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Opening extract from
**Hattie B Magical Vet:
The Mermaid's Tail**

Written by
Claire Taylor-Smith

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*The Frozen Merlakes
Beyond the Enchanted Orchard
Bellua*

*Mith Ickle
Rocky Nook
Dragon's Valley
Bellua*

Dear Mith Ickle,

Well, I've never written to a dragon before, but it looks like I haven't got any choice.

Things are just so bad over here at the Frozen Merlakes. You'll never believe it, but one of our younger mermaids has had all her colours stolen. Honestly, I've never seen a mermaid tail look so ugly! Now she can't swim, or move around, or really do anything. Of course, the rest of us mermaids have to look after her all the time, which is pretty boring, I can tell you.

Nothing we've tried has made her better so we need to ask the Guardian for help. I've heard you're friends with her so can you ask her to come to us? Like now? We all think that evil Imp King has got something to do with it. You have to help us fix this before anything else happens around here – or in the rest of Bellua!

And do hurry, won't you?

Ariana

(Golden-haired mermaid with beautiful coloured tail)



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The Call to Bellua ★.

Standing on the village green with her best friend Chloe, Hattie Bright was admiring a large cream building with wide blue doors and a red roof.

‘I can’t believe it’s finally ready,’ said Chloe, looking at the recently finished village hall.

‘And our drama group’s going to be the first to show off the new stage!’ said Hattie excitedly.

A few children from her class had prepared

a short play, which they were going to perform as soon as the mayor cut the ribbon and declared the hall officially open. ‘Aren’t we on in less than half an hour?’ she added, glancing at her watch nervously.

‘Yep,’ agreed Chloe. ‘We’d better hurry up and get ready!’



Backstage several of Hattie’s classmates were already getting into their costumes, while crowded round the only mirror were Victoria Frost and her friends Jodie and Louisa. A large assortment of make-up was spread out in front of them.

‘A second eyeshadow colour or not?’ asked

Victoria, sweeping a flash of shimmering green across an eyelid.

‘I think you look lovely already,’ simpered Jodie, before Louisa quickly added: ‘Whatever you do will look perfect, Victoria.’

Victoria was just about to apply some silver to the green when Hattie’s reflection appeared in the mirror behind her own.

‘I hope you’re not going to ask to use the mirror, Hattie,’ sneered Victoria, before Hattie even had a chance to open her mouth. ‘Only, I’ve got to do Jodie and Louisa after me and we don’t have much time left.’

‘It’s OK, I’ll get changed first,’ Hattie said cheerfully, deciding there was no time for an

argument either. ‘I don’t think my character needs much make-up anyway.’



Soon Hattie and Chloe were in their costumes, a light brushing of powder applied to both their faces.

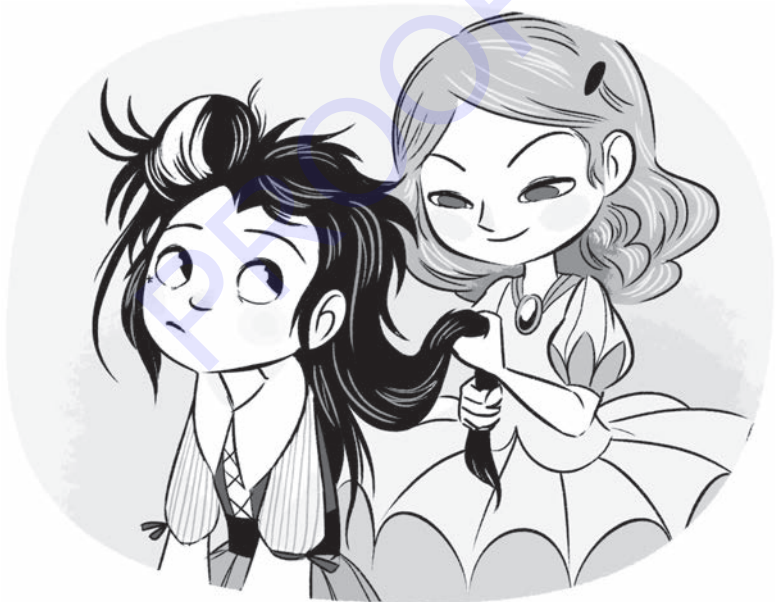
‘I’m going to leave my hair down,’ said Chloe. ‘How about you, Hattie?’

‘Well, I was going to have bunches, but I’m not sure I can do them myself, especially without a mirror,’ replied Hattie.

‘I can help you in a minute,’ said Chloe, ‘but I just need to sort out these trousers first. They keep falling down!’

As Chloe rushed off to rummage through the costume chest for a belt, Hattie was surprised to hear Victoria behind her.

‘Bunches, did you say, Hattie? I could help you do those. Jodie and Louisa *always* say I’m brilliant



at hairstyles and you've got such, um . . . *unusual* hair, it would be a real treat to style it for you.'

'It's OK. Chloe said she'd –' began Hattie, but Victoria already had one half of Hattie's long dark hair grasped in her hand.

'Oh, seeing as I've already started, I may as well finish,' said Victoria. 'Now, do you want that white streak in one bunch or split between two?'



With her bunches in place, Hattie was looking around for Chloe when a familiar voice rang out. 'Knock, knock! Hello! Anyone called Hattie here? Hattie B?'