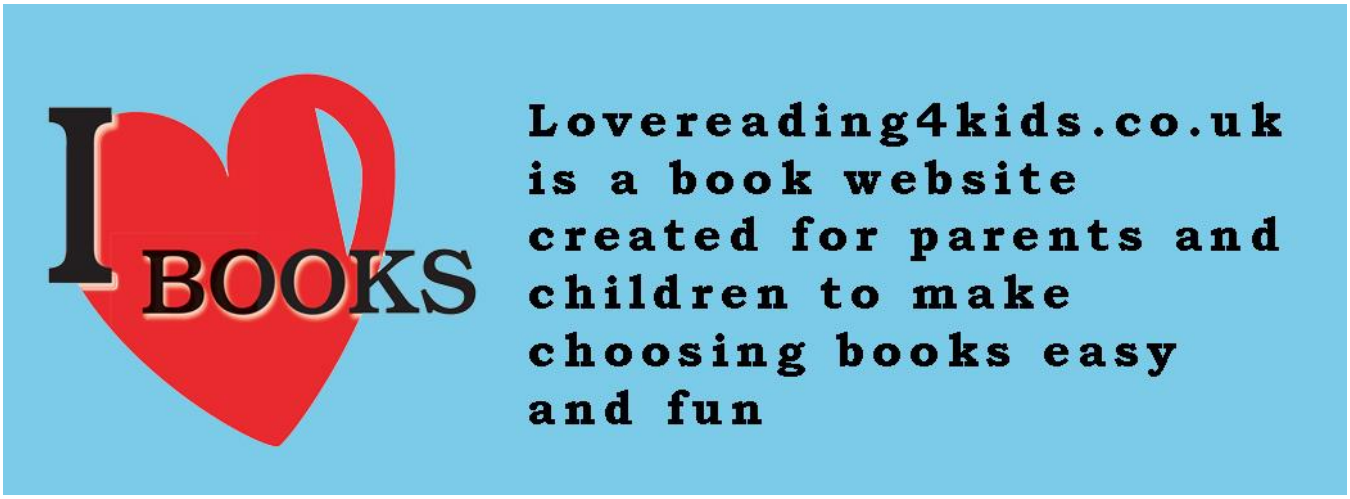


Opening extract from

Unicorn in New York: Louis Makes a Splash

Written by

Rachel Hamilton

Illustrated by

Oscar Armelles

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To Gillian Sore and Clare Whitston (The Queens of Storyland), Alex McNabb and Iain Martin (Chief Glitterers), Tracy Donnelly, Annabel Kantaria, Lucy Strange and Charlotte Butterfield (Cupcake Decorators), Wayne Jordan and Jack Cheshire (Rainbow Polishers) and Abbie, Darius, Emily and Kelsey (Unicorn Racing Enthusiasts)



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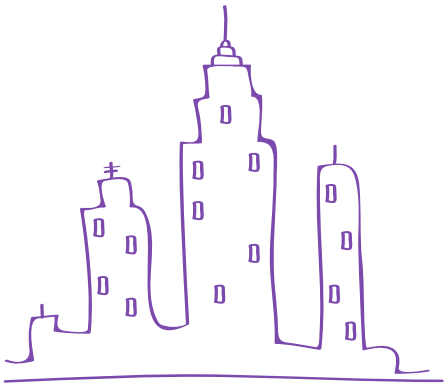
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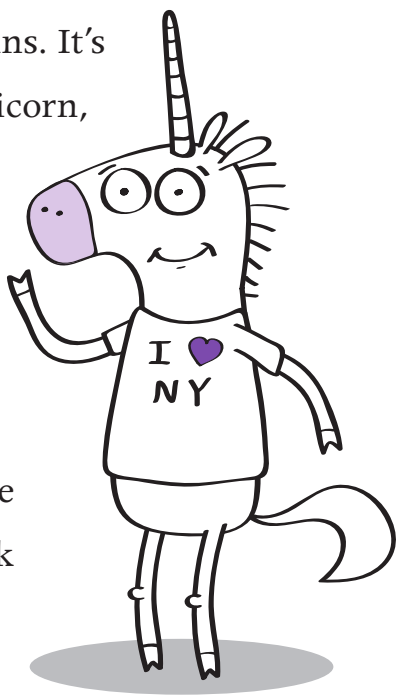




Chapter One

Greetings

Greetings, humans. It's me, Louie the Unicorn, and I'm back once again to say, 'LOVE ME!'



Oops. Sorry. Bit over-excited. What I *meant* to say was . . . Greetings, humans. It's me, Louie the Unicorn, and I'm back

once again to say, 'LISTEN TO ME!' Because I'm here to share another thrilling tale of drama, destiny, and DIVAS (that would be you, Miranda the Mermaid) from the New York School of Performing Arts.

This time, our adventure began outside the John Feelgood Theatre, queuing to audition for *Splash it Up!*—the hottest new show in town from the world-famous musical theatre producers, Andrew Velvet-Curtains and Tim Dry-Ice.

Splash it Up! was creating a huge buzz in the entertainment world and an even bigger buzz in Miranda the Mermaid's tank as we read the audition poster aloud for the thousandth time:



'It's perfect!' Frank the Troll burped with delight and pirouetted on the spot. 'This part could have been written for you, Miranda.'

I clapped my hooves in agreement. 'There is only one superstar, super-singing mermaid in this city. You were born to make a "splash", Miranda.'

'♫ Oooh ♫,' Miranda trilled, flicking her tail with glee. 'This could be the big break I've been waiting for my whole life.' She smiled dreamily, and then added, 'I'm sure there'll be roles for the rest of you too.'

'Not for me,' Danny the Faun sighed. 'I'm just queuing for support. They already have an award-winning director—the magnificent Trevor Phatt-Bunns—but it's a great opportunity for you, Miranda.'

'I'm still not sure I've picked the right scene for my audition,' Miranda said. 'I'd have made a lovely, if soggy, Juliet from *Romeo and Juliet*. Or perhaps I should have chosen the dying swan scene from Swan Lake?' Miranda paused and then sang, '♫ Qua-a-a-a-ck! Aaaargh ♫'

'Dur! Fish for brains!' heckled Arnie the Unicorn, who'd managed to get a spot ahead of us in the queue and kept reminding us about it. 'Swans don't quack.'

'Don't they?' Miranda asked us.

We shook our heads.

'Maybe they do when they're dying,' Miranda yelled at Arnie. 'Don't be judgey.'

'Whatever,' Arnie harrumphed, with a toss of his tail. 'Mermaids are so stupid.'

'Tell that to the producers of this *mermaid show*,' Miranda retorted. 'You big bully.'

'Ignore him, Miranda. You'd make a lovely dead swan,' Danny reassured her. 'But as they're looking for a mermaid and you *are* a mermaid, it makes sense to do a scene with a mermaid in it.'

'I should have chosen the scene from *Peter Pan* where the mermaids try to drown Wendy,' Miranda replied. 'With Arnie playing Wendy.'

'Miranda!' I protested. 'You can't drown Arnie. He's my friend and fellow unicorn.'

'I wouldn't really hurt him. Well, not much.' Miranda sighed at my expression. 'OK, OK, no messing with Arnie. Bo-o-oring.'

'Stop worrying about your audition,' Danny told her. 'Ariel from The Little Mermaid is the perfect choice.'

'Of course it is!' I cheered. 'I make a fabulous Sebastian the Crab. Check out my funky plastic crab claws.'

'Louie!' Danny narrowed his eyes at

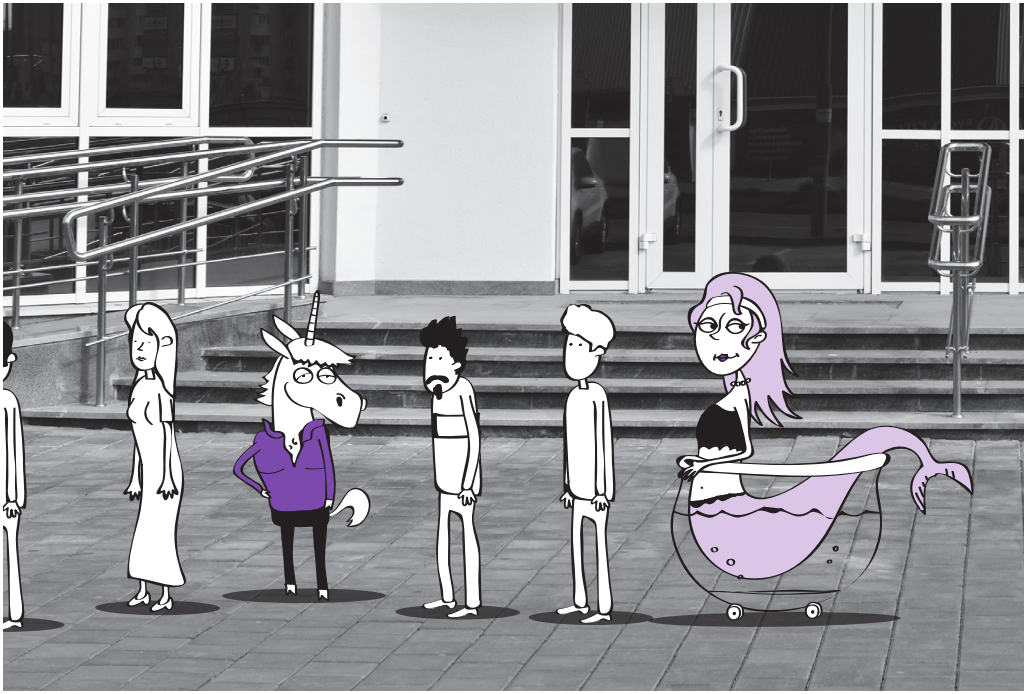
me. 'Remember what we agreed? This is Miranda's audition.'

'It's OK,' Miranda said. 'I want my friends involved. Louie IS a fabulous Sebastian. And Frank . . . well . . . Frank would make a fantastic King Triton.' She beamed up at him and sang, '♫ **So big, so powerful, so . . .** ♫'

'I don't want to be Triton!' Frank growled. 'I want to be Flounder the Fish.'

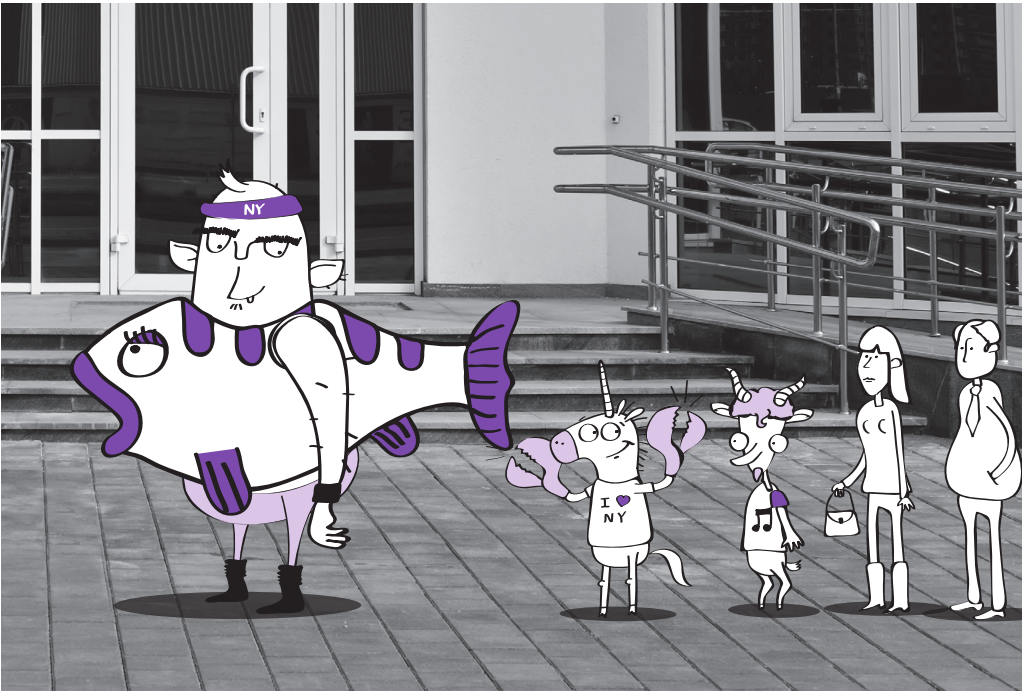
'Yes, we know!'

We giggled as we looked at Frank. Despite being two metres tall and two metres wide, he had squeezed his wide warty face and hairy troll body into a tiny yellow and blue fish costume. Even in a queue of crazily dramatic auditionees, a troll dressed as a fish



was attracting attention—in particular, as he was accompanied by a fawn, a mermaid in a tank on wheels, and a unicorn wearing crab claws.

'You make a lovely Flounder, Frank,' Miranda assured him with a giggle. 'Come on, let's practise our group audition. ♫ We'll knock their socks off. ♫'



I jumped up and down. 'We are having ALL the fun. Can you believe I found such realistic pincers at such short notice?'

'YES, I CAN!' Frank yelled. 'Because you keep pinching my bottom with them. And that will stop being funny very quickly now we're stuck in the longest queue in history.'