



# Once Upon A Time



nce upon a time, there was a mouse called Millie, who liked nothing more than spending a day playing with her friends, swimming in the pond and eating her favourite kind of cheese as a treat. Millie's best friend was called Gilly.

Gilly was great fun to be around, and made everyone giggle. Before Gilly went out to play though, she would always try to make sure she looked dressed up. Her whiskers would be polished, her claws painted and her fur brushed and shiny. She liked to sneak a look at her mum's favourite magazine, MouseGirl, she thought that if she tried hard to look like the mice in the magazines and on the TV, it would mean that she would fit in better at school and have more friends.

One warm sunny day, Millie, Gilly and their friends agreed to go to the pond for a swim. Millie knocked on Gilly's door to collect her. She waited... and she waited... then she knocked again. "Gilly?!" she called up to her friend's window. Eventually the door opened, and Gilly's mum came out looking cross. "Gilly's still getting ready, I'm afraid," she said. "Why don't you go and get her, I've been trying to get her to go outside all morning!"

Millie ran upstairs to find Gilly brushing her fur. "Come on! We've missed loads of fun already, your fur looks great how it is!" said Millie. Gilly didn't think so – she looked miserable. "I can't possibly go out like this! Look at me, I look like a sheep not a mouse!" Millie thought her friend looked perfect the way she was, and told her so. Gilly didn't listen.

"Come ON, Gilly!" Millie said. Eventually, Millie helped Gilly straighten the last bit of fur. Gilly stole one last look at the mirror, straightened a

whisker, and finally went outside.

The warm sun beamed down on them as they ran happily to see their friends at the pond. As she ran, Gilly tripped on a stone and stumbled. "Whoops!" said Millie, "are you ok?" "N—n- no!" whimpered Gilly. "Look at my claw polish! It's ruined!" Millie looked, and there was a tiny chip on Gilly's claw. "Never mind," said Millie. "You can always repaint it when you get home". "But it looks awful now!" Gilly said sadly. "Everyone will laugh at me – I'll see you later, I'm going home to re-do it." "No you don't! We're late already, come ON! No-one's going to care!" Eventually Millie managed to persuade Gilly to keep going.

They reached the pond and everyone was excited to see them. Millie jumped into the water and made a huge splash! Everyone laughed, even the lifeguard, except Gilly who ran quickly backwards to avoid the splash.

"Come on Gilly, your turn!" everyone yelled. "Oh no," Gilly said. "I've just come to watch – I've just brushed my fur and I'll look awful if it gets wet."

Millie and all her friends tried to persuade her, but it was no use.

All day, Gilly sat on the edge of the pond with her paws in the pool, watching the others. She wanted so much to join in, but she was worried that the other mice would think she looked silly. At lunch time, she joined in the picnic but wouldn't eat even a little bit of the cheese Millie had brought – she was worried she'd get fat.

After their long day playing in the sunshine, everyone went home to bed. Millie couldn't sleep though. She lay awake feeling a bit sad that Gilly wouldn't join in, and didn't seem to be having fun like everyone else. How could she help Gilly, and show her how much more fun it is to be yourself? She wasn't sure... 