



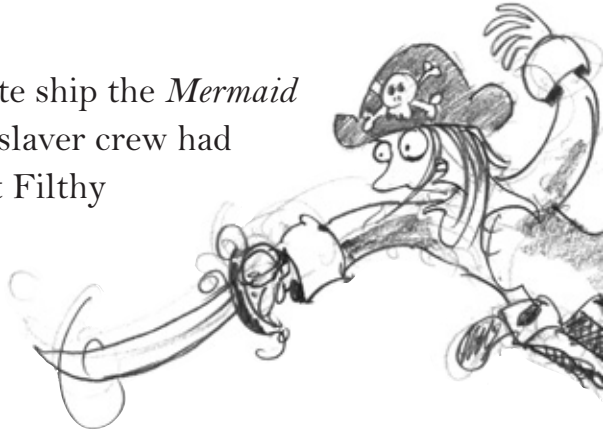
CHAPTER 1

A Pirate Crew¹

“I’ll cut off your head!” shouted Mum, waving her sword at the slaver captain. “I’ll chop off your toes to feed the fish!”

(1)

The battle on the pirate ship the *Mermaid* was terrible. Half the slaver crew had been caught in the net Filthy Frederick used to catch sea monsters. Up on the mast the skull and crossbones danced in the wind.



¹ **crew** The people who work on a ship.

Mum ran down the stairs, took the slaver captain by his dirty hair and gave him a kick with her long black boot, pushing him over the side of the ship and into the sea.



“There you go, you dirty dolphin!” she shouted. She looked quickly at the pile of rope where Cecil was sitting with his books, “Have you finished your homework?”

“Not yet,” said Cecil. “It’s difficult to concentrate with all this noise. This is a really hard maths problem...”

“I don’t care if it’s advanced alchemy² - I want that homework finished before bedtime...There you go, you silly sea-snake!”

“But Mum,” shouted Cecil, as Mum ran after another slaver, “what’s the cube root of twenty-seven?”

“Three!”

Filthy Frederick and his wooden leg tapped towards Cecil. “Sorry, me hearty³,” he called to Cecil. “But your ma’s busy at the moment!”

Another slaver jumped down onto the pile of rope.

Swack! Filthy Frederick’s wooden leg kicked him into the sea.



² **alchemy** A Medieval science that tried to make gold from normal metals.

³ **me hearty!** A typical exclamation for a pirate

“Say hello to the sharks, you plate of octopus pool!” shouted Filthy Frederick, picking an insect out of his beard and eating it.

“Are there really sharks down there?” asked Cecil, interested.

“Of course not,” said Filthy Frederick, sitting down on Cecil’s pile of rope. Filthy Frederick was one of Cecil’s favourite people, but sometimes Cecil wished he would have a bath.

“Oof! Time for a break, me hearty,” smiled Filthy Frederick, showing his three long, yellow teeth. “Your ma would be angry if anyone got hurt in one of her battles. You know what she says: “Free the



slaves, take the treasure and don't get any blood on my nice clean ship." "Any more maths problems?"

Filthy Frederick had once been locked in a prison cell with the king's alchemist who had tried to correct the king when he said that two times four was nine. Filthy Frederick had learned lots of things in that prison, like the cube root of lots of numbers and never correct someone who has a crown and an army.

(2)

"A pirate's life is the way for me," sang Filthy Frederick, waving his wooden leg in the air and pushing another two slavers into the sea.

"With lots of enemies on the sea,
With treasure chests and jewels too,
A fine free life for me and you!"

"See you later, me hearty," added Filthy Frederick to Cecil. "Time to go back to the battle!"

The old pirate tapped off on his wooden leg after another slaver, with a small cloud of fleas⁴ dancing around his head.

⁴ **flea** A very small insect that usually lives in animals' hair.

“See you later, Filthy Frederick,” said Cecil.



“Snap!” said Snap, looking out of the pile of rope. Snap was Cecil’s pet crocodile.

Mum thought that Cecil would be safe if he had a crocodile to guard him.

“Glop.” Snap was eating something that looked like a finger. Mum said Snap wasn’t allowed to eat fingers or toes, but Cecil thought that slavers were the perfect snack for Snap.

Cecil continued doing his homework. Behind him the battle was nearly finished. Filthy Frederick and Mum were making the last slavers walk the plank⁵.

Ambrose One Arm and Harry the Hook were carrying half the treasure chests from the slaver ship to the *Mermaid*.

Barnacle Bruce was explaining to the surprised slaves that the slavers’ ship was theirs now and

⁵ **walk the plank** A typical pirate punishment - the enemy walks off the ship on a short board and falls into the sea.

so was the other half of the treasure, so they were rich. And then he checked if anyone knew how to sail a ship, because if not he would give them sailing lessons.

In the sea, the slavers were swimming to a small island nearby. Mum always checked there was an island nearby when she made prisoners walk the plank, and if one couldn't swim, she threw him a lifebelt.

“Stinking sons of sea-serpent slavers!” shouted Mum, walking over to Cecil and cleaning her sword on her trousers. “I hope fish swim up their pants and bite their...” She remembered Cecil was listening. “Well, son, how's the homework going?”

“Nearly finished.”

“Good. Dinner's nearly ready. Hey, Putrid Percival!” she shouted. “What's for dinner?”

“Sea monster soup!” the ship's cook answered from down in the galley⁶.



⁶ **galley** The kitchen on a ship

“But we had sea monster for lunch and breakfast and last night’s dinner!” shouted Mum.

“What can I do if the only thing you catch is sea monster?”

“Let’s have pizza,” suggested Mum. “OK, Perce?”

“Fine by me,” called Putrid Percival. “I’ve been cooking these tentacles for hours but they’re still impossible to chew.”

“You lads⁷,” shouted Mum to the pirate crew. “Do you want sea monster or pizza for dinner?”

“Pizza!” replied Filthy Frederick, Barnacle Bruce, Harry the Hook and Shark-eyed Pete.

“Snap!” replied Snap. Snap liked pizza even more than fingers and toes.

“I want lasagne!” called Ambrose One Arm.

“OK, eight pizzas and one lasagne. Sail to land, lads!”

Mum threw Cecil a bag of gold. “We’ll go to Bandicoot Creek and you go and order the pizzas and get some of that white stuff too. What’s it called?”

⁷ **lad** A boy, or a typical way pirates address each other.

“Milk,” said Cecil.

“Right,” agreed Mum. “Nine tankards⁸ of their best milk too.”

Cecil wasn’t happy as he put his homework into his bag. He wished Mum and the crew had never discovered pizza. He wished Filthy Frederick would have a bath and learn to sing. He wished Snap would learn to use a toothbrush. But most of all, he wished he didn’t have to go to school tomorrow.



⁸ **tankard** A big metal cup, usually used for drinking beer.