

The bestselling author of *Artemis Fowl*

EOIN COLFER



THE
LEGEND
OF

CAPTAIN CROW'S TEETH



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CAPTAIN
GROW'S
TEETH

Illustrated by Tony Ross



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CHAPTER 1

Baby Talk

My family spend every holiday in a caravan by the sea. All of us get stuffed into a bedroom the size of a car boot. We sleep with the window open. If you have brothers, then you know why.

I myself have four brothers: Marty, Donnie, Bert and HP. Mum says that in ten seconds we can do more damage to the caravan than a hurricane.

You probably think she's exaggerating. You're probably saying to yourself, *they can't be*

that bad. Well, they are. Let me tell you a few stories about my brothers. We'll start with the youngest.

Brother 5: HP (Half Pint). You would think that a five-year-old couldn't cause too much trouble, but what HP lacks in size, he makes up for in brains.



One day, on a visit to our little cousin's, HP realized that babies could do whatever they wanted and never get in trouble, so he decided that he would go back to being a baby. So from that day on, for six whole months, HP only spoke in baby talk. We knew he was faking, but Mum and Dad got an awful shock.

Here is a sample conversation.

Dad: Now come on, little guy. What am I holding in my hand? (A banana.)

HP: Mmmm . . . Poo.

Dad: No. Not poo. Think, HP. It's a fruit. Your favourite. It's a ban –

HP: Nana . . .

Dad: Yes! Excellent. You've got it. Nana. Say the whole word now.

HP: Nananana . . . poo.

(At this point Dad puts his head in his hands

and gives up. Donnie and Bert give HP the thumbs up.)

Brothers 4 and 3: Donnie and Bert. I've put them together because they work as a team. Whenever you see one, you can be sure the other is lurking nearby. Bert acts as lookout while Donnie commits the actual crimes.

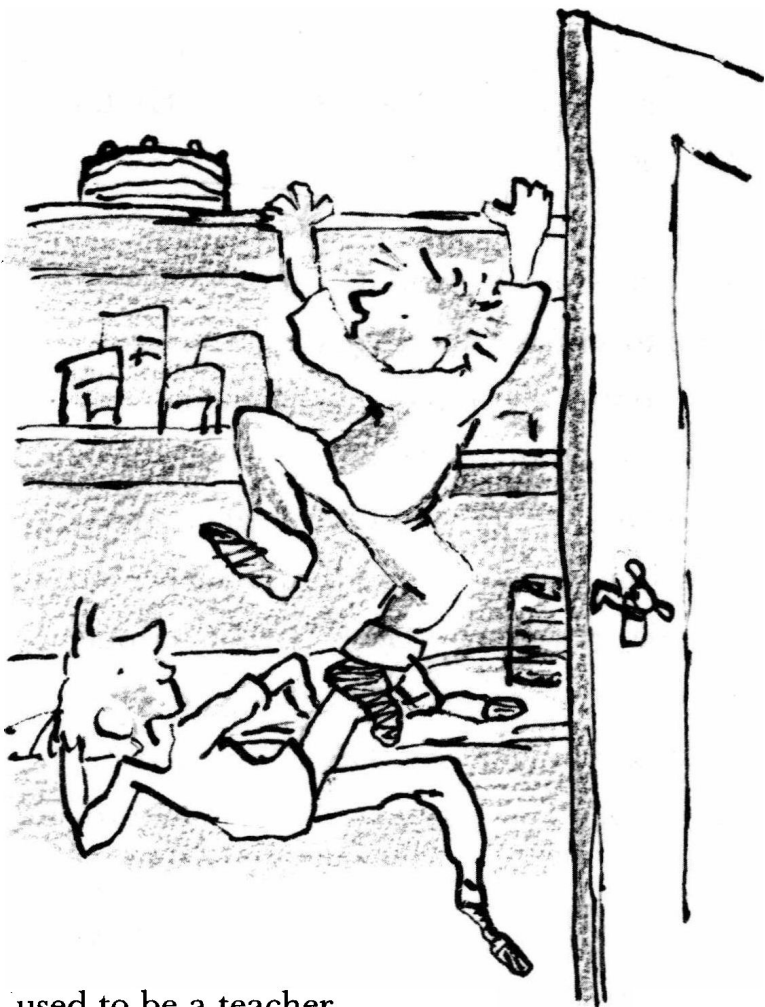
Mum used to paste sticky labels on stuff Donnie and Bert weren't supposed to touch.

Hands off was stuck on the ice cream.

Do not touch was pasted on the cocoa powder, and . . .

If you open this, you'd better be wearing gloves because I can take fingerprints and I will track you down
read the label on the cake tin.

This last message was meant to be a reading lesson as well as a warning. Mum



used to be a teacher.

Mum tried hiding the cake in the cupboard, but Donnie and Bert simply climbed up the shelves like monkeys. In the end, Mum was forced to wrap the biscuits in

lettuce leaves and store them in the boot of the car.

Brother 2: Will. That's me. A lovely boy and a real asset to any group. And I'm not just saying that; it's on my school report.

Brother 1: Marty. My older brother. Marty knows the punishment for actually touching a younger brother is a week in his bedroom, so he has to invent other ways to torment us.

Marty usually saves his cruellest tortures for me. He knows I am afraid of ghosts and so plays all kinds of spooky tricks on me. I could fill three notebooks with stories of his nasty pranks.

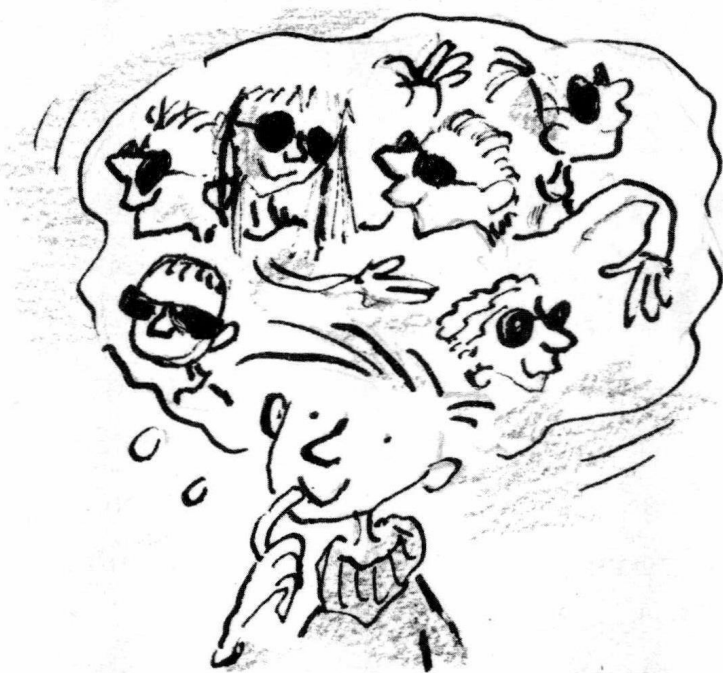
CHAPTER 2

captain crow's Teeth

We spent the long summer days swimming, building rafts and putting crabs in each other's shoes. The village of Duncade was a great place for a bunch of boys to go on holiday. We had a boat, wetsuits, a tree house and fishing lines. And this year, I had the Sprats' Jig to look forward to.

The Sprats' Jig is a weekly junior-junior

disco for nine to elevens. And even though it has a stupid name, I still couldn't wait to go because I would get to hang around with the big kids. Marty had been a few times the year before and filled my head with images of kids being cool and dancing underneath a spectacular light show. There was even a



rumour that the rock band U2 would be making a special appearance.

The night before the first disco of the summer, I couldn't sleep. This was nothing to do with the disco. This was because Marty was scaring us silly with his favourite ghost story: The Legend of Captain Crow's Teeth.



We were all zipped into our sleeping bags in a room that was only supposed to have two bunks, but Dad had built three more from old planks and hardboard.

Every night, Marty would wait until we were all half asleep, then begin his story. When a person is half asleep he is liable to believe anything. 'Did anyone hear that?' he asked. 'I thought I heard someone outside the window.'

'I didn't hear anything,' I said, even though I knew Marty was pulling our legs.

'Baba,' said HP, who was still doing the baby-talk thing.

Marty switched on his spy torch, shining it on HP. 'Don't try that baby bit on me, HP.'

'Fair enough,' said HP, who was no fool.

'Maybe it was nothing,' continued Marty, shining the light under his own chin, creating spooky shadows. 'Or maybe it was Captain



Crow looking for the boy who planted an axe
in his forehead.'

'Marty,' I said. 'You're scaring the lads.'

'We want to be scared,' objected Bert.

'Yes. And don't leave anything out,' added
Donnie. 'Plenty of blood and guts, please.'

‘You asked for it,’ said Marty, suddenly switching off the torch, plunging the tiny room into darkness blacker than tar.

He paused for a moment, waiting until we were all good and nervous, then started the story.

‘Over three hundred years ago,’ he began, in a low wobbly voice, ‘the sea around Duncade was terrorized by the dreadful pirate Captain Augustine Crow. Captain Crow was the cruellest, meanest and smelliest pirate ever to set foot on a deck.’

In our minds, Captain Crow looked a bit like Marty, with a beard.

‘Crow and his band of pirates lured ships on to the rocks by putting out the lamp in the Duncade lighthouse and lighting another lamp further down the rocks. The ships steered to the starboard side of the pirates’ lamp and straight into the reef, where Crow

and his men were waiting. They would loot the grounded ships, load everything into their boat, the *Salome*, and sail off to their hideout. Some nights, when the pickings were extremely rich, the pirates piled their treasure high on the rocks that come out of the sea at low tide. When the pirates' lamp hit those rocks, they would glimmer and twinkle in the night like the gold teeth in Crow's own head.

