Praise for



'Sibéal Pounder's books are the most fought over in our house. They've brought so much joy and laughter, and *Neon's Secret UNIverse* is no exception. Fun, funny, magical and fizzing with imagination, my children and I have been pinching it off each other since it landed!'
Sophie Anderson, author of
The House with Chicken Legs

'I adored not-at-all normal Neon and her madcap adventure'
Joanna Nadin, author of
The Worst Class in the World series

'*Neon's Secret UNIverse* is exactly what the world needs right now: a glorious, galloping, life-affirming stampede of pure multicoloured joy. I want to go on holiday inside Sibéal Pounder's head'
Chris Smith, author of
Kid Normal, *The Great Dream Robbery* and
Frankie Best Hates Quests

'Bright, bubbly and never knowingly normal, *Neon's Secret UNIverse* is a whirlwind of witty, wonderful adventure!'
Mo O'Hara, author of
My Big Fat Zombie Goldfish and *Agent Moose*


NEON
AND THE
UNICORN
HUNTERS

Books by Sibéal Pounder

Neon's Secret UNIverse
Neon and the Unicorn Hunters

Tinsel: The Girls Who Invented Christmas

Bad Mermaids
Bad Mermaids: On the Rocks
Bad Mermaids: On Thin Ice
Bad Mermaids Meet the Sushi Sisters
Bad Mermaids Meet the Witches (for World Book Day)

Witch Wars
Witch Switch
Witch Watch
Witch Glitch
Witch Snitch
Witch Tricks

Beyond Platform 13 (with Eva Ibbotson)



SIBÉAL POUNDER

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For Jim


(a small part of)
THE UNIVERSE
Glow Mountains
LUMINO FALLS
LUMINO FALLS SCHOOL
the slimy wardrobe
whiskers & GLOOP
SQUELCHIE'S story shop
GOOMART
LUMINO
GLITTERVOLES
Little trot
GOOHEAD CENTRAL
Little Lumino
Glittergate
Glittergate Academy

UHs Stands for UNICORN HUNTERS!

My name is Priscilla Knackerman and I just want to say: I am a Unicorn Hunter! That's right, I'm an UH. Pronounced like you would say 'uuuh?'

The UHs are as old as … really old stuff! And we know the truth about unicorns. They are NOT horses with horns, that's just something they made up to distract us. The truth is, unicorns are the most powerful beings on the planet – more powerful than witches or mermaids or elves, and they look just like you and me! You'd never spot one unless you knew what to look for: a stripe of colourful hair at the back of their head. They live in a secret world known as the UNIverse. It's impossible to get there unless you find a portal opener. Rumour has it the last surviving portal opener is hidden

right here in Brunty. And I'm going to find it! It's what I was born to do – find a portal to the UNIverse, jump in and DESTROY THE UNICORNS!

Now, I'd better go because tomorrow is an exciting day. We're going to go digging for the portal opener, plus we have new neighbours moving in. My mum said the girl is my age! She's called Neon Gallup. I bet we become BEST FRIENDS.

One Week Later


MAGIC EYE
SPICE G
TITANIC
UH

1

Priscilla Knows

December 1996, two months since Priscilla Knackerman discovered Neon has the portal opener and saw her jumping into the UNIverse.

Neon Gallup dragged an old, battered green lipstick across her bedroom wall and watched as the mark she'd made fizzed and crackled and began to rip open.

This was Neon's big secret. She had found the lipstick when she moved into her new house, hidden in a secret compartment in the window sill. It had been covered in goo and turned out not to be just any old lipstick – it was a lipstick that opened a portal to the UNIverse! The secret world where *real* unicorns live.

Neon took a step back as a tidal wave of glitter burst

from the portal and shot across the floor. Beyond the rip she could see the colourful world of the UNIverse glittering in sunlight.

No one knew she had a secret life, in a secret world. No one knew she had become a UNICORN! She touched the stripe of green in the back of her hair.

No one knew her secret!

OR DID THEY?

Though Neon didn't know it, two months earlier her new neighbour Priscilla Knackerman had walked into Neon's room at the exact moment she was jumping through the portal to the UNIverse! Priscilla had SCREAMED, and Neon would've screamed too had she seen her, because not long ago Neon had discovered Priscilla is a UNICORN HUNTER! The scariest creatures on the planet, if you're a unicorn. But Neon didn't see Priscilla that day and Priscilla didn't run and tell anyone Neon's secret – or at least not yet anyway. She didn't inform the UHs that she knew where the

portal opener was. She didn't mention that Neon was a unicorn. She didn't do anything. For some strange reason, Priscilla didn't tell *anyone* …

Neon clambered through the portal and landed with a thud in the capital city of Lumino, then she made her way towards to the Goomart, where she had just been promoted from a Goo Spillage Human to a Very Important Unicorn shopping assistant, responsible for assisting all the VIUs with their goo needs. No matter how many times she saw the Goomart, she could never get over how brilliantly weird it was. It was the No. 1 goo shop in the UNIverse, and the oldest. The shelves were stocked to bursting with every magic goo you could imagine, and some that you couldn't. It was a treasure trove of slimy magic and Neon loved every inch of—

'OH, THANK HOOFS YOU'RE HERE, I HAVE A GOOMERGENCY!' came a cry that shattered her thoughts. A terrified looking Bronco Blazon, the new

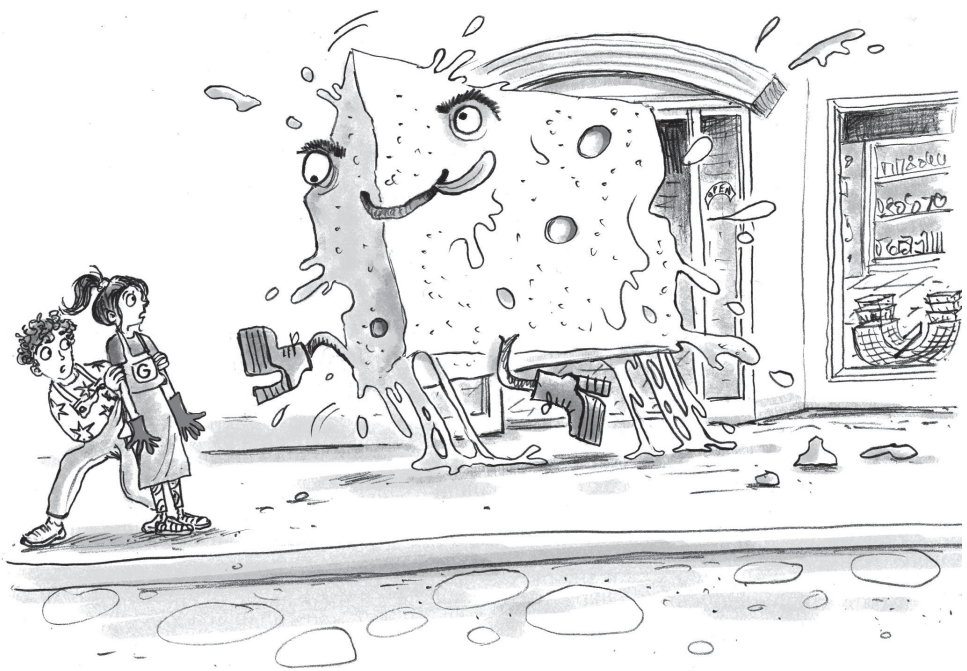
Goo Spillage Cleaner, burst out of the Goomart and hid behind her.

'What is it now?' Neon groaned, just as a giant piece of gooey cheese came stomping out of the shop. It was wearing platform shoes.

'Oh no,' Neon said, taking a cautious step back.

The thing was huge, as tall as the Goomart itself. It smiled and wiggled with excitement, sending slobbery globs of cheese flying in all directions.

'BRONCO!' the cheese cooed. 'OH, BRONCO!'



'It's one of the Cheesy Feet goos,' Bronco explained at speed. 'You know, for fixing smelly feet. But it's gone off and morphed into … *that*.'

Neon scratched her head. All magic in the UNIverse was done with goo – there was a goo for practically everything. But goo was unwieldy and when a goo went off, anything could happen.

'I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY CHEESE EYES WHEN I SAW YOU, BRONCO!' the cheese oozed. 'I JUST COULDN'T BELIEVE MY CHEESE EYES.'

'I think it's in love with me!' Bronco fretted. 'It's cheesy cheese.' He held up his goo wand, ready to pounce. Usually, most goos could be eliminated by a simple light touch of a goo wand, if you could get close enough.

'Ah, and it's wearing platform shoes because it was a product for feet,' Neon said. 'It all makes so much sense.'

'I HAVE BEAUTIFUL CHEESE FEET!'

'Save me,' Bronco pleaded, shakily handing Neon his goo wand.

'Pleasure,' Neon said with a smile, then without a second's pause she charged forwards, sliding right through the cheese's legs and expertly jabbing it in the shoe with the goo wand! Instantly, the whole thing went *POP*. Putrid cheese rained down on her until she was completely buried in the stuff! The stench was almost unbearable and Neon held her breath as she clawed her way out.

Bronco was crying with relief. 'That,' he said, 'was so cool!'

Neon proudly pulled the cheesy goo from her hair and flicked it on to the floor. Music started playing somewhere in the distance – it was the Mice Gurls' new single, 'Mice Up Your Life'.

'Just another day at the Goomart,' she said as she swaggered inside.

The owner of the Goomart, Old Lady Buck, greeted Neon with a nod and handed her a goo wand. Her long hair was pulled into a low ponytail and it swished

behind her like a pony's as they walked to the VIU section. As soon as they got there, Neon spotted the blobs of goo dancing around the room, and the sound of applause. She caught a glimpse of a glittering red jumpsuit.



Old Lady Buck had used a decorating goo on the VIU department when she'd first built it many years ago. The goo had been called GUEST'S DREAM, so the colours and furniture and paintings would morph into

the preferred style of the guest inside. Unfortunately, it had since gone off and now guests also experienced things they had literally dreamed of the night before. Sometimes it was wonderful things, like bunnies in meadows, and sometimes it was terrible, like a monster called Elgin who had fourteen eyes and burped up angry ants.

'Important day today, kid,' Old Lady Buck said, pushing her towards the room. 'You've got a VIU in need of holiday supplies and she's one tricky customer.'

'Neon!' came a cry, as Filly Spangle poked her head around the door. She glanced at Old Lady Buck, who was sneaking off down the aisle. 'Old Lady Buck! You're not helping too? I need expertise, not … no offence, Neon. She's *a human*.'

Filly Spangle and Neon had only recently become friends, after a rocky start. But Filly often said quite rude things, without really realising she was doing it.

'Bit harsh,' Neon said. 'I'm also a unicorn now, *remember*.' She turned and showed Filly her stripe of hair.

'Barely,' Filly said. 'I'm going to Lumino Falls, Neon. That requires some very important goos. For starters I need a specialised Lumino Falls sun cream, and I'll need a special Lumino Falls hair comb because the kelpies will do terrible things to me if I have the wrong one.'

'Kelpies?' Neon said, confused.

'Yeah, someone once dropped a jar of Scottish Legends goo into Lumino Falls and now there are millions of them. If you go swimming with the wrong comb, they get furious. I don't know why, it's just their thing.'

'So … don't bring a comb?' Neon suggested.

'Oh, that's even worse. If you're comb-less, you can't pay the monster to borrow a goo canoe. It only accepts payment in combs.'

Neon blinked in bewilderment, then quietly whimpered, 'Old Lady Buck?'

'You've got this!' Old Lady Buck called over her shoulder, and Neon was sure she heard her chuckle.

'All right,' Neon said faintly. 'A comb, so you can go canoeing or whatever.'

Filly's face grew serious. 'You may mock me, Neon, but you would not be laughing if you saw what can happen if you bring the wrong comb to Lumino Falls.'

Sometimes, on particularly weird UNIverse days, Neon found her mind drifting back to the human world, where everything was normal and boring. Daytime in the UNIverse was night-time in the human world, and due to all the portal jumping, Neon never needed to sleep. It was now almost impossible for her to imagine what sleep felt like. She closed her eyes and pictured her parents tucked up in their bed, and the next-door neighbours – Priscilla and her mum, Mrs Knackerman … the whole town, sleeping soundly.

But Neon imagined *wrong* that day.

Priscilla wasn't tucked up in bed, and she certainly wasn't sleeping. She wasn't even at home.

She was at Neon's house.

2

Intruder in Neon's Room

A little earlier.

Priscilla heaved herself up and through Neon's bedroom window and rolled across the room.

'Unicorns,' she said angrily under her breath. She was too late! The portal had almost closed, only a tiny, barely visible bit of the rip remained. Neon was already in the UNIverse! *Again*.

'Every time,' she muttered. 'I can never catch her.' Priscilla's plan was simple: catch Neon jumping through the portal and snatch the portal opener from her grasp. She'd been trying for *weeks*, but it was no good. She'd even tried searching for it during the day when Neon was working at Ratty's (her parents' weird cafe). She decided Neon had to be keeping it on her at all times.

Priscilla could feel the fury growing inside her. Unicorn Hunters were born to sniff out unicorns and destroy their world. She was closer than any other UH had ever been. If she could just get hold of the lipstick, she'd be the most notorious and famous UH in the world. She could destroy THEM ALL!

Priscilla had one more plan to try.

She pulled one of her mother's old lipsticks from her bag.

'Time for a confusing switcheroo,' she said with a smirk. And she placed the lipstick in Neon's Ratty's apron pocket. If Neon kept the lipstick on her, then it must be in the apron pocket … She wore it all the time, it would be the perfect hiding place for it. Priscilla was hoping that *another* lipstick would cause her to leave the portal opener somewhere, thinking she was already carrying it. It might only work for a short while, especially as Neon's lipstick was green and all Priscilla could find was a bunch of red ones, but it would be enough time for Priscilla to get her hands on the portal opener.

But she had to be there, waiting. This plan required a SLEEPOVER.

Quietly, Priscilla crawled under Neon's bed.

And she waited.