

CHAPTER 5
BALLERINAS AND DAISIES

At this point, most twelve-year-olds would have gone for help. Or at the very least gone shrieking down the hall and jumped under the covers of their parents' bed.

Katherine did neither of these things. Instead, she stared the gargoyle right in the eye and tried to look fierce. Milly growled encouragement. Katherine gulped. She inched her window open a crack, and as quietly as she could, whisper-shouted down to the gargoyle.

"Hey! What the heck are you doing? You can't throw stones at my window!"

The gargoyle didn't miss a beat. He squared his little shoulders, stuck his tongue out at her, then smiled. His tiny lips pulled apart to show a very sharp row of glittering points. It was a sneering smile, not a cheerful, welcoming, happy smile.

She was a little offended and surprised at his rudeness. "You're really rude!" she yelled quietly. "Don't just smile at me. Explain yourself!" Katherine knew this last command was a rather weak one, copied

from unimaginative adults trying to "get to the bottom of things", but it was all she could come up with at the moment.

Then she heard a low chuckle, the same chuckle she heard the night before in the bushes, and he stuck his tongue out at her once more, turning his back on her.

"How rude! He really is rude, Milly." Katherine was getting annoyed with him now. Who did he think he was? This was her house, her backyard, after all.

She and Milly could only watch helplessly as he walked casually over to the back door and bent down to pick something up. He knew he was being watched, but he didn't seem to care.

Have you ever seen a gargoyle walk? It isn't very pretty or graceful. It's really more of a waddle, since they have very thick legs, wide sharp-toed feet, and their arms drag along the ground. They tend to look somewhat off balance, since their leathery wings are very heavy and throw them backwards. It makes them look slightly "off-kilter", as Katherine's grandmother would say.

Katherine was wondering what he was picking up? He seemed very interested in his squat little feet and was doing something to them.

Suddenly, it came to her. Her shoes! She had left her new red shoes with the white stripes beside the back door!

"Oh, no!" she groaned. As he waddled back into full view, she realized to her dismay that she was right. The gargoyle had taken her shoes and stuffed them onto his own ugly feet!