



Chapter One



Have you ever been to a Garden Party? We have one every term here at the Princess Academy, and they are SUCH fun – at least, that’s what my big sis says. She says everyone dresses up in their VERY best dresses and tiaras, and a huge orchestra arrives to play dance music, and the fountains splash



sparkling lemonade. There are flowers just EVERYWHERE...and all our relations are invited to come and see just how Perfect we are! And if it looks like rain, guess what happens? Fairy G – that’s the school Fairy Godmother – floats a sunny blue sky over the whole garden!! Isn’t that just SO amazing?

There’s another FANTASTIC thing about the Garden Party. It’s the one and only time when Fairy G brings out the Princess Academy Magical Mirror...and it really is MAGICAL! My big sis made me PROMISE I wouldn’t



tell anyone what happens because it’s supposed to be a really HUGE surprise, but I know it’s OK to tell you. This (sh! Don’t tell ANYONE!) is what happens...

On Garden Party day, every princess in the Princess Academy puts on one of her special dresses, does her hair, and puts on her tiara. Then each princess is invited into Fairy G’s private study to curtsy to her reflection.

And GUESS WHAT?

The Magical Mirror looks right back, and decides how much of a Perfect Princess you are – and it gives you tiara points!



And it can give you up to THREE HUNDRED!!!! But my big sister says nobody has EVER got that many.

So you can see why I was counting every single minute until Garden Party day – but of course there was a BAD side to it as well.



Suddenly we had DOZENS of extra classes in *Curtseying to the Floor*, and *Walking Gracefully in Long Skirts*, and *Dancing...oh*, we had to learn HUNDREDS of new dances! It seemed as if we NEVER had even half a second to have any fun.





But we did our best and at last there was only one day to go. Our dresses were already hanging up on the rail in our dormitory.

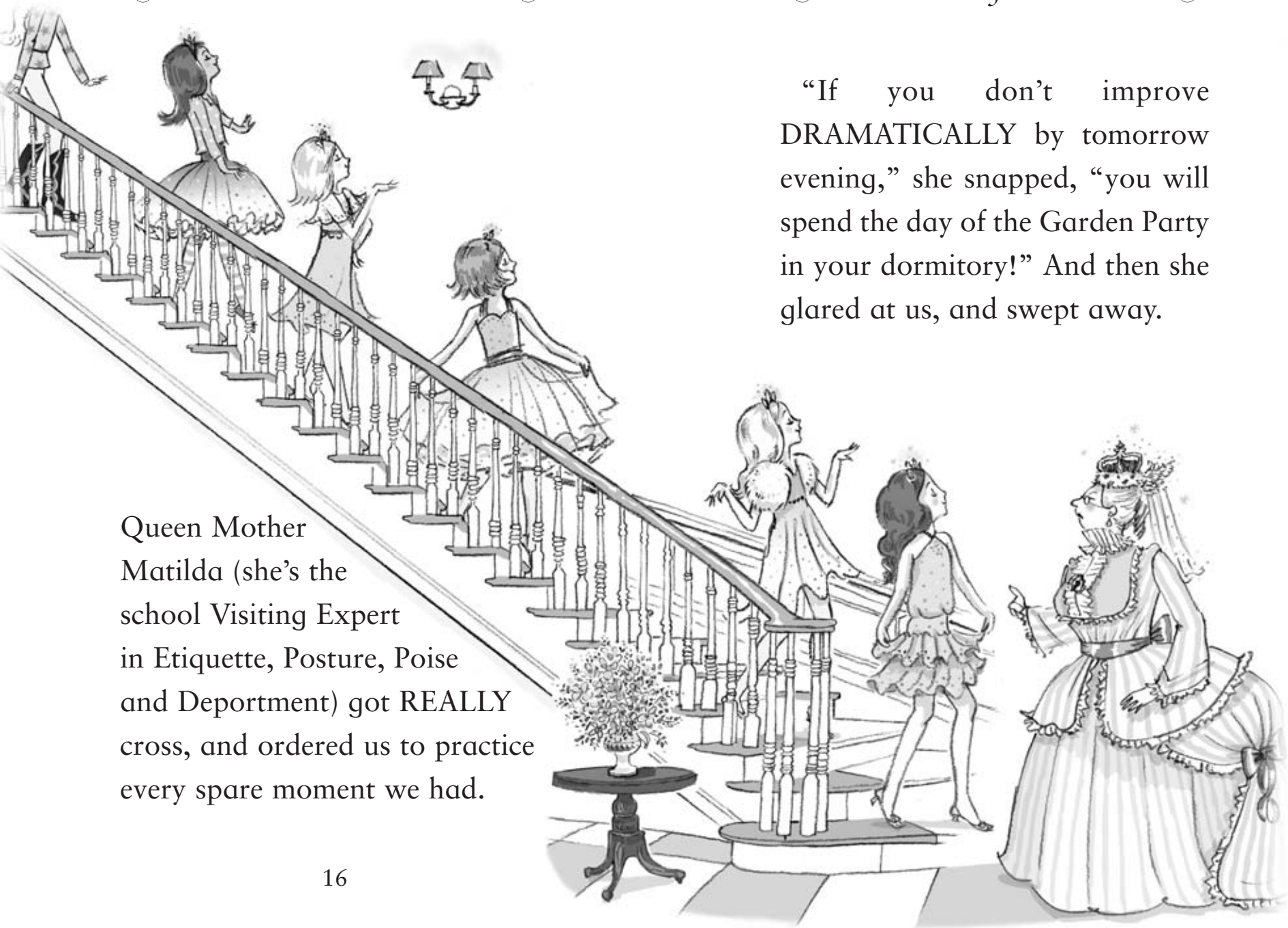


My dress was SO dreamy – it was totally TOTALLY gorgeous pale pink satin, scattered with the sweetest little pink and white daisies, and it had layers and layers of silk petticoats, so it rustled beautifully as I walked! Our tiaras were sparkling on dark blue velvet cushions on our bedside chairs. We were wildly excited...until everything went SO wrong.

On the Thursday morning we had our final test in *Descending the Staircase as if Floating on Air* – and all six of us failed miserably, especially me.

Queen Mother Matilda (she's the school Visiting Expert in Etiquette, Posture, Poise and Deportment) got REALLY cross, and ordered us to practice every spare moment we had.

“If you don't improve **DRAMATICALLY** by tomorrow evening,” she snapped, “you will spend the day of the Garden Party in your dormitory!” And then she glared at us, and swept away.





We did as we were told, but we didn't seem to get any better. By Friday tea time I was SO worried. What if Queen Mum Mattie said we couldn't go to the Garden Party? That would be TOTALLY TERRIBLE...because we'd never get to see the Magical Mirror and win our tiara points!!

“My feet hurt!” Charlotte moaned as we dragged ourselves up the Grand Staircase for what felt like the hundredth time since breakfast.

“Maybe we'll just SAIL down this time,” Katie said hopefully.

“NO chance,” I said gloomily.



“I fell over about ten times this morning.”

“Head UP, breathe IN, STRAIGHTEN your back, and SMILE!” Emily and Daisy chanted together.





“And DON’T forget to curtsy on the second to bottom step!” Sophia added as we reached the top landing.

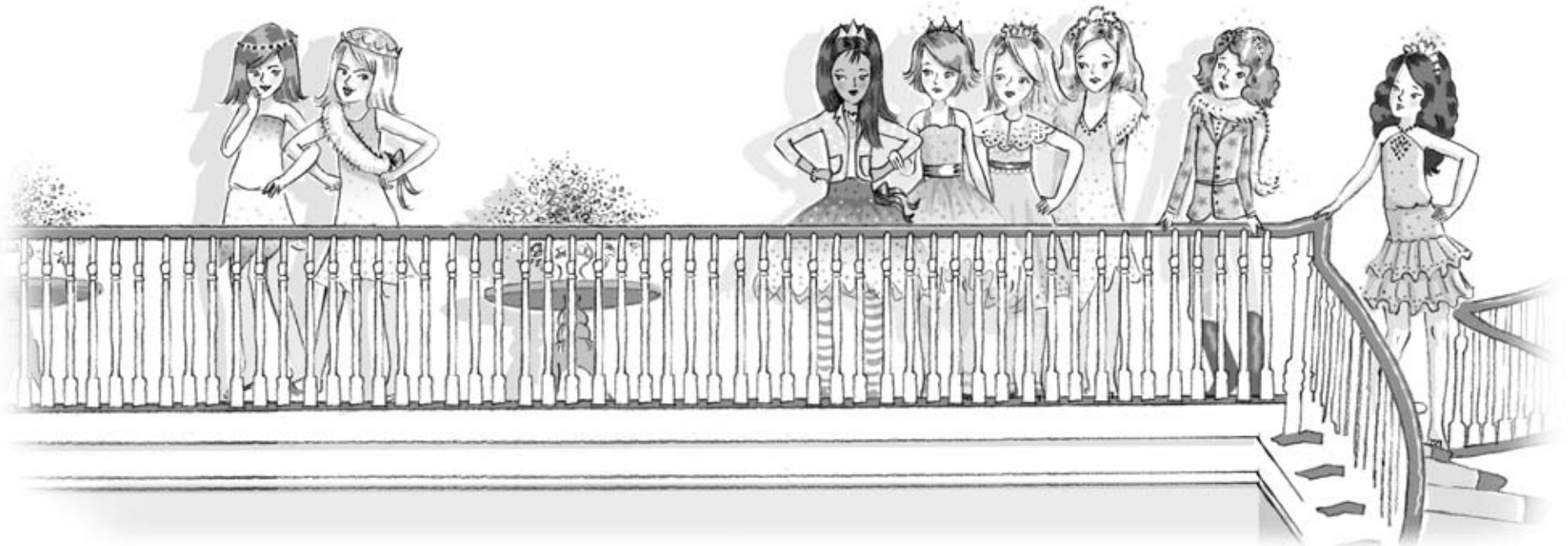
We all groaned loudly.

“Ooooh! Floreen, DO look!” Horrid Princess Perfecta suddenly appeared with her nasty friend.



“It’s the dozy rosie-posies!”

Floreen gave us a pitying smile. “So it is! Isn’t it a shame that they’re only Perfect Princesses when it comes to FALLING down stairs!” And she and Perfecta sniggered loudly as they went off along the corridor.





I pretended I hadn't heard them, and stared out of the window. Outside in the sunny garden the three kitchen maids, Moira, Prue and Jinny, were running to and fro with armfuls of flowers. Usually they're kept busy inside by the Academy cook, Big Clara, but today they were arranging HUGE vases of lilies and roses and big white daisies all the way down the drive and around the courtyard of the Princess Academy.

"Aren't they LUCKY?" I said to Emily. "They don't have to worry about how to walk down a stupid staircase!"



"I suppose." Emily looked doubtful. "But just IMAGINE having Big Clara ordering you about every second of the day!"





Emily was right about Big Clara being bossy. Prue had obviously put one of the vases in the wrong place in the courtyard, because Big Clara was jumping about in a rage, and shouting at her. I could see Prue was trying not to cry as she picked up the vase, and it must have been REALLY heavy because she went bright red as she struggled with it. And then she just happened to look up at the window, and she saw me looking, and she tried SO hard to smile at me...and I felt so sorry for her I made a funny face, and pretended to jump about just like Big Clara.





BIG MISTAKE!

Prue laughed...

...and she **DROPPED** the vase...

...and it **SMASHED** into a thousand pieces and **SQUASHED** all the flowers!

And at exactly that moment I heard a stern voice from the corridor below calling, “Princesses! Let me see you **FLOAT** down that staircase!”