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opening extract from

Frangipani Fairies (Sunshine Fairy)

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Chapter one

Just where the River Thames snakes around the bend between Hammersmith and Chiswick, on its way out of London towards Hampton Court Palace and Windsor Castle, is a row of old houses whose feet have been splashed by river-water every time there has been a high tide, for nearly two hundred years.

But the river coming in uninvited is a small price to pay when you can look up and downstream from morning to night from the windows in the living room! Sometimes, at dawn, these lovely old houses even seem magical, as the pale yellow sunshine plays across paintwork and filters through curtains.

Melissa Edwards is lucky enough to live in one of these houses. Her bedroom is in the attic, with a high sloping ceiling that casts interesting shadows. Her room faces the back of the house and, though it isn't large, Melissa loves it. Her window nestles under the boughs of a beautiful old horse chestnut tree, and she likes gazing up at the green light that filters through its giant leaves.

Now, in late May, the tree is almost in full flower, and the scent of its blossoms comes in through her open window. But this afternoon, its wonderful smell is not quite enough to chase away Melissa's grey mood.

She is cross with her mother; and VERY, VERY cross with her baby brother. He has ruined her day.

On strict instructions from her mum, Melissa had been warned that her room had to be *sorted out properly* before she could go to Jemma's birthday party tomorrow.

"It's a tip in here, Melissa," Mum had said to her this morning. "I've scarcely been able to get through your door since your sleepover last weekend. I've been

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patient all week, but
today's the day!
Your nail polishes must have almost dried
out by now, there are hair products all over
the floor, and I got body glitter between my
fingers when I reached under your pillow
for your nightdress this morning."
She paused, but Melissa knew her mum
wasn't finished yet. "And those clothes in piles
in the corner; how many wardrobe changes
did you make? And don't think you can just
stuff them back in your drawers or
cupboard… Get the dirty ones into
the laundry basket, and everything
else neat and organised.
Otherwise, you
won't be going to
that party
tomorrow."
Melissa slumped down dejectedly on her bed.
Everyone had had such a good time at the
sleepover. It had been like a girls' spa weekend.
It was typical of Mum to only notice the
mess and not to understand all the work that
had gone into making it a success. Melissa
hadn't really thought about the consequences:
it had just been so much fun.
Emily had looked amazing with those long,
false nails and eyelashes on, but now they
were all stuck to Melissa's desk. She smiled at
the memory of Jemma's hair after she and
Sarah had finished plaiting it with ribbons and
beads; the same ribbons which now lay
discarded under her bed, while the beads
were scattered across the floor, tangled in the
long carpet. They'd take for ever to get out!
And what about those lipgloss kisses Chloe
had left all over her mirror…
Melissa sighed deeply. It wouldn't be the
same tidying up on her own, but she knew
she had to start. Jemma's mum had hired a
proper dance studio for the birthday party
tomorrow, and Jemma's older brother was

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going to make a video of them all doing their own routine to her favourite pop song. It was going to be so much fun! She *definitely* didn't want to miss that.

So Melissa worked hard for hours cleaning her room. She started by making her bed, which made a big difference, and this gave her the courage to take on the next challenge. The whole morning seemed to disappear while she cleaned, and tidied and put away her things. She found toys she'd forgotten about, and tiny sweets all glued together in the strangest places!

She was just standing back to admire her work when she received a visitor. And, in two minutes of mischief, her little brother Angus and his chubby, careless fingers, reduced her pristine space to a total disaster zone.

He'd tipped her colouring pencils onto the floor, trying to get one out. Then, before she could stop him, he'd climbed onto her chair *with dirty boots* and knocked down a framed photograph of her and her friends. The glass had shattered. As Angus pulled some books from the shelf, they collapsed in a heap on the floor. And, if that wasn't bad enough, the books then knocked over her wastepaper basket, sending her recorder, a tennis racket and the flower pot she had been growing a pansy in for her school science project, all tumbling after them.

Melissa looked at the little flower slumped on the floor, and thought it looked as though it had a broken heart! The pansy had been her pride and joy. For weeks, from the time she had planted the tiny seed during winter and first seen its stout green stem shoot up through the soil in spring, right to the moment when its first little bud appeared a fortnight ago, she had talked to it and laughed with it. Its face had three lovely colours – mauve, lemon-yellow and white; and it had a wonderful button-shaped eye that made her

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feel as though it could see exactly what she was thinking.
Now Melissa stood open-mouthed, staring at the chaos. Squealing with delight, colouring pencil finally in hand, Angus scuttled off, treading soil into her pale pink carpet as he left. The little pansy must have shuddered as it narrowly escaped his stomping feet.
Melissa was furious. She had wanted her room to be especially perfect to prove a point to her mum, and now she'd have to start all over again. She shouted and chased after her brother, then saw she was making an even worse mess with the flower on the carpet, so she flopped down and tried very hard not to cry.
Poor Melissa! She was a clever girl, and well organised most of the time. She liked to do her homework neatly, to keep her drawers in order, to fold her clothes away properly (except after sleepovers!), and to have flowers all around her. She had a good heart, too, and was quite kind to everyone, but if things didn't go her way, she could get very grumpy...
While Melissa was rubbing her eyes and sniffing in the corner under the roof beam, her little pansy, wrenched from its comfortable spot on the window sill, lay limply on the floor in great distress. Its small yellow eye took in the scene of chaos stretching across the little girl's floor, and seeing her looking so miserable with her arms clasped around her knees on the floor, it let out a sigh

that perhaps no one could hear...

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