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Opening extract from

The Royal Wedding Crashers

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Published by

Bloomsbury Publishing PLC

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Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Bloomsbury Publishing, London, New Delhi, New York and Sydney

First published in Great Britain in May 2015 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP

www.bloomsbury.com

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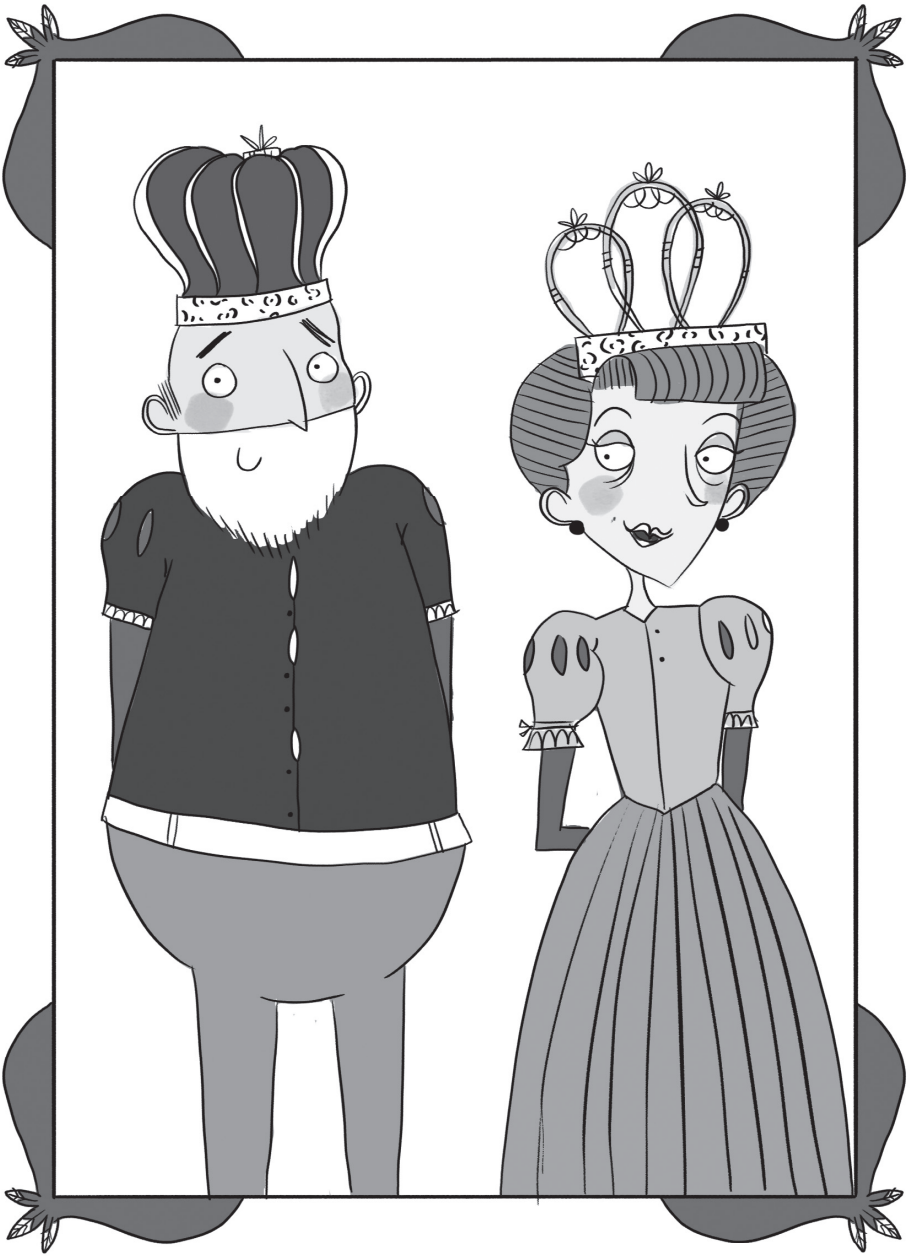
A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 4088 5544 7



Printed and bound in Great Britain
by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2



The story so far …

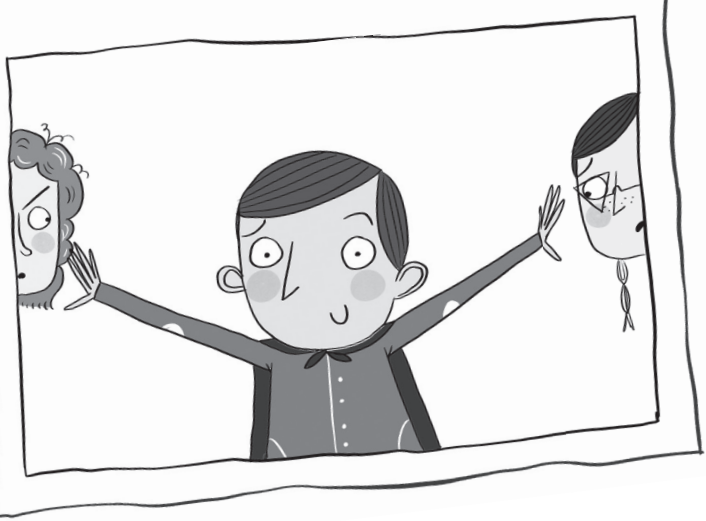
BRITLAND BLATHER

'PRINCE PEPINO NOT COMPLETELY USELESS AFTER ALL,' KING AND QUEEN DECLARE

After eight and three-quarter years of being unremarkable, Prince Pepino almost-single-handedly repelled an invasion, yesterday.

'We are pleased to inform the people of Britland that, without Prince Pepino, they would all have been turned into slaves or meatballs by King Alaspooryorick of Daneland yesterday,' the King

told our Royal reporter. 'The invader's attack was fought off by Prince Pepino, his six little brothers and two local girls. They used cheeses, catapults and snotty handkerchiefs.' The Queen and the King were not able to help, since they were on their



annual day of holiday in the Independent Republic of Slough, where they were spotted squirting rather a lot of mayonnaise on their chocolate sundaes.

The 'two local girls' have been identified as sisters Holly and Anna Burnbright, who were Royal-Babysitting for the day. It is rumoured that Prince Pepino might now be friends with the young ladies. Prince Pepino was unavailable for comment, since his mouth was full of caramel fudge. Anna Burnbright stated: 'Yes, we saved the country. You're welcome. But sorry, we need to go now; yesterday's job didn't earn us any money, so we have to find another one. We want to buy tickets to an amazing Holy Moly Holiday, you see.'



Chapter One

Big fluffy spiders make better pets than puppies: they've got more eyes, and they're better at knitting. Like most puppies, they enjoy nibbling at people just for fun; however, unlike most puppies, their bites are generally venomous. This is why Prince Pepino, who had just received a big fluffy pet tarantula as a present from his godfather the Tsar of Marok, was now covered

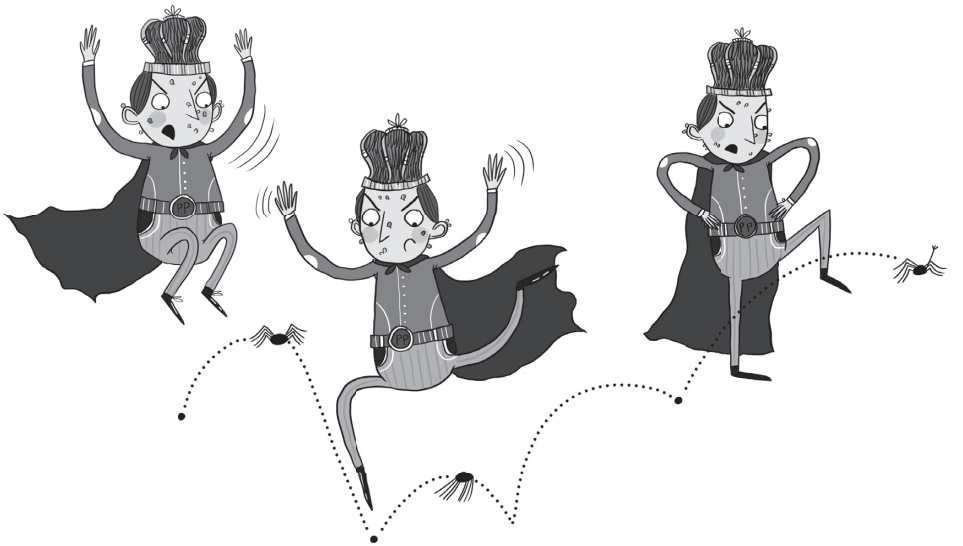
in greenish poisonous spider bites from the tip of his nose to his big toe.

'She's doing it *again*! Ouch! Stop it, Charlotte A. Rainier, you bloodthirsty terrorist!'

Charlotte A. Rainier – the tarantula – couldn't help it: Prince Pepino's right little finger was just too appealing. It was perfectly plump, and smelt of cactus ice cream. She knew it wasn't nice of her, but she had to – SNAP! – bite it.

'That's it! That's it!' Pepino shouted. 'I'm going to – flatten – you – like a – pancake!'

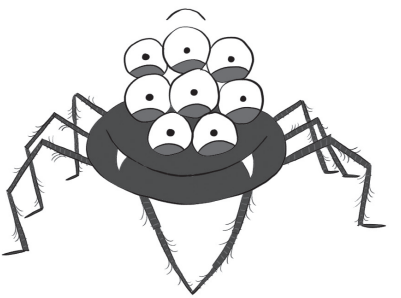
He tried, but Charlotte A. Rainier was faster.



‘Pepino, how *dare* you!’ scolded Holly Burnbright, picking up Charlotte A. Rainier from the floor to stroke her.

‘She *bit* me!’ Pepino retorted. ‘She bites me all the time!’

‘She’s just playing,’ said Holly. ‘Look at her sorry little eyes, all eight of them. She didn’t mean any harm.’



And Holly looked lovingly at Charlotte, who had quickly woven herself a little hammock between her fingers, and was now having a nap and snoring.

'Ahem!' coughed Nestor. 'I thought you three were interested in finding a summer job.'

Indeed they were. Prince Pepino of Britland and his friends, Holly and Anna, were in urgent need of one thousand five hundred pounds. *Urgent*, that is, because Anna would not give up her dream of going on a Holy Moly Holiday she had seen advertised in the newspaper. And Pepino and Holly knew better than to argue with her.

Plus, the Holy Moly Holiday did sound *extremely cool*.