



CHAPTER ONE

Tree Acrobatics

Princess Lulu grasped the lowest branch of the tree with both hands and swung herself backward and forward. After a few swings, she stretched high enough to curl her legs around the branch above.

Her curly black hair swayed as she climbed. She wore a short yellow dress dotted with tiny golden beads. It was her tree-climbing dress, and it was now extremely dusty. On her left hand she

wore a ring with a gleaming yellow topaz,
her favorite jewel.

Halfway up the tree there was a long straight branch, almost as straight and smooth as the beam in Lulu's gym. She loved practicing in the gym, but being out here with the sun blazing down and the breeze on her face was even better.

On her left stood the palace of Undala, with its courtyard and fountain, and on her right was the outer wall, with the golden grasslands beyond. In the distance, an elephant lifted its trunk at the water hole, getting its early-morning drink.

Lulu smiled and turned back to the branch in front of her. She wanted to see if she could do a cartwheel on it. She stood tall and gazed straight ahead, excitement fizzing inside her. Then, pointing one foot, she raised her arms high above her head, ready to cartwheel.



“Achoo!” The ear-splitting sneeze came from below, making Lulu jump. She wobbled and nearly fell off the branch. Grabbing on to the tree trunk, she peered down toward the ground.

Prince Olaf stood under the tree, his spiky blond head looking up at her. Lulu sighed. Olaf was visiting the kingdom of Undala with his parents, the king and queen of Finia, and ever since arriving he’d been following Lulu around. He’d seemed so nice when she’d met him before, at royal balls and banquets. But now she thought he was a know-it-all!

Olaf sneezed again. “Sorry!” he said. “I was just watching. I love learning acrobatics and circus skills. I was practicing them in your gym yesterday. Maybe I can teach you some?”

Lulu swung down from the branch and landed on the ground in front of him,

hands on her hips. “You were practicing in *my* gym?”

“That’s right.” Olaf grinned, not noticing Lulu’s frown. “I think I’m getting really good at walking the beam.”

“Really?” Lulu folded her arms. “How many times did you fall off first?”

“A few times.” Olaf didn’t look even the tiniest bit embarrassed. “Would you like me to show you how to do it? I can always hold your hand if you’re nervous.”

Lulu’s eyes flashed. Olaf was the most annoying prince she’d ever met! “No thanks!” she snapped. “I can turn hundreds of cartwheels on my beam, and I certainly don’t need anyone to hold my hand!” She was about to add that she would show him just how good she was, but the low *clang* of the breakfast gong interrupted her.