

Chapter Three

Arthur

They landed at the edge of a lake. Or, to be more precise, Mia landed at the edge, and Spike landed in it.

“Oh great!” he moaned, wading back to shore.
“I’m soaking wet!”

“That’s not important,” said Mia, her eyes scanning around the lake.

There was a tall, grey castle rising up in the distance.

“Of course it’s important!” replied Spike. “I could catch a cold. How can I catch my Uncle Darius if I’m coughing and sneezing all the time?”



"It's my birthday!" said a stern voice.

The pair turned to discover a small, thin girl with a shock of ginger hair. She wore an expensive looking gown and a tiara.

"It's your birthday as well?" cried Spike, holding out his hand. "Mine too! What did you say your name was again?"

"Guards!" screamed the girl. "Take them away!"

Within seconds, Spike and Mia found themselves in the clutches of two burly men in royal uniforms.

"You can't do this!" insisted Spike. "Who do you think you are?"

Mia sighed. "Spike," she said, "meet Queen Elizabeth the First. Or, at least, she will be in the future. For now, she's Princess Elizabeth."

"And you have invaded the castle to gatecrash my party!" snarled the girl.

"Castle?" said Spike, gazing around the room once more. "Impressive. I had my last birthday at Laser Quest."

"Silence!" screeched the Princess. "Now, because you cannot give me a good enough reason for the two of you being here..."



“Yes,” said Mia with a sigh. “If we’ve just bumped into a man who speaks French, chances are that we’re in...”

Spike shrugged. “Scotland?”

Mia blinked. “Please tell me you’re joking!”

“Of course I’m joking,” grinned Spike. “It’s Australia, isn’t it?”

“France!” exclaimed Mia. “We’re in France!”

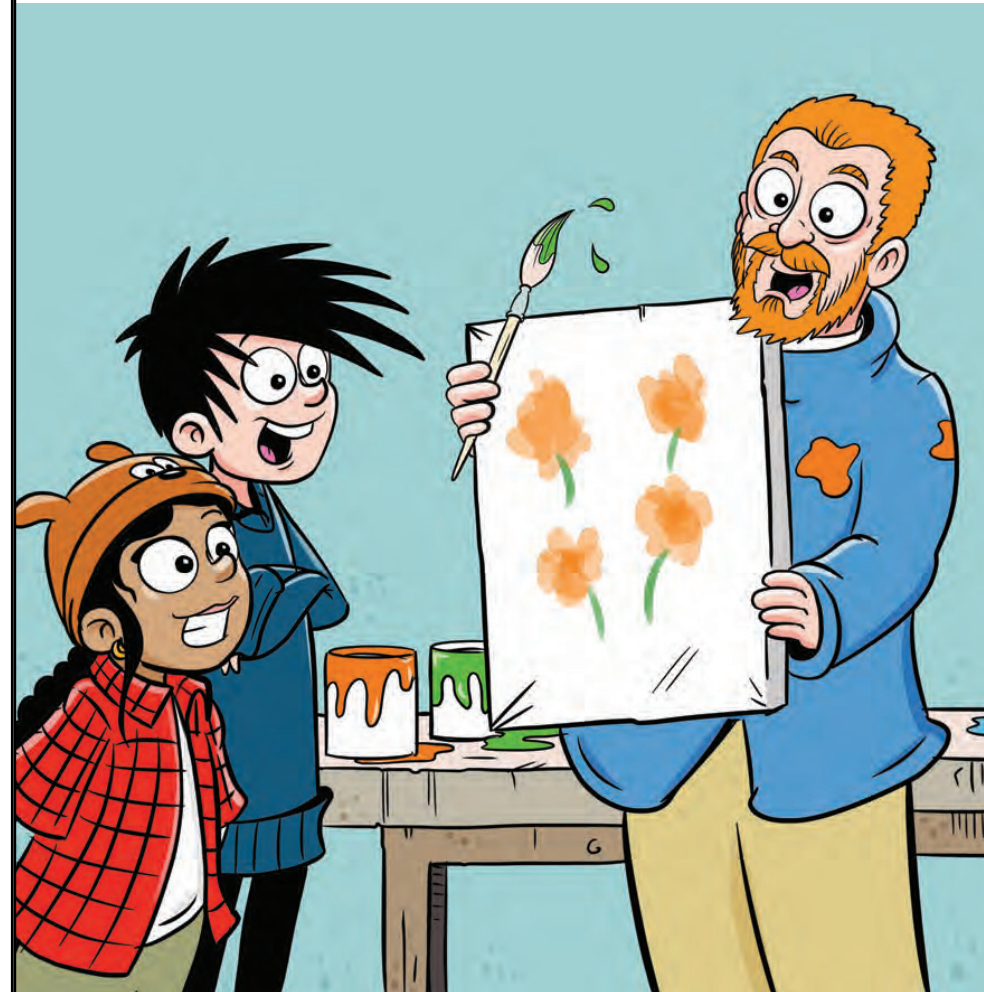
The man looked up from his work. “You children are English?” he asked.

“Yes, we are,” said Mia, “and we’re sorry that we bumped into you.”

“Do not worry, my young friends, look...” He held the canvas up to show that he had painted green stalks below several of the orange stains.

“They look a little like sunflowers, don’t you think?” he said with a smile.

Mia gasped. “Sunflowers! You’re van Gogh!”



“Don’t do it,” cried Mia. “He wants to steal your quill and take it more than four hundred years into the future to show off in the museum he’s building!”

Shakespeare rubbed at his forehead. “And people say the plots for some of my plays are ridiculous!”

“Come on, beardy!” urged Dr Dire. “Get a shift on! I haven’t got all day!”

“Actually, I won’t!” said the Bard. “I don’t like you. So I’m going to swap my quill for this young man’s strange writing stick...”

He handed the feather pen to Spike, and took the fish pen in return. “What a wonderful writing tool...”

But, before he could examine the pen any further, Igor snatched it out of Shakespeare’s grasp with one of his claws and chewed down hard on it.



“Your Majesty!” exclaimed Mia. “This man isn’t your guard. He’s a time-travelling scientist from the future, who is here to steal—”

“Silence!” roared Cleopatra. “You cannot speak directly to the Queen of Egypt!”

“Take it easy, Cleo,” said Spike. “You don’t want your bath to curdle into yoghurt...”

Cleopatra’s cheeks burned red with anger. “Take them away!” she yelled. “Take them away and execute them!”

“At once, Your Majesty!” said Dr Dire.



Chapter Four

Trick

Mia and Spike hid in the shadows behind a pillar.

“There’s Caesar over there,” said Spike, pointing to a man in flowing robes.

The laurel wreath sat on top of the man’s head.



“Good,” said Mia. She reached up and pulled down a long piece of white material that was hanging from the pillar. “This should work,” Mia said with a smile.

“Who’s the bloke with the beard next to him?”

“That’s Brutus,” said Mia. “He’s one of a group of people who will stab Caesar to death in a few months’ time.”

“Murder?” cried Spike. “We need to call the police! Quick, dial IX IX IX!”

“**SSH!**”

Mia hissed.

“Caesar being killed is part of history. We can’t change anything, even the smallest thing, or the whole universe could collapse. That’s why we have to stop Darius from getting the laurel wreath.”



Chapter Three

Pirates

“Stowaways, eh?” said the Captain, turning to reveal long, flowing red hair, piercing eyes and lips the colour of rubies.

“No,” said Spike, shaking his head. “You can’t be a pirate. You’re a woman!”

Mia sighed again.

The Captain unsheathed her sword in a flash.

“I think you’ll find I am a pirate,” she said, taking a step towards Spike. “Captain Anne Bonny, at your service...”

“OK!” squeaked Spike. “I believe you! You’re a pirate!”

“And you two are two trespassers on board my ship, The Ranger!” hissed Bonny.

“Wrong!” said Spike.

Spike pointed up to where Dr Dire had almost reached the pirate flag. “There are actually three trespassers on board,” he said. “Four if you count Igor.”



“That one was close!” said Spike as a cannonball landed just a few metres away.

Reaching the tent, he lifted the canvas, for Mia to slither underneath.

He followed before an eagle-eyed British gunner could aim a cannon in their direction.

Inside the tent, they ducked behind what they presumed to be Napoleon’s camp bed and watched as Dr Dire rummaged through a messy pile of objects on the table in the centre of the room.

There was a brass telescope, a number of tiny figures of French soldiers, maps, plans and more.

Spike opened his mouth to wonder out loud what it was his uncle was searching for, but a voice with a heavy French accent beat him to it.

“Who are you, and what are you doing?”

Napoleon Bonaparte had re-entered the tent.

