



The Adventure Begins



“Hi, Mum! I’m home!”

Ellie Macdonald ran into the empty kitchen through the back door. She shrugged her schoolbag off her shoulders and put it down carefully. After all, there was something very special inside! At the bottom, wrapped up in her school jumper, was a mysterious wooden box.

As she opened her bag, Ellie felt a flicker of excitement. She and her best friends, Summer and Jasmine, were the only ones who knew that the box was much more than an ordinary jewellery box. It had been made by the ruler of a magical land called the Secret Kingdom, where incredible creatures like fairies, mermaids, unicorns and pixies lived. It was a wonderful place, but it was in terrible trouble.

When everyone in the land had decided they wanted kind King Merry to rule rather than his horrid sister, Queen Malice, the evil queen had sent six thunderbolts crashing into different parts of the kingdom. Each thunderbolt had the power to make trouble and bring great unhappiness. Ellie and her friends

had promised to help stop the nasty queen. Whenever one of her thunderbolts caused a problem in the Secret Kingdom, a riddle would appear in the lid of the Magic Box to tell the girls where they were needed. When they had solved it, Ellie, Summer and Jasmine would be whisked away to the kingdom to try and help. They had already had five wonderful adventures and Ellie couldn't wait for the magic to work again!

Ellie pulled the Magic Box out of her bag and looked hopefully at the carvings of amazing creatures that covered every side, and the glittering jewels that decorated its mirrored lid. If only the lid would start glowing, that would mean it was time for her and her friends to return to the Secret Kingdom. But all she could

see was her own reflection, her red curls falling messily around her face.

Ellie sighed and carried the box to the



hall carefully. She caught sight of her mum through the window, tidying up the hanging baskets in the front garden. Ellie avoided her and headed for the stairs, clutching the Magic Box.

“RARRRRR!” With a loud yell, Molly, Ellie’s little sister, jumped out from where she had been hiding beside the hall table.

Ellie almost dropped the box in shock. “Molly!”

Molly whooped in delight. “I made you jump, Ellie!” She was four and looked just like Ellie had when she was little, with red curls that reached to her shoulders and mischievous green eyes. She loved to play tricks on her big sister. “What’s that?” she said curiously, spotting the box in Ellie’s arms.

“Nothing.”

“Let me see!” Molly tried to look.

“It’s just an old box, Mol,” Ellie told her hastily. The last thing she wanted was Molly looking in the Magic Box! Inside

it were six wooden compartments, and five of them were filled with the special objects Ellie and the others had collected on their adventures. There was a magic moving map of the Secret Kingdom, a tiny silver unicorn horn that let the person holding it talk to animals, a cloud crystal that could be used to control the weather, a pearl that could turn you invisible and an icy hourglass that could be used to freeze time. If Molly found those things she'd want to know where they had come from and the girls couldn't tell anyone about the Secret Kingdom!

Ellie swooped the box over her sister's head and put it on the table. Then, jumping forward, she started to tickle Molly to distract her.

Molly squealed and pushed her away. "Ellie, get off!"

Ellie tickled her harder. "Nope! I'm the tickle monster and I'm coming to get you!" she teased, chasing her around the hall.



Molly laughed and shrieked. "Get off me! Get off... hic!" A loud hiccup exploded from her and both sisters burst out laughing.

The front door opened. Mrs Macdonald looked in. “What’s going on, girls?”

Molly could barely contain her giggles. “Ellie was tickling me, Mummy, and now I’ve got... I’ve got... *Hic!*”

“Hiccups,” Ellie finished for her with a grin.

“Oh, Molly.” Mrs Macdonald shook her head. “Come on, let’s get you some water. Did you have a good day at school, Ellie?” she called over her shoulder as she led Molly away.

“Yes, fine, thanks, Mum. I’m just going up to my room for a while.”

Grabbing the Magic Box, Ellie ran upstairs. After putting the box safely on her desk and changing out of her school clothes, she got out her sketchbook and began to draw a picture of Trixi, the little

royal pixie who the girls had met on all their adventures. Ellie was very good at art, but she still couldn’t make the pixie look as cheeky and friendly as she was in real life.

Taking a rest for the moment, she glanced up at the box and almost fell off her chair in surprise.

It was glowing.

Ellie gasped and jumped to her feet, sending her pencil pot flying. “Oh wow! It’s time for another adventure!”

She threw her school jumper over the box in case



anyone happened to come in and see it, and ran downstairs to use the phone. She had to tell Jasmine and Summer straight away!

“Promise you won’t look at the riddle on the box until we get there!” begged Jasmine when Ellie called her.

“I won’t!” Ellie promised, although she was desperate to find out what the riddle would say, and where in the Secret Kingdom they were needed this time.

Ellie waited impatiently by the front door. Jasmine and Summer both lived in Honeyvale Village too, but it seemed to take them ages to arrive. Each minute felt like an hour! At last, she saw Summer running along the street, her blonde pigtails flying out behind her. At the same time Jasmine came racing around the

corner on her bike.

“It’s really happening then?” Jasmine breathed, pulling off her bike helmet, her dark hair tumbling around her shoulders.

“Yes!” Ellie said, happiness fizzing through her.

They hurried inside. “Hi, girls,” Mrs Macdonald called from the kitchen. “Are you staying for tea?”

“Yes, please,” Summer and Jasmine both chorused.

“Though hopefully we’ll have had an amazing adventure before then!” Jasmine whispered to Ellie and Summer. The girls knew that time in the real world stayed still when they were in the Secret Kingdom, so Ellie’s mum would never even notice that they’d been gone. They shared a smile and raced upstairs.

“Ta-da!” Ellie whisked her jumper off the box.

“Look!” Summer squealed. “We’re really going to the Secret Kingdom again!”

“Who do you think we’ll meet this time?” said Jasmine.

“Let’s see what the riddle says!” Ellie carefully read out the words that had formed in the mirror:

*“Danger from a royal hand,
A thunderbolt in sparkling sand,
A wicked deed must be put right,
Before the next midsummer night.”*

The girls looked at one another in confusion. “What does that mean?” said Summer, twiddling the end of one of her plaits. “Where do we have to go?”



Suddenly the box opened and a piece of parchment floated out of it. It was the magic map!

Ellie carefully unfolded it, with Summer and Jasmine peering over her shoulders. The map glowed with colour. Magical pictures on it showed what was happening on the crescent-shaped island of the Secret Kingdom, with its emerald green hills and meadows, aquamarine waters and sandy coves.

“Look! There’s Unicorn Valley!” said Summer, looking down to where unicorns were cantering far below, their silver and gold horns glittering in the sunshine.



“And Magic Mountain,” said Jasmine, pointing to a huge snow-covered mountain which had pixies all over it, skiing and zooming down enormous slides made of ice.

“I wonder where we’re needed this

time?” said Ellie, her forehead crinkling in thought as she looked at the riddle again.

“It says ‘a thunderbolt in sparkling sand,’” said Summer. “Well, you get sand at the seaside – so maybe we have to go to a beach?”

“Glitter Beach!” gasped Jasmine, pointing to a label next to a little harbour with shops and boats. “Somewhere with a name like that is bound to have sparkling sand.”

Ellie and Summer nodded eagerly.

Jasmine’s hazel eyes shone in excitement. “What are we waiting for? Let’s call Trixi!”

The girls put their hands on the green gems of the box and looked at one another. “The answer to the riddle is Glitter Beach!” they said together.