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Opening extract from
**Hattie B, Magical Vet: The
Dragon's Song**

Written by
Claire Taylor-Smith

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*The Cavernous Imp Castle
Bellua*

*Immie Imp
The hole in the second root on the right
The Imp Oak
Bellua*

Immie,

My excellent plan has begun. I have seized a magical power from a pitiful dragon – the first of many creatures! I WILL become the supreme ruler of the entire Kingdom of Bellua. Once I've collected enough powers, no one will be able to stop me – not even a vile Guardian.

I am sending YOU, Immie, to stop the new Guardian from curing the creatures of Bellua. There must be no happiness in Bellua. All must fear me! If you fail in your task, the Guardian will destroy my rule of misery and despair.

The new Guardian is just a wimpy girl so your task will be easy, even for you. Do not fail me, imp. You must NOT let her threaten the advance of the mighty Ivar.

Signed,

King Ivar

*All Mighty, All Powerful, Supreme
(and handsome) King of the Imps*



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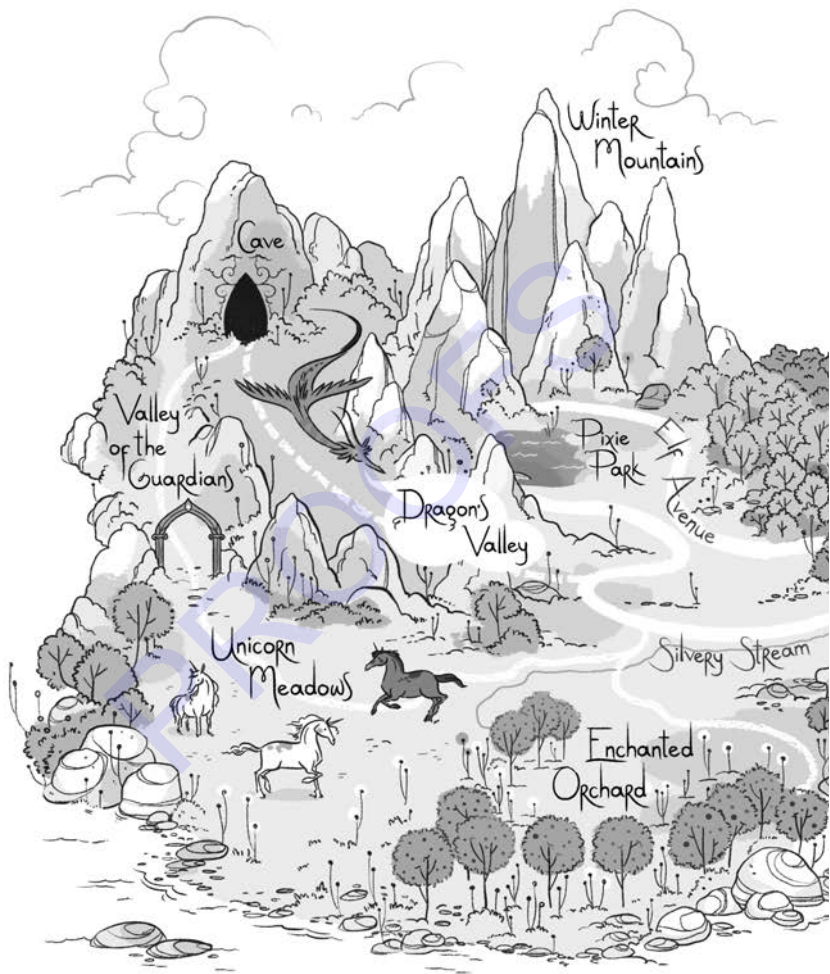
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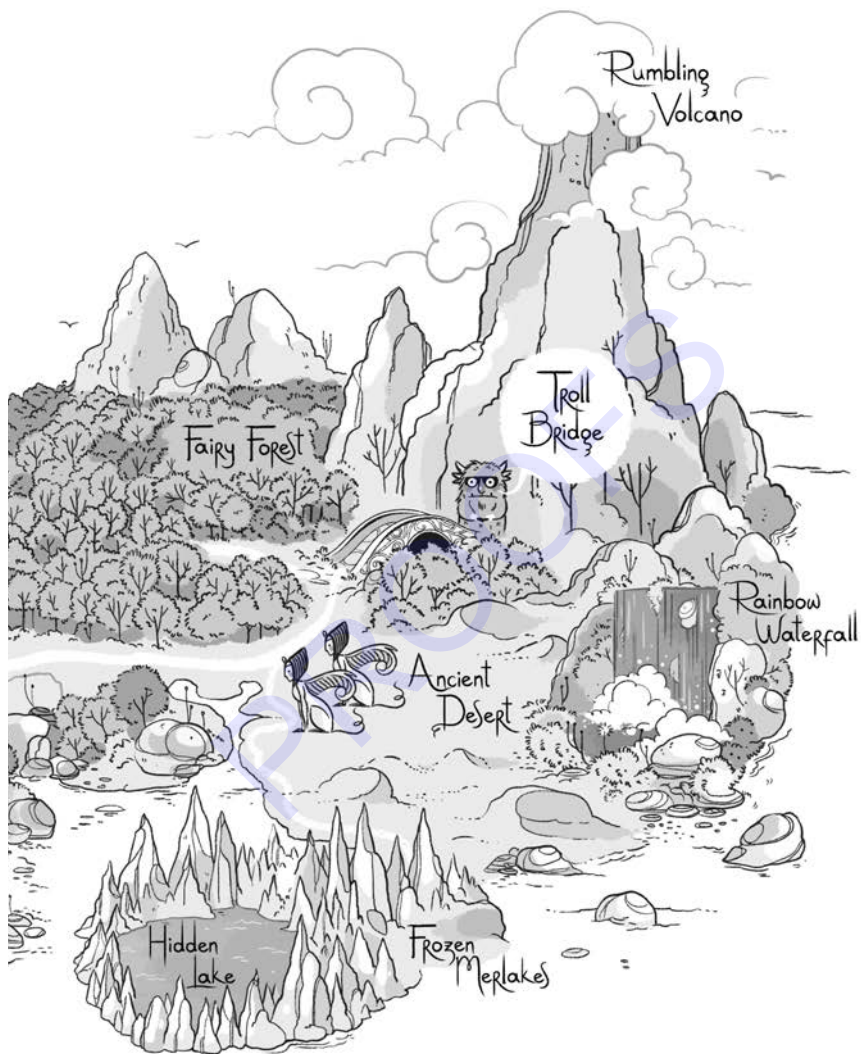
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The Worst Birthday Ever ★

It was eight o'clock on a sunny Saturday morning in March. Hattie Bright leapt out of bed, pulled on her Dalmatian-patterned dressing-gown and stepped into her bunny-shaped slippers.

I can't believe I'm ten today! she thought.

Bursting with excitement, Hattie remembered the birthday sleepover she and her best friend

Chloe had arranged for that night. Then there were the animal-themed presents she guessed would be waiting for her downstairs! Hattie's family and friends knew that she *loved* animals and they always chose gifts with cute cats or dogs on them – or ponies, or rabbits, or just about any other animal anyone could think of. Hattie adored them all.

Hattie bounded down the stairs, but when she burst into the living room it looked just the same as when she had gone to bed the night before. There were no presents piled up by the old Victorian fireplace and none heaped on the sofa either. All she could see on the coffee table were two empty mugs from last night.



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Hattie couldn't believe it! No birthday presents and – even worse – she could see her parents in the hall, putting on their coats and getting ready to go to work at their vet's practice in town.

'Are you and Dad both going to work, Mum?' asked Hattie, who had hoped that at least one of them might have taken the day off for her birthday. Hattie's mum nodded as she tied a brightly patterned silk scarf round her neck. 'B-but don't you know what day it is?' added Hattie, not believing her own parents could have forgotten it was her birthday.

'Yes, of course,' replied Mum. 'It's Saturday.'

What a silly question! Now, we're going to be really late for our first patient if we don't get a move on. We should be home before lunchtime, though, and Peter's in his room if you need him.'

'B-but –' Hattie stammered in protest. She knew that Peter, her grumpy teenage brother, wasn't likely to even get up by lunchtime, let alone wish her a happy birthday.

'But nothing, young lady,' interrupted Mum. 'We really had better get going. So see you just after twelve. Bye!'

And, with that, Mum and Dad swept out of the house. The front door slammed and Hattie found herself standing alone in the hall,

convinced that this was going to be her worst birthday *ever*.

Back in the living room, Hattie slumped in an armchair with the phone, ready to call



Chloe and tell her how her birthday had got off to such a terrible start. But after a couple of rings Chloe's mum answered. She told Hattie that Chloe wasn't at home because she had spent last night at her cousin's house and was almost certainly going to stay there for the whole weekend. Hattie was devastated as she thought, *What about our sleepover plans?*

'I'm sure Chloe will tell you all about it back at school on Monday morning,' added Chloe's mum in a cheery voice. 'Bye for now, Hattie – have a lovely weekend!'

As Hattie said goodbye in a slightly shaky voice, she thought she heard a muffled giggle coming down the phone – a giggle that

sounded very much like it might have come from Chloe herself.

Hattie gasped and slammed down the phone with tears pricking in her eyes. Was Chloe actually at home after all? Was she there with some other friends when it was Hattie's birthday? The tears started pouring down Hattie's cheeks and dripping on to her dressing-gown collar. This definitely was the worst birthday *ever* – Chloe was meant to be her best friend!

Feeling really upset that Chloe could treat her so badly, Hattie ran upstairs and grabbed the butterfly writing set that Grandma had

bought her last Christmas. She sat down at her small wooden desk and rummaged in her kitten pencil case for a pen before furiously scribbling down how she felt:

Dear Chloe,

I thought it was bad enough when my mum and dad forgot my birthday, but now it looks like you have too! Your mum says you probably won't be here for my birthday sleepover either, even after we spent all that time planning the midnight feast and which DVD we were going to watch. I thought you

were my best friend, but a best friend wouldn't forget something this important, so maybe we just can't be friends any more.

Your ex-best friend,

Hattie

She folded the letter and angrily pushed it into an envelope. That would show Chloe! Hattie was never going to trust her, or anyone, again – ever.

Before writing Chloe's name on the envelope, Hattie paused just for a moment, feeling horrible. Did she *really* want to send this? Could Chloe *really* have done this to her? Then Hattie remembered the giggle at the other end of the

phone. Yes, she *was* going to send the letter. She wanted Chloe to know how upset she was that her best friend had let her down. Hattie felt so hurt that she didn't even care when a tear fell on to the ink, turning Chloe's name into a smudgy mess.

She stomped back downstairs, adding the envelope to a pile of her mum's letters that were on the kitchen table, waiting to be posted when she got home.

Still sniffing tearfully, Hattie looked at the big round clock that hung just above the cooker. It wasn't even nine o'clock yet, so there was a whole morning to fill when she should have been enjoying all her birthday presents. She

couldn't believe that *everyone* had let her down, not just her best friend but her mum and dad too! Hattie was just thinking about dragging her duvet downstairs and curling up on the sofa with a magazine when she heard someone knocking at the front door. *Knock, knock*. There it was again.

'Get that, will you, Hattie!' Peter bellowed down the stairs.

Hattie humphed. So Peter was awake after all, but just too lazy to come down and open the door – or wish her a happy birthday, for that matter.

She opened the door and peered out, but there was nobody there. *How strange!*



She was about to close it when something on the doorstep caught her eye. A little warily, Hattie bent down to take a closer look.

