

Letters Home

Castle Adventure

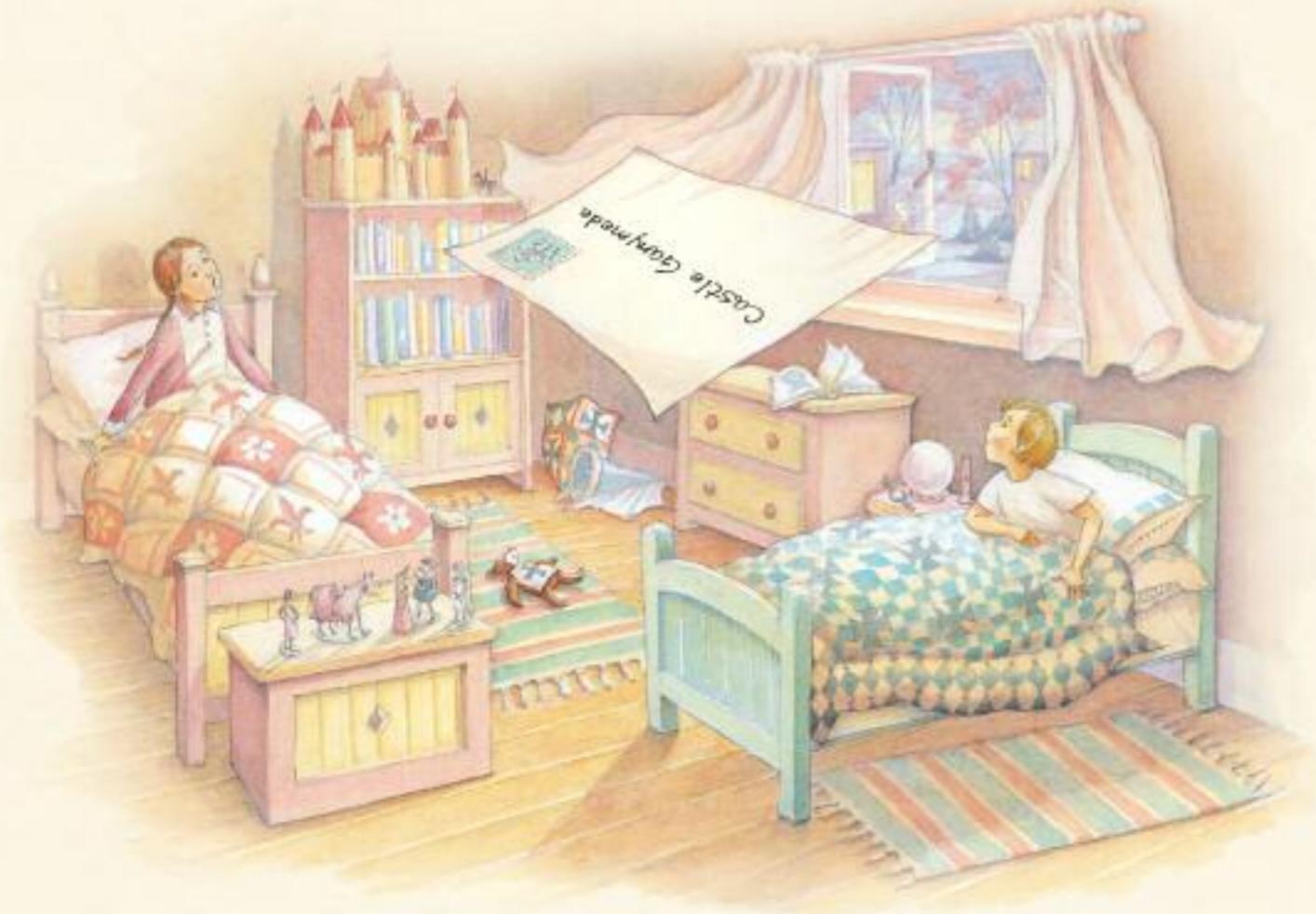


Letters Home Castle Adventure

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Text by Nicholas Harris



 Orpheus



"Hey, Charlie!" yelled Max. "Wake up! I think a giant bird has flown in through our window!"

Both children sat up sharply as a large, white, flat shape wafted around their bedroom. It wasn't a bird, they soon realised, but a huge envelope.

"Wow! It looks as if a giant postman has delivered us a giant letter," laughed Charlie. "I wonder who it's from?"

As it came to rest on the floor, the children leapt from their beds.

"It's not addressed to us," said Charlie. "I think it's meant to be delivered to a castle. Look at that address. *Castle Ganymede*."

"Hmm. I've never heard of that one," muttered Max (who was very knowledgeable about castles).

"It must be a long way away from here. Shall we see if there's a letter inside?"

The children turned the envelope over. The flap had not been stuck down, so they carefully lifted it open. They were disappointed to find the envelope empty. But they couldn't resist climbing inside.

"Hey, maybe it'll deliver *us* to Castle

Ganymede!" laughed Max.

In a flash, the envelope lifted itself off the floor, and, with the children whooping with glee, promptly flew out of the window.

"Hey, Magic Envelope!" shouted Charlie as they soared up above the rooftops. "Where are you taking us?"

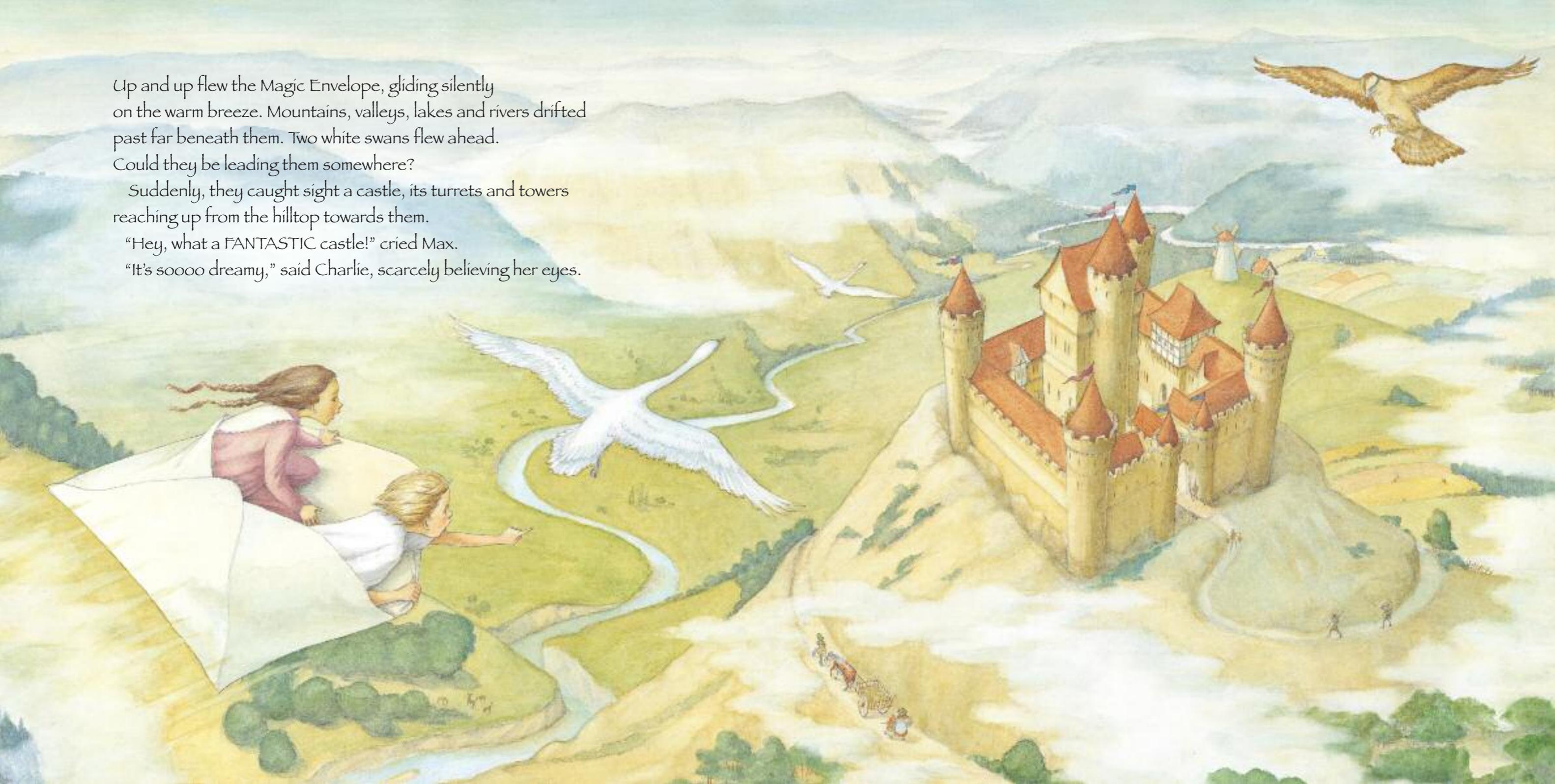


Up and up flew the Magic Envelope, gliding silently on the warm breeze. Mountains, valleys, lakes and rivers drifted past far beneath them. Two white swans flew ahead. Could they be leading them somewhere?

Suddenly, they caught sight a castle, its turrets and towers reaching up from the hilltop towards them.

“Hey, what a FANTASTIC castle!” cried Max.

“It’s soooo dreamy,” said Charlie, scarcely believing her eyes.





The Magic Envelope floated gently down to land on the castle drawbridge. Charlie and Max climbed out and stood gazing up at the gatehouse. The castle looked even more colossal than it did from high above.

The entrance to the castle was through a great arch. Three armed guards stood in their path. To the children's great relief, the men were smiling warmly.

"Welcome to Castle Ganymede!" said one.

Charlie noticed some other people peering at them from the battlements.

"Hello, I'm Charlie. And this is my brother, Max. We were delivered here in this envelope." They looked round, but it had shrunk down to a normal size. There was now a letter inside.

"Have fun at the castle!" it read.

"Remember, whenever you'd like to send a letter home, just let me know. I'm always ready to deliver!"





Two children rushed up to welcome Charlie and Max.

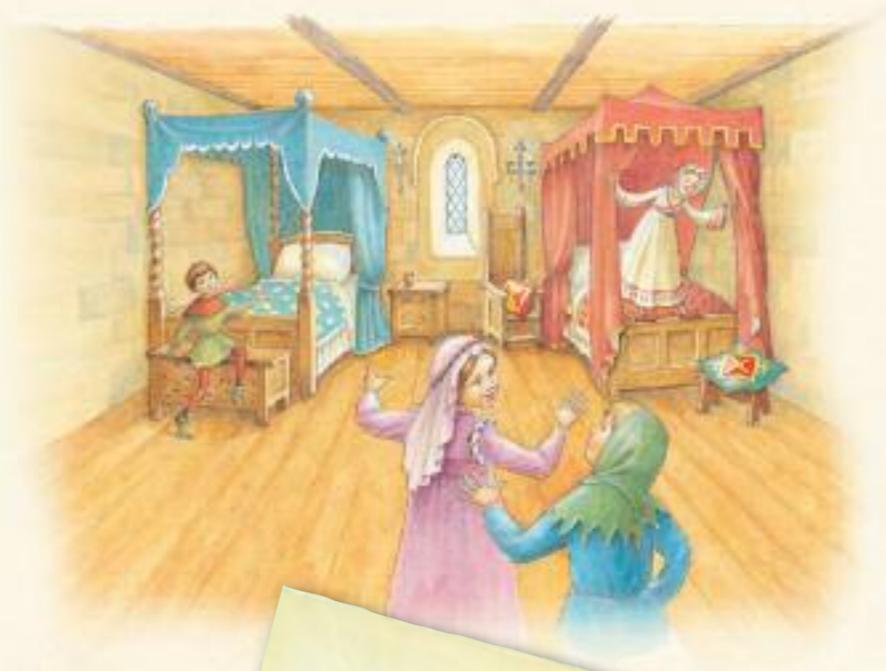
“Hello, you two. I’m Eleanor, but you can call me Ellie. This is my cousin Tom. We’d love to show you around the castle. Follow us!”

Quick as a flash, Ellie and Tom disappeared through a door into one of the towers. Charlie and Max chased after them. Just behind the door was a staircase that twisted round and round as it climbed steeply into the gloom of the tower. Shouts and giggles echoed loudly from somewhere above their heads.

“C’mon you two!” Ellie shouted down. “We’re nearly at the top.”

Charlie had to hitch up her dress to stop herself catching her feet in it, while Max leapt up the high steps as fast as he could.

They followed their new friends’ voices through a door at the top of the staircase.



“This is your room,” said Ellie, beaming. Charlie and Max gaped at the two magnificent four-poster beds. They had their own bedroom in a real castle.

It was *perfect*.

Later that evening, they wrote their first letter. It was to their parents, telling them they were safe and well. Off sped the Magic Envelope.

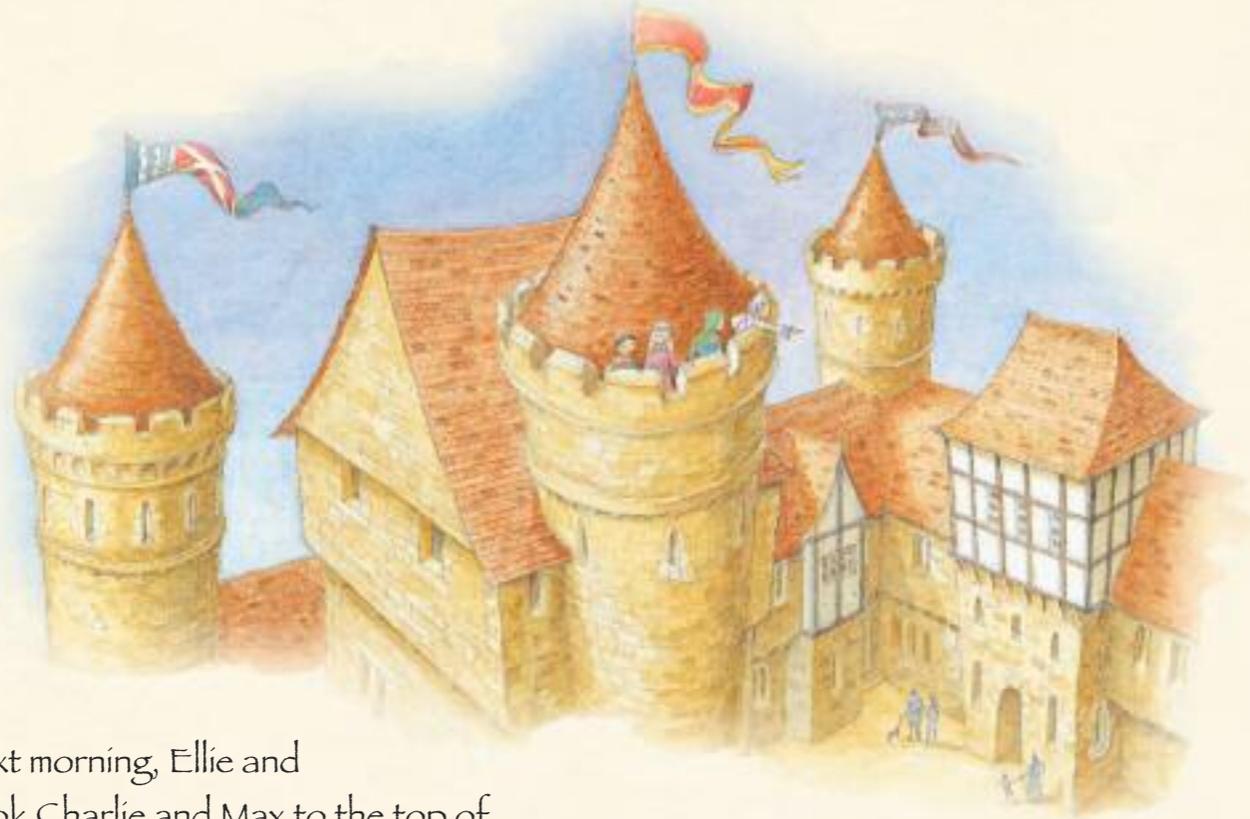
AT CASTLE GANYMEDE
16th May 1423

Dear Mum and Dad,

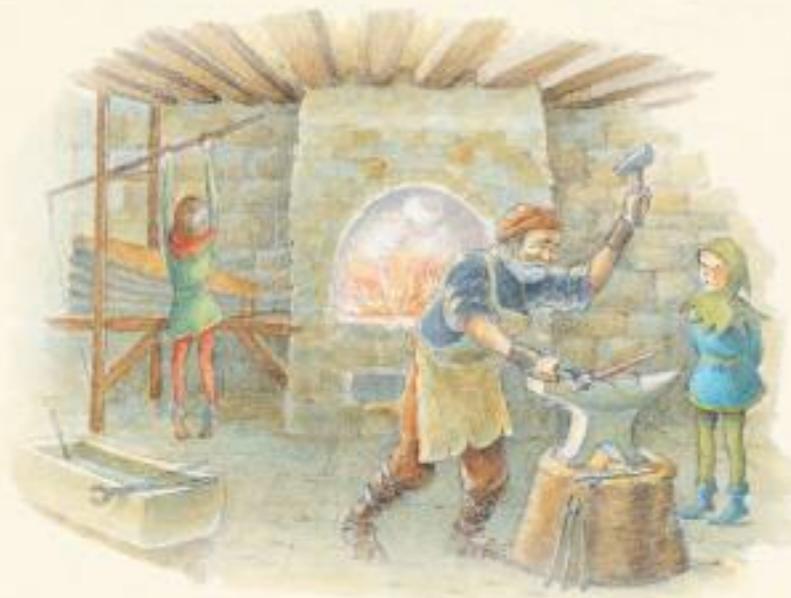
Sorry we won't be down for breakfast in the morning. A huge Magic Envelope came in the night to take us on an adventure to a castle. PLEASE DONT WORRY!!! We're both safe and everyone is kind and looking after us. Even the guards with their scary swords and lances are friendly! We've met two children who live in the castle and are about the same age as us. They're called Ellie and Tom and they're cousins. They found us a FANTASTIC bedroom in one of the castle towers. We've each got a cool FOUR-POSTER bed to sleep in!

Lots of love,
Charlie and Max XXXX





The next morning, Ellie and Tom took Charlie and Max to the top of the highest tower in the castle.

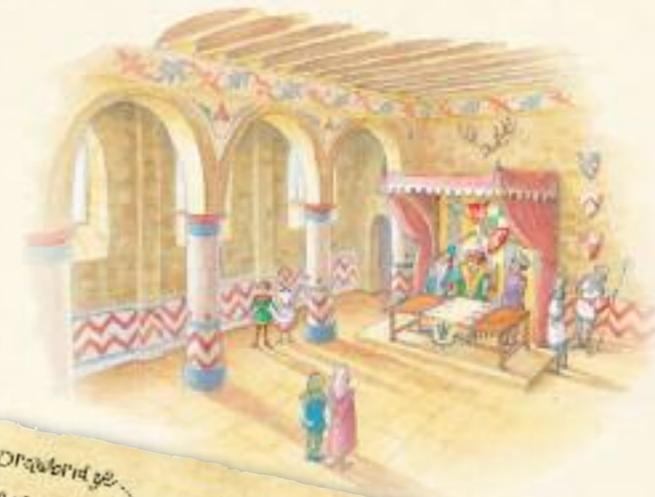


From the battlements, the cousins pointed out various parts of the castle: the gatehouse where they had arrived, the blacksmith's forge, the Great Hall, the kitchens and the dungeons.

Tom took Max to visit the forge. Tom worked the bellows to fan the flames, while Max watched the blacksmith hammer a rod of hot metal into a new shape.

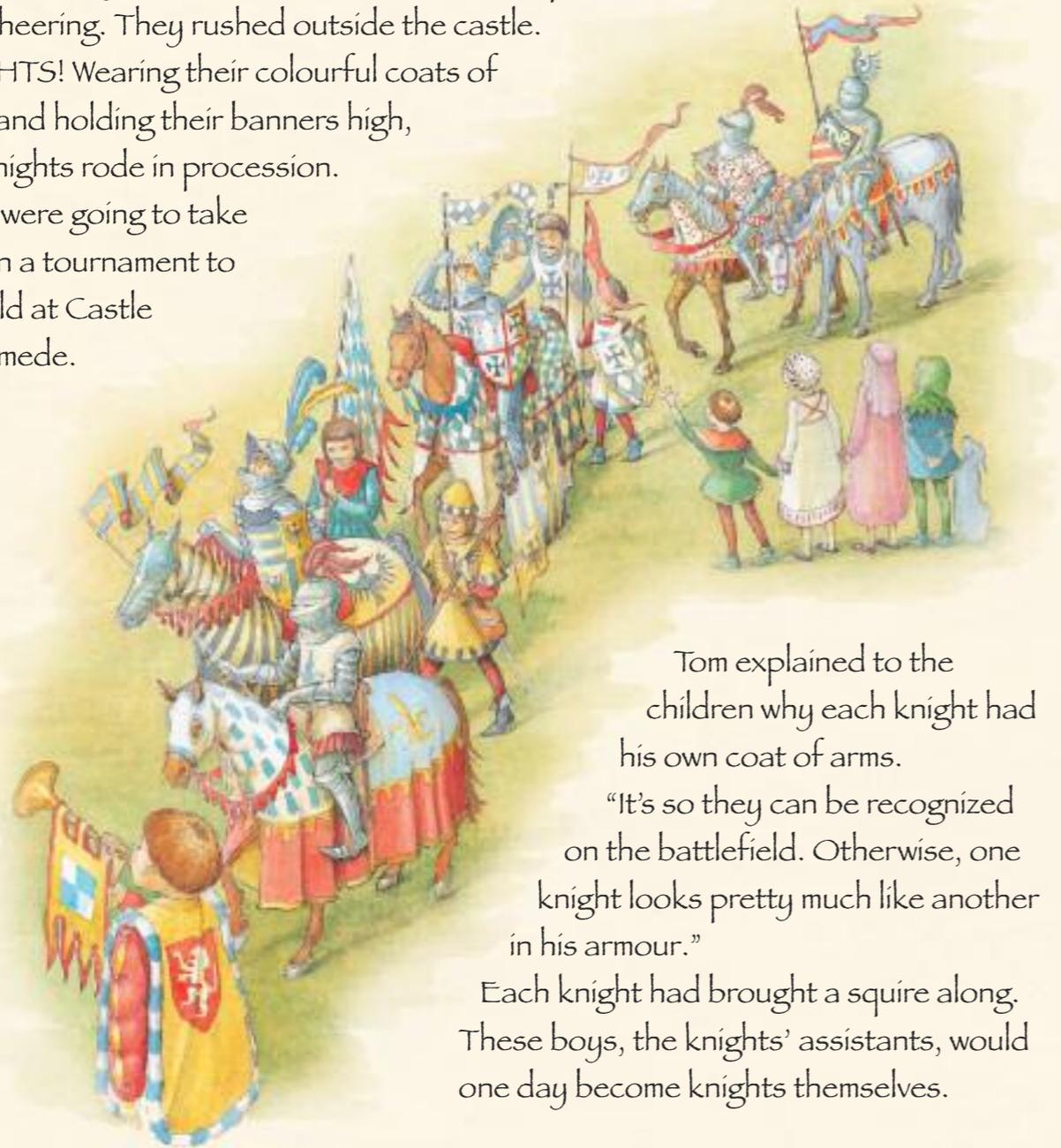
"My father would like to welcome you," said Ellie. Ellie's father was William Fitzwalter, the Lord of Castle Ganymede. Charlie and Max were a little scared when they crept into the vast Great Hall. But the lord was a kind man. He told them something very exciting was going to happen at the castle the next day.

Afterwards, Ellie and Tom led the children down some dark steps.



"We're going to see the dungeons now," said Tom. "It's my favourite place."
"There won't be any prisoners, will there?" asked Charlie, shuddering at the thought.
"No!" laughed Tom. "Only rats."

Later that day, the children heard distant trumpets and cheering. They rushed outside the castle. KNIGHTS! Wearing their colourful coats of arms and holding their banners high, the knights rode in procession. They were going to take part in a tournament to be held at Castle Ganymede.



Tom explained to the children why each knight had his own coat of arms. "It's so they can be recognized on the battlefield. Otherwise, one knight looks pretty much like another in his armour." Each knight had brought a squire along. These boys, the knights' assistants, would one day become knights themselves.



The next morning everyone was very excited. It was the day of the tournament! The boys decided to brush up on their own sword-fighting skills. Tom found some wooden weapons and challenged Max to a duel. Tom won the first contest easily.

"Hey, that's not fair," protested Max. "You live here all the time!"



Meanwhile, Ellie took Charlie to see the quintain. "The knight must aim his lance *exactly* at the middle of the shield," Ellie explained. "Anywhere else and the sack of sand will swing round and – thwack! Off he goes."

Charlie held her breath as the knight galloped towards the target ...

From a castle nearly, 600 years ago
Dear HENRY,
I hope you're not missing your big bro and sis too much! We're staying in a CASTLE, where there are REAL knights and dungeons. Here's a flag we found for you. It belongs to a knight we met called Sir Toby. It's his coat of arms.
Lots and LOTS of love,
Charlie and MAX xxxxxxx

At last the tournament got under way. The heralds blew their trumpets and the watching crowd stood to cheer. The joust was about to start. The knights' horses snorted loudly and set off at a gallop – each one heading straight for the other. Ellie and Tom were for Sir Toby, holding the red and white lance.

“WATCH THIS!” yelled Tom above the din. “Whoever knocks the other one off his horse wins!! C’MON SIR TOBY!!!”

The two knights hurtled towards each other, their lances lowered. The horses' hooves thundered louder and louder until they were only a few metres apart...

The tiltyard, Castle Ganymede
18th May 1423

Hey Harvey,
Good morrow, my liege! Yep, you'd better believe this: you've just got mail from a 15th century FORTRESS with a working drawbridge and portcullis!! The place is full of dudes with lances and crossbows!!! Guess we've gone 500 years back in time. It's a long story how we got here, but we'll explain later :-> Here is some chain mail for you. Soldiers wear a vest made of this under their armour. There's a TOURNAMENT going on here today. That's right – knights in armour jousting on horseback. Can't wait!

Fare thee well, sirrah!
Charlie and MAX



CRACK! The lance of Sir Toby's opponent, Sir Robert, snapped in two as it struck Sir Toby's shield. But at precisely the same moment Sir Toby's lance hit Sir Robert on the side of his helmet and he was tipped back off his horse.

"OOH!" went the children.

"THUD!!" went Sir Robert as he crashed to the ground, his shield, his shattered lance and his helmet flying in all directions.

"HOORAY!" went the crowd (for Sir Toby had many supporters at Castle Ganymede).



Moments later, a dazed Sir Robert sat up. He checked to see whether his jaw was still working. He looked around to see if he was all in one piece. Thankfully, he had no wounds – except to his pride.

Meanwhile, a beaming Sir Toby, the victor, dismounted to loud applause. One of his keenest admirers, Lady Matilda, stepped forward to greet him. She offered him a bouquet of flowers – and a warm smile. Blushing, he thanked her shyly.

"Aw, it's soooo romantic," sighed Charlie.

Dear Granny and Granddad,
We hope Mum and Dad have already told you about our great castle adventure, and that you're NOT TO WORRY about us!!!

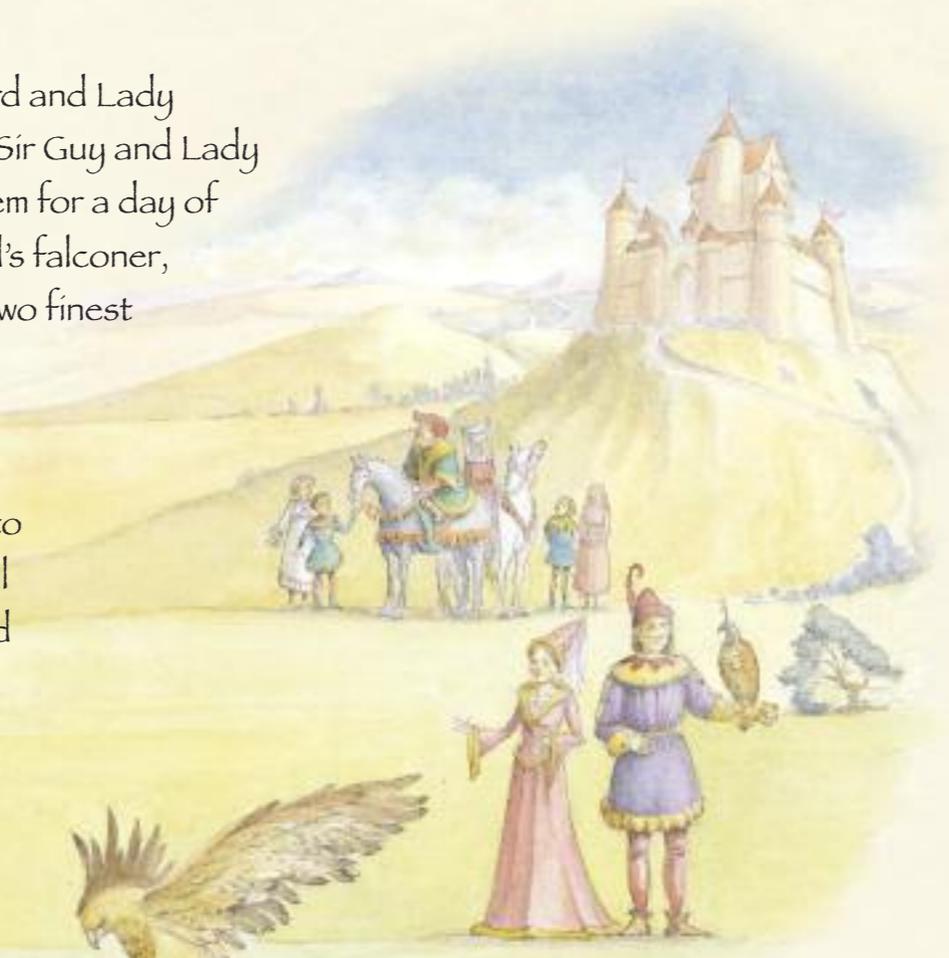
Today we went to a tournament. In the joust, a knight called Sir Toby (our favourite) knocked another knight, Sir Robert, off his horse, so Sir Toby won the contest. A very nice lady, called Lady Matilda, gave him a bouquet of flowers. We hope they'll get married because that means there'll be a feast in the castle!

Lots and lots of love from
Charlie and Max XXXXX

Castle Ganymede
18th May 1432



The next day, Lord and Lady Fitzwalter invited Sir Guy and Lady Matilda to join them for a day of hunting. The Lord's falconer, Richard, and his two finest falcons joined the hunting party. Richard had trained the birds to fly off, catch small birds in the air and return at his command.



Sir Guy and Lady Matilda enjoyed the sport, but now they had eyes only for one another. Soon, they asked to be excused, and took a walk in the woods – alone, or so they thought.



Land of my dreams
19th May 1423

Hi Maddie,

How PERFECT is this? Today I watched while a REAL knight – y'know, a guy wearing armour who goes round fighting tournaments and stuff – declared his UNDYING love for a damsel. They met after he won a joust with another knight. He then asked her to marry him! And she said YES!! OHMIGOD!!! Isn't it just like a fairy story? He's soooo handsome and she's soooo beautiful. Tell me I'm dreaming or something.....

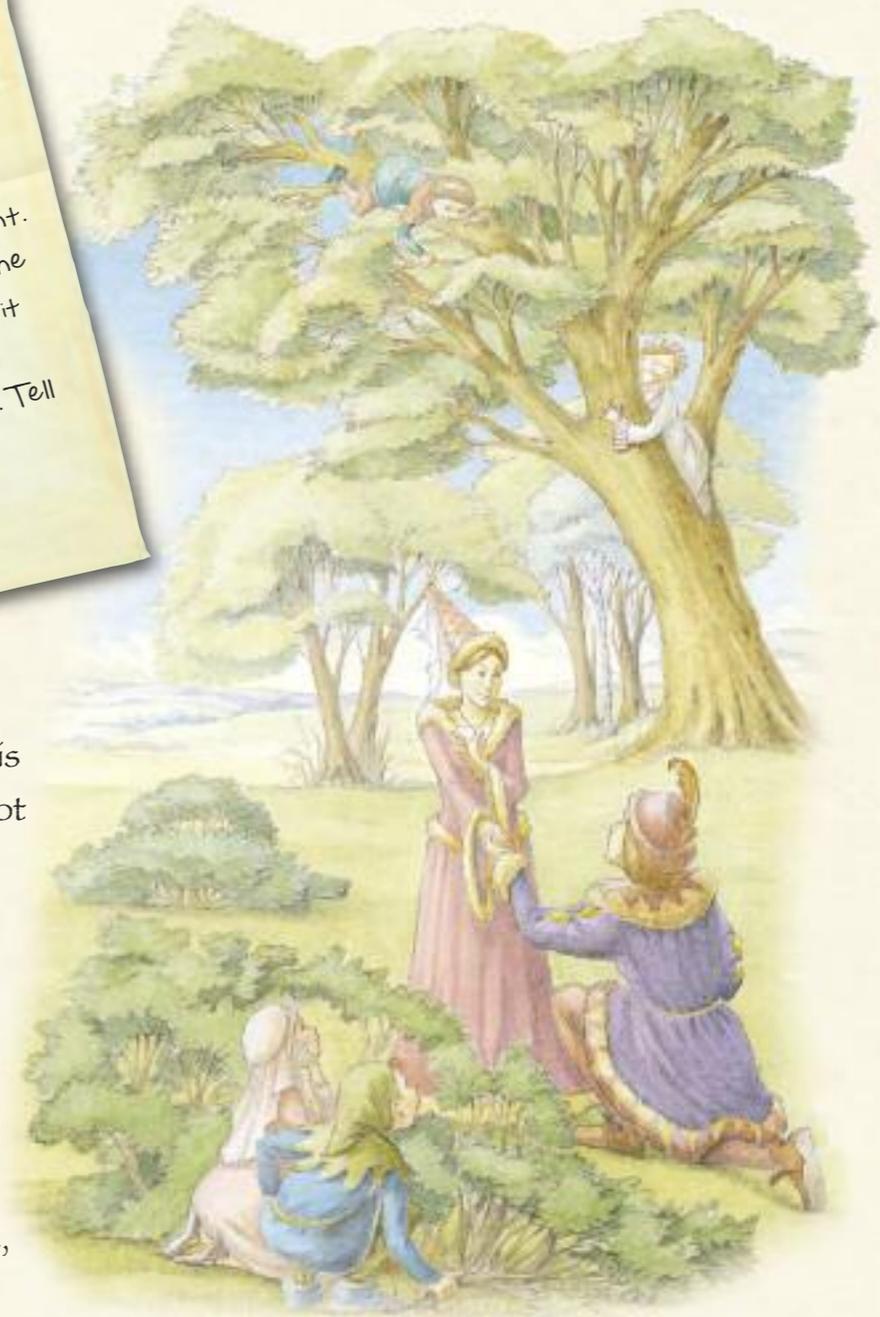
Love Charlie XXXX

The children followed the knight and his damsel at a safe distance to a quiet spot near a large oak. They carefully hid while Sir Guy went down on one knee.

“Will you marry me?” he implored Lady Matilda.

“Yes, I will marry you,” she replied, wreathed in smiles. It took all Ellie and Tom's strength *not* to cheer and clap.

“It's soooo lovely,” whispered Charlie, shedding a tear.





It was time to celebrate! Lord and Lady Fitzwalter announced there would be a feast in honour of Sir Guy and Lady Matilda. The children hurried to the kitchens to help the cooks prepare the huge amounts of food that would be needed to serve all the guests.

That evening, the Great Hall was filled with an excited hubbub. The guests chattered, musicians played, jesters performed acrobatic tricks – and more and more dishes arrived at the tables. Charlie and Max had never seen *anything* like it.



The Great Hall of Castle Ganymede
19th May 1423

Dear Mrs Baron,
We're sorry but we won't be able to have lunch at school today. But you don't have to worry about us going hungry. Today we're having a massive FEAST with enough food to keep us going for weeks!
We thought you might like to have some tips to cook a feast for school lunch. How about this?

Oysters steamed in milk
Tarts of spicy pork and dates
Roast Goose with grapes and garlic
Stewed cabbage with cinnamon

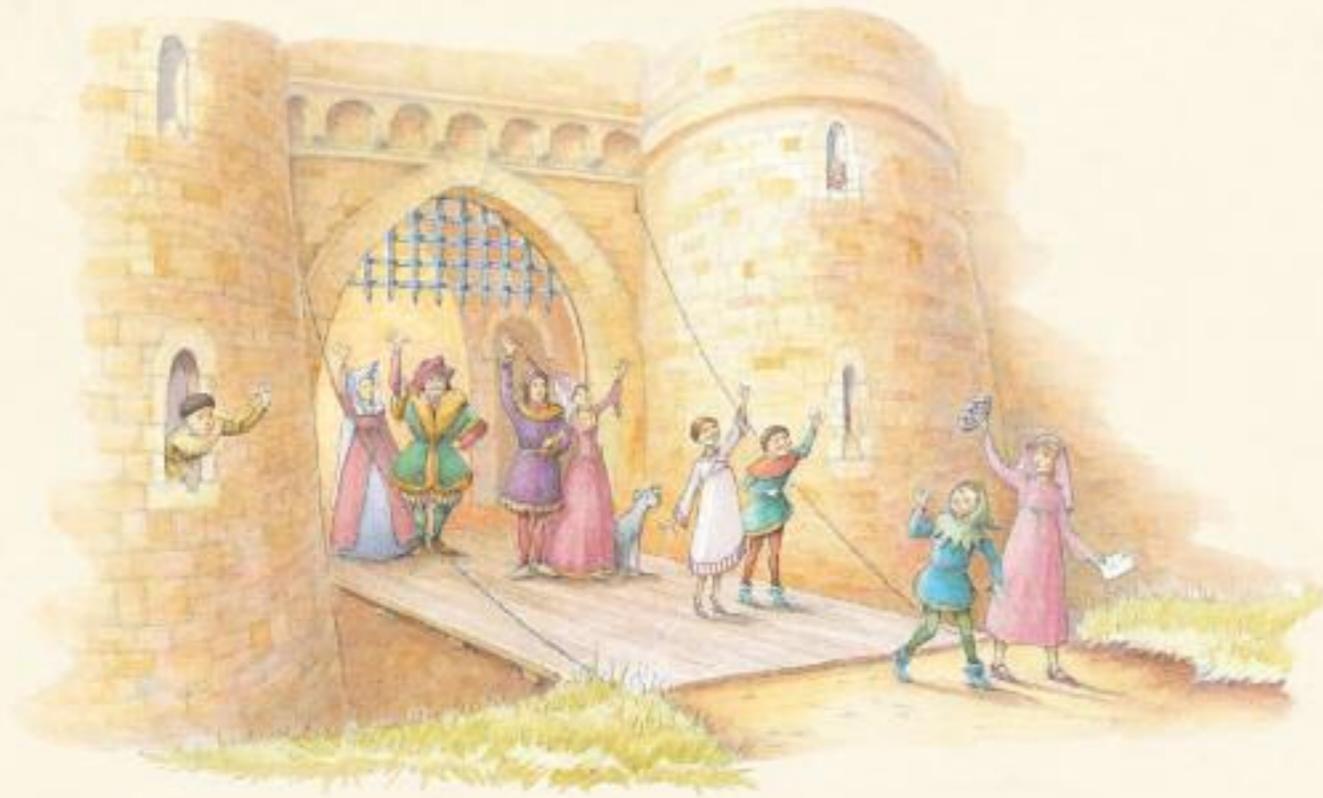
Best wishes from
Charlie and Max Morgan



It was well past bedtime and the two young time travellers had to set off for home. The Magic Envelope arrived with their home address on it.

“Here,” said Ellie to Charlie. “Take my bonnet with you to remember me by.” Trying hard not to cry, Charlie thanked her.

Lord and Lady Fitzwalter, Sir Guy and Lady Matilda and Ellie and Tom all came to the castle gatehouse to wave goodbye to the children.



The Magic Envelope was once again large enough for the children to climb into it. There was even a pillow each, to make their journey home more comfortable.

Up and up they flew, narrowly avoiding collision with a startled owl. Soon the great castle was no more than a distant speck

in the dusky landscape. But the children – Charlie still clutching Ellie’s bonnet – had long since fallen asleep. As the Magic Envelope sped through the night, they dreamed of tournaments and falcons, dungeons and turrets, knights and damsels...





The next thing the children knew the sun was streaming through their bedroom window. Mum and Dad were standing in the room holding a letter.

“A letter arrived for us this morning,” said Mum. “Funnily enough, it seems to have come from you two!”

“What I want to know,” said Dad, “is how it was sent from a *castle*, when you’ve been tucked up in bed all night – hmm?”

Charlie and Max exchanged glances and beamed happily.

“So, what do you think of my new hat?” giggled Charlie.