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Opening extract from

# Cloudberry Castle: Ballet School Secrets

Written by

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# Cloudberry Castle

## Ballet School Secrets

Janey Louise Jones

Kelpies

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*For Angela Watson and her ballerinas,*
*who have been so helpful.*

# 1. Cloudberry Castle School of Ballet



I couldn't believe that it was time to move up to the big castle! The Cloudberry Castle School of Ballet was soon to open for business. All my dreams were coming true and I felt like the luckiest girl in the world.

It was last July, and we were all flat-out busy preparing for the move. Dad loved his role as chief project manager up at the castle. He burst into the family kitchen in Holly Cottage one day, shortly before the move.

"Katie and Sorcha, I need two ballerinas! Quickly! That's the ballroom studio just finished this minute! The barre is fitted and the mirrors are up," he said. "You have to test it out."

"Cool!" I said. We hadn't been allowed in there for months. "C'mon, Sorcha. Let's get our ballet things!"

We grabbed our bags, and got in the car with Dad.

He raced over there. We jumped out the minute the car stopped, bombing up the stairs to the ballroom.

It was spectacular.

"Wow!" I gasped. "This is the best ballet studio I've ever seen."

"And is it really ours?" whispered Sorcha.

"Well, yes. But remember, we'll have to share all this with everyone who comes to the ballet school. Let's put some music on," I said.

"Yeah! What are you going to pick?" she asked.

"That's easy – *The Sleeping Beauty*," I said, "*The Entrance of the Good Fairies*. I'll show you what to do!"

Dad watched us proudly as we glided blissfully around the new studio, doing *pirouettes* and *arabesques*.

"Sorcha, follow me," I said. "We'll do an *arabesque* followed by a *battement glissé*. Just copy what I do. That's it. Swish your foot out. Well done!"

"I love dancing in here," said Sorcha. "It's like being in our own fairy tale."

I loved it too – especially having the mirrors to check out my footwork. We spent over an hour in there, perfecting a little *Sleeping Beauty* routine.

Afterwards, Sorcha and I had a look around the castle, taking in the changes.

"Come on, let's check out the bedrooms," I said, charging up to the second floor of the castle.

"Won't the boarding girls miss their families?" asked Sorcha.

"Maybe a little at first. But they're going to be so busy dancing that time will fly," I assured her.

"Ooh, these rooms are so pretty!" said Sorcha.

I had to agree. They were painted in a lovely colour called Ballet Shoe Pink, with some walls covered in pretty paper called Rose Sprig. They are kind of atticy rooms with sloping ceilings. I'd say they were the maids' rooms years ago.

In the middle of the six little bedrooms, there was a huge sitting room, filled with four comfy sofas, one in mulberry velvet, one in lime green linen, and one in bright pink fabric. The final one was a crazy patchwork design, involving loads of bright colours and patterns. We had bought this huge TV in Perth, which was a bit like a cinema screen, and there was a coffee table, plus scatter cushions and some pictures for the walls.

I was so proud of it all. We ambled back to Holly Cottage, discussing the story of *The Sleeping Beauty*. It was a bittersweet time, saying goodbye to our beloved cottage. Our life in Cloudberry Castle was about to begin, but we had been so happy in our tiny family home.

"This is the hardest thing I've ever done," I told Mum, as we browsed through a glossy ballet brochure, filled with pictures of beautiful ballet shoes and fluffy tutus, while

Sorcha drew pictures of ballerinas. Hamish, meanwhile, made a wizard's brew in a bucket in the garden.

"Yes, it's tough for us all, darling. We've been blissfully happy in this little house. But it's a fresh start," said Mum. "And how exciting – I still can't believe it's happening to us. And it's all your doing, Katie!"

"I just can't believe that we're going to have our very own ballet school! I've never been so excited," I said.

"You have worked so hard for this ballet dream to come true, Katie." Mum smiled.

I looked up to Cloudberry Castle. I had a lot to think about, and when I feel that way, I always go and chat to Bella – my lovely little pony. I don't ride her as she's too small, but we're the best of friends. I knew she was in the paddock by the castle, near Lily's Lake.

I pulled on my wellies.

"Mum, I'm going to see Bella," I said.

"Hey, Katie, can I come?" said Sorcha.

"Sure, get ready." I smiled.

We strolled over to the paddock together.

"I don't know if I'm going to like my new room in the castle," said Sorcha.

"Why's that?" I said.

"Oh, just cos the ceilings are really high, plus all my dollies like being on the shelves in my own room in the cottage," she explained.

"And where will you put your dollies in your new room?" I asked.

"I dunno. Maybe Dad will build some shelves just like the old ones, so that the dollies will feel at home," she said.

"I think we should ask Dad to do exactly that," I said, ruffling up her hair.

We saw Bella grazing on the far side of the paddock.

"Bella!" I called. "Come over, girl!"

Instantly, she looked up and began to trot over to us. Lovely Bella!