



Flora  
the Dress-up  
Fairy

For Zoë Sarankin,  
a very good friend of the fairies

Special thanks to  
Narinder Dhani

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“Rachel, look!” Kirsty Tate cried excitedly, pointing through the car window. “There’s McKersey Castle!”

Rachel Walker, Kirsty’s best friend, stared down the long driveway at the huge stone castle ahead. It was set on a hill, and it had two tall turrets, one on either side of the entrance gate.

“It’s beautiful,” Rachel breathed.



Mrs. Tate, who was driving, smiled in agreement. “Isn’t it the perfect place for a party?” she said.



“It was so smart of Lindsay and Robert to choose a castle for their big costume ball.”

Lindsay was Kirsty’s cousin, and she and her husband were celebrating their tenth wedding anniversary at McKersey Castle. Kirsty and her parents had been invited. Kirsty was allowed to bring a friend, so Rachel had traveled with the Tates all the way to the Scottish Highlands.



“It’s a *masked* ball, too,” Mr. Tate added.

“That’ll be fun,” Rachel said eagerly.

Kirsty nodded. “Wow!” she exclaimed as they got closer to the castle. “There’s a moat and a drawbridge!”

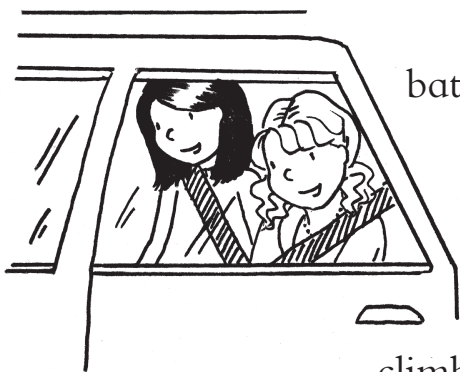
“Just like a fairy-tale castle,” Rachel said, smiling at Kirsty.





Kirsty grinned back at her friend. She and Rachel knew a lot about fairies, because they'd met them many times. In fact, the girls were now good friends with the fairies. That was Rachel and Kirsty's very special and magical secret!

The two girls watched with delight as the car crossed the drawbridge and came to a stop in the castle courtyard.



“Look at the battlements,” Rachel said, pointing toward the top of the castle as she and Kirsty climbed out of the car.

“I wonder if we're allowed to go up there.”

“Hello!” cried Lindsay. Kirsty's cousin



rushed out of the large oak castle doors with her husband, Robert.

She hugged the Tates one by one.

“And you must be Rachel,” Lindsay said, giving Rachel a hug, too. “Come inside, everyone.”



“Is everything ready for the party tomorrow night?” Kirsty asked as they carried their bags toward the entrance hall.

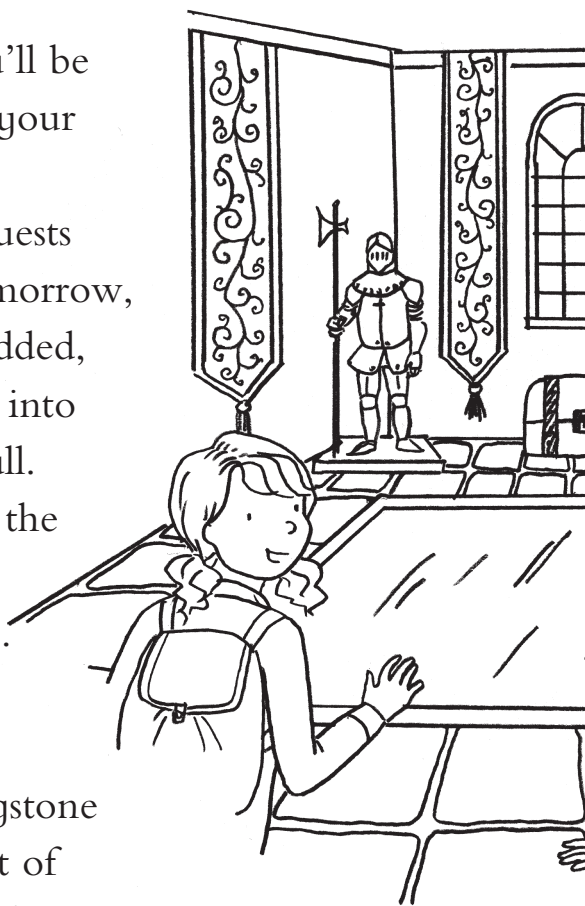
“Not quite!” Lindsay replied. “The cake is coming today, and the party planning company that is organizing everything is delivering the costumes



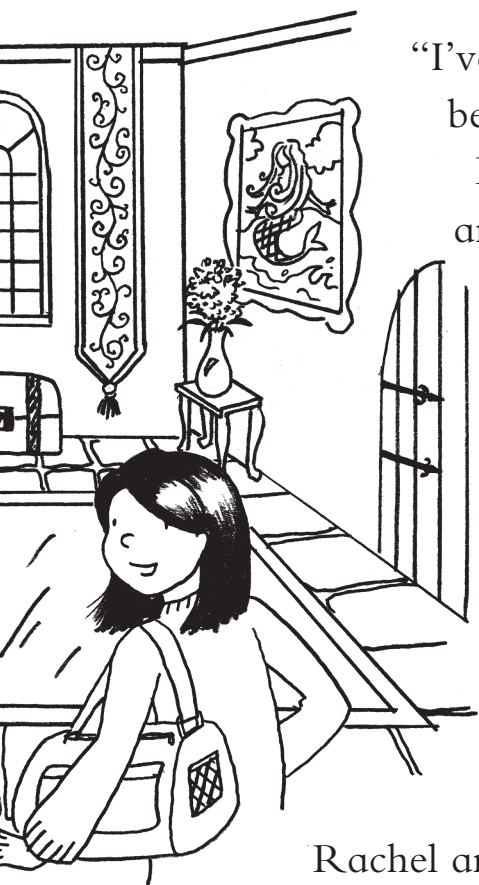
tomorrow. You'll be able to choose your outfits then."

"The other guests are arriving tomorrow, too," Robert added, as they stepped into the entrance hall.

The inside of the castle was cool and welcoming. There were tall arched windows, a flagstone floor, and a suit of armor standing in one corner. Colorful embroidered banners and tapestries hung from the ceiling.







“I’ve picked out a special bedroom for you two,”

Lindsay said to Kirsty and Rachel, as Robert led Mr. and Mrs.

Tate to their room  
“Follow me.”

Lindsay led the girls up a winding staircase.

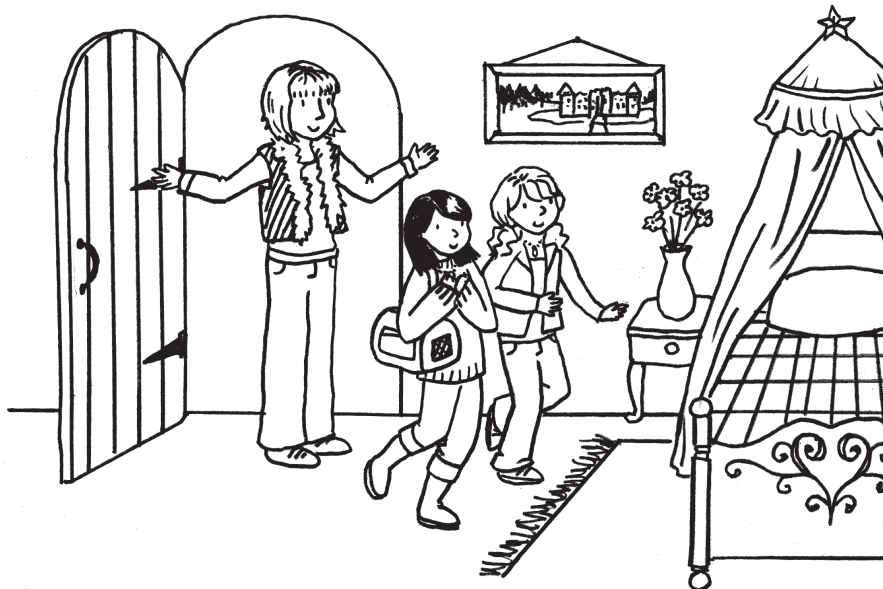
“Ta-da!” she announced, throwing open a small wooden door.

Rachel and Kirsty gasped with delight when they saw the huge room. It had two canopy beds and pretty white furniture. One side of the room was



taken up with an enormous window.  
After the girls had put their bags  
down, they went to look out the  
window.

“We’re right over the drawbridge!”  
Rachel cried excitedly.





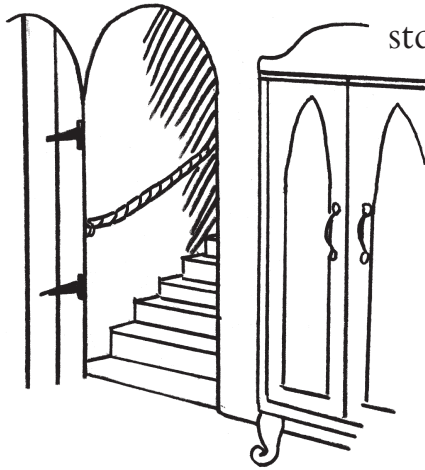
“This used to be the old gatehouse,”  
Lindsay explained.

“And where does that door by the  
wardrobe lead?” asked Kirsty.

“Come and see,” Lindsay replied.

The door opened onto another narrow





staircase, which led  
up to the castle  
battlements.

“Look!” Rachel  
said, pointing  
across the hills.

“We’re so high,  
it seems like

we can see all of Scotland!”

“I gave you that bedroom because I  
thought you two girls would be great  
at protecting the castle from intruders,”  
Lindsay joked, her eyes twinkling.

“I don’t want anything to spoil this  
party!”

Suddenly, Kirsty spotted a white van  
approaching the drawbridge. “*McKersey  
Village Cakes*,” she read from the side of  
the van.



“My cake!” Lindsay cried, hurrying over to the stairs. “I’m dying to see it! It was difficult to arrange, but a party’s no good without a cake, right?” She grinned at them. “Be careful up here, OK?”



The girls nodded. “Lindsay’s really excited, isn’t she?” Kirsty laughed, as her cousin clattered off down the stairs.



“So am I!” Rachel said. She shivered.  
“Oh! Did you just feel that blast of icy  
wind, Kirsty?”

“Yes,” Kirsty agreed, frowning.

Rachel’s eyes widened. “I can see ice!”



She gasped. “There, all over  
the steps up to  
that tower!” The  
girls hurried over  
to investigate the  
tower to the left of

the drawbridge. Curiously, they began  
to climb the frozen steps. As they did,  
the air got colder and colder. Suddenly,  
Rachel and Kirsty heard a horribly  
familiar, icy voice.

“Raise my flag to the top of this  
tower!” it snapped.



Hardly daring to breathe, the two girls peeked around the tower wall to the top of the steps. To their shock, standing next to a gnarled green goblin, was Jack Frost himself!