

CHAPTER 1

Maggie Sparks was a witch. A small, curly-haired, freckle-faced witch, who was usually full of mischief and fizzing with

MAGIC.

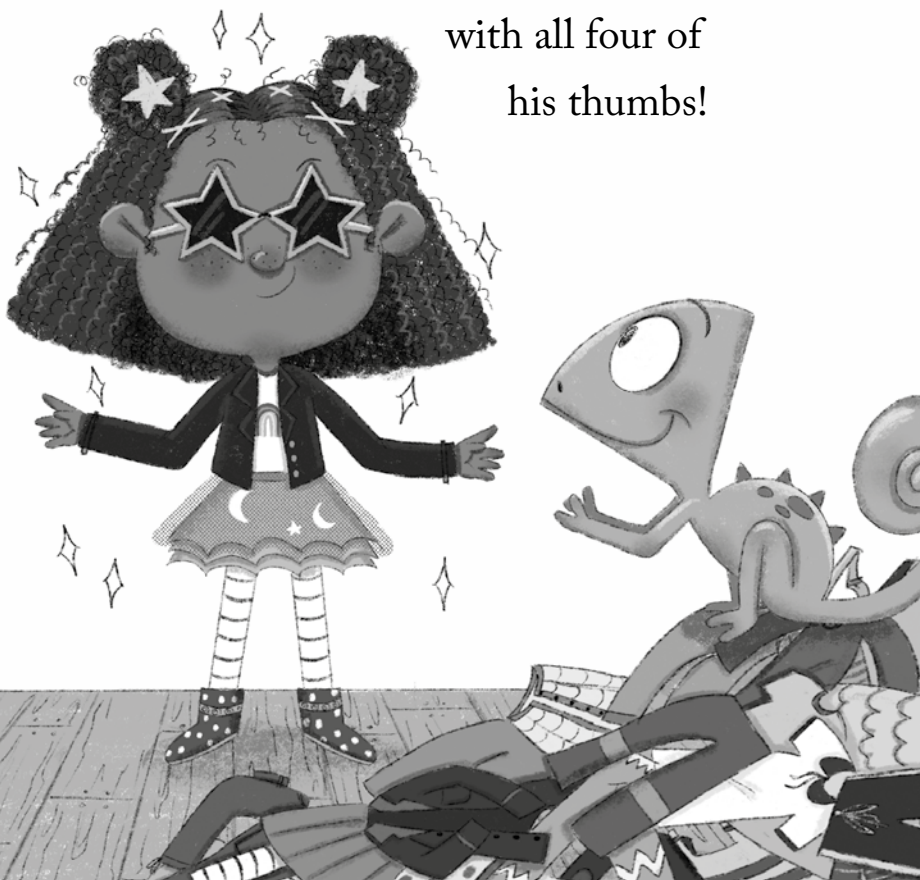
But today she wasn't *just* a witch ...



she was a fashion queen!

She was dressed to impress in stripy leggings, a rainbow T-shirt, a tutu, spotty wellies, a black leather jacket and her superstar sunglasses. Bat, her pet chameleon, was VERY impressed. He gave her a thumbs up

with all four of his thumbs!



Maggie hurried downstairs to show her mum and dad how awesome she looked.

‘Ta-da!’ she said, as she struck a pose in the living room doorway.

Mum and Dad looked VERY surprised, and very smart.

‘Why do you both look so posh?’ asked Maggie.

‘Because we’re all going to Aunt Celia and Uncle Roger’s for dinner,’ said Mum. ‘You can’t go dressed like that. Wear this instead.’

Mum handed Maggie a boring navy-blue dress and the smart shiny shoes that pinched her toes.

Maggie's face fell into a frown. 'What?! This is SOOOO UNFAIR!' she shouted. Then she stomped back upstairs to get changed.



The journey to Aunt Celia's house was awful. The car was hot and stuffy, and Alfie wouldn't stop screaming until Mum gave him a biscuit. Then he covered himself and everyone else in crumbs and biscuity slobber.

By the time Maggie's family arrived at The Fanshaw Residence (that's what Aunt Celia called her house),

they were all red-faced, crumpled and smeared with custard creams.



‘Tom, Hetty, you made it ... at last!’ said Aunt Celia, opening the giant front door.

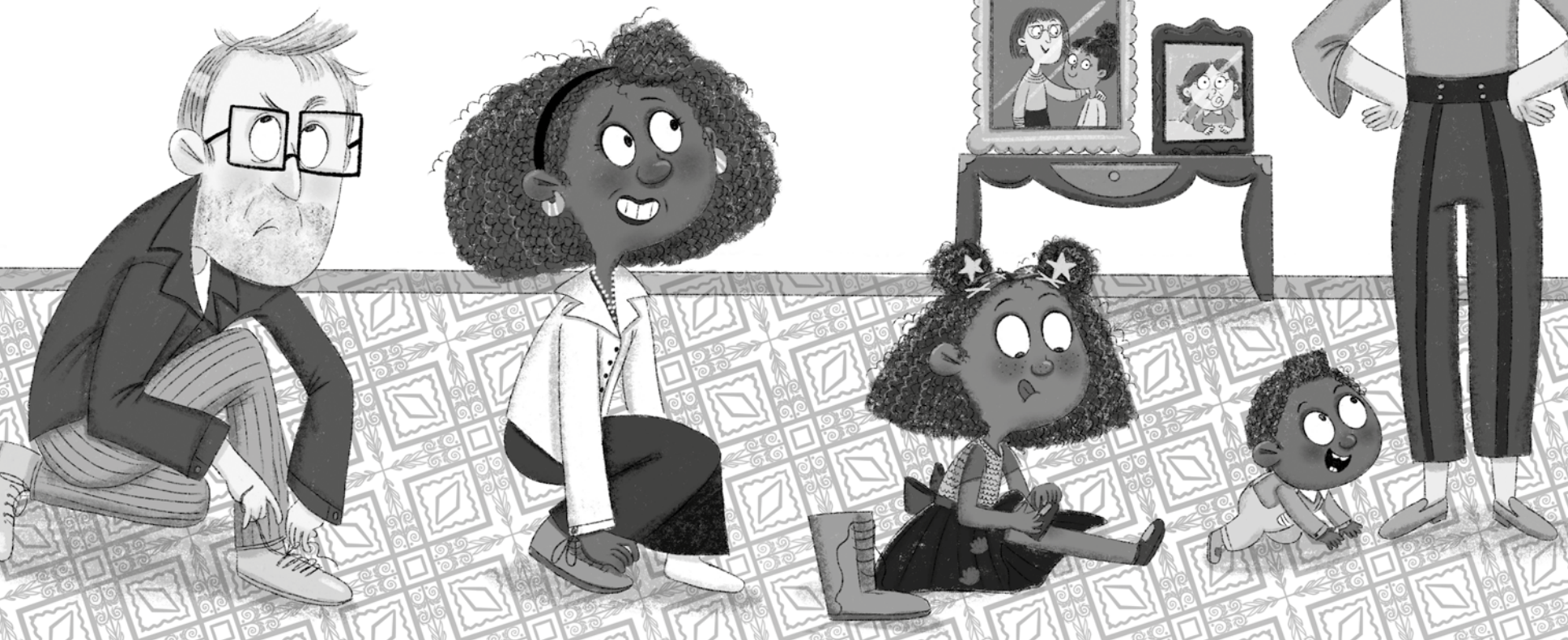
‘Yes,’ said Mum. ‘Sorry we’re a bit late, the traffic was—’

‘It doesn’t matter, Hetty, dear,’ Aunt Celia interrupted. ‘I’m sure you did your best. And I’m so glad you didn’t

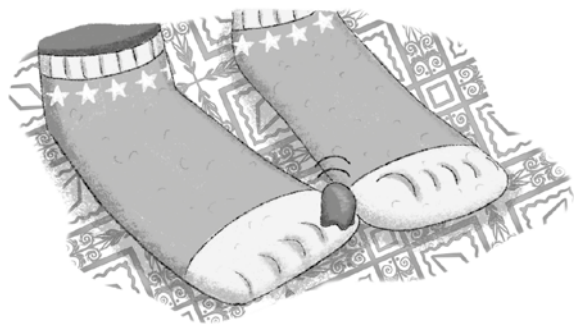
bother to dress up. We’re not fussy!’

Mum forced her face into a smile and Dad rolled his eyes.

As they stepped inside, Aunt Celia said, ‘Shoes off, please. We’ve got a new carpet in the living room.’



Maggie happily kicked off her smart shoes, forgetting that the sock on her right foot had a big hole in it. One toe peeped out and wiggled like a worm.



Mum blushed as Aunt Celia tutted.

‘Bring your shoes with you,’ said Aunt Celia. ‘I think it will be best if we eat outside, on the patio.’ She looked at Alfie and added, ‘Less mess!’

They walked through the hall, waded through the thick, new, living room carpet and stepped out onto the patio. Uncle Roger was lounging in a garden chair, talking into his mobile phone. He looked up and waved, then turned back and carried on with his call.

‘He’ll be with us soon,’ said Aunt Celia. ‘It’s an important business call from America. He works so hard.’

Does he? thought Maggie. She didn’t think talking on the phone counted as hard work. Maths homework, on the other hand – now **THAT** was hard work.

Just then, Maggie's cousin Ella came running towards them. She looked perfect, as usual. Ella had beautiful curly hair, brown eyes and white teeth. She was dressed in clothes that made her look cool and smart and sporty all at the same time. She was SOOOOOO annoying!

'Hello, Auntie Hetty and Uncle Tom,' said Ella.

'Wow, you both look lovely!'

Mum smiled. Dad blushed and said, 'Thanks, Ella.'

'And hello, Maggie,' Ella said, turning to face her.

'What an unusual pattern on your dress!'

Maggie looked down and saw two biscuity Alfie handprints.

Ella laughed.

Maggie didn't.



Dinner was awful! There was lots of weird-looking food and no chips. Worst of all, Aunt Celia droned on and on about all the lovely things she'd bought since their last visit, and how well Ella was getting on at school.

Maggie was **SO BORED!** So when Mum said, 'Ella, why don't you show Maggie around your lovely garden?' Maggie was happy to leave the table.



‘Let’s play Tap-it Tennis!’ said Ella.

‘Tip-tap – what?’ said Maggie.

Ella giggled. ‘It’s just like normal tennis. But the ball is attached to a pole with string, so you can’t hit it into next door’s garden by mistake.’

Maggie sighed. Hitting the ball into next door’s garden was her favourite thing about tennis. Especially when it slam-dunked into their pond!

Ella handed Maggie a racket and then hit the ball gently with hers. The ball swung round on the rope and Maggie hit it back.

Well, this isn’t too bad, Maggie thought, as she and Ella tapped the ball back and forth.

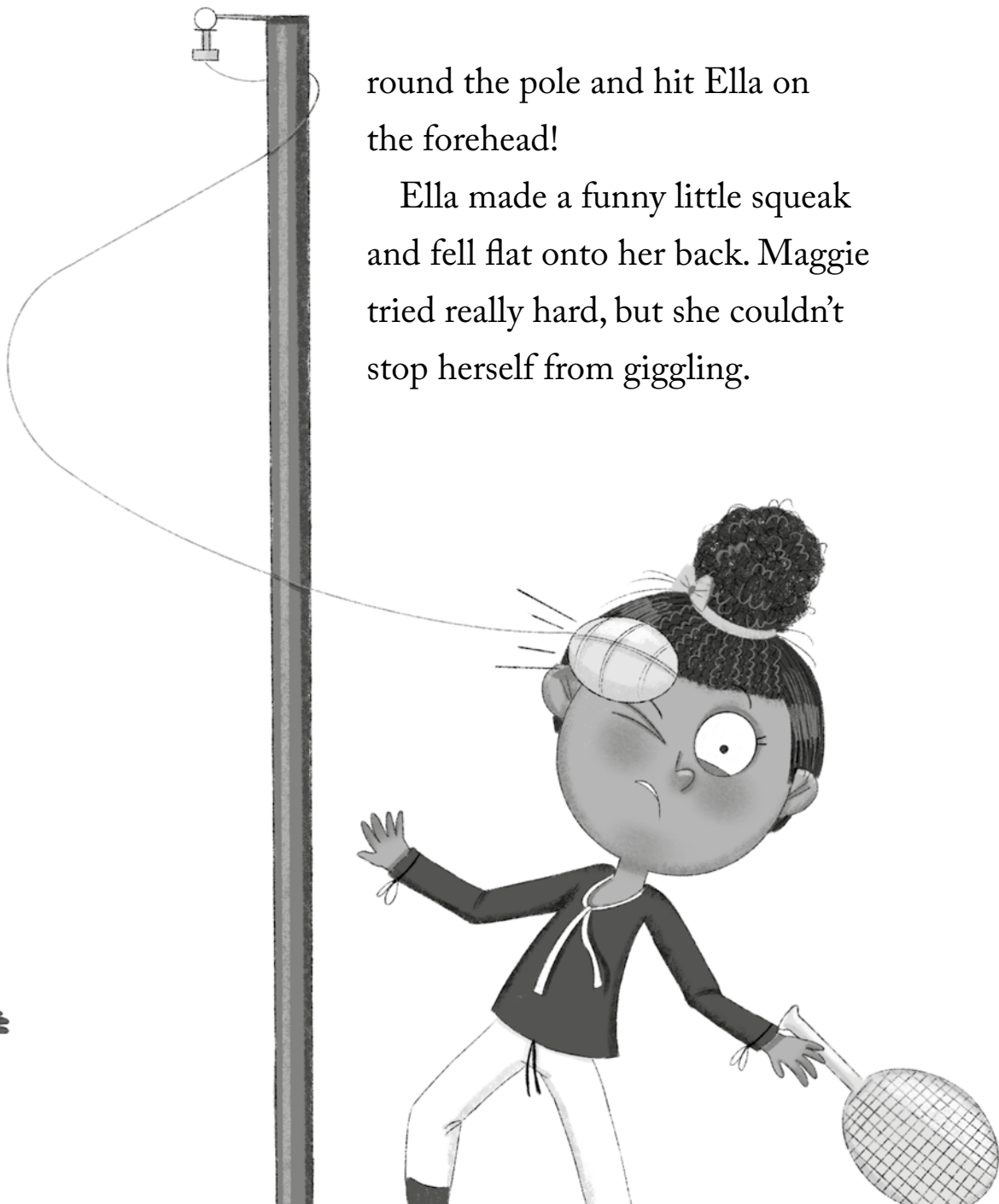


But after a few minutes, Ella started to hit the ball harder and harder. Maggie could hardly keep up! The ball was whizzing past her eyes like a streak of fuzzy yellow lightning.

Then Ella hit the ball so hard it made a THUNK! Maggie ducked just in time. The ball flew right

round the pole and hit Ella on the forehead!

Ella made a funny little squeak and fell flat onto her back. Maggie tried really hard, but she couldn't stop herself from giggling.

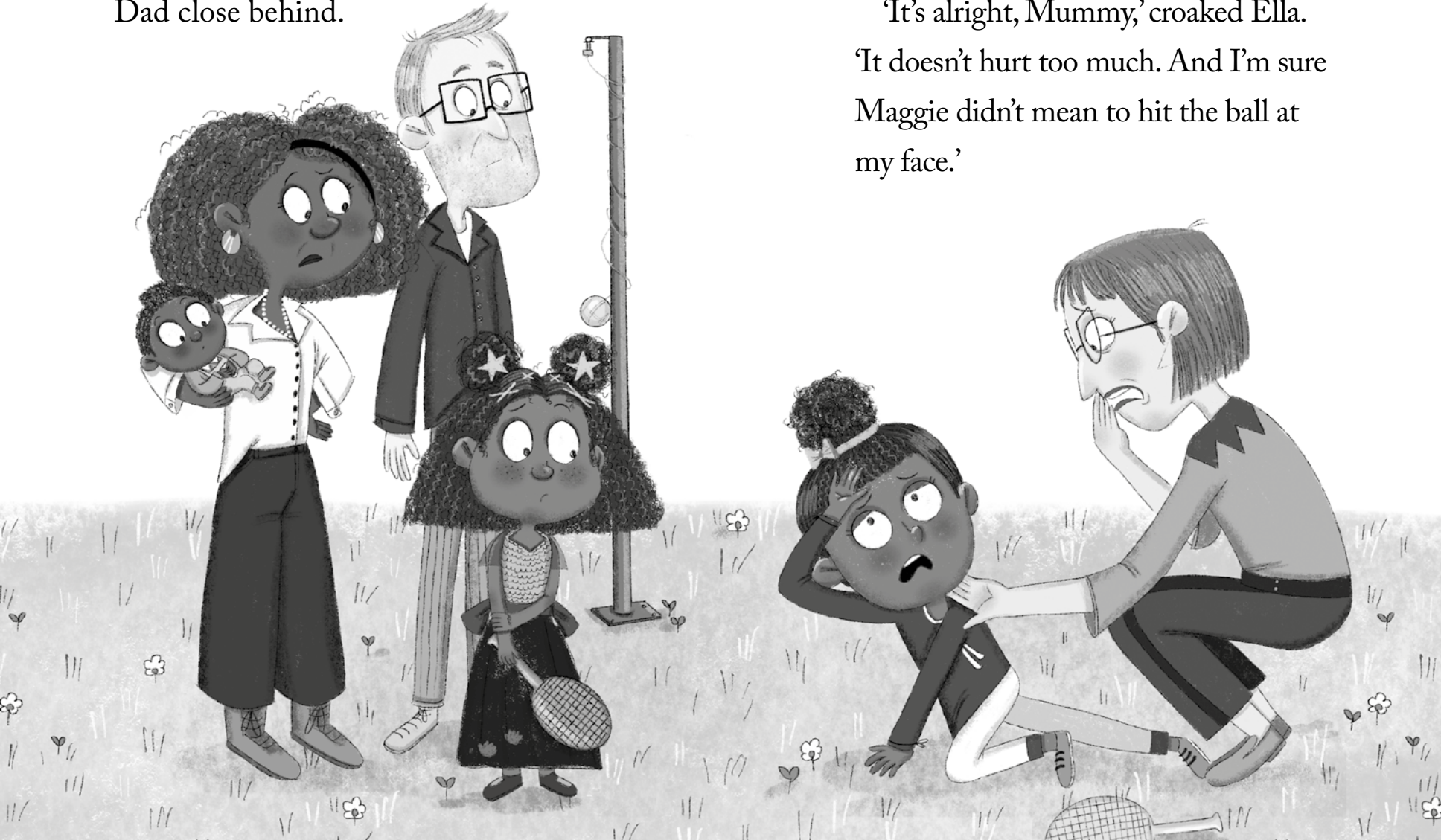


'ELLA! My poor darling!' screeched Aunt Celia, as she raced across the lawn, with Mum and Dad close behind.

'What have you done, Maggie?' Aunt Celia asked.

'What?' gasped Maggie.

'It's alright, Mummy,' croaked Ella. 'It doesn't hurt too much. And I'm sure Maggie didn't mean to hit the ball at my face.'



‘Oh, Maggie,’ said Mum,
shaking her head.

‘But, Mum, it wasn’t me!’ said
Maggie.

‘Oh, I suppose poor Ella
hit the ball at herself, did she?’
snapped Aunt Celia.

‘YES! SHE DID!’ shouted
Maggie.

‘That’s enough,’ said Dad.
He was wearing his disappointed
face. ‘Say sorry to Ella right now.’

Maggie stood with her
mouth open in shock. It was
SOOOOO UNFAIR!

Finally, she mumbled, ‘Sorry.’



‘What did you say, Maggie?’ asked Ella. ‘I couldn’t hear you. My ears are still ringing from that TERRIBLE bump on my head.’

‘I said SORRY!’ shouted Maggie.

‘That’s alright, Maggie. I forgive you,’ said Ella with a little smile.

Maggie’s face felt hot. Her fingers began to tingle and tiny sparks started to fizzle from her hair.

‘I think you’d better take Maggie home,’ said Aunt Celia, looking at Maggie nervously.



‘Yes, that might be best,’ said Mum. ‘I’ll just say goodbye to Roger—’

‘NOW, PLEASE!’ screeched Aunt Celia, as more magical sparks began to fill the air around Maggie.

Mum took Maggie’s hand and dragged her off to the car. Dad scooped up Alfie and bundled him into his car seat.

The car stayed frostily quiet all the way home.

When they got home, Maggie was sent straight up to bed. She stomped up the stairs and woke up Bat as she slammed her door shut.

Maggie told Bat everything that had happened. ‘It was so unfair,’ she said. ‘I told the truth and nobody believed me. Yet *perfect* Ella told lies and **EVERYBODY** believed her!’



I bet Ella hasn't been sent to bed
extra early.'

'You know what, Bat?' said Maggie.
'Telling the truth is overrated. I'm
going to try fibbing instead!'

Bat sighed and shook his head.

