

Shock Announcement

“This is Marigold Moonglow, my fairy godmother,” I said, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

“Hello, girls. I’m delighted to meet you at last. Katherine has told me so much about you,” said Marigold.

“Sophie’s birthday seemed the perfect time to keep my promise, so I’m going to take you all on a magical adventure tonight!”

Charlotte was making funny little squeaking noises, and Sophie was shivering with excitement. “Where are we going?” she asked shyly.

“We’re going to Oak Tree Hollow,” Marigold explained. “It’s a pretty little village in Fairyland. A magical carnival always arrives in Oak Tree Hollow when there’s a full moon. I’ve told my fairy friends it’s your birthday, and they’ll be waiting to greet you when we arrive.”

“Wowee! I love carnivals,” shrieked Sophie. “Will there be hot dogs and candyfloss, and lots of loud music?”

“Yes, there will, and a surprise for the birthday girl,” said Marigold with a wink. “But we need to get going. Don’t worry when the train takes off. It can be scarily exciting if you’re not used to flying, but it’s completely safe.”

“You mean we’re going to fly in that thing?” gasped Charlotte, pointing to the land train.

“Of course,” said Marigold. “It’s perfect for a birthday adventure.”

“I won’t be scared. I’m eight today,” declared Sophie.

“I won’t be scared either,” said Charlotte, but she had a little wobble in her voice.

“I know *you* won’t be scared,” said Marigold, staring at me, her eyes twinkling with a mischievous gleam. “All you have to do is squeeze your earlobe and say *snickerdoodles*, and you’ll be able to cope with anything.”

“I already squeeze my earlobe when I’m thinking,” I said, “but why do I have to say *snickerdoodles*?”

I knew Marigold was going to tell

me something important.

“You have to say *snickerdoodles* because it’s a word you like saying, and now it’s the magic word you have to say when you want to cast a spell, my little witch.”



“*Witch?* What do you mean? I’m not a witch,” I gulped.

“I’m afraid you are, Katherine,

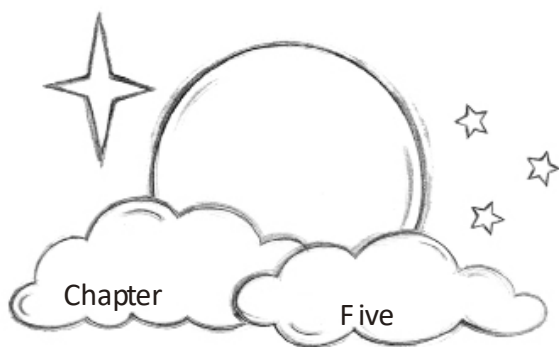
but I'll explain everything later," said Marigold, putting a finger to her lips and turning her attention to the adventure ahead.

"Snippety clickety," said Marigold, snapping her fingers, and in a flash, we found ourselves in the train carriage. It was decorated with a banner that said, "Happy Birthday Sophie".

I should have been happy, but I was worried. I'd seen a horrified look flash between Charlotte and Sophie when Marigold said I was a witch.

What if they believed her? What would they do? I hoped Marigold was only teasing – in fact, I was sure she was!





Mischievous Moonbeams

I could see Elroy's ears flapping as we rose into the air, and his trunk was swinging from side to side.

"I fly with Elroy as often as I can. We have such fun together in the night sky," said Marigold. "Elroy loves children; he's thrilled to be part of Sophie's birthday adventure."

"Hello, everyone!" boomed Elroy.
"Happy Birthday, Sophie."

“Thank you, Elroy,” gasped Sophie, then she turned to me and whispered, “A big blue elephant just wished me a happy birthday.”

“Of course he did,” I said, as if it was nothing special. “It’s all part of your birthday adventure.”

Sophie grinned sheepishly. “Oh my! This is so strange; it feels like a dream.”

“Well, it’s not a dream, this is actually happening,” I said.

“It’s time to get you into something more suitable for an adventure. Can’t have you wandering around in your pyjamas,” said Marigold. Marigold clicked her fingers, and in a flash, we were back in our day clothes.

I couldn’t resist leaning out of the window as we flew over Puddington. I

could see the street lights twinkling far below us.

“Watch out for mischievous moonbeams. They will try to trick you if you don’t keep an eye on them,” called Marigold from the driver’s cab.



A few minutes later, a beam of light slipped into our carriage. It looked more like a fine chiffon scarf than a moonbeam, but we guessed this must be one of those mischievous ones that Marigold had warned us about!

“Mmmm, I can smell scrumptious hot dogs; it’s making me feel hungry,” murmured Sophie as the moonbeam draped itself round her shoulders. “It tickles,” she giggled, twirling round with the moonbeam swishing behind her.

“You’d better watch out,” said Charlotte, “that moonbeam may try to trick you.”

“You’re just jealous,” laughed Sophie.

“No, I’m not! *You’re* the birthday girl! It’s your special day; I don’t want to be tickled by a moonbeam!”

As we flew over Puddington Pleasure Park, I caught sight of something leaving the ground. Minutes later, the sound of a fairground organ floated into the carriage. A carousel was hovering beside the train!

“I wish I could ride on that carousel,” said Sophie. “When we go to the Pleasure Park I always ride on the carousel. I love it.”

“Don’t be silly, carousels can’t fly. It must be some sort of hologram,” snorted Charlotte. “I learnt about holograms at school last week. They’re an intrusion, they’re not real.”

“You mean an illusion, not intrusion,” said Sophie. “Anyway, I’m not going to argue with you; you can believe what you want. It’s my birthday and I’m going to ride on that carousel, hologram or not!”

“I’m not sure that’s possible,” I said. “Perhaps it will follow us to Oak Tree Hollow. You can ride on it there.”

“I hope you are right,” sighed Sophie.

