



A New Adventure



“There!” said Ellie Macdonald, standing back to admire the pretty shapes laid out on the baking tray.

It was a rainy Sunday afternoon and her best friends Summer Hammond and Jasmine Smith had come round to make biscuits. Summer had designed hers in the shape of hearts, while Jasmine had made crowns. Artistic Ellie had created biscuit fairies.

“How long do we cook them for?” asked Summer, twirling one of her blonde pigtails thoughtfully. “I don’t want them to burn!”

“Fifteen minutes,” said Ellie, consulting the cookbook.

“Fifteen minutes!” wailed Jasmine dramatically, slumping down in her chair so that her glossy black hair flew around her face. “But I’m starving!”

“It’ll go by in a flash,” Ellie giggled. “I’ll get the timer.”

She jumped up from the table where they had been working, then stumbled as she caught her foot on the leg of her chair.

“Oops,” she said as it clattered to the floor.

Mrs Macdonald came in to see what

the noise was. “Don’t you worry, girls,” she said, admiring the biscuits. “I’ll put these in to bake, and call you when they’re done. I’m sure they’ll be delicious. And you’ve made such lovely shapes! Crowns and hearts and even fairies. What imaginations you all have.”

While Mrs Macdonald was putting the biscuits into the oven, the three friends exchanged a grin. Of course Ellie’s mum thought they had good imaginations – she hadn’t been to the Secret Kingdom, the magical land where only a few days ago the girls had actually met a real king wearing a real



crown, seen fairies, and eaten magical heart-shaped endless cookies at King Merry's birthday party!

"Let's go upstairs while the biscuits are baking," suggested Jasmine loudly. "And check on the Magic Box," she added quietly as the girls headed up to Ellie's room. "Just in case! You did bring it, didn't you, Summer?"

"Of course," Summer said with a smile.

Ellie's bedroom was long and light, with her art books and tools scattered across a big desk and the colourful pictures she'd painted pinned all over the lilac walls.

The girls settled down on the big window seat where Ellie did her painting. Summer carefully pulled the Magic Box out of her bag and passed it to Jasmine, who stared eagerly at its mirrored lid.

The box was just as beautiful as when they had first found it. Its wooden sides were delicately carved with images of magical creatures and its curved lid had a mirror surrounded by six glittering green stones.



"It was so lucky we found this at the school jumble sale," smiled Summer.

"We didn't find it – it found us!" Jasmine reminded her. "The Magic Box knew we were the only ones who could help the Secret Kingdom."

The Secret Kingdom was an amazing place where lots of magical creatures lived – but it had a big problem. Ever since its subjects had chosen King Merry to rule instead of Queen Malice, his nasty sister, Malice had been determined to make everyone in the kingdom as miserable as she was. She'd scattered six horrible thunderbolts around the land, and each of them contained a spell to cause lots of trouble.

“The kingdom still needs our help, though,” said Ellie. “We stopped Queen Malice’s first thunderbolt from wrecking King Merry’s birthday party, but we’ve only found one of the thunderbolts she hid. Trixibelle said there were six.”

“I hope we see Trixi again soon,” said Summer. “It was so wonderful meeting a real pixie.”

“Well it doesn’t look like we’ll be seeing her today,” said Jasmine sadly, putting the Magic Box down and flopping onto Ellie’s homemade rag rug. “The mirror’s blank.”

“No, it isn’t!” exclaimed Ellie, grabbing the box and leaning over it. “Look!”

The mirror was starting to glimmer and shine. Words began to float up from its shimmering depths.

“It’s a riddle!” said Ellie. She read the words in the mirror out loud:



*“The second thunderbolt is found
Where one-horned creatures
walk the ground.
Its wicked magic must be foiled
Before a special game is spoiled!”*

given them after their last adventure! Jasmine unfolded it carefully. It showed the crescent moon-shaped island of the Secret Kingdom. All three girls crowded round.

Ellie crinkled her forehead thoughtfully. “Creatures with one horn,” she said. “I don’t know about you, but that makes me think of...”

“Unicorns!” broke in Summer, her eyes shining. “There were unicorns at King Merry’s birthday party! But I don’t know where they live.”

At that moment, the Magic Box began to glow even brighter. Slowly it opened, and a fountain of light shot up from the centre, lifting up a square of parchment. It was the magical map King Merry had



“There’s King Merry’s palace,” Jasmine said, pointing to the pink building with its four golden turrets. The flags at the top of the turrets waved slightly, as if in a breeze.

Summer was looking around the rest of the map. “Flower Forest,” she read out. “Dolphin Bay.”

“What’s that?” asked Jasmine, pointing to a wooded area surrounded by steep hills.

Ellie looked closer. “Unicorn Valley!” she exclaimed. “That must be where the next thunderbolt is!”

They all looked at the Magic Box, but nothing happened.

“What did we do before?” Summer wondered aloud.

“We put our hands on the jewels, then Trixi and King Merry appeared!” Jasmine

remembered. The Magic Box started to glow again, and the friends rushed to press their palms onto the brilliant jewels.

“The answer to the riddle is Unicorn Valley!” Ellie whispered.

For a moment the light coming from the box flashed so brightly they had to shut their eyes. Then it died away, and everything was still.

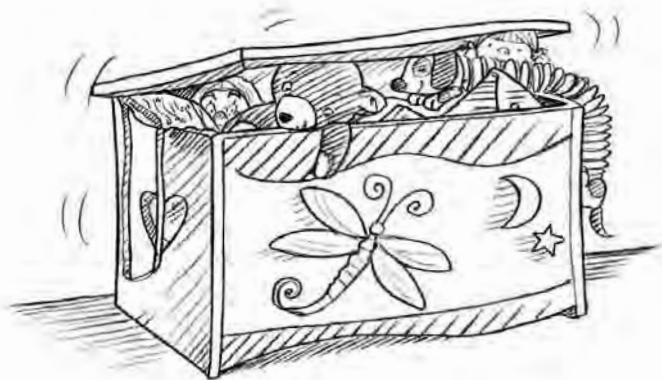
The girls looked around cautiously.

“Do you think it worked?” asked Jasmine. “King Merry and Trixi appeared in Summer’s wardrobe last time.”

All three of them looked towards Ellie’s wardrobe. Then, behind them, the lid of Ellie’s toy chest started to rattle. . .

Ellie saw it out of the corner of her eye and turned round so fast she almost fell over. “They’re stuck in the toy chest!” she cried.

“Don’t worry,” came a tinkly little voice from among the toys. “I’ll be with you in a moment.”



“Trixi!” the girls cried happily, recognising the voice of King Merry’s royal pixie, who had guided them around the Secret Kingdom during their last visit.

As they watched, pink petals began to creep around the edge of the lid of the chest. The flowers were growing magically fast, forcing it apart. The lid

burst open with a shower of petals and Trixi shot out, riding on a leaf. The tiny pixie waved at the girls excitedly, then tapped the magical ring she always wore. It sparkled and the magic flowers dissolved into glittery dust that settled on Ellie’s floor before gradually fading away.

Then Trixi floated over to where the girls were standing. “It’s lovely to see you again,” she smiled, flying her leaf over to each of them in turn and kissing them on the nose.

“You too,” said Summer happily. After their last adventure it had hardly seemed real that they had made friends with a pixie, but here she was, looking just the same – her clothes made out of leaves, messy blonde hair peeking out from under her flower hat.



Trixi's blue eyes twinkled as she smiled at them all.

"But where's King Merry?" Jasmine asked.

"He's busy writing a speech," Trixi told her. "Every year the unicorns hold an event called the Golden Games and King Merry gives a welcome speech to everyone there. Except last time he got

confused and arrived at the end of the games, so I had to turn it into a goodbye speech instead!"

The girls all giggled. It was so nice to hear about the Secret Kingdom. But it was even better to go there and have adventures themselves!

"Poor King Merry," laughed Jasmine.

"Well, he might be in trouble again this year," said Ellie seriously. "The riddle says that Queen Malice's second thunderbolt is hidden in Unicorn Valley."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Trixi. "Let's see if we can spot it."

She flew over the map and hovered over Unicorn Valley.



They looked down into an orchard full of fruit trees, neat gardens, a steep hill surrounded by multicoloured grass and beautiful emerald-green fields.

“Unicorn Valley is one of the loveliest spots in the kingdom,” said Trixi. “Just the sort of place Queen Malice would try to wreck!”

“Well, we won’t let her,” said Ellie firmly.

“Let’s go!” said Jasmine.

Trixi gave the Magic Box a tap with her ring. Then she chanted:

*“The evil Queen has trouble planned.
Brave helpers fly to save our land!”*

Trixi’s words appeared on the mirrored lid before streaming up to the ceiling. They swirled around in a dancing cloud

and then surrounded the girls’ heads in a glittering, flashing whirlwind.

“We’re off to the Secret Kingdom!” cried Jasmine above the sound of rushing air.

The girls grabbed one another’s hands as Ellie’s bedroom seemed to drop away beneath them. There was a flash of blinding colours...and there, spread out below them just as they had been on the map, but much more beautiful, were the rolling green fields of Unicorn Valley.

Fields that were getting closer and closer very quickly!

“Aaarrgh!” shrieked Ellie, screwing her eyes shut. “We’re falling!”