

# Prince BMW



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Chicken  
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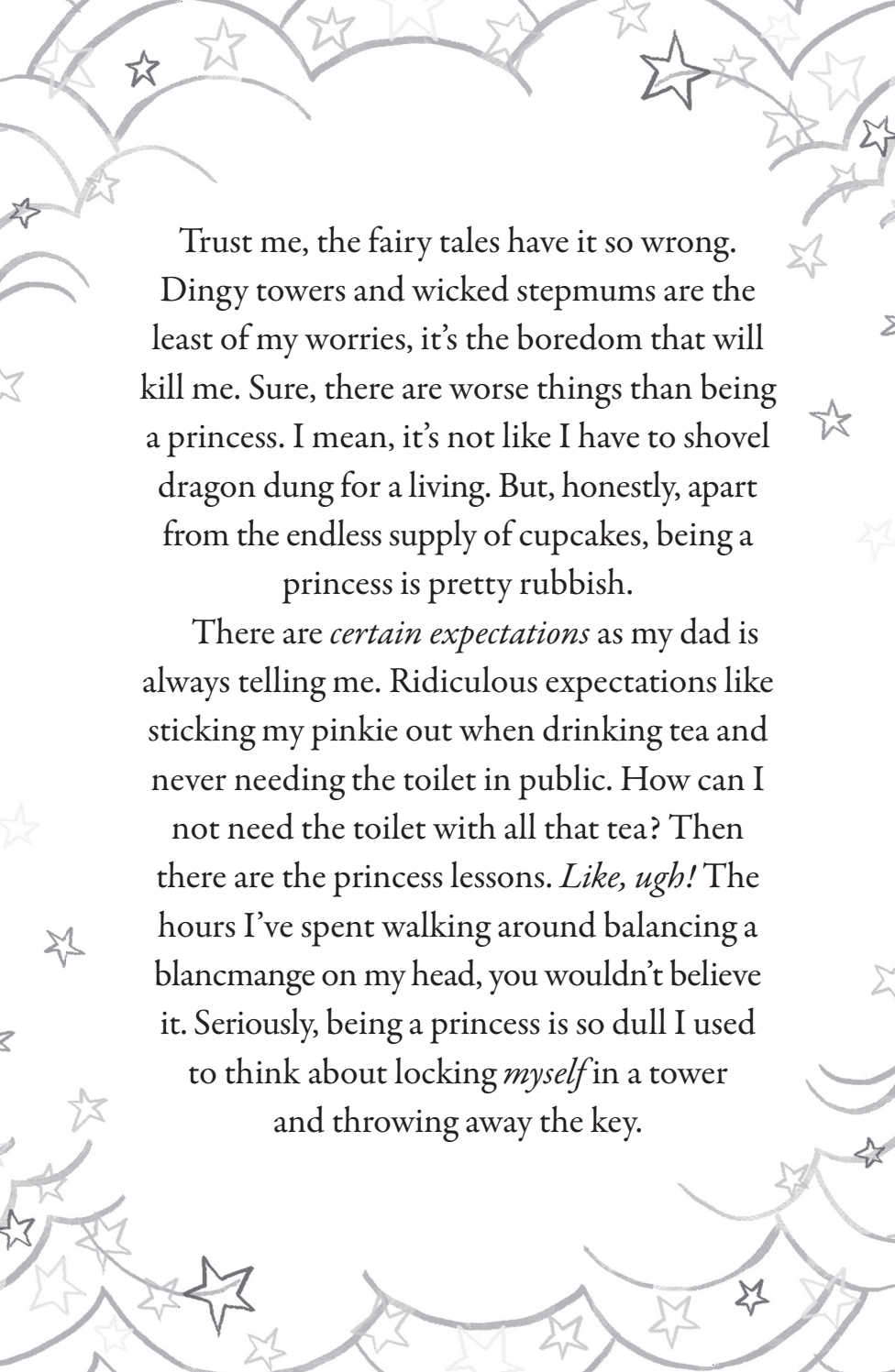
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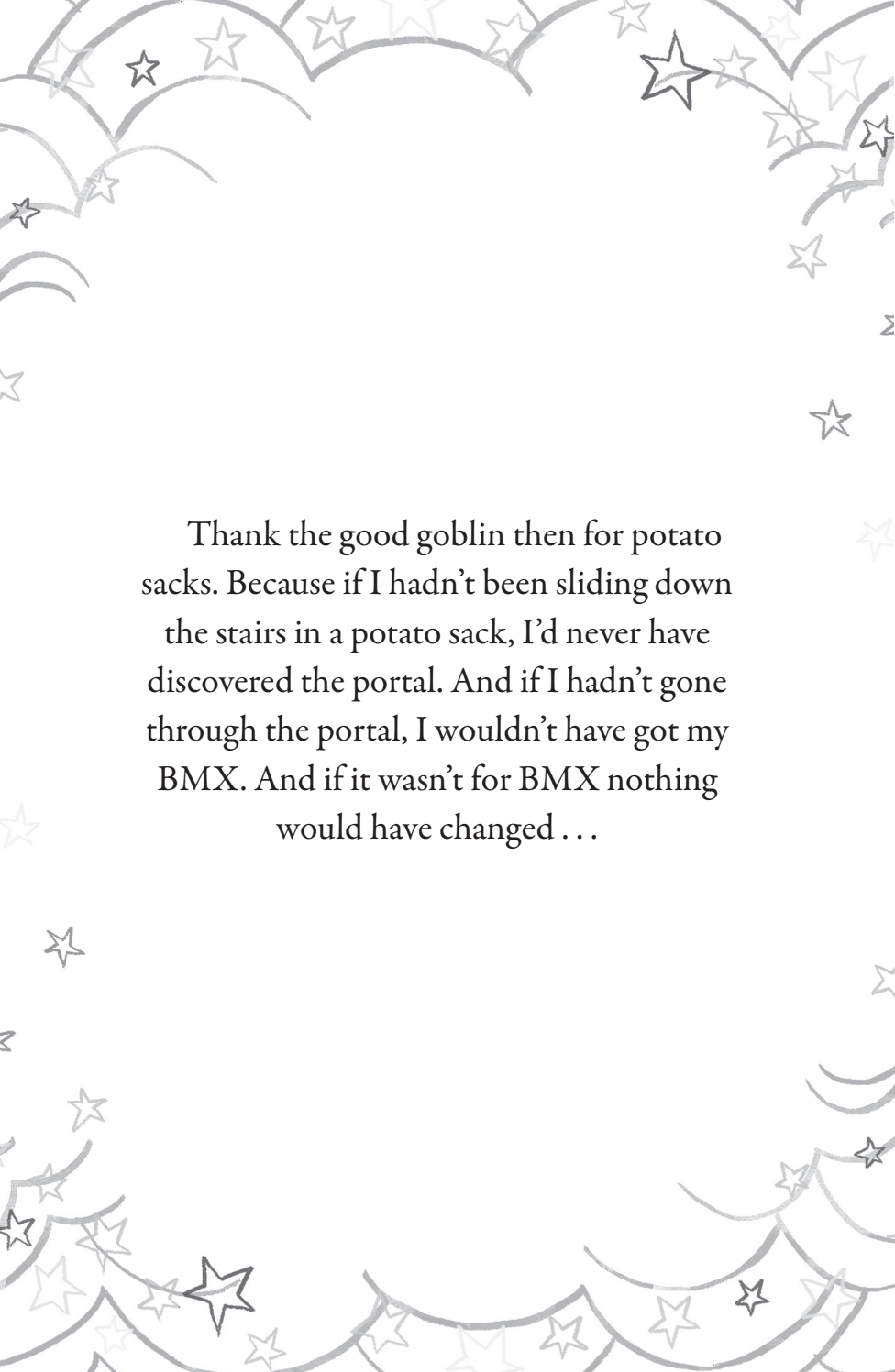
*For Mary Girl  
and  
the three generations of radical  
dudesses she inspired.*

*Always in our hearts, Nan xxx*

A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring stylized crescent moons and five-pointed stars of varying sizes, some solid and some outlined, arranged in a repeating pattern.

Trust me, the fairy tales have it so wrong. Dingy towers and wicked stepmums are the least of my worries, it's the boredom that will kill me. Sure, there are worse things than being a princess. I mean, it's not like I have to shovel dragon dung for a living. But, honestly, apart from the endless supply of cupcakes, being a princess is pretty rubbish.

There are *certain expectations* as my dad is always telling me. Ridiculous expectations like sticking my pinkie out when drinking tea and never needing the toilet in public. How can I not need the toilet with all that tea? Then there are the princess lessons. *Like, ugh!* The hours I've spent walking around balancing a blancmange on my head, you wouldn't believe it. Seriously, being a princess is so dull I used to think about locking *myself* in a tower and throwing away the key.



Thank the good goblin then for potato sacks. Because if I hadn't been sliding down the stairs in a potato sack, I'd never have discovered the portal. And if I hadn't gone through the portal, I wouldn't have got my BMX. And if it wasn't for BMX nothing would have changed . . .



## CHAPTER 1

The day everything changed started out like every other day. I was in trouble again. I shut my eyes, but it was no use. When I opened them Dad was still there in the Grand Hall with his nose curled up like he'd just stood in something nasty. I call this his troll-poop face. He pulls it a lot. Today, as well as pulling the troll-poop face, he was doing the finger wag. The finger wag means I'm in real trouble.

I sighed and climbed out of the potato sack I'd been sliding down the stairs in. My silver shoes

clacking on the mosaic floor, I traipsed across the Grand Hall to where Dad was standing in his fur-trimmed cape next to a polished suit of armour. *Clack. Clack. Clack.* My footsteps sounded out my doom. I was *so* in for it now.

Dad looked at my crumpled gown and shook his head.

‘Whatever next, Avariella!’ he said, taking his pocket watch out of his waistcoat and flicking open the lid. A tiny red cuckoo popped out of the watch face.



‘You’re late,’ it said.

Dad took a deep breath. It seemed ages before he let it out again. ‘You were supposed to be ready ten minutes ago. What do you think you’re doing, sliding down the stairs in a vegetable sack?’

I smoothed down my pink gown and gave him my best puppy-dog eyes – you know, the wide-eyed cute look that’s always a winner with grannies? Well, it wasn’t a winner with Dad.

‘And don’t look at me that way!’ he said, wagging his finger again. ‘I was very clear with my instructions – we must arrive at the Bubblegum Bazaar before the crowds.’ He pressed his lips together and shook his head. ‘Really, I don’t know what I’m going to do with you.’

This was a lie because he clearly *did* know what to do with me. He did the same thing he does every time I’m in trouble, which is send me to my chambers. Originality is not one of Dad’s strong points. Mind, I can’t talk because I did the same thing I do whenever he grounds me. I pulled a sad face and made my way slowly up the stairs.



Oh, don't worry, I was only sad on the outside. Inside I was like yay, oh yay with unicorn bells on! I mean, what a result. What's the point of travelling miles across the kingdom to a fete when you're not allowed to join in with the fun stuff anyway? Much better to stay home sack-racing. But first I needed to make sure the coast was clear.

I flung open the door to my room, kicked off my sparkly shoes and zoomed round the four-poster bed to the window. The second sun was rising and the sky was streaked with pink and orange. I opened the window and breathed in the sweet scent of chocolate blossom that grew in Biscotti all year round.

Ooh, as well as having his best togs on, Dad was taking the fancy gold carriage. He was standing in front of the four white horses with my brother, Bertie, waiting for Mum. Bertie's satin knickerbocker suit was the same shade of turquoise as the horses' feathery headdresses. As for Mum's latest fashion disaster, she looked like she'd borrowed her outfit from Little Bo Peep.

She had Doreen tucked under her arm. The micro-unicorn's long mane was brushed perfectly straight and the pearlescent bump, where her horn was yet to grow, glistened in the sun. Dad glared at Mum. It didn't matter how cute Doreen looked with her gold-painted hooves: there was no way she was getting in the carriage with them. Last time we took Doreen with us on a royal visit, she bit the Earl of Bourbon and weed on his wife's shoe.

Dad wagged his finger at Mum – yep, I wasn't the only one who got the finger wag! She put Doreen down and, laughing, shooed her back towards the palace. They all climbed into the carriage and the coachman cracked his long leather whip and pulled away. I waved, but they didn't wave back.

Sighing, I shut the window, tracing the route of the carriage on the leaded glass as it left Castello di Cannoli and raced across the drawbridge. Through the pink haze, I could see far across the kingdom: the colourful gingerbread houses and shops of Amaretti town; scattered

villages formed of thatched cottages and farms; the stinky swampland where the giant ogres live; and far off in the distance, on the other side of the Black Forest, the cornfields and rolling meadows that lined the Limonadi River.

The carriage was almost at the edge of town now. Some kids about my age chased it up the street. I turned away, fighting the familiar empty feeling in my chest. There was no point wishing. *A princess is not expected to play with her subjects.*

Oh, whatever. It was time to get my potato sack back. And with the servants given the day off to go to the bazaar, this time nobody was going to ruin my fun.