



(GOLD EXP.b2 1ST ED. U6)

Reading 6

First night

It had started as a joke, or rather a dare – just a stupid dare. Marlon, who sat behind her in class, used to make fun of her mercilessly when she went red every time she answered a question. He had bet that someone who got embarrassed as easily as Susie would never be able to stand on stage in front of an audience in the school play.

Goodness knows why she had accepted the bet, thought Susie miserably as she sat in the dressing room, staring at her face in the mirror. Ten minutes to go before the curtain went up and the performance began.

Since childhood, Susie had hated being the centre of attention. Even at birthday parties she begged her mum not to make her blow out the candles in front of everyone. She was happiest when she was part of a group and unnoticed. However, she was still a joiner, not a loner. She belonged to clubs and societies and played sports, but didn't excel at anything in particular so she didn't have to cope with being in the spotlight. That was until tonight, a stupid bet and this time the spotlight was a very real one – on a stage. The whole audience would be watching her.

Susie saw the familiar blush redden her cheeks in the mirror as she anticipated the moment. And then another familiar emotion looked back at her from her reflected eyes. Anger. She was suddenly really angry with herself for agreeing to do this. But then she realised that it was anger that had given her the strength to say yes in the first place.

She had been so angry with Marlon that she'd shouted, 'OK – you're on. I'll audition – and I'll do it better than you could ever hope to!'

Still angry, she had forced herself to audition. She had had to read a speech of Titania's, the fairy queen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Shakespearean language felt strange, but she did her best to focus on the meaning of the lines, and also to block out the other people in the room. At the end of the speech, the room was very quiet and Susie's cheeks started to feel hot. Then suddenly everyone started clapping. Marlon actually cheered! Her teacher Miss Holmes gave Susie a big smile. 'Excellent Susie! You've got talent. I think we've found our Titania.'

And here she was, about to step into the spotlight in a Shakespearean play. Susie took a last look in the mirror and to her surprise it wasn't Susie who looked back. Instead she saw a queen, dressed in a flowing white costume with make-up that made her look beautiful and magical. With a confidence she had never known before, Susie stood up and walked to the side of the stage. She even felt herself move in a different way with her head held high. Marlon was standing there, ready to make his entrance. He bowed mockingly as she approached. 'Your majesty!' he grinned. Susie looked at him. She was about to say something sarcastic, but then it was time to go on stage. Her audience was waiting.

Read the text and choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D).

- 1 Susie regrets
- A auditioning for the play.
 - B getting embarrassed in class.
 - C joking with Marlon.

- D being late for the performance.
- 2 What does Susie like doing?
- A being on her own
 - B winning competitions
 - C doing things in a group
 - D organising parties
- 3 How did Susie feel in the dressing room?
- A upset because she couldn't act well
 - B worried about remembering her lines
 - C annoyed that she was in this situation
 - D surprised that she hadn't given up before
- 4 Susie performed well in the audition because she
- A practised speaking Shakespeare's lines.
 - B knew the play very well.
 - C was an experienced actress.
 - D imagined she was alone.
- 5 Why did Susie 'move in a different way'?
- A She was very nervous.
 - B She wanted to impress Marlon.
 - C She was in a hurry to get on stage.
 - D She was playing a role.