedro.

Anyway, this is what happened. And like lots of things in our caravan, it started with an argument.

