
DRAGONRACERS
PETER BUNZL
Illustrated by
LIA VISIRIN

DRAGONRACERS

PETER BUNZL

Illustrated by
LIA VISIRIN

Barrington Stoke

To Georgia

First published in 2023 in Great Britain by
Barrington Stoke Ltd
18 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7LP

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

Text © 2023 Peter Bunzl
Illustrations © 2023 Lia Visirin

The moral right of Peter Bunzl and Lia Visirin to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in any part in any form without the written permission of the publisher

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library upon request

ISBN: 978-1-80090-178-0

Printed by Hussar Books, Poland

CONTENTS

1	Kitty Hawk	1
2	Test Flight	7
3	The Egg	14
4	The Hatchling	20
5	“Brave Pilots Wanted!”	28
6	Growth Spurt	36
7	Flying Practice	47
8	Race Day	57
9	Enter the Dragon	63
10	Flying High	70
11	Last Leg	76
12	Big Finish	87
13	Flying Lessons	98
	Author’s Note	105

Chapter 1

KITTY HAWK



My name is Kitty Hawk. My brother's name is Harris Hawk. This is a story about the first time we flew. That's when I became the world's first "Bird Girl" and Harris became the world's first "Bird Boy". That's what the newspapers called us after our great adventure – just like the very first pilots, who were called "Bird Men".

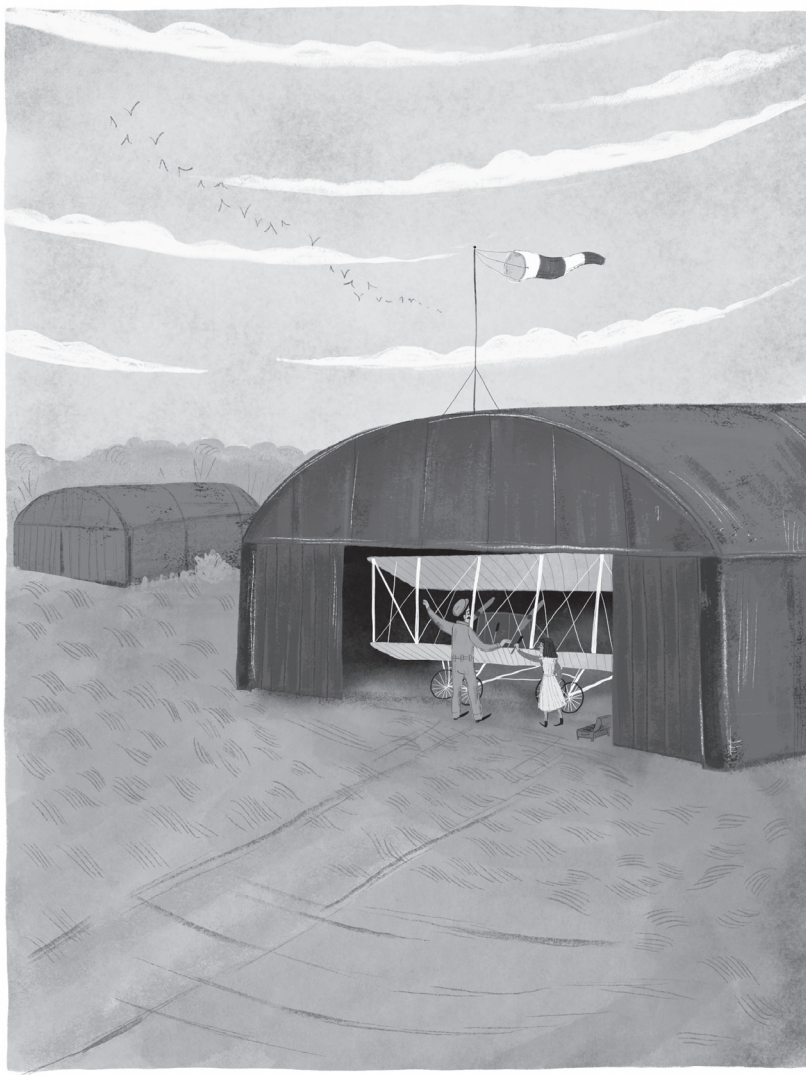
Our dad, Peregrine, is chief aircraft engineer to Mr Claude Grahame-White, the most famous "Bird Man" in Britain. Mr Grahame-White is Dad's boss, but he still insists that my brother and I call him Claude.

Harris and I are twins. We were born in 1900, at the start of a great new century. Our mum died when we were babies, and Dad has taken care of us since then. He says that Mum might be gone, but her love remains, burning bright like the sun. Mum is up there in Heaven, high above the clouds, shining her light down to brighten our days.

Harris, Dad and I live in a cottage on the edge of Hendon Airfield, where Dad works. Hendon Airfield belongs to Claude, and it wasn't always the big aerodrome it is now, with lots of planes flying in and out. At the time of this story, it was a grass field from when it used to be farmland, with two new aircraft hangars that Claude had built.

The aircraft hangars had curved roofs and each could house one aircraft. The bigger hangar housed Claude's biplane, which is an aeroplane with two wings on each side that

are placed one above the other. In the bigger hangar there was also a workshop with tools.



No one ever went in the smaller hangar. It housed an old monoplane – an aeroplane with only one wing on each side. The monoplane was never used. Dad called it "the injured bird" because one of the wings was broken. He and Claude had been waiting for months for the parts to arrive so they could fix it.

At the front of each hangar were two big doors that slid open. It meant you could wheel the aircraft out and onto the airstrip without their wings getting caught. The airstrip was a plain patch of mown and flattened grass with pegs along each side. It was just long and wide enough for those small early aircraft to taxi down and take off.

I had never been up in an aircraft myself – Dad always said it was too dangerous for children. But I loved to imagine how it would feel – to soar upwards, your heart lifting as you moved off the ground. Every time I thought about it I felt excited.

The Wright brothers had made the first aircraft flight powered by an engine in 1903, when I was three. That flight had lasted for 12 seconds and reached a height of 36 metres and a speed of 6.8 miles per hour. How incredible it must have been to do something that everyone else thought was impossible!

Since then, aircraft had developed a lot, but people were still only flying short distances. There had been short trips in France and America, and a daredevil flight across the English Channel in 1909. But for safety reasons, most pilots stuck to flying in circles above their home airfields.

I had asked Dad if I could learn to fly, but he told me of the people who had died in air crashes. Dad said I was too young for him to let me take that risk and, besides, it took a long time to learn the skills to fly.

I knew that wasn't true. Claude had been a pilot for less than a year, and he had already

learned to fly two planes. He had got his pilot's licence in January and now it was only April.

Before he took up flying, Claude had been a cyclist, a balloonist and driven motor boats and racing cars. But I wasn't interested in anything else. I was obsessed with flying from the start. I promised myself I would learn someday, just like Claude. But for the moment all I could do was watch from the sidelines.