

Chapter 1

When Katie arrived at the Fairy House on Friday night after school, she got a lovely surprise. Her fairy friends had made a slide from twigs woven together with long grass, going from Daisy's bedroom window to the tree roots below. As Katie arrived, Rosehip was careering down it, crying, "Wheeeeeee!" As she landed at the bottom and smiled up at Katie, Snowdrop appeared at the window, ready for her turn.





“Oh, wow! This is amazing!”



Katie cried, running to the door and grabbing the sparkly blue handle, which Bluebell had bewitched with fairy dust. “I believe in fairies, I believe in fairies, I believe in fairies,” she whispered, as fast as she could. She squealed with delight as the top of her head tingled, and with a great whooshing sound roaring in her ears she felt herself shrinking to fairy size. Then she raced into the house, calling, “Hi, I’m here! Can I have a go?”

She dashed upstairs, past Bluebell’s beautiful pressed-flower pictures on the walls, into Daisy’s bedroom, which they’d painted a cheery sunshine yellow. She gave Daisy and Bluebell a big hug, and they watched Snowdrop go sliding down, laughing all the way, her



long black hair streaming out behind her.

"I made the slide!" said Bluebell proudly. "And you're next!"

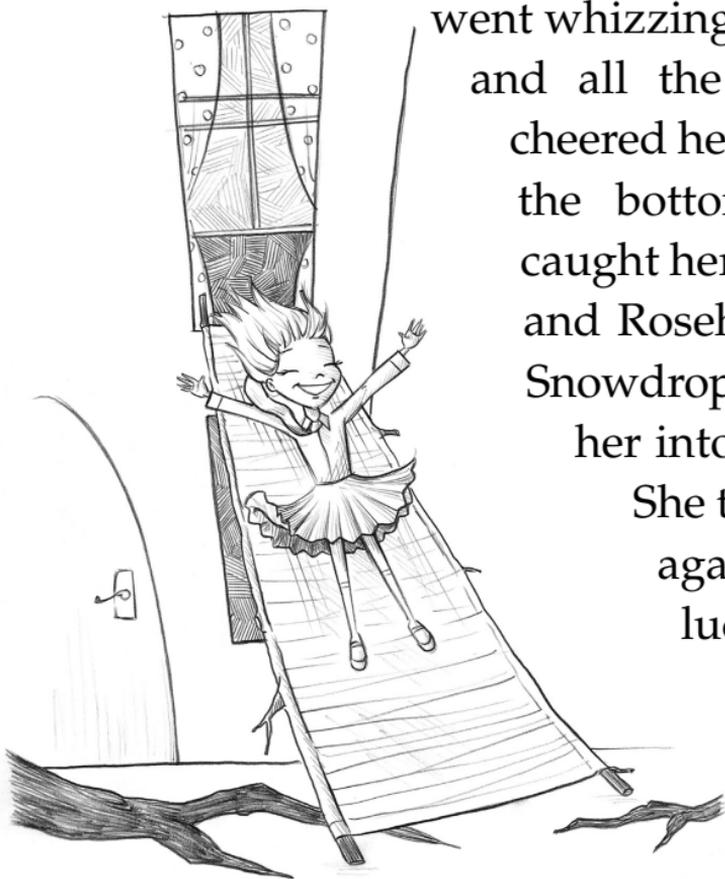
Katie squealed with delight as she

went whizzing down, and all the fairies cheered her on. At the bottom, she caught her breath and Rosehip and Snowdrop pulled her into a hug.

She thought again how lucky she

was to have the most

wonderful friends in the whole world.





When Katie had accidentally left her dolls' house outside under the oak tree one night, she'd never dreamt that *fairies* would move in. In fact, she'd thought they only existed in stories, not in real life, and when she'd first met them she hadn't quite believed her eyes! But here they were – fragile, shy little Snowdrop, with her tumbling black hair and silky petal skirt; bold Bluebell with her striking blue bob and cheeky smile; flame-haired Rosehip who loved song and dance; and kind, gentle Daisy, with her yellow plaits and cheerful nature.

Daisy and Bluebell came whizzing down the slide then and all four fairies gathered excitedly around Katie.

“Tomorrow's Saturday, isn't it?” asked Snowdrop breathlessly. “That



means no school, doesn't it?"

"We can play together all day," added Rosehip, fluttering into the air with excitement and turning a few cartwheels. "If it's sunny again we can lie out on the roof and make up stories and tell jokes and whisper secrets and —"

Katie's shoulders slumped. She'd forgotten about Saturday. "I was really looking forward to spending tomorrow with you too," she told her friends sadly. "But I've got to do something horrible instead. You remember Tiffany from my class—"

The fairies all shuddered. Bluebell said, "Revolting Tiffany? How could I ever forget?"

Katie grimaced. "Yes, well, revolting Tiffany saw Mrs Borthwick praising my work when we began writing fairy tales today. We have to finish them off





for homework, but now Tiffany wants me to write her story *for* her. That's why she's coming round tomorrow morning. If she gets a star for it, her dad's promised her a pony."

The fairies' eyes grew wide with amazement.

"A pony? Just for getting one single star?" spluttered Snowdrop.

"It's not fair!" cried Rosehip crossly. "I'd love a pony!"

"Me too!" declared Bluebell, stamping her foot to prove it.

"And she's not even going to write the story herself – that's cheating!" gasped Daisy, shocked.

They all agreed that they'd love a pony and that Tiffany was horrid and lazy and didn't deserve so much as a hoof pick.

"But why did you agree?" wailed Bluebell. "Why didn't you just tell



her to go and stick her head in a bucket? That's what *I* would have done!"

"Yes, a bucket of *cold custard*," added Rosehip, and Bluebell and Snowdrop sniggered. Daisy just lowered her eyes demurely. She was never ever mean about anyone, even though Tiffany really was the most revolting girl any of them had ever met.





“I don’t *want* her to come over,”
Katie grumbled. “But she said that if
I don’t help her she’ll tell the nice
girls in my class not to be friends
with me, and she’ll be an even more
horrible bully to me than ever!”

“Oh, that’s awful!” cried Daisy,
putting her arm round her. “You
poor thing.”

All the fairies agreed that Katie
was a poor thing, and she found
eight sympathetic arms around her.

“But will you still help us with
our task?” asked Snowdrop
anxiously. “You know, when she’s
gone home?”

Katie nodded. As well as having
lots of fun together, the fairies had a
serious mission, given to them by
the Fairy Queen, and Katie had
promised to do everything she
could to help them.





Snowdrop pulled the scroll from the Fairy Queen out of a pocket hidden among the petals of her skirt and unfurled it. They all peered over her shoulders and read it again:

Fairy Task No. 45826

By Royal Command of the Fairy Queen

Terrible news has reached Fairyland. As you know, the Magic Oak is the gateway between Fairyland and the human world. The sparkling whirlwind can only drop fairies off here. Humans plan to knock down our special tree and build a house on the land. If this happens, fairies will no longer be able to come and help people and the environment. You must stop them from doing this terrible thing and make sure that the tree is protected for the future. Only then will you be allowed back into Fairyland.

By order of Her Eternal Majesty
The Fairy Queen

PS You will need one each of the twelve birthstones to work the magic that will save the tree - but hurry, there's not much time!



The Magic Oak was the very tree that the Fairy House stood under. And with Katie's help the fairies had already got two of the birthstones. The first had been easy – Katie's ring from Auntie Jane was set with a garnet. And by a stroke of luck they'd found the second, topaz, at school when Bluebell had turned big and taken Katie's place in class. That day the revolting Tiffany had also revealed that her father, Max Towner, was the property tycoon who built Katie's little close of new houses. He was also the very man planning to knock down the tree and build a luxury home in the almost-meadow.

If he succeeded, it would spell disaster for both earth *and* Fairyland. No one knew exactly what would happen if fairies couldn't come to





earth and look after the plants and animals any more, but they knew it wouldn't be good. And without their special tasks to do on earth, who knew what would become of the fairy people? It was safe to say that the future of Fairyland, and maybe earth too, depended on the five friends.

Snowdrop pointed to the PS. "There's not much time – and we've only got two birthstones so far." Her eyes filled with panic. "What if the diggers come and we're not ready and—"

Katie took hold of her pale, trembling hands and tried to smile. "As soon as Tiffany's gone tomorrow I'll come and see you, and we can work out how to get another birthstone," she promised. Then she gave them all a stern look.



“But while she’s here you *must* stay out of the way,” she warned, “especially you, Bluebell. And don’t worry. I won’t be bringing her anywhere near the Fairy House.”

“But surely it doesn’t matter if we hover around,” Rosehip reasoned. “She won’t be able to see us.”

People could only see the fairies if they believed in them, and as most children and all adults didn’t, they were usually fairly safe from being spotted.

“But she might believe,” said Katie. “I don’t really want to find out, do you?”

The fairies all shook their heads in alarm. Tiffany was so horrible, who knew *what* she might do if she got hold of them.

Just then, Katie heard Mum calling her in for tea.



“Come straight back out afterwards!” cried Bluebell, beaming. “We can play on the slide and—”

“I can’t,” Katie said regretfully. “Mum’s really excited about Tiffany coming over. She thinks she’s a real friend of mine and so she’s insisting we make a cake for her.”

Bluebell stamped her foot. “She gets a cake too!” she grumbled. “So unfair! Why can’t your mum make one for us? We’re your *real* friends!”

Katie smiled sadly. “I wish I could introduce you all to her,” she said, “but she doesn’t believe in fairies. I did try to tell her about you but she just





thought I'd made you up as a game."

"Oh, OK," said Bluebell regretfully.

So Katie hugged her friends goodbye, took hold of the doorknob and chanted the magic words. As soon as she was big again, she swished away through the tall grass and wild flowers. "I'll see you tomorrow – as soon as I can," she called back over her shoulder.

"Not if we see you sooner!" replied Rosehip, and she and Bluebell giggled a naughty giggle.

But Katie was ducking under the garden fence, too far away to hear.

At the tea table, Katie pushed her green beans miserably around her plate as Mum talked excitedly about her "new friend" coming over.



“So what are you girls planning to do?” she asked again, as Katie hadn’t answered the first time.

Katie pulled on a smile – she hated to hurt Mum’s feelings. “We’re going to make up fairy stories,” she said, “and then write them in our neat work books to show Mrs Borthwick.”

“What a good idea!” Mum exclaimed. “With your imagination I’m sure you’ll come up with something wonderful.”

“Hmm,” Katie mumbled. Once again, she thought how lucky she was to have the loveliest mum in the world. She suddenly wished that she could tell the truth about Tiffany, but she knew Mum would be furious and cancel the story writing session. She’d probably tell Mrs Borthwick about Tiffany’s



demands too, and Tiffany would get into trouble at school. And that would make her more horrid to Katie than ever.

No, Katie knew she'd just have to smile sweetly and put up with Tiffany for the day. She thought she could manage it – she just hoped that her fairy friends would behave themselves too!