

Chapter 1

Katie stepped out into the garden and whirled round and round on the lawn, arms outstretched. It was the first day of the summer holidays – at last! She was so excited. No more sitting in a stuffy classroom filled with noise and chatter. No more bells and books and lonely playtimes. No more Tiffany Towner being mean to her. With no more school, she could spend all day every day in the





almost-meadow with her new friends. Her new *fairy* friends. It was going to be the best summer ever! And it was starting right now!

Katie patted her pocket and grinned to herself. She had something very special tucked inside and she couldn't wait to show it to the fairies. At the bottom of her garden, she wriggled under the wire fence, which was now heavy with white-flowered bindweed, and dashed across the almost-meadow. Wild grasses, vibrant with foxgloves and dandelions, brushed her legs and all around her the air was filled with birds and bees and butterflies.

When Katie reached the Magic Oak tree, she couldn't see the fairies anywhere. That was strange. They were usually playing flying tag in





its canopy of lush green leaves or doing handstands on its gnarled roots. She stepped carefully over Daisy's handkerchief hammock and crouched down by the Fairy House.

The Fairy House used to be Katie's dolls' house, but when she'd accidentally left it outside under the oak tree one night, Snowdrop, Bluebell, Daisy and Rosehip had moved in. Katie had been firm friends with the four fairies ever since, and she'd given them the house for their very own. Now, she put her little finger on the enchanted doorknob and whispered the magic words "I believe in fairies, I believe in fairies, I believe in fairies." Then she giggled as the top of her head tingled and, with a great whooshing sound in her ears, she shrank down, down, down to



fairy size. Then, her heart leaping with excitement about the special surprise in her pocket, she stepped into the Fairy House.

“Hi, I’m here!” she cried, peering round the doorway into the living room.

But there was no one on the sofa, with its rose-petal throw, and no one lounging on the woven-grass rug. The kitchen, with its cheery pink chequered tablecloth and pressed flowers taped to the cupboards, was empty too.

“Bluebell? Daisy?” called Katie, but there was no reply.

She hurried up the stairs and found her friends sitting silently on Bluebell’s bed, heads bowed over a piece of paper. Daisy was nervously chewing the end of one of her plaits and Rosehip was jigging her legs





anxiously. Snowdrop's thick black hair had fallen forward across her face as she frowned down at the paper. Even boisterous Bluebell was silent.

"What's up?" Katie asked, making them all jump.

"Oh, hello!" said Rosehip. "We didn't even hear you come in. We were all too busy *thinking!*"

Katie kicked off her shoes and climbed on to the bed as well. As soon as she saw what the fairies were



staring at, she knew exactly why they looked so serious. It was the scroll from the Fairy Queen, and Katie had seen it many times before. It read:

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

P.S. 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!



Of course, Katie had already promised to help the fairies in their task. “We’re doing brilliantly. We’ve already collected five birthstones,” she reminded them.

“But that means we’ve still got seven to find,” said Daisy. “Erm, doesn’t it?”

Katie nodded. Maths was not the fairies’ strong point. “Yes, we still need amethyst, aquamarine, diamond, emerald, pearl, ruby and turquoise,” she said, counting them off on her fingers as she spoke.

“And we just can’t work out how to get even *one* of them,” wailed Snowdrop. “My brain hurts from thinking so hard and we still haven’t had any good ideas.”

Katie couldn’t help smiling then.

“Katie! This is serious!” cried Bluebell. “What if Max Towner’s





getting ready to knock the Magic Oak down *right now*? We don't have the power to stop him!"

Max Towner was the developer behind the plans to demolish the tree and build a luxury villa in its place. He was also the father of the revolting Tiffany, the girl who made Katie's life a misery at school.

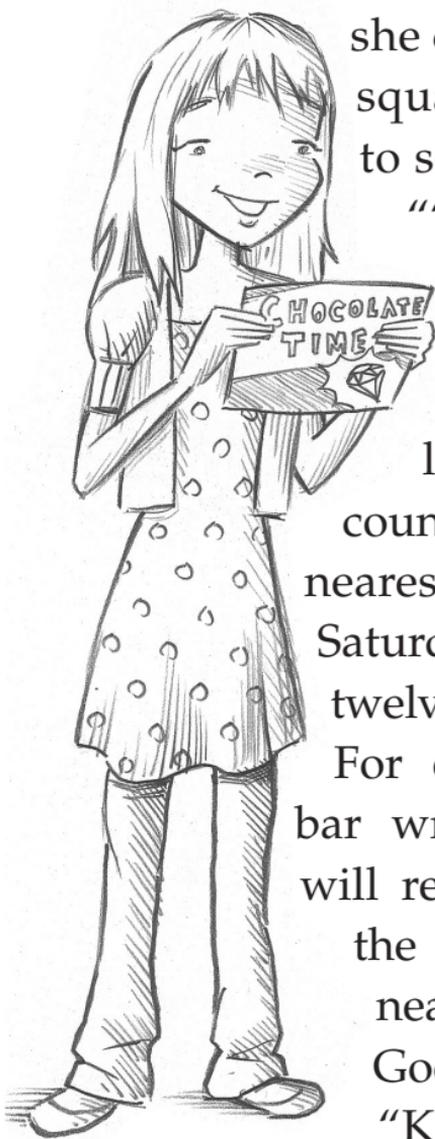
But Katie was still smiling. She took the special something out of her pocket. It had shrunk down to fairy size along with her. The fairies frowned at it, confused.

"I don't see how showing us a chocolate bar wrapper will help and I don't—" Bluebell began, but Katie just smiled, smoothed it out and began to read.

"Join in the fabulous Chocolate Time treasure hunt and win a ruby!"

She paused, eyes twinkling. As





she continued, the fairies squashed in close to her, to see for themselves.

“We’ve buried six little treasure chests, each containing a *real* ruby, at different locations around the country. Join us at your nearest treasure hunt on Saturday 30th July between twelve noon and three p.m. For every two chocolate bar wrappers sent in you will receive one clue as to the whereabouts of your nearest buried treasure. Good luck!”

“Katie, that’s brilliant!” cried Rosehip, hugging her.

“You’re such a great friend!” added Daisy, joining in the hug and





pulling Snowdrop in too.



Bluebell jumped up and down with excitement, making the bed shake so much that they nearly tumbled off. “We’ll win the treasure hunt and get the ruby!” she sang, over and over again.

Katie squinted at the small print on the wrapper. “It says here that there are six clues you can send for, so we need to get twelve wrappers to have the best chance of winning,” she told them.

“Is that a lot?” asked Snowdrop.

Katie nodded. “Yes, especially as the treasure hunt is on Saturday. We really need to send the wrappers off today to be sure of getting the clues back in time.”

Snowdrop looked downcast at this, but Bluebell was as enthusiastic as ever. She leapt off the bed,



clapped her hands and cried, "In that case, we'd better get cracking!"

