

Chapter 1

Katie hurried out into the garden as soon as she got home from school. She ducked under the wire fence and on to the patch of rough ground beyond. The afternoon sun shone down and the almost-meadow was alive with insects buzzing round the wild flowers and butterflies fluttering in the breeze, but Katie hardly noticed. She swished through the tall grass determinedly, heading straight for





the old oak tree. She had to see her new friends, and quickly. She needed to ask their advice. She had a feeling she'd just done something very silly indeed.

As she reached the oak tree, with the dolls' house beneath it (now beautifully decorated and renamed the Fairy House) she saw her friends, busy enjoying the lovely sunshine.





When Katie had left her pink plastic dolls' house out under the old oak tree by accident, she'd never imagined that four fairies would move in!

They'd had such wonderful times together – dancing and singing and playing fairies' games and making things and having adventures. She'd even become a fairy herself and had a go at flying, and she'd rescued Daisy from the clutches of the revolting Tiffany, a horrid girl in her class. It was, in fact, precisely this horrid girl that Katie now needed to speak to the fairies about.

Shy little Snowdrop was watering her window boxes, her black hair tumbling forwards over her pale face as she leaned out of the window. Daisy was sunbathing in a





handkerchief hammock they'd
rigged up between two sticks, a
dreamy smile on her kind face.
Flame-haired Rosehip and cheeky
Bluebell were happily practising
acrobatics in the shorter grass under
the tree, with their cute fairy skirts
tucked into their underwear (and
for once they weren't arguing!).





Katie giggled as Bluebell's shock of blue hair stood on end when she did a handstand.

"Hi, Katie, come and play!" she called, from upside down.

Katie smiled but shook her head. "Maybe later," she said. "Right now I need your help – all of you!"

She stepped carefully over Daisy's hammock and put her little finger on the doorknob of the Fairy House, which Bluebell had bewitched with fairy dust. "I believe in fairies, I believe in fairies, I believe in fairies," she whispered.

The top of her head tingled and there was a familiar whooshing sound in her ears as she shrank down to fairy size. Then she sat on the bench of woven grass and





twigs that Bluebell had made and her fairy friends gathered around her.

“What’s wrong?” asked Daisy.

“Well, you know Tiffany made me write her story for her?” she began and the fairies all nodded, crossly. Katie knew they were still angry about Tiffany bullying Katie into doing her homework, and worse, about pinching the Fairy House – with poor Daisy still in it!

“Well, you know that Tiffany’s father had promised her a pony if she got a star for the story?”

They all nodded and Rosehip muttered, “Not fair!”

Katie folded her arms tight. “Well, she did get a star, and a pony! Now she’s challenged me to take part in a gymkhana this Saturday at her stables.”



“What’s a gymkhana?” asked Snowdrop.

“I think it’s a competition where you play lots of mounted games,” said Rosehip, her eyes gleaming. “We had one at the summer festival in Fairyland, and I got to ride one of the Fairy Queen’s ponies, remember?”

“Oh, yes!” cried Bluebell. “Do you think it will be the same sort of thing for humans, then?”

“Probably,” said Rosehip. “And it’s great fun. You lucky thing, Katie!”

But Katie didn’t feel like a lucky thing. “That’s the problem,” she mumbled. “I’ve never ridden a pony in my life. I don’t even know how!”

“Oh, right. So obviously you said no to Tiffany,” said Rosehip





blithely. "I mean, mounted games are fun but if you don't know how to ride you'd almost definitely fall off and hurt yourself and—"

Listening to this, Katie went pale. "Actually, I said yes," she told her startled friends.

"But why on earth would you do that?" Daisy asked, all concern. "As Rosehip said, it could be dangerous."

Katie took a deep breath. "While Tiffany was talking I noticed that she had a new ring on," she told them. "It had a pale green stone in it, and I'm sure it's peridot! That's one of the birthstones we need to complete the fairy task."

The fairies' eyes all grew wide then. The fairy task was the reason that they were here. They needed to complete it before they were

allowed back into Fairyland.

“I made her promise that if I competed against her and won, she’d give me the ring,” said Katie. “If I get it we’ll be one step closer to saving the tree.”

Daisy gasped and Bluebell said, “Good thinking, Katie – and wow, you’re so brave.”

Snowdrop drew the scroll she’d been given by the Fairy Queen from her pocket and unrolled it. Once again, they all peered over her shoulder to read it. They did this every day, just to remind themselves of the importance of what they had to do. Secretly, they all hoped that some magical new instructions might appear there to make the task easier, but nothing ever did. The scroll 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

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!



A few days had gone by since they'd last got a birthstone and the fairies were all starting to worry. Katie lay awake at night sometimes too, frightened that the bulldozer was revving up that very moment, ready to come and knock down the tree. They knew that Tiffany's father, a builder, was behind the wicked plan. But until they had all the birthstones they were powerless to stop him. Without all twelve, they wouldn't be able to work the magic to save the oak tree, and Fairyland with it.

So the fairies could easily understand why Katie had decided to challenge Tiffany in order to try winning one of the birthstones. But that didn't make it any less dangerous.

"But surely your mum won't let





you?" mused Snowdrop.



"She's said I can go, even though neither of us like Tiffany, because she knows how much I love ponies. But she does think I'm only having a beginner's lesson," she admitted, blushing.

"Which race do you have to beat Tiffany in?" asked Rosehip nervously.

"The Chase Me Charlie," said Katie.

"Oh, I haven't heard of that," Rosehip said.

"I'm sure it's easy-peasy," said Bluebell helpfully, but Katie didn't feel any better.

"Maybe you could look in it up a book?" Daisy suggested.

"Good idea," said Katie, "I'll have a look in the school library tomorrow. It's a pity I can't learn how to ride from a book, too! What

on earth am I going to do?"

"Maybe we can help," said Rosehip suddenly. "You remember when you took the Fairy House inside and we got a little bit, well. . ."

"Naughty, and so we wrecked everything," finished Bluebell.

"Well, we brought your toy ponies to life with fairy dust, didn't we?" Rosehip continued, thoughtfully. "I was just thinking that if we brought them out here and, well, there's not much time, but maybe—"

Katie leapt to her feet, suddenly understanding her. "We could bewitch them to come to life and you could teach me to ride!" she cried.





“Wow, Rosehip, that’s brilliant!”
gasp ed Snowdrop.

“Well, don’t get too excited, there’s hardly any time and –” Rosehip was saying. But Katie didn’t hear her, she’d already grabbed the enchanted door handle and was busy turning big. “Back in a moment!” she called, as she rushed off to get the ponies.

For the first time since she’d agreed to the gymkhana, Katie felt a rush of excitement about it. Rosehip’s riding lessons would give her a chance against Tiffany. Only a teeny tiny chance, of course, but a chance all the same.

Katie knew she had to try.

After all, they really needed that birthstone.