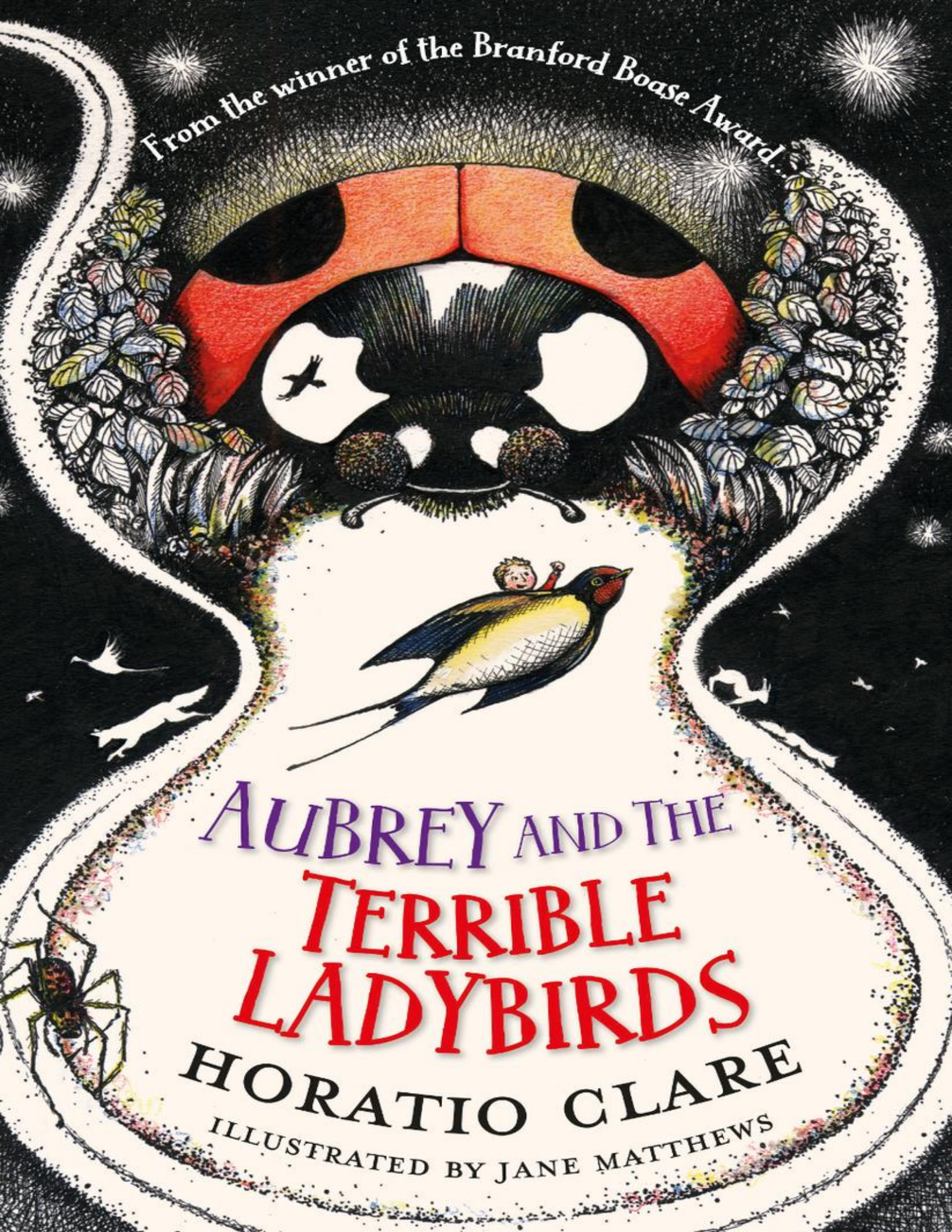


From the winner of the Branford Boase Award...



AUBREY AND THE  
**TERRIBLE  
LADYBIRDS**  
HORATIO CLARE  
ILLUSTRATED BY JANE MATTHEWS



Aubrey  
and the  
**TERRIBLE  
LADYBIRDS**



Aubrey  
and the  
*TERRIBLE  
LADYBIRDS*

HORATIO CLARE

ILLUSTRATED BY  
JANE MATTHEWS



For Aubrey, Robin and Rebecca, with love to the  
moon and stars (and back again).

# Aubrey and the Terrible Ladybirds

## Starring:



**Aubrey** - Our hero. Works hard at school, sometimes. Adores but does not always listen to his parents. Believes in Living Life to the Full. He is able to talk to animals, and to understand what they say. Animals know him as AUBREY RAMBUNCTIOUS WOLF.



**Jim** - Aubrey's father, an English teacher at Aubrey's school. Loves his family, books and walking, and sometimes gets into trouble.



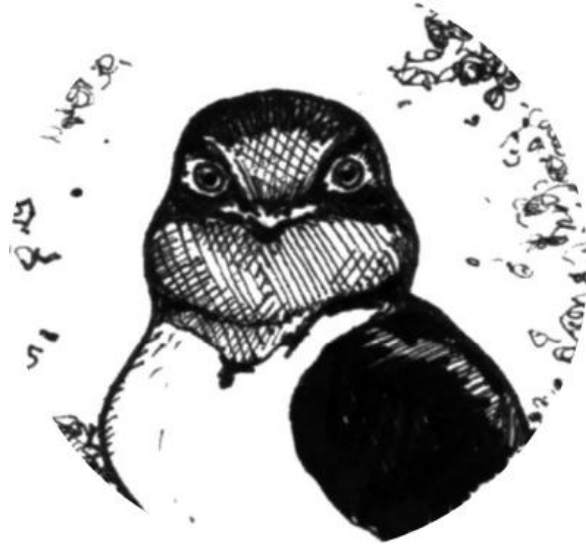
**The Ladybirdz Family** - Rosso, Rodina, Zenya, Bronko and Pikola, a travelling family. They love each other, and aphids.



**Suzanne** - Aubrey's mother, a nurse, a runner. Loves Aubrey and Jim and sometimes has to rescue them, which she is very good at.



**Ariadne** - An extremely large house spider. Loves flies and travel, hates baths.



**Hirundo** - A swallow, a traveller, a talker. Loves lady swallows, hates bat hawks and traffic.



**Mr Ferraby** - A retired gentleman, a good neighbour, a maker of mobiles, observer of animals and birds, friend of Aubrey and his family.



**Mrs Ferraby** - Retraining as a psychologist since she retired. Loves hard work and Mr Ferraby, whose ideas about animals and birds she thinks are batty.



**The Unfriendly Ladybird**, also known as the **Historian Ladybird** - A native of Rushing Wood and guardian of the Ferrabys' garden. Loves aphids, suspicious of strangers.



**Aloysius Wolf von Wolf** - An eccentric German wolf spider, efficient, loves time-travel.



**The Terrible Cockerel** - An Italian cockerel. Eats whatever he can, hates the British.



**Bernardo** - An Italian honey bee. Loves nectar, vines and roses, conversation and Ariadne.



**Eric** - A French worm. Loves soil, hates fertiliser, hates birds, friend of Ariadne, suspicious of the English.



**Pascale** - A schoolgirl, clever, passionate and friend to animals and insects. Hates pesticides and prejudice.



**Hoppy** - A grey squirrel, a famous character in Rushing Wood. Loves pranks, action and teasing; hates buzzards and goshawks.

Other parts are played by members of the Great Family of the Creatures of Rushing Wood.

# Contents

Title Page

Dedication

Aubrey and the Terrible Ladybirds

CHAPTER 1: The Newcomers, and Trouble on Woodside Terrace

CHAPTER 2: More Trouble

CHAPTER 3: The Swallow Stone

CHAPTER 4: Flight!

CHAPTER 5: Alexander the Great, Yoghurt and Stone

CHAPTER 6: In Which Ariadne Asks Our Friend To Save The World And He Wants To Tell Her To Go Away

CHAPTER 7: Die Bahn von Zeit und Raum

CHAPTER 8: Killers, Killing, Dying and Death

CHAPTER 9: Eric, Un Ver (Eric, A Worm)

CHAPTER 10: An Interrupted Breakfast

CHAPTER 11: Still No Breakfast

CHAPTER 12: Pascale, and the Problem with Parents

CHAPTER 13: The Great Leaving

CHAPTER 14: The Anger of the Trees

CHAPTER 15: On the way to the Raven Conference

CHAPTER 16: Surprise On Caer Drewyn

CHAPTER 17: A Wonderful End to the Holidays

Acknowledgements

About the Author

Copyright

## CHAPTER 1

# The Newcomers, and Trouble on Woodside Terrace

One bright morning of wind and surging waves, a white ship came into port. All night the waves had been big bucking thumpers which had made the ship sway and roll. It had been a rough crossing for the family who now stood on the top deck. Rodina, the mother, felt seasick. Pikola, the youngest child, had been seasick. The two older children were tired. Their father, Rosso, tried to cheer everyone up.

‘Look!’ said Rosso in his jolly way. ‘Look - a new country! A new adventure!’

Rosso was a bulky, happy father. ‘Isn’t this exciting?’ he cried. ‘Hello, new world!’

He waved at a man on the dock who was hooking the ship’s ropes over bollards. The man did not see him or hear him.

Rosso’s family stared down at the new world. They saw metal cargo containers and they saw cranes. They saw cars, roads, a cold sky and a freezing grey sea.

‘It’s disgustick!’ said Pikola. Disgustick was her favourite word at the moment. ‘I don’t want to go on holiday here.’

‘Ah-ha!’ said her father. ‘It’s time I told you about the next part of our Great Adventure. We’re not just on holiday. We’re coming here to live. We’re going to start a new life in this new world and it will be wonderful!’

The second oldest child was called Bronko. Because his big sister Zenya often took charge of him, or tried to, and because his little sister Pikola was very good at getting what she wanted, Bronko would shout and roar when he wanted to make a point. 'OH NO! I HATE EVERYTHING!' he howled.

Pikola burst into tears. 'I don't want to live in a disgustick place!' she wailed. 'I want to go home!'

'Calm down please, children,' said their mother, Rodina. 'This is a famous country. It is one of the most beautiful places in the world and one of the kindest places in the world. Everyone knows it is a safe and special land. We will meet lots of friends. We will make our home here - a happy home, I promise you.'

She gathered her children around her. 'You've done so well,' she told them. 'Dad is proud of you and I am proud of you. So keep your spirits up for the next bit - it's not far now, and then we can all relax, OK?'

The children saw that their parents had made up their minds. Zenya quite liked the thought of new places and new friends.

'You guys are unbelievable,' she said. 'At least it can't be worse than this.'

'It isn't worse - it's magical!' said Rosso. 'Are we ready, everybody? Ready, Rodina my love?'

'Yes we are!' said Rodina. 'We're always ready, aren't we, kids?'

'Come on then!' hollered Rosso. 'Forward, to the New World!'

Rosso opened his wing covers, took off and flew over the ship's rail. Rodina and the three children took off too. The family flew in a tight formation. They headed west, on a course for Woodside Terrace.