



Mrs Paul clapped her hands three times. Everyone knew what *that* meant. She wanted silence and all pencils down.

Jake wished he could keep colouring his picture of a dragon, but knew he had to stop. He lifted one edge of the paper so Jonah could see what he'd done.



Wow, went Jonah's lips, not making a sound. Mrs Paul waited until the class was still. 'Right,' she said. 'I have very exciting news for you.'

'Oh, Mrs Paul!' Stephanie squealed. 'Are you having a baby? My mum's having a baby and ...'



Mrs Paul looked at Stephanie sharply. 'Three boys are quite

enough for me, thank you! No, I've decided that our class will put on a musical play at the end-of-year concert.'

Jake looked at Jonah.

Wow, went Jonah's lips again. This time he rolled his eyes too, and Mrs Paul caught him.



'You'll all have parts to play – yes, even *you*, Jonah. But there are only four weeks to rehearse so we'll need to work extremely hard. We want to put on a great show for your mums and dads. We want our class to be the best in the whole concert!'

Jake imagined dressing up as a pirate and sword-fighting with Jonah.

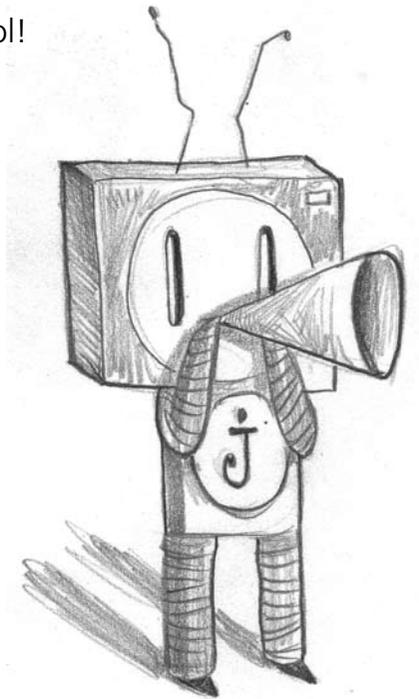


He imagined scampering across stage in a monkey suit.



He imagined talking like a robot, with a silver-painted box over his head.

A play might be cool!



2.

Mrs Paul told the class they'd be doing a short play based on a movie called *The Little Mermaid*. The movie, she said, had been based on a story by Hans Christian Andersen.

Benji put his hand in the air. 'And what was that story based on, Mrs Paul?'

'Imagination, Benji,' Mrs Paul replied.

Stephanie and some of the other kids had watched *The Little Mermaid* on DVD, but Jake hadn't.

'What's it about, Mrs Paul?' he asked.



'It's about a mermaid princess who falls in love with a human prince.'

Some girls giggled. 'Oo-oooh.'

The boys sniggered. 'Urgh, fishy!'

*Yuk*, Jake thought. *Why couldn't she choose something about pirates?*

'Come on now, let's not be silly,' Mrs Paul continued. 'The mermaid makes a deal with a sea witch – she can turn into a human if she gives the witch her voice.'

'Hey Stephanie! That's what you should do,' Benji said.

'*Fun-nee*,' snapped

Stephanie.

'Tomorrow we'll watch the

movie during class,' Mrs Paul told them. 'Then you'll all know what it's about. And you'll need to practise the songs at home.'

'Will there be costumes?'

Jake asked.



'Of course! We may need to hire a few things, but we'll be able to make most of it in art class.'

Mrs Paul paused and took a deep breath. 'Now, listen. There are bigger roles and smaller roles. Please put your hand up if you'd like me to consider you for one of the main parts.'

A lot of hands shot up. Some stayed hidden under desks. Jake wasn't sure. He raised his hand a little, quite slowly.

Mrs Paul wrote names into her notebook.

'Thank you,' she said.



3.

The next day, after they'd watched the movie, Mrs Paul wrote the names of all the characters on the whiteboard. There was Ariel the mermaid and her father, King Triton. There was a human prince named Eric, a fish called Flounder, Sebastian the crab, and a seagull named Scuttle.

Jake thought he wouldn't mind being Sebastian. He'd wear a cool crab costume with big crab nippers and scurry sideways across the stage.

