

ONE

busk:

*to perform music in the streets and other
public places for money*

That's the official dictionary definition. I checked it on Dad's computer before we came out, while I was waiting for Ava to remember where she'd put her flute case. But there was another version underneath:

busk it [informal]:

*to do something as well as you can, without
much preparation*

That's the one we need, my sister and me. We aren't so much busking as busking *it*. And I have a feeling it shows.

"Are you sure this is working?" I mutter, as Ava puffs her way through the final chorus of "Yellow Submarine."

She finishes with a flourish and a smile.

"We're fabulous. Trust me."

Trouble is, I don't. The last time I trusted my older sister was in grade school, when she assured me that it was perfectly normal to wear a Buzz Lightyear costume (complete with wings) to gymnastics class if you accidentally left your leotard at your granny's. The teacher made me do the whole class in that costume, including the hula hoop sequence. Ava giggles whenever she thinks of it. Some memories haunt you to infinity and beyond.

However, she promised me a third of the proceeds today, which sounded tempting at the time. I was hoping to earn enough for some new shading pencils.

"Jesse's cousin got fifty pounds last week," she says, reading my mind. Her eyes have the dreamy look she always gets when she mentions her boyfriend in Cornwall — or even, it seems, his relatives.

"What, Jesse's cousin, the classical violinist?"

"Uh-huh."

"Who's in an orchestra?"

"Well, yes," Ava admits. "But she was busking in Truro, which is miles from anywhere. And look at us."

I look at us. Location-wise, we're perfect: Carnaby Street, in the heart of London's West End, surrounded by Saturday shoppers taking advantage of some early summer sun. If we were Ava's boyfriend's cousin, we'd probably make a fortune. But I bet she wasn't playing *Easy Beatles Tunes for Beginners*. And I bet she didn't give up her instrument at fourteen, like Ava did three years ago. And I bet she wasn't accompanied by a girl who only took up the tambourine that morning, like I did.

It. We are so busking *it*.