



# The Adventure Begins



“Hi, Mom! 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 sweater, was a mysterious wooden box.



As she opened her bag, Ellie felt a flicker of excitement. She and her best friends, Summer Hammond and Jasmine Smith, were the only ones who knew that the box was much more than an ordinary jewelry 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

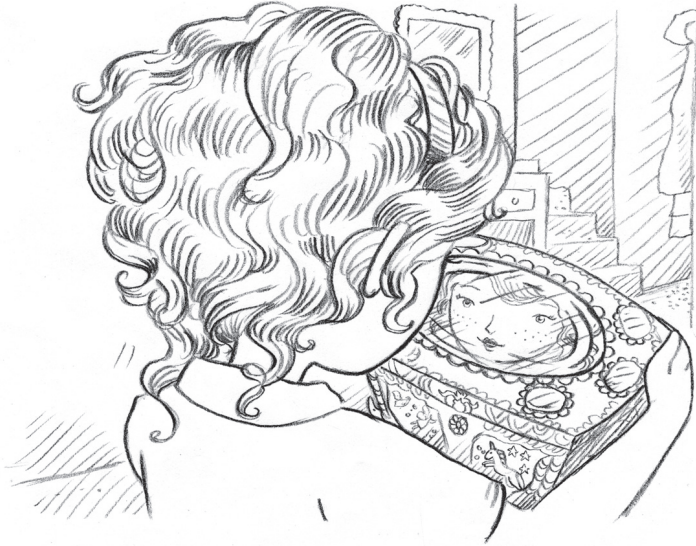


had promised to help stop the nasty queen. Whenever one of her thunderbolts caused a problem in the Secret Kingdom, a riddle would appear in the lid of the Magic Box to tell the girls where they were needed. When they solved it, Ellie, Summer, and Jasmine would be whisked away to the kingdom to try to 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 carefully carried the box to the hall. She caught sight of her mom through the window, tidying up the hanging baskets in the front garden. Ellie avoided her and headed for the stairs, clutching the Magic Box.