

*Also by Ruth Quayle*

The Battle of the Blighty Bling

# The Race to Hornswaggle Rock



Ruth Quayle

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To my sisters,

Tamsin and Anna








My name is Victoria Parrot McScurvy. I'm descended from a long line of pirates. You could say I'm pirate royalty but most people just call me Vic. I live on a ship called *Sixpoint Sally* with my family. According to some people we're a bit of a rabble. We have messy hair and bad manners. We're not your average family.

First of all there's my mum. She is at least six foot three inches, which in case you don't know is very tall for a woman. She wears party dresses with short sleeves to show off all her muscles and tattoos.





And she laughs most of the time – except when she's shouting.

Dad is much smaller than Mum. Mum bosses him around and makes him bail out the bilges. She says Dad is a lazybones.

I share a hammock with my younger brother, Bert. He thinks he is nearly as tall as me but this is just because he stands on tippy-toes. Sharing a hammock with my brother is not very relaxing. This is because Bert is addicted to collecting skimming stones. I tell Bert that skimming stones are not comfy to sleep on but Bert doesn't listen.

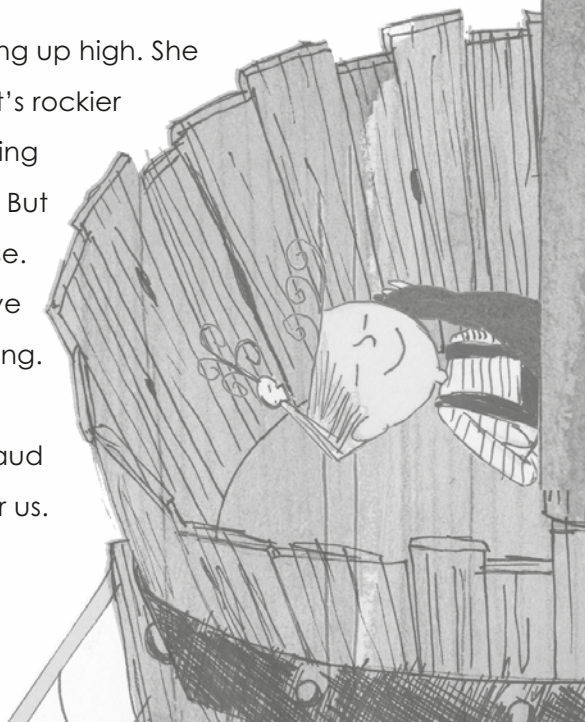
Bert and I have quite a lot of fights about his skimming stones. When Bert isn't throwing them, he likes to hide them in an old pillowcase. He thinks this stops me from nicking them but it doesn't. Last week I took his favourite blue skimmer and made it do fifty-seven skims.



You should have heard his screams. Mum says Bert's fuse is even shorter than Dad's legs. They're both crosspatches.

Our very cute – but very naughty – little sister, Maud, doesn't have a hammock. She prefers to sleep up in the crow's nest with just her nuggy for company (Maud's nuggy is a disgusting old blanket that she can't live without). I know that the crow's nest isn't the safest place for a toddler to sleep but Maud screams if Mum and Dad don't let her. Maud has a very loud scream.

Maud likes being up high. She says it's because it's rockier up there and rocking helps her to sleep. But this is just an excuse. Maud doesn't have ANY trouble sleeping. But we're secretly quite glad that Maud doesn't sleep near us.



She's teething, which means she bites everything in sight, including our bottoms. Mum says it's a phase.

Apart from the screaming and biting, Maud is the best sister in the whole world. She is a menace.

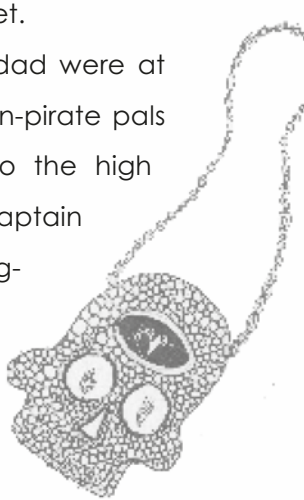
You may already have heard of the McScurvys. A few months ago, we won the Battle of the Blighty Bling. It was on the news and everything.



But in case you missed it, here's a quick recap:

Back then our family weren't feeling one bit piratey. We had lost our ship and (nearly) all our treasure and we were living in a rundown caravan on the south coast. Mum and Dad stacked shelves (and stole food) in the local supermarket.

But one day when our mum and dad were at work, we kids (with the help of two non-pirate pals called Arabella and George) took to the high seas, fought off our old arch-enemy Captain Guillemot the Third, won back our long-lost pirate ship, *Sixpoint Sally*, and rescued the Blighty Bling. The Blighty Bling is a famous jewel that acts like a third eye, helping you find a safe way through rocks and whirlpools.



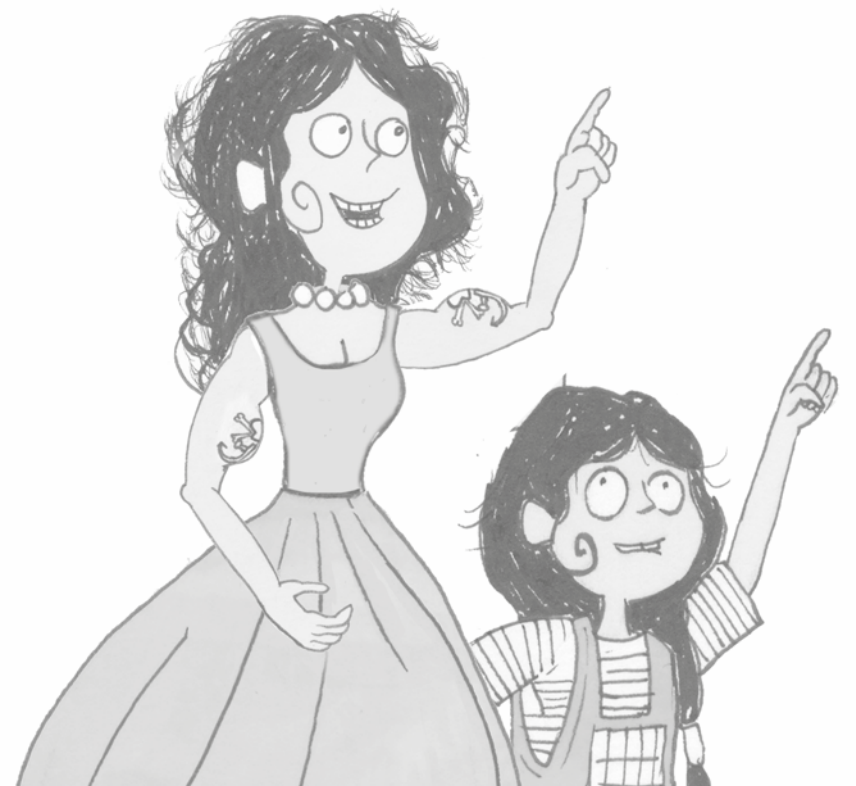
Now we're the most famous pirates in England again. Sort of. Dad says we'll go down in history. Mum says don't count your chickens.

But we don't have any chickens. We just have Pedro, our very grumpy pet parrot. At the moment Pedro is even grumpier than usual. This is because he

is lonely. Pedro wants to meet a nice lady parrot to grow old with. But parrots are rare on the south coast of England. The only birds around here are seagulls and pigeons and they're not Pedro's type.



Mum says Pedro is lovesick. I asked Mum what being lovesick feels like but she laughed and said 'Chance would be a fine thing', which made Dad even grumpier than usual.





We used to wear shoes and do homework. But now we've got our ship back, we live it up on the high seas. We sing shanties till dawn. We count our treasure. We sail around looking for trouble. We sleep in till late. Then we just get up, chew a bit of bubblegum, have a splash about in the sea and mooch around till lunch. No one tells us what to do. If we're naughty our parents pat us on our backs.

At least they USED TO. Recently, though, things have changed. Or, rather, our mum has.







# CHAPTER 2

It all started a few weeks ago when Mum began waking us at 10.30 in the morning (which is very early for pirates). And that was just the beginning. She soon had us lifting and heaving and stretching. She told us we had to swim round the boat one hundred times before breakfast if we wanted any bubblegum.

She made us practise our steering . . .

. . . and our climbing . . .

. . . and our front crawl.

She turned into a strict sergeant major and it was all because of the Hornswaggle Boat Race.



