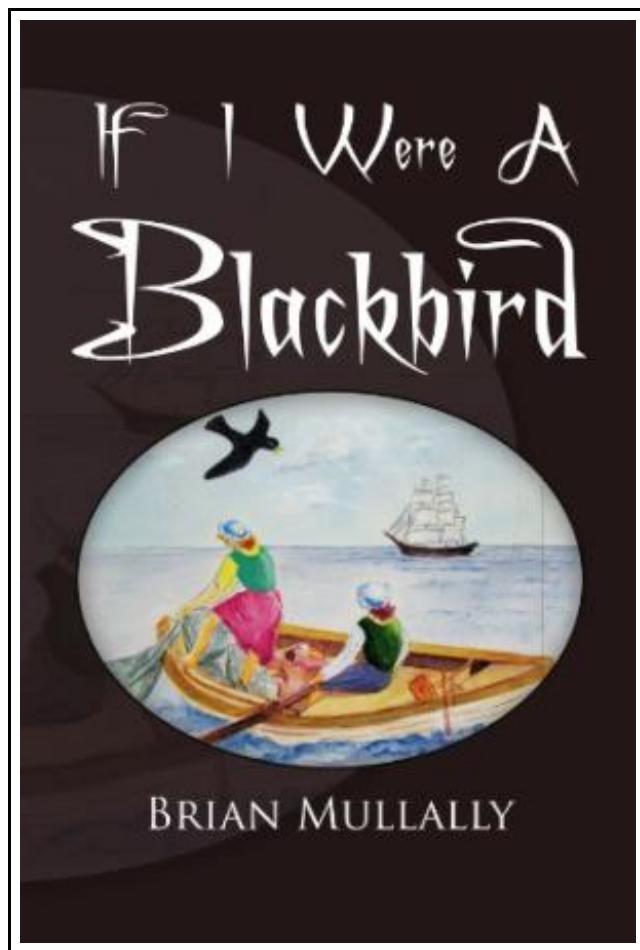


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(Rebecca Bechtelar)

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Xlibris, Corp. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 184 pages. Dimensions: 8.9in. x 6.0in. x 0.5in. Did Jane Austen see Caro Lapsford in London that summer? It's unlikely, but it pleases me to imagine that they did -- they could have exchanged glances - even a cat can look at a queen. Perhaps, Caro caught a glimpse of Jane as she descended from her carriage, and there was a brief exchange of glances before Jane lowered her eyes under the hood of her bonnet. They were both twenty-one years old in 1797; each bent on their own mission; Jane was trying to sell her first novel, Caro was intent on helping her lover escape. Austen's characters are surrounded with faceless servants, and their stories will never be told. But, Caro is no one's servant and when she receives the news that her lover, Kemp Saunders, has been press-ganged into the Navy, she is determined to help him escape. She persuades her father to sail his trawler to London, because she wants to be there when the Channel Fleet returns to port. She finds lodgings in a dockside tavern and earns her living plying a dinghy among the anchored ships, selling fresh produce to the hungry crews -- and waits. Kemp and his two brothers were taken by force when their merchant ship was waylaid on the high seas by a British man-o-war. Among the pressed men is William Benson, an American citizen working his passage back to Boston. Benson and Kemp will become firm friends. Chapter one describes Caro's hopes and fears, as she lays in a hammock onboard the H. M. S. Dido and waits for Kemp to come off duty. Chapter two is a flashback, chronicling how the Saunders brothers were hijacked. Chapter three recounts Caro's reaction when she first...

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