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opening extract from

Socks, Shocks and Secrets:

The Spectacular Second Diary of Bathsheba Clarice de Trop

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BEING BATHSHEBA
by Bathsheba Clarice de Trop



Hello, dear readers! This is me!!!

Bathsheba Clarice de Trop.

Yep, that's my real name. You probably know me from my mother's books, like *Bathsheba's Paris Plot*, and *Bathsheba's Caribbean Crisis*. You might think I look a bit different from the way I'm described in the books – for example, my hair is mousy brown, not champagne blonde, and I am not ~~pretty~~ super tall or super slim. That is not surprising, because you see, everything in the books is made up. I don't have ~~many friends~~ amazingly glamorous friends who are royalty. And I have never saved the world or solved mysterious crimes. And I don't

go to posh boarding school St. Barnaby's, because it doesn't exist. Instead, a tutor used to give me my lessons at home, which was really ~~boring~~ boring.

But all that is going to change, because – guess what – I am starting school for the very first time in just two days!! And guess which school?? Yes, that's right, on the first of September I am starting at Clotborough School in Year Eight. So by the time you are reading this I might be sitting at the desk next to you in maths or something!!!!! Hello again!!! Take me to your leader, ha ha. (Actually, I have already met the headmaster, Mr. Baxter-Bix – he was nice but his face kept twitching. I think he was a bit stressed by my hot-pink feather boa. If you are reading this, Mr. Baxter-Bix, I promise not to wear it to school!!!)

Well, anyway, I am not like the Bathsheba in my mother's books, and that used to make me feel sad, because I wanted to be like her. I

wanted to be super glamorous and amazing and cool. But then I got a dad and a friend and things got a lot better...except some horrible girl called Avocado nicked my part in my own film and my mum had to go to America to help make the film ~~and I will really miss her~~ but that's okay because I don't think she'll miss me much anyway as she is always very busy. I miss Natasha, though. Natasha used to be our housekeeper but now she works for a rock star and his three children instead. She makes very good lasagne and she is the godmother of my ~~first~~ best ever friend Keisha, who edits this newspaper!!! Hello, Keisha!!!

Um, what else? Well, here are some things I am looking forward to doing at school.

☆ Joining drama club! I am so looking forward to having even a small part in a real play. And I really, really want to get into Dramarama camp next summer. I AM going to be a Film

Star when I grow up – despite Avocado!

☆ Joining school newspaper club! My friend Keisha who edits this very newspaper is in it, and she says it's great fun.

☆ Making lots and lots of new friends!!!

☆ Midnight feasts! I know this is a day school, but they always sound so much fun in Mummy's books. Maybe we could close the curtains or something? Also, I expect that something awful will happen like someone stealing the Hockey Cup because that always happens in books about school – anyway, it does in the books my mum writes. In that case, have no fear!!! I will catch the thief!!!

Spectacularly yours,
Bathsheba Clarice de Trop!!!!!!!!!

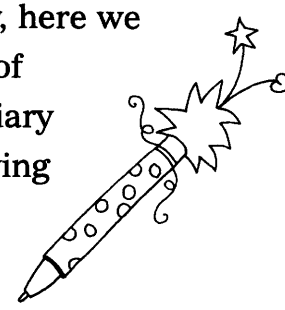
Right, I think that is the best article I can possibly write for the Clotborough School Gazette. Now all I've got to do is type it out and give it to Keisha. And hope it gets into the newspaper!

Two Days To Go

Saturday: My first day in my new house with Bill. And only two days till I go to school for the first time ever!

Dear Diary,

Here we are again! Or actually, here we are at the beginning, because of course you are not the same diary I was writing in when I was living with Mummy in a Palatial Mansion in Kensington. That diary got full up (even the cover – a lot happened over the last few months) and is under my bed in my special secrets box, waiting until I get to be a famous Film Star, and can publish it.



You are a different diary. Quite a cheap, dull diary, because Bill – that's my dad – said we should be careful to Live Within Our Means.

Actually, if I had wanted, I could have had a nicer diary, because Mummy has left me a bank account full of money for while she's away. But she didn't leave Bill one. And, well, when I picked up the mauve, expensive diary in Paperflo's today, I just remembered Bill buying a second-hand suit earlier on, and I felt a bit awful and I put it down again...and picked up you, dear Diary! Who are grey with greyer bits, rather like the sky at the moment. But! Not for long!! Because...I have stickers!!!

Dear Diary, welcome to your Extreme Makeover.

Sticker sticker stickery stickery stick stick stuck.



Two hours, twenty-five stickers, one tube of glitter glue and six felt tips later...

Look at you now! You are beautiful! You are Princesscular! You are shiny and glittery, with pink, blue and yellow bits all over, and lots of gold stars, because they are the Dramarama camp logo (my best friend Keisha gave me some Dramarama stickers). And I have drawn pictures of my two ponies, Pepper and Poppy, on you!

Diary, you SHALL go to the ball.

So, what has been happening you are probably wondering? Well, a lot. Mummy left to go to America this very morning and I moved into the new house with Bill. I feel a bit wobbly when I think about it. I can't quite imagine that Mummy is really not around any more...

But! I have to be positive, like Mummy said

when she was leaving and I was nearly going to cry. And so the good thing is that I now, as from this morning, officially live with Bill, my dad!

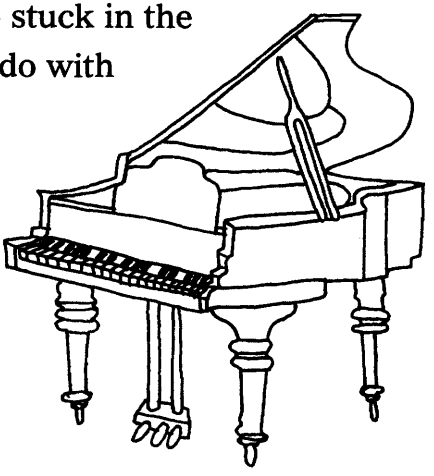
I bet you are wondering what your new home looks like. Well, on the outside it is not very Spectacular. Our new house (Bill's house that I live in) is in a cul-de-sac, which Bill says means Bag of Bum in French. I am not sure that can be true – are governments allowed to be so rude about their streets?

From my new bedroom window I can see all the way to Taylor Tower, where Keisha lives on the twentieth floor. Our bit of the estate has brick houses that look all the same, sitting neatly around a grass lawn. None of it looks as scary as Mummy says it is, and everyone I've met so far has been really nice.

The house where I lived with Mummy was huge; it had three sitting rooms, two dining

rooms, eight bedrooms, four bathrooms, a swimming pool and an underground garage. This house is completely tiny – just as you are going upstairs it stops. If I stretch out my arms really far, I can touch both sides of my bedroom at once. It is actually really cool, like living in a space pod or something.

The other thing about my new house is that it has a piano stuck in the hall. This is all to do with the removal men thinking it would go in and the house being unconvinced.



Bill is quite stressed about this. So I am making him a list of Good Things about having a piano stuck in the hall. Stars should always Think Positive!!!

Good things about having a piano stuck in the hall:

- ☆ You can hear anyone trying to break in because they play scales without meaning to.
- ☆ I will be able to give concerts (of *Chopsticks* and *Für Elise*) to the entire street. All I have to do is open the front door, and – ta-dah! – instant open-air festival.
- ☆ We will get lots of exercise climbing over and under and around it.
- ☆ You can jump from the middle of the stairs onto the piano, slide in your socks across the keyboard, and bounce straight through the sitting room door onto the sofa without hurting yourself. This makes getting downstairs faster in an emergency such as a fire.

Later: After trying and trying and trying to move the piano...

Bill has just given me a list of his own!

Bad things about having a piano stuck in the hall:

- We can only have very thin and active visitors, as no one else will fit around it.
- My crazy daughter keeps appearing through the sitting room door at jet speed because she thinks it is a great idea to use the piano keyboard as a cannonball run. I have no doubt this will soon lead to a broken leg. Or a broken sofa. Or both.
- The landlord charges for marks on the paint, and by the time we get this monster out, there will be more mark than paint. And I don't have a job yet, remember?

PS Bathsheba, you have too much stuff!

Huh. I think Bill should be less negative!

I know I have too much stuff, even though I've left loads behind (in storage, because the old house where I lived with Mummy is being rented out to an American family). Mummy did tell me only to choose my favourite things to take with me, but I seemed to have more favourites than non-favourites. Sigh.

These are a few of my favourite things (tra la):

- ☆ Seven walk-in wardrobes' worth of clothes
- ☆ A piano (yes, the one stuck in the hall)
- ☆ A fairy castle bed (still in bits in the garden)
- ☆ A giant teddy bear of Snoopy (it used to LOOM over my cot when I was a baby. Actually I hate it, but Mummy cried when I said I wanted to leave it

behind... Maybe Keisha knows someone who would like it?)

☆ Eighty-seven other stuffed animals – bears, dogs, giraffes, snails, monkeys, pumas, etc.

☆ A bouncy castle I'd forgotten I had

And that's not counting all the books and toys and other things that were in boxes and boxes and boxes...

I was quite astonished when I saw how much stuff I had. Really, you don't notice it after a while.

Actually, dear Diary, it makes me feel a bit—

Ooh, there is Keisha at the door! Got to rollerblade, Diary – mwah, mwah, see you later!

