

# every- thing ON a WAFFLE

Polly Horvath

"Witty, clever, and involving."—*Booklist*



## *My Parents Are Lost at Sea*

■ I live in Coal Harbour, British Columbia. I have never lived anyplace else. My name is Primrose Squarp. I am eleven years old. I have hair the color of carrots in an apricot glaze (recipe to follow), skin fair and clear where it isn't freckled, and eyes like summer storms.

One June day a typhoon arose at sea that blew the rain practically perpendicular to our house. My father's fishing boat was late getting in and my mother, who wasn't one for sitting around biting her nails, put on her yellow macintosh and hat and took me over to Miss Perfidy's house, saying, "Miss Perfidy, John is out there somewhere and I don't know if his boat is coming safely into shore, so I am going out in our sailboat to find him." Well, a thinking person might have told my mother that if a big fishing boat wasn't going to make it through those waves, our little skiff sure wasn't. But

Miss Perfidy wasn't one to waste time in idle chitchat. She just nodded. And that was the last I saw of my mother.

The fishing boat never came back to shore. Neither did the skiff. So all that June I continued to live with Miss Perfidy. There was a memorial service for my parents but I wouldn't go. I knew that my parents hadn't drowned. I suspected that they had washed up on an island somewhere and were waiting to be rescued. Every morning I went down to the docks to watch the boats come in, sure that I would see my parents towed in, perhaps on the back of a whale.

"I don't know what you think the story of Jonah is about, Miss Perfidy," I said. "But to me it is about how hopeful the human heart is. I am certain my parents, if not in the belly of a whale, are wondering how I am doing and trying to get home to me!" I called the last few words out in the direction Miss Perfidy had gone. She often stalked off when I was in the middle of a sentence. It didn't encourage many heartfelt confidences.

I didn't mind Miss Perfidy's exits, but what I did mind was her mothball smell, which was never overwhelming yet hovered around her in a little fog. Mothballs spilled from every drawer in her house. I couldn't understand why Miss Perfidy seemed to be the only person in town who had such a huge problem with moths. One day I got out a



box and read the directions. "You know, Miss Perfidy," I said, "is it possible that you misunderstood the directions? You seem to be using an awful *lot* of mothballs." But Miss Perfidy had already left the room.

Besides, it wasn't really any of my business. The town council was paying Miss Perfidy her usual baby-sitting fee of three dollars an hour from what they called the Squarps' estate and what I called my parents' bank account until they could figure out what to do with me. This was taking them a lot longer than it might have because my parents hadn't made wills or thought ahead to the day when they would both disappear at sea. But even I knew that at three dollars an hour I wasn't long for life with Miss Perfidy.

One member of the town council argued that three dollars an hour was a lot to pay a baby-sitter for those endless night hours when I was asleep and Miss Perfidy was snoring in her own bed, but it was fruitless to argue with Miss Perfidy. She was mean with money. In Coal Harbour there was whaling and fishing and the navy. If you didn't whale or fish or do naval things you had to do what you could to hold body and soul together, so Miss Perfidy was tight with her pennies by necessity. When things had gotten too tight a few years back she had sold her small cottage and bought an even smaller cottage. Before she moved from the small cottage she dug up her flower bulbs



# HAVEN'T YOU EVER JUST KNOWN SOMETHING DEEP IN YOUR HEART WITHOUT REASON?

Primrose Squarp simply knows her parents did not perish at sea during a terrible storm, but try convincing the other residents of Coal Harbour on that score. For all practical purposes, at least for the time being, Primrose is an orphan, and there's no great clamoring of prospective adopters. After realizing the impracticality of continuing to pay Miss Perfidy an hourly wage to babysit her, the town council is able to locate a relative, Uncle Jack, who reluctantly takes Primrose into his care. But true sanctuary can always be found at a restaurant called The Girl in the Swing, where everything—including lasagna—is served on a waffle.

★ "Horvath delivers another hilariously puckish read with this tale of a (possibly) orphaned girl from a small Canadian fishing village. . . . A laugh-out-loud pleasure from beginning to triumphant end."—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review

"Delightful. Hilarious. Entertaining. Insightful. These adjectives don't even begin to describe a novel I simply couldn't put down. . . . You'll love it."—*The Syracuse Post-Standard*

## Go Fish

Look inside for an interview with Polly Horvath.

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