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Opening extract from

Valentina de la Frou

Written by

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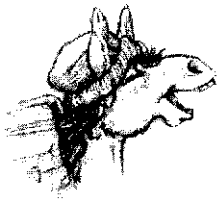
Who's Who in the Kingdom of the Frosty Mountains

The girls and their pets



Jessica Juniper – *Ballerina from the western Rocks*



Sinbad – *Jessica's pet donkey*



Crystal Coldwater – *Ballerina from the northern Lake*



Pollux – *Crystal's pet white fox*



Laura-Bella Bergamotta – *Ballerina from the southern Valley*



Mr Melchior – *Laura-Bella's pet tiger*



Ursula of the Boughs – *Ballerina from the eastern Forest*



Dorothea – *Ursula's pet bear*



Valentina de la Frou – *Ballerina from the City*



Olympia – *Valentina's pet eagle*

Some other Ballerinas

Rubellina Goodfellow – *Ballerina from the City, and the Chancellor's daughter*

Jo-Jo Marshall – *Another Ballerina from the City, and Rubellina's best friend*

The Teachers

Mistress Odette – *the Headmistress*

Mistress Camomile – *a Ballet teacher*

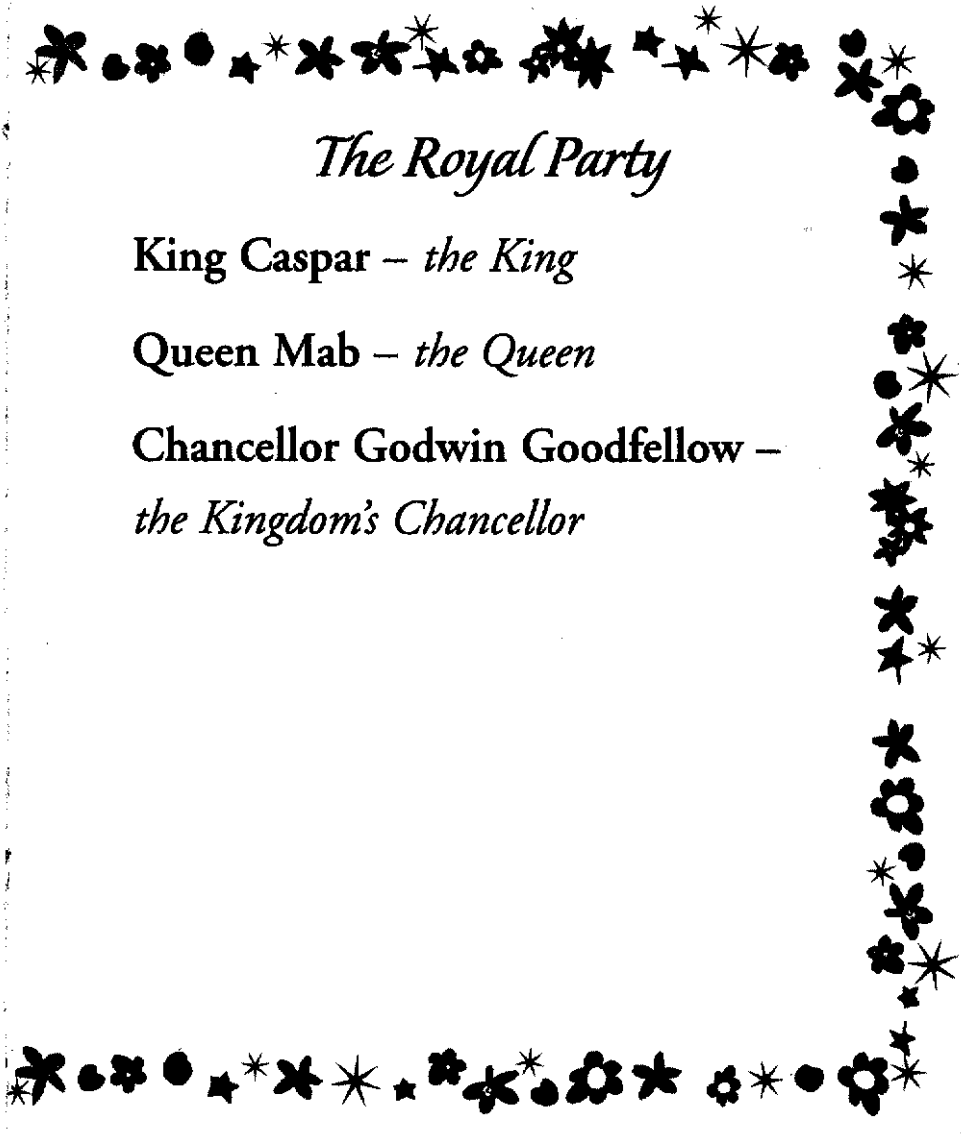
Master Lysander – *another Ballet teacher, also known as Mustard Stockings*

Master Silas – *the History of Ballet teacher*

Mistress Hawthorne – *the Gym teacher*

Mistress Babette – *the Costume, Hair and Make-up teacher*

Master Jacques – *the Mime teacher*



The Royal Party

King Caspar – *the King*

Queen Mab – *the Queen*

Chancellor Godwin Goodfellow – *the Kingdom's Chancellor*



Prologue

When I was a young Ballerina, an admirer gave me a gift.

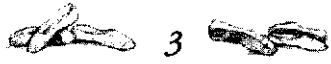
It was only a frosted-glass perfume bottle, filled with a sweet scent of lemon and orange. But my admirer told me that



the bottle was the most precious thing he could give, because there was a magical Kingdom inside.

I didn't believe him at first.

But that night, I had a very special dream. I dreamed of a magical Kingdom, the most beautiful land I'd ever seen, filled with delightful people and their very special animals. And the next time I danced, I thought of the Kingdom, and suddenly I danced as I had never danced before. Every night that I wore the perfume, I danced



better than ever, until I was the most famous Ballerina in the world.

But one day, the old frosted-glass bottle was accidentally thrown away.

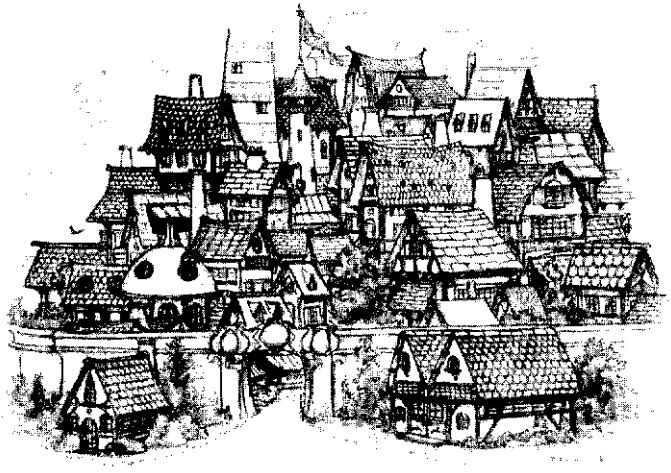
And from that day onwards, I never danced so beautifully again.

I searched for the bottle high and low, but I never found it. I have since had many years to write down what I learned about the Kingdom inside . . .

Inside the bottle, behind snow-capped Frosty Mountains, the Kingdom is divided

into five parts. There are frozen Lakes in the north, warmer meadows in the southern Valley, stark grey Rocks in the west, and to the east, a deep, dark Forest.

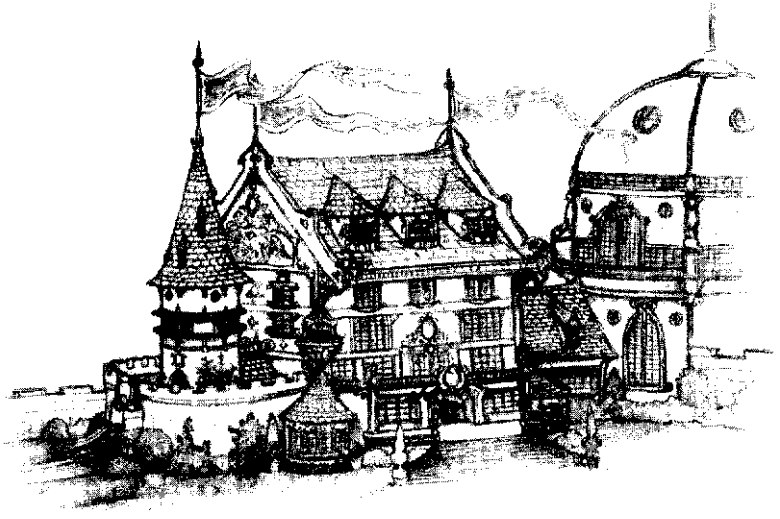
And the City. How could I forget the City? Silverberg, the capital, rising from the



Drosselmeyer Plains like a beautiful new jewel on an old ring.

From a distance, the houses seem to be piled on top of each other. Their brightly painted wooden roofs look as if they hold up the floors of the dwellings above as they wind around and around ever-more-narrow streets. And at the very top of the teetering pile is the biggest building of all: the Royal Palace. It is made from snow-white marble taken from the Frosty Mountains themselves, which glows in the

early morning sun and sparkles in the cold night.



The Royal Palace is the home of the King and Queen. But it is here too, within

the marble walls of the Palace, that you can find the Kingdom's famous Royal Ballet School. This is where the most talented young Ballerinas in the land become proper Ballerinas-in-Training, and really learn to dance. They travel from far and wide. Pale blonde Lake girls journey from the north, dark-haired Valley Dwellers come from the south. Grey-eyed Ballerinas travel from the western Rocks, and green-eyed Forest girls make their way from the east. The City girls have no need to come quite so far.

Of course, they all bring their pets. Each Kingdom Dweller has their own animal companion. And these animals can talk – talk just like you and me. Lake Dwellers keep Arctic foxes or snow leopards, while Valley Dwellers keep small tigers, monkeys or exotic birds. Strong, sturdy Rock Dwellers enjoy the company of sheep, goats and donkeys, while Forest Dwellers keep black bears and leopards. Every City Dweller keeps an eagle.

Out there, somewhere, is my old

frosted-glass perfume bottle.

Out there, somewhere, are the Ballerinas-in-Training who inspired me – Jessica Juniper, Crystal Coldwater, Laura-Bella Bergamotta, Valentina de la Frou and Ursula of the Boughs.

And they will wait for you, until the day that you find them.

Emerald Everhart



CHAPTER ONE
At the Grand Tea-Rooms

Valentina's favourite tea-rooms in the whole of Silverberg were the smart, stylish, and terribly expensive Grand Café and Tea-Rooms. The Grand had

everything. It was beautifully decorated, outside and in, with little gold chairs at marble-topped tables, and a long counter running along one side of the huge room, where you could perch up on a stool and choose your cake from a glass cabinet. And what cakes! The Grand's famous Toffee Apple Torte was sticky, shiny and utterly delicious, but if you were in the mood for something else, there were light, fruity Scoffins, hot toasted Flumpets with melted butter, or any one

of another fifty-two different cakes and cookies.

Valentina, who was treated to tea at the Grand twice a year, could hardly contain her excitement when the letter arrived from her mother one bright spring morning.

'Brilliant!' she gasped, putting down her glass of Raspberry Juice with a splash. 'Mother wants to take me to tea at the Grand this afternoon! She's asked Mistress Odette for permission, and

Olympia and I are to meet her there at four o'clock.'

Olympia, Valentina's pet eagle, gave a squawk of happiness.



'Oh! Even better!' Valentina turned the letter over. 'Mother says I can bring a friend too!'

Valentina's four best friends, Jessica, Crys, Laura-Bella and Ursula, all glanced at each other.

'But Val,' said Jessica, always sensible, 'which of us will you take?'

Valentina waved a lordly hand. 'Mother won't mind if five of us turn up.'

Sinbad, Jessica's pet donkey, let out a

loud bray. 'Brilliant! I've dreamed of that Toffee Apple Torte for months!'

'I meant us five girls, Sinbad,' said Valentina. Then, seeing the donkey's ears droop, she relented. 'Well, I suppose all you pets can come too.'

Sinbad clattered his hoofs in excitement. Dorothea, Ursula's pet bear, and Pollux, Crys's white fox, looked thrilled, and even Mr Melchior, Laura-Bella's stern little tiger, gave a purr of pleasure.

'But you'll have to behave yourselves around my mother, Sinbad,' Valentina went on. 'That goes for all of you, girls and pets! Mother can be awfully snooty. I've often had to point it out to her.'

Jessica and the others kept their smiles to themselves. As much as they loved Valentina, they could not deny that she was rather snooty herself.

They dressed up in their smartest clothes straight after classes that afternoon, and hurried down the hill

from the school into the streets of Silverberg. There was a hustle and bustle outside the doors of the Grand Tea-Rooms, as ladies and gentlemen came and went, dressed in all their finery.

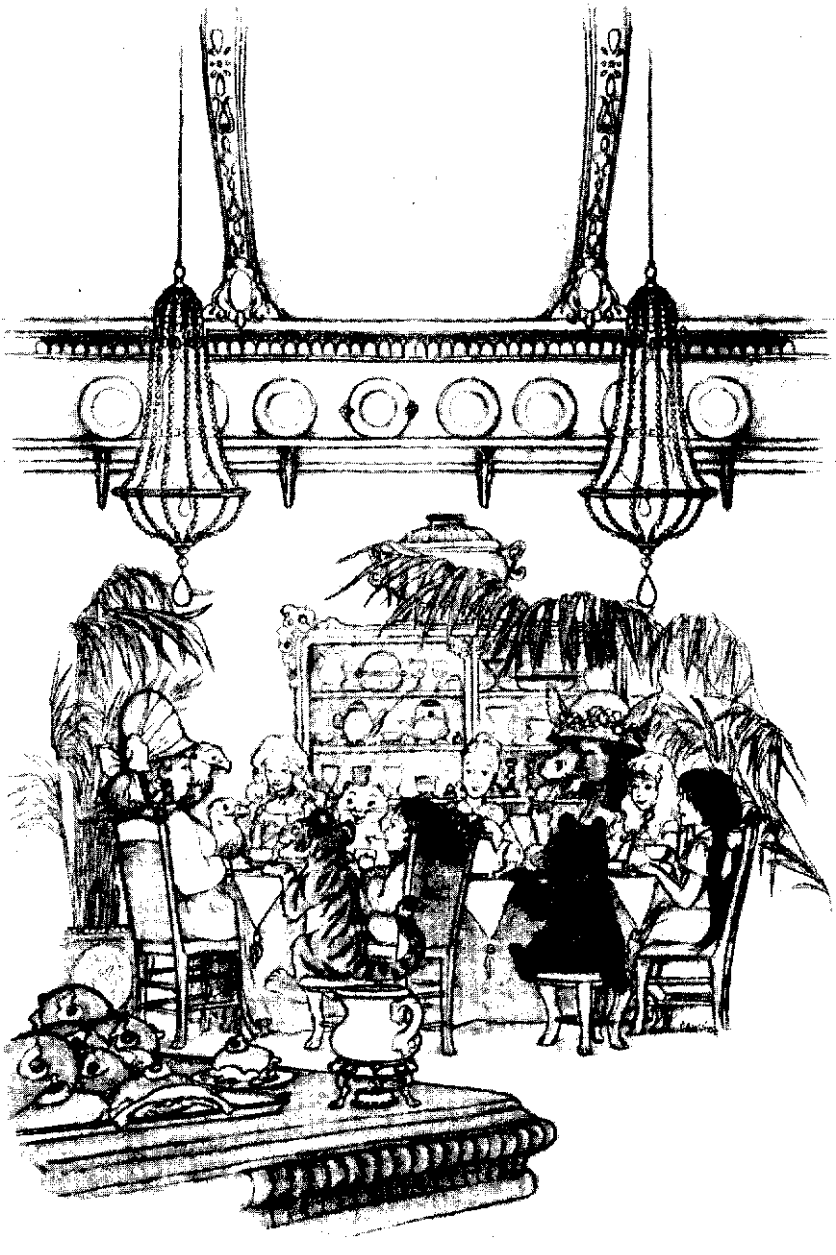
'Do you think we're smart enough?' Sinbad hissed in Jessica's ear. 'I couldn't find my best hat – will my second-best do?'

Valentina overheard him. 'You all look perfectly smart – but Mother might disagree!'

Valentina's mother was waiting at a little table for two. It was already laid with dainty cups and plates, and a small dish of cakes was in the middle. She looked rather annoyed at having to move to a larger table, and even more annoyed when the entire plate of cakes seemed to disappear, mysteriously, shortly after Sinbad's arrival.

'How nice to meet all your friends, Val, darling,' said Mrs de la Frou. Her hair was golden, just like Valentina's,

although it was wound up in a glossy coil on the back of her head, and she wore a spectacular red hat. She was plumper than Valentina, and her sweet, rather pretty face had a pouting look about it. The eagle on her shoulder was on the plump side too. It flapped a welcoming wing at Olympia, Valentina's eagle, and then stared longingly at Sinbad. 'You must be Jessica, Crystal, Laura-Bella and Ursula. I've heard so much about you! And your lovely pets



too. What a very handsome tiger and fox. And what a sweet bear! And . . . well, what a . . . donkey.'

Sinbad nodded his head, trying to hide the fact that his cheeks were bulging with cakes.

It didn't work.

'I think we shall need more cakes, waiter,' said Mrs de la Frou, with a frown, before turning to Valentina. 'Val, darling, I've got some very exciting news for you and Olympia.'



'What news?' Valentina started to pour tea for all her friends from the silver teapot, as the waiter brought more cakes. Then she gasped. 'Have you bought me

that silvery necklace I wanted?'

'No, Valentina . . .' said Mrs de la Frou.

'Have you planned me a surprise birthday party?'

'No, Valentina . . .'

'Have you had my whole bedroom painted pink?'

'No, Valentina, and I wish you would let me speak!' Mrs de la Frou pushed at her hair with a fluttering hand. 'The news is much more

important than that.'

'More important than a party or a pink bedroom?' Valentina frowned. 'I don't understand.'

Her four friends exchanged smiles.

'Val, darling, I am delighted to tell you that you have been accepted into Madame Malvolio's Academy for Better-Brought-Up Young Ladies!' Mrs de la Frou beamed. 'You will be starting there next term.'

The entire table fell silent, apart

from Sinbad's chomping.

'But Mother,' Valentina said, 'I already go to school. At the Royal Ballet School, remember?'

Mrs de la Frou gave a little shriek. 'Val, darling, you didn't think you were going to stay there forever, did you? You'll have a much better education at Madame Malvolio's! They teach you how to cut open a boiled egg without breaking the yolk! They teach you how to plait your hair in eighty-three styles!

They teach you how to fold a napkin into the shape of an peacock!'

Sinbad whispered to Jessica, 'I want to go to Madame Malvolio's Academy. That's all useful stuff!'

'It will be wonderful, Valentina. I only wish I had been given the chance to go to Madame Malvolio's when I was your age.' Mrs de la Frou sighed, and helped herself to a hot buttered Flumpet. 'Oh, my dear girls, you mustn't all look so horrified! You can

still keep in touch with Valentina with little letters and notes. Madame Malvolio teaches the most wonderful letter-writing classes!'

'But Mother, I don't want to go to Madame Malvolio's!' Valentina burst out. 'I don't want to learn how to eat a boiled egg, or how to plait my hair, or fold napkins into silly shapes! I want to stay at the Royal Ballet School, with all my friends, and learn how to be a dancer!'

'Valentina,' said Mrs de la Frou, in a



warning tone, 'you begged me to let you go to ballet school, and I agreed. But your school reports have not convinced

me that you will ever be a great prima ballerina. No, no – Madame Malvolio's is the place for you. I have made up my mind. I simply won't hear another word about it.'

And so the rest of the tea, despite the wonderful treats and the gorgeous surroundings, passed by in complete, miserable silence.