Illustrated by Mike Love, based on
original artwork by Harriet Muncaster

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP
Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark
of Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

Copyright © Harriet Muncaster 2024

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published in 2024

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN: 978-0-19-278796-5

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in China

Paper used in the production of this book is a natural,
recyclable product made from wood grown in sustainable forests.
The manufacturing process conforms to the environmental
regulations of the country of origin.



# Chapter ONE

'Looks like perfect weather for our picnic today!' exclaimed Dad, glancing out of the window at the cloudless sky. My dad is a fairy, and he loves sunshine and nature!

'Hmm,' said Mum. 'I wouldn't say *perfect*. Rain would be much more atmospheric.' My mum is a witch and

loves it when the skies are gloomy.

I stared out of the window at the sparkling sunshine. Although I definitely identify more with my witchy side, I did agree with Dad that sunny weather was much nicer for a picnic.



'I want to wear my swimming costume and run through the sprinkler!' I said.

'*Mmm hmm*,' said Mum, who was preoccupied with preparing the food for the barbecue. She was making some absolutely disgusting-looking beetle burgers and putting them on a plate next to some bug skewers.

'Yuck!' I said. I hate all witch food! So does my brother Wilbur. I was glad we would be eating *fairy food* made by Dad, hopefully cooked on a *separate* barbecue.

'Don't be rude!' said Mum. 'Now go and get out of your pyjamas, please. Our guests will be here soon!'

Mum had invited our new neighbours, Frederick and Felice, over for the barbecue, along with Oswald, their son. I was actually quite looking forward to meeting them!

'Do you think Oswald might want to



play in the sprinkler too?' I asked.

'Maybe,' said Mum. 'But I don't want anyone getting soaked in the sprinkler until after lunch! Go and put on your party dress, please.'



'My *party* dress?' I said in surprise. 'But it's just a summer barbecue!'

'Yes, but we want to make a good impression on our new neighbours, don't we?' said Mum. 'If we make a big effort, they'll feel really welcomed!'

'*I'm* wearing my best bow tie!' said Dad, who was busy piping pink fluffy fairy cream onto the top of a trifle.

I licked my lips. Fairy fruit trifle is the best!

'So,' continued Mum, 'that means absolutely *no* mischief today, Mirabelle! I want you to be on your best behaviour. Do you promise?'

'Of course!' I said, truthfully.

'Thank you,' smiled Mum. 'And if you're really good and helpful today, I'll let you come up and play in the witch turret tomorrow!'

'Ooh!' I said. I *love* spending time with Mum in the witch turret. We have all kinds of fun mixing up glittering, glimmering potions together.

'I'll be the *best*, most *helpful*, witchling!' I promised.



I ran up the stairs to my bedroom and opened my wardrobe, looking for my party dress. It wasn't there, so I began to search the floor instead. I am not very

good at keeping my bedroom tidy and there were piles of clothes everywhere. Dad calls it my *floordrobe*. Eventually, I found what I was looking for—a lilac, sequinned dress with a puffy netting skirt. I pulled it on just as the doorbell rang.

'They're here!' called Mum, her voice suddenly going quite shrill and nervous.



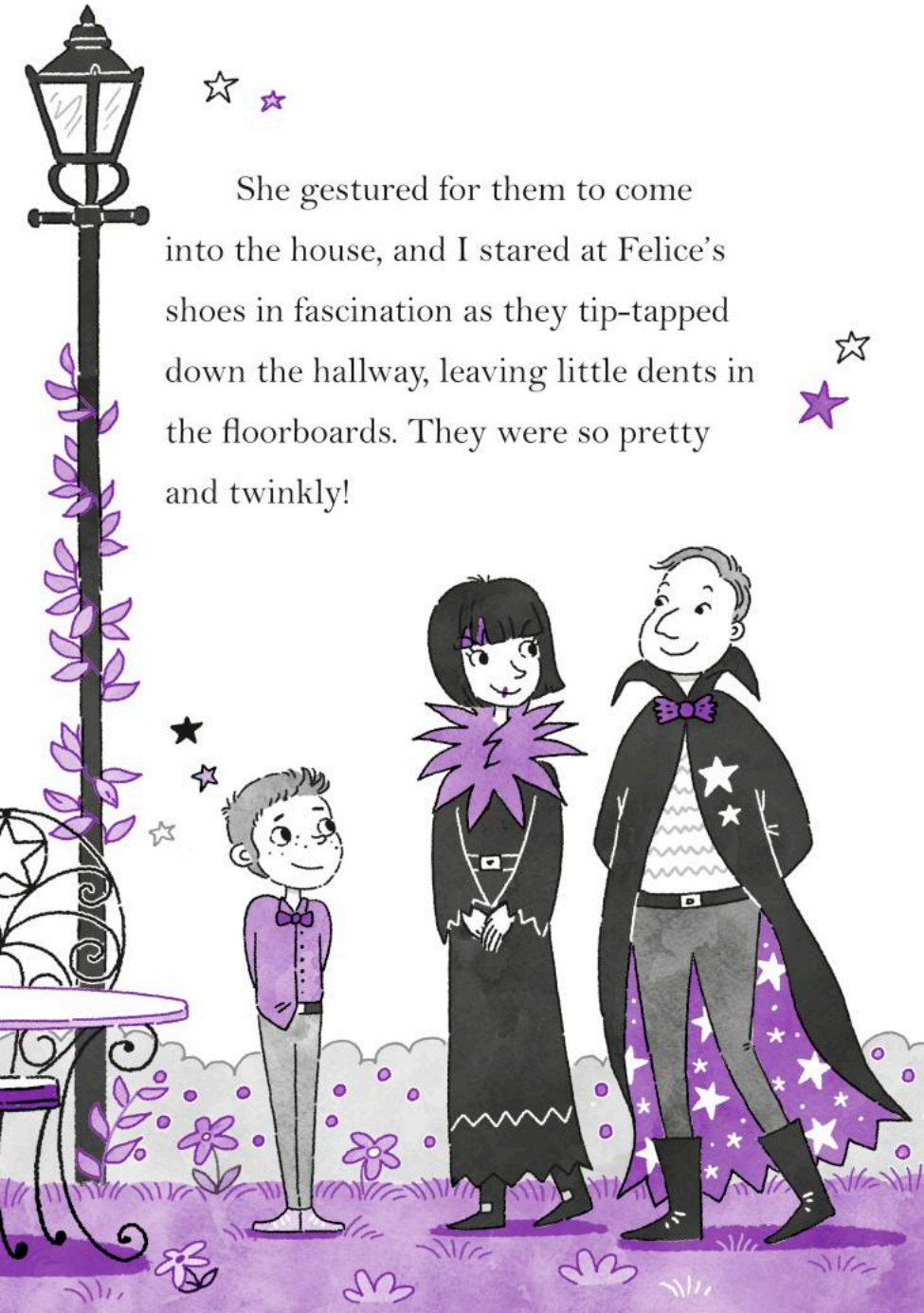


I hurried downstairs to the front door. Our new neighbours were standing on the step, looking a bit nervous too. Frederick looked smart in a cloak of shiny silver stars, Oswald's hair had been neatly styled with some kind of shiny gel, and Felice looked very glamorous with her hair all perfectly swirled and twirled. On her feet were a pair of very sparkly purple shoes with heels so tall and spiky that I wondered how she would be able to walk on the grass in them.

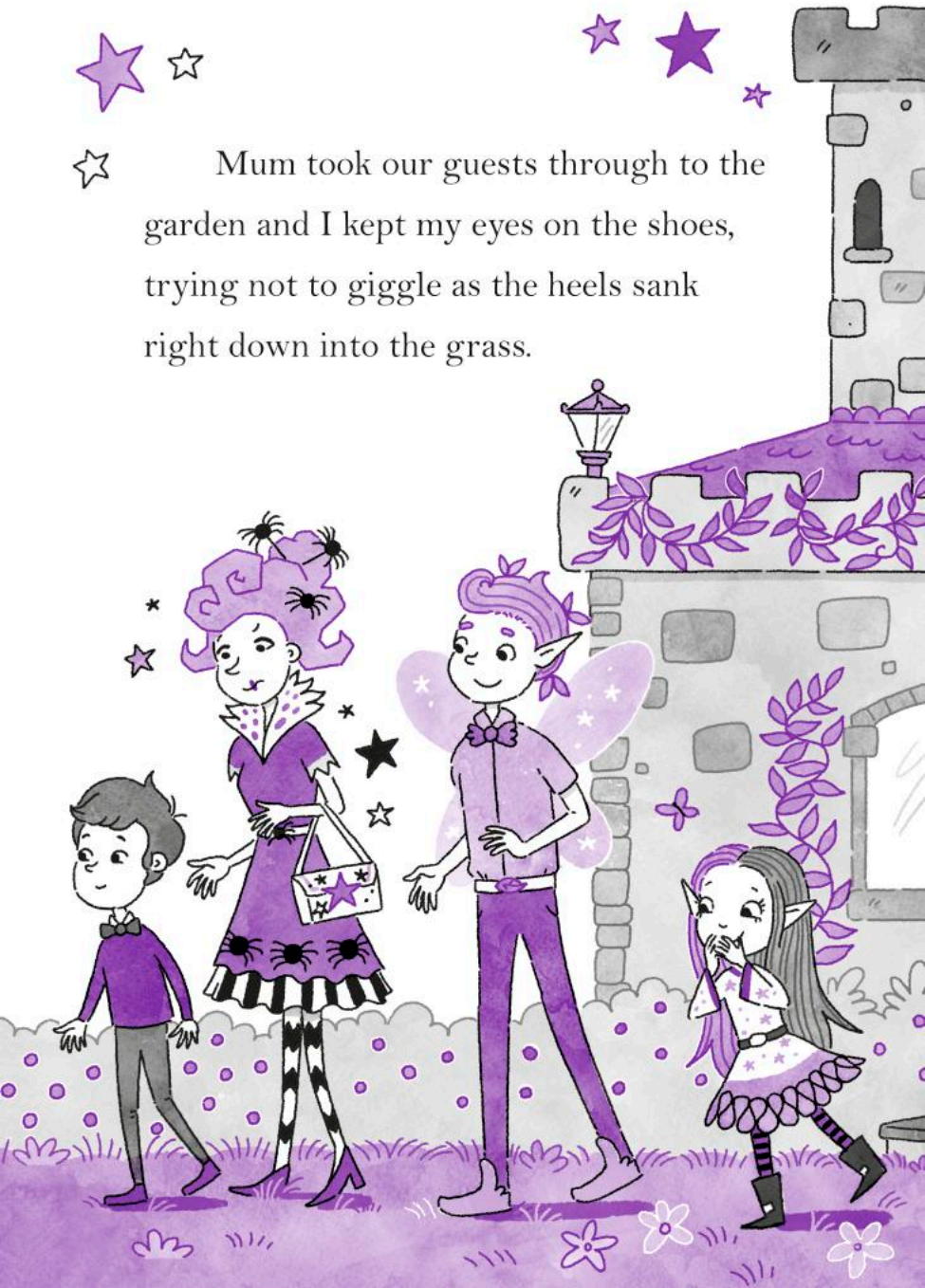
'Frederick!' beamed Mum, 'Felice! *Welcome*!'



She gestured for them to come into the house, and I stared at Felice's shoes in fascination as they tip-tapped down the hallway, leaving little dents in the floorboards. They were so pretty and twinkly!



Mum took our guests through to the garden and I kept my eyes on the shoes, trying not to giggle as the heels sank right down into the grass.



'Would you like a drink?' asked Mum in a very sickly-sweet sort of voice. 'I've got lots of fancy witch things, especially for today! Hubble bubble fizz, sparkling bogwater, toad juice . . .'

'I'd *love* a hubble bubble fizz!' said Frederick. 'Thank you!'

'Just water for me,' said Felice. 'I'm afraid I don't like fancy drinks, they give me a headache.'

'Oh,' said Mum, sounding a bit disappointed. 'Yes, of course, water is fine. What about you, Oswald?'

'Toad juice, please!' replied Oswald.

Mum hurried away to fetch the

witch drinks, while Dad began to set up the barbecue.

I looked over to where Wilbur was showing Oswald one of his boring wizardy books.

'Hey, Oswald,' I butted in. 'Do you want to broomstick race across the garden?'



'Maybe later.' Oswald shrugged.

'We're talking about our favourite wizard wordsearch books,' said Wilbur. 'You don't even *do* wordsearches!'

'That's because they're very *boring*!' I retorted.

I moved away, sighing.

It looked like this picnic was going to be dull, dull, dull!