





Chapter 1

Princess Nixie flicked her shiny rainbow tail back and forth like she always did when she was trying to solve a problem. She called her method “swishing a fix”—usually it just took a few swirls of her tail to find a clever solution to any problem.

But now, she didn’t know what to do! *Breathe, focus, solve*, she reminded herself. That’s what they practiced at Rescue Crew School when facing a tough situation.

“What’s wrong?” her friend Princess Cali asked as they waited backstage at the Oyster Dome arena. “You should be excited. It’s finally Selection Day!”

“I know. But I’m not sure which seapony to choose,” Nixie said.

Five royal merchildren from all across the Eastern Kingdoms had come to Astoria City, the capital of Astoria Kingdom, Nixie’s home. They’d each pick a magical seapony from the Enchanted Seapony Academy. After the Match Ceremony the next day, they’d be official members of the Royal Mermaid Rescue Crew. Nixie got chills just thinking about it.

The seaponies and merchildren would work as partners to keep the seas safe. They’d also live together in the royal

merchildren's castles. Rescue Crew partners were always close friends.

"We've been working with the seaponies for a year. And you still don't know who to pick?" Cali asked.

Nixie shrugged. "None of them seem like a perfect match."

Nixie knew the seaponies well. They came from across the Eastern Kingdoms, too, and attended the Enchanted Seapony Academy in Astoria. The seaponies and merchildren worked together at Rescue Crew School on the weekends.

"I want to choose Rio," Cali said. "She has such a great Sea Savvy. Blowing a big protection bubble will come in handy. And we got along really well during our training sessions."

“I don’t know which seapony is the right match for me,” Nixie said. “But I know who’s not—Rip.”

“But he’s so fast.” Cali’s twin brother, Prince Cruise, swam up to join them. “And he’s a super cool shade of blue.”

“Then why don’t *you* pick him?” Nixie asked.

Cruise laughed. “Because he’s bossy and doesn’t know how to have fun.”

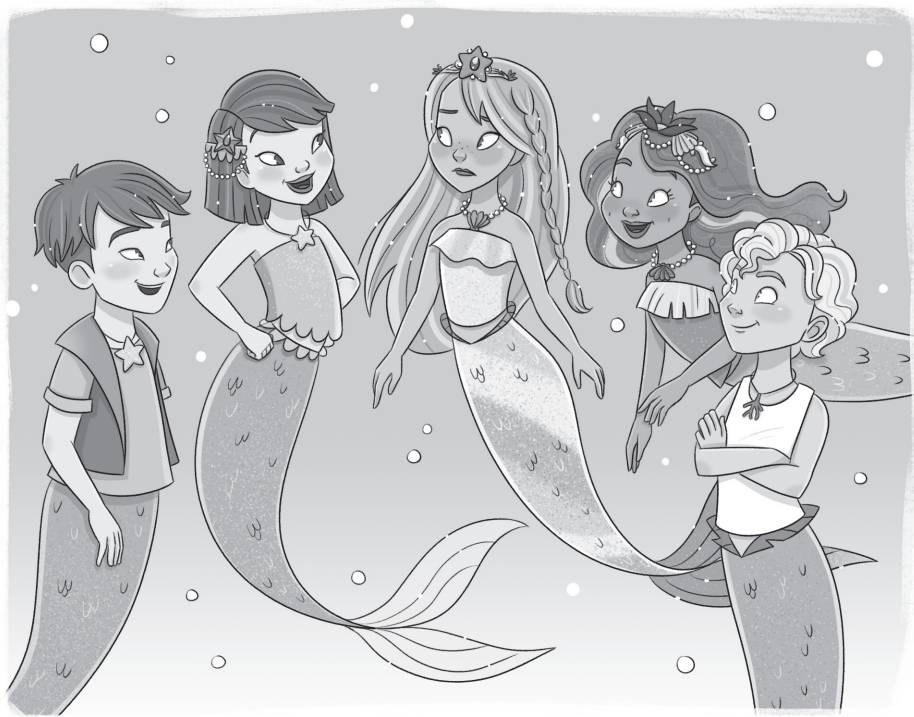
Princess Lana joined them. “Remember how mad he got when you did your fish presentation on jellyfish?” she reminded Nixie.

“Of course. Because ‘jellyfish aren’t fish’!” Nixie swished her tail again. “But they’re awesome. And they have the word *fish* in their name. That counts.”

“And you taught them how to dance to your singing!” Cali said.

Nixie smiled. She *had* been proud of that presentation.

“I hear he always has a copy of the rule book in his saddlebag,” Prince Dorado said, swimming up.



While her friends were laughing, Nixie bit her lip. “Guys, we shouldn’t be so mean. He tries hard. He’s great at playing fetch. And he has top marks in his class.”

“We’re not being mean. It’s the truth,” Cruise said. “He wouldn’t be a very fun partner.”

Nixie had to agree about that.

Nixie imagined the thrill she would feel working with exactly the right seapony. Her heart sped up just thinking about it. But none of the five seaponies in this year’s selection class gave her that excited feeling. Her teachers always said, “A team takes two.” But who did she want on her team?

She swished her tail faster and faster. What was she going to do?