

Harriet's gift



story Heather Cooke
illustrations Charlie deLange



Harriet's Gift



story by Heather Cooke
illustrated by Charlie deLange
layout by Natasha Nass

This book is dedicated to all the
brave unicorns out there and
their siblings who love and accept
them as they are.

Sponsored by Jenny Mclean

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"Harriet", said mum one day,
"what would you like more than
anything in the whole world?"

"A puppy!" shouted Harriet.

"What's even better than a
puppy?" asked Dad

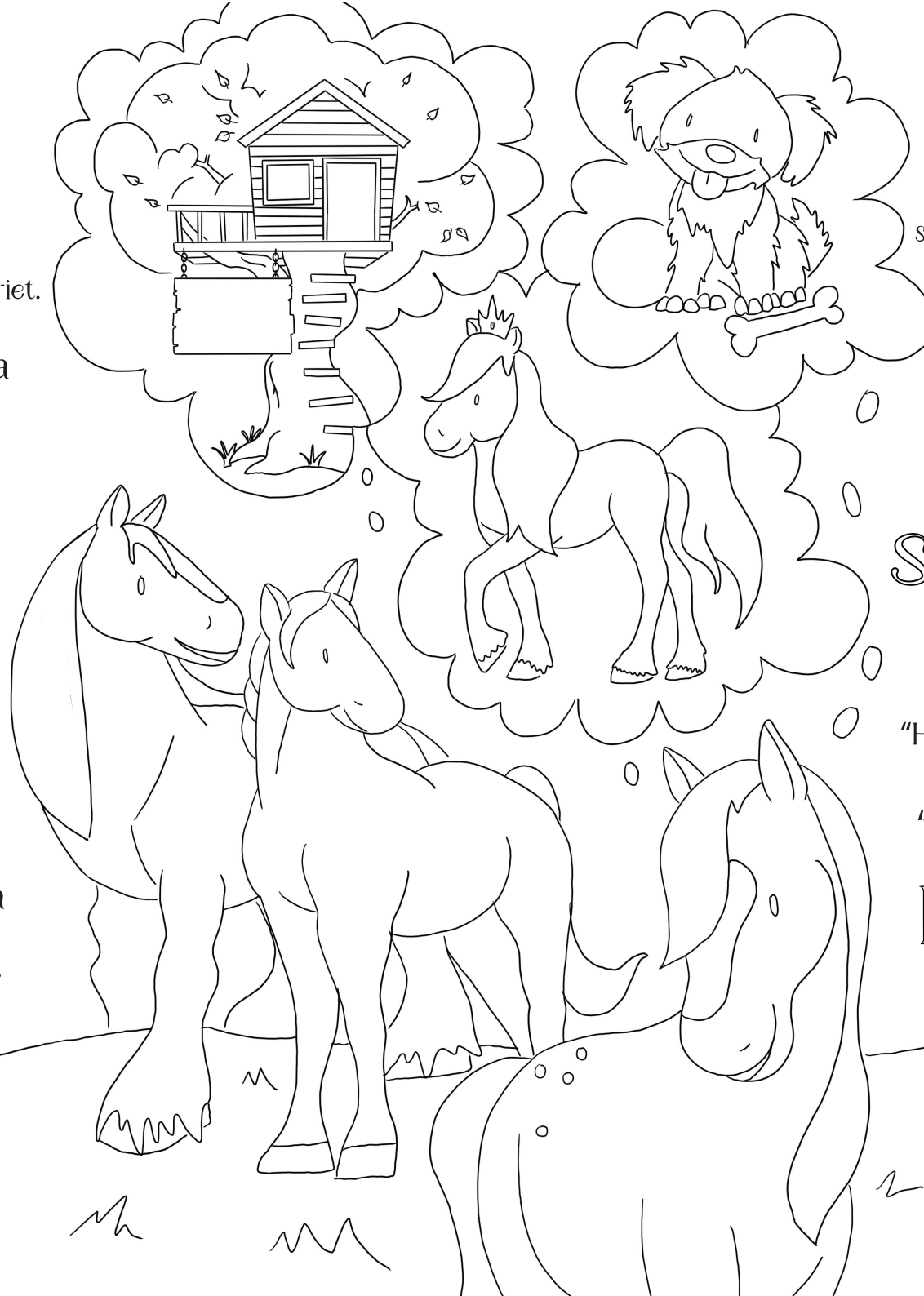
"A treehouse with
a sign that says "No Grown-ups"?
suggested Harriet.

Mum smiled "Even Better!"

Harriet thought and thought, but she
really didn't know what they meant.

"How would you feel if I told
you we were going to have a
baby?" said Mum.

Harriet whinnied
with joy.



Yes,
it was the one thing
she wanted more than
anything else in
the whole world.

"Do you think it
will be a
sister
mum?"

"Hold your horses,"
Mum laughed.
"Let's see when
your sister or
brother
arrives."



But asking a five-year old pony like Harriet to be patient was like asking a race-horse to slow down for the donkeys.

She wrote a sign that she wore around her neck that said
"Best Big Sister. EVER"
"Let's wait," said Mum "till he or she is born before you wear the sign."

For the next few months Harriet was very busy. She helped Dad make a baby bed, sewed new baby clothes with Mum, and when they weren't

looking, she painted a pink "sister" on the side of the crib and sewed pink bows onto the pockets of the baby clothes.

Surely, thought Harriet, if she wished it with all her heart, she'd get a baby sister.

But when mum
finally had the baby,
Harriet got a
big shock.

"Come and
meet your baby
brother, Neo"
said Dad.

Harriet looked like
she'd swallowed a
mouthful of rotting hay.
"A brother?"

Then when her mother
lifted the
blanket and
showed her
the baby,
Harriet almost
fainted.

Not only was it
a boy, the baby
didn't even look
like a regular horse!

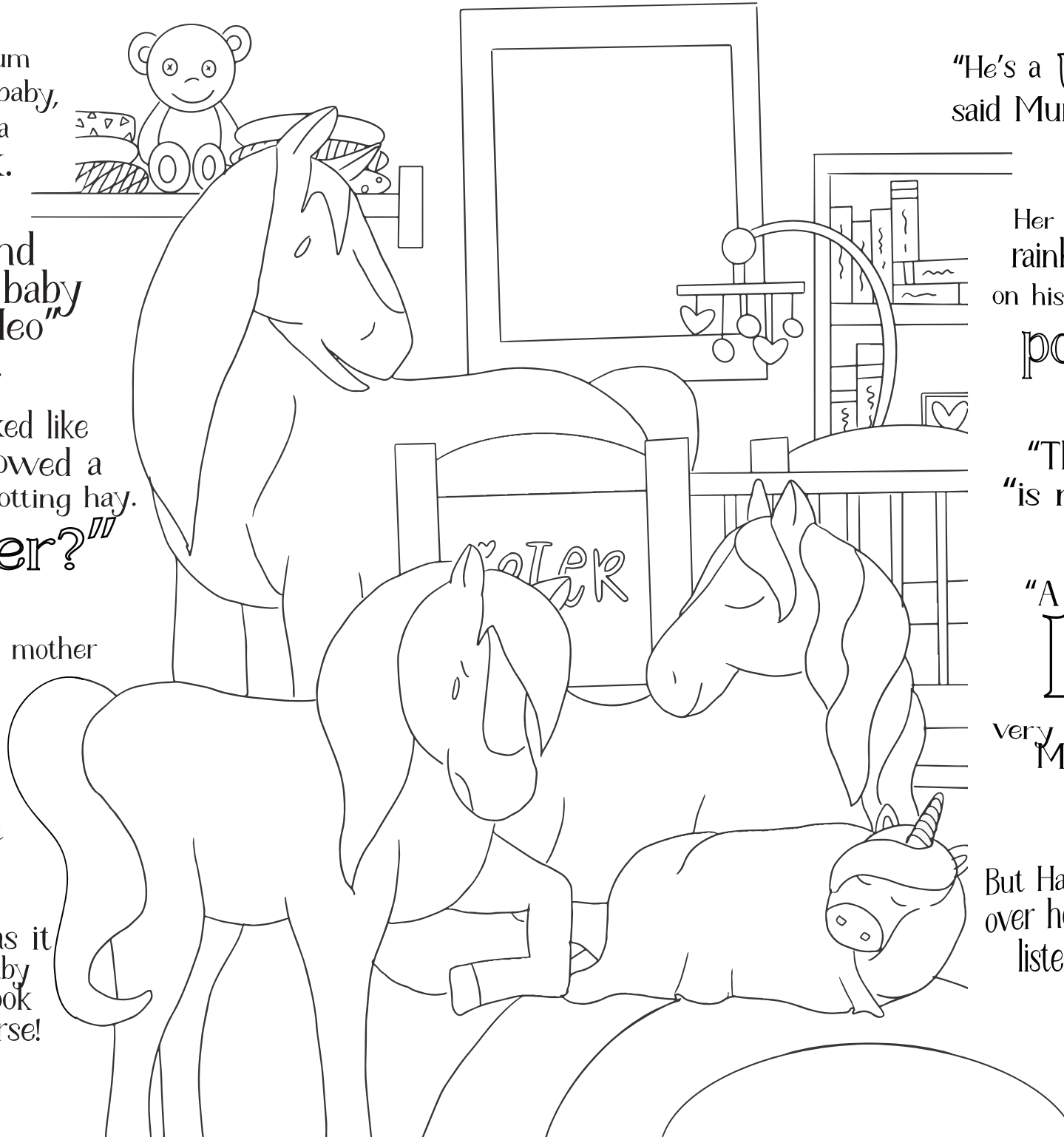
"He's a unicorn"
said Mum. Harriet stared.

Her brother had a weird
rainbow-coloured mane and
on his forehead, was a long
pointed horn.

"That" she gasped
"is not ... normal".

"A Unicorn is a very
rare
very special kind of horse,"
Mum explained kindly.

But Harriet had her hooves
over her ears and wouldn't
listen to another word.



As time passed, no matter how hard she tried,
Harriet just couldn't get used to her unicorn brother.

Nothing about him was normal.

When he moved it looked like a dance, not a trot.
When he sang, he didn't neigh - he warbled like a bird.

Harriet's friends laughed and
said he was *adorable*
but Harriet thought it was
no laughing matter.

But the biggest bother was Neo's horn.

Once, when they were walking down the street,
his horn hooked in the mane of a young mare.
She had a very tangly mane and the more Neo
tried to pull away, the more his horn got stuck.

It eventually took two mane stylists and the
equestrian police services to separate them.



When Harriet played
with Neo she had to watch
that the sharp horn
didn't poke her.

A trip to the supermarket
was a nightmare -

Neo liked to swing his head
to and fro, knocking items
off the shelves and making
a huge mess.

One day, when Mum
asked her to play
with Neo while she made
supper, Harriet refused.

"I've decided to quit
being a big sister"
she said.



Her mother sat
her down gently
and said:
"Do you know
why we called
your brother Neo?"

Harriet shook
her head.

"Because it means

Gift"

her mother
replied.

"And one day,
when you least
expect it, your
brother is going
to give you
the most
wonderful gift."



"A gift!" thought Harriet "that's more like it!"

She wondered if the gift would be a doll's house, or roller skates, or maybe a karaoke player to sing along to?

Months passed and Harriet waited and waited for her gift.

Often when the doorbell rang she would think "Is that someone delivering my present?", and she'd race to the door to answer it. But there was never any **present** for her.

Neo, on the other hand, was constantly receiving gifts. His favorite was a signed soccer ball given to him by champion player, Siegfried Stallion. **f**or birthdays, Neo always got **WAY** more presents than Harriet.

Mum explained a little sadly, "It's because he doesn't have friends to play with."

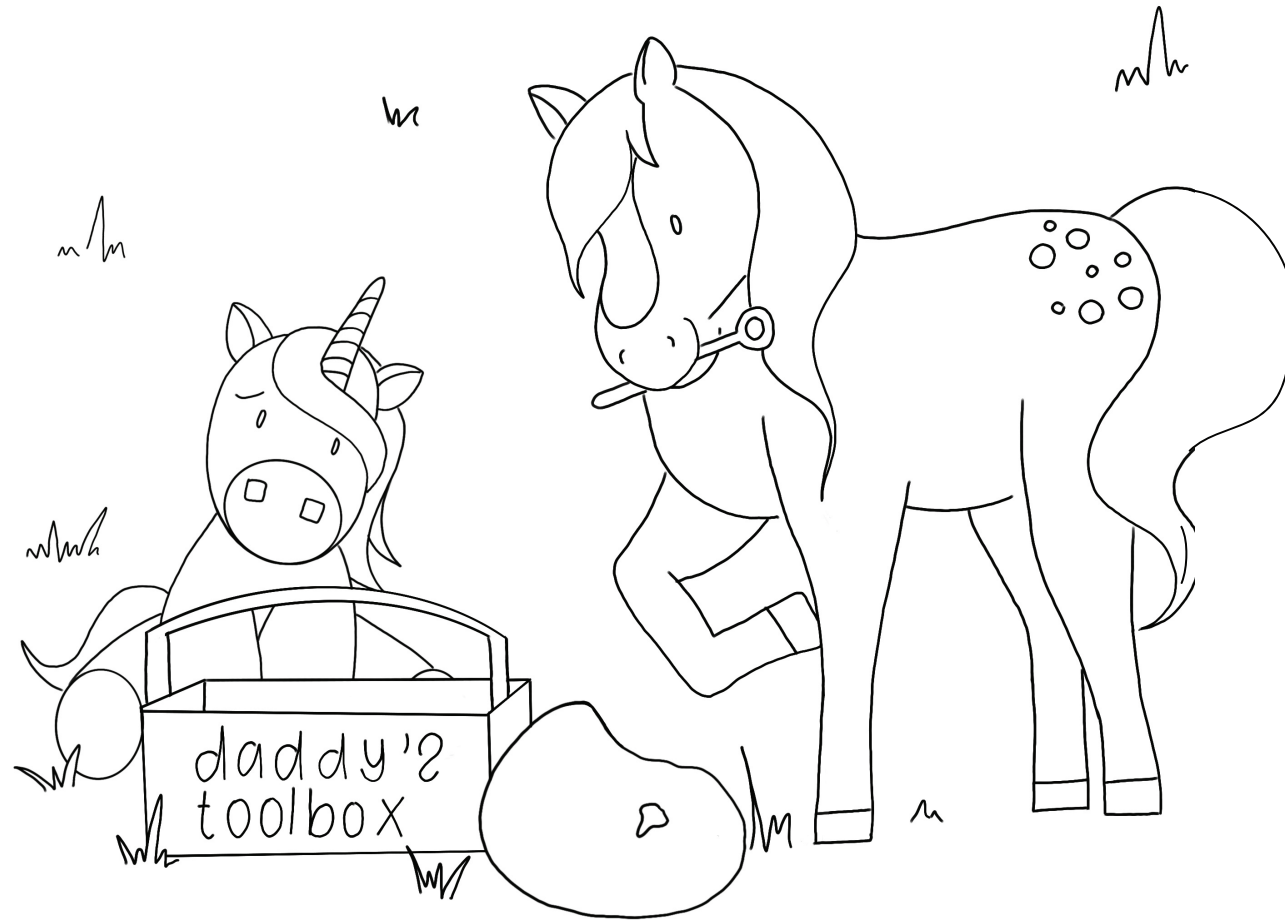
Harriet thought she'd be more pleased the day Neo's soccer ball burst when he tried to header it into a net, but he looked so forlorn.

They found a puncture repair kit and together they fixed the ball.

Neo was so happy

that he gave her a big hug, taking great care not to prod her with his horn.

Then they went outside to play and Harriet cheered herself hoarse when he scored a goal.



She realised it wasn't her brother's fault that he'd been born a unicorn.

Having a horn on his head must be way more bother to him than it was to her.

"Come" said Harriet, picking up the ball, "Let's see what we can do."

The next day Harriet trotted down the road to see an old mare called Griselda Grasschomper.

Behind her back she was known as Griselda Grumpyflanks, because she was always cross, but Harriet needed her help.

Griselda opened the door with a scowl, and Harriet almost lost her courage.

"Puh - please can you make something for my brother?" she stammered.

To Harriet's surprise, Griselda smiled.
"for that unicorn brother of yours? Certainly!"

Griselda could **knit** just about anything and Harriet wanted a **woolen cover** to fit over Neo's horn so it **wouldn't poke** into everything.

"Shall we make it blue?" Griselda asked.

"No" said Harriet, "I think it should be all the colours of the rainbow, just like Neo's beautiful mane".



Neo was delighted
with his
horn cover.

He did his weird little
dance all around the
house and only
knocked
over one
vase of flowers.

He looked so funny
with flowers stuck
in his mane
that Harriet had to
laugh.

Then they quickly
tidied up the mess
before mum saw it.

For a brother, thought
Harriet, he's not so bad.



"He needs a friend"
Harriet told Mum,
"and I am going to help".

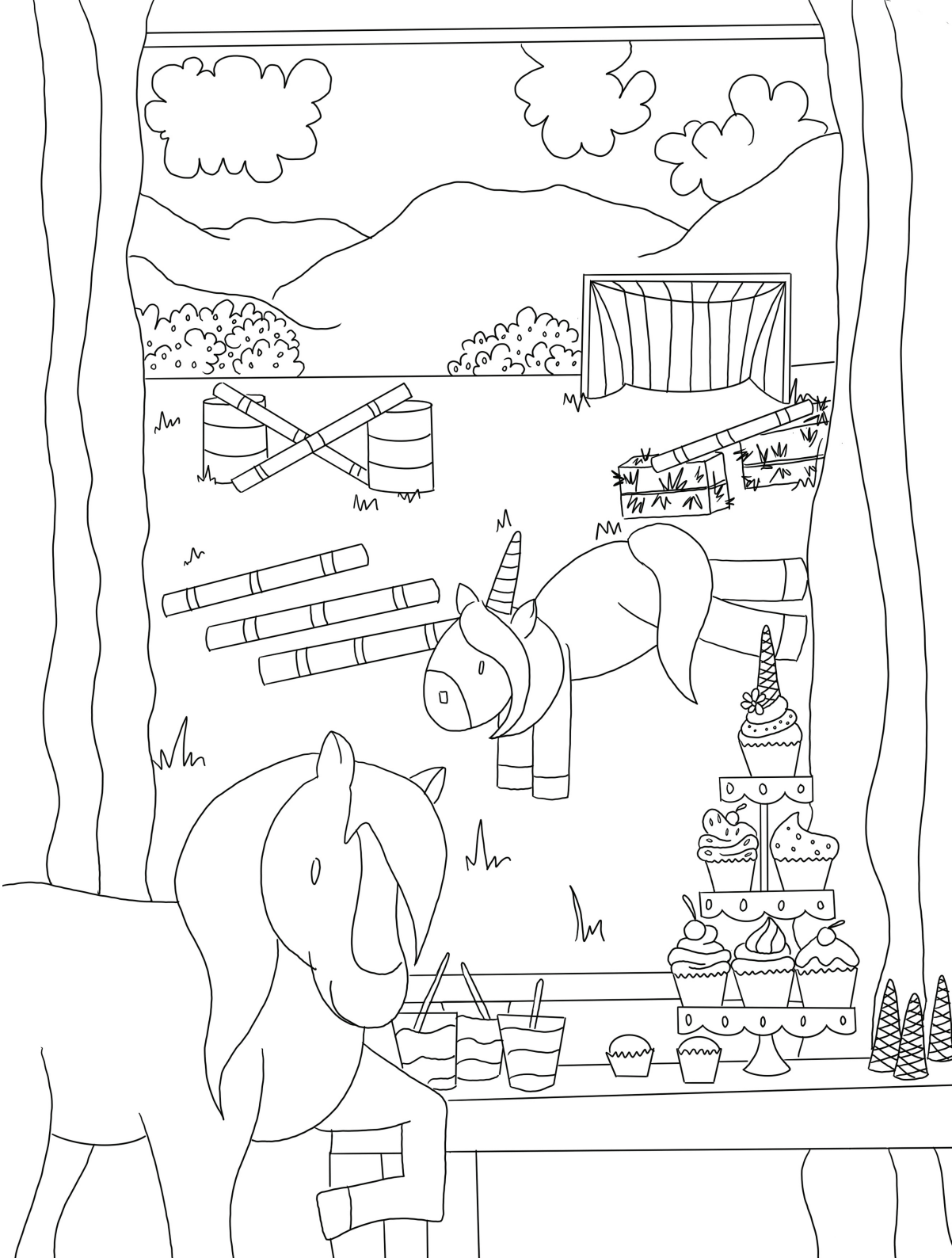
So they put an advert
in the Horse's Herald
newspaper saying that
they were looking for
a unicorn friend.

A few days later,
they found a
perfect match.

Her name was
Hope

She was Neo's age,
and she lived nearby.

Harriet wanted to organise
the best playdate ever!



Harriet and her three friends planned a day
the unicorns would never forget.

They'd play pin the horn on the unicorn and
pass the parcel, and musical statues.

They'd eat ice-cream and drink rainbow
slushies and decorate their own cupcakes.

Griselda Grasschomper made a matching horn
cover for Hope, and Harriet's Dad built a small
steeplechase course for jumping.

But on the morning of the playdate, they got a call
from Hope's mum - Hope had a cold and because
unicorns are SO delicate, she couldn't come to the

playdate.

Harriet was crushed, but when she saw Neo
through the window practicing steeplechase
jumps she pulled herself together:
"The show must go on," she said.

Harriet and her friends
stuck ice-cream cones on
their foreheads so they
all looked like Neo.

He whinnied with delight
when he saw them.

During "stick the horn on
the Unicorn" they laughed
hysterically when Harriet
missed the poster and stuck
the horn on her dad's hind
quarters by mistake.

And although everyone had a
turn at pass the parcel,
Harriet was very
pleased
when it was Neo who
won the book of unicorn stories.



Later that
night when Neo
was asleep,
Harriet said
to Mum

"I still feel
bad he doesn't
have any
friends"

"Yes, he does,"
her mom replied
"He has **you** and
YOUR friends.

And soon Hope
will be better
and we'll have
that **playdate**."

"Remember when I told you that Neo would give you a special gift?" said Mum.

"Oh Mum, it doesn't matter now" said Harriet.
"He's my brother, I don't need a gift".

"But did you know that he's already given it to you?" said Mum.

Harriet frowned, she didn't understand.

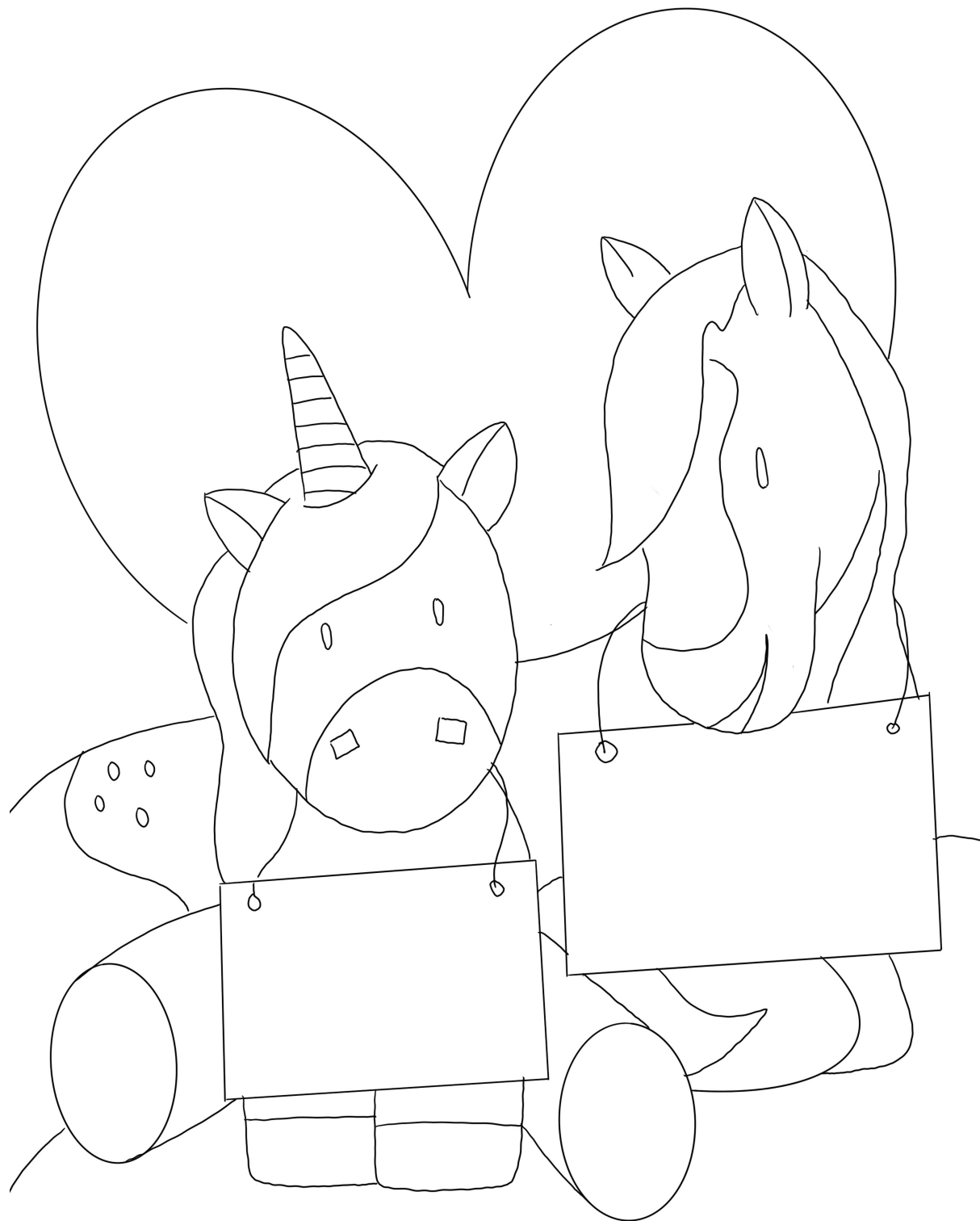
"It's a very precious gift, and although many try to find it, it's not always easy to receive."

"What is it?" asked Harriet.

"Your brother Neo has given you the gift of
kindness" said her mother.

Harriet thought for a bit, and
then her face broke into a grin.

"I think" she said, "that I shall make him a sign to wear around his neck that says
"Best Baby Brother - EVER!""



faq's and age-appropriate responses

Kids with rare Chromosomal Disorders sometimes look and do things differently to other kids. It can cause social issues such as isolation and bullying, and affects not only the child with the condition, but the whole family. This is why we chose to focus on Harriet, the sister of a child with a "chromosomal disorder". It's important to remember that these children are special, rare and unique and often other kids ask a lot of questions about their condition.

Here are some of the questions that are asked and a good way to answer them:

Q: What's wrong with him/her?

A: Firstly, don't discourage a child from asking this question. Your child is inquisitive and this moment provides an opportunity to frame their perception of those who are differently-abled. There is nothing wrong with him/her, they are just different. Take the opportunity to ignite compassion and love for people who are different from them. Point out the similarities between your child and the special needs child (same colour hair, same shoes etc), and focus on those, rather than focusing on the differences. Same Same but different.

Q: Why is he wearing that on his head?

A: That is his special weapon that he needs to empower his differences. Whilst it makes him look different, it also forms a very unique part of who he is.

Q: Can they grow the missing piece?

A: Not always. But, that is ok. If he did grow the piece, he would lose his special weapon.

Q: Will he/she get better?

A: Some can get better, but most don't. Which is why loving them just the way they are, whilst we still can, is so important.

Q: Will he/she go to a normal school?

A: Normal school is just a name for a school that works for some children's way of thinking. Special schools are for those who think and do things differently.

Q: How do you do it? (aimed at the parent)

A: You just do it. Because our love for our special babies beams like the sun, and we know that they are worth it.

we are rare

Rare Diseases South Africa (RDSA) is a non-profit organisation that has been successfully working to ensure that people living with rare diseases and congenital disorders experience better recognition and support, improved health services, and a better life overall.

ways you can get involved

Use your mobility to benefit others by becoming a
Rare ACTIVist
events@rarediseases.co.za

Small change makes a big difference

Volunteer
your time and skills
www.rarediseases.co.za/volunteers

Donate

There are a few ways you can make a monetary contribution:

1. Eft or Direct Deposit

Banking details:
Rare Diseases South Africa
First National Bank
Branch: sunninghill
Branch code: 251655
Acc no: 624 11658 034
Ref: your email

2. Zapper or SnapScan



3. Monthly Debit Order

www.rarediseases.co.za/donate

4. Given Gain

www.givengain.com/c/rarediseasesa/

6. MySchool Card

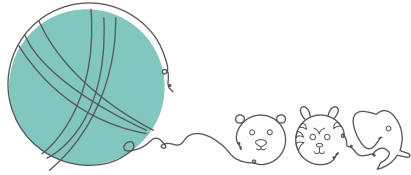
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5. On our online store
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Rare Bear Project

A Rare Diseases South Africa Initiative | NPO 120-991

The #RareBearProject is all about supporting our community. From providing support to families impacted by Rare Diseases, to creating jobs and income generating opportunities to the woman of Kya Sands.

100%
of our income
goes straight
back into this
project



100%
washable



100%
local

We are committed to:

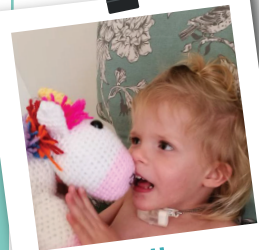
- Empowering individuals, as well as growing programme initiatives.
- Improving overall sustainability of the #RareBearProject.
- Providing support, and companionship to those impacted by rare diseases.
- Providing a continuous income stream for the woman making #RareBears.
- Reducing unemployment within the Kya Sands community.
- Up-skilling and training woman of Kya Sands to generate income outside the #RareBearProject.
- Nurturing future entrepreneurs.



Gabriella



Kya Sands ladies



Stella



Miracle

To date, this project has seen over **60 women up-skilled in the art of crocheting**, and provided them with a sustainable, income generating opportunity by making #RareBears

Harriet's Gift is the story of a young horse who eagerly awaits the birth of a sibling, but when the foal is born, it is a unicorn, and not the regular horse she was anticipating. Harriet not only has to accept the challenges that a special needs sibling presents, but must learn tolerance, empathy and kindness as she alters her expectations and comes to appreciate her brother's differences.



Heather Cooke is a television writer and director. She started writing children's short stories when she became a mum and is working on an animated full length feature film for her Masters degree in Screen Writing.



Charlie was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder but tries not to let it define her, she's an illustrator and urban farmer busy getting her degree in forensics.

