

BLOOMSBURY

SIBÉAL POUNDER

BAD

Mermaids



Illustrated by  
Jason Cockcroft

# Prologue

Mermaids have been flopping all over this planet for a really long time. And yet no submarine, ship or sinking scientist has ever discovered their whopping world.

Only mermaids know how to get to the Hidden Lagoon. Deep down beneath the waves, just past the NO LEGS BEYOND THIS POINT sign, is a small shell, and inside that shell is a keypad made of old pearly buttons. To open the gates to the Lagoon and all the cities within it, all you have to do is type in the secret code. The code that for thousands of years has kept mermaids hidden from human sight –

The unbreakable!  
The UNFAKEABLE!  
Havenolegs.

# 1

## In a Fish Tank on Land

‘May I borrow a pen please?’

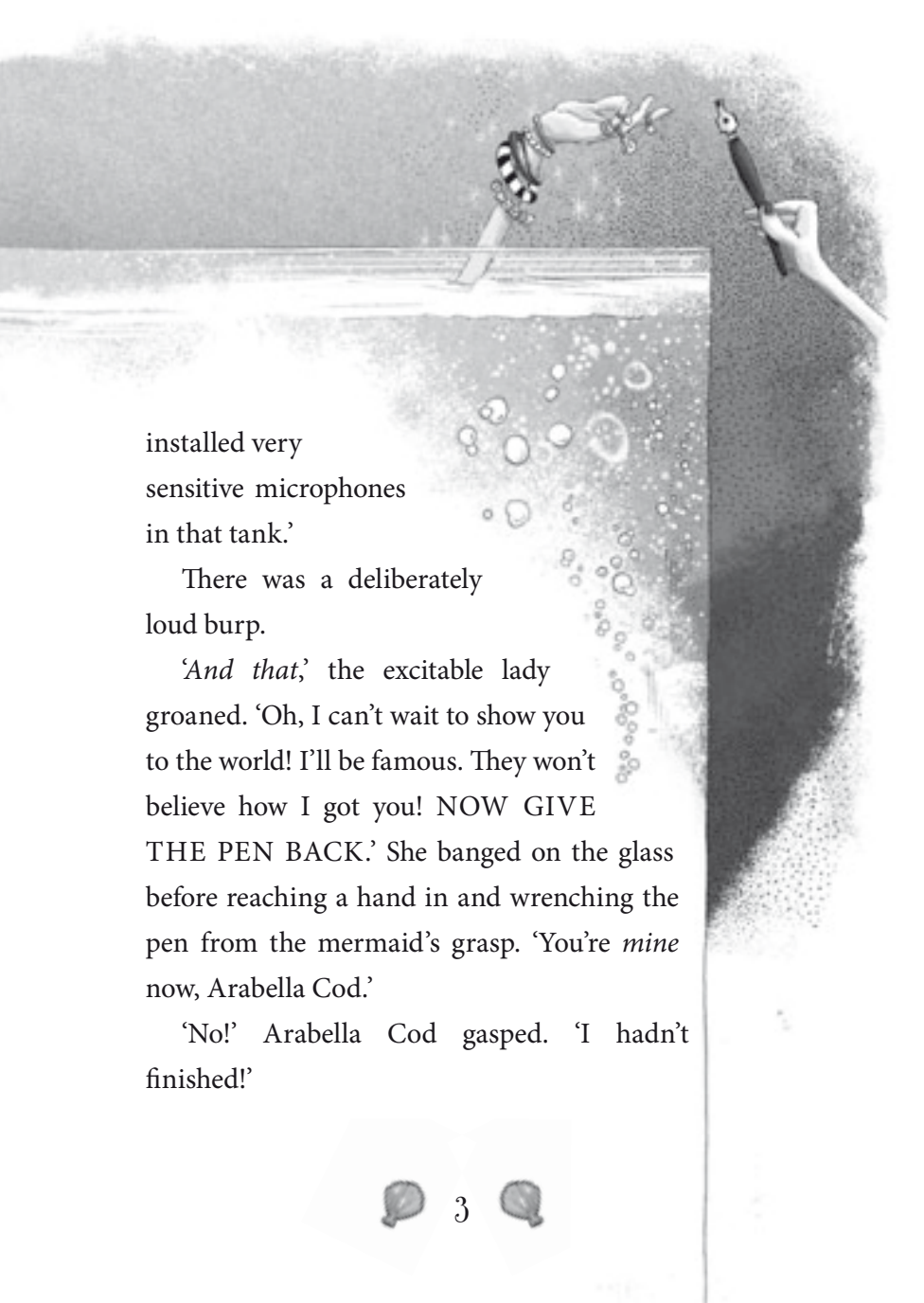
‘A pen?’ an excitable lady squawked, waving her arms elaborately like someone swatting at least forty flies. She tottered over to the fish tank, her large feet clad in spotted socks and squeezed into a pair of stilettos.

‘Yes please, a pen,’ came the tired voice from somewhere in the tank’s murky water. An elegant hand, fingers adorned with pearl and crystal rings and a wrist stacked with swirly shell bracelets, flopped out of the tank.

‘WE’RE COMMUNICATING!’ the excitable lady wheezed with joy. She tossed a pen into the tank. ‘Me and you. You and me. You and your fin. Me and my socks.’

There was a sigh from inside the tank.

‘I heard that!’ the excitable lady snapped. ‘I’ve



installed very  
sensitive microphones  
in that tank.'

There was a deliberately  
loud burp.

'*And that,*' the excitable lady  
groaned. 'Oh, I can't wait to show you  
to the world! I'll be famous. They won't  
believe how I got you! NOW GIVE  
THE PEN BACK.' She banged on the glass  
before reaching a hand in and wrenching the  
pen from the mermaid's grasp. 'You're *mine*  
now, Arabella Cod.'

'No!' Arabella Cod gasped. 'I hadn't  
finished!'

The excitable lady squealed as she caught a flash of pearly fin. ‘What did you write?!’

‘Nothing,’ Arabella Cod said quickly. ‘I ... just wanted to hold it.’

The excitable lady twirled around the room, laughing uncontrollably. ‘WHAT A DAY!’ she roared, punching the air. ‘ARABELLA COD, THE MERMAID QUEEN, MY PRISONER FOREVER!’ A tiny crab hastily heaved itself out of the tank and scuttled quickly along behind her, carrying a sloppy lump of seaweed.

The excitable lady twirled in its direction.

It froze.

She twirled on her heel once more to face the tank, peering eagerly inside and stroking the glass affectionately. The crab took its chance and scuttled out of the door.

‘Don’t stop until you get there!’ Arabella Cod shouted after it. ‘I’m sure they’ll figure it out! They have to ...’

The excitable lady turned to the door. But the crab was gone.

‘Who on *earth* are you shouting at, you strange lump of fish?’ she spat.

But Arabella Cod said nothing.

Failing to see that crab would be the biggest mistake the excitable lady ever made.



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