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Opening extract from

Stitch Head and the Pirate's Eye

Written by

Guy Bass

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Stitch Head

The Pirate's Eye



To Mum and Dad

~Guy Bass

For Alice Ballard - a book for big school!

~Pete Williamson

Stitch Head

The Pirate's Eye



Guy Bass

Illustrated by Pete Williamson

Stripes



Foreword to the Past

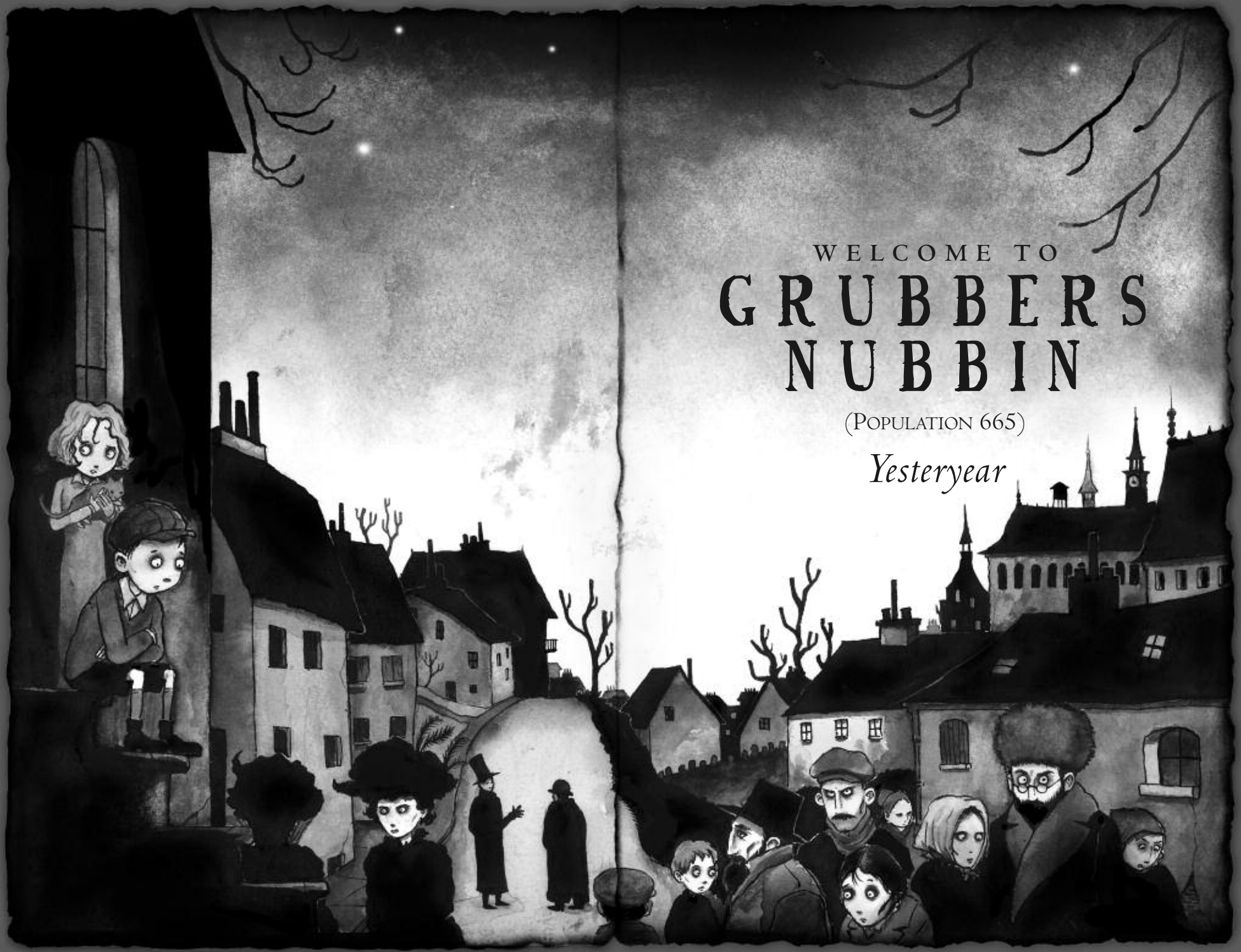
(in the form of a rousing olde sea shanty sung by salty sea dogs)

When the seas be rough and the waves be quick –
Yo ho ho and slap your thigh! –
There's only one sailor who isn't sick,
Ahoy! Captain Flashpowder!

The waves do crash with brutish clout –
Yo ho ho and spit in your eye! –
But steady sails the Gadabout,
Ahoy! Captain Flashpowder!

The captain hunts for long-lost gold –
Yo ho ho and tickle your toes!
He'll be rich afore he's old,
Ahoy! Captain Flashpowder!

His eagle eye looks out to sea –
Yo ho ho and pick your nose!
He goes o'er the edge if he wants a wee,
Ahoy! Captain Flashpowder!


WELCOME TO
GRUBBERS NUBBIN
(POPULATION 665)
Yesteryear



PROLOGUE

ALMOST-LIFE AND TIMES

(The Shadow of Castle Grotteskew)

"Onward, to Adventure! Via Excitement!"

From
The Daring Diary of Captain Flashpowder

Yesteryear! What a wonderful time it was. Yesteryear was filled with song and cheer, with funny hats and moustaches and horses pulling carts, with cobbled streets and expressions like "Lawks-a-mussy!" and "Hooken-snivey!". Yes, all in all, yesteryear was just about the most charming time to be alive.

Unless you lived in the small town of Grubbers Nubbin, that is. For in Grubbers Nubbin, even on the brightest day, a dark shadow fell upon the town. The shadow of

CASTLE GROTTESKEW.

High on a hill above the town loomed the castle. It had loomed there since before anyone could remember. The castle was home to the maddest of mad professors, Mad Professor Erasmus. For more years than it is possible to count on four people's fingers, the professor had

busied himself creating hundreds of monstrous, unearthly creatures.

The very first of his creations was a small, almost-human creature that the professor had named

STITCH HEAD.

Stitch Head was a jigsaw of bits, pieces and spare parts. His bald, round head was covered with stitches, and his eyes were different colours and sizes. One was black and forgettable, but the other was a bright, ice-blue orb that shimmered like the ocean on a cloudless morning.



Long since forgotten by his master, Stitch Head spent his days hiding in the darkest shadows of the castle, silently watching over the professor and his many creations. Fortunately, the castle's inhabitants rarely caused trouble. After all, they were some of the nicest unnatural horrors you were ever likely to meet.

But they hardly ever started out that way.



THE FIRST CHAPTER

THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

(We're going to need a bigger dose)

"You haven't seen the world until you've seen it through a pirate's eye."

From
The Daring Diary of Captain Flashpowder

"RUN!"

Stitch Head raced down the moonlit corridor, his mismatched eyes flashing with fear. He had a small bag slung over his shoulder, which clanked and clinked as he ran. In his tiny hand he gripped an ink-blue bottle.

"Empty…" he whispered – and looked behind him.

"Oh … oh no. It's here!"

A strange-looking, three-armed creature appeared from the gloom, stampeding after him. It was a hulking, beastly thing with a terrifying combination of monstrously abnormal parts. It charged along the corridor, gaining on Stitch Head with every step. Then, when it was almost upon him, its ear-piercing roar filled the air…

"WAAA-AAAHH! Faster, Stitch Head! It's going to EAT us to PIECES!" cried

the Creature. Stitch Head and the Creature both glanced back. Behind them, in the dim light of the corridor, emerged *another* monster. It was huge – five times bigger than the Creature, and an impossible combination of octopus, sea snake, squid and upside-down-faced horribleness. It writhed its way towards them, roaring and screeching so loudly that it cracked the castle walls.

"GRREAAEOOORRGH!"

"I thought your POTION was meant to CURE it of its monstrousness!" cried the Creature (who, as it still hadn't fixed upon a name for itself, was just called the Creature).

"It was!" cried Stitch Head, searching in his potion bag as he tore down the corridor. "We're going to need a bigger dose!"



"WHAT do you think it's so GRUMPY about, anyway? It's only been almost-alive for FIVE MINUTES…" cried the Creature. "Maybe it didn't WANT to be brought to almost-life…"

"It's the *Root of All Evil*!" panted Stitch Head, as the shadow of the octo-monster loomed over them. "The professor's been

growing the root in his laboratory … he must have added it to his creation! It's made it … *bad*. I thought my *Serenity Salve* would cure it but—"

"GRREEEOOOORRRGH!"

The tentacled octo-monster launched itself towards them with all its mad might. Stitch Head and the Creature leaped aside as the beast crashed through the floor, plummeting to the level below.

The Creature dusted itself off and peered though the hole left by the octo-monster.

"Well, THAT was a stroke of LUCK," it said. A moment later, the remainder of the ancient floor crumbled beneath their feet. Stitch Head and the Creature plunged to the lower level with an "*AAAAH!*" and a cascade of rubble.