



Chapter One



We were just finishing breakfast, and Charlotte was saying how BORING it was because there were no balls or parties to look forward to, when suddenly Fairy G appeared from nowhere in a cloud of silver sparkles. (Fairy G is the school fairy godmother, and she's quite AMAZINGLY big.)



Fairy G dusted away the sparkles, and beamed at us.

“I’ve got a VERY special treat for you first years,” she said.



“Queen Gloriana has cancelled your usual lessons, and you’re to spend ALL DAY in the sewing room with the Grand High Duchess Delia!” And she looked as if she was expecting a MASSIVE cheer...but there wasn’t one.

Nobody said anything, until Perfecta put up her hand.

“Excuse me, Fairy G,” she said, “but you aren’t expecting us to do any SEWING, are you?” She made it sound like the worst thing you could ever ever do – worse than picking up worms!



Fairy G gave Perfecta a chilly look. “Of COURSE I am, Perfecta,” she said. “The Grand High Duchess is the best needlewoman in the whole kingdom! Her designs for ballgowns and dresses are TRULY wonderful, and you’re very VERY lucky she’s agreed to spend a day here.”

Perfecta made a dreadful face. “My mother and father would be FURIOUS if they thought I was making my own dresses,” she sneered. “That’s for servants to do!”

I held my breath and waited for



Fairy G to explode, but she didn’t. Well, not quite. “I would like to remind you, Princess Perfecta,” she said, and she sounded terribly stern, “that tiara points are won AND lost in many different ways. Be VERY careful!” She turned to the rest of us. “Hurry up, now! Duchess Delia is waiting for you. Make sure you wash your hands

before you make your way to the sewing room – and I’m sure we’ll ALL have a lovely day!” And she disappeared, but this time in the usual way through the dining room door.

As soon as she was gone we all started talking at once.

“I’m HOPELESS at sewing,” Katie wailed. “I tried to make a dress for one of my dolls once, and it was AWFUL!”

“Me too,” Charlotte agreed. “I always sew the wrong bits to each other!”

“AND me,” said Emily.

“And I ALWAYS prick my fingers,” Daisy said.

“It might be OK,” Alice said cheerfully. “Gran makes quite a lot of my clothes, and I help her sometimes. It’s fun – we think of all kinds of ways we can use old velvet curtains, or the left over bits of satin from Granpapa’s royal sashes.”

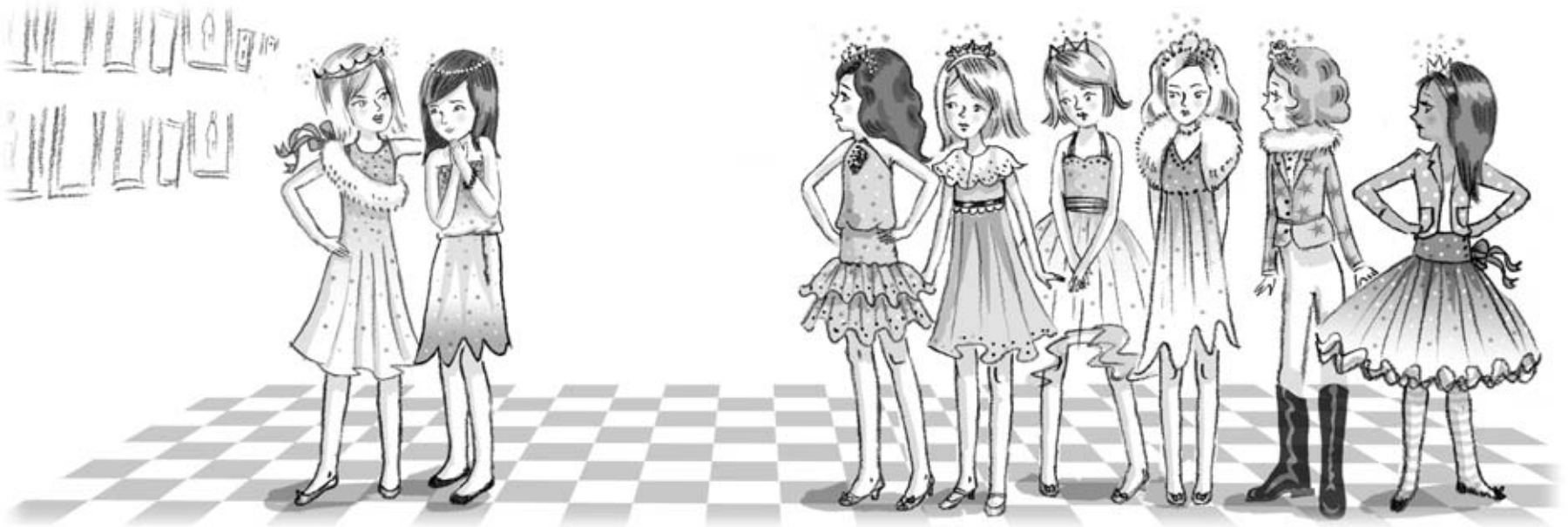




“OLD VELVET CURTAINS?”
Perfecta and her horrible friend, Princess Floreen, were standing right beside Alice, and staring at her in the MOST despising way.

Alice giggled. “Yes! One of my most favourite winter ballgowns was made of HEAVENLY red velvet from the throne room!”

Perfecta put her arm round Floreen’s shoulder. “If you ask ME, Floreen,” she said with a sniff, “princesses who are so POOR that they have to make their dresses from CURTAINS shouldn’t be allowed to come to the Academy! I mean, we might just as well invite in BEGGARS and TRAMPS!”





“PROPER Princesses are RICH, AND they have servants. How on EARTH can you join the Tiara Club if you haven’t even got a SEWING MAID?” And she tossed her head, and was just about to march away when I grabbed Alice and swept her past Perfecta and out into the middle of the dining hall.