Fairy Tale Castle Party in your Pad

Once upon a time...

Your Party...

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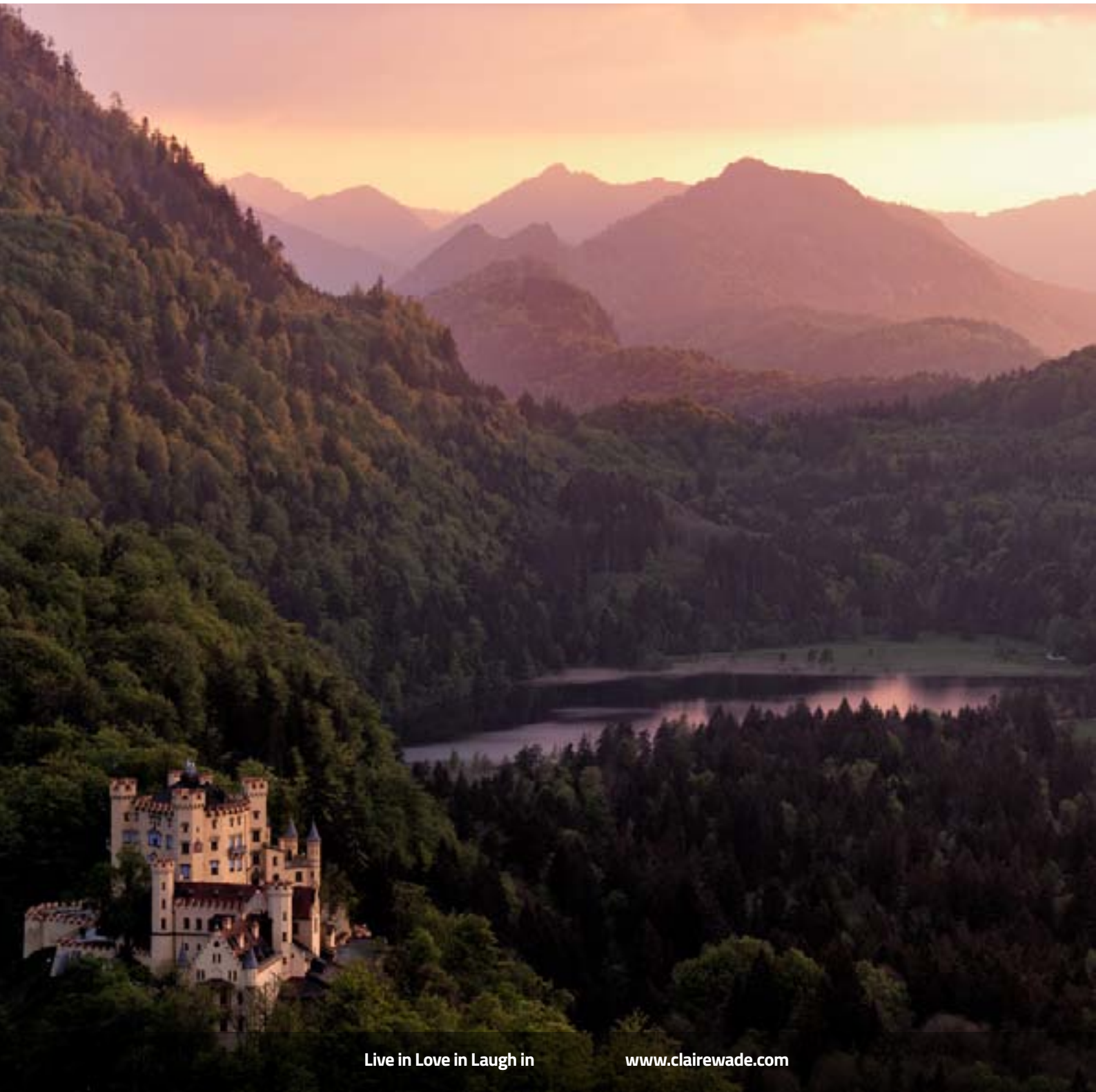


Fairy Tale Castle Adventure

Hi, come in, come in...

Welcome to the Party in your Pad! I am so pleased you can join me and the other party guests from all over the world. Whether you've never been to a virtual party before or you're a seasoned party go-er, you are in for a lot of fun.

It can feel a little surreal at times; but just go with it. If you relax and let yourself be whisked away on the journey, then you're going to have a great time and make lots of special memories.

Coming up with the idea...

My very first party was for my 19th birthday, when I was bedbound and feeling lonely. I sent out little chocolate teacakes and candles for my friends to light and sing Happy Birthday! I felt surrounded by them, even though they were miles away.

The parties have grown so much over the past ten years and now are all singing and dancing - okay more like audio and cool e-magazine; but they are what I'd always dreamed they would be.

I'm now organising a party every couple of months and have had so much fun, meeting lots of new people and making fab friends. I love having something to look forward to, especially when I feel so left out hearing what other people are up to.

I have my own social life for the first time in years and that is so amazing - and exciting!

Okay so let's get down to the juicy details, how does this Party in your Pad thing all work?

Where to start?

First step is to download the party. There's an e-magazine and an mp3 audio. Both of these can be looked at or listened to on the exclusive party page.

Can't spend much time on a computer? Me either, so just download them to your hard drive, smart phone or notebook and you can print them off, load them onto your mp3 player, or just browse as and when you are able.

Audio or Magazine?

The mp3 has the audio party experience, recorded in my own dulcet (kind of) tones. You can listen to it while relaxing, either with your eyes shut, to help you imagine it or while looking through the magazine where you'll find accompanying photos, if you find visualising a challenge then this makes it much easier.

The magazine also has the written version along with the photos, as well as the recipes and activities you can do to help your party go with a swing!

You can do as much or as little as you are able: feel free to customise it to your own needs. You don't have to fit it all into a single day, you can spread it out over days or weeks.

Mingling with the guests and making new friends...

Don't forget to stop by the Facebook group and say hi.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/liveinloveinlaughin

Share photos of you at the party, the outfit and diamonds you choose to "wear" and any crafts you make during the party.

Introduce yourself, just like at a normal party, jump into conversations, add comments, share any fun ideas you have had for the party that others might enjoy too. Don't feel nervous or shy, it's natural, I get like that too; but everyone is warm and friendly. We are all here to have a fab time and sharing the party with others is a huge part of that!

Remember...

This is your party - it's all about you having a great time, so do what feels good, adapt it to suit your needs and abilities and most importantly....

Have fun!

Claire x.

Fairy Tale Castle

Today you feel like escaping into a book. You want to lose yourself in someone else's adventure, so you head to your book shelf and begin your search for the perfect one. You contemplate all the worlds, journeys and adventures that are just waiting for you. How can you possibly choose just one?

Maybe you should take pot luck? See which one jumps out at you. Resting your hand on the shelf, you run the tips of your fingers along the books. You trace the lettering of the titles and authors, feeling the faint creases that mark the spines, clear signs of your favourite, well read stories. You feel the smooth glossy covers of the paperbacks and the dust jackets of the hardback books. You keep searching though, not stopping until your hand reaches a large, smooth leather bound book. It's unfamiliar and you don't know how it got there.

Sliding the heavy book off the shelf you carry it across to the table and set it down. "Your Adventure" is written across the front cover in large swirling font. You trace the words with your finger and find the gold lettering is embossed, raised out of the smooth leather. You feel a slight tingle against your fingertips and a hum of excitement begins to build inside you.

Opening the cover with a creak of leather, you release the scent of old paper and something you can't quite place. Taking a deep breath you realise that it's the scent of libraries, of stories waiting to be enjoyed.

Turning to the first page, you see hand written words in neat calligraphy.

"Welcome to your adventure. Your journey begins here."

You feel the joy of a new story waiting to be discovered and reading on, you feel your heart beat just a little faster.

"Everyone deserves a little magic in their life, a chance to be the hero or heroine of their own story. Let me show you how..."

The words end there and you eagerly turn the page, ready to begin the story.

"Once upon a time, as all good stories begin, there was a castle. It was the most beautiful and magical castle there ever was. All who saw it, if only from a distance, knew there was something very special about it, they found themselves being drawn towards it, even when their journey was intended to take them in the opposite direction.

By day the castle glowed a beautiful golden yellow, like the walls were made from sunshine and at night the torches made it glow like a fallen star come to rest on Earth. It was a beacon for travellers, all knew they would find a warm welcome."

At a sound of bird song, you look up from the book and let out a little gasp. The words are lifting from the page, floating up into the air as you read. The black letters are swirling around you, spiralling in a cloud of consonants and vowels. Tiny full stops and small commas dance together as the walls around you begin to fade and you realise that you're no longer sitting at home. You're familiar surroundings are being replaced by slopping hillsides and a vast green forest. In the distance you can see a golden yellow castle, the orange tips of the roof and turrets catch the warm, afternoon light and give the illusion of a palace made of sunshine.

You feel a strong desire to go to the castle, to get a closer view and you take a step forward, ready to follow the path in front of you. You can see it leads down the hillside, through the valley and to your destination; but you only take a few steps when you hear the jangling of metal and the clip-clop of hooves.

You look up to see a man driving a carriage towards you. The beautiful white horse shakes its head, setting the harness jingling as the man pulls the black and red carriage to a stop beside you.

"Hello," he says, smiling down at you. "Welcome to our land of adventure. I'm here to take you to the castle." He hops down from his seat and opens the carriage door for you.

You step up onto the narrow black ledge and make yourself comfortable on the soft, red velvet seat, sinking into the cushions. He climbs back up onto his seat and with a click of his tongue and a flick of the reins, the horse sets off again.

The carriage rocks gently back and forth as you drive, the sound of the horses feet on the road is a rhythmic beat that counters the beautiful trills and calls of the birds. You search for signs of them in the trees; but they are hidden within the forest, their light, joyful song the only clue to their existence. They fill you with a sense of freedom and you feel yourself relax.

As you travel, you keep getting glimpses of the castle from between the trees and the closer you get, the larger it looks. Then you leave the forest behind and see it rising up in front of you. At the base of the castle walls, there is a picturesque village that you pass through on your way to the gate. There are people out walking, children are playing and everybody you see smiles and waves. You smile and wave back, feeling like royalty as the carriage approaches the gateway and passes into the castle keep.

The horse puts it head down as you climb the walled streets that lead up to your destination. The sound of hooves on the cobbled stones is loud, the sound echoes around you.

You come to a stop just outside the main entrance to the castle and the driver gets down to help you. You step down onto the cobbles and make a slow turn, taking in the magnificent architecture and the beautiful manicured garden, with perfect green lawns and sculpted plants. The babble of a fountain nearby tempts you to explore the garden; but then you catch sight of the open front doors. Unable to resist, you head into the high ceilinged entrance hall and gasp at the magnificent splendour.

The room is light and airy, with creamy coloured marble walls, high arched windows and candles suspended in sconces. They flicker with a bright golden glow, moving in the gentle breeze from outside.

In front of you are two great staircases one leading up, the other down, and you are unsure which direction to take. As you're hesitating, a smartly dressed butler arrives and he greets you with a small bow.

"Welcome to the castle," he says. "My name is George, I am the head butler. Please make yourself at home, you are free to explore the castle at your leisure. You have joined us at a very special time, guests from all over the world are travelling here tonight for a ball and we would be honoured if you would join us.

"The event will begin at dusk; but you will of course need to dress for the occasion. If you head up the stairs and take the third door on your right, you will find the dressing room. Marie is there and she will help you choose the perfect outfit for tonight."

You thank George and head up the wide stairs, sinking slightly into the thick red carpet, soft and deep beneath your feet. Following his instructions, you walk past the doors that lead off the landing, until you reach the third on the right.

It takes a bit of courage and a deep breath to open the heavy wooden door; but you've been given permission, so with a quick knock to announce your intention, you turn the handle and step in.

You stop just inside the room and look around at the exquisite outfits that are arranged on mannequins all around you. Beautiful long flowing dresses and smart tailored suits are everywhere you look.

You walk closer, unable to resist stretching out a hand and touching the soft material of the nearest outfit, feeling the delicate silk and then tracing the fine bead work that embellishes the bodice. You move onto a dark tuxedo that has sapphire blue buttons and a finely embroidered waistcoat in swirling blue and peacock green stitching.

There is a movement in the corner of the room and you give a little start, thinking that one of the mannequins has come to life; but you realise that this must be Marie. She smiles when she sees you.

"Hi, you must be here for the ball. Let's find you an outfit, have you got any preference? No? Well then please feel free to look around the room, you can try on anything you like. I know we will find something perfect for you."

Marie gives you some time to wander around the room, to examine each outfit and inspect them from every angle; but there's almost too much choice. How can you possibly choose?

After completing a second look around the room, Marie comes across to join you and stands scrutinising you for a second, lips pursed as she glances from you to the clothes. Then she breaks out in a big beaming smile.

"Yes, yes, I think I have just the thing," she says leading you through the mannequins to one that's stood by the window.

She's right, it is perfect. Seeing your pleased expression, she begins to take the clothes off the mannequin.

"There's a screen over there," she says nodding to the corner of the room. "Go behind it and get changed while I get these ready for you."

It feels odd changing clothes in a room with a stranger; but the screen is very tall and you feel sheltered behind it. Marie passes you items of clothing to slip on and helps you do up any of the difficult garments, fastening buttons and ties that you couldn't possibly do for yourself.

Once finished, she steps away and gestures for you to stand in front of the large glass mirror. You step forward and gasp at the sight of your reflection. You've been transformed. You twist and turn, trying to see yourself from all directions. You're smiling so wide your cheeks hurt and your eyes hold a new, excited sparkle.

"You look amazing," Marie says. "I think you need a few finishing touches, a diamond or two to complete your outfit and then I think it's time to join the ball. I believe," she says going to the window. "Yes, that's right, the guests are already beginning to arrive."

You walk across to join her and looking down on the courtyard, you see that carriages are indeed driving up to the front entrance and beautifully dressed men and women are climbing out. You feel excited and confident when you catch another glimpse of yourself in the mirror.

"Come, come, you can't be late. We don't want you to miss a thing."

She leads you to a table covered in beautiful jewellery, there are rings, watches, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, even tiaras and sparkling crystal glass slippers. You love them all; but pick out the sparkling diamonds that take your fancy. They really do add the finishing touches. With your head held high, you leave the room and retrace your steps back down the stairs.

You can now hear the sounds of a string quartet playing, the music is ethereal and enchanting, it draws you down the second flight of stairs and on to a large room where you can see people already dancing.

The guests are waltzing across the polished wooden floor, the women's dresses swirl out and around, as the elegantly dressed men dip and twirl them.

In the corner of the room, the quartet is playing softly, the bows of the violin and cello moving back and forth in graceful motions. You recognise the tune and find yourself humming along. The dancers seem to practically float, gliding in time with the music. You'd love to join in; but aren't sure if you could ever do it.

"You know it's really not as hard as it looks," a voice says from beside you and you glance across to see a smiling face. You do a little double take and blushing slightly, look back to the dancers while you compose yourself. Your dream date is standing next to you and they just held out their hand to you. "Come on, let's give it a try."

Heart beating just a little bit faster you take a deep breath and feeling caught up in the music and the magical atmosphere you allow them to lead you onto the dance floor. You find a small space among the dancers, standing still as you take up your position. It feels odd to be this close to a stranger, hand in hand; but their warm smile makes you relax. You're so close you can't help but glance into their eyes and then over their shoulder as you focus on the music. It's a little unnerving; but at the same time it feel as if you've known them forever.

At a slight nod, you both begin to dance, your feet moving forwards and backwards, traversing the wooden floor. Your partner seems to know what they're doing and they help guide you around, ensuring you don't bump into any of the other dancers. You start to relax, enjoying the mix of music and motion, dancing in sync as you spin and twirl. In your mind's eye you are the most elegant couple there and you're both certainly dressed for the part.

The music will play all night and you can dance to as many or as few songs as you want. There is a buffet set up, so if you get peckish you can go and help yourself to some of the delicious looking food.

With all the dancing and the music, you begin to feel quite warm and in need of some fresh air. On seeing this, your partner suggests that you head outside. It sounds like a very good idea. You allow them to lead you from the room; but instead of heading upstairs and out the front door, they head through a side door to a spiral staircase. You follow them up the steep stairs, running one hand along the cold stone wall as you go.

You feel like you've been climbing the stairs for a long time and are relieved when you finally step out onto the battlements. The sky is dark overhead and the stars are breathtakingly bright out here with no street lights to diffuse the night. You tilt your head back and stare up at the millions of sparkling lights, high in the heavens.

Going to the crenellated wall, you look out and realise you're so high up you can see over the whole valley. The forest you came through earlier is just a dark shadow covering the sweeping hillsides. It's cold up here; but it's refreshing too and you draw in a deep lungful of the crisp air, smiling at the puffs of smoke you breath out, feeling like a dragon.

Out of the corner of your eye you suddenly see a bright flash of light moving across the sky and you look up just in time to see a shooting star speeding across the dark night. You instantly make a wish on it and then watch its journey until it vanishes from sight.

Smiling you wrap your arms around yourself feeling a glow of happiness so warm it keeps the cold of the night far away. Then you hear the first booming toll of a bell, from somewhere in the castle. The bell rings again and again, and you look across the rooftops to a clock tower. You see that it's midnight and as the two hands reach the top of the clock, you count the strikes. As the twelfth one rings out and the resonant sound slowly fades away.

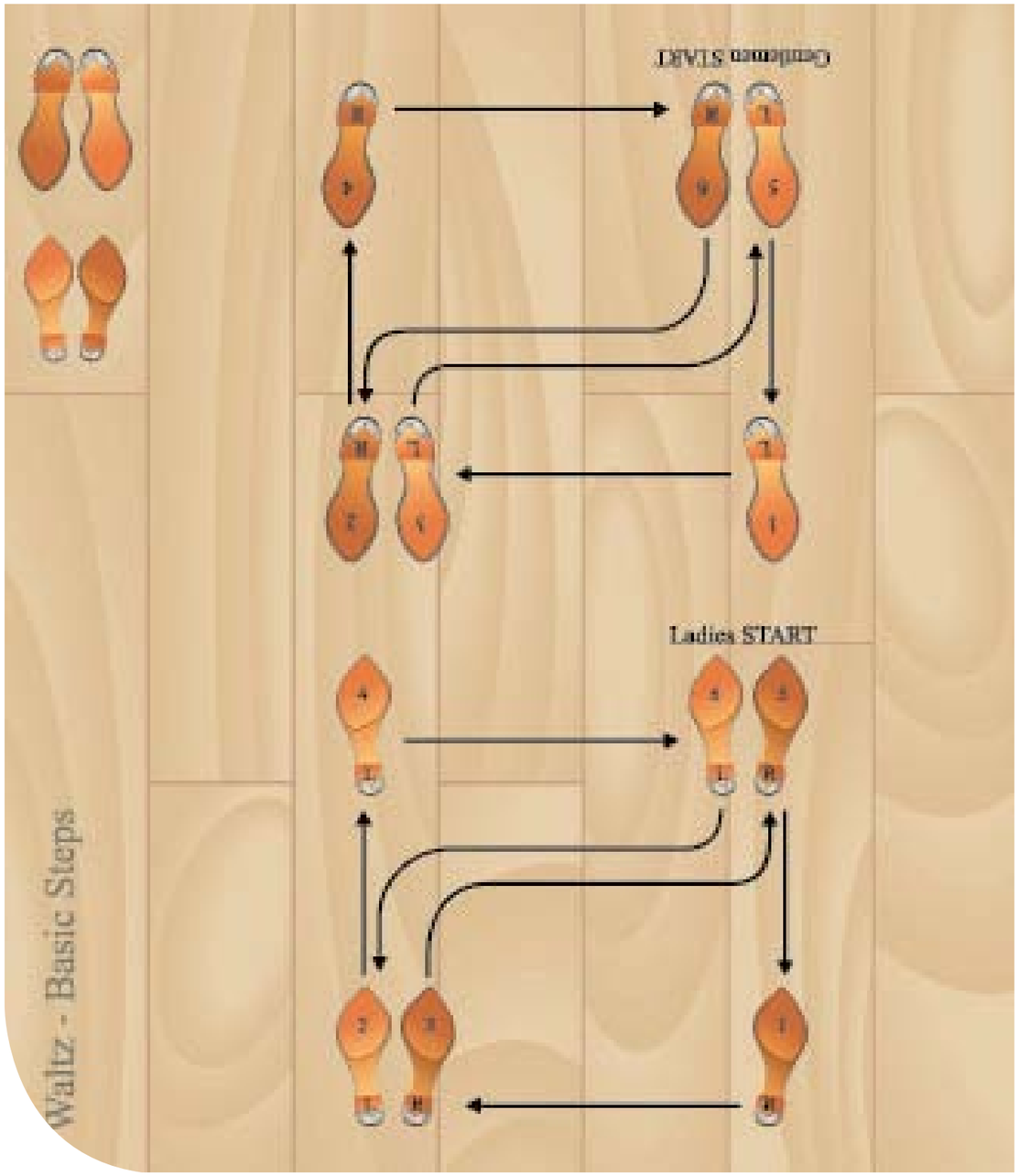
It's a new day; but you're having so much fun, you're not yet ready for the old one to end!

Don't worry, the magic doesn't end here with the strike of the clock, your carriage will not return to a pumpkin and your beautiful clothes will stay as they are.

You are free to remain in the castle for as long as you wish. There is a room made up for you to spend the night and the dancing will go on until dawn, so rejoin the party and enjoy the rest of your night. Have fun!

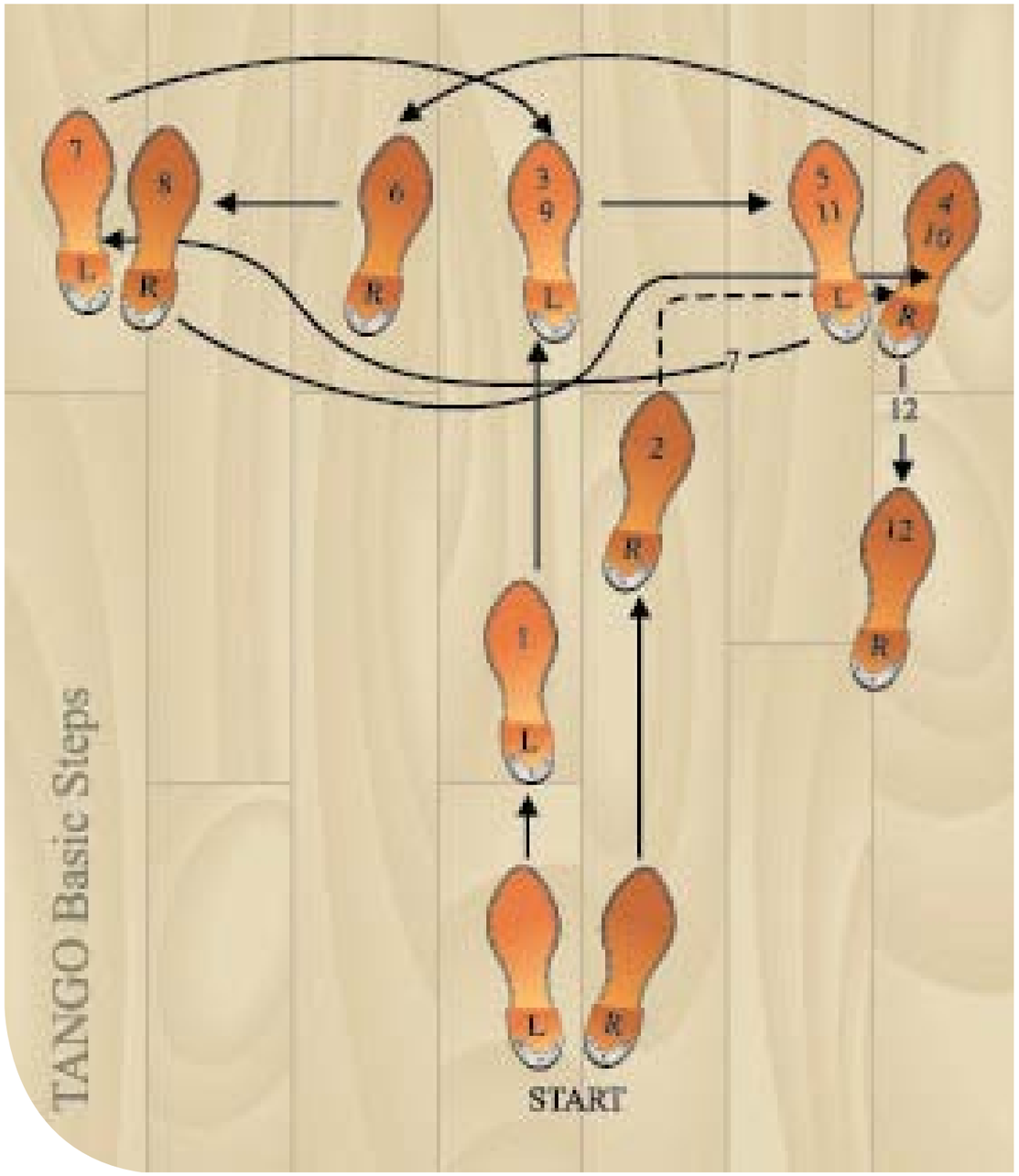
Learning to Dance

Dancing is an important part of a ball, so here are some tips on how to elegantly glide across the dance floor, without treading on any toes...



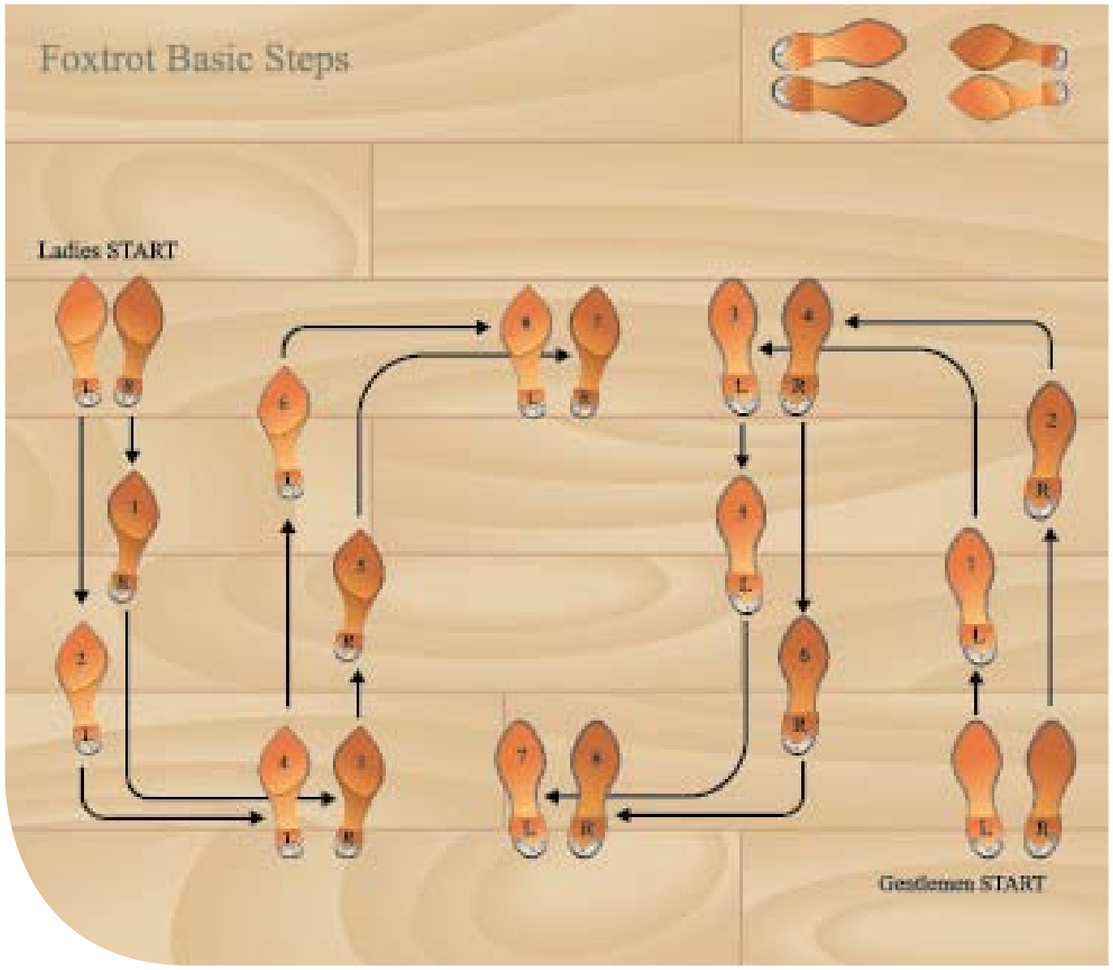
Waltz

The Waltz is the oldest of the ballroom dances, dating from the middle of the 18th Century. The dance caused a scandal when first introduced because it was the first time a man and a woman danced close together, with the man's hand on the lady's waist! Watch a tutorial here... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEqg4PxkyYE



Tango

The Tango is a passionate dance that originated in Buenos Aires in the 19th Century. It is a blend of music, dance, singing and poetry. It was forbidden in many public places because of its racy, "voluptuous" nature; but is now a popular style of dance.
Watch a tutorial here... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qY0_zp58ow



Foxtrot

The Foxtrot was developed by Harry Fox in 1914. It is a smooth dance with long, continuous flowing movements across the dance floor. It has an elegant and sophisticated feel to it.
Watch a tutorial here... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYV-qIdoCwE

Pumpkin Soup

Serves 4

- 450g (1 lb) pumpkin, peeled, seeded and diced into large cubes - don't throw the seeds away!
- 60g (2 oz) margarine or butter
- 340g (¾ lb) potatoes, peeled and sliced
- 1 tin (14oz) tomatoes
- 1.15 litres (2 pints) vegetable stock
- Seasoning

To Serve:

- 2 tbsp single cream
- Parsley, chopped

Directions

1. Melt the butter in a pan and cook the diced pumpkin gently for five minutes.
2. Add the potatoes and cook for a few more minutes.
3. Add the tomatoes, stock and seasoning. Bring to the boil and simmer gently for one hour, until the vegetables are cooked.
4. Liquidise the soup with a hand blender or food processor.
5. Serve with a swirl of cream and a sprinkle of chopped parsley.

Cinder Toffee

aka Honeycomb

Ingredients

- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 5 tbsp granulated sugar, caster or brown also work
- 2 tbsp golden syrup

Directions

1. Line a baking tray with baking parchment.
2. Place the sugar and syrup in a medium sized saucepan - this is important! It looks too big; but it's not.
3. Melt on a low heat until the sugar has dissolved. You don't need to stir it, just shake the saucepan a little to help it mix together.
4. Then allow it to boil, watching for it to turn a deep golden colour - make sure it doesn't go too dark or it will taste burnt.
5. It's done when it reaches hard boil stage - this is 138°C if you have a sugar thermometer. Or use a wooden spoon to drop a tiny bit into a cup of water, if it goes into a firm ball, it is ready.
6. Take off the heat and then add the bicarbonate of soda. Whisk it in quickly; but be careful as the toffee will bubble up - that's why you need a bigger pan than you think.
7. Immediately pour the bubbling toffee into the lined baking tray and allow to cool.
8. To wash the saucepan, fill it with water and leave to soak - the sugar will dissolve.
9. Once cool break the Cinder Toffee into pieces and enjoy. Be careful of your teeth!

Fairy Cakes

Cake Ingredients

- 115g butter
- 115g sugar
- 115g self raising flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Honeycomb Buttercream Ingredients

- equal quantities of butter, icing sugar and honeycomb/cinder toffee - so weigh your left off toffee and measure the other ingredients accordingly
- Edible glitter, available from online cake craft shops

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Place cupcake cases into a cupcake pan.
2. Mix all the cake ingredients together, a food processor or electric mixer makes quick work of this.
3. Fill each cake case two thirds full.
4. Bake in the oven until risen and golden. The cakes should spring back when lightly pressed and a cocktail stick comes out clean. About 15 minutes.
5. Leave to cool while you make the buttercream.
6. Blend together the butter and sugar to form a light, creamy texture. Stir in the honeycomb to taste. Then spread over the top of the fairy cakes. Sprinkle with fairy dust (edible glitter) to finish.

Entertainment

Music

To practise your ballroom dancing, you need some beautiful music performed by the fantastic Vitamin String Quartet who do covers of modern songs.
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL89003F041C22B82A

Movies & Television

There are more movies and television shows based on fairy tales than you can shake a magic wand at. These are some of my favourites.

- *Anything by Disney*
- *Once Upon a Time (TV)*
- *Beauty and the Beast (TV)*
- *The Princess Bride*
- *Ever After: A Cinderella Story*
- *Enchanted*
- *The Princess Diaries*
- *A Cinderella Story*
- *Ella Enchanted*
- *Jack the Giant Slayer*
- *Mirror Mirror: The Untold Adventures of Snow White*
- *Snow White and the Huntsman*
- *Another Cinderella Story*
- *Stardust*
- *The Prince & Me*
- *Shrek*
- *The Chronicles of Narnia*
- *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*

Write your own Fairy Tale

Fancy yourself as a budding author?

Have you ever thought of writing your own story? Did you enjoy making up stories when you were a kid?

Even if you've never thought about writing or think you have no imagination, you will be amazed at the stories you come up with in this fun game of Chain Stories.

Chain Stories are similar to the parlour game Consequences; but instead of writing single words on a piece of paper, each person writes a sentence to create a story. You can do this on your own or with others.

Chain Stories - In a group

Each player has a piece of paper and a pen. At the top of the page they write a sentence. For example "Once Upon a Time there was an old woman."
Then they fold the top of the paper over so the sentence can't be seen.

The papers are passed around, so that each person has a new piece and now they write the next sentence, below the fold. Once finished, fold the paper down again.

Keep passing the papers around. The story can be as long or as short as you want. Decide who is writing the last sentence then unfold the paper and read the story aloud.

Chain Stories - On your own

You can still create a chain story if you're on your own - you can do it via email, Facebook or Twitter, just invite some friends, explain how it works and have fun.

You will see what people are writing as they pass the story around; but you can still get really creative.

Alternatively create a chain story with sentences from some of your favourite books. Take out a few books or magazines, then randomly turn to different pages, selecting the first sentence that jumps out at you. See what adventures your random page turning takes you on.

Don't forget to share your stories with the other party guests...
https://www.facebook.com/groups/liveinloveinlaughin