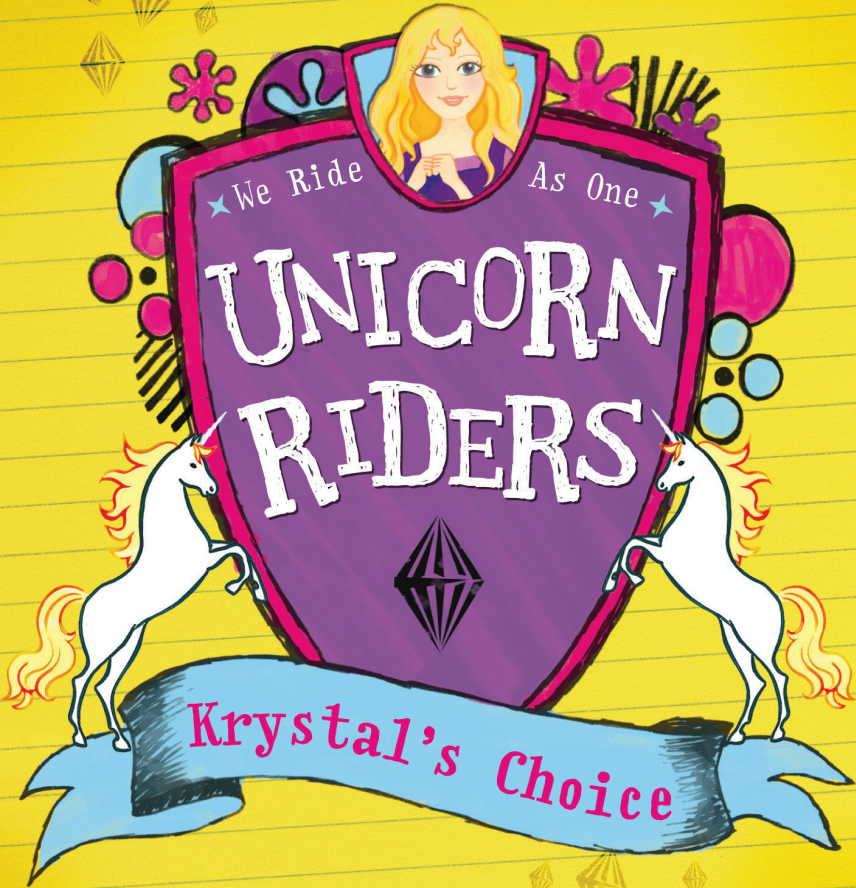


Aleesah
Darlison



Illustrations by
Jill Brailsford



NB. This is an **ADVANCED UNCORRECTED CHAPTER SAMPLE**. Please note contents and publishing information are subject to change. When quoting from this book, please check publishing details and refer to the final printed book for editorial accuracy.



◆ CHAPTER 1 ◆

WITH HER LONG HAIR STREAMING behind her, Krystal galloped Estrella into the village square. “Behold Estrella, Avamay’s most dazzling unicorn!” she cried. The crowd parted, leaving a circle around Krystal and Estrella. “Watch her perform her tricks. Admire her stunning beauty!”

Krystal had spent hours combing her unicorn’s coat and plaiting her golden mane and tail with ribbons. She hoped the people of Stillmet would be impressed.

Stillmet sat at the base of the Effervescent Falls. It was a poor village and recently a terrible flood had washed through it, damaging many of the houses in its path. Queen Heart had sent the Riders in to help.







Estrella whinnied, rising onto her hind legs while Krystal clung to her back. With every nudge of Krystal's knees the unicorn obeyed – stepping, rearing and turning like a dancer. The crowd gasped in wonder. Krystal smiled. She had wanted to make them happy. They'd had such a terrible time lately.

“E, use your magic,” Krystal whispered.

Every unicorn had a unique skill. Estrella's was the ability to enchant others. Now, as Krystal held one hand high, Estrella pirouetted on her hind legs and sent a shower of magical sparks from her pearl horn over the crowd.

“Amazing!” they exclaimed. “Breathtaking!”

Estrella landed on all fours. Her pearly-white sparks dissolved, breaking the spell. The crowd clapped and cheered. Krystal slid off Estrella and greeted the villagers, shaking hands with many of them.

How wonderful it is to make others happy, Krystal thought. To entertain them and help them forget their troubles.

Not that she got much chance to entertain people with Estrella's dancing tricks. Jala, the Unicorn Riders' Leader, didn't approve of performances like the one Krystal had just given. She would have called it showing off.

The crowd filtered away. Ellabeth trudged over carrying a bucket of sudsy water. Her red Unicorn Rider's uniform was smudged with dirt, as was her forehead. "That was a nice thing to do. Are you ready to help now? There's a cottage over here that needs cleaning."

"It's not as glamorous as dancing with a unicorn," Krystal replied with a grin, "but I guess I can help."

Ellabeth laughed. “You’re too kind. Come on, then.” They fell into step together. “You know, you’d better not let Jala catch you wasting Estrella’s magic like that.” Ellabeth became serious. “You’ll get in trouble.”

“I was only trying to cheer up the villagers,” Krystal said.

“Yeah, but you know what Jala’s like with rules. This is the place. In you go.”

Krystal eyed the cottage Ellabeth pointed to. She wrinkled her nose. “It smells dreadful.”

Ellabeth shrugged. “The others aren’t complaining.”

Krystal glanced at Quinn and Willow, the other Unicorn Riders. Both wore their uniforms. Quinn’s was pale blue with the symbol of a butterfly embroidered on the front. Willow’s was green with the symbol of a purple violet. While Quinn swept the stone steps of a house nearby, Willow, the Head Rider, helped the woman who lived there replant her vegetable garden.

Krystal eyed the cottage once more. She still wasn't sure she was up to the task. "I need a drink first," she said. "I'll be back in a minute. Promise." She ran off, leaving Ellabeth shaking her head.

Krystal crouched by the river, cupping the cool water in her hands to drink. "I'm a Unicorn Rider," she murmured. "I protect the kingdom from evil threats like Lord Valerian. Cleaning cottages isn't what being a Unicorn Rider is about. This is all too hard."

Footsteps crunching on the black rocks behind her made Krystal turn. Willow, Ellabeth and Quinn sat beside her.

"Finding the work difficult?" Willow asked.

Krystal nodded. "Why can't we use unicorn magic to fix everything?"

Willow laughed. "Because magic can't solve every problem. Sometimes hard work is the only answer."

"I'm no good at hard work," Krystal said.

Quinn hugged Krystal. "Sure you are. You



always work hard to train Estrella and groom her.”

“I guess.” Krystal studied the calluses on her hands. Once, her hands had been soft, her nails painted. Not any more.

Before she had been chosen to be a Rider, Krystal’s playground had been her parents’ huge country estate. She had been doted on by servants, nannies and a tutor. There had been



beautiful dresses, endless parties, ponies to ride. Her wealthy parents had showered their only child with love and gifts, making her life a perfect fairytale.

Everything had changed when Krystal's name appeared in The Choosing Book. The Choosing Book held the details of all past, present and future Riders, only the future Riders couldn't be seen yet. When it was time for a new Rider to be chosen, only then would The Choosing Book display her details.

Of course, Krystal had been delighted when her name was revealed in the great book. Every girl in the kingdom dreamed of becoming a Unicorn Rider. Only a handful were ever chosen.

But being a Rider was different to how Krystal had imagined it. She had to challenge herself and face great dangers. She had to share everything with the other Riders, including a bedroom with Ellabeth. She even had to do daily chores.

I miss my old life, Krystal thought. I miss my family. I'm no good at cleaning. It's just not my thing. Does that make me a bad Rider?

"Ah, the adventurous life of a Unicorn Rider." Willow interrupted her thoughts. "It has its ups and downs."

"I love the adventure," Krystal said. "It's the dullness I can't stand."

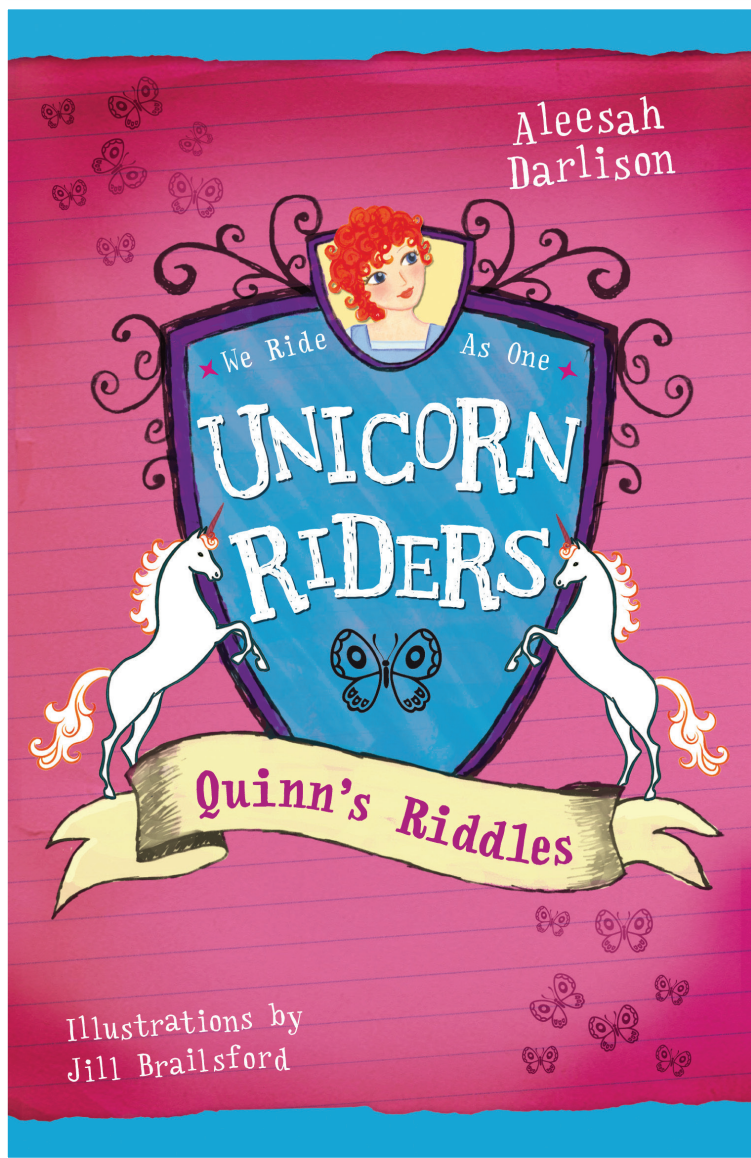
"We can't all shine all the time," Ellabeth quipped.

Krystal was about to tell Ellabeth to stop teasing her when the sound of an approaching horse made her look up.

"The Queen's messenger." Krystal recognised the purple coat, the gold sash.

"Honourable Riders." The messenger bowed in his saddle as the girls scrambled to their feet. "The Queen approaches."





UNICORN RIDERS BOOK 1:

QUINN'S RIDDLES

by Aleesah Darlison

illustrated by Jill Brailsford

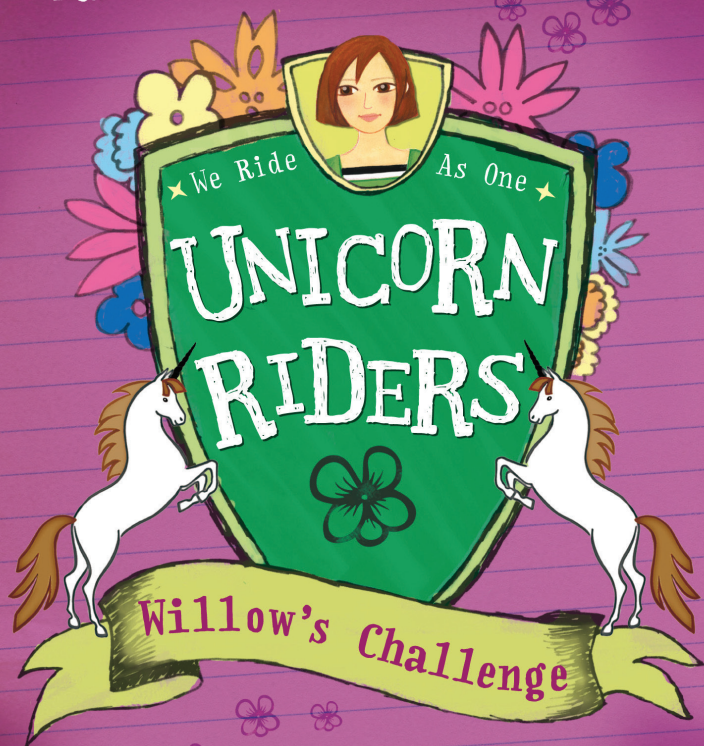
ISBN: 9781921529979

Arrp: \$6.50

NZrrp: \$7.50

Copyright © 2011 Aleesah Darlison and Jill Brailsford. All rights reserved.

Aleesah
Darlison



Illustrations by
Jill Brailsford

UNICORN RIDERS BOOK 2:
WILLOW'S CHALLENGE

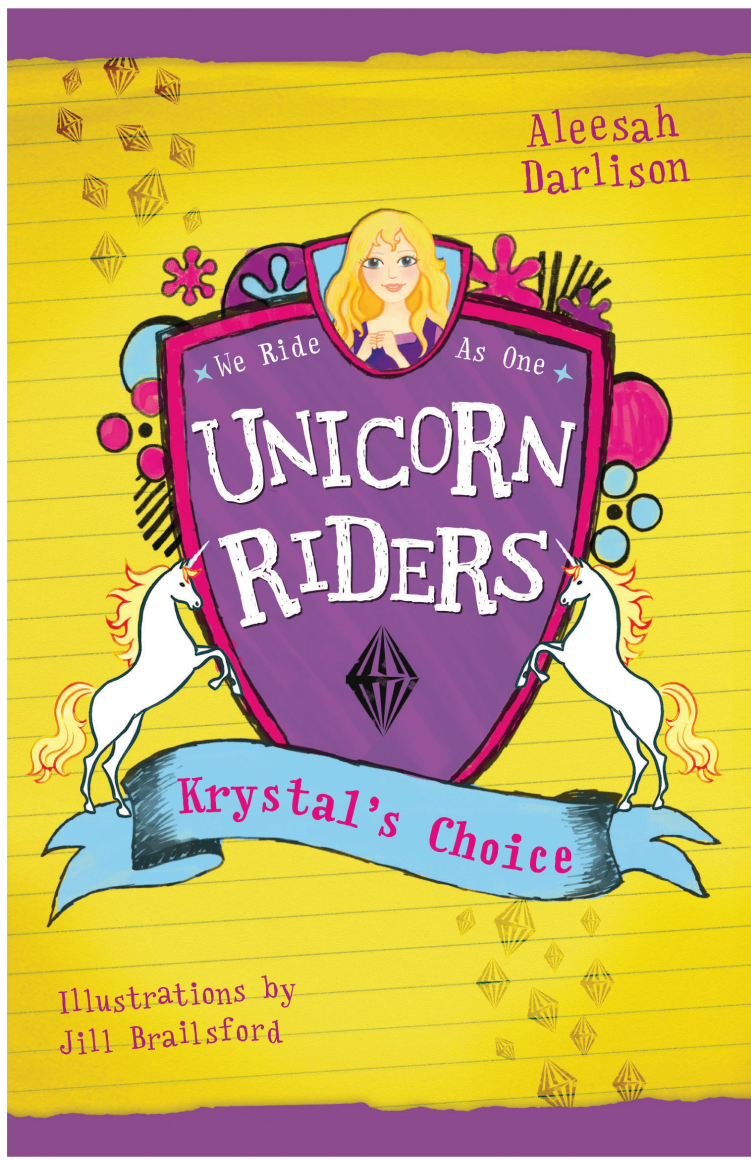
by Aleesah Darlison

illustrated by Jill Brailsford

ISBN: 9781921529986

Arrp: \$12.95

NZrrp: \$14.99



Aleesah
Darlison

★ We Ride As One ★

UNICORN
RIDERS

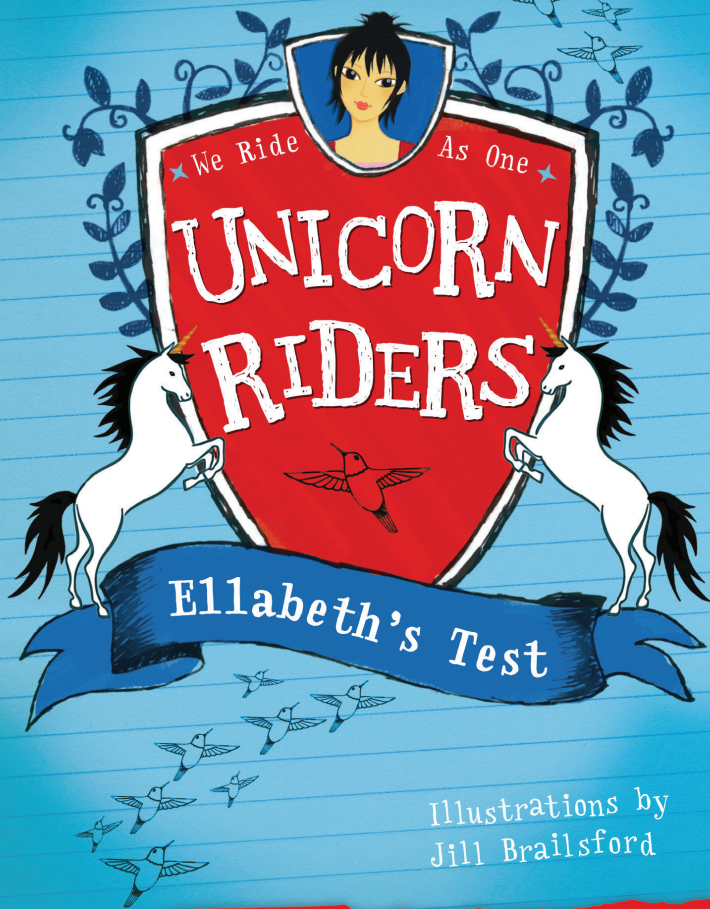
Krystal's Choice

Illustrations by
Jill Brailsford

UNICORN RIDERS BOOK 3:
KRYSTAL'S CHOICE
by Aleesah Darlison
illustrated by Jill Brailsford
ISBN: 9781921529993
Arrp: \$12.95
NZrrp: \$14.99

Copyright © 2011 Aleesah Darlison and Jill Brailsford. All rights reserved.

Aleesah
Darlison



Illustrations by
Jill Brailsford

UNICORN RIDERS BOOK 4:

ELLABETH'S TEST

by Aleesah Darlison

illustrated by Jill Brailsford

ISBN: 9781921720000

Arrp: \$12.95

NZrrp: \$14.99

WALKER  BOOKS

www.walkerbooks.com.au