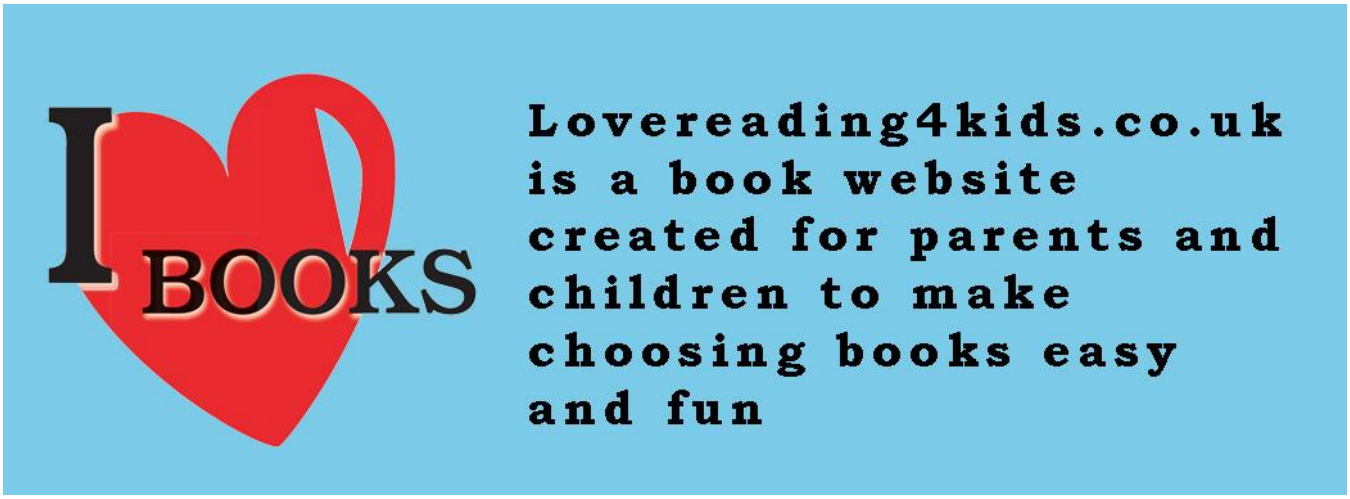


Opening extract from

The Royal Rabbits of London

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CHAPTER ONE

In a deep, dark burrow at the edge of the forest, Horatio, the old grey rabbit, heard the rustle of leaves and the pad of steps. He put down his book, ears sharp, and sat up straight in the big, tatty armchair, where he had been warming his paws in front of the fire. Horatio was elderly and grizzled and a stump was all that remained of his hind left paw, but his hearing was better than ever and he listened as the footsteps grew louder. The old rabbit's heartbeat quickened and he began to slide the handle from his walking-stick, easing a blade into the dim light. Horatio had been on the run for a long time, but he knew his enemies continued to pursue him and at the hint of danger his old power returned as if he were still young and unbeatable. He might be a forgotten and retired wreck – but *they* would never give up and *he* would never allow himself to be captured.

'Who twitches there?' he demanded, looking over the cracked rim of his spectacles. His voice sounded strangely gruff, more like a dog's growl than a rabbit's murr.

'It's me, Shylo Tawny-Tail,' replied a soft voice nervously. In the doorway Shylo gave a gentle thump of his hind paw – for that is what polite rabbits do when they arrive somewhere – and twitched his nose. Horatio relaxed and slid the sword back into his

walking stick. ‘Come in, young Shylo Tawny-Tail,’ he said. But the small, skinny rabbit hesitated. ‘Don’t be afraid, you’ve come back for more stories about the Old World, have you?’ murred Horatio, whose smile revealed a broken yellow tooth.

‘Yes,’ Shylo replied, lolloping into the gloomy room. Horatio looked at Shylo’s narrow shoulders, the scrawny body, the red eye-patch worn to strengthen his squint, he had yet to see a more weak and feeble bunny than Shylo, but Horatio knew that looks could be deceiving. After all, hadn’t *he* been just as weak and feeble once? Hadn’t he then risen to great heights? He smiled at the courage of the young bunny because, not only was it forbidden by the Leaders of the Warren to venture this close to the farm, but it was absolutely and totally and unmistakeably forbidden to visit Horatio. When he had arrived all those years ago, a broken rabbit in both body and mind, not to mention strange in appearance, for he belonged to a very different variety of rabbit, they had barred their burrows against him and forced him to build a home on the other side of the forest, only a short distance from the farm that nestled in the valley below. Indeed, fear of strangers is a terrible thing.

‘So where does your mother think you are this time?’ Horatio asked.

‘I said I was going to dig up turnips,’ Shylo replied, one ear flopping over his forehead in embarrassment, because as lies go, that wasn’t a very good one.

‘Well, no one will find you in this part of the forest, for sure.’ Horatio pointed at the cupboard with a shaky paw that was always wrapped in a bandage. ‘You’ll find a bag of turnips in there. I can’t send you back empty-handed. You know you could get

into a lot of trouble coming to see me.’

‘Mother says you’re…’ Shylo hesitated suddenly because what his mother said about Horatio was not very polite.

‘Mad?’ Horatio finished the sentence with a chuckle, then erupted into a fit of coughing. ‘I know what they say. That I’ve lost my mind and that my enemies will find me here and put them in danger. Fear is born out of ignorance, Shylo Tawny-Tail, don’t ever forget that. Your Leaders don’t know any better.’

Shylo gazed at the long scar on the old buck’s cheek, the bandaged paw, the ugly stump of his missing fourth paw and his left ear which seemed to have been almost entirely bitten off. He understood why other rabbits were afraid of crazy old Horatio. He looked like he’d had a fight with Tobias the farm cat, and won.

Horatio took off his glasses. ‘Sit down, Shylo Tawny-Tail. Now where did we finish last time?’

Shylo went to the bookcase and pulled down a large and heavy book and carried it, rather unsteadily, across the room. He perched on the stool beside Horatio and pushed the book onto the big buck’s knee. Horatio looked at the book, covered in cobwebs, and read out its title:

‘THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GREAT RABBIT EMPIRE.’

‘Yes, you were telling me about that,’ murred Shylo eagerly. ‘When the Great Rabbits of England ruled much of the rabbit world. At that time, most of the human world was ruled by the Great British Empire. As above, so below, I believe you said.

Then both empires fell—'

'Yes, the British lost many of their foreign territories and so did the Rabbits.' Horatio interrupted. 'Now America is the most powerful country in the human world and the American Rabbits are the most powerful rabbits in the rabbit world. But what happened to that elite variety of rabbits who had ruled the empire, Shylo Tawny-Tail?'

Shylo's eyes shone with excitement. 'The British Empire fell but their royal family went on living in Buckingham Palace. They weren't powerful any more. They didn't chop heads off their enemies or rule faraway foreign lands,' Shylo explained enthusiastically, pleased to show what he knew. 'In fact, the Royal Family were almost prisoners in Buckingham Palace. They needed help!'

'Yes they did!' agreed Horatio. 'And who came to their aid?'

'The cleverest and bravest of all the rabbits, of course!' piped Shylo.

'Indeed, those elite rabbits no longer had an empire to run, so they formed a secret society of spies and knights to protect the human Royal Family. They called themselves the Royal Rabbits of London and they built a vast warren beneath the palace,' said Horatio gravely. 'There were none as clever and brave as them. You see, without those brave Knights, the kings and queens of England wouldn't exist at all.'

Shylo's one visible eye gleamed with fascination. 'You were going to tell me about the dogs … the Pack.'

Now Horatio's face grew very serious and his eyes flashed like knives in moonlight. Shylo thought that if any of his brothers and sisters could see the old rabbit now, they

would surely faint with fear. The old buck wiped his spectacles with a handkerchief. 'The Pack,' he said and this time his snarl sounded like ice cracking. 'Only one rabbit ever made it out of the Kennel to tell his tale,' he said darkly. 'One clever rabbit who was only seconds from death…but that is another story. The others? Skins hanging on hooks. Dozens of them. Bowls full of rabbit tails, dishes full of rabbit paws. And the smell…' His nostrils flared with distaste and Shylo thought of the most disgusting smell he knew, which was a rotting pigeon killed by Tobias, and decided that the Kennel must stink even worse than that. He grimaced at the thought, for Shylo had an unusually sensitive nose.

Horatio replaced his spectacles and his eyes looked large and bloodshot behind the glass. 'Those dogs can rip a rabbit's heart out with one snap of their teeth,' he added grimly. Shylo's knees knocked together. 'There are dangers in these forests from prowling foxes and swooping kestrels, on the tracks from Range Rovers and tractors, and on the farm where Tobias hunts us and Farmer Ploughman's gun shoots us for the hotpot.' Shylo shuddered at these words, because his father had been killed by that gun when Shylo had been a very young bunny and he would always be scared of Farmer Ploughman now. 'But believe me,' Horatio continued, 'when I tell you there's nothing that puts fear into the heart of a rabbit more than the yellow-fanged dogs of the Pack.'

Shylo was suddenly afraid because Horatio had switched from speaking about the past to the present. Surely the Royal Rabbits of London and the Pack had vanished in the mists of the past? 'But they no longer exist, these dogs…do they?' his voice came

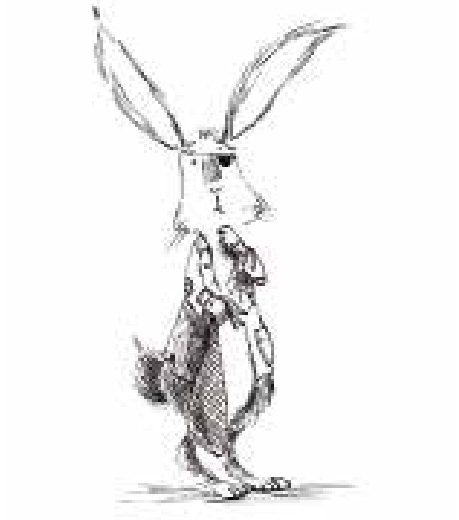
out as a squeak.

Horatio saw that he had frightened the young bunny and was sorry. ‘I think it’s time you went home, young Shylo Tawny-Tail,’ he said, patting his paw. ‘I’ve got some more newspapers for you. Rabbits read so little these days. But all wisdom comes from reading.’ He handed Shylo a crumpled pile of newspapers and grinned crookedly. ‘I stole them from the farm. That Tobias is a menace. Better watch out for him.’

‘Thank you,’ Shylo said, stuffing them into his pocket.

‘Now don’t forget the turnips and try not to get caught on your way home.’

Shylo scampered back to the Warren as quickly as he could because Horatio had scared him with tales of the Pack and his imagination had begun to conjure up snarling dogs behind every bush and tree.





CHAPTER TWO

When Shylo reached his home he scurried down the tunnel and gave the bag of turnips to his mother. She looked at the small sack of rotting vegetables and sighed.

‘Oh, Shylo! Is this all you managed to find?’ Why, when all her other children were so quick and bouncy, was Shylo so utterly slow and clumsy? She loved her youngest dearly but every day she worried he would be eaten by a fox or lost in some piece of whirling farm machinery.

Shylo flopped onto a chair and pulled out the newspapers Horatio had given him. This pleased his mother for her other children did not want to read at all, preferring noisy games instead.

Presently Shylo’s three brothers and three sisters arrived with sacks full of vegetables stolen from the farmer’s fields, which made his little bag of turnips look very sorry indeed. ‘Ha! Is that *all* the runt could manage?’ cried his biggest brother, Maximilian, scornfully. Maximilian pulled Shylo’s eye patch then released it with a snap of the elastic, causing his brother to squeal in pain. ‘You’re good for nothing, you are! I don’t know why you bothered to get out of bed this morning!’

And then Maximilian proceeded to leap around the room in great jumps and bounds to demonstrate how fit and athletic *he* was.

'Really, Maximilian, you're such a show-off,' laughed their mother. Shylo could see how proud she was of him and wished that he could jump and bound around the room like that but all he could manage was a rather clumsy hop. 'Enough, everybody. It's time for tea. Leave Shylo be.'

'I can handle myself,' Shylo muttered as his siblings took their seats at the table and began to pile the food onto their plates.

His mother straightened his patch. 'You won't have to wear this for long, dear,' she said kindly. 'Just until your eye gets stronger.' Shylo wished he could tell his siblings about Horatio's story of the Pack. *That* would scare them, even Maximilian who claimed not to be scared of anything. But he knew he could never reveal his secret meetings with Horatio because he'd get into terrible trouble. 'Put some food in you,' his mother added. 'Parsnips will make you big and strong.' But the look on her face told him that she didn't believe it.

Shylo looked at his siblings enviously. They were all glossy brown fur and fat white tails, long legs and stiff ears and extremely pleased with themselves. He imagined his mother must love them so much more than him. He climbed onto a chair and with a helpless sniff searched the almost empty dishes on the table for something to make him big and strong.

***

That night Shylo sat in the mouth of the tunnel and gazed up at the stars twinkling in the satin sky. He wished that he was clever and brave like the secret society of rabbits who had once lived beneath Buckingham Palace and protected the Royal Family of England from danger. He dreamed of a life of adventure. He longed to play a great part in rabbit history but he was afraid of getting hurt and being away from his mother. He sighed. Maximilian was right, there was no rabbit weaker and feebler than he. Even Shylo knew that his dreams were much too big for him.

***

The following morning Shylo was shaken from sleep by Maximilian shouting into his ear. 'Shylo, get up! Rats have broken into the Warren! You have to get out NOW!'

Shylo's sister Blythe pulled back the duvet. 'Yes now! Get up, get up!'

His two other sisters, Elvira and Erica stood in the doorway, wringing their paws. 'Hurry, the rats will eat you!'

Shylo leaped out of bed but was so terrified that his knees buckled beneath him and he fell directly onto the floor with a thud. Maximilian lifted him roughly onto his paws. 'Come on, Runt, or the rats will catch you!' Shylo didn't waste time finding his clothes. He scampered through the burrow in his pyjamas. As he charged through the kitchen he knocked over the jug of carrot juice and it went crashing to the ground. Plates went flying and chairs fell back. Desperate to flee the jaws of the fearsome rats Shylo couldn't escape quickly enough. His heart beat so fast and so furiously he thought it might burst out of his chest.

When he reached the mouth of the burrow, what did he see but Maximilian and his other siblings roaring with laughter. They were laughing so hard they had to hold their bellies. 'April Fool!' said Maximilian.

'And you're the biggest fool this April,' chimed his sisters in unison.

Shylo felt very silly in his pyjamas. Other rabbits hopped past on their way to the fields and he saw them giggling behind their paws. He tried to hold back the tears of hurt and embarrassment.

'Where's your sense of humour, Runt?' laughed Maximilian. 'It's only a joke.'

'Yes, it's only a joke,' repeated the others. 'Really, Shylo has no sense of humour!'

At breakfast Mother noticed that Shylo was quieter than usual but it wasn't until the evening, when he left the dinner table early complaining of a stomach ache, that she realised something was wrong. She found him tucked up in bed, although it wasn't nearly bedtime. She sat on the edge of his bed and stroked his forehead. 'What's the matter, Shylo?' she asked gently.

'Nothing,' he replied, not wanting to tell tales on his brothers and sisters. But he didn't have to. His mother knew, as all mothers do, and was sorry.

'You know, one day you'll show them,' she said, kissing him tenderly. 'One day you're going to make me very proud.' Shylo opened his big brown eyes and a fat tear rolled down his face. 'I believe in you, Shylo,' she added. 'You just have to learn to believe in yourself.'



CHAPTER THREE

The following day, eager to hear more stories about the Royal Rabbits of London, Shylo pretended to his mother that he was going to the field to steal a spring baby lettuce. 'Watch out for birds of prey,' she warned.

'He wouldn't be a very satisfying meal,' said Maximilian with a snigger and his other brothers and sisters sniggered with him. Shylo couldn't leave the burrow fast enough. He hopped up the tunnel and out into the field at the edge of the forest, leaving the mocking sound of his siblings' laughter far behind him. When he was sure he was alone, he lolloped into the trees.

As Shylo made his way further into the forest the trees grew thicker and darker and it became eerily quiet. Then a twig snapped behind him and his heart leaped in his chest like a frantic cricket. He spun around in terror to find none other than Maximilian standing over him like a giant shadow. 'Where do you think you're going?' he demanded, standing on his hind legs and folding his arms.

'It's none of your business,' Shylo replied, trying to sound brave.

'Oh, but it is, Runt. As your biggest brother, it's my duty to protect you. You

shouldn't be in this part of the forest. It's dangerous.'

'I should think you'd be pleased if I got eaten by a fox.'

Maximilian narrowed his eyes. 'The fields are the other way, so you're not going there. Tell me, little brother, where *are* you going?' Shylo shook his head, refusing to give his secret away. Maximilian reached to grab his eye patch but before he could, Shylo ducked and dashed into the undergrowth. He knew his brother was faster than him, but he also knew from hiding from bullies his whole life that being small could sometimes work to his advantage. With Maximilian at his heels he zigzagged across the forest floor, jumping over branches and brambles, desperately searching for something low to dive under. He stumbled on a tree stump and rolled like a bouncy ball down a small hill, *bounce-bounce-roly-poly*, until he came to an abrupt halt against a bank of nettles. He picked himself up and, trying to ignore his bruised and stinging bottom, limped on. With the blood pumping loudly in his ears he searched for somewhere to hide. At last he saw it: a fallen oak with a tiny gap beneath the great trunk, just small enough for him to hide in. Giving one last burst of energy he threw himself beneath it.

Shylo squeezed his eyes tightly shut – but then he heard a squeaking and squealing noise. Barely daring to breathe for fear of seeing Maximilian's big face glaring at him through the hole, he opened his eyes slowly. One eye of course was hidden behind the red patch and only saw darkness, but the other saw only too well what had made the noise, and it wasn't Maximilian. Instead through the gap beneath the trunk, Shylo saw a trio of big, greasy, menacing rats, rubbing their pink fingers together like thieves around

a pot of gold. Maximilian had vanished, for not even he, with all his strength and vigour, could compete with a rat!

When they were very young, Shylo's father had given all his children the 'rat talk'. 'The world is full of rats,' Father Tawny-Tail had explained. 'Country rats and city rats, uptown rats and downtown rats, rats in silvery dresses and diamonds, and rats with fleas in their fur. All of them are dangerous for rabbits!' Luckily Shylo had only encountered rats a few times in his short life, but even he knew that this trio were no ordinary rats! No, indeed they were *not*. They were bigger, *much* bigger. Shylo thought they looked like super-rats! He shut his eyes again hoping that when he opened them the rats would be gone, but it was no good. They were there in all their greasy, smelly horror and their squeaking made him shiver. It was almost too much, and yet he found himself unable to look away and so continued to watch.

The rats had cigarettes glued to their greenish lips, which let out whirls of bluish smoke and they carried bulky cameras with giant long lenses over their shoulders. Their mobile phones were stashed in little leather pouches on belts around their waists and they wore headsets with little microphones placed in front of their mouths so that they could talk without dropping their cameras. Now they were squealing and wriggling around a tablet, which lit up their glistening pink snouts in the glare of its blue, flickering light.

Most rabbits would have run home to their mothers, especially ones as cowardly as Shylo, but he remained, listening with mounting curiosity even though he was in grave

danger…

What were the rats gazing at on the screen and why were they looking so pleased with themselves?



CHAPTER FOUR

The three rats had not noticed Shylo. He remained hidden beneath the trunk of the oak tree, trying to be as quiet as possible. He decided that in the event of them discovering him he would play dead. He knew what dead animals looked like and he was sure that if he lay still and let his tongue hang out he would make a very convincing dead rabbit.

From where he crouched he could see them very clearly. And he could smell them too because all rats smelled disgusting! Right now he wished that his sense of smell was not so sharp. Their revolting pong reached him like a sour fog and he had to concentrate very hard in order not to choke on it. But wait! They were squeaking and he could hear them!

'A picture of the Queen in her bedroom would make every front page of every newspaper in the whole wide world!' said the fattest and greasiest rat, not bothering to wipe the long dribble of bright emerald-green snot that swung from his pink nostril.

The Queen! thought Shylo. Now you may not know this, but whenever a rabbit hears the words *the Queen*, they sit up and use their ears to bow, even if they are in bed or on the run, rabbits always bow their ears for the Queen. So now, even as he lay under

the tree trunk, Shylo bowed his ears. *Her Majesty! In her bedroom? Without her crown! What a terrible thing!*

'Yeah, Baz!' sniggered the shortest rat, rubbing his sticky paws together gleefully. 'How about in her nightie? How much would that fetch us, eh?'

'In her *nightie*, Splodge!' guffawed the one with sticking-out teeth, an elongated, scraggy neck and a rather stupid expression on his face. 'I like it! In her nightie!'

The Queen in her nightie! Shylo did not know whether to salute or bow or shout out in horror, he was so shocked by the rats' horrible plan.

'In her bedroom, in her nightie!' chortled Baz, letting the dribble of snot dangle dangerously close to the camera that was hanging around his neck.

'Yeah, Baz. No one's done that before! Seeing as we've discovered a map that reveals a secret tunnel into her bedroom this shouldn't be too difficult. Once we've taken the picture we'll sell it for a fortune to the richest website Rat-on-a-celebrity.com!'

'For a million smackers!' Baz sniffed loudly and the dribble of snot shot back into his nostril like a home-loving snake. 'Papa Ratzi will be very pleased with us.'

'Very pleased,' agreed Baz. 'A million smackers is a fortune!'

'A fortune,' Splodge repeated, 'eh Grimbo?'

'Yeah! We'll be rich!' said the scraggy-necked rat, who gave a little dance, wiggling his wrinkled bottom and waving his thick tail, finally lifting it up and letting out a noisy fart, which was so smelly it made Shylo gag.

Shylo, knowing it was only a matter of seconds before he erupted into a spasm of

coughing and spluttering because of the stench, slunk back into the shadows. He found an exit on the other side of his hiding place and crept though it. He ran as fast as he could to Horatio's burrow. Somebody had to do something to stop the three rats, and fast!

'Ah,' said the old buck when Shylo tumbled into his sitting room without thumping his paw. 'Shylo Tawny-Tail in a hurry to hear more stories,' and he went to the bookshelf to take down the book.

The little rabbit staggered to his feet. 'No books! This time it's real!' and out came the story in a breathless torrent of stammering: 'Rats … plot … Queen … bedroom ... nightie!'

Horatio could not help bowing with his one good ear at the mention of Her Majesty, but his face darkened. 'What did you say?'

'Rats … plot … Queen … secret tunnel … nightie,' Shylo spluttered, catching his breath.

'Rats?' boomed Horatio. Shylo was too terrified to notice the old buck shudder. Horatio banged down the book and hobbled slowly towards the bunny, leaning heavily on his walking stick. 'Take a deep breath, Shylo Tawny-Tail, and tell me exactly what you saw. These rats, what were they like?' He placed a paw on Shylo's shoulder and the little bunny immediately felt encouraged. Horatio had never mocked him, or taunted him, or made fun of him. He was a rabbit who was very eager to hear what Shylo had to say and Shylo took a deep breath, drew back his shoulders and told him about the conversation he had heard in the forest.

When Shylo had finished, Horatio nodded thoughtfully. 'We don't have much time,' he growled. 'It sounds to me that you stumbled across a gang of Ratzis!'

'A what?' Shylo asked, confused.

'A gang of Ratzis. We haven't yet reached the Ratzis in the book, but they are among the worst enemies the Royal Family has ever faced. They hunt them in order to make money from taking the most private photos, which they then sell, exposing them to the world!' At this he went to the table and opened the book they had been looking at just yesterday. 'Here is a picture of a Ratzi. Is this what they looked like?'

Shylo looked down at the page and this is what he saw:

HOW TO SPOT A RATZI!

* Very high squeaking voices
* Shiny fur glistening with grease (can be black or brown or grey)
* Thin, bony chests
* Long, swollen bellies (because they eat too much junk food and only drink beer)
* Saggy bottoms (because they are really very unfit)
* Very very long pink, hairless tails, which are thick at one end, thin at the other
* Sharp teeth, sharp claws, sharp vision and long thin tongues
* Snotty noses and big ears full of yellow wax

* They smell of rubbish from their rucksacks full of rotting fast food and they also fart a lot, so you can smell them coming!
* They always carry a camera, a phone and a tablet to send their photographs
* They are really very ugly creatures indeed



Shylo nodded. 'Yes! That's who they were! Ratzis!'

'Then we must tell the Royal Rabbits at once,' said Horatio.

‘The Royal Rabbits of London?’ Shylo gasped. ‘But I thought they no longer existed. I thought they were history.’

‘I know what you thought, but that doesn’t change the facts. They exist all right, perhaps they are a little tired and forgotten, but they are the only ones who can stop the Ratzis.’ Horatio looked grim. ‘Every man, woman and animal in the world, from the highest queen to the lowest field mouse, has a private place in their heart. It’s the only thing that is truly our own. But the Ratzis want to steal that place by taking photographs and sending them round the world on the Internet. When they do, they steal people’s very souls! The Ratzis, Shylo Tawny-Tail, are the Soul-Stealers!’

Shylo’s teeth began to chatter, this was a lot for a country rabbit like him to take in. ‘So how are you going to tell the Royal Rabbits of London?’

Horatio once again put his paw on Shylo’s thin, patchy shoulder. ‘Not me! *You* are going to tell them, Shylo Tawny-Tail.’

Shylo thought he must have misheard. But Horatio continued: ‘I…I…’ he hesitated, as if searching for an excuse. ‘I’m much too old to travel to London,’ he said shiftily, his eyes low and dark. ‘But you…’ He looked the young bunny up and down. ‘You’re a brave rabbit. How would you like to go to London? To the Royal Rabbit Headquarters – the RRHQ – at Buckingham Palace.’

Shylo was unable to speak. All he could manage was a loud gulp and a high-pitched squeak, which was meant to sound like *‘me?’* but came out as *‘eek’*. Shylo didn’t feel brave at all. He felt frightened and ever so slightly regretful – if he hadn’t run away from

Maximilian he might never have stumbled across the Ratzis. At last he found his voice, thin and trembling though it was. ‘London?’ he gasped.

‘Yes, of course. You are the only one who can prevent the Ratzis from sneaking into the Queen’s bedroom and taking the photograph that will steal a little of her soul. She can’t defend herself. Only the Royal Rabbits can do that. How shameless those Ratzis are. How *very very* shameless.’ Horatio shivered then: ‘Come on, you must leave at once.’

‘But I’m not strong enough or…or…brave enough. My siblings call me Runt!’

Horatio smiled at him kindly. ‘This is one of those moments that can change the whole life of a rabbit, yes, even the weakest and feeblest! Do you remember the first time we met?’ Shylo nodded. ‘You had wandered to my side of the forest and found some old newspapers I had discarded among the bluebells. You sat down and started to read. I noticed how brave you were to venture to the forbidden part of the forest, but also how curious – it was your curiosity that impressed me the most. When I approached, you didn’t scamper off. Do you remember what you said?’ Shylo shook his head. ‘You said: “Why is everyone afraid of you?” You see, your curiosity made you brave. Shylo Tawny-Tail, you are braver than you know.’

‘But how will I find the headquarters when I get there?’ Shylo asked.

‘Listen carefully.’ The excitement rose in Horatio’s voice. ‘I will tell you exactly how to get there, Shylo Tawny-Tail.’

Shylo, just for a moment, started to cry. ‘I’ll get lost!’ he protested in a small voice.

‘No you will not. Now, you’re not crying, are you, Shylo Tawny-Tail?’

‘No, not any more,’ Shylo replied with a sniff, lifting his chin.

‘Good. I have great faith in you. As I always say: *Life is an adventure. Anything in the world is possible – by will and by luck, with a moist carrot, a wet nose and a slice of mad courage!* You’re going to discover that there is more to you than you ever imagined.’



Life is an adventure. Anything in the world is possible - by will and by luck, with a moist carrot, a wet nose and a slice of mad courage!

Shylo has always been the runt of the litter, weak and shy and constantly teased by his siblings. But when Shylo stumbles across a band of rats who are plotting against the Queen, it's up to this unlikely hero to travel to London and inform the Royal Rabbits of London about the diabolicial plan!

The Royal Rabbits of London have a proud history of protecting the Royal Family and now the secret society need to leap into action to stop the rats . . . But can a rabbit as feeble and shy as Shylo convince them that the Queen is in danger?

The Hobbit meets *Fantastic Mr Fox* meets *Watership Down* in this charming novel from bestselling authors Santa Montefiore and Simon Sebag Montefiore, which shows that even the smallest rabbit can be the biggest hero.

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