

Chapter 1

Once upon a time there was a strong, clever, and exceedingly funny queen. Her name was Cassandra and she ruled over the queendom of Feather. She had a husband called Norman and together they had twelve daughters, who were each as different from one another as you would expect twelve sisters to be.

Freya loved to write stories whilst Ellie preferred to ride motorbikes through the woods. Genevieve enjoyed painting, whilst Lucinda loved to climb mountains. Poppy was a world class swimmer, Robin was a musician, Paula loved to pole vault, and Hayley hoped to one day be a famous scientist. Arielle, the eldest of the sisters, had a knack for magic, and the second eldest, Evangeline, was always looking for ways to make the world better. Then there were the two youngest girls, Rosie and Julia, who were twins. They looked so alike that sometimes even their sisters couldn't tell them

apart. But they were as different from one another as the rest. Rosie liked building things out of wood. Julia, on the other hand, was terrible at making things, but she was a wonderful singer.

Yet, for all their differences, there was one thing the twelve sisters had in common: they all loved to dance; and this – as you will soon learn – was a problem for their father, King Norman. Norman was the worst dancer anyone had ever, EVER seen. He couldn't even do a step-together-step-touch and a finger snap without tripping over his own feet and ending up on his bottom. So it made him jealous and sad and a little bit mad to see his daughters dance so well. He tried his best to keep his feelings to himself, but he didn't always succeed.

Now, once a year, Queen Cassandra liked to take a short break from her exhausting queenly duties to go on holiday with her best friend, Maud, who ruled the neighbouring queendom of Flame. This year, the two queens had decided to hike to the highest point of the snowiest mountain in all the land, and Cassandra couldn't wait! Norman, on the other hand, was far less excited. He hated being left in charge. He preferred to leave all the queendom ruling stuff to Cassandra whilst he listened to music, wrote poetry, cooked delicious meals for everyone in the castle and, occasionally,

helped the servants with some DIY. But Cassandra deserved a break and Norman knew it, so one sunny summer morning, the queen threw her rucksack over her back, kissed each of her twelve daughters on the head and gave Norman a goodbye hug.

‘Be good,’ she told them all. ‘I’ll be back in a week.’

Norman’s face turned a funny shade of purple. His eyes were as wide and wild as a frightened cat’s. ‘Goodbye,’ he said in a shaky voice, before turning and scurrying into his office.

The twelve girls looked at one another and giggled.

‘Poor Dad,’ said Poppy after they’d waved off their mum.

‘We’ll have to be especially good so he doesn’t get stressed,’ sighed Freya.

Her sisters put on their most angelic faces and nodded. Of course they would be good. They were always good...

Well, they were often good...

Well, they were good some of the time!

For a day or two everything went surprisingly well. The princesses helped their dad by taking him cups of tea and making him lunch. Ellie baked him some rainbow-drop cookies, Genevieve painted him a picture, Freya went into his office several times a day and told him stories to cheer him up, and Hayley and

Rosie worked together to make a machine that would tie Norman's shoe laces for him. The first time he used the machine, it tied his shoes together without him realising, and when he tried to walk he fell flat on his face. He didn't use it after that, but it was the thought that counted.



After three days of everyone being on their best behaviour, things began to go wrong. Dark clouds rumbled across the sky and rain tumbled down, driving the twelve sisters in from the garden, where they had been making dens and playing 40/40.

'Let's dance,' Paula yelled, dragging the heavy piano across the hallway floor and positioning it right outside Norman's office.

'Hurrah!' shouted the others, jumping up and down and clapping their hands.

Robin sat down behind the piano and started to play one of their favourite songs. The princesses began to sing along as they whirled and twisted and leapt around the entrance hall. The music got louder and faster, the singing more raucous, and the sound of their feet stomping on the stone floor echoed through the castle, drowning out the howling wind outside. None of them noticed King Norman appear from his office, his face as purple as squished blueberries.

'What on earth do you think you are doing?' he thundered.

The music stopped. All twelve princesses fell silent as they turned to look at him.

'Uh oh!' muttered Ellie.

'Do you have any idea how much noise you have been making?' he growled, his dark eyes narrowing to tiny slits.

'Double uh oh!' murmured Evangeline.

He stamped his foot and pointed across the hall. 'You are to go to your room and stay there for the rest of the day...'

'But Dad...' began Arielle.

'...and night,' he continued, his frown deepening.

'What about dinner?' whispered Julia.

'No dinner,' he screeched, sounding like a whistling kettle about to explode. 'And absolutely NO DANCING!'

With that, he stormed back into his office, slamming the door behind him so hard that the wooden door frame trembled.