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Opening extract from

Prince Frog Face

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For Mo and Ella

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Chapter 1
How It Began

It all kicked off on a Monday.

I'm talking about the grim business of me getting turned into a frog. I'll tell you about it, but if you dare to laugh, I'll jolly well have you clapped into a dungeon. I can do that because I'm a prince. Prince Valentine of Romantica. With a name like that, I can do what I jolly well like.

Anyway, that Monday I was strolling around the palace gardens because I needed a

breather. I had spent all morning interviewing princesses for the top job of being My Girlfriend. Mummy and Daddy think I spend too much time on my hobbies. They say I should get out more. So I agreed to give the girlfriend thing a go. To see if there was anyone up to my standards.

I was wearing my best gold crown, my gold suit and a new pair of gold shoes. I have to say I looked pretty amazing. Blingtastic, in fact. Apart from the pimple on my nose, but I couldn't help that.

There were quite a few princesses up for the girlfriend job. That's no surprise. What's a princess without a prince to prop her up? Nothing, right? And who wouldn't want to be seen with me, with the whole top-to-toe gold thing I had going on?

So far, I had seen six princesses. Six interviews on a Monday morning. I ask you.

None of them were any good. No class at all. Terrible shoes. Too stuck-up or too giggly. They chattered like fools, or they just sat in silence and stared at the pimple on my nose. So rude.

I'd asked them each 20 questions, given them points for their answers and written notes in my little black book. But, to tell you the truth, I was wasting my time. I dismissed them all and told them I'd let them know in the unlikely event that they made the shortlist. They looked pretty fed up as they drove off in their stretch limos. One or two of them were crying into their phones. Sob stories. I wasn't bothered. Plenty more where they came from.

There was the next six, for starters.

Right now, they were out on the terrace taking tea. On my bill, I might add. I'd need to get the money back from them for that later. Footmen were handing around plates of chocolate cake, but none of it got eaten. I

suppose the princesses didn't want to spoil their outfits with crumbs. Plus, they were all too busy tossing their hair and being snooty and staring daggers at each other. Well, they were fighting for me, weren't they? They weren't there to make friends. These interviews were a serious business.

So, there I was, taking a breather, when I saw something out of the corner of my eye.

Someone was over by the pond. Bending over, picking something. Not a gardener, or one of the footmen – they don't tend to hang out by ponds. Not a lost princess either, if the rags she was wearing were anything to go by. I looked again. It was a scruffy old woman, dressed all in black and with a basket on her arm.

