

# THE *Princess* DIARIES



## PART ONE

### CHAPTER ONE

#### **I Am Mia**

My name is Mia Thermopolis. I'm fourteen years old and I live in New York City. I live in an apartment in Greenwich Village, on the west side of the city. I live with my mom, Helen, and my cat, Fat Louie. My mom is an artist. She paints pictures.

I'm a freshman - a ninth grade student at Albert Einstein High School. My best friend is Lilly Moscovitz. Lilly isn't pretty but she's very smart. She is interested in politics and ecology. Lilly writes reports about the people of New York and their problems. Then she makes films of her reports. She has her own TV show - Lilly Tells It Like It Is. Lilly's mom and dad are doctors - they're both psychoanalysts. Psychoanalysts find out about people's feelings. Lilly has an older brother named Michael.

My parents never got married. They stopped loving each other before I was born. Fourteen and a half years ago, they broke up their relationship. My parents' relationship ended, but they're still friends.

My dad doesn't live in New York. He lives in a small country called Genovia. It's near the border of France and Italy. My dad is an important person in the government of Genovia. I visit my dad every Christmas and summer. I stay with him and Grandmere - my grandmother - in her house in France.

I'm not very popular at school. I don't have lots of friends. And I don't have a boyfriend. No boy has ever asked me out on a date because I look strange. I look like a freak. I'm the tallest girl in my grade. I have huge feet and very curly, light brown hair. I'm also very thin.

I want to look like Lana Weinberger. Lana Weinberger is in my grade and she's beautiful. She has long blond hair and big gray eyes. Lana is going out with Josh Richter. She's dating the best-looking boy in the school. Josh is really GORGEOUS! He has blond hair and blue eyes. He's six feet tall and very good at sports. He's a senior student.

My mom gave me this diary. She told me to write down my feelings. I don't tell her my real feelings. That's what she says. So she wants me to write them down.

Tuesday, September 23rd

My mom's right. I don't tell her about my real feelings. I think about my feelings. But I don't tell anyone about them. I've decided to write my feelings here in my diary.

MY MOM IS GOING OUT ON A DATE WITH MY ALGEBRA TEACHER, MR FRANK GIANINI!

"I'm happy about this," I told Mom. But I'm not happy. There are about two million guys in Manhattan. She could go out with any of them. Why does she want to go out with my school's Algebra teacher?

Wednesday, September 24th

I told Lilly about my mom and Mr Gianini.

"Mr Gianini is OK," said Lilly. "He's nice and his classes are easy."

Lilly's good at Algebra. She doesn't have to work hard in Algebra classes. But I'm flunking Algebra-I fail every Algebra test. Every afternoon, after school finishes, I have to do extra Algebra.

That's how Mr Gianini met my mom. He asked her to come to the school. "Mia is flunking Algebra," he told her. "She needs to do extra work."

Then he asked my mom out on a date.

"I don't understand you, Mia," said Lilly. "Why are you hiding your real feelings? Talk to your mom. You're not happy about her and Mr Gianini. Tell her this."

But I can't talk to my mom. She's very happy about her date with Mr Gianini. She's being really nice to me. Last night, she made a special meal for me-pasta with lots of vegetables. I'm a vegetarian, so I don't eat meat.

I think about my mom kissing Mr Gianini. Then I think about Lana Weinberger and Josh Richter. I saw them kissing last week.

I want Josh Richter to kiss me like that.

Thursday, September 25th

Today, Mr Gianini asked me a really easy question, but I didn't hear it. I just sat there, looking at him.

"What?" I said.

Then Lana Weinberger leaned over my desk and stared at me. Her long blond hair touched my desk. "FREAK," she said.

I went to Lilly's apartment after school. Her parents- the Doctors Moscovitz-were there.

"Your mother is dating your Algebra teacher," Lilly's mother said. "How do you feel about that?"

"I feel fine, Doctor Moscovitz," I said. But I was lying.

Lilly's older brother, Michael, was also in the apartment. He's a senior student, like Josh Richter. But Michael doesn't play sports like Josh. Michael is only interested in computers. He spends a lot of time in his room, working on his computer. He writes an online magazine called Crackhead.

"Your mom is dating Frank Gianini?" said Michael. And he laughed.

Friday, September 26th

This afternoon, during my Algebra class, Mr Gianini spoke to me quietly. He started talking about his date with Mom.

"Mia, I'm going out with your mother," he said. "Are you unhappy about that?"

"Oh, no, Mr Gianini, it's OK," I said. I felt my face becoming red. "It's only for one date, isn't it?"

"Well, maybe I'll take her on more than one date. I really like your mother."

"OK," I said. "But if you make her unhappy, I'll kill you." I've been very rude to a teacher! Did I really say that to him?

Mr Gianini smiled. "Mia, I'm not going to hurt your mother," he said. "I will never upset her."

That evening, when my mom was out with Mr Gianini, my dad called from Genovia. He wanted to talk to Mom. He sounded very weird. His voice was really strange.

I didn't want to tell him about Mom and her date with Mr Gianini. I lied. "She's working in her art studio," I said.

Saturday, September 27th

I went into the kitchen early this morning. My cat, Fat Louie, wanted some food. My mom was there, and she was making pancakes! I couldn't believe it. Mom never cooks breakfast. She usually wakes up later than me. She was in a very good mood. She was smiling happily.

"I had a wonderful time last night," she said.

Mom and Mr Gianini ate dinner at a Thai restaurant last night. They're going on another date this week. I feel OK about this. I'm happy because my mom is happy.

Sunday, September 28th

My dad called again today. This time, Mom was in her art studio. My dad sounded very weird again.

Monday, September 29th

Today, Mr Gianini was in a very good mood. Suddenly he started talking about the school play. All the students are going to act and sing in the musical, My Fair Lady.

"Mia, you could play the main character," he said.

I was surprised. Mr Gianini was only being nice. I knew that. But I can't be in a musical. I can't sing - my voice is horrible.

Later, when I was with Lilly, Lana Weinberger came up to us. She started calling me a freak again. Josh Richter was with her. I knew why Lana said this. She wanted to hurt me. And she wanted Josh to see my unhappiness.

"Leave us alone, Weinberger!" said Lilly angrily.

Lana started to argue with Lilly. But Lilly isn't afraid of Lana. She just laughs if people say bad things to her.

Tuesday, September 30th

Something weird has happened. When I got home from school, my mom was waiting for me. She had a strange look on her face. She spoke softly and quietly.

"Your dad called," she said. "He's very upset. He's heard some bad news. He's sterile. He can't have any more kids."

About a year ago, my dad was very ill. He had cancer. He had an operation-doctors had to cut the cancer out of his body. Then he had chemotherapy treatment. The chemotherapy worked well and the cancer hasn't come back.

"The chemotherapy has made your dad sterile," Mom said. "He can never have another child."

I don't understand why my dad is upset. Why does he want more kids? He already has me. I only see Dad at Christmas and in the summer, but that's OK. He looks after Genovia and he's always very busy.

My dad's hair fell out after the chemotherapy, but he's still handsome. He looks like Captain Jean-Luc Picard in the TV show, Star Trek: The Next Generation. My dad has had a lot of girlfriends. He brings them to Grandmere's house in France. They love the twenty-seven bedrooms, the ballroom, the swimming pools, and the farm. But Dad never goes out with any girl for more than a few months.

"Dad is flying here, to New York, tomorrow," said Mom. "He wants to talk to you, Mia."



## CHAPTER TWO

### **"You're a Princess!"**

Wednesday, October 1st

My dad has arrived in New York. He's staying at the Plaza Hotel, where all the rich people stay.

Thursday, October 2nd. Afternoon. The Ladies' Room at the Plaza Hotel

I've had a terrible shock. Now I know why my dad wants more kids. IT'S BECAUSE HE'S A PRINCE!

My dad is a politician and he's rich. But he's also the Prince of Genovia, and nobody told me! I've been to Genovia lots of times. Every summer, I stay in my grandmother's house, Miragnac. It's on the border of France, near Genovia. Why didn't she tell me the truth?

A few years ago, I found some information about Genovia in an encyclopedia. I read these facts. The name of the Genovian royal family was Renaldo. The head of the family was Prince Artur Christoff Philippe Gerard Grimaldi Renaldo. There was a picture of the prince. He had thick brown hair and a moustache. My dad's family name is also Renaldo. My dad's name is Philippe Renaldo.

This afternoon, my dad and I sat in the Palm Court dining room at the Plaza Hotel. Lots of tourists go there. They like to have tea there in the afternoons.

"I want you to know the truth, Mia," began my dad in a very serious voice. "I am the Prince of Genovia."

This news was a terrible shock for me. Suddenly, I got hiccups!

"Really, Dad?" I said. Hiccup. I tried to stop the noise coming from my throat. But I couldn't. Hiccup. Hiccup! They were really loud hiccups! Hiccup! Hiccup!

"I'm head of the royal family of Genovia," said my dad. "Your mother didn't want you to know this. She didn't want you to grow up in a palace. I agreed with her. But unfortunately, I've now heard some bad news. I can't have any more children. You're my only child, Mia. So you are now my heir. When I die, you will be the ruler of Genovia."

I hiccupped again. This was really embarrassing! The people who were sitting on the table beside us were staring at me.

"Mia?" said my dad. "Are you listening?"

"Dad, please excuse me for a minute," I said. "I have to go to the bathroom."

I went into the ladies' room. The ladies' room at the Plaza is very beautiful. The walls and the carpets are pink. There are mirrors and little couches everywhere. I thought about what my dad had said. He's the Prince of Genovia.

I'm beginning to understand some things that I didn't understand before. When I fly to France, there's always a huge limousine waiting for me at the airport. When I go shopping with my grandmother, we always visit stores in the evening. We go shopping after ordinary people have gone home. We're always the only customers in the stores.

Most people have never heard of Genovia. Nobody famous has come from there. But it is a very beautiful country. The weather is warm and sunny. In the north, there are mountains covered with snow. In the south, there is the blue Mediterranean Sea. In the center of the country, there are hills covered with olive trees. Olive oil is Genovia's main export. Genovia sells a lot of olive oil to other countries.

There's a royal palace in Genovia. I've passed it lots of times when I was in the car with Grandmere. But she never told me who lived in it.

My hiccups have gone now. I'll go back to my dad.

Late afternoon. The Penguin House at Central Park Zoo.

I've had a second shock. I'm not going to tell anybody about my family. I'm not even going to tell Lilly. She won't understand. No one will understand. I'm really upset.

This is what happened. When my hiccups disappeared, I returned to the Palm Court dining room. My dad was speaking on his cellphone. He was talking to my mom.

"Yes, I told her," he was saying. "No, she doesn't seem upset." He looked at me. "Are you upset?"

"No," I said. I wasn't upset-not then.

My dad ended the call. "Did you understand what I told you, Mia?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "You're the Prince of Genovia."

"Yes," he said. "But you're not Mia Thermopolis anymore."

"I'm not?" I said. "Then who am I?"

"You're Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo, Princess of Genovia," said my dad, a little sadly.

WHAT? A PRINCESS? ME? It can't be true. My mouth opened but no words came out. I started to cry. My dad leaned across the table and touched my hand.

"It won't be so bad," he said. "You'll like living at the palace in Genovia with me. You can visit New York. You can see your friends as often as you want."

Then I got mad. I was so angry that I stopped crying.

"I DON'T want to live in Genovia," I said in a loud voice. Everyone in the dining room turned and looked at me. My dad was shocked. "Mia," he said, "I thought that you understood."

"I understand only one thing," I said. "You lied to me all my life. You never told me the truth about your family. And why do I have to live with you in Genovia?"

I stood up quickly and ran out of the hotel. I ran all the way down the street and into the middle of Central Park. It was getting dark, but I didn't think about this.

Suddenly I saw the gates of the Central Park Zoo. I've always loved that zoo.

I paid my entrance money and went into the Penguin House. The funny little black and white birds swam around their pool and I watched them. Then I sat down and took my diary out of my bag. I'm writing in my diary now. What am I going to do? I can't leave New York and live in Genovia.

## Evening

Of course, I couldn't hide in the Penguin House forever. When the zoo closed, I took a bus home. My mom and dad were sitting at the kitchen table. The phone was in front of them. They both began talking at the same time.

"Are you OK? Where have you been?" asked my mom. "We've been so worried!" said my dad.

"I ran away. I'm sorry," I said.

Then I went into the bathroom and took a bath. After lying in the hot water for a long time, I put on my favorite pajamas. Then I picked up Fat Louie and went to bed. Before I fell asleep, I heard my mom and dad talking in the kitchen.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Lilly's Place**

Friday, October 3rd. Home

When I woke up today, I felt better. It's Friday-the day before the weekend. Friday is my favorite day of the week.

Mom was in the kitchen, making breakfast. Dad was there too. He was sitting at the table and reading the New York Times.

And then I remembered. I'm a princess! Suddenly, I felt unhappy again.

"We need to talk, Mia," said my dad. He folded his newspaper and laid it on the table.

"Come and sit down, Mia. Have some breakfast," said my mom. "I've made everything that you like."

I didn't want to talk about my future in Genovia. "I have to go to school," I said.

"SIT DOWN!" said Dad loudly.

I sat down, and Mom put some food onto my plate. "Mia," she said, "Think of the lovely things that you can have in Genovia. When you're sixteen, you can have a car. Dad will buy you a car for your sixteenth birthday."

"I don't want a car," I said.

"You've always wanted a horse, haven't you?" she said. "You could have a horse in Genovia. A nice gray one..."

My eyes filled with tears and I started to cry.

"Mom," I said, "Why are you saying this? Don't you love me anymore? Why are you making me leave? Why do I have to live with Dad? Is it because you and Mr Gianini don't -" Then my mom started crying too. She jumped up from her chair and put her arms around me.

"No, Mia," she said. "I just want the best thing for you."

"So do I," said my dad.

"Well, I want to stay here and finish high school," I said. "That's the best thing for me. Then I'm going to join Greenpeace. I'm going to save whales from danger."

"You're not going to look after whales!" said my dad. "Please, Philippe," said my mom. "We can't talk about this now. Mia has to go to school. She's late."

I started looking for my coat. "Yes," I said. "I have to get to the subway station."

"No," said my dad. "Lars will drive you to school."

"But I have to meet Lilly," I said. "I meet her every day, and we go to school together on the subway."

"Lars can pick up your friend too," said Dad.

Lars is my dad's driver. He goes everywhere with my dad. But now I realize something. Lars isn't just my dad's driver. Lars is also my dad's bodyguard. His job is to protect my dad. Lars came up to the apartment and walked downstairs to the car with me. It was really embarrassing.

Algebra class

Lilly was very surprised to see Lars.

"My dad's in town and Lars is my dad's driver," I said. "Why are your eyes red?" asked Lilly. "Have you been crying? What's happened?"

"Nothing has happened," I said. I didn't want to tell Lilly the truth.

Now I'm sitting here in the Algebra class. But I feel better. Nobody can make me be a princess. This is America. People are free in America. They can live in any place and in any way that they want. If I don't want to be a princess, I don't have to be one. I'll tell my dad tonight.

Late evening. Lilly's bedroom

I didn't go to my extra Algebra class with Mr Gianini this afternoon. When school finished, I spoke to Lilly.

"Can I stay at your place tonight?" I asked.

She said yes, so I called my mom.

"Can I stay the night at Lilly's apartment?" I asked her. "But, Mia, your father wanted to have another talk with you this evening."

"I'll be home tomorrow, Mom," I said quickly. "And I won't forget to do the shopping on the way home."

Saturday, October 4th. Early morning. Lilly's place

I always have a great time when I stay with Lilly. The Moscovitzes are nice and their apartment is huge.



Lilly's parents - the Doctors Moscovitz - never forget to pay bills. They always have delicious food in their refrigerator. They even buy vegetarian food for me to eat. I love my mom very much. But she spends a lot of time in her art studio. She doesn't spend much time at home with me. Sometimes, Mom forgets to pay the bills. Sometimes, she even forgets to buy food. I want my mom to be like Lilly's mom. I want my dad to be like Lilly's dad.

At Lilly's place, I can relax. I feel very comfortable and happy there. When I'm with the Moscovitzes, I don't worry about Algebra. I don't worry about being a princess.

Last night, Lilly's parents went out. So Lilly and I climbed into their huge bed and watched James Bond movies on their big TV. Then Lilly's brother, Michael, came into the room.

"Your dad is on the phone," he said to me.

"I don't want to speak to him." I replied.

"OK," said Michael. "You and Lilly already went to bed. I'll tell him that."

Michael went and spoke to my dad again. Then he came back and watched James Bond movies with us. We had a really good conversation about our favorite actors and actresses. When Lilly's parents came home, Lilly and I went back to her room.

"Mia, who do you prefer?" asked Lilly. "Josh Richter, or my brother, Michael?"

"Josh Richter," I said.

I'm in love with Josh Richter. He's the best-looking boy in the school. I love his blond hair and blue eyes.

But later, I thought about Michael. He isn't as good-looking as Josh, but he makes me laugh. One time, I saw Michael coming out

of his bedroom. He wasn't wearing a shirt, and he looked really good. I've never told Lilly my thoughts about her brother. She'll think that I'm weird.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Thermopolis Renaldo Agreement**

Saturday, October 4th. Afternoon

I stayed at Lilly's place as long as I could today. But I was worried about my mom and dad. I didn't go home last night. Were they angry all night? I came home after lunch.

I've always been a good daughter. I don't smoke cigarettes, and I don't take drugs. I do my homework most of the time, and people trust me. I'm an honest person.

When I got home, my mom was reading a magazine. She always goes to her art studio on Saturdays. But today she had stayed at home, waiting for me. My dad was there too. He was reading the New York Times.

"We must talk," he said.

"Please, Dad," I said. "I need time to think about things."

"I know," said my dad.

Then my mom came over and put her arms around me. "We're so sorry, Mia," she said.

I was very surprised. Why were my parents being so nice? Why weren't they angry with me?

"This is difficult for you, Mia," said my dad. "We understand that now. So we've done something to make things easier."

My dad pulled a document from his pocket and put it on the table in front of me. I started to read it.

## THE THERMOPOUS-RENALDO AGREEMENT

I, Artur Christoff Philippe Gerard Grimaldi Renaldo, make this agreement. My daughter and heir, Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo, can stay at her school, Albert Einstein High School. But she must spend every Christmas and every summer in Genovia.

I felt very happy. Then I read the rest of the agreement.

I, Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo, will do my duties as heir to Artur Christoff Philippe Gerard Grimaldi Renaldo, Prince of Genovia. I will become the ruler of Genovia when he dies. I will also go to all the functions of state.

"What are functions of state?" I asked.

"Special ceremonies," said my dad. "When an important event happens in the world, every country sends someone - a representative. For example, when the leader of a country marries or dies, a representative of the Genovian royal family goes to the ceremony. You're the Princess of Genovia, so you will go to these functions of state. You will represent Genovia."

"But I don't know how to behave like a princess," I said.

"That's OK," said my dad. "Grandmere will teach you."

I thought about this. How can Grandmere teach me? She's not here in New York, she's in France. I signed my name at the bottom of the agreement.

## Evening

It's Saturday night, and I don't have a date with a boy. I'm spending the evening with my DAD! I'm always at home on Saturday nights. Boys don't want to go out with me.

My mom has gone out on a date with Mr Gianini. She was wearing a small black dress and high-heeled shoes. My dad stared and stared at her. She looked really beautiful. Usually, my mom isn't very interested in clothes.

I phoned a restaurant that delivers food to the apartment. I ordered a pizza and some salad. It was a delicious meal. But my dad wasn't interested in the food. He watched sports programs on TV and drank whisky. Then he fell asleep.

I tried to call Lilly, but her phone was busy. Maybe Michael was chatting online with a friend.

Michael uses his computer a lot. He works on his magazine, Crackhead, and chats online with his friends for hours. He uses his computer to send instant messages. He has conversations in Internet chat rooms.

I really wanted to speak to Lilly. I wasn't going to tell her about being a princess. But sometimes just talking to Lilly makes me feel better.

I watched my dad sleeping. I started to get bored. I decided to send Michael an instant message. I wanted him to go offline. Then I could call Lilly.

Michael and I use different names when we chat to each other online. I'm "FtLouie," which means Fat Louie. It's the name of my cat. Michael uses the name "CrackKing"-a criminal who sells drugs.

Michael is clever and funny. He's always making jokes. This was our conversation:

CrackKing: What do you want, Thermopolis?

FtLouie: I want to talk to Lilly. I want to speak to her on the phone. Please go offline.

CrackKing: What do you want to talk to her about?

FtLouie: I'm not telling you. It's private.

CrackKing: Why are you at home? Didn't Dreamboy call you? Didn't he ask you out?

FtLouie: Who's Dreamboy?

CrackKing: Josh Richter, of course.

I love Josh Richter, and now Michael knows this! Lilly told her brother my secrets! I'm really embarrassed! I'm going to kill her!

But five minutes later, my phone rang. It was Lilly.

"You wanted to talk to me," she said. "Michael told me." Michael can be so nice sometimes.

Sunday, October 5th

I didn't go to Mr Gianini's Algebra class on Friday, and he told my mom. I can't believe it! I had to stay at home today. I had to study Algebra with my DAD! There's an Algebra test at school tomorrow. I must not flunk it. I've written an important Algebra formula on the bottom of my sneaker. I can look at the formula during the test.

Monday, October 6th, 3:00 a.m.

I've been awake all night. I've been worrying about the Algebra formula that's on my shoe. What will happen if someone sees it? If I look at the formula, I'll be cheating. I'll no longer be an honest person. I'll have to leave Albert Einstein High School if someone finds out about this. And I'll never get a job at Greenpeace.

4:00 a.m.

I tried to wash the formula off my sneaker, but it won't come off! I can't wear my boots instead of my sneakers. The laces of my boots are broken.

7:00 a.m.

Someone will see me cheating in the Algebra test. I just know it.

9:00 a.m.

I'm in the girls' room at school. Lana Weinberger came in and she saw me washing the bottom of my sneaker. Then she started brushing her long blond hair, and staring at herself in the mirror. I couldn't wash the formula off my sneaker. But I'm not going to look at it during the test.

Evening

OK-I looked at the formula during the test. But it didn't help me at all. I got all the answers wrong anyway. I can't even cheat well!

I have so many things to worry about. I must buy new laces for my boots. I'm flunking Algebra. My mom's dating my Algebra teacher. I'm the Princess of Genovia. I hate my life.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Grandmere**

Wednesday, October 8th

Grandmere's HERE! She's not here in our apartment. But she's here in New York. She's staying at the Plaza Hotel, with my dad.

Maybe Grandmere won't come to our apartment. She hates cats and Fat Louie is here. Also, Grandmere will hate Greenwich Village. No one is allowed to smoke cigarettes in the restaurants here and she smokes all the time.

Why did she have to come here? Why? Why? WHY?

Thursday, October 9th

I found out why Grandmere has come to New York. She's going to give me PRINCESS CLASSES! This is terrible. I can't write any more.

Friday, October 10th

Yesterday, after school, I had my first princess class.

It's not a joke. Every day, after my Algebra lesson with Mr Gianini, I have princess classes at the Plaza with my grandmother. I signed the Thermopolis-Renaldo Agreement. My dad reminded me about this. The princess classes are part of my duties as my dad's heir. That's what I agreed to. I checked the agreement. But I couldn't see anything in it about princess classes.

Grandmere is staying in the penthouse suite of the Plaza. She's staying in the huge, luxury rooms on the top floor of the hotel. Everything in the penthouse is colored pink. There are pink walls, pink carpets, pink drapes, and pink furniture. There are lots of vases of pink roses too.

Grandmere's name is Clarisse Marie Renaldo. She is my father's mother. She is the Dowager Princess of Genovia. Grandmere wears lots of makeup and smokes cigarettes all the time. All her clothes are purple. Purple is her favorite color. Grandmere started asking me questions immediately. She is scary. She frightens me.

"Stand up straight, Amelia," she said. "Your hair is too curly. And why are you so tall? Can't you stop growing? Come and kiss your Grandmere."

I walked over and kissed her.

Then I saw Rommel - my grandmother's dog. He was looking out from behind her skirt. He's fifteen years old and he was wearing a purple jacket. It's the same color as Grandmere's dress.

"Now," said Grandmere, "You are Princess of Genovia. You cried when your father told you the news. Why?"

Suddenly I felt very tired. I sat down on one of the pink chairs. "Oh, Grandma," I said in English. "I don't want to be a princess. I just want to be me - Mia."

"Don't call me Grandma," said Grandmere. "I'm your Grandmere. Speak French when you speak to me. Sit up straight in that chair. And your name isn't Mia-it's Amelia." She sat down in the chair next to me. "Don't you want to be a princess?"

"Grandma - I mean, Grandmere," I said, "I can never be like a princess."

"You are your father's heir," said Grandmere in a very serious voice. "When your father dies, you'll rule Genovia."

I stared at Grandmere and she stared at me. "I have a lot of homework today," I said. "Is this princess class going to take a long time?"

"We'll begin classes tomorrow," she said. "You'll come here in the afternoons, after school. Write a list before you come here tomorrow. Make a list of the ten women who you admire most. And give reasons. Bring the list with you."

My mouth fell open with shock. Homework? I've got to do homework for these princess classes?

"Close your mouth, Amelia," said Grandmere. "Tomorrow you'll do your hair nicely. You'll wear lipstick and paint your nails with nail polish. And you won't wear those big, ugly boots. Now I have a dinner appointment. Goodbye."

Today, I borrowed one of my mom's lipsticks and took it to school. But I didn't want anyone to see me wearing lipstick. I waited until after my class with Mr Gianini. When all the other kids had gone home, I went into the girls' room. I put lipstick on my lips and brushed my hair. My hair is very curly. I brushed it and brushed it, but it didn't look better.

I'd forgotten about the school Computer Club. The Computer Club has a meeting at Albert Einstein High School every Friday afternoon. Lilly's brother, Michael, is in the Computer Club.

When I walked out of the girls' room, I met Michael. I dropped my bag and the lipstick fell out. Michael picked it up. He stared at me in surprise.

"Why are you wearing this?" he asked, holding the lipstick toward me.

"Please don't tell Lilly," I said. "Don't tell Lilly what?" he said. "Where are you going? Are you going on a date?"

"No, I am not going on a date!" I said. "I have to meet my grandmother."

"Do you usually wear lipstick when you meet your grandmother?"

I looked toward the door. Dad's bodyguard, Lars, was standing there. He was waiting for me. He was going to drive me to the Plaza Hotel.

"Michael, don't tell Lilly about this. OK?" I said. Then I ran away.

When I got to the Plaza, Grandmere was HORRIBLE.

"You're wearing too much lipstick," she said. "And it's the wrong color for you."

I gave her my list of the ten women who I admire. But she tore up the piece of paper. "They're not good choices," she said. Then she told me to come back at ten o'clock the next morning.

"Grandmere, tomorrow is Saturday," I said. "I always help my friend, Lilly, on Saturdays. We film her TV show." But Grandmere didn't listen to me. So when I got home, I called Lilly. I wanted to say, "I can't help you tomorrow. I have to spend the day with my grandmother." But no one answered the phone. The Moscovitz family were out.

Saturday, October 11th, 9:30a.m.

I called Lilly early this morning. This was our conversation.

"You have to spend the day with your grandmother?" she said angrily. "I don't believe you, Mia. Why didn't you say 'no' to your

grandmother? We always spend Saturdays together."

"Lilly, you don't know my grandmother," I said. "She's scary. I can't just say 'no' to her."

"I don't know your grandmother," said Lilly. "That's true, Mia. I don't know anything about her. It's very strange. You know all about my grandparents."

I've never introduced Lilly to Grandmere because Grandmere hates children. Also, she hates hearing about poor peoples' problems. Lilly makes TV films about the problems of poor people. I can't introduce Lilly to Grandmere now. I'm a princess. I don't want Lilly to know about my future life in Genovia.

"Well, come to my place tonight," Lilly said. "I have to finish my film. You can help me." Then she hung up the phone.

Now I'm in the car with Lars. We've just arrived at the Plaza Hotel. I'm going to meet Grandmere.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Blond Hair and Fake Nails**

Saturday, October 11th. Late afternoon

I can never go to school again. I can never go anywhere again. I'm so embarrassed. I look awful. I'm really angry with Grandmere.

This morning, she was waiting for me in the entrance of the Plaza Hotel.

"On y va" she said, which in English means, "Let's go."

"Let's go where?" I asked.

"Chez Paolo," said Grandmere. Chez Paolo means "Paul's house."

"Maybe Grandmere has a friend called Paul," I thought. "And maybe we're going to his house."

But Chez Paolo wasn't a house. It was a beauty salon, and Paolo was a stylist. He makes ordinary people like me look beautiful. That is Paolo's job. First, he cut my hair short. Then, he colored it blond. My real fingernails are very ugly because I bite them. So he stuck beautiful long fingernails made of plastic on top of my own nails. Then he put makeup on my face.

When Paolo had finished, I looked in a mirror. I got a shock. He had turned me into a different person!

Then Grandmere took me to some very expensive shoe shops and clothes shops. She bought me four pairs of shoes, and lots of clothes. Grandmere's very happy because I don't look like Mia Thermopolis any more. Mia Thermopolis never had blond hair or

fake fingernails. Mia Thermopolis never wore makeup, or beautiful, expensive shoes and clothes.

But I'm not happy at all. Who am I now? I don't know. I'm not Mia Thermopolis. Grandmere is turning me into someone else. As soon as I got home, I tried to talk to my dad. But he didn't listen to me.

"What's the problem, Mia?" he said. "You look beautiful. I like your new hairstyle. It's very... nice."

My mom came out of her bedroom. She was wearing a new skirt and top, and she looked great. She was going out on another date with Mr Gianini. My dad stared at her.

"Mia," said my mom, "your grandmother is just trying to prepare you."

"Prepare me for what?" I said. "I'm the Princess of Genovia but I don't want anyone to know this."

"They'll find out about you soon," said my mom. "Maybe they'll read your story in the newspaper."

"Why will it be in the newspaper?" I asked.

My mom and dad looked at each other. Then my dad took out his wallet. He opened it and took out some money. "All right, Mia," he said. "How much do you want?"

I was shocked. So was my mom.

"I'm serious," he said. "The Thermopolis-Renaldo Agreement isn't working. I want your grandmother to turn you into a princess. So I'll pay you to go to the princess lessons. How much do you want, Mia?"

I started to speak. I didn't want any money. But my dad said, "Listen. I'll give one hundred dollars a day to Greenpeace. The

money will arrive with a letter from you. The money will help Greenpeace to save a lot of whales. But, you'll learn how to be a princess. Do you agree?"

I want to work for Greenpeace when I leave school. If I pay them all that money, they'll have to give me a job!

So I agreed. I'll learn to be a princess.

Evening

Lilly Moscovitz and I had a fight - a big argument. She isn't my friend anymore! This is what happened.

I couldn't help Lilly with her film this morning. I had to go out with Grandmere. So Lilly told me to help her this evening. When I walked into the Moscovitzes' apartment, she stared at my hair.

"What happened to you?" she said in a shocked voice.

"My grandmother took me to a guy called Paolo. He -"

But Lilly wouldn't let me finish my explanation.

"Your hair is the same color as Lana Weinberger's," she said. "And what are those things on your fingers? Are those fake fingernails? Lana Weinberger has those too! You're turning into Lana Weinberger!"

I started to get angry. I am not turning into Lana Weinberger.

"This wasn't my idea," I said. "It was my grandmother's decision. I had to agree."

"Why didn't you say 'no' to your grandmother?" said Lilly. "I asked you to help me. But you said 'no.' Then your grandmother told



someone to cut off your hair. She told them to color it yellow. And you let her do this."

I got really mad. It had been a very difficult day.

"Lilly!" I said angrily. "Shut up!"

I've never told Lilly to shut up before. Why was Lilly telling me what to do? Then Michael came out of his bedroom. When he saw me, he looked very surprised.

"What did you just say to me?" said Lilly. She was angry now.

"My mom, my dad, my grandmother and my teachers are always telling me what to do," I said. "You're my friend. Now you're telling me what to do too."

"What is your problem?" said Lilly.

"I don't have a problem," I said. "But you seem to have a big problem with me. So I'm leaving. And," I said, opening the door, "my hair is not yellow."

I went home and took a hot bath. Then I picked up Fat Louie and got into bed. Lilly hasn't called and apologized. I'm not going to call her first.

I looked in the mirror a few minutes ago. My hair doesn't look so bad.

11:59 p.m.

Lilly still hasn't called.

Sunday, October 12th. Morning

Something has just happened. It was very embarrassing.

I walked into the kitchen to get some breakfast. My mom and Mr Gianini were sitting at the table. They were eating pancakes. They were very surprised to see me.

"What are you doing here, Mia?" asked Mom. "You were going to stay at Lilly's place last night."

I didn't reply. At that moment, I wanted to be at Lilly's place. I didn't want to see Mr Gianini having breakfast in our kitchen. He had spent the night at our place with my mom. I didn't want to know this.

"Frank missed his train home last night," said my mom. "So I asked him to spend the night here. He slept on the couch in the living room."

She was lying-I knew that. But I didn't say anything.

Late morning

After breakfast, my mom and Mr Gianini went to Central Park. They asked me to go with them. But I didn't go. I have lots of homework to do. That's what I told them. Maybe they'll kiss each other. I didn't want to see that. People kiss on TV and that's OK. But my mom kissing my Algebra teacher? No!

Afternoon

I've just turned on my computer. I've got an e-mail from Michael Moscovitz. He's going to help me with my extra Algebra. I can't believe it! Wasn't that nice of Michael?

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **A New Friend**

Sunday, October 12th. Late evening

My dad called me after lunch.

"I want you to come to the Plaza Hotel this evening. I want you to have dinner with me and Grandmere," he said. "I'll send Lars to pick you up in the car."

When I told Mom, she looked happy.

"That's OK," she said. "I'll stay here. I'll order some food from my favorite Thai restaurant. I'll watch TV."

Dinner at the Plaza was very boring. I couldn't eat most of the food because it was meat. But I ate some fish, and some chocolate ice cream.

Dad kept asking me questions about Mom and Mr Gianini.

"Do you feel OK about your mom dating your Algebra teacher?" he asked.

Why is my dad asking me this? My mom likes Mr Gianini - I know that. But does she love him? I don't know. I didn't tell my dad about Mr Gianini staying the night.

When I got home, I saw two empty cartons of Thai food in the kitchen.

"Was Mr Gianini here for dinner?" I asked my mom.

"Oh, no," she said quickly. "I was very hungry, so I ordered two meals."

My mom has told me two lies today about Mr Gianini. Lilly still hasn't called.

Monday, October 13th. Morning

This morning, I asked Lars to stop the car at Lilly's apartment building. I wanted her to ride to school with us. But she had already left her apartment.

Afternoon

I usually sit with Lilly in our school cafeteria at lunchtime. But today, a boy called Boris Pelkowski was sitting beside Lilly. He was sitting in the seat where I usually sit. Lilly likes Boris Pelkowski because he's a great musician. Boris comes from Russia and he plays the violin. He also wears his clothes in a WEIRD way.

I got a plate of salad and looked around. Most of the tables in the cafeteria were full of students.

"Who can I sit with?" I thought.

Tina Hakim Baba was sitting at one of the tables. No other students were sitting with her. Tina's parents are very rich. Her father comes from Saudi Arabia and he owns an oil company. Tina's parents are frightened of kidnappers. Mr and Mrs Hakim Baba don't want kidnappers to take Tina. Kidnappers usually want lots of money before they release a person. People have been hurt or killed by their kidnappers. Tina's parents are very careful. They send her to school in a limousine with a bodyguard. The bodyguard follows Tina everywhere. All the other students call Tina a freak.

Tina was reading a book and the bodyguard was sitting beside her. Tina had a plate of salad, just like me. But she hadn't chosen a salad because she's a vegetarian. She'd chosen it because she's a little heavy. She wants to lose weight.

I walked over to her table and put my plate down.

"Can I sit here?" I asked.

Tina looked up in surprise. She looked at me and then she looked at the bodyguard. The bodyguard nodded.

Tina laid her book on the table and smiled. She has large brown eyes and a nice smile.

"Yes," she said. "Please sit with me."

Tina and I ate our salads and talked about school. There's going to be a dance at Albert Einstein on Saturday. I asked Tina if she had a date for the dance.

"A boy from Trinity is taking me to the dance," she replied. Trinity is a school for rich boys.

I liked talking to Tina. She wasn't a freak at all. She was really nice. When she got up to get a drink, I looked at the book beside her plate. Tina was reading a romantic novel called My Name is Amanda.

Lana Weinberger walked over to the table.

"What has happened to your hair, Mia?" she said loudly. "It's a horrible yellow color."

Then Tina came back, holding an ice cream. She gave the ice cream to me.

"Oh, Tina," said Lana, "did you buy that ice cream for Mia? Did your daddy give you money to buy a new friend?" Tina was very hurt

by Lana's words and her eyes filled with tears. I felt very angry with Lana. Suddenly, I took the ice cream and pushed it onto Lana's sweater. Everyone in the cafeteria stopped talking. They stared at us.

"Look at what you've done!" Lana screamed.

I stood up, and picked up my plate of salad.

"Come on, Tina," I said. "Let's go somewhere quieter." Tina picked up her salad and followed me. Her bodyguard followed too. He was laughing. Lilly Moscovitz was staring at me. Her mouth was open with shock.

Late afternoon

I'm in a lot of trouble. I'm sitting in Principal Gupta's office. Principal Gupta is the head of the school. I was sent here because I pushed ice cream into Lana Weinberger's sweater. I'm worried. What's going to happen?

Evening

Principal Gupta has punished me. She has given me a week's detention. Every day next week, I have to stay for an hour after school, and do extra work. I also have to do my extra Algebra every day with Mr Gianini, and the princess classes with Grandmere.

"Lana's sweater has to be cleaned and you must pay," said Principal Gupta. "And you must apologize to her."

"I'm sorry, Principal Gupta," I said, "I'll pay for Lana's sweater to be cleaned. But I won't apologize to her."

Principal Gupta was surprised, but she wasn't angry with me.

"Mia," she said quietly, "I'm worried. You've never been in trouble before. Is... is everything all right? Do you have any problems at home?"

I thought about all my problems. My mom is dating my Algebra teacher. My best friend hates me. I'm fourteen and I've never had a date.

I'm too tall and too thin. And I'm the Princess of Genovia. But I didn't want to talk about these things with Principal Gupta.

"Everything's fine," I lied.

"You're a very special person," said Principal Gupta. "You're good and kind. Lana Weinberger is just like you. She's a very nice girl too."

Principal Gupta doesn't understand.

Lana Weinberger isn't like me at all!

Tuesday, October 14th

When Lars and I arrived at school this morning, Tina Hakim Baba was arriving at the same time. We smiled at each other, and went into school together. Her bodyguard followed us.

"I told my parents what happened yesterday," said Tina. "I told them what Lana said. I told them about your fight with Lana. They've invited you to dinner on Friday. You can stay the night at my house."

"OK," I said. I smiled. "Thanks."

I like Tina. She's nice to me.

Afternoon

I've just heard some news and I can't believe it. Lilly is going to the dance on Saturday. She's going with Boris Pelkowski! I'm the only girl in my class who doesn't have a date for the dance. THE ONLY ONE. Why am I such a freak?



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **In the News**

Tuesday, October 14th. Evening

This afternoon, while Michael Moscovitz was helping me with my Algebra, he asked me a strange question. "Are you doing anything on Saturday evening?"

A teacher came into the room before I could reply. But I knew what Michael was going to ask me. He wanted me to meet him on Saturday. He was going to help me. He was going to give me some extra Algebra work. I don't want to do extra Algebra-not on the weekend.

Grandmere is very happy. She heard about my friendship with Tina Hakim Baba. Tina's father is a rich Saudi Arabian prince. He knows lots of other rich people.

Wednesday, October 15th

When I got to school today, lots of kids were staring at me. Maybe there was something wrong with my hair. I went into the girls' room to look in the mirror. Some girls saw me. They ran out of the room, laughing.

Late morning

A weird thing just happened to me. Josh Richter, the most popular boy in the school, came up to me.

"Hi, Mia. How are you?" he asked.

I couldn't answer. Josh Richter never speaks to me.

Then he bent down until his face was close to my face. His eyes are very blue.

"See you later," he said softly. Then he walked away.

Principal Gupta's office

Now I know why everyone was staring at me. I know why the girls ran out of the girls' room. I know why they laughed at me. I know why Josh Richter spoke to me. My story is in the news!

My picture is on the cover of a newspaper - the New York Post. The picture shows me leaving the Plaza Hotel on Sunday night. Over the photo are the words:

PRINCESS AMELIA.

Underneath the picture are the words:

NEW YORK'S ROYAL PRINCESS.

Mr Gianini saw the picture on his way to work. He called my mom, but she didn't hear the phone. So he called my dad at the Plaza Hotel. My dad told him to bring me to Principal Gupta's office.

While I waited for my dad, I looked at the New York Post on Principal Gupta's desk.

I read the story about me. It was by a reporter called Carol Fernandez. She wrote about my mom and dad too. She called my mom, "the black-haired artist, Helen Thermopolis." She called my dad, "the handsome prince, Philippe of Genovia." And she called me, "the tall and beautiful princess of Genovia." Carol Fernandez must be crazy. I'm not beautiful!

"Mia, you're a princess," said Principal Gupta. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't want anyone to know," I said.

Here comes my dad now.

Afternoon

I'm mad with my dad. He made me stay at school and go back to my classes.

"You don't understand, Dad," I said. "All the kids are laughing at me. Why did you tell Carol Fernandez about me?"

"Me?" said my dad in a surprised voice. "I didn't tell that reporter anything." Then he looked Mr Gianini.

Mr Gianini was standing by the door. His hands were in his pockets.

"It wasn't me," replied Mr Gianini.

"I didn't speak to Carol Fernandez. I hadn't heard of Genovia until this morning."

"Well, somebody told the newspapers about Mia," said my dad. "I'm going to call Carol Fernandez and ask her."

Then he told Lars to go with me to my classroom.

"Dad, I don't need a bodyguard," I said.

"Mia," said my dad. "Genovia is a small country but it's very rich. Maybe someone will try to kidnap you."

"Dad, no one is going to kidnap me," I said.

But my dad didn't listen. Now I have a bodyguard, just like Tina Hakim Baba. Everyone will laugh at me even more.

Late afternoon

Suddenly I'm very popular. When I walked into the cafeteria at lunchtime, Lana Weinberger came up to me.

"Hey, Amelia," she said. "Come and sit with us!"

Lana wants to be my friend now, because I'm a princess.

"No, thanks, Lana," I said. "I have someone to sit with."

I went to sit with Tina. Lana looked shocked. Everyone in the cafeteria was staring at our table. Tina looked at me sadly, but she didn't say anything.

"Tina," I said at last. "If you don't want to sit with me, I'll understand."

Tina's eyes filled with tears. "What do you mean, Mia?" she said. "Don't you like me anymore?"

"Of course I like you," I said. "But everyone is staring at us because of me."

"No, Mia," she said. "They're not staring because of you. Everyone always stares at me. They stare at me because of Wahim."

Wahim is Tina's bodyguard. He and Lars were sitting together at our table. The two men were talking about guns.

I got mad then. I wasn't mad with Tina. I was mad with everyone else at Albert Einstein High School. Nobody talks to Tina. "She's a freak," they say. "She's weird." But she's a really nice girl.

"I want to sit with you, Tina," I said.

Tina looked happier then. She started reading another romance today. She told me all about it.

When Michael Moscovitz was helping me with my Algebra, we had this conversation. Lilly joined in too.

MICHAEL: So you're the Princess of Genovia? When were you going to tell your friends?

ME: I didn't want anyone to know.

MICHAEL: Why? It's not a bad thing.

ME: Are you joking? Of course it's bad. I don't want a different life. I don't want to be a princess.

LILLY: Mia, your dad has more than three hundred million dollars. He's never worked for it. I read this in a newspaper. Did this money come from the poor people of Genovia?

MICHAEL: Lilly, no one in Genovia has to pay anything to their government. The country is very rich. Everyone in Genovia has a good education. Maybe Mia's father gets paid well because he works very hard for his country. You're jealous.

LILLY: I am not!

MICHAEL: Yes, you are. Mia got a new hairstyle, and she didn't ask for your advice first. That's why you're jealous. Then you stopped talking to her, and she found a new friend. All this time, Mia had a secret. And she didn't tell you about it.

LILLY (to Michael): Michael, shut up!

MICHAEL (to me): Does this guy (pointing to Lars) follow you everywhere? Does he go with you on dates? Will he go with you to the dance this weekend?

ME: No, because no one has asked me.

## CHAPTER NINE

### **I'm Famous!**

Wednesday, October 15th. Evening

I'm famous. When Lars and I walked out of the school today, there were reporters everywhere. They started taking photos and shouting questions.

"Smile, please, Amelia!"

"Hey, Amelia, what's it like being a princess?"

I was frightened but Lars helped me. First, he told me not to say anything. Then he put his arm around me. He pushed me through the crowd of photographers and reporters. He pushed me into the back seat of Dad's car. Then he jumped in beside me. "Drive!" shouted Lars.

I didn't know the man who was driving the car. My dad was sitting next to him.

"Where will I go to school now, Dad?" I asked.

"You can stay at Albert Einstein High School," said my dad. "Lars will go with you every day. He'll protect you."

"Who will drive your car?" I asked.

"Hans," said my dad, pointing to the driver. "He's my driver now."

"Will Lars go everywhere with me?" I asked.

"Yes," said my dad.

Suddenly, I understood. I'll never be able to go anywhere alone again.

"I don't want to be a princess anymore," I said. "You can take back your money. Tell Grandmere to go back to France. I've had enough."

"It's too late, Mia," said my dad. "You are the Princess of Genovia. Everyone knows that. Tomorrow, there will be photos of you in every newspaper in America."

Later

My mom spoke to my dad. Now he's mad with her.

"Clarisse talked to Carol Fernandez about Mia, didn't she?" said Mom.

"My mother didn't tell that reporter about Mia," said my dad angrily. "Why do you think that? Maybe your boyfriend, Frank Gianini, spoke to the reporter."

Then my mom got mad too. "Get out," she said in a cold voice. "Leave my apartment."

"You don't like my mother, so you can't see the truth," said my dad angrily.

"The truth?" said my mom. "I'll tell you the truth, Philippe. Your mother..."

I went to my room. I didn't want to hear the fight between my parents. But is my mom right? Did Grandmere tell Carol Fernandez about me?



Thursday, October 16th

This morning, my picture was on the covers of the Daily News newspaper, and the magazine, New York Newsday. The picture was also in the New York Times.

There were more reporters waiting for me outside school today. Lars held my arm and we ran into school together. As we ran, the reporters were shouting questions.

"Amelia, who do you like best-Leonardo DiCaprio or Prince William?"

"Princess Amelia, why don't you eat meat?"

Afternoon

Something very surprising has happened. I was in the cafeteria with Tina and Lars and Wahim. We were eating our lunch.

Suddenly, Lana Weinberger put her tray down next to mine. I'm not joking - Lana Weinberger sat beside me. Then someone else put down a tray on the table. It was Josh Richter.

"Hey," he said. He sat down in the seat next to me, and started eating.

"Are you going to the school dance this weekend, Mia?" asked Lana. "Josh's parents are away. After the dance, we're all going to a party at Josh's place. Will you come too?"

"I'm sorry," I said. "I can't."

Lana stared at me. "What do you mean, you can't?" she said.

I've heard about the seniors' parties. Everyone drinks lots of alcohol and gets very drunk.

"My mom won't let me go to a party like that," I said. "Don't tell your mom the truth," Lana said. "Say to her, 'I'm spending the night with a girlfriend.'"

But I could never tell this lie to my mom.

"I'm sorry," I said, "Everyone drinks a lot of alcohol at those parties. I don't drink alcohol. Alcohol is a poison. I don't like putting poison into my body."

"I can understand that," said Josh Richter suddenly.

"Josh!" said Lana, laughing. "You drink more than anyone in the whole school."

Josh didn't laugh. He just stared at Lana with his blue eyes. It wasn't a very nice stare.

Late afternoon

When classes finished, Josh was waiting outside my classroom.

"Hey," he said. Then he smiled. It was a big smile that showed all his teeth. They were very white.

"Are you going to the dance with anyone?" he asked.

I dropped my book in surprise. I bent down to pick it up. "N-no," I said in a weak voice.

"Oh. Well, I'll see you," said Josh. Then he left.

I'm still shocked. Josh Richter talked to me today. Twice.

## Evening

This evening, Grandmere wanted to have dinner at an expensive restaurant. She wanted us to go outside the Plaza Hotel for a meal.

"There will be reporters outside," she said. "I'll teach you what to do." But when we came out of the hotel, the reporters weren't there.

"Wait one minute," said Grandmere. She went back into the hotel. I got into the car. She came out of the hotel again a little later.

When we arrived at the restaurant, lots of reporters were waiting. I was very surprised. Immediately, they started taking photos and shouting questions.

I turned to Grandmere. "You called these reporters, didn't you? You told them about our plan to eat here. Did you tell Carol Fernandez about me too? Did you give her my story for her newspaper?"

"Of course," said Grandmere. "You have to learn how to live with reporters, Amelia. It's part of being a princess."

"Dad and Mom had a big fight about the report in the New York Post" I said. "But Mr Gianini didn't talk to Carol Fernandez, did he? You did. I'm going to tell Dad the truth. He's going to be really mad at you, Grandmere."

"No, he won't be mad," she said. "That story in the Post was only the beginning. Soon you'll be on the cover of Vogue magazine, and then -"

"Grandmere!" I shouted, "I DON'T WANT TO BE ON THE COVER OF VOGUE!"

When I got home, I called my dad. "Dad, Grandmere told Carol Fernandez everything about me," I said. "It wasn't Mr Gianini."

"I know," he said in an unhappy voice.

"Well," I said, "you have to apologize to Mom."

Later, my dad called my mom. Afterwards she looked very happy. Maybe my dad apologized to her.

## CHAPTER TEN

### **My First Date**

Friday, October 17th

JOSH AND LANA HAVE BROKEN UP! I can't believe this. Josh has ended his relationship with Lana. He doesn't want her as his girlfriend any more. Everyone in school is talking about it.

When I saw Lana, she looked awful. Her eyes were red - she had been crying.

After the first lesson

Josh Richter came up to me after my English class.

"Hey, Mia, who are you going with to the dance tomorrow?" he asked.

"Er... no one," I replied.

"Well, why don't we go together?" he said.

I couldn't speak for a minute. JOSH RICHTER AND ME ON A DATE!!!

Then I heard a tiny voice inside my head. He's only asking you because you're the Princess of Genovia. But I didn't want to listen to the voice.

"Yeah, OK," I said. "That might be fun."

"Fine," said Josh. "I'll come for you at seven o'clock. We'll go to a restaurant-Tavern on the Green-and have dinner first."

Late morning

I'm going to the dance with Josh, and Lilly has found out. Now she's speaking to me again. But she only says bad things about Josh.

"He's just broken up with Lana," she said. "He broke up with her sixteen hours ago. Then this afternoon he asks you out. He's bad, Mia. And he takes drugs."

Some of Josh's friends take drugs - this is true. But does Josh take drugs? I can't believe that.

Lana looks so sad, and Josh doesn't seem to care. He and his friends sat with Tina and me at lunch today. But Josh and his friends didn't talk to us. They just talked to each other. I feel bad about Lana. But I still want to go to the dance with Josh.

Evening

My princess class with Grandmere ended after an hour. This is because I'm going to spend the night at Tina's place.

I told Grandmere about the dance and Josh's invitation. Grandmere was very pleased. She called a famous fashion company. She made an appointment for me tomorrow. I'm going to their store to choose a new dress.

After I left Grandmere's suite, I went to Tina's huge, luxury apartment. Tina has three little sisters and a baby brother. She also has a big TV in her room, and a Sony PlayStation.

Tina's parents are really nice. Mr Hakim Baba isn't well. He has a problem with his heart. He can't eat meat. He only eats vegetables and rice. Mrs Hakim Baba is very beautiful. She's British and she has blond hair. She used to be a fashion model. Her picture was once on the cover of Vogue, but she doesn't work now.

Tina showed me her dress for the dance. It's very pretty. She looks much more like a princess than I do.

Saturday, October 18th

When I got home, Mr Gianini was there.

"Has Josh called?" I asked my mom.

"You don't mean Josh Richter, do you?" asked Mr Gianini.

"Yes," I said. "I'm going to the dance with Josh tonight."

"But what about Lana Weinberger?" asked Mr Gianini in a surprised voice. "She is Josh's girlfriend."

"They broke up," I said.

"Who's Josh Richter?" asked my mom.

"He's the most gorgeous boy in the school," I said.

"Well, he's the most popular," said Mr Gianini. "But he isn't the right kind of boy for Mia."

"Oh," said my mom. "Then I have to talk to Mia's father."

She called my dad at the Plaza Hotel. As she was speaking to him, the front door bell rang. Mr Gianini opened the door.

"I'm Clarisse Marie Renaldo-the Dowager Princess of Genovia," said a loud voice. "Who are you?"

It was Grandmere! She had come to our apartment.

She was going to take me shopping. She stared at Mr Gianini.

"Grandmere," I said, "they won't let me go to the dance."

My mom was still talking to my dad on the phone.

Grandmere came into the apartment and took the phone from Mom's hand.

"Philippe," Grandmere said into the phone. "Your daughter is going to the dance tonight with her boyfriend. I'm going to buy her a new dress. I'm taking her to the store now."

Then Grandmere spoke quickly to my dad. She used some rude words. But she spoke in French, so only I understood her. My mom and Mr Gianini didn't understand what she was saying.

When Grandmere put the phone down, she looked around our apartment. "The Princess of Genovia lives here?" she asked. "In this place?"

"Now listen, Clarisse -" said my mom angrily.

"Go and get your coat, Amelia," said Grandmere.

I went to get my coat. When I returned to the living room, my mom's eyes were very red. Mr Gianini was looking at the floor. Then I went shopping with Grandmere. Mom and Mr Gianini didn't stop me.

Evening



It's after seven o'clock and I'm waiting for Josh. I'm sitting and writing my diary.

I'm wearing my new dress and my new shoes. My hair and my makeup and nails are perfect. My dress is pale blue silk and it's beautiful.

My dad is sitting at the kitchen table. My mom keeps looking at the clock.

"You can go out with Josh," said my dad, "but Lars has to go with you."

My dad looked at his watch. "It's seven-fifteen," he said. "Josh Richter is late."

The front door bell has just rung. Josh is here!

The Ladies' Room, Tavern on the Green

I'm sitting in the Ladies' Room of the restaurant-Tavern on the Green.

Josh was good with my parents. My dad asked him lots of questions. Questions such as: What car are you driving? What time will you be back? Which college are you going to after high school?

Josh answered all my dad's questions politely. He even called my dad "Sir"!

Then Josh and Lars and I went down to the street. Josh had come in his father's car. We got into it. Lars drove, and Josh and I sat in the back seat. We talked for a few minutes, but then a strange thing happened. Josh and I didn't have anything more to say to each other. We didn't talk for the rest of the ride to the restaurant. I don't have this problem with Lilly's brother Michael. Michael Moscovitz and I never stop talking.

When we got to the restaurant, Josh's friends and their girlfriends were sitting at a big table. Josh ordered bottles of champagne. Then, without asking me, he ordered steaks too. But I'm a vegetarian and I won't eat meat.

I haven't eaten my steak and Josh hasn't noticed. He's talking and laughing with his friends. He hasn't spoken to me since we got to the restaurant. He has ordered more and more champagne. Why does he want to drink so much?

This evening is not going well, so I came into the Ladies' Room. But I'll have to go back to the table soon.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### **The Wrong Kind of Boy**

Saturday, October 18th. Evening. The Girls' Room, Albert Einstein High School

I've found out THE TRUTH about Josh. I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT HE'S DONE!!

We stayed in the restaurant for a long time. Josh and his friends drank nine bottles of champagne. We were late getting to the dance.

When we arrived at the school, there were lots of news reporters' vans outside the building. There was a big crowd of reporters. They were shining big bright lights onto the steps at the front of the school. Some reporters were checking their cameras and tape recorders. Others were talking on their cellphones. They were all waiting for someone - me!

Who told all the reporters that I was coming to the dance? Not Grandmere this time.

Lars was very angry when he saw the crowd. But Josh didn't care. "Come on," he said to me. "We'll run up the steps into the school while Lars parks the car."

Josh held my hand and pulled me out of the car. Then he pulled me up the steps to the school doors.

When the reporters saw me, they shouted, "It's her! It's Princess Mia!"

They started taking pictures and shouting questions. The lights of the cameras' flashbulbs were very bright. I couldn't see where I

was going. I held Josh's hand tightly.

At last, I saw the school doors in front of us. Josh stopped. Below us, the reporters were screaming questions and taking photos. "Kiss her! Kiss her!" they shouted.

Suddenly Josh turned toward me and kissed me on the lips.

At once, all the cameras' flashbulbs went off. The reporters were taking pictures of Princess Mia's first kiss. But I didn't feel happy and romantic. I felt embarrassed. Josh turned to the reporters. He waved his hand and smiled. Then he opened the doors to the school and pushed me inside.

My friends were standing inside the school hall-Tina and her boyfriend, Lilly and Boris. Mr Gianini, and other students from school were there too. Everyone was looking at me.

I couldn't think clearly. Josh Richter had just kissed me on the lips. He had kissed me, and all the reporters had taken a picture. Then I realized the truth. Josh wanted to date a princess. So he broke up with Lana. Then he invited me to the dance. He told the reporters about the dance. He told them about me. He wanted to get his picture in the papers with me.

I turned and stared at Josh. "Why did you kiss me in front of everyone?" I asked angrily.

"The reporters were shouting 'Kiss her! Kiss her!'" said Josh. "They wanted a good photo. So I kissed you."

"You didn't kiss me because you like me," I said. "You kissed me because I'm the Princess of Genovia."

"Of course I like you," said Josh.

"No," I said. "You don't care about me. You don't know me. You don't know my feelings or thoughts. You haven't asked what I like.

You ordered a steak for my dinner, but you didn't ask me first."

My friends were all staring at Josh.

"Mia is a vegetarian, you idiot," said Lilly.

"Oh, sorry," said Josh. But he didn't sound very sorry. "Are you ready to dance?"

I didn't reply. I didn't want to dance with Josh. I turned and walked away into the girls' room.

Tomorrow, pictures of Josh kissing me will be in all the newspapers. Will the words: YOUNG ROYAL IS IN LOVE be above the pictures? I'm not in love with Josh any more. I don't want a boyfriend like him. He only wants me because I'm a princess. When my dad sees the photos, he's going to be really mad.

Then I heard Lilly and Tina's voices. They had come into the girls' room.

"Are you OK, Mia?" Lilly asked in a kind voice. "I'm sorry about everything. Come and join us."

"I can't," I said. "You all have dates. I don't have one." "Michael is here," said Lilly. "He doesn't have a date." Michael Moscovitz is at the dance? I'm coming out!

Sunday, October 19th Lilly's place

Lilly and I aren't fighting any more. And Lilly and Tina have become friends. There weren't any pictures of Josh kissing me in the newspapers today. There was more important news. Yesterday, Iran attacked Afghanistan. All the news reports were about the fighting.

I had a wonderful time with Michael at the dance. We talked a lot, and we danced together.

It was wonderful standing close to Michael and holding him.

Then we all went back to Lilly's place in Tina's car. I called my mom.

She let me stay with Lilly last night.

This morning I woke up early. I can hear Lilly's family making breakfast in the kitchen. I AM SO HAPPY!

Evening. My apartment

Grandmere and Dad came here this afternoon. They wanted to know about the dance. I didn't tell Dad about my kiss with Josh. I spoke to Lars earlier. He promised not to tell my dad either!

I won't have any princess classes for a whole week. Grandmere is going away for several days.

Later in the afternoon, I took Grandmere up to the roof of our apartment. My mom and dad came out onto the roof too. There is a wonderful view of the city from our roof. You can see all of Manhattan and the Hudson River.

The sun was just going down, and the sky was purple and pink and orange. We all stood on the roof and watched the beautiful sunset. I felt very peaceful and happy. Maybe everything is going to be all right. Maybe my life as a princess will be OK too!

## PART TWO

### CHAPTER ONE

#### **The Private Diary of an "Ordinary" Teenager**

My name is Mia Thermopolis and this is my diary. Some things about my life are very ordinary. I'm fourteen years old, and I live in New York City. I live in an apartment in Greenwich Village, on the west side of the city. I live with my mom, Helen, and my cat, Fat Louie. My mom is an artist. She paints pictures.

I'm a freshman - a ninth grade student at Albert Einstein High School. My friends, Tina Hakim Baba, Shameeka Taylor, Ling Su, and Lilly Moscovitz are also in the ninth grade. Lilly is my best friend.

Other things about my life aren't ordinary at all. Last month, I heard some amazing news. I'm not just an ordinary teenager, I'm also a princess! I'm the Princess of Genovia. Genovia is a small country in Europe near the border of France and Italy. My dad, Philippe Renaldo, is the Prince of Genovia and I'm his heir. When he dies, I'll become the ruler of Genovia. Every day after school finishes, I have princess classes with my dad's mother, Grandmere.

Grandmere is the Dowager Princess of Genovia. She is teaching me to be a princess. Grandmere wears purple clothes and she smokes cigarettes all the time. She speaks French and wears lots of makeup. She is scary - everyone is frightened of her.

My mom and dad never got married, but they're still friends. Mom is dating my Algebra teacher, Mr Frank Gianini-she's going out with him. I'm happy for her.

I like Mr Gianini, but I don't like Algebra. I'm flunking Algebra - I fail every Algebra test. So I have extra Algebra classes.

Sometimes Lilly's brother, Michael, helps me with my Algebra. I've got a crush on Michael. I love him, but he doesn't know about my feelings. I'd like to go out on a date with Michael.

Monday, October 20th. 8:00 a.m.

I'VE JUST HAD A BIG SHOCK! I was eating breakfast, when my mom came into the kitchen. She had just come out of the bathroom. Her face was very pale and her hair looked terrible.

"Are you sick, Mom?" I asked her. "Do you have a headache? Do you want some aspirin?"

"No. No thanks," said my mom. Her voice was really weird. It sounded strange. I was very worried.

"What's the problem, Mom?" I asked. "What's wrong?"

"Mia, I'm pregnant!" said my mom in a shocked voice.

Suddenly her eyes were full of tears, but she was smiling. "I'm going to have a baby!"

I can't believe it. My mom is having a BABY! And its father is Mr Gianini, my Algebra teacher!

My mom and dad weren't married when I was born. Fourteen and a half years ago, Mom and Dad fell out of love with each other. My mom didn't want to marry my dad. So she became a single parent. She looked after me without anyone's help. I live with Mom in America, and my dad lives in Genovia. My dad sends us money each month.

Why wasn't Mom more careful? She is an adult, but sometimes she behaves like a teenager. She doesn't think carefully. And now she's going to be a single parent again.



## My problems

1. I'm the tallest girl in the freshman class.
2. I'm a freak - I look strange. I'm very thin and I have huge feet.
3. Last month, my mom started dating my Algebra teacher.
4. Last month, my dad told me, "You are the Princess of Genovia."
5. I have princess classes with my scary grandmother.
6. In December, I must go on TV in Genovia. I have to introduce myself to the Genovian people.
7. I don't have a boyfriend.

## Algebra class

Mr Gianini hasn't spoken to me about Mom's pregnancy. Maybe my mom hasn't told him about the baby.

What will my new baby brother or baby sister look like? My mom is very beautiful. She has thick, black, curly hair. Mr Gianini is tall and good-looking, and he's very smart. Maybe the baby will be smart too. But I want the baby to have my mom's nose. Mr Gianini's nose is too long.

## English class

Mrs Spears, our English teacher, has given us a new project. We have to write a diary. She wants to read our diaries and know more about us. But I write this diary every day. My mom gave me this diary about a month ago. She was worried about me. I never talked about my feelings. She wanted me to write down my feelings.

I don't want Mrs Spears to read this diary. My thoughts are private. I don't want Mrs Spears to read my secrets. I'll have to start a different diary for Mrs Spears. It'll be a fake diary. I won't write about my real feelings in the fake diary.

Mrs Spears wants us to write about ourselves at the beginning of our diaries. This is what I'll write for my introduction:

### ENGLISH PROJECT: MY DIARY by Mia Thermopolis

Name: My full name is Princess Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo of Genovia. When people speak to me they call me, "Your Highness." In America, I'm sometimes called "Princess Mia." A month ago, everyone called me Mia (or Amelia) Thermopolis. My friends call me "Mia."

Age: 14

School Grade: Freshman - ninth grade.

Description: I'm five feet and nine inches tall. My eyes are gray and my feet are too large. My hair is short and very curly. The real color of my hair is light brown. But last month, I went to a beauty salon. Paolo, the stylist, cut my hair and colored it blond. I'm a vegetarian-I don't eat meat.

Parents: My mother's name is Helen Thermopolis. She's an artist. My father's full name is Artur Christoff Philippe Gerard Grimaldi Renaldo. He is the Prince of Genovia.

Pets: Fat Louie-an orange and white cat. Fat Louie is eight years old and he weighs 25 pounds.

Best Friend: Lilly Moscovitz. Lilly is very smart and she's interested in politics and ecology. She cares about people and what happens to the planet Earth. She makes films about the people of New York, and their problems. She has her own TV show-Lilly Tells It Like It Is.

Boyfriend: I don't have one.

Address: 1005 Thompson Street, Apartment 4A, New York. I've lived all my life in New York City with my mother. But every summer I go to France and visit my father. We stay in my grandmother's house.

About a month ago, my father told me, "Mia, I am the Prince of Genovia. You are my heir." After that, he came to stay at the Plaza Hotel in New York. He's staying in a suite in the penthouse - rooms on the hotel's top floor. My grandmother has a suite in the penthouse too. I have to go there every afternoon. My grandmother is teaching me how to be a princess.

Afternoon

Lilly sat with me in the cafeteria during lunch.

"What's wrong, Mia?" she asked. "Something's wrong."

I wanted to say, "Lilly, my mom's PREGNANT!" But I didn't say this. I told a lie. "Nothing's wrong," I said. But Lilly didn't believe me.

I'm worried about my mom and Mr Gianini. Will Grandmere be mad about my mom's pregnancy? Will she be angry when she hears the news about the baby? And what about my dad? How will he feel? Will he be angry? Or will he be sad? A year ago, my dad got

very sick. He had cancer. Dad is OK now, but he can't have any more children. He's not in love with my mom now, but maybe this news will hurt him.

And has Mom thought about which foods are best for a pregnant woman? My mom doesn't eat healthy foods. She eats too many candy bars, cakes and pizzas, and she drinks beer. Our refrigerator is full of the wrong kinds of food. I must throw out all the alcohol and coffee. I must buy fresh fruit, vegetables and milk.

Late afternoon

Today, I used the school computer and I went on the Internet. I found some information about pregnancy. Lilly saw what I was looking at.

"Do you have a secret to tell me, Mia?" she said in a shocked voice. "Are you pregnant?" Lilly's voice is very loud. Everyone heard her.

"I'm looking for some information for my Biology class," I said. Only part of this was true. I'm working on a special project with Kenny Showalter. Kenny is my study partner in Biology class. The project isn't about pregnant women. It's about insects. But Lilly doesn't know this.

Lilly went on talking about pregnancy. I was very embarrassed because her brother, Michael, was sitting with us. He heard our conversation. I wanted Lilly to shut up.

I've liked Michael for a long time. But he doesn't know this. He's a senior student-he's older than me. He's very smart and he's kind. He's also good-looking, and he has a gorgeous body. But Michael doesn't notice me at all. I'm just his younger sister's best friend.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Grandmere's Surprise**

Monday, October 20th. After school

When I got home, there was a phone message on the answering machine. Grandmere had called while we were out.

"My plans have changed," she said in her message. "I was going away for a few days. But now I have decided to stay in New York. Call me back immediately, Amelia. I have a surprise for you."

What is Grandmere's surprise? It's something horrible, I'm sure. I'm not going to call her back. If she calls again, I'll tell a lie. I'll say, "I didn't get your message. The answering machine didn't work properly."

Early evening Grandmere called again.

"Come and have dinner with me and your father tonight at the Plaza Hotel," she said. "I'll tell you about your surprise then."

My mom has invited Mr Gianini to our apartment this evening. She is going to tell him about the baby. I will go to the Plaza and have dinner with Dad and Grandmere.

Late evening - 11:00 p.m.

I now know all about Grandmere's surprise, and I don't like it. I'm going to be on a TV show called Twenty-Four/Seven. Lots of

people in America watch this show every week. Twenty-Four/Seven is very popular.

Grandmere spoke to the people who work on the show. She made an arrangement with them. I'm going to be interviewed by Beverly Bellerieve. Beverly is going to ask me questions about being a princess. The interview will be filmed next Saturday.

I don't want to be on the Twenty-Four/Seven show. But Grandmere won't listen to me. "You have to tell everybody about Genovia," she said. "Then lots of tourists will go there. This will be very good for Genovia."

"Your grandmother is right, Mia," said my dad. Then he started asking questions about the interviewer, Beverly Bellerieve.

"Didn't she win the Miss America beauty competition in 1991?" he said. "Is she dating anyone?" My dad likes beautiful women.

"Where will the interview be filmed?" I asked. "Will it be filmed at my apartment, or at the Plaza Hotel?"

Then I thought about my mom and Mr Gianini.

"What will Mr Gianini say when Mom tells him about the baby?" I said to myself. "Will he be happy?"

When I got back to the apartment, the door to my mom's bedroom was closed. I heard Mom and Mr Gianini talking quietly inside the room. I want Mr Gianini to be pleased about the baby. He's the best guy that my mother has ever dated.

I went into my bedroom and switched on my computer. There was an e-mail message from Michael Moscovitz. He wanted to talk to me. Michael likes working on computers. He is a member of the Computer Club at school. He writes an online magazine called Crackhead.

Michael and I often use our computers to send instant messages to each other. We have conversations in an Internet chat room. We use different names when we chat to each other. I use the name "FtLouie." It means Fat Louie. It's the name of my cat. Michael uses the name "CrackKing" - a criminal who sells drugs. Michael is always making clever jokes. This was our conversation:

CrackKing: At school today you were weird. What's wrong with you?

FtLouie: Nothing is wrong. I'm fine.

CrackKing: You weren't listening when I was helping you with your Algebra problems.

FtLouie: Yes, I was. I heard everything that you said.

But I wasn't telling Michael the truth. There is something wrong. I have a problem, and I can't talk to him about it. I HAVE A CRUSH ON MICHAEL MOSCOVITZ! When I'm close to Michael, I can't think clearly. He makes me feel happy and excited.

I have to stop writing now. My mom is outside my room. She's knocking at the door.

Very late

My mom just came into my bedroom and she was crying.

"Why are you crying?" I asked. "Isn't Mr Gianini pleased about the baby? What did he say?"

"I'm crying because I'm so happy," she replied.

Then she pulled me into the living room. Mr Gianini was standing there.

"We want you to hear our news first," said my mom. "We're getting married."

Then she put her arms around me and held me tightly. Mr Gianini hugged me too. It's very weird, being hugged by your Algebra teacher!

Tuesday, October 21st, 1:00 a.m.

MY MOM AND MR GIANINI ARE GETTING MARRIED! Does my mom believe in marriage? She never married my dad. Maybe he never asked her.

I've just realized something. If my mom marries Mr Gianini, he'll live with us. He'll live here, in this apartment. I'll have to eat breakfast every morning WITH MY ALGEBRA TEACHER!

9:00 a.m.

When I woke up this morning, my throat was painful. I felt ill and I couldn't talk properly. I tried to shout for my mom, but my voice was very weak. She couldn't hear me. So I got up and went down the hall to her room.

"Mom, I'm sick," I whispered. "I can't go to school today. Please will you call the school? And please call Lars. Tell him, 'Don't come with the limousine.' And call Lilly."

Lars is my driver and bodyguard. His job is to protect me because I'm a princess. He drives me to school every day in my dad's limousine. We always pick up Lilly and take her to school too.

Late morning



My mom usually goes to her art studio to paint. But today she stayed at home and looked after me. She made me cups of tea and special food.

At ten o'clock, Mom put a thermometer in my mouth. She took my temperature. She wanted to find out if my body heat was normal. After a minute, she took the thermometer out of my mouth and looked at it.

"Your temperature is ninety-nine point zero degrees," she said. "It is zero point six degrees higher than normal." Then she touched my face. "Your skin is hot. You have a fever. Stay in bed and rest."

My temperature:

11:45 a.m.-99.2F

12:14p.m.-99.1F

1:27 p.m.-98.6F

2:05 p.m.-99.0F

3:35 p.m.-99.1F

Maybe my temperature won't be normal by Saturday. Then I can't be interviewed by Beverly Bellerieve. GREAT!

Evening

Grandmere called a short time ago. "I'm sick," I told her. But she didn't feel sorry for me at all.

"If I'm still sick on Saturday, I won't be able to do the interview," I said.

"Of course you will," said Grandmere. "A princess must do her duties for her people, even if she is sick."

Wednesday, October 22nd

When I woke up, my temperature was 102F! My mom called my dad. She asked him to take me to my doctor. So Lars and my dad came to the apartment in the limousine.

We had to sit in the doctor's reception for about ten minutes before the doctor examined me. My dad spent the ten minutes talking to the doctor's pretty receptionist.

The doctor looked inside my throat and felt my neck. "You have a throat infection," he said.

Then he wrote a prescription for some medicine. "Take this," he said, giving me the piece of paper. "Go to a drug store and buy this medicine. You must take the medicine four times each day. When your temperature is normal, you can go to school."

As soon as I got home, I took some of the medicine. Then I went to bed.

My temperature:

5:20 p.m.-99.3F

6:45 p.m.-99.2F 7:52 p.m.-99.1F

My temperature is starting to go down. I don't want to get better too quickly! If I'm better by Saturday, I'll have to do that stupid interview.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **A Secret Admirer**

Thursday, October 23rd

This morning, something very exciting happened.

My mom brought me a letter that came in the mail. When I opened the envelope, I got a big surprise. Someone has sent me a LOVE LETTER! I don't know who sent it, there was no name at the end. It was from a secret admirer. The person wanted to keep his name a secret. The letter was signed, "A Friend." It was printed on a computer. There was no handwriting on it. This is what it said:

Dear Mia,

I feel strange writing this letter. But I'm too shy to talk to you. I can't tell you my real feelings. So I'm writing my feelings in this letter. I've liked you for a very long time. I liked you before you became a princess. I'll always like you.

Sincerely,

A Friend

I've never had a letter like this before! Is it from Michael Moscovitz? I hope that it is. But Michael sees me nearly every day. And he's never spoken to me about his feelings. If the letter isn't from Michael, who sent it?

I want to call Lilly, Tina and Shameeka and tell them about the letter. But they are in school. I CAN'T BE SICK NOW! I have to get well immediately. I want to go back to school and find out about this letter.

My temperature:

10:45 p.m.-99.2F

11:15 p.m.-99.1F

12:27 p.m.-98.6F Yes! YES! I'm getting better!

2:05 p.m.-99.0F.

Oh no! My temperature is going up again!

3:35 p.m.-99.1 F.

Late afternoon

Lilly came to the apartment after school. She bought some homework for me.

I didn't tell Lilly about the letter. I won't tell anyone. A love letter is very private. Maybe Michael did write it. If he wrote it, he won't want everyone to know about it.

Lilly sat on my bed and we watched a movie on TV. The movie was about a handsome boy who fell in love with a girl. Later, the boy found out that the girl was a princess. Her story was just like mine! But the girl in the movie couldn't marry the handsome boy. Her father had arranged for her to marry a prince.

"Maybe my dad has arranged a royal marriage for me too," I said to Lilly. "So I can't fall in love with a handsome actor, or your

brother Michael. I'll have to marry someone like Prince William, and live in Britain."

Lilly looked at me, then she went into the living room.

My father was sitting there, reading a newspaper. He was looking after me for a few hours. My mom wasn't in the apartment. She didn't want to tell Dad about her marriage to Mr Gianini, or her pregnancy. She had gone shopping.

"Mr Renaldo," I heard Lilly say. "Is Mia secretly engaged to be married? Is she going to be married to a prince, or a millionaire?"

"No, of course not," said my dad.

Lilly came back into my bedroom. "You're worried about falling in love with an actor. I understand that," she said. "But why did you talk about love and my brother Michael?"

Immediately, I realized my mistake. I don't want Lilly to know my feelings about her brother. I didn't answer her question.

## Evening

After dinner, I switched on my computer and read my e-mail. Lots of my friends had sent me messages. There was a message from Tina Hakim Baba. "Get well soon," she said. Another friend, Shameeka, sent me an invitation to her party. Michael had sent a message too. It was a little film with a cat in it-a cat like Fat Louie. The cat was dancing and it was really cute. Michael had signed the message: Love, Michael.

Did Michael send me the love letter on Thursday? Is he the shy friend? I don't know. The word love wasn't in that letter. The sender of the letter-"A Friend"-used the word liked. And he signed it, "Sincerely."

Then I saw another e-mail. I didn't recognize the e-mail address. It was from someone using the name, Jo Crox. Who is Jo Crox? Is he the person who sent the love letter? Is he my secret admirer? Is he the boy who likes me? This was the message:

Jo Crox: I hoped to see you in class today. Then I heard about your throat infection. Are you feeling better? Did you get my letter? Get well soon.

Your Friend

Jo Crox is my secret admirer! But who is he? He wanted to see me in class. So we must take a class together. But there is no one in any of my classes with the name Jo.

Maybe Jo Crox isn't his real name. I looked at the name and thought for a few minutes. Then I understood! Jo Crox. Jo-C-rox. Jo-see-rocks. Josie Rocks! Josie is the name of my favorite character, Josie, in the TV show Josie and the Pussycats. Josie "rocks" means Josie is cool. This person is saying, "Josie is cool." This person must know me well! I replied immediately.

FtLouie: Dear Friend,

I got your letter. Thank you very much. Who are you? I won't tell anyone. Please tell me. I'll keep your secret.

I waited for about half an hour, but Jo-C-rox didn't write back.

Friday, October 24th. Algebra class

I AM BETTER! My temperature is normal now, so I went to school. Lars drove me in the limousine and we picked up Lilly outside her apartment. Michael was with her. When we got to school, Michael walked with me to my class. I felt very happy.

Lilly's boyfriend, Boris Pelkowski, meets her outside school every morning and walks with her to class.

Afternoon

My list of things to do

1. Stop thinking so much about Jo-C-rox.
2. Stop thinking so much about Michael Moscovitz.
3. Stop thinking about my mom and her pregnancy.
4. Stop thinking about my TV interview tomorrow.
5. Stop thinking about Grandmere.
6. Stop biting my fingernails.
7. Work harder in my Algebra class.

Evening

Homework: English project. I have to write in my school diary. I have to write 200 words, with the title: Describe a special experience that changed your life. What can I write about? A month ago, my father told me who I was. I'm a princess. I'm heir to the throne of Genovia. My life changed then. Maybe I'll write about that.

Kenny Showalter, my partner in Biology class, had a very special experience last year. Last summer, Kenny visited India with his family. While he was there, he got very sick. He nearly died.

"That experience changed me," said Kenny. "Now, I want to help people who are sick and dying."

I've never had any experiences like that. My experiences aren't special at all.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Me and My Big Mouth**

Saturday, October 25th. Grandmere's suite, the Plaza Hotel.

As I waited to start my interview with Beverly Bellerieve, I felt weak and ill. My throat hurt and my body was hot.

Maybe I didn't feel well because I was nervous. Twenty-four/Seven is a VERY popular TV show. My interview is going to be shown on Monday night. People in about twenty-two million homes all over America will watch it.

When I got to the Plaza Hotel, my dad was in my grandmother's suite. He started talking about Mr Gianini.

"Mia, is your Algebra teacher living in your apartment?" he asked.

I didn't know what to say. Mr Gianini isn't living in our apartment. Not really. But he will be living there soon.

"Er... no," I said.

Dad looked happy when he heard that. But will he be happy when he finds out about Mom's marriage to Mr Gianini? Will he be happy about Mom's baby?

The interviewer, Beverly Bellerieve, arrived at the suite. She's very smart and very beautiful. My dad likes her very much. He smiled a lot when he talked to her. She smiled too. Lots of women like my dad. He's rich and he looks like Captain Jean-Luc Picard in the TV show, Star Trek: The Next Generation.

7:00 p.m. In the limousine

I'm feeling much worse. The interview was awful. I made a REALLY BAD mistake!

My dad and Grandmere watched while Beverly Bellerieve interviewed me. At first, everything went really well. But then I said a stupid thing. And because of this, my dad knows about Mom and Mr Gianini. I didn't want this to happen. I was just so nervous. Beverly was nice to me. But I couldn't think clearly and my answers were too long.

We talked for about an hour. Then Beverly said, "Mia, didn't you have some exciting news recently?"

I was very surprised. "She's asking me about the baby and the wedding," I thought.

"Oh, yes," I said quickly. "I'm very excited. I've always wanted to be a big sister. But my mom and her boyfriend don't want a big wedding. They just want a small quiet wedding."

Me and my big mouth. The words just came out! I spoke before I thought about the question.

My dad was drinking a glass of water. He dropped the glass. Grandmere started making strange noises.

Suddenly I realized what I'd said. "Oh no!" I thought. "I've said the wrong thing."

Beverly wasn't talking about my mom. She didn't know about my mom's marriage to Mr Gianini. And she didn't know about the baby. Beverly was talking about my work at school. I'd gotten a very good grade in my last Algebra test.

My dad put his hands on his head. His face was pale. He looked shocked.

What will my mom say when she finds out?

"Don't worry, Mia," said my dad. "I'll explain to your mother what happened. It wasn't your fault."

I don't know what I said in the rest of the interview. I don't remember what other questions Beverly Bellerieve asked me.

"I'm not jealous of Mr Gianini," my dad said to me later. "I'm pleased for your mother. She and Mr Gianini will be very happy." He said that, but I don't believe him.

I'm going straight from the hotel to Lilly's place. She's asked all her friends to go to her apartment. We're helping her to make a film tonight. It's about teenagers behaving badly. Maybe I can stay at Lilly's place tonight. I don't want to go home and see my mom yet. I'll wait until Dad talks to her.

Sunday, October 26th, 2:00 a.m. Lilly's bedroom

I did a very stupid thing tonight. I was with Tina, Shameeka, and Ling Su at Lilly's apartment. Lilly gave me a dare. She told me to do something stupid and dangerous.

"I want to film some teenagers behaving badly," she said. "If I ask you to do something stupid, will you do it?"

"What's the dare?" I asked.

"I dare you to drop an eggplant onto the sidewalk from my bedroom window. You won't do it. You're good. You never behave badly."

"I'll do it," I said at once. "I accept the dare."

It was a very stupid thing to do. Lilly's family live in an apartment sixteen floors up from the street. It's extremely dangerous

to drop anything out of high windows in New York City. If something falls on someone in the street, they could die.

But my friends heard what Lilly said. So I agreed to do the dare. I went into Lilly's kitchen and found an eggplant. Then I went back to Lilly's bedroom. Lilly turned on her video camera and started filming.

I opened the window and dropped the eggplant. The huge purple vegetable fell down and down. Then... SPLAT! It hit the sidewalk. The soft eggplant exploded. Pieces of it went everywhere. Many pieces hit a bus and a Jaguar car.

I leaned out of the window. I saw a man get out of the Jaguar. He looked up at Lilly's apartment building. He was trying to see which floor the eggplant came from.

Suddenly someone pulled me back. It was Michael, Lilly's brother.

"Get down!" he said. We all got down on the floor at once - me, Lilly, Michael, Shameeka, Ling Su and Tina.

I was surprised to see Michael in the apartment. I thought that he was out with his friends from the Computer Club.

"That was really stupid!" Michael said. "It's against the law to drop things out of windows in New York City. You could kill someone."

"Oh, don't be silly, Michael," said Lilly, laughing. "It was only a vegetable."

"I'm not joking, Lilly," said Michael, angrily. "I'm very serious. If anyone saw Mia do that, she'll be in big trouble. Maybe the police will arrest her. You mustn't keep that film, Lilly. No one must see the Princess of Genovia behaving so badly."

I was very pleased. Michael was trying to help me. Maybe he didn't write the love letter, but he does care about me a little.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Wedding Plans**

Sunday, October 26th, 7:00 p.m.

I was worried. I'd told the secret about my mom and Mr Gianini. I didn't want to leave the Moscovitzes' apartment this morning. I always feel relaxed and comfortable at Lilly's place. Lilly and her family are ordinary people with normal problems. But my family is weird and our problems are always difficult.

I was surprised when I got home. My mom was happy to see me. "Don't worry, Mia," she said. "Your dad's talked to me about the TV interview. Everything's OK. I understand."

We sat down and made plans for her wedding. My mom wants to get married near the time of Halloween.

Then Lilly called.

"You've done an interview for Twenty-Four/Seven and it's being shown on Monday," she said. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"How do you know about this?" I asked in surprise.

"There are TV commercials advertising it," said Lilly. "They're saying, 'Princess Mia, America's royal princess, has been interviewed by Beverly Bellerieve.' Why didn't you tell me?" Lilly asked again.

"I didn't think that it was important," I said.

"You didn't think that an interview with Beverly Bellerieve was important?" said Lilly. "Beverly Bellerieve is America's top TV journalist. She's great!"

"Oh," I said. "She just seemed like a nice lady."

9:00 p.m.

I've had another e-mail from Jo-C-rox!

Jo Crox: Hi, Mia. I just saw the TV commercial for your interview. You looked great. I'm sorry, but I can't tell you my real name. Now stop reading your e-mail messages. You must start your Algebra homework.

Your Friend

I wrote back immediately.

FtLouie: WHO ARE YOU?

Jo-C-rox didn't reply. But how does he know about my Algebra homework? Michael knows about my Algebra homework. Is he Jo-C-rox? I want Michael to be Jo-C-rox!

Monday, October 27th

Lots of people at school saw the commercials for my interview. Everyone is going to watch Twenty-Four/Seven tonight. Tomorrow, they'll all know about my mom and Mr Gianini. What am I going to do? What did I say in the interview? What other things did Beverly and I talk about? Did I say other stupid things?

I talked about the interview with my friend, Tina Hakim Baba. Before Tina was born, her mother was a model in Britain. She did a lot of TV interviews.

"The TV company always sent my mom a videotape of the interview before they showed the film on TV," said Tina.

This was a good idea. So at lunchtime I called my dad at the Plaza Hotel. I asked him to get a videotape of my interview from Beverly Bellerieve.

"I'll ask her now," said my dad. He spoke to someone in his hotel room. Then I heard Beverly's voice on the phone. "What's the matter, Mia?" she asked.

Beverly was in my dad's hotel suite! I wasn't surprised. My dad liked Beverly very much when he met her.

"I'm worried about my interview," I said. "I'd like to see a videotape of the film before you show it on TV."

"You don't need to see a videotape," said Beverly. "Don't worry. Everything's fine."

### Afternoon

Something very embarrassing has happened. I was walking down the school hall with Michael and Lilly, when we met Lana Weinberger. Lana is the most beautiful and popular girl in the ninth grade. Lana walked up to Michael and me and stared at us.

"Are you two dating each other?" she said loudly.

Michael's face became red. So did mine.

Lilly started to laugh. "Mia and Michael dating?" she said. "Of course they're not!"

Lana started laughing too. But Michael didn't say anything. He was putting his books in his bag.



After school

When I walked into Grandmere's hotel suite for my princess class today, she was sitting with a strange man. On the table in front of them, there was a huge piece of paper. There were lots of circles on the paper. Grandmere and the man were sticking small pieces of paper onto the circles.

"What are you doing, Grandmere?" I asked.

"Oh, Amelia, this is Vigo," said Grandmere, pointing to the man. "He's come here from Genovia. He plans all the important events in Genovia. He's helping me to plan your mother's wedding."

"Grandmere," I said. "Can I talk to you privately for a moment, please?"

"No," said Grandmere. "If you have anything to say, you can say it to Vigo too."

Vigo jumped up from his chair and rushed over to me. He was very short and he spoke excitedly.

"I'm delighted to meet you, Your Highness," he said.

"It's nice to meet you too," I said. "But my mom and Mr Gianini want a small, quiet wedding. I'm sure of that."

"Nonsense!" said Grandmere. "Amelia, you are a member of the Genovian royal family. One day, you'll be the ruler of Genovia. Your mother must have a big wedding. The marriage will take place in the White and Gold Room here at the Plaza. Then there will be a party in the Grand Ballroom."

"Er... Grandmere," I said. "Mom and Mr Gianini don't want a big wedding and a large party."

"Why not?" said Grandmere in a surprised voice. "Your father is paying for everything, of course."

"Maybe I'll call Dad about this," I said.

"You can't," said Grandmere. "He's gone away with his new girlfriend. She's that... that interviewer - Beverly Bellerieve. Now, look Amelia, this will be your mother's wedding dress."

She held up a picture of a dress with a huge skirt. It was the kind of dress that my mom hates.

"Grandmere," I said. "You are working very hard. But my mom really doesn't want a big wedding."

Grandmere didn't listen to me. "Tell Amelia about the food for the wedding," she said to Vigo.

Vigo started describing the food. Then he described the music. After that, Grandmere and Vigo showed me the white and gold wedding invitations. I looked at the date on the invitations. It said: Saturday, November 1st.

"Wait a minute," I said. "Is the wedding this Saturday? That's in less than a week."

"Yes," said Grandmere.

"What if the guests are busy? What if they have other plans for that day?"

"The wedding has to be soon," said Vigo. "Your mother must be married quickly. In a few weeks, her pregnancy will show."

Grandmere has even told Vigo about my mom's baby! That's great. That's really great.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **The Interview**

Monday, October 27th. Evening

When I got home, I didn't tell my mom about Grandmere's plans for the wedding. My mom was in the bathroom. She was feeling sick because she was pregnant.

Mr Gianini was in the apartment. It was nearly time for my TV interview with Beverly Bellerieve. He switched on the TV, and we watched it together. The interview was horrible! It went like this:

A man's voice spoke at the beginning of the show. He was the announcer.

VOICE: It is Monday, the 27th of October. On Twenty-Four/Seven tonight is Beverly Bellerieve's interview with America's Princess... Mia Renaldo!

A picture of me and Beverly Bellerieve came on the TV. We were in the penthouse suite of the Plaza Hotel. Beverly looked at the TV camera and spoke.

BEVERLY: This is the amazing story of an ordinary teenage girl. She lives in New York City with her mom, Helen Thermopolis. Helen Thermopolis is an artist. A month ago, Mia was a normal teenager. Her life was filled with ordinary teenage things - things like homework and friends. Then one day, everything changed.

Then Beverly turned to me and started asking questions.

BEVERLY: Mia, please tell us about that day. The day when your life changed completely.

ME: We... I... was here at the Plaza with my dad. He told me two pieces of amazing news. First he said, "I am the Prince of Genovia." Then he said, "You are the Princess of Genovia and my heir. When I die, you'll become the ruler of Genovia."

BEVERLY: How did you feel about that news?

ME: I was really upset. Me! A princess! I didn't want anyone at school to know. I didn't want to be a freak like my friend Tina Hakim Baba. Tina's life is strange and lonely. Her father owns an oil company and he's very rich. Tina's parents worry about her safety. A bodyguard goes everywhere with her. He even comes to school. But that's what has happened to me too. I have a bodyguard. I'm a freak too, a huge freak.

BEVERLY: Oh, Mia, I can't believe that. Aren't you popular at school?

ME: No, I'm not. I'm not popular at all. Only the jocks - the boys who are very good at sport-are popular in my school. And the cheerleaders - the girls who shout and cheer while the jocks play - are popular too. But the popular people aren't my friends. I never get invited to their parties. Those are the really cool parties. Everyone drinks beer. And everyone makes out... er... kisses.

BEVERLY: Your grandmother - the Dowager Princess of Genovia - is helping you, isn't she? She's showing you how to be a princess.

ME: Oh, yes. She's giving me princess classes after school.  
BEVERLY: Mia, you had some exciting news recently.

ME: Oh. Yes. I'm very excited. I've always wanted to be a big sister. But my mom and her boyfriend won't have a big wedding...

At that moment, my mom came out of the bathroom. She looked at the TV. She heard what I was saying on the film. Her

mouth opened in shock. I had told the whole of America her private business!

We watched the rest of the TV show. As we watched, I became more and more embarrassed.

The interview ended like this:

BEVERLY: Amelia Mignonette Thermopolis Renaldo isn't a jock, or a cheerleader. But she is a very unusual girl. She's a modern princess. She is America's princess. Mia has the same problems as all American teenagers. But one day, she will rule a country. And next year, Mia will be a big sister. Twenty-Four/Seven is the show that heard Mia's exciting news first. Mia's mother, Helen Thermopolis, is expecting a baby in July. The father of Helen's baby is Frank Gianini - Mia's Algebra teacher at Albert Einstein High School. Frank and Helen will be having a small, quiet wedding.

Mom and Mr Gianini were nice to me. They weren't mad. But they were upset.

The phone rang. It was Lilly. My best friend was mad. "You called us freaks," she said angrily. "What did you mean?"

"Lilly, I didn't call you a freak," I said.

"You said, 'Only jocks and cheerleaders are popular at my school.'" Lilly replied. "You said, 'I don't go around with the popular kids.' All your friends are unpopular. That's what you mean, isn't it? Your friends aren't cool. They're weird - they're freaks."

Then she hung up the phone.

A few seconds later, the phone rang again. It was my friend Shameeka.

"Mia," she said. "I invited you to my party. Do you remember?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, my dad won't let me have a party now," said Shameeka. "My dad said, 'Now parents of students at Albert Einstein know the truth. Mia Thermopolis has told us what happens at teenage parties in this area. Students have sex and drink beer at their parties. You can't have your party.'"

"Oh, Shameeka," I said. "I am so sorry."

Shameeka hung up the phone. The phone rang again. It was Tina Hakim Baba. Immediately, I apologized to her.

"I'm sorry, Tina," I said.

"Why are you sorry?" asked Tina happily. "You said my name on TV!"

"Er... I know." I had also called Tina a freak.

"I can't believe it!" she said. "It was so cool! It's the most exciting thing that has ever happened to me."

"You... you aren't mad at me?" I said. "Did your dad see the interview too?"

"Yes," said Tina. "He's very pleased. Now everyone knows about my bodyguard, Wahim. He protects me everywhere I go."

Tina hung up. The phone rang for the fourth time. It was Grandmere.

"Well," she said. "That was terrible, wasn't it?"

"I'm sorry, Grandmere," I said. "I didn't mean to say bad things about my school."

But Grandmere wasn't talking about my high school.

"That Bellerieve woman didn't show any pictures of Genovia," she said. "We need more tourists to come to our country."

"Maybe I'll have to go to another school now," I said.

But Grandmere wasn't listening to me. Suddenly, she hung up the phone.

"Mia," my mom said. "The interview wasn't that bad. You told the truth about the jocks and the cheerleaders."

I went into my room and switched on my computer. I'd received a message from Michael Moscovitz. We had this chat room conversation:

CrackKing: Hi. I just saw you on TV. You were very good.

FtLouie: It was terrible.

CrackKing: Well, you told the truth.

FtLouie: But Mom and Mr Gianini are upset. And Lilly and Shameeka are mad at me now.

CrackKing: Don't worry about Lilly. She's jealous because more people watched your interview than her TV show. What are you doing on Saturday night?

I read the last line of his message again. Was Michael Moscovitz asking me out ON A DATE?

FtLouie: I don't know. Why?

CrackKing: Well, Saturday is the day after Halloween. I'm going to a movie theater with some friends. We're going to see the ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW. It's a really funny movie. Everyone is going to celebrate Halloween. We'll all wear scary costumes and crazy makeup. Do you want to come?

OK. Michael wasn't asking me out alone with him. But it will be nice to go out with him, and his friends. Then I remembered my mom's wedding.

FtLouie: Can I give you my answer later? Maybe I'm doing something with my family on Saturday night. I'll speak to you later.

CrackKing: Sure. OK.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **Surprise Visitors**

Tuesday, October 27th. Algebra class

This morning, Principal Gupta - the head of Albert Einstein High School - asked me to come to her office.

"Are you very unhappy here at Albert Einstein?" she said. She looked worried. "Last night, in your TV interview, you said, 'I'm not popular.' But everyone in the school knows who you are."

"They know me because I'm a princess,"

I replied. "My story was printed in newspapers and magazines. Before that, very few people wanted to know me."

"You must join one of the school clubs," said Principal Gupta. "Then you'll meet more students. You'll have more friends."

"Principal Gupta," I said, "I don't have time for clubs. I don't have any time for myself after school finishes. Every afternoon, I have an extra Algebra class, and then I have a princess class with my grandmother. In the evenings, I do my homework."

Principal Gupta doesn't understand!

Late morning

Lilly's boyfriend, Boris Pelkowski, told me a secret about Lilly. She is secretly writing a book about our school.

I can't believe it. Why does Lilly only tell Boris her secrets? Why doesn't she tell me? Lilly and I have been best friends since elementary school. I tell Lilly everything. Well, almost everything. She didn't know about my mom and Mr Gianini's wedding, and their baby. She doesn't know about my feelings for her brother. And she doesn't know about my secret admirer. But I tell her nearly everything else.

Afternoon

Kenny, my partner in Biology class, spoke to me after class today.

"Are you doing anything on Saturday night?" he asked. "I'm not sure," I replied. "Maybe I'll be eating dinner with my family."

"Well, I'm going to see a movie-the Rocky Horror Picture Show-with some friends from the Computer Club," he said. "Will you come too?"

"Is Michael Moscovitz one of your friends?" I asked.

"Yes," said Kenny.

6:00 p.m. In the limousine

I'm with Lars. We're going back to the apartment. I've just been to see Grandmere at the Plaza Hotel for my princess lesson. I walked into the suite and I had a shock. Lots of people were there. There were people talking about food and wine and flowers. Others were writing names on cards. Vigo was running about, telling everyone what to do. Grandmere was sitting and eating chocolates. Her little dog was sitting under her chair. He was shaking with fear.

"Ah, Amelia," said Grandmere. "Sit down. You can help me. Taste these chocolates. Which chocolates are best for the wedding

guests?"

"Grandmere," I said, sitting down on a chair next to her. "Mom really won't be happy about these arrangements. She doesn't want a big wedding."

"Nonsense," said Grandmere loudly, in a scary voice. "This will be a wonderful event. I'm inviting lots of famous people. Many of them are very rich. Some of them are members of royal families."

It's impossible to argue with Grandmere. She never listens to me. So after my princess class, I went to my dad's hotel suite. I knocked on the door, but he didn't answer.

I went and talked to the hotel receptionist.

"The prince left the hotel a few hours ago," she said. "Beverly Bellerieve was with him."

10:00 p.m.

When I got home, there were strangers in the apartment. A family - a mom and a dad, and a boy with long blond hair was in the dining room. They were sitting around the table. They had suitcases with them.

"Mia, don't you remember me?" asked the woman.

I stared at her. Suddenly I recognized the woman. My mouth fell open in shock. I couldn't believe it.

"Grandmother Thermopolis?" I said.

"Mia," said the woman. "You've never called me 'Grandmother.' I'm Mamaw."

My mom's mother, Mamaw, and my mom's father, Papaw, were in our apartment! I didn't recognize the young guy. He was dressed like a farmer. He was wearing a cotton shirt and denim overalls.

My mom's parents live in the state of Indiana. Indiana is hundreds of miles away from the state of New York. My grandparents live in a small town called Versailles. They've never been to New York City before.

My mom doesn't talk to her parents very often. We haven't visited Mamaw or Papaw for four years. When I was born, they were angry. This was because my mom didn't marry my father. My grandparents didn't help my mom when I was a baby. They didn't give her advice or any money.

I went to find my mom. She was in her bedroom. She was talking to my dad on the phone.

"Philippe," she was saying angrily, "your mother has invited my parents to New York. My parents, Philippe. You know how I feel about my parents."

Then she saw me standing by the door.

"Are your grandparents still out there?" she whispered. "Er... yes," I said. "Did you invite Mamaw and Papaw here?"

"No, I did not!" said my mom. "Grandmere Clarisse invited them. She's arranged a big wedding. It's going to be on SATURDAY!" Her voice was getting louder and louder. "Your Grandmere has invited hundreds of people - all her friends."

I felt terrible. I had forgotten to tell my mom about Grandmere's wedding plans.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **The Boy from Indiana**

Wednesday, October 29th

Some surprising things happened when Hank came to school with me today. And these things made me look at my cousin more carefully. Suddenly, I realized something. Hank has changed a lot in four years.

Hank wears the kind of clothes that farmers wear-boots, a cotton shirt, and denim overalls. These are not the kind of clothes that young guys wear in New York. But Hank is big and strong and he has a really nice body. His hair is blond and his eyes are dark blue. In fact, Hank is gorgeous! All the girls stared at him as he walked through the school hall.

"Who is that sexy guy?" they asked me.

When Lana Weinberger first saw Hank, her eyes opened wide with surprise.

"Who's your friend?" she asked me.

"He's not my friend, he's my cousin," I replied.

"Well, you can be my friend," Lana said to Hank.

"Thanks," replied Hank. He looked down at Lana and smiled.

But the biggest surprise of all was Lilly. When she saw Hank, her mouth fell open and she couldn't speak. She just stared at him.

Afternoon

I don't believe what has happened today. Lilly and Hank have disappeared. Nobody knows where they are. Lilly's boyfriend, Boris, is really worried.

At lunch, Lilly asked Hank lots of questions about his life in Indiana.

"Do you have a girlfriend?" she asked.

"No, I don't," said Hank, "I was dating a girl called Amber. But we broke up two weeks ago."

Then Lilly started telling Hank about New York.

"You'll be bored here in school with Mia," she said. "Go visit some places in the city. There are lots of exciting things to see."

Since lunch, nobody has seen Lilly or Hank. Lilly will be in a lot of trouble. She's run away with Hank and she's missing her classes. Now I have to tell my grandparents. Their grandson has disappeared. What will Mamaw and Papaw say?

Algebra class

I told Lars, my bodyguard, what has happened.

"Lilly and Hank have disappeared. They've run away together," I said. "I'll call the police."

"No, wait," Lars said. Then he spoke to Mr Gianini. Mr Gianini agreed with Lars.

"Lilly is quite sensible," my Algebra teacher said. "She'll look after Hank."

But I'm really worried. Have Lilly and Hank fallen in love with each other? Hank isn't very smart. But perhaps Lilly doesn't care about this. He is very good-looking.

7:00 p.m.

Hank and Lilly are OK. They're safe! Hank got back to the Soho Grand hotel at about five o'clock. Lilly got back to her apartment at about the same time.

"We've been walking around the city," they said.

I don't believe them. But I have more important things to worry about. When I went to the Plaza Hotel for my princess class with Grandmere, my dad was outside her door. He was looking nervous.

"Mia," he said. "I have some bad news. Grandmere has already sent out the wedding invitations."

"What?" I said.

"Don't worry," said my dad. "I'll take care of everything."

My dad is a good man, but Grandmere is stronger than him. He won't be able to stop her.

I walked into Grandmere's suite. The royal wedding planner, Vigo, was with her.

"Lots of famous people have accepted our invitations," said Vigo proudly. "It'll be the biggest, most important wedding in New York this year."

I didn't say anything. I was thinking about Mom. She was going to be shocked when she saw hundreds of famous people at her wedding. None of them are her friends.

"Your dress for the wedding has arrived," said Vigo. And suddenly, he pulled a dress from a box. "What do you think?"

I've never seen such a beautiful dress. It was pink, with a huge skirt. As soon as I saw that dress, I wanted it. I wanted it more than anything in the world. And then I remembered. This dress was for my mom's wedding. The big wedding that Grandmere had planned. I felt terrible. I'm a bad daughter. I can't wear the dress. My mom doesn't want a big wedding. I don't want this big wedding to happen. Only Grandmere wants this wedding.

"It is a beautiful dress," I thought. "I want Michael, or Jo-C-rox, to see me wearing it. I'll look like a real princess in this dress."



## CHAPTE NINE

### **Secrets and Lies**

Thursday, October 30th. English class

Hank didn't come to school with me today. He called the apartment early in the morning.

"I'm sick," he said.

Last night, Mr Gianini took Mom, me, Mamaw, Papaw and Hank to dinner at a famous restaurant. Everybody had a very good time and they ate a lot. If Hank is sick, I'm not surprised.

When Hank didn't come to school today, all the girls were very disappointed. Only Boris was happy. He's very jealous of Hank. Does Lilly like Hank more than Boris? I don't know.

Afternoon

Lilly and Hank have disappeared AGAIN! Before lunch, my mom called Lars on his cellphone. Mamaw had spoken to Mom because Hank was missing from his hotel room. Mamaw was worried about her grandson.

"Lars, did Hank go to school with Mia today?" asked my mom.

"No," said Lars.

Then, at lunchtime, Lilly said, "I'm feeling sick. I'm going home."

I don't believe what Lilly said. She isn't sick. She's gone to meet Hank somewhere. That's what I think. What are Hank and Lilly

doing? Do they love each other? Are they having sex?

7:00 p.m. In the limousine

I've just had another shock. Now I'm in the limousine with Lars. He's driving me to my apartment.

When I went to Grandmere's suite today, Mamaw was there. Mamaw and Grandmere were sitting on couches and drinking tea. They were talking about someone.

Vigo was speaking on the phone. He was making more arrangements for the wedding.

"She was always very stubborn," Mamaw was saying. "She never takes advice or listens to anyone."

"I am not stubborn!" I said.

"Don't enter the room in that rude way, Amelia," said Grandmere. She spoke in French. "Come here and say hello to me properly."

I went and kissed Grandmere on both of her cheeks. Then I kissed Mamaw on both of her cheeks too. Mamaw laughed and said, "We don't say hello like that in Indiana."

"Now, Shirley," Grandmere said to Mamaw in English.

"What were we talking about?"

"Helen is being difficult about this wedding and I'm not surprised," said Mamaw. "But Papaw and I are very happy. Frank Gianini is very nice."

So they weren't talking about me. They were talking about my mom! They're arranging this wedding together!

"Shirley, we both agree," said Grandmere. "This wedding will take place. It must take place."

"Oh, certainly, Your Highness," said Mamaw.

"But Grandmere," I said. "Mom doesn't want-"

"Vigo!" shouted Grandmere. "Bring those shoes for the princess! She'll wear them with her new pink dress on Saturday."

Vigo came toward me with a pair of pink shoes. They were the same color as my dress.

They were the prettiest shoes that I've ever seen.

"Aren't they lovely?" said Vigo. "Put them on."

The beautiful shoes fit me perfectly.

"It's sad," said Grandmere. "Your mother doesn't want this wedding. We'll have to send the shoes back to the store."

"Can I keep them for another time?" I asked.

"Oh, no," said Grandmere quickly. "You can only wear pink shoes at a wedding."

I'm worried. My dad promised to stop this wedding. But he hasn't done anything. He won't be able to stop Grandmere. She has arranged for a limousine to come to our apartment on Saturday. The driver will pick up me, Mom and Mr Gianini. Will my mom refuse to get into the car on November 1st?

9:00 p.m.

Mr Gianini has moved into our apartment. He brought with him a table with a football game on it, and a TV. The football table is

great. I've already played nine games.

"You can call me 'Frank' now, Mia," he said.

But it's very difficult for me to call Mr Gianini "Frank." He's my Algebra teacher.

I asked my mom about the wedding on Saturday. But she just smiled.

"Don't worry about that, Mia," she said.

Mom didn't say anything more. She didn't want to talk about the wedding. So I called Lilly. Her phone line was busy, so I sent her an instant message on the Internet.

When Lilly and I chat online, Lilly uses the name "WmnRule." It means "women are cool."

FtLouie: Where did you and Hank go to today?

WmnRule: I'm not going to tell you. It's a secret.

FtLouie: Lilly, I'm worried about you. You missed classes today. And Boris was upset too.

WmnRule: Well, Boris has to trust me. And you must trust me too, Mia.

Suddenly I received a new message-from Jo-C-rox!

Jo Crox: Are you coming to see the ROCKY HORROR SHOW movie?

Jo-C-rox is going to the Rocky Horror movie on Saturday. Michael is going to the Rocky Horror movie too. Michael MUST BE Jo-C-rox.

I felt really happy and excited. I wanted to run around the room. I wanted to scream and laugh at the same time. I wrote back immediately.

FtLouie: Yes, I want to come to the movie.

## CHAPTER TEN

### **Hank's Dream Comes True**

Friday, October 31st. Halloween

I was completely wrong about Lilly Moscovitz. At lunch, I found out the truth about her and Hank.

We were all sitting in the school cafeteria - me and my bodyguard Lars, Tina Hakim Baba, and her bodyguard Wahim, Lilly, Boris, and our friends, Shameeka and Ling Su.

Suddenly, someone walked up to our table. We looked up. A tall, very handsome young man was standing there. We all stared in surprise. It was Hank! But he looked very different. Everyone in the cafeteria stopped talking. They were all looking at him.

Hank was wearing a black sweater, a long black leather coat, black jeans, and black boots. His blond hair had been cut short. He looked like the actor, Keanu Reeves, in the film, The Matrix.

"Hello, Mia," said my cousin, sitting down beside me.

Hank's clothes were different, but his voice was different too. It was deeper. He didn't pronounce words like a person from Indiana. He no longer had an Indiana accent.

"So," Lilly said to him. "What happened?"

"Well," Hank said in his new, deep voice. "I have to thank you, Lilly. I got the job. I'm going to be a model. A famous fashion company wants me to model underwear. Pictures of me will soon be in magazines and on TV." He smiled a huge smile.

"Mia," he said, turning to me, "Your friend has done something that no one has ever done for me in my life."

What had Lilly done?

"When I was a young boy, I had a dream about being a model," said Hank. "I wanted to be a fashion model. But everyone laughed at me. When I told Lilly about my dream, she helped me. Now my dream has come true. I'm going to be a model. I'm going to be rich and famous."

"I only helped you a little, Hank," said Lilly. "I told you where to go. And I told you who to meet. You did the rest yourself."

Suddenly Hank stood up and pulled Lilly to her feet. Then he kissed her for a long time. Everyone stared at them.

When Hank let Lilly go, she sat down slowly.

"I'm never going back to Versailles with Mamaw and Papaw," Hank said to me. "Please tell them that." Then he turned, and he started to walk out of the cafeteria. But just as Hank reached the door, Boris stood up. He grabbed Hank's arm.

"Hey, you!" Boris said. "Lilly is my girl, not yours." Two boys were arguing because of Lilly! It was very romantic. I want a boy to call me his girl. I want Michael to call me his girl.

Then Boris hit Hank in the face. But Boris hurt his own hand. He didn't hurt Hank.

Afternoon

I used Lars's cellphone to call Mamaw and Papaw at their hotel. Mamaw answered the call.

"It's me," I said. "I'm calling with news about Hank." "WHERE IS HE?" shouted Mamaw.

"Mamaw," I said. "Hank is OK. He's going to be a model. He's got a contract with one of the best modeling agencies in New York. He's going to model underwear. He's going to be very famous."

"UNDERWEAR!" Mamaw shouted. "My grandson is going to model underwear! Mia, tell Hank to call me RIGHT NOW. He's in BIG TROUBLE."

"OK, Mamaw," I said. "Er... is the wedding still going to take place tomorrow? Did you talk to my mom?"

"Of course," said Mamaw. "Everything is ready."

"Really?" I said. I was very surprised. "Has Mom agreed to the plans? Will she be at the Gold and White Room at the Plaza on Saturday?"

"Yes, she'll be there," said Mamaw.

I hung up the phone. I felt sad and a little disappointed. I was sad for Mom, because she didn't want a big wedding. And I was sad for myself, because I didn't want to go to the wedding on Saturday. I wanted to go to the Rocky Horror movie with Michael.

Later, I talked with Lilly about Hank. Michael was there too.

ME: Why did you help Hank become a model, Lilly?

LILLY: Hank had a dream about becoming a model. So I helped him. I gave him some advice about fashion. I helped him to speak without his Indiana accent. Then he went to the modeling agency. They said, "You're tall and you have an excellent body. Your face, skin, eyes, teeth and hair are very good." Then a photographer took some photos of Hank. The pictures were great! The agency became very excited. The next day, they gave him a job.



ME: Why was Hank's visit to the agency a big secret? Why didn't you tell me about it?

LILLY: Because he didn't want you to laugh at him. Hank is your cousin. You don't see him as other people see him. But he's a very special person. He'll do great things. His dream can come true.

MICHAEL: Yeah. He'll model underwear.

LILLY: You're jealous, Michael. Hank is going to be a supermodel!

Michael didn't say anything else to me all day. Is he Jo-C-rox, my secret admirer? Why won't he tell me?

Five reasons why Michael won't tell me

1. He's shy. He can't tell me his real feelings.
2. He thinks that I don't like him.
3. He's thought about me, and now he doesn't like me.
4. He doesn't want a freshman to be his girlfriend. He's older than me. He's a senior.
5. He isn't Jo-C-rox.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### **My Mom's Wedding Day**

Saturday, November 1st, 7:00 p.m. The Plaza Hotel

It's been a very strange day. When I woke up this morning, the apartment was very quiet. I went to my mom's bedroom and knocked on the door. But nobody answered. So I opened the door and went inside. No one was there!

A few minutes later, the phone rang. It was my dad.

"Dad, Mom has disappeared," I said. "And Mr Gianini isn't here either. Where are they?"

"Don't worry, Mia," said my dad. "Your mother is OK. She's written you a letter. I have it here. You can have it at eight o'clock tonight."

"But Dad, the wedding is at eight o'clock tonight."

"I know," said my dad. "I have to go now, Mia."

"No, Dad, wait -"

But my dad hung up the phone. Then it rang again. It was Grandmere.

"Are you and your mother ready?" she asked. "We're all going to the beauty salon. You have to get your hair and makeup done."

"Er... Mom's left already," I said.

"Well," said Grandmere. "The limousine is coming to your apartment at ten o'clock to pick you up."

When the limousine arrived, Grandmere was sitting in it with Mamaw. "Your mother has gone to another beauty salon," said Grandmere. "Your father told me."

We went to Grandmere's favorite beauty salon - Chez Paolo. We stayed there all day. When we left, our hair and makeup looked beautiful. Then we went back to the Plaza

Hotel and I put on my lovely pink dress and shoes.

I'm sitting here in a little room, waiting for my mom.

9:00 p.m.

MY MOM AND MR GIANINI ARE MARRIED!

At 7:45 the wedding guests began to arrive at the White and Gold Room. Hundreds of famous people came. There were rock stars, millionaires, and film actors. There were members of royal families and beautiful models.

At eight o'clock, I asked my dad for my mom's letter. I read it and then I had to sit down. I couldn't believe what I read. Then my dad went to the front of the room and made a speech to the guests.

"Thank you all for coming here tonight," he said. "Unfortunately, the wedding will not take place this evening.

This morning, Helen Thermopolis and Frank Gianini eloped. They flew to Mexico and got married secretly."

Grandmere screamed and almost fell from her chair. Vigo ran to help her.

"But please stay and have dinner with us," continued my dad. "There is lots of wonderful food and wine in the ballroom. And thank you again for coming."

The guests were very surprised. They stood up and went into the ballroom. I read the letter from my mom again.

My Dear Mia

You will be reading this letter at 8 o'clock. By that time, Frank and I will be married I couldn't tell you our plans before I didn't want your grandmother to ask you questions about us.

You're a wonderful daughter, and you've helped me a lot during this crazy time. This new baby will be very lucky. He or she will have a wonderful big sister.

You loving Mom

I wasn't shocked by the news of Mom's secret marriage. It's very romantic. I was shocked because my father helped my mom and Mr Gianini. And my dad stopped Grandmere's plans. My dad has always been frightened of Grandmere.

I went up to my father and put my arms around him. I hugged him tightly.

"You did it, Dad!" I said, laughing. "Grandmere will be really mad when she knows the truth."

"Why are you surprised, Mia?" he said. "I'm not frightened of my mother. She isn't as bad as you think."

Just then, Vigo came over to us.

"Your Highness," he said to my dad, "your mother - the Dowager Princess Clarisse - is in her hotel suite. She won't come out. She's upset and embarrassed."

My dad and I went up to Grandmere's penthouse suite. My dad knocked on the door.

"Mother," he called. "It's Philippe. Please open this door at once."

There was no reply.

"Dad," I said quietly. "Let me speak to her."

"Grandmere, it's me, Mia," I called through the door. "Mom and Mr Gianini eloped and I'm really sorry. But Mom didn't want this big wedding. I told you that."

There was still no reply. "Grandmere," I said. "You're not behaving like a princess. A princess must always be brave, even if things go wrong. You taught me that. A princess must never hide her face. Come down to the ballroom. Come to the party and speak to your guests."

Suddenly the door opened and Grandmere came out. She was wearing a purple dress, and she had jewels in her hair.

"Of course I'm going back to the party," she said. "I had to put on more makeup. That's why I came up here."

I looked at my dad and my dad looked at me.

"Of course, Grandmere," I said.

Then Grandmere did a surprising thing. She held my arm. Then I held my dad's arm. The three of us stood in the hallway, joined together. It was a very special moment.

Sunday, November 2nd, 2:00 p.m.

Everybody had a very good time at the party. Later in the evening, Hank arrived. Mamaw and Papaw were pleased to see him, and so were all the girls. He looked gorgeous! He even asked Grandmere to dance.

At ten o'clock, Lars's cellphone rang. It was my mom calling from Mexico. She and Mr Gianini were drinking champagne on a beach. She was really happy. I talked to her quietly because I didn't want Grandmere to hear.

A few minutes later, my dad came up to me. "Mia, don't you want to meet your friends tonight?" he asked.

I hadn't forgotten about the Rocky Horror movie. But I remembered Grandmere's words to me in princess classes. "Your family is more important than your friends," she had said.

But now Grandmere was happy. She had forgotten about me. She was dancing with a famous film actor.

"Yes," I said to my dad. "I do want to meet my friends."

"Well, you can go," he said.

Lars drove me to the Rocky Horror movie theater. When we got there, we drove up and down the street, looking for my friends.

Suddenly I saw Lilly. Boris and Michael were with her. Kenny Showalter and Michael's other friends from the Computer Club were there too. They were all dressed in weird costumes. They looked like characters from horror films and ghost stories. I got out of the car and ran toward them. Michael stared at me.

"I don't have a horror costume," I said, looking down at my dress. "I'm sorry."

"You look really... You look really..." he said.

Then he stopped. What was he going to say? Didn't I look OK? Did my dress look stupid?

We sat and watched the movie. I was sitting in a seat between Michael and Kenny. Lars sat behind me. Michael didn't say much. Kenny tried to talk to me, but I was only thinking about Michael. I sat beside him in the dark, and it was wonderful.

The movie lasted for two hours and it was really good. Afterwards, we went to a cafe called, Round the Clock. I sat between Michael and Kenny. Everyone talked very loudly.

Suddenly, Kenny whispered something in my ear.

"Have you had any interesting mail lately?" he asked.

Then I realized the truth. Michael wasn't Jo-Crox. Kenny was my secret admirer! Kenny is a really nice boy and I like him. But he isn't as sexy and attractive as Michael Moscovitz.

I looked at Kenny and I tried to smile. "Oh, Kenny," I said. "Are you Jo-C-rox?"

"Yes," said Kenny. "Will you come on a date with me, Mia?"

I was very disappointed. Kenny is a good friend. But do I want him to be my boyfriend? No. I'm in love with Michael. But I didn't want to hurt Kenny's feelings. I spoke kindly and quietly to him.

"OK, Kenny," I said. "I'll go out with you."

Kenny smiled and put his arm around my shoulders. Michael saw Kenny putting his arm around me and smiling.

Suddenly Michael stood up. There was a weird expression on his face. "I'm tired," he said. "Let's go home."

"What's wrong, Michael?" said Lilly in a surprised voice. "I'm tired, too," I said. "Lars, please can we go to the car?"

"Mia, can I call you later?" asked Kenny.

Lilly looked at me. Then she looked at Kenny. Then she looked at Michael. Suddenly she stood up too.

"Come on," she said to Boris. "It's time to go."

Lilly, Boris, Michael and I went in the limousine with Lars. Michael sat beside me in the car. He was silent and I felt terrible. Everything had gone wrong.

At last, we arrived at the Moscovitzes' apartment. Suddenly, Michael turned toward me. "You look really nice in that dress," he said.

I smiled at him. Suddenly I felt happy again.

Now I'm sitting in Grandmere's suite at the Plaza Hotel. Maybe things aren't so bad. Soon, I'm going to have a new baby brother or sister. And I've got a really nice new stepfather-Mr Gianini.

Kenny called at midday. I'm going to see a Japanese movie with him at four o'clock. After that, I'm going to Lilly's place. I'm going to spend the night there. We're going to watch a video of my favorite movie - Dirty Dancing.

Yesterday was a special experience. Maybe I'll see Michael at breakfast tomorrow morning. That will be better than anything.



## PART THREE

### CHAPTER ONE

#### **A Girl with Two Lives**

My name is Mia Thermopolis. A few months ago, my mom gave me this diary because she wanted me to write down my feelings. Now I write about everything that happens to me.

I go to the Albert Einstein High School in New York City. I'm fourteen years old and I used to be an ordinary schoolgirl. But now my life isn't ordinary at all.

I live in an apartment in Greenwich Village, on the west side of the city. I live with my mom, Helen, and my cat, Fat Louie. My mom is an artist and she's beautiful. Last month she got married to Mr Gianini, my Algebra teacher at school. So now Mr Gianini is my new stepfather and he lives with us too.

My mom is three months pregnant. So I'm going to have a new baby half-brother or half-sister. I'm very happy about this.

I'm a freshman - a ninth grade student - at Albert Einstein High School. My best friend is Lilly Moscovitz. I have other school friends too, like Tina Hakim Baba and Shameeka Taylor. My worst subject at school is Algebra. I keep flunking Algebra - I fail every test-so I have to go to Mr Gianini's extra Algebra classes.

Two months ago, I had a big shock. My dad, Philippe Renaldo, came to New York and told me that I'm the Princess of Genovia. Genovia is a small country in Europe, near the border of France and Italy. My full name is Her Royal Highness Princess Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo. My dad is the Prince of Genovia.

My mom and dad weren't married when I was born. My mom didn't want to marry my dad so she became a single parent. But although my mom and dad weren't in love with each other, they stayed friends. When I was growing up, my dad sent us money. And every summer I visited him in Genovia.

But then everything changed. My dad got cancer. He had an operation and the doctors cut the cancer out of his body. Then he had chemotherapy. The chemotherapy worked well but now my dad is sterile - he can't have any more children. So I'm my dad's heir. When he dies, I'll become the ruler of Genovia.

My dad's mother-Grandmere-is the Dowager Princess of Genovia. Grandmere speaks French, drinks cocktails and smokes a lot of cigarettes. Many people are frightened of her. She's staying in a suite of rooms at the Plaza Hotel in New York. Every day after school, Grandmere gives me princess lessons.

So I have two lives-a life as an ordinary schoolgirl, and a life as a princess.

My English teacher told our class to write about what our family did on Thanksgiving Day.

I had two different kinds of Thanksgiving Day dinners, so I wrote about both of them.

### My Thanksgiving by Mia Thermopolis

6:45 a.m. I was woken up by the sound of my mother being sick. She is three months pregnant so she is sick every morning.

7:45 a.m. Mr Gianini, my new stepfather, knocks on my door. He says that it's time to get up. Mr Gianini, my mom and I are having

Thanksgiving dinner at his parents house on Long Island. The roads will be very busy because everyone is going to visit their families. Mr Gianini says that we have to leave now if we want to miss the traffic.

8:45 a.m. There is no traffic at this time in the morning on Thanksgiving Day. So we arrive at Mr Gianini s house three hours early.

12:00. Mr Gianini's sister arrives with her husband and their daughter, Claire. Claire is my age but I know we aren't going to like each other. Claire looks at me.

'You're the one who's supposed to be a princess?' she says.

1:00 p.m. The food is served. We begin eating.

1:15 p.m. We finish eating.

1:20 p.m. I help Mr Gianini s mother dean up in the kitchen. She tells me to go and chat with Claire. But I don't want to talk to Claire.

3:00 p.m. We leave because we have to get home before the traffic gets bad. I .say goodbye, but Claire doesn't say goodbye to me.

6:30 p.m. We arrive home late. There were a lot of cars on the road. I just have time to change into a long blue evening dress and a pair of flat blue shoes. Then Lars, my bodyguard, arrives to take me to my second Thanksgiving dinner at the Plaza Hotel. Lars' job is to look after me because I am the Princess of Genovia. He must stop anyone from trying to kidnap me.

7-30 p.m. We arrive at the Plaza Hotel. My father, the Prince of Genovia, and his mother, the Dowager Princess, have rented the

Palm Court dining room for the evening. They are having a Thanksgiving party. Grandmere has invited about two hundred of her closest friends. Her guests include the Emperor of Japan and his wife.

That's why I have to wear flat shoes. Grandmere says it's rude to be taller than an emperor.

11:30 p.m. I am very tired because I had to get up so early this morning. At last, my father allows me to leave and Lars drives me back to the apartment.

12:00 a.m. After a long and tiring day, I finally go to bed.

And that's the end of Mia Thermopolis's Thanksgiving.

Saturday, December 5th

My life is over. O-V-E-R.

I know I have said this before, but this time I really mean it.

And why is my life over? Because I have a boyfriend.

All my friends have boyfriends. Even my friend Lilly has one. Lilly's boyfriend is Boris Pelkowski. He's fifteen years old and he's a very good musician. He also wears weird clothes.

When Lilly got a boyfriend, I got worried because I didn't have one. I thought there must be something wrong with me.

And then one day, I got a boyfriend too.

A boy named Kenny from my Biology class started sending me anonymous love letters. Kenny didn't sign his name so I didn't know they were from him. I was hoping they were from Lilly's older brother

Michael. I've been in love with Michael for a long time, but he doesn't know how I feel. He just sees me as his kid sister's friend.

So when Kenny said that he had sent me the love letters, I didn't know what to do. I like Kenny, but only as a friend.

There's a big dance at school at the end of this semester - the Albert Einstein Winter Dance. I'm going to the dance with Kenny. Well, he hasn't asked me yet, but he will. He has to ask me because he's my boyfriend.

I must be the luckiest girl in the world. I'm not pretty, but I'm not ugly, I live in New York and I'm a princess. I have a boyfriend. What more could a girl ask for?

It's no good. The truth is: I DON'T EVEN LIKE KENNY.

Kenny is a nice guy. But when I see him, my heart doesn't start beating faster. And when Kenny holds my hand or kisses me, it's not exciting at all.

Sometimes, when Kenny tries to kiss me, I turn my head away.

I know I have to break up with Kenny. I must tell him that I only like him as a friend. But I don't want to upset him.

And there's another problem. On Saturday nights, Kenny and I go out with Lilly and her boyfriend, Boris. Sometimes we are joined by my friends, Tina Hakim Baba and her boyfriend, Dave Farouq EL-Abar, and my other friend Shameeka Taylor, and her boyfriend, Daryl Gardner. So we are four couples - Lilly-and-Boris, Kenny-and-Mia, Tina-and-Dave and Shameeka-and-Daryl.

So if Kenny and I break up, who will I go out with on Saturday evenings? And who will take me to the Winter Dance?

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Michael and Judith**

Saturday, December 5th, 11:00 p.m.

My life has just got worse.

Last night, Lilly-and-Boris and Tina-and-Dave and Mia-and-Kenny went ice-skating. We were joined by a new couple, Michael-and-Judith. Lilly's brother Michael brought Judith Gershner to the ice-rink.

I'm not surprised that Michael likes Judith. Judith is the President of the Computer Club. Judith, like Michael, is a senior student. Judith, like Michael, is very smart and is going to college in the fall. Judith, like Michael, won a prize last year at school for her science project. She cloned a fruit fly. In her bedroom at home.

When I saw Judith and Michael together, I got a terrible feeling inside. I felt very jealous of Judith.

"Look, there's your brother," I said to Lilly. "I didn't know your brother and Judith Gershner were going out."

Lilly doesn't know that I'm in love with Michael.

"They're not," said Lilly. "Judith was at our place. She was working with Michael on a project for the Computer Club. I told them that we were going skating, and Judith said she wanted to come too."

I watched Michael and Judith skating. Michael could skate very well but Judith wasn't very good. She was holding on to Michael's hands as they skated.

I don't know how to clone a fruit fly, but I do know how to skate better than Judith.

Then Kenny came up. He wanted to skate with me like Michael was skating with Judith. So Kenny took my hands and tried to pull me around the ice rink.

"I know how to skate, Kenny," I said.

But Kenny wouldn't go away. So finally, I let him hold my hands as he skated in front of me.

But it was difficult to skate with Kenny skating in front of me. He fell down and I couldn't stop, so I crashed into him. My chin hit his knee and I bit my tongue. I could feel my mouth filling up with blood. Everyone around the ice-rink was staring at me. I felt really stupid and embarrassed.

Now I'm here at home in bed with only my cat, Fat Louie, beside me. My tongue hurts and I can't talk. And the boy I love is with another girl. A girl who is much smarter than me.

Sunday, December 6th

I've just got back from dinner at Grandmere's.

I have to go to Genovia at the end of December. On Christmas Eve my dad will make a speech on Genovian national television. He's going to introduce me to the Genovian people. I'm very nervous about appearing on Genovian TV in front of 50,000 people.

My cousin, Sebastiano Grimaldi, was also at dinner. Grandmere brought Sebastiano to New York because he is a fashion designer. Sebastiano is going to design the dress I will wear for my TV appearance.

Sebastiano is about thirty, with long dark hair which he ties back. He is very tall and he wears brightly-colored clothes. Tonight he was wearing a blue velvet jacket with leather trousers. He speaks English with a French accent and he says only the first syllable of English words.

He says "nar" instead of "narrow"; "cof" instead of "coffee" and "madge" instead of "magical". It's very funny.

I want Sebastiano to design a really nice dress for me. I want a dress that will make Michael Moscovitz forget about Judith Gershner. I want a dress that will make him think only about me, Mia Thermopolis.

After dinner, Sebastiano drew a design for the dress. Grandmere looked at his drawing.

"That's brilliant. Just brilliant," she said.

I looked at the design. The dress looked very ordinary. "Um," I said. "Can't you make it a little more... sexy?" Grandmere and Sebastiano looked at each other.

"Sexy?" said Grandmere in a surprised voice. Then they both began to laugh.

While they were laughing, my dad got up and left the table. He went outside to the balcony. Grandmere and Sebastiano were still talking so I went outside and joined my dad.

"Mia," he said when he saw me. "What are you doing out here? It's cold. Go back inside."

"I will in a minute," I said. I stood next to him and looked out over New York. From the Plaza Hotel, there is a wonderful view of Manhattan - the island in the center of New York. You can see the lights in all the windows.



Suddenly, I realized that one of those lights probably belonged to Judith Gershner. Then I felt very sad. My dad looked at me and noticed that something was wrong.

"Look, I know that Sebastiano is a difficult person," he said. "But he's only here for a couple of weeks."

"I wasn't thinking about Sebastiano," I said sadly.

I don't usually tell my dad about my problems with my love life. But my dad has had a lot of girlfriends so I thought perhaps he could give me some good advice.

"Dad," I said. "What do you do if you like someone-but they don't know that you like them?"

"I'm sure Kenny knows that you like him," said my dad. "You go out with him every weekend."

"I'm not talking about Kenny, Dad," I said. "Kenny and I are just friends. I'm talking about Lilly's brother, Michael." My dad looked very surprised.

"Isn't Michael in college?" he said.

"Not yet," I replied. "He's going to college in the fall."

Then my dad looked worried.

"Don't worry, Dad," I said. "Michael would never be interested in a girl like me."

"What do you mean?" my dad asked in an annoyed voice. "What's wrong with you?"

"Dad," I said. "I almost flunked Algebra, remember? Michael is very smart."

"You may not be good at Algebra," said my dad, "but you and I, Mia, are intelligent people." Then he said, "Don't make the same mistake as me. Don't keep your feelings to yourself because you are too shy... or too proud, to tell the person you love how you feel."

I looked at my dad in surprise. He sounded so... sad. Was he talking about Mom? But Mom would never be happy living in Genovia. She likes living in New York. She likes American TV and American food.

"What do you think I should do, Dad?" I asked. "Do you think I should tell Michael that I like him?"

My dad shook his head.

"No, no, no," he said. "You have to tell him by showing him how you feel."

"Oh," I said. I didn't really know what my dad was talking about.

My mom has just come into my room to say that Kenny is on the phone for me.

I suppose Kenny wants to ask me to the Winter Dance.

Sunday, December 6th, 11:00 p.m.

I am very shocked. Kenny did NOT ask me to the Winter Dance. Instead, this was our conversation:

ME: Hello?

KENNY: Hi, Mia. It's Kenny.

ME: Oh, hi Kenny. What's the matter?

Kenny sounded strange, which is why I asked.

KENNY: Well, I just wanted to see if you were OK. I mean, if your tongue is OK.

ME: It's a little better.

KENNY: Because I was really worried. You know, I really didn't mean to pull you down like that.

ME: Kenny, I know. It was just an accident.

KENNY: Well, I just wanted to say that I hope you feel better. And also to let you know... well, Mia, that I love you.

I was SO shocked!! What kind of guy calls a girl on the phone and says I love you??? Why is Kenny telling me this?

Kenny was still on the phone, waiting.

ME: Um, OK.

Poor Kenny. I know he wanted a different kind of answer. But I didn't know what else to say. So I said,

ME: Well, see you tomorrow.

AND I HUNG UP THE PHONE!!!!

I really am the most terrible, ungrateful girl in the world.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Talking with Tina

Monday, December 7th. Homeroom

Every morning, Lars drives me to school and we pick up Lilly and Michael. But this morning, Michael wasn't there because he had a dentist appointment. So while we were in the car, I told Lilly about Kenny. I told her that he called and said he loved me.

Lilly didn't believe me.

"Kenny would never say that," she said. "He probably said something else and you didn't hear him properly."

"Oh?" I said. "What could Kenny have said that sounded like I love you? I glove you?"

Then Lilly got mad.

"No, of course not. You know, you have been behaving strangely about Kenny. You used to say, 'Why don't I have a boyfriend? When am I going to get a boyfriend?' And now you have one, you're not even grateful."

I knew that this was true. But I didn't want to admit it.

"That's not true," I replied. "I'm very grateful about Kenny."

"Really?" said Lilly. "Mia, I think that you're not ready to have a boyfriend."

Now I was really mad.

"Me? Not ready to have a boyfriend? I've been waiting my whole life to have a boyfriend!"

"So why won't you let him kiss you on the lips?" asked Lilly.

"Where did you hear that?" I asked.

"Kenny told Boris, of course. And Boris told me."

I was very shocked but I tried to stay calm.

"That's great," I said. "So now our boyfriends are talking about us?"

"Mia," said Lilly, "If Kenny did say 'the L word' - you know, 'Love' - it was because you won't let him show you how he feels. You won't let him kiss you. So he has to tell you how he feels in words."

Monday, December 7th. Still Homeroom

We have exams next week. I have English and Algebra on the same day.

On December 17th I have Biology. I'm not very good at Biology. I'm not flunking it because Kenny gives me the answers to the homework. But if I break up with Kenny, he won't let me copy his answers any more.

On December 18th, in the evening, there is the Winter Dance. But Kenny hasn't asked me to the dance yet.

If I break up with Kenny, I won't be able to go to the dance. You can't go without a date. You can't go alone.

Monday, December 7th. Later

I talked to my friend, Tina Hakim Baba, between lessons earlier today. I told her what Kenny said last night on the phone.

Tina is a good friend. Her father comes from Saudi Arabia and he owns an oil company. He is afraid that kidnappers may try and take Tina away. So Tina has a bodyguard, like me. Her bodyguard's name is Wahim.

Tina believed me about Kenny. She thought it was great. "Oh, Mia, you are so lucky," she said.

"But, Tina," I said. "I don't love Kenny."

Tina opened her eyes wide.

"You don't?" she said.

"No," I said sadly. "I really like him, as a friend. But I'm not in love with him."

"Oh Mia," Tina said, grabbing my arm. "There's someone else, isn't there?"

There were only a few minutes before the bell for our next class. But suddenly I decided to tell Tina everything. "Yes," I replied.

"I knew it!" shouted Tina excitedly. "So who is he?"

"It doesn't matter," I said. "Besides, he has a girlfriend."

"It's Michael, isn't it?" said Tina.

At first, I wanted to say no. But perhaps Tina might be able to help me.

"If you tell anyone, I'll kill you," I said. "Do you understand? I'LL KILL YOU."

Then Tina became very excited and started jumping up and down.

"I knew it," she said. "Oh, Mia, I've always thought you and Michael would make a lovely couple."

I was happy because Tina hadn't laughed at me. I wanted to throw my arms around her but there was no time. The bell for our next lesson was soon going to ring.

"Really?" I said. "You don't think it's stupid?"

"No," Tina said. Then she looked worried. "But what about Kenny? And Judith?"

"I know," I said sadly. "Tina, I don't know what to do." Then the bell rang. We were both very late to class. But I didn't mind because now I don't have to worry alone any more. Tina is worrying with me.

Monday, December 7th. Later

A terrible thing happened in the school cafeteria at lunch. I met Michael and I asked him about his dentist appointment. Then Michael told me what the dentist had done. As he talked, I looked at his lips. Michael has very nice lips. They look like they would be very soft to kiss.

And RIGHT THEN, Kenny went by to get his lunch.

I know Kenny can't read my mind. But he didn't say "hi" when Michael and I said "hi." He must have seen that my face was red. I mean, I was wondering what it would be like to kiss Michael's lips, when my boyfriend walked by.

I'm sure Michael's going out with Judith Gershner. After he got his lunch, he sat down next to her.

I wish I were leaving for Genovia tomorrow.

Monday, December 7th. French class Lilly is mad with Mrs Spears, her English teacher. Lilly has to write a paper for English. She wanted to write about everything that's wrong with the Albert Einstein High School. But Mrs Spears didn't approve of Lilly's ideas so she told Lilly to write about something else.

Now Lilly wants to arrange a protest against the school. She wants all the students to walk out of their lessons tomorrow. This was our conversation.

LILLY: I think we should have a walkout.

ME: A walkout?

LILLY: You know. We all get up and walk out of school at the same time. We do it to show the teachers that we're not happy.

ME: Lilly, I don't think that this week's a good time for a walkout. It's almost our final exams. I can't miss any classes. I don't want my grades to get any worse.

At that moment the bell rang, so I don't think Lilly will have time to arrange a walkout. That's a good thing, because I really need the extra study time.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Grandmere's Advice**

Monday, December 7th. Biology class

Kenny has just passed me the following note.

Mia - I hope what I said to you last night didn't make you feel uncomfortable I just wanted you to know how I felt.

Kenny

He's sitting here next to me, waiting for an answer. Maybe this is the perfect time to break up with him. I could simply write,

I'm sorry, Kenny, but I don't feel the same way-let's just be - friends.

But I don't want to upset Kenny. And he's my Biology partner. I mean, I'm going to have to sit by him for the next two weeks. And what about the Winter Dance? If I break up with Kenny, who will take me?

But what else can I do? After what happened at lunch today?

Dear Kenny,

I think of you as a very dear friend...

Monday, December 7th, 3:00 p.m. Mr Gianini's Algebra class.

The bell rang before I could finish my note to Kenny. I'm going to call him tonight and tell him how I feel.

Tuesday, December 8th. Homeroom

Well, I didn't break up with Kenny.

After my Algebra lesson with Mr Gianini, I went to the showroom where Sebastiano is selling his new designs. I had to be measured for my new dress.

Grandmere was there with her dog, Rommel. She was drinking her favorite cocktail.

Sebastiano started to talk about my dress. But I wasn't listening to him. I was busy thinking about my problems with Kenny.

Suddenly Grandmere put down her cocktail and shouted, "Amelia, what's the matter with you?"

"What?" I said.

Grandmere gave me an angry look.

"Sebastiano," my grandmother said. "Please leave the princess and myself alone for a moment."

Sebastiano left the room.

"Now," Grandmere said. "Something is worrying you, Amelia. What is it? Trouble at home? Your mother and the Algebra teacher are fighting already, I suppose?"

I felt very angry when Grandmere said that.

"My mom and Mr Gianini are very happy," I said. "I wasn't thinking about them at all."

"What is it, then?" asked Grandmere.

"Nothing," I almost shouted. "I just - well, I have to break up with my boyfriend tonight."

"Oh?" said Grandmere in an interested voice. "What boyfriend?"

"I have only one boyfriend," I said. "His name is Kenny."

"I thought this Kenny person was your Biology partner," said Grandmere.

"He is," I said. "He's also my boyfriend. But the other night, he told me that he loves me."

Grandmere patted Rommel on the head.

"And what is wrong," she asked, "about a boy who says that he loves you?"

"Nothing," I said. "But I'm not in love with him. So it's not right."

"Why not?" said Grandmere. "Unless, of course, you are in Love with someone else. Is there someone special in your life, Amelia?"

"No," I lied.

"You're lying," said Grandmere. "You have a very bad habit, Amelia. When you lie, your nostrils flare - they become much wider. If you do not believe me, look at your nose in the mirror."

I turned around to face the mirror. My nostrils weren't flaring. Grandmere was crazy.

"I'll ask you again," said Grandmere. "Are you in love with anyone?"

"No," I lied.

And my nostrils flared! Grandmere was right. All these years, no - one has ever told me about my nostrils flaring when I lie-not even my mother or Lilly!

"Fine," I cried, turning around from the mirror. "All right, yes, I am in love with someone else."

"Don't shout, Amelia," said Grandmere. "Who is this special someone?"

"I'm not going to tell you," I said.

"Does he feel the same way about you?" asked Grandmere. "No," I replied. "He likes another girl who knows how to clone fruit flies."

"How useful," said Grandmere. "Well, Amelia, do not throw away this Kenny until you have got someone better."

I stared at Grandmere. I felt very shocked. How could she say such cold things?

"What about the Winter Dance?" said Grandmere. "If you stop seeing Kenny, who will take you to the dance?"

"I won't go with anybody," I said. "I'll just stay home."

"While everyone else has a good time? And what about this other young man? The one you are in love with. Will he be at the dance with the house fly girl?"

"Fruit fly," I said. "And I don't know."

Would Michael ask Judith Gershner to the Winter Dance? When I thought about this, I began to feel sick.

"One way to make this young man notice you," Grandmere went on, "is to go to the dance with the other young man. You should look very beautiful in a dress designed by Genovian fashion designer, Sebastiano Grimaldi."

"Grandmere," I said. "This boy likes smart girls. He isn't going to notice me just because I'm wearing a pretty dress."

"Hmmm," said Grandmere. "Do what you want. But it seems cruel, breaking up with Kenny at this time of year."

"Why?" I asked. "Because it's Christmas?"

"No," Grandmere said. "Because you both have your exams. But you must do what you think is best."

I felt terrible. Of course, I can't break up with Kenny now. You can't break up with someone just before Finals.

I want to break up with Kenny, but I can't.

I want to tell Michael how I feel about him, but I can't.

Tuesday, December 8th. English class

Something really embarrassing happened in the third-floor hallway between lessons. I talked about it with my friend, Shameeka.

SHAMEEKA: What happened in the hallway just now? Did Kenny just say what I think he said?

ME: Yes. Oh, Shameeka, what am I going to do?

SHAMEEKA: What do you mean? The boy loves you, Mia.

ME: Do you think everyone heard him? Do you think the people coming out of their Chemistry lesson heard him?

SHAMEEKA: Yes, of course. He shouted it very loudly.

ME: Were they laughing? The people coming out of Chemistry? They weren't laughing, were they?

SHAMEEKA: Most of them were laughing. Except Michael. He wasn't laughing.

ME: HE WASN'T? REALLY? Are you joking?

SHAMEEKA: No. Why would I be joking? And why do you care what Michael Moscovitz thinks?

ME: I don't care. People shouldn't go around laughing at other people's problems, that's all.

SHAMEEKA: I don't see the problem. So Kenny loves you. A lot of girls would like it if their boyfriend shouted "I love you" at them.

ME: Yeah, well, NOT ME!!!!

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **My Plan**

Tuesday, December 8th. Biology class

We have a class in school where we work on our own special projects. I usually enjoy this class because Michael helps me with my Algebra homework. But today it wasn't fun at all.

Judith Gershner came. She had her arm around the back of Michael's chair. Then she interrupted a private conversation I was having with Lilly about Kenny.

"I heard what Kenny said to you in the hallway," Judith said. "He said, 'I don't care if you don't feel the same way, Mia, I will always love you.' It's really sweet."

"He really knows how he feels," replied Lilly. "Not like Mia."

This made me mad. I know exactly how I feel. But I just can't tell anyone.

I was very surprised when Michael suddenly spoke.

"Mia doesn't shout about her feelings in the third-floor hallway," said Michael. "But she still knows how she feels."

"Yeah," I said in a pleased voice.

"Well, why didn't you tell Kenny that you love him too?" asked Lilly.

"Look," I answered, feeling my cheeks turn red. "I really like Kenny as a friend. But love, I mean love. That is a very big thing. I'm not, I mean, I don't..."

I stopped. Everyone in the room was listening, especially Michael.

"I see," said Lilly. "You're afraid to say that you love a guy forever."

"I'm not afraid," I said. "There are many boys who..."

"Oh, yeah?" said Lilly. "So make a list. Make a list of boys who you could love forever."

I made a list of ten boys. But Lilly said my list was no good. Except for one, the boys were all from films. The only real boy on my list was Justin Baxendale, a good-looking senior boy. Justin has just come to the Albert Einstein High School from Trinity, a school for rich boys.

Of course, I couldn't put Michael's name on my list. Michael was there, sitting next to his girlfriend, Judith Gershner.

Kenny just passed me a note.

Mia - I'm sorry that I embarrassed you today. Sometimes I forget that you are still quite shy. I promise never to do that again. I know you like Chinese food. Will you have lunch with me at Big Wong on Thursday?

Kenny.

Tuesday, December 8th, 7:00 p.m.

I had a princess lesson today. Grandmere kept asking me about Kenny. She said that Kenny was very clever to send me those anonymous love letters.



"What was so clever about those letters?" I asked.

"Well, you're his girlfriend now, aren't you?" Grandmere replied.

I hadn't thought about it before, but I think Grandmere's right.

Tuesday, December 8th, 8:30 p.m.

Lilly has sent an email to every kid in the school. She wrote,

To all students at Albert Einstein High School.

Do you feel worried and nervous because of too many exams? A silent walkout has been planned for tomorrow at 10 a.m. Leave your pencils, leave your books and walk outside the school to East 75th Street. The walkout is to protest against Principal Gupta and the school. Show your teachers how you feel!

I don't know what to do. I can't just walk out of school tomorrow at 10 a.m. That's Mr Gianini's Algebra lesson. He will be upset if we get up and leave.

But if I don't take part in the walkout, Lilly will be mad.

Tuesday, December 8th, 8:45 p.m.

I just got this instant message on my computer from Michael. We often chat in an internet chat room. Michael always uses the name "CrackKing" - a criminal who sells drugs. I use "FtLouie" which means "Fat Louie" - the name of my cat.

Cracking: Did you just get that crazy e-mail from my sister? You're not going to take part in her stupid walkout, are you?

FtLouie: But she'll be mad with me if I don't.

CrackKing: You don't have to do everything she says, Mia. You don't always agree to do everything she wants.

FtLouie: But it's EASIER to do what she wants.

CrackKing: Well, I'm not walking out.

FtLouie: It's different for you. You're her brother. You live together.

CrackKing: Not for much longer.

Michael has been accepted by Columbia College, one of the best colleges in New York. He's going there in the fall. So is Judith Gershner.

FtLouie: That's right. You got accepted by Columbia. Congratulations. You must be happy because you'll know one other person there - Judith Gershner.

CrackKing: Yeah. Listen, are you still going to be in town for the Winter Carnival? You're not leaving for Genovia before the 18th, are you?

The Winter Carnival is after our finals on December 18th. All the school clubs will have special booths at the carnival. The Winter Dance is in the evening, after the carnival. But Michael isn't going to ask me to the dance. He must know I'm going with Kenny, that is if Kenny ever asks me. Besides, isn't Michael going with Judith?

FtLouie: I'm leaving for Genovia on the 19th.

CrackKing: Oh, good. Because you should come to the Computer Club's booth at the carnival. I want you to see this new program I've been working on.

Of course Michael isn't going to ask me to the dance. He just wants me to look at his stupid computer program.

I wanted to write,

Don't you know how I feel? Don't you know that the only guy I could love for ever is YOU?

But instead I wrote:

FtLouie: I can't wait. Well, I have to go now. Bye.

Wednesday, December 9th, 3:00 a.m.

I've just woken up with these words going around in my head. "Well you're his girlfriend now, aren't you?"

That's what Grandmere said about Kenny's love letters.

I THINK SHE'S RIGHT.

Kenny's anonymous letters did work. I mean, I AM his girlfriend now.

So why don't I write some anonymous love letters to the boy I like? I think that's a good plan.

Wednesday, December 9th. Homeroom

I told Tina about my plan this morning. Tina thought it was a great idea too. So before school started, we went to our local shop to buy a card.

I wanted a card that had no message inside, with a nice picture on the front. But the only blank cards had photos of fruit. The best

one was of a strawberry.

Tina agreed to write a poem on the inside of the card. I didn't want to write it myself because I didn't want Michael to recognize my handwriting. I didn't want him to know the card was from me.

So Tina wrote,

Roses are red

Violets are blue

You may not know it

But someone loves you

I wasn't sure about using "the L word" - "Love." I wanted to use "Like." But Tina said "Love" was right.

Because, as she said, "It's the truth, isn't it?"

Tina's going to put the card into Michael's locker.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **The Walkout**

Wednesday, December 9th, 9:30 a.m.

I just saw Lilly in the hallway. She whispered, "DON'T FORGET! TEN O'CLOCK!"

Well, I did forget. The walkout! Her stupid walkout!

Mr Gianini is standing in front of the class. He doesn't know about the walkout. It's not his fault Mrs Spears didn't like Lilly's paper.

It's already nine thirty-five. What am I going to do?

Wednesday, December 9th, 9:45 a.m.

Lana Weinberger just said, "Are you going to walk out with your fat friend?"

Lana is in my grade and she's beautiful. She's going out with Josh Richter, a very good-looking boy. But Lana is always saying mean things about me and my friends. I'm very angry with Lana for saying Lilly's fat. Lilly isn't fat. She's just round.

Wednesday, December 9th, 9:50 a.m.

Ten minutes until the walkout. I have to leave the classroom.

Wednesday, December 9th, 9:55 a.m.

I told Mr Gianini I had to go to the bathroom and he gave me a hall pass. If a teacher asks why I am not in my class, I can show them this pass.

I'm standing in the hallway next to the fire alarm. Lars is with me. And Justin Baxendale just walked by with a hall pass too. He gave us a really weird look.

Justin Baxendale's eyelashes are really long and dark...

I CAN'T BELIEVE I AM WRITING ABOUT JUSTIN BAXENDALE'S EYELASHES AT A TIME LIKE THIS.

I have a big problem. If I don't walk out with Lilly, I'll lose my best friend.

But if I do walk out, I'll upset my stepfather.

There's only one thing I can do to stop the walkout.

I just told Lars to get ready to run.

Wednesday, December 9th, 10:00 a.m. On East 75th Street

We're all standing in the middle of 75th Street in the rain. Nobody has coats on. When they heard the fire alarm, the teachers made everyone run outside very quickly. There wasn't any time to get our coats.

Lilly is really mad, but I don't know why. She wanted everyone to leave the school and go outside. And that's what happened. Of course, Lilly wanted us to go outside to protest against the school, not because a fire alarm sounded.

'Somebody told the teachers about our walkout!" she shouted.  
"So they arranged a practice fire drill at the same time!"

Wednesday, December 9th. Special Project class

I don't know if Michael got the card or not!!!!

Stupid Judith Gershner is here in our class again. I suppose Michael must want her to be here. And because Michael is so busy with Judith, I suppose I'll have to do Algebra by myself.

That's all right. I can study very well on my own. Who needs Michael's help? Not me.

Wednesday, December 9th. French class

I'm worried because I know very little about kissing. So I think I should get some advice from a kissing expert like

Tina Hakim Baba. Tina knows a lot about kissing. She has been kissing her boyfriend, Dave Farouq ET-Abar, for almost three months now.

So I wrote down some questions for Tina and she answered them for me.

Tina - I need to know about kissing. Can you please answer each of the following questions????? Mia

1. Does a boy know if a girl doesn't know how to kiss?

The boy may know you are nervous. But everyone is nervous when they kiss someone new. It's weird kissing someone for the first

time. But it's fun too.

2. How do you know when it's time to stop?

Stop when you feel like you've had enough.

3. If you're in love with him, is it still horrible?

Of course not! Kissing is never horrible! But it's always better kissing someone you really like.

4. If he's in love with you, does he care if you are a bad kisser? If the guy likes/loves you, he won't care if you are a good kisser or not.

Wednesday, December 9th, 9:00 p.m. In the limousine coming home from Grandmere's suite

I am so tired. Grandmere took me to Sebastiano's showroom and made me try on every dress there. There were short dresses, long dresses, and dresses with straight skirts. There were dresses with wide skirts, white ones, pink ones, blue ones, and even a bright green dress.

I have to choose a dress to wear on Genovian national TV on Christmas Eve. But Sebastiano is a very good designer.

There were several dresses I really liked.

I told Sebastiano about the Winter Dance. Then Sebastiano started asking me questions like,

"Who do you go with?" and "What he look like?" Suddenly, I started telling Sebastiano all about my love life. I told him about Kenny, and how Kenny loves me but I don't love him. I told him how I love someone else, but he doesn't love me.

Sebastiano is a very good listener. When I had finished, he said,



"This boy you like. How you know he no like you back?"

"Because," I explained, "he likes this other girl." Sebastiano waved his hands.

"No, no, no. He help you with your Al home. (Sebastiano only says the first syllable of English words. He meant "Algebra homework".) Why he do that if he no like you?"

"Because I'm his little sister's best friend." I said sadly.

"You no worry," said Sebastiano. "I make dress. After dance, this boy no think of you as little sister's best friend." One of Sebastiano's assistants took photos of me in all the dresses. Sebastiano wants me to see how I look in each one. Then I can decide which dress I like best.

Today, Mr Gianini asked me some questions after class. MR GIANINI: Mia, I heard a story about a walkout. People were saying that the students were planning to walk out of classes this morning. Had you heard about that?

ME: (very nervously): Um, no.

MR GIANINI: So you wouldn't know if someone, to stop the protest, turned on the fire alarm on the second floor?

ME: Um, no.

MR GIANINI: Do you know the punishment for turning on a fire alarm when there is no fire? Anyone who did that would have to leave the school.

ME: Oh, yes. I know that.

MR GIANINI: I gave you a hall pass shortly before the alarm went off. So I thought maybe you were in the hall and saw the person who did it.

ME: Oh, no. I didn't see anybody.

MR GIANINI: I didn't think so. Oh, well. If you ever hear who did it, maybe you could tell her from me never to do it again.

ME: Um, OK.

MR GIANINI: And tell her "thanks" from me too. It's a difficult time right now, with all the worry about Finals. (Mr Gianini picked up his briefcase and jacket). See you at home.

Then Mr Gianini smiled at me. But he couldn't know that I was the person who turned on the fire alarm. I knew my nostrils were flaring. But Mr Gianini doesn't know that my nostrils flare when I lie. RIGHT????

Thursday, December 10th. Homeroom

Lilly keeps talking about everything that is wrong with the Albert Einstein High School. She is organizing a meeting of a new protest group on Saturday morning. She says that I have to be the group's secretary because I'm good at writing things down.

Michael has gone to school early every day this week. He's working on his computer program for the Winter Carnival.

I bought another card last night from the gift shop at the Plaza Hotel. This card is better than that stupid one with the strawberry. It has a picture of a lady holding a finger to her lips. Inside, it says, Shhh.....

Under that, I'm going to ask Tina to write:

Roses are red

But cherries are redder

Maybe she can clone fruit flies

But I like you better

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **Another Crime**

Thursday, December 10th, 11:00 am.

Principal Gupta called a meeting of the whole school this morning. She asked if anyone had any information about Wednesday's fire alarm.

I'm not worried. The only person who could give her information about me is Justin Baxendale. He passed me in the hallway a few minutes before I turned on the alarm. But Justin Baxendale isn't listening to Principal Gupta. He's playing games on his Gameboy.

Thursday, December 10th. Special Project class

Today was my lunch with Kenny at Big Wong.

Kenny still hasn't asked me to the Winter Dance. And I don't think he loves me as much as he says. He's stopped calling me after school. He says it's because he's busy studying for Finals, but I suspect something else.

I think Kenny knows how I feel about Michael.

I'm not enjoying our Special Project class today. Judith Gershner isn't here... but neither is Michael. Nobody knows where he is.

Thursday, December 10th, 9:00 p.m.

Tonight, when I went for my princess lesson with Grandmere, Sebastiano was there too.

When Grandmere paused to take a phone call, Sebastiano started asking me lots of questions. He wanted to know what clothes my friends and I like to wear. He wrote my answers down in a little notebook.

When Grandmere finished her phone call, I told her that I couldn't come to princess lessons next week. I explained that I had SIX Finals to prepare for. But Grandmere was not very pleased.

Fortunately, my dad came in just then. I told him about my Finals and that I didn't have time to go to my princess lessons.

"Yes, of course," he said. Grandmere started to argue, but my dad said,

"If Mia hasn't learnt how to be a princess by this time, she never will."

Grandmere pressed her lips together and didn't say anything more.

Friday, December 11th. Homeroom

Here's what I have to do:

1. Stop thinking about Michael when I should be studying.
2. Stop telling Grandmere anything about my personal life.
3. Start acting more
  - A. Grown up.
  - B. Like a princess.

4. Stop biting my fingernails.

5. Write down everything Mom and Mr Gianini need to know about taking care of Fat Louie when I'm away in Genovia.

6. BUY CHRISTMAS PRESENTS!

7. Stop watching TV when I should be studying.

8. Stop playing computer games when I should be studying.

9. Stop listening to music when I should be studying.

10. Break up with Kenny.

Friday, December 11th. Principal Gupta's Office

I've done a terrible thing.

I, Mia Thermopolis, have become a young criminal. The fire alarm was only the beginning. Maybe I'll even have to leave the school. But it's not my fault. It's Lana's fault.

I was sitting in Mr Gianini's Algebra lesson. Lana was sitting at the desk in front of me. Then she turned around and put a newspaper, USA Today, on my desk. There was an article with a big headline:

Most Popular Young Royal

Fifty-seven percent of our readers have voted for Prince William of England as their favorite young royal, while Will's little brother Harry has twenty-eight percent. Princess Mia Renaldo of Genovia is in third place, with thirteen percent of the votes.

Why is Princess Mia so unpopular?

I read the stupid article and gave the paper back to Lana.

"So?" I whispered to her.

"So," Lana whispered. "I wonder how popular you would be if their readers knew that you turned on fire alarms."

I was very shocked. How did Lana know I had turned on the fire alarm? She couldn't have seen me. Unless...

Unless Justin Baxendale had told her.

I don't know why I behaved like I did, but something happened inside me. Lana's little pink cell phone was lying on top of her desk. Suddenly, I reached for it and put it on the floor. I crushed it with my boot and it broke into hundreds of pieces.

So Mr Gianini sent me to the principal's office. I can't really blame him, even if he is my stepfather.

Oh. Here comes Principal Gupta.

Friday, December 11th, 5:00 p.m. The Loft

I've been suspended from school so I have to stay at home. It's only for one day. But they're going to write it on my school record. They're treating me like a criminal.

I'm not a criminal. My dad doesn't think so, either. But I'm not going to tell my dad why I broke Lana's cell phone. I'm not going to tell him about the fire alarm.

Now I'm at home with my mother. I'm sitting on her bed and we're watching TV. Because Mom is pregnant she is often tired, so she spends a lot of time in bed.

Mom was drawing some pictures of me. Then she asked me questions about what Lana had said. She wanted to know why I had crushed Lana's cell phone. Suddenly I started telling her a lot of things. I told her all about Kenny, and Michael, and Judith Gershner, and Tina and the anonymous cards, and the Winter Carnival, and Lilly and her walkout. I told her everything, except about the fire alarm.

After a while, my mom stopped drawing.

"You know what I think you need?" she said. "A vacation."

So then we had a sort of vacation, right there on her bed. I ordered pizzas, and then we watched some great movies. For a while, it was almost like the old days. You know, before my mom met Mr Gianini and I found out I was a princess.

Friday, December 11th, 8:00 p.m. The Loft

I just checked my email. I have a lot of messages from my friends. They all think I did a very good thing when I crushed Lana's cell phone.

But I only did it to hide my other crime. I was afraid Lana would tell everyone that I had turned on the fire alarm.

Something good: Michael is getting my cards. Tina walked by his locker today and saw him put the latest card into his bag!

I've just got an Instant Message from Michael on my computer!

CrackKing: Hey, Thermopolis, what's this I hear about you getting suspended?

I wrote back:

FtLouie: Just for one day.



CrackKing: What did you do?

FtLouie: I crushed Lana Weinberger's cell phone.

CrackKing: Are your parents making you stay at home?

FtLouie: No. I told them I attacked Lana's phone because of something she said.

CrackKing: So you're still going to the Carnival? FtLouie: Yes.

This is the second time Michael's asked me if I'm going to the Winter Carnival.

Friday, December 11th, 9:00 p.m.

Mr Gianini got home late tonight. He stopped on his way home to buy a huge Christmas tree.

I don't approve of people cutting down trees for Christmas. But I didn't say anything about the tree because my mom was so excited. Mr Gianini kept looking at me, to see if I was happy too. He said that he had got the tree because I'd had a bad day. He wanted to do something nice for me.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **Sebastiano in Trouble**

Saturday, December 12th, 2:00 p.m. Lilly's apartment

The meeting of Lilly's new protest group took place today. But nobody came except me and Lilly's boyfriend, Boris Pelkowski.

Lilly's very upset that only Boris and I came to her meeting. I try to tell her that everyone is too busy studying for Finals. Boris is sitting beside her and speaking to her in a calm voice. Boris wears weird clothes, but you can see he really loves Lilly.

It makes my heart hurt, when I see Boris looking at Lilly like that. I must be jealous. I want a boy to look at me like that. But I don't mean Kenny.

I can't watch Lilly and Boris any more. I'm going into the kitchen to see what Maya, the Moscovitzs' housekeeper, is doing. Maybe I can help her.

Saturday, December 12th, 2:30 p.m. Lilly's apartment

Maya wasn't in the kitchen. She's here, in Michael's room, putting away Michael's school uniform.

It's very interesting to be in Michael's room. I have been in it before, but only when Michael was here. But now he's at school, working on the computer project for the Winter Carnival.

I am lying on Michael's bed, while Maya puts his shirts away. I'm looking up at his ceiling and over at his desk.

I've just noticed something. My card with the picture of the strawberry is right there on his desk.

I feel happy that Michael hasn't thrown away my cards! Oh. I just heard the front door open. Is it Michael??? Or his parents??? I had better get out of his room.

Saturday, December 12th, 3:00 p.m. Grandmere's suite, the Plaza Hotel

Sebastiano is in big trouble.

When I visited Sebastiano's showroom, he made me try on all the new dresses he had designed. Then one of his assistants took photos of me.

Sebastiano's sold the photos to the Sunday Times magazine! When Lilly's parents - the Drs Moscovitz - came in, they had a copy of the magazine.

"So you're a model now, Mia!" they said to me. "Congratulations!"

"What are you talking about?" I asked in surprise.

Then the Drs Moscovitz showed me an article with the heading Fashion for a Princess. Underneath, there were about twenty photos of me wearing Sebastiano's new dresses.

It's a great way for Sebastiano to advertise his dresses. When women see pictures of a princess wearing his dresses, they'll want to buy them.

I was trying on these dresses because I wanted something nice to wear on Genovian national TV. But when people see those pictures, they'll think I'm only interested in clothes.

My father is really mad with Sebastiano. He thinks Sebastiano has used me to sell his clothes. I'm upset too. But Grandmere can't understand why my dad and I are so mad.

"You look really beautiful," she keeps saying.

My dad has called the concierge of the Plaza Hotel. Dad told him not to let Sebastiano back into the hotel.

Saturday, December 12th, 5:00 p.m. The Loft

It's not Sebastiano's fault about the pictures. It's Grandmere's. I don't think my dad will ever speak to her again. I know Grandmere is an old lady, but she didn't think about my feelings at all.

Sebastiano called when I was getting ready to leave. He was very surprised that my dad is so mad. He said that he had tried to come upstairs to see us, but the concierge stopped him.

When my dad told Sebastiano he was very upset about the photos, Sebastiano was even more surprised.

"But I had your permish, Philippe!" he kept saying. (Sebastiano meant "permission.")

"You did not!" said my dad.

Then Sebastiano said that he had got permission from Grandmere.

"I only did it, Philippe," said Grandmere, "because Amelia is so shy. I wanted her to feel better about herself."

But my dad wouldn't listen to her. He came over, grabbed my arm and took me out of the hotel suite. Then he asked Lars to take me home.

When I get to school on Monday, everyone is going to say, "Oh, look, here's Mia. She says she's only interested in animal rights and being a vegetarian. But now she's become a fashion model!"

Saturday, December 12th, 8:00 p.m. The Loft

I already have seventeen emails, six phone calls and one visit (Lilly) from people who saw the pictures.

Why are all these people calling and e-mailing me? How do I explain that I didn't know about the pictures? Nobody is going to believe me.

Millions of people will see the pictures and think, "How much did the newspaper pay Princess Mia for those pictures?" Now I have to start studying. I'm going to study Algebra first because it's my worst subject. It's also my first test.

**I WILL PASS ALGEBRA THIS SEMESTER!!!!!!**

Saturday, December 12th, 9:00 p.m. The Loft

Mom and Mr Gianini are watching a really good movie in the next room. So I went and watched my favorite part of the movie with them. But now I'm studying again.

Saturday, December 12th, 9:30 p.m. The Loft

Four of the seventeen emails were from Michael. One was about my pictures in the magazine and the other three were jokes. They weren't very funny, but I laughed anyway.

I'm sure Judith Gershner doesn't laugh at Michael's jokes. She's too busy cloning fruit flies.

Saturday, December 12th, 10:00 p.m. The Loft

I've just written out some instructions for my mom and Mr Gianini about Fat Louie. I've told them how to take care of him while I'm away in Genovia.

Saturday, December 12th, Midnight. The Loft

I can't believe it's midnight already and I am still only on Chapter One of An Introduction to Algebra!

Sunday, December 13th, 10:30 a.m. The Loft

Lilly just came over. She wants us to study for our exams together.

Sunday, December 13th, Noon. The Loft

Michael told Boris where Lilly was, so now Boris is here too.

Boris breathes very loudly so I can't pay attention to my studies. And I wish he wouldn't put his feet on my bed. I wanted him to take his shoes off first. But Lilly said Boris's feet smell.

How can Lilly be happy with a boyfriend who breathes loudly and whose feet smell?

Sunday, December 13th, 12:30 p.m. The Loft

Now Kenny's here.

Sunday, December 13th, 8:00 p.m. The Loft

After Boris and Kenny arrived, it was impossible to do any more studying. So we decided to go to Chinatown, the Chinese area of New York. We went to a restaurant called Great Shanghai and had a really good time.

Now I'm home again. My mom says that while I was out, Sebastiano called four times. AND he sent a dress to my home.

He designed this dress for me to wear to the Winter Dance. It's made of dark green velvet with long sleeves. It isn't sexy. But when I put it on and looked at myself in the mirror, I looked really good.

There was a note attached to the dress that said:

Please forgive me. I promise this dress will not make him think of you as his little sisters best friend.

Of course I forgive Sebastiano. And I expect one day I'll forgive Grandmere too. But I will never forgive myself. I should just have told Sebastiano, "No photos."

But when I was looking at myself in all those beautiful dresses, I forgot that being a princess is not just about wearing pretty dresses. Being a princess is about behaving as a good example to a lot of people... even people you don't know, and may never meet.

## CHAPTER NINE

### **Yellow Roses**

Monday, December 14th. Homeroom

When I got to my locker this morning, I was very surprised. A yellow rose was sticking out of the door. What can this mean? But when I looked around, I saw only Justin Baxendale with a crowd of girls.

I suppose the person who is leaving me anonymous roses must be Kenny.

It's Reading Day today. We are supposed to spend the day studying in homeroom. Our Finals begin tomorrow.

Kenny keeps passing me little notes. They say things like: Keep smiling!

It's five days until the Winter Dance, and I still don't have a date.

Tuesday, December 15th

The Algebra and English Finals are finished. I have only three more exams.

Someone left another yellow rose in my locker. I asked Kenny if it was him, but he said no. Then Justin Baxendale walked by.

Four more days until the Winter Dance, and still no date.



Wednesday, December 16th

I have only two more exams left.

There was another yellow rose today.

Three more days until the dance. Still nothing.

Thursday, December 17th, 1:00 a.m.

Maybe Kenny is lying about the roses. Maybe they really are from him. Maybe he's leaving them for me as a kind of joke, before he asks me to the dance tomorrow night.

Thursday, December 17th, 4:00 p.m. In the limousine on the way to the Plaza Hotel

MY FINALS ARE FINISHED!!!!

I think I passed all of them. Even Algebra!

Now I can think about more important things. Everyone at school knows about those stupid photos in the magazine. So I am going to arrange a press conference. I am going to call a meeting of TV reporters. I am going to tell them that Sebastiano is giving away all the money that he makes from the photos. He will give the money to Greenpeace.

Of course, Sebastiano doesn't know about this. And he isn't going to like it because he isn't going to make any money from advertising those dresses. But then, he should have asked me if he could use my pictures to advertise his clothes.

I am very nervous. I've never arranged a press conference before. But I have to do it. The best part is, I'm doing it alone with no help from anyone.

Well, the concierge at the Plaza helped. He got me a room. And Lars made all the calls on his cell phone. And Lilly helped me write down what I was going to say, and Tina did my make-up and my hair.

But except for that, I did everything.

Thursday, December 17th, 7:00 p.m.

My press conference was very successful. I'm usually shy, but I think I spoke very well. I have now watched myself on the four major American TV networks.

Sebastiano called me right after the press conference. He was very angry. He kept shouting about how much money he had lost.

"Sebastiano," I said. "Everyone thinks you've done a wonderful thing. You've given all the money from the pictures to Greenpeace. So in the future, many more people will want to buy your clothes."

In the end, Sebastiano realized I was right. He stopped being angry and started to be happy.

Then my dad rang. He was laughing.

"You really know how to be a princess now," he said.

Thursday, December 17th, 9:00 p.m.

Tina just called. She didn't want to talk about the press conference. She asked what I got from my Secret Snowflake.

"Secret Snowflake?" I said in surprise. "What are you talking about?"

"You remember, Mia," said Tina. "Your Secret Snowflake. It's a kind of game. Some kids at school were organizing it about a month ago. We all wrote our names on pieces of paper. Then we put them in a jar. Then we all picked a piece of paper out of the jar. The person who picked your name is your Secret Snowflake. They have to buy you gifts in the last week of school. But you don't know who is giving you presents. You don't know who your Secret Snowflake is."

"Oh!" I cried. I had forgotten all about my Secret Snowflake. And I had forgotten that I had pulled Tina's name out of the jar. I had forgotten to buy any presents for her.

Then I realized something. The yellow roses. They must be from my Secret Snowflake!

"Have you bought gifts for your Secret Snowflake, Mia?" asked Tina.

"Uh, sure," I said. I felt terrible. Where was I was going to find a present for Tina? Tomorrow was the last day of the Secret Snowflake game.

"Finals are over now," Tina went on. "So when are you going to tell Michael that you sent him those cards?"

"I'm never going to tell him," I said.

"But Mia," said Tina, "then why did you send him the cards?"

"I wanted him to know that there are other girls who like him besides Judith Gershner," I replied.

"Mia," said Tina. "You have to tell him. How will you become his girlfriend if he doesn't know how you feel? That's how you became Kenny's girlfriend. He sent you the anonymous love letters, but then he told you he'd sent them."

"So you have to tell Michael it was you," Tina went on. "And you have to tell him tomorrow. Because the next day you're leaving for Genovia."

I'd forgotten about that too. I am leaving for Genovia the day after tomorrow! With Grandmere! And I'm not even speaking to Grandmere anymore!

I told Tina that I'd tell Michael about the cards. She hung up the phone happily.

But I was lying to her.

I am never going to tell Michael how I feel about him.

I can't. Not ever.

Friday, December 18th. Homeroom

The teachers have just given us computer printouts with our final exam grades. We can spend the rest of the day having fun at the Winter Carnival. And later this evening, at the dance.

I think I know who my Secret Snowflake is. It must be Justin Baxendale. I've seen him waiting near my locker three times this week. He must be leaving the roses for me.

We have to tell our Secret Snowflakes our names today. If Justin Baxendale tells me that he was my Secret Snowflake, I'm going to feel really embarrassed.

But I have worse problems than Justin Baxendale. I'm the only girl in the school who doesn't have a date for the dance tonight. And tomorrow, I have to leave for Genovia. I'm going there with my crazy grandmother who isn't speaking to my father.

I got a present for Tina. I went on the Internet and found a book club with romantic stories. I paid for her to become a member of the club. Now she can read new stories every month.

I'll have to go out to my locker when the bell rings. Perhaps Justin Baxendale will be there.

Tina says yellow roses mean 'love forever'. That's why I thought they were from Kenny.

I have the computer printout with my exam grades. But I am not looking at it. I DO NOT CARE ABOUT MY GRADES.

The bell has just rung. I left the homeroom and now I'm standing by my locker. Justin is there, looking for someone. Lana is there too, waiting for her boyfriend, Josh.

"Dude," Justin says.

Dude? I am not a dude. Who is Justin talking to?

I turn around. Josh is standing there, behind Lana.

"I've been looking for you all week," Justin is saying to Josh. "Do you have those Algebra notes for me?"

So Justin wasn't waiting for me, he was waiting for Josh!

Josh says something to Justin, but I don't hear him. Because Michael is standing behind Justin.

Michael Moscovitz.

And in his hand is a yellow rose.

## CHAPTER TEN

### **A Big Shock**

Friday, December 18th. At the Winter Carnival

When I saw Michael holding the yellow rose, I thought, "It's Michael! He has been leaving the yellow roses for me."

But then Michael said,

"Here. This just fell out of your locker."

I took the rose. My heart was beating very hard. But then I saw a note attached to the roses.

Good luck with your trip to Genovia!

See you when you get back!

Your Secret Snowflake,

Boris Pelkowski.

Boris Pelkowski has been sending me the yellow roses! Boris is my Secret Snowflake. Boris wouldn't know that yellow roses mean "love forever".

"What grade did you get in Algebra?" said Michael.

I stared at him. I was still thinking about the roses. Then I opened the computer printout with my grades. To my surprise, I had

got "B" for my Algebra grade. My last grade for an Algebra exam was "F". But I've worked hard at Algebra all semester and now my grade is a "B".

I was so happy that I forgot I was in love with Michael. I threw my arms around his neck.

Then Kenny came around the corner and saw me with my arms round Michael.

Now Tina says that Kenny thinks there's something going on between Michael and me. So I have to go and find Kenny. I have to tell him that Michael and I are just friends.

"Why don't you just tell Kenny the truth?" says Tina.

But you can't break up with someone during the Winter Carnival. That would be a really mean thing to do.

Friday, December 18th. Still at the Winter Carnival

Well, I couldn't find Kenny anywhere.

Tina's taking me over to the Computer Club's booth now. Michael and Judith and the rest of the kids in the Computer Club are sitting there behind their computers. They've designed a new computer game.

I don't want to go over to the Computer Club's booth. But Tina says I have to.

"It's the perfect time to tell Michael you love him," she says. "You have to tell him now, when Kenny isn't here."

Even Later on Friday, December 18th. Still at the Winter Carnival

Well, I'm in the Girls' Room again. And this time I'm never coming out.

When Tina and I arrived at the Computer Club's booth, Michael asked me to sit down in front of one of the computers. Then he told me to turn it on. So I sat there, waiting for the stupid computer game to start.

I was feeling very sad. No one had asked me to the dance. And tomorrow I'm going on a boring trip to Genovia. And before I go, I have to break up with Kenny. Then I'll leave for Europe with my dad and Grandmere, who aren't speaking to each other. And when I come back, Michael and Judith will be engaged.

So I really didn't feel like playing a computer game.

But when the game started, I was surprised to see a picture of a castle with a garden. Inside the garden were red roses. It was very pretty.

Then a flag appeared on the computer screen. Some words were written on the flag in gold.

I screamed and jumped up. My chair fell over and everyone started laughing. Only Michael wasn't laughing. But I couldn't look at Michael. What did it mean? Did Michael feel the same way as I did? Or was it a kind of joke?

I knew I was going to start crying right there, in front of everyone. So I grabbed Tina's arm and pulled her towards the Girls' Room. I heard Michael shout, "Mia!" But I didn't stop. I pushed through the crowd, pulling Tina behind me.

Suddenly somebody grabbed my arm. It was Kenny.



"Mia, I have to talk to you," he said.

"Not now, Kenny," Tina said.

"Yes, now," Kenny said in a serious voice.

Tina let go of my arm and I stood there, waiting.

"Mia," said Kenny. "I just want to... I mean, I just want you to know. Well. That I know."

I stared at him. I had no idea what he was talking about.

"Look, Kenny," I said. "This really isn't a good time. Maybe we could talk later -"

"Mia," said Kenny. He had a funny look on his face. "I know. I saw him."

And then I remembered. Kenny had seen me with my arms round Michael after I got my "B" grade for Algebra.

"You don't have to worry," Kenny said. "I won't tell Lilly."

Lilly! I didn't want Lilly to know how I felt about Michael!

"Kenny," I said. "I am so, so sorry." Suddenly I started crying. When I put my hands to my face, they were wet with tears. "I really do like you," I went on. "I just don't.... love you."

Kenny's face was white, but he didn't cry-not like me. He was smiling a weird little smile.

"I can't believe it," he said, shaking his head. "When I first realized what was happening, I thought, Mia would never do that to her best friend. But... well, I've suspected for a long time there was someone else. That's why you never wanted to kiss me."

"I knew you didn't want to hurt my feelings," Kenny went on. "I didn't ask you to the dance because I knew you'd say no. Because you like someone else. I mean, I know you'd never lie to me, Mia. You're the most honest person I've ever met."

Was Kenny joking? Me? Honest?

"But I think you'd better tell Lilly soon," said Kenny. "I first suspected it at the restaurant. And if I suspected it, so will other people. You don't want someone else to tell her."

"Restaurant? What restaurant?" I asked in surprise.

"You know," replied Kenny. "That day we all went to Chinatown. You and he sat next to each other. You kept laughing... you were very friendly with each other."

"Chinatown?" I thought. But Michael hadn't gone with us that day to Chinatown...

"And I've noticed him leaving you yellow roses all week," said Kenny.

I stared at him through my tears.

"What?" I said.

"You know." He looked around, then whispered. "Boris. Leaving you all those roses."

BORIS. BORIS PELKOWSKI. I couldn't believe it. My boyfriend just broke up with me because he thinks I am in love with BORIS PELKOWSKI.

BORIS PELKOWSKI, who wears weird clothes.

BORIS PELKOWSKI, my best friend's boyfriend.

I tried to tell Kenny the truth. You know, that Boris isn't my secret love, but my Secret Snowflake.

But then Tina rushed forward.

"Sorry, Kenny," she said. "But Mia has to go now." Then she pulled me into the Girls' Room.

"I have to tell Kenny the truth," I kept saying.

"No, you don't," said Tina. "You two have broken up. All that matters is that you and Kenny are finished."

I looked at my face in the mirror. There were tears running down it.

Tina says that she's sure Michael didn't mean to make fun of me. She says that he wanted to tell me he felt the same way about me.

If Michael was joking, it was a very cruel joke. Michael doesn't know how much I love him. He probably didn't mean to be cruel. He probably just thought that he was being funny.

I can't leave this bathroom. I'll just wait until everyone has gone, then I'll come out quietly and go home.

I'm going to Genovia tomorrow, and I'm going to stay there.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### **After the Winter Carnival**

Friday, December 18th, 5:00 p.m. The Loft

I'm at home in my room. I've locked the door. I have to pack for my trip to Genovia tomorrow. But people keep calling and knocking on my door.

Well, I'm not talking to anybody. I'm not speaking to Lilly, or my dad, or Mr Gianini or my mother, and ESPECIALLY not Michael, although he's called me four times.

Friday, December 18th, 5:30 p.m. Outside on the Fire Escape  
I'm sitting on the fire escape outside my room. My dad told Lars to remove my bedroom door so that people could get into my bedroom. But I climbed out on to the fire escape through my window.

It's snowing and it's very cold. But it's also really peaceful. I can hear the soft sound of the snow all around me.

I hear footsteps from my room. Who's coming?

Friday, December 18th, 7:30 p.m.

Grandmere just climbed out of my bedroom window and onto the fire escape to talk to me!

"Amelia," she said. "What are you doing out here? It's snowing. Come inside."

I was really shocked that Grandmere spoke to me, after what she did. She gave Sebastiano permission to take pictures of me.

Then he used the pictures to advertise his clothes in the newspapers.

"I understand that you are upset because of the pictures," said Grandmere. "But I wanted to show you that you are just as pretty as the other girls in those magazines."

Poor Grandmere. She comes from such a different world. In Grandmere's world, the most important thing for a girl is to be beautiful.

"I only meant to show you what you can do," said Grandmere. "And look what you did. You arranged a press conference all by yourself, and you passed Algebra."

I smiled. "That's true," I said.

"Now," Grandmere said, "there's only one thing left to do."

I nodded. "I know. It's best for me to live in Genovia."

Grandmere looked at me as if I were mad.

"Live in Genovia?" she said. "What are you talking about?"

"Maybe I could just finish school there," I said.

Grandmere just stared at me.

"But your friends... your mother..."

"Well," I said calmly. "They could come and visit."

Grandmere's face became hard.

'Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Renaldo,' she said. "You're running away from something, aren't you?" She got up from the fire escape and pointed at my window. "You get inside, right now," she said.

I was so surprised that I climbed back into my room through the window. Grandmere climbed in too. Then she went to my wardrobe and started looking through my clothes.

"You," she said, "are a princess of the royal family of Renaldo. And a princess does not run away when things go wrong."

She pulled out the green velvet dress which Sebastiano had designed for me. Then she stood there, waiting. I knew she wanted me to put on the dress.

"Grandmere," I said. "You don't understand. I can't go back to the dance. I don't even have a date. And the whole school thinks I am in love with Boris Pelkowski."

"So you must show them that it doesn't matter what they think," said Grandmere. "Now get dressed, Mia."

I don't know why I obeyed her. Maybe it was because, deep inside me, I knew Grandmere was right.

But perhaps it was because, for the first time in my life, Grandmere didn't call me Amelia.

No. She called me Mia.

So I am sitting in the car right now. I'm going back to stupid Albert Einstein High School and wearing a stupid dress that Sebastiano designed.

We're here.

I think I'm going to be sick.

Saturday, December 18th. On the Royal Genovian Plane

Last night was the best night of my life. I have never been so happy. Not even on my sixth birthday when my mom gave me Fat Louie.

I am really grateful to Grandmere for making me go to that dance. I am SO GLAD I went back to Albert Einstein, the best, the greatest school in America.

When I walked into the school, Lilly-and-Boris and Tina-and-Dave came up. They seemed very happy to see me.

I went into the main hall. It was decorated like winter, with snowflakes everywhere. I saw Lana and her boyfriend, Josh. Justin Baxendale was with a group of girls. My friend Shameeka was there. Even Kenny was there.

Then I saw Judith Gershner in a red dress. She was dancing with a boy I had never seen before.

I went back to look for Lilly and found her making a telephone call.

"Where's your brother?" I asked.

"How should I know?" said Lilly.

"Well, Judith Gershner is here," I said, "so I thought..."

"How many times do I have to tell you?" said Lilly. "Michael and Judith are not going out."

"So why have they been spending time together?" I asked.

"Because they were working on that stupid computer program for the carnival," said Lilly. "Judith already has a boyfriend."

She grabbed my shoulders and turned me around so I could see Judith on the dance floor.

"He goes to Trinity," Lilly said.

I watched Judith dancing. The boy she was with looked like Kenny, but older.

"Oh," I said.

"You're behaving in a very weird way today," said Lilly. "Sit down here." She pulled out a chair. "And don't get up."

I sat down. Suddenly I felt very tired.

After a time, Lars and Wahim, Tina's bodyguard, came and sat next to me. I felt embarrassed, sitting with two bodyguards.

Nobody was asking me to dance. I had done what Grandmere wanted. I had come to the dance. But now I wanted to leave.

"Let's go," I said to Lars. "I have a lot of packing to do."

Lars started to get up. Then he stopped. I saw that he was looking at something behind me. I turned around.

And there was Michael. He had just arrived. There was fresh snow in his hair.

"I didn't think you were coming," he said. "I called you, but you wouldn't come to the phone. Mia, about what you saw on the computer today. I didn't mean to make you cry. Look, I knew it was you who was leaving those cards."

"You did?" I said.

I could feel my eyes filling with tears again.

"Of course I did," said Michael. "Lilly told me."

"Lilly told you?" I cried. "How did she know?"



He waved his hand impatiently.

"I don't know," he said. "Maybe your friend Tina told her. But that's not important."

I saw Lilly and Tina at the other end of the room. They were both staring at me. When they saw me looking at them, they turned away quickly.

"I'm going to kill them," I said.

Michael reached out and grabbed my shoulders.

"Mia," he said. "It doesn't matter. What matters is that I meant what I wrote. And I thought you did too."

"Of course I meant it," I said.

Michael shook his head.

"Then why did you behave in that weird way at the carnival today?" he asked.

"Well, because... I thought you were laughing at me."

"Never," he said.

And suddenly Michael leaned down and kissed me, right on the lips. And I found out then that Tina was right.

If you're in love, kissing is the nicest thing in the world.

Michael told me he has been in love with me for a long time too. He's kept it a secret for almost as long as I have.

We had the most wonderful evening. We danced all night, until Lilly finally came up and said,

"Come on, it's snowing really hard. We have to leave."

Then Lars drove me home and Michael and I kissed good night outside my apartment, with the snow falling all around us.

That was last night. Now I'm on the plane to Genovia, with my dad sitting beside me. Grandmere's here too. She says I've changed. She says that I seem taller than before.

And you know, maybe I am. She thinks it's because I'm wearing another of Sebastiano's special designs.

But I don't think that's the reason. And it isn't love either. Well, not completely.

It's because I feel happy about myself and my life.

I feel like a princess in a story.

A story with a happy ending.

## PART FOUR

### CHAPTER ONE

#### **In Genovia**

Saturday, January 2nd. Royal Genovian Bedroom

My name is Mia Thermopolis and I'm fourteen years old. A few months ago, my mom gave me a diary because she wanted me to write down my feelings. So now I write about everything that happens to me in this diary.

I live in New York with my mom, Helen, and my cat, Fat Louie. Three months ago, my mom married Mr Gianini - he's my Algebra teacher at school. So Mr Gianini became my stepfather and he lives with us too. Now my mom is pregnant - she's going to have a baby in a few months' time.

I'm a freshman - a ninth grade student-at the Albert Einstein High School in New York City. At the moment, it's the Winter Break from school. But I'm not spending my vacation in New York. I'm spending it in Genovia. Genovia is a small country in Europe, near the border of France and Italy.

I'm staying here because I'm the Princess of Genovia. My full name is Her Royal Highness Princess Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo. My dad is Prince Philippe, the Prince of Genovia.

My mom and dad weren't married when I was born. My mom didn't want to marry my dad because she didn't want me to grow up in the palace in Genovia. So she became a single parent and looked after me without anyone's help. But although my mom and dad weren't in love with each other, they stayed friends. My dad sent

money to my mom and me from Genovia, and I visited Genovia every summer.

But a few months ago my dad got cancer. He had an operation and the doctors cut the cancer out of his body. Then he had chemotherapy treatment. The chemotherapy worked well but now my dad is sterile - he can't have any more children. So now I'm my dad's heir. When he dies, I'll become the ruler of Genovia.

I'm staying in Genovia with my dad and Grandmere, my dad's mother. Grandmere is the Dowager Princess of Genovia. She speaks French, drinks cocktails and smokes a lot of cigarettes. Many people are frightened of Grandmere. Sometimes I'm frightened of her too, but at other times she just makes me mad.

This is my first official visit to Genovia. To prepare for it, Grandmere gave me "princess lessons" - she taught me how to speak and act like a princess.

My best friend at the Albert Einstein High School is Lilly Moscovitz. Lilly has an older brother named Michael. I've been in love with Michael for a long time, but I didn't think he was in love with me. Then last week, at the Winter Dance at school, a wonderful thing happened. Michael told me that he was in love with me too.

But the next day, I had to leave New York and come to Genovia.

I can't stop thinking about Michael Moscovitz.

But it's OK for me to think about him. BECAUSE HE IS MY BOYFRIEND NOW!!!!!!!

Tuesday, January 5th. Royal Apartment of the Dowager Princess

Grandmere is talking to me. But I'm not really listening to her. I'm thinking about Michael.

My life in Genovia is busy but it's also very boring. I really want to call Michael or Lilly, but I can't. They're spending the Winter Break at their grandmother's house in Florida, and I don't know the phone number.

The royal palace in Genovia is very old. It was built in the 1600s. I want to email my friends but I can't because there is no Internet connection in the palace.

Most people living in the castle are older than me. The only person near to my own age is my cousin, Prince Rene.

Rene isn't really my cousin, he's a distant relation from another part of my family. He is four years older than me and he goes to a business school in France. But he doesn't work very hard. He spends most of his time driving around in his Alfa Romeo sports car, or swimming in the palace pool.

So that's my life in Genovia. I really just want to go home. I want to see Michael, my new boyfriend. I haven't even gone out on a date with him yet. I haven't been out with him as his girlfriend.

I'm in my castle in Genovia, and Michael's in his grandmother's place in Florida. It's been eighteen days since I spoke to him. I'm worried that he's forgotten me. Eighteen days is a long time. Perhaps he's met another girl in Florida - a beautiful girl with long hair and a golden tan.

"Amelia!" Grandmere just shouted at me. "Are you listening to me? I don't know what's wrong with you. You're not thinking about that boy, are you?"

Grandmere has started calling Michael that boy.

"If you are talking about Michael Moscovitz," I said, "then yes, I am thinking about him."

"You'll soon forget about him," said Grandmere.

But Grandmere is wrong. I've loved Michael for about eight years, so I'm not going to forget him easily.

It's thirteen more days until I see the lights of New York and Michael's dark brown eyes again.

Friday, January 8th, 2 a.m., Royal Genovian Bedroom

I've just had a terrible thought.

When Michael said he loved me at the Winter Dance, perhaps he didn't mean he loved me as a girlfriend. Perhaps he only loves me as a friend.

It's the middle of the night and I should be asleep. I have a very busy day tomorrow. I have to visit the new children's part of the Prince Philippe Hospital in the morning.

But how can I sleep when my boyfriend could be falling in love with another girl? I've seen TV programs about girls in Florida. They're very beautiful.

Why am I so stupid? When Michael said that he loved me, why didn't I ask him what he meant? Why didn't I ask him, "Do you love me as a friend, or as a partner for life?"

I am never going to be able to sleep now. There is only one thing I can do. I have to call the only person who might be able to help me. That's my good friend, Tina Hakim Baba. Tina knows a lot about romance. She'll be able to tell me what to do.

Tina has gone skiing for the Winter Break, but she has her own cell phone. I have a phone here in my room.

I'll call her right now.

Friday, January 8th, 3 a.m., Royal Genovian Bedroom

Tina answered the phone. She wasn't out skiing because she hurt her foot yesterday. She was in her room, watching TV.

"Tina," I said. "I'm worried that Michael just thinks of me as a friend, not a girlfriend."

"What?" said Tina in a shocked voice. "But I thought you said he used 'the L word' - Love - on the night of the Winter Dance."

"He did," I replied. "But he didn't say that he was in love with me. He only said he loved me."

"Guys only say the word if they mean it. My boyfriend never says it to me," Tina said sadly.

"But how did Michael mean it?" I said. "I mean, I've heard him say that he loves his dog. But he's not in love with his dog."

"I see," said Tina. "So what are you going to do?"

"That's why I'm calling you," I answered. "Please help me."

So then Tina thought of a plan. She was very shocked when I told her that Michael and I had not spoken since the night of the Winter Dance. I explained that I couldn't call him because I didn't know the number of his grandmother's house in Florida.

Tina said that wasn't a problem. She told me to call her back in five minutes. When I did, she had the number.

"How did you get it?" I asked in surprise.

"It was easy," she said. "I called the telephone information service. Then I asked for the number of every person named Moscovitz in the town where Michael's grandmother lives. I called each number on the list until I got the right one. Lilly answered. She's expecting you to call her."

Then Tina gave me the number. I was very happy that she had got it for me.

"So how are you going to find out if Michael is in love with you?" asked Tina.

"Well," I said. "Maybe I can just ask him, 'Michael, do you like me as a friend, or do you like me as a girlfriend?'"

"Mia," Tina said, "I don't think you should do that. Boys don't like to talk about their feelings."

"So what do you think I should do?" I asked.

"Wait until you get back to New York," said Tina. "You can only find out what a boy is feeling by looking into his eyes. He'll never tell you anything on the phone. Why don't you just ask Lilly? And then call me back. I want to know what she says."

"OK," I said.

Then I dialled the number that Tina had given me. I was so nervous that my fingers were shaking. I was going to talk to Michael - Michael, whom I'd loved for years and years and who was now my boyfriend. What was I going to say?



## CHAPTER TWO

### **Calling Michael**

Lilly answered the phone. Our conversation went like this:

LILLY: (sounding cross): I thought that you would never call.

ME: I didn't know your grandmother's number.

LILLY: And you didn't leave me your phone number in Genovia.

ME: I don't know the number of the palace in Genovia. Lilly, please tell me something. Has Michael found another girlfriend?

LILLY: Are you crazy? First, Michael hasn't gone out of the house since we've been here. He's too busy working on his computer. So he hasn't had time to meet any girls. Secondly, he's not going to go out with another girl because he likes you.

ME: (almost crying with relief): Really, Lilly? Are you sure?

LILLY: Yes. But I don't know why I'm being so nice to you. You didn't even remember his birthday.

"His birthday?" I shouted. "Oh, Lilly, I completely forgot!"

"Yes," Lilly said. "You did. But don't worry. I'm sure he didn't expect a card. You're too busy being the Princess of Genovia."

I felt terrible. How could I forget something as important as Michael's birthday?

"Lilly," I said. "Can I talk to Michael, please?"

"OK," said Lilly. Then I heard her shout, "Michael! Phone!"

After a time, I heard some footsteps. Then Michael picked up the phone.

"Hello?" he said in a curious voice. Lilly hadn't told him who was on the phone.

When I heard Michael's voice, I felt wonderful. I forgot that it was two o'clock in the morning. I forgot that I hated my life in Genovia.

"Michael," I said. "It's me."

"Mia," he said. He sounded really happy too. "How are you?"

"I'm OK," I said. "Listen, Michael, I'm very sorry that I forgot your birthday."

Michael laughed. "That's OK," he said.

Then Michael and I had a wonderful conversation. I told him about my trip to Genovia. Then he told me about his birthday dinner with his parents and Lilly.

I was so happy listening to Michael's voice that I didn't notice how late it was.

"Isn't there a difference between the time in Genovia and the time in Florida?" asked Michael suddenly. "Isn't the time in Genovia six hours ahead of the time in Florida? Isn't it three o'clock in the morning in Genovia?"

"Yes," I said in a dreamy voice.

"Well, you'd better go to bed," Michael said. "I'm sure you have a lot of things to do tomorrow."

"Yes," I said. "I have to go on a tour of the hospital in the morning. Then in the afternoon I have to visit the zoo." "Mia," said

Michael in a worried voice. "You'd better get some sleep. Hang up the phone and go to bed."

"You hang up first," I said.

"No," he said. "You hang up first."

"No," I said, very happy. "You."

"No," he said. "You."

"Both of you hang up," Lilly said very rudely over the extension. "Grandma is waiting to use the phone."

So we both said goodbye very quickly, and hung up.

But I'm almost sure that Michael would have said, "I love you," if Lilly hadn't been on the line.

Sunday, January 10th, 10 a.m., Palace of Genovia

I'm really worried because I don't know what to get Michael for his birthday.

I asked Tina, and Tina said I should get him a sweater. But a sweater isn't very romantic. It's the kind of present I would get for my dad.

Tina reads a lot of romantic stories, so I was surprised that she suggested a sweater. But Tina says she asked her mom. Tina's mom used to be an international model and she dated lots of exciting men.

Tina's mom says there are rules about presents for guys. The present depends on how long you have been dating a guy.

Length of Time Going Out: Suitable Gift

1-4 months: Sweater

5-8 months: Cologne

9-12 months: Cigarette lighter (or pocket knife for a non-smoker)

1 year: Watch

Grandmere also has a list of presents for boyfriends. Grandmere's list is like this.

Length of Time Going Out: Suitable Gift

1-4 months: Candy

5-8 months: Book

9-12 months: Handkerchief

1 year: Gloves

I don't agree with Grandmere's list at all! Who gives handkerchiefs these days? And candy? For a guy????

But Grandmere says her rules are the same for guys and girls. So Michael should only give me candy or flowers for my birthday too.

Giving a present to a boy is very difficult. Everyone has a different idea. I called my mom in New York and asked her what I should give Michael. She said boxer shorts.

But I can't give Michael UNDERWEAR!!!!

Then I asked my dad. He said a pen so that Michael can write to me in Genovia. But nobody writes with a pen any more. A pen is a really boring present.

Monday, January 11th, 1 a.m., Royal Genovian Bedroom I just got off the phone with Michael. I had to call him. I had to find out what he wanted for his birthday.

He says that he doesn't want anything. He says that I am the only thing he needs, and he'll see me in eight days. That will be the best present anyone could give him.

But I have to get him something. Something really good. But what?

I didn't call Michael just because I wanted to hear his voice. Well, perhaps I did. I've been in love with Michael for a very long time. I love the way he says my name. I love the way he laughs. I love the way he asks me what I think. It's like he really cares. And I love talking to him on the phone.

It's eight days before I can be in Michael's arms again. And I can't wait.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Jane Eyre**

Things were starting to go well for me at last. But then Grandmere ruined everything.

I was very sleepy again today. I think Grandmere knew I was awake late last night, talking to Michael.

"I know you like that boy, Amelia," she said. "But there are other boys as well. You are only fourteen. You are too young to give your heart to anyone."

"I'm going to be fifteen in four months," I said. "And Juliet was only fourteen when she married Romeo."

"Well, that relationship didn't end very well, did it?" said Grandmere. "Romeo and Juliet killed themselves. Let me tell you something, Amelia. If you hope to keep that boy, you are doing everything wrong. You call him at every hour of the night -"

"But, Grandmere," I said. "I love him."

"But you mustn't let him know that," replied Grandmere. "If he realizes how you feel, he will stop trying to please you. If you want to keep him, then stop calling him every night. Start looking at other boys. And stop thinking so much about his birthday present. He should be thinking about a birthday present for you!"

"But my birthday isn't until May," I said.

I didn't want to tell Grandmere that I had already chosen Michael's birthday present. I had taken something from the Palace Museum. But I wasn't going to tell Grandmere about that.

I don't feel bad about taking it from the museum. Nobody else is using it. I'm the Princess of Genovia and I own everything in that museum. Well, the royal family owns everything.

"And who says a man should only give a woman presents on her birthday?" said Grandmere. She held up her arm and I saw a huge, diamond bracelet. "Your grandfather gave this to me on March 5, 1967. That is not my birthday. He gave it to me because he thought the bracelet, like myself, was perfect. That is how a man should treat the woman he loves."

"I don't want Michael to give me diamonds," I said. "I just want him to ask me to the school dance."

Grandmere opened her bag and took out a book.

"Here," she said. "This is for you."

I looked at the book. "Jane Eyre?" I said in surprise. "Read that book, Amelia," said Grandmere. "It will teach you a lot about relationships between men and women."

"But, Grandmere," I said.

"Read it!" Grandmere shouted.

Seven days, twenty-three hours and forty-five minutes until I see Michael again.

Tuesday, January 12th, 10 a.m. Meeting of the Genovian Parliament

Jane Eyre is very boring. Nothing exciting has happened.

Tuesday, January 12th, 2 p.m., Still in a Meeting of the Genovian Parliament

Jane Eyre is getting better. She has got a job as a teacher in the house of a very rich guy named Mr Rochester.

Tuesday, January 12th, 5 p.m., Still in a Meeting of the Genovian Parliament

Mr Rochester is a very sexy kind of guy.

Tuesday, January 12th, 7 p.m., Dining Room

Jane Eyre is behaving like an idiot! Something bad happened but it wasn't Mr Rochester's fault! Why is she being so mean to him?

Wednesday, January 13th, 3 a.m., Royal Genovian Bedroom

I think I understand why Grandmere wanted me to read this book. But I'm not sure it's a good idea to behave like a character in a book. Especially a book written in 1846. There is a character in Jane Eyre named Mrs Fairfax. Mrs Fairfax warns Jane about Mr Rochester. She tells Jane not to get too friendly with Mr Rochester before they are married. She means that Jane shouldn't chase after Mr Rochester.

I understand this very well. It means that if I want to keep Michael, I shouldn't chase after him. So I should stop calling him so much.

But what will Michael think if I stop calling him? He might think I don't like him anymore!!!!!!

It's nine o'clock at night in Florida right now. What is Michael doing? Maybe he's walking on the beach with a beautiful girl.



No, Grandmere and Mrs Fairfax are right. I mustn't call Michael. If you are always available, a man will lose interest in you. But if you are not always available, then men really want to see you, like in Jane Eyre.

Five days, ten hours and fifty-eight minutes until I see Michael again.

Thursday, January 14th, 11 p.m., Royal Genovian Bedroom

I called Tina and told her about Jane Eyre. Now Tina's reading it too. She agrees with me-perhaps it's not a good idea for girls to chase boys. Girls should let boys chase them. So she's decided not to email or call her boyfriend, Dave.

Then Tina and I made a promise to each other. We said that when one of us wanted to call our boyfriends, we would call each other instead.

Four days, fourteen hours and forty minutes until I see Michael again.

Saturday, January 16th, 11 p.m., Royal Genovian Bedroom

Tonight there was a royal ball to celebrate the end of my first official trip to Genovia.

Grandmere has been talking about this ball all week. She kept talking about what dress she wanted me to wear, and my hair and fingernails. Now I know why she wanted me to look good. She wanted me to dance with Prince Rene, so that a reporter from the magazine Newsweek could take a photo of us.

"I will stop calling Michael so often," I told Grandmere. "But that doesn't mean I am going to start going out with Prince Rene."

Prince Rene asked me to go outside on the balcony with him because he wanted to smoke a cigarette. But I told him I don't smoke. Then I told him that I already have a boyfriend, but Rene just laughed.

Then my dad came up, so I told him that Grandmere was trying to fix me up with Prince Rene. My dad went to speak to Grandmere and Prince Rene went away. Later, Grandmere told me that she only wanted a nice photo of Prince Rene and me for Newsweek. She thought that the photo would attract more tourists to Genovia.

Perhaps if a magazine prints the photo, Michael will see it. Then he'll be jealous like Mr Rochester was, after Jane Eyre met another man.

Two days, fourteen hours and twelve minutes before I see Michael again.

I CAN'T WAIT!!!!!!

Monday, January 18th, 3 p.m., Genovian Time. Royal Genovian Plane. 20,000 Feet in the Air

I cannot believe that:

a. my dad is staying in Genovia. He's not coming back to New York with me

b. Grandmere said that my princess lessons have to continue and my dad agreed with her

c. Grandmere and her dog Rommel are coming back to New York with me

IT IS NOT FAIR. I went to all the princess lessons Grandmere gave me last fall. I passed Algebra. I went on Genovian national TV and gave a stupid speech to the people of Genovia.

Grandmere says that I still have a lot to learn about governing a country. But I think the only reason she's coming back to New York is because she likes making my life difficult.

I don't want Grandmere to damage my relationship with Michael. I told my dad this as well. But I'm not sure that he was listening to me. He was busy watching two beautiful girls.

"Please don't tell me again that I'm too young to be in love," I said to Grandmere at lunch. "I'm old enough to know my own heart."

Michael and I are going to have a great love, just like Jane Eyre and Mr Rochester.

Twenty two hours until I see him again.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Home at Last**

I am so happy!

I'm home!!!! I'm home at last!!!! I love New York. I am so happy to be home again.

When I looked out of the plane's window, and saw the bright lights of Manhattan below me, I felt really good. I love New York. I was so happy to be home again.

Lars, my bodyguard, was waiting for me when I stepped off the plane. Lars' job is to look after me. He must stop anyone from trying to kidnap me.

Lars looked very tanned because he has been on holiday with Wahim, Tina Hakim Baba's bodyguard. Tina's father is very rich because he owns an oil company. So Tina has a bodyguard too.

Lars drove me home. My mom was waiting for me. It was so good to see her!!!! She looks great. She's four months pregnant now and she is starting to get bigger. It's difficult to hug her because the baby gets in the way.

"I missed you so much!" said my mom.

Mr Gianini was looking great too, he's growing a beard. Then I saw my cat, Fat Louie. I picked him up and gave him a great big hug.

The loft looks wonderful. While I was away, Mr Gianini put in a special kind of Internet connection. So now I can go online without using the telephone.

But the best thing was waiting for me on the answering machine. My mom played it for me as soon as I walked in the door.

IT WAS A MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL!!!! MY FIRST MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL SINCE I BECAME HIS GIRLFRIEND!!!!

This is the message:

Hi, Mia. It's Michael. Please could you call me when you get this message? I'm worried because I haven't heard from you for some time. And I just wanted to know if you're OK. And if you got home all right. OK. That's all. Well. Bye... This is Michael, by the way. Or maybe I said that? I can't remember. Hi, Mrs Thermopolis. Hi, Mr G. Well. Call me, Mia. Bye.

I took the tape out of the machine and brought it into my room. I played it about fifty times. It was the best Christmas present I've ever had.

My mom kept coming into my room to give me more hugs. The last time she came in, I was playing Michael's message again.

"Haven't you called him back yet?" she asked.

"No," I said.

"Why not?" asked my mom.

"Because I'm trying to be like Jane Eyre," I said.

"Jane Eyre?" said my mom. "You mean the girl in the book?"

"That's right," I said. "Jane Eyre didn't chase boys, she let them chase her."

But my mom didn't look happy about this.

"Jane Eyre was so mean to poor Mr Rochester!" she cried.

I didn't say that this was what I had thought, too... at first.

"Where did you get your ideas from, Mia?" asked my mom. "Who told you about Jane Eyre?"

"Grandmere," I said. I knew my mom wasn't going to like that answer. Mom and Grandmere are very different people, and they don't get along very well.

"Well," said my mom. "I'm pleased that you and your friends have decided not to chase boys. However, if a nice boy like Michael leaves you a message on your answering machine, you should return his call. That's not chasing boys - that's being polite."

I thought about this. My mom was probably right.

"OK," I said. "I suppose I could return his call." Suddenly I felt very excited about speaking to Michael again.

"I don't think you should play games with boys," said my mom. "Not with a boy you like. Especially not Michael."

"Mom, if I want to spend the rest of my life with Michael, I have to play games with him," I said. "If he knows how I really feel about him, he might run away. I love Michael more than anything in the world, except for you and Dad and Fat Louie."

Actually, I think I love Michael more than I love my mom and dad. That sounds like a terrible thing to say, but it's how I feel. But I will never love anyone or anything as much as I love Fat Louie.

"It's good that you want to take things slowly with Michael," said my mom. "But if a boy you like leaves a message for you, then you should call him back. Or he might think that you don't like him anymore."

Suddenly I felt very worried. Perhaps Michael had fallen in love with another girl. Perhaps he was on the phone to her right now.

"Mia," said my mom, looking worried. "Are you all right?"

I tried to smile, but I couldn't. I wanted my mom to leave the room so I could call Michael.

"Mom," I said. "I have to call Michael now."

"Oh, Mia," said my mom, looking pleased. "I really think you should. Charlotte Bronte, the author of *Jane Eyre*, was a very good writer. But things were different back in the 1840s."

Then I remembered something. Michael and Lilly's parents don't allow Michael and Lilly to use the phone after eleven o'clock on weeknights. And it was almost eleven o'clock now.

As soon as my mom had gone, I grabbed the phone. But before I could pick up the receiver, it began to ring.

My heart jumped with excitement. I knew it was Michael calling. It rang again and I picked it up.

"Hello?"

But it wasn't Michael. It was Grandmere.

"Grandmere," I said. I couldn't believe it. The time was ten fifty-nine. I had one minute left to call Michael. If I didn't ring him now, I would make his parents angry.

"I can't talk now Grandmere," I said, "I have to make another call."

"Oh?" said Grandmere. "And who are you calling at this time of night?"

"Grandmere," I said. "It's OK. He called me first. I am returning his call. It's the polite thing to do."

"It's too late for you to be calling that boy," said Grandmere.

Now it was eleven o'clock. I had missed my chance to call Michael because of Grandmere.

"You'll see him at school tomorrow," said Grandmere. "Now let me speak to your mother."

This shocked me. Grandmere never usually speaks to mom. They haven't had a good relationship since my mom got pregnant and refused to marry my dad.

So I took the phone into the living room and passed it to my mom. She was watching TV with Mr Gianini. I didn't tell her that it was Grandmere on the phone.

"Hello?" I heard my mom say in a bright voice.

Then I came back to my room. I was thinking about what I would say to Michael in the morning. Then suddenly I had a brilliant idea. Perhaps I could send an Instant Message to Michael on my computer. I turned it on. Michael was online! So I wrote this message to him.

Michael, it's me! I'm home. I wanted to call you, but it's after eleven. I didn't want your mom and dad to be mad.

Michael has changed his online name. He used to be CrackKing but now he's LinuxRulz.

LinuxRulz: Welcome home! It's good to hear from you. I was worried about you.

FtLouie: I've just been very busy. Should Lars and I pick you and Lilly up on the way to school tomorrow?

LinuxRulz: That would be good. What are you doing on Friday?

What am I doing on Friday? Was Michael asking me out on a date? I felt very excited, but I tried to type calmly.



FtLouie: Nothing, as far as I know. Why?

LinuxRulz: Do you want to go to dinner at the Screening Room cinema? They're showing the first Star Wars film.

HE WAS ASKING ME OUT. Dinner and a movie. At the Screening Room you sit at a table and have dinner. You watch the movie as you eat. Star Wars is my favorite film. I think I am the luckiest girl in the world.

My fingers were shaking as I wrote:

FtLouie: I think that would be OK. I'll have to check with my mom. Can I let you know tomorrow?

LinuxRulz: OK. So see you tomorrow. Around 7.45?

FtLouie: Tomorrow. 7.45.

I could not imagine a more perfect date. Mom will let me go because I'm going with Michael and she thinks he's a nice boy. Even Mr Gianini likes Michael.

I'm too excited to sleep now. I am going to see Michael in eight hours and fifteen minutes.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **A New Semester**

Tuesday, January 19th. Algebra class I felt terrible this morning. I was so tired that I couldn't get out of bed. I am jetlagged after the long plane journey back from Genovia. I only got up because I was so excited about seeing Michael again.

I opened my underwear drawer to look for my lucky underwear. This underwear has a picture of Queen Amidala on it. Queen Amidala is the heroine in the first three Star Wars movies. Whenever I wear this special underwear, I believe it brings me good luck. For example, I was wearing it at the Winter Dance when Michael told me he loved me.

I always wear my Queen Amidala underwear on the first day of a new semester. I wear it so that things will go well for me. But this morning my Queen Amidala underwear wasn't in my underwear drawer. So I went into my mom's room and woke her up.

"Mom, I need my Queen Amidala underwear," I said. "Where is it?" But my mom wasn't listening to what I was saying because she hadn't woken up properly.

"Shnurowog," she said, which isn't even a proper word. So then I had an idea.

"Mom, can I go for dinner with Michael at the Screening Room this Friday night?" I asked. I knew my mom wasn't really listening to me because she was still sleeping. So she wasn't going to say "no."

"Yeah, yeah," she said.

So now I had my mom's permission to go out with Michael. But I had to wear my ordinary underwear to school and I wasn't very

happy about that. There's nothing special about my ordinary underwear-it's just boring and white.

Then Lars drove me to Michael and Lilly's place. I was excited about seeing Michael, but I was also worried. What was I going to say to him? I hadn't seen him for thirty-two days. How was I going to hug him in front of Lars and Lilly?

When we got to Michael and Lilly's building, I jumped out of the car. Michael was standing there, looking tall and handsome. My heart started beating very fast. When he saw me, he smiled a wonderful smile.

"Hi," I said nervously.

"Hi," Michael said. "It's really good to see you."

Lilly walked past us and got into the car.

"It's really cold," she said. "Will you two hurry up and get in?"

Michael put his hand on the car door to open it for me. But then he put his other hand on my arm. As I turned around he said,

"So can you go out with me on Friday night?"

"Yes," I replied.

Then he pulled me towards him and kissed me, in front of all the people on the street! And he kissed me in a very special and romantic way.

I got into the back of the car with Lilly. I had a big smile on my face. I thought Lilly would laugh at me, but I didn't care because I was so happy. I wasn't wearing my Queen Amidala underwear, but the new semester had started very well for me.

Then Michael got in beside me and closed the door. Lars said "Good morning" to Lilly and Michael, and they said "Good morning"

back.

For the first time in my life, the guy who I like actually likes - maybe even loves-me too. It's a wonderful feeling.

Tuesday, January 19th. Algebra class

When I was sitting in Mr Gianini's Algebra class today, Michael came in.

I am only a freshman and Michael is a senior student. Seniors don't usually walk into freshman classes unless they have a special reason. But Michael came into the class just to see me. He came right up to my desk with his school schedule in his hand.

"What time do you have lunch?" he asked, so I told him.

"Same as me," he said. "Do you have your Special Project class afterwards?"

"Yes."

"Great," he said. "See you at lunch."

Then he turned and walked out again, looking tall and cool.

I can't believe that Michael has been in to see me. ME, MIA THERMOPOLIS. I used to be the most unpopular person here. Now everyone knows that I'm going out with one of the coolest and best-looking boys in the school.

Everybody in the class was staring at me in surprise, including Lana Weinberger. Lana is beautiful, but she's always been very mean to me.

Lana got out her cell phone and started telling one of her friends about Michael's visit. But Mr Gianini doesn't allow students to

use cell phones in class. He took Lana's phone away and told her to write an essay of a thousand words. The subject is: "How rude it is to make cell phone calls during class."

Tuesday, January 19th. Special Project class

I am so depressed. I know I shouldn't be depressed because there are many great things about my life.

Great Thing Number One

The boy I have been in love with for a long time loves, or really likes, me too. We are going out on our first real date on Friday.

Great Thing Number Two

I know it is only the first day of the new semester, but I am not flunking anything yet - I'm not failing it. Not even Algebra, which is my worst subject.

Great Thing Number Three

I am no longer in Genovia, the most boring place in the world.

Great Thing Number Four

I don't have Kenny for my Biology partner any more. Kenny used to be my boyfriend. But when I was going out with Kenny, I was really in love with Michael. Kenny has a new girlfriend now. He's

going out with a girl from our Biology class. My new Biology partner is my friend, Shameeka. She's really good at science.

### Great Thing Number Five

I have really cool friends who seem to like being with me, and not only because I'm a princess.

So I have all these great things in my life, and I should be really happy.

Perhaps I'm only depressed because I am feeling so tired because of the jetlag. But I can't stop feeling bad about myself.

### WHAT AM I DOING IN THIS SPECIAL PROJECT CLASS?

I have no right to be in this class. I have no special talents, like my friends. I am not good at anything.

All my friends can do wonderful things. Lilly has her own television show. Michael can play the guitar and many other musical instruments. He can also design computer programs. Boris, Lilly's boyfriend, is brilliant at playing the violin. Tina Hakim Baba can read a book every day. Shameeka is very good at science.

But I can't do anything really well. I don't know why Michael even likes me. I am such a boring person.

As I was writing this, Lilly leaned over.

"What's wrong with you?" she asked. "You look terrible."

I told Lilly that I was depressed because I didn't have a special talent.

"They only put me in this Special Project class because I was flunking Algebra," I said.

"But you do have a talent," Lilly told me.

I stared at her. My eyes were wide with surprise.

"What is it?" I asked.

"If you don't know, I'm not going to tell you," said Lilly. "You have to guess what it is by yourself. But right now, your talent is obvious."

I looked around, but I didn't know what Lilly was talking about. I'm not talented at anything. I know Michael loves me, but that just makes things worse. Michael is good at everything, and I am not good at anything.

Tuesday, January 19th. In the Limousine on the way to Grandmere's for Princess Lesson

I've made a list of things to do.

1. Find my Queen Amidala underwear.
2. Stop worrying about whether Michael is in love with me or not. Be happy with what I have. Remember, lots of girls have no boyfriends at all.
3. Call Tina to talk about how we are not chasing boys.
4. Do all homework.
5. Wrap Michael's birthday present.
6. Find out what Grandmere talked to Mom about last night.
7. Stop biting my fingernails.
8. Buy things for Fat Louie.

9. Think about a secret talent.

10. GET SOME SLEEP!!!!!! Boys don't like girls who have big ugly circles under their eyes. Not even perfect boys like Michael.



## CHAPTER SIX

### **Grandmere's Big Lie**

Wednesday, January 20th. Homeroom

I was really tired yesterday. I fell asleep in the limousine on the way to my princess lesson with Grandmere. So Lars turned around and drove me home again. Then he carried me up to my room and my mom put me to bed. I slept for fifteen hours until seven o'clock this morning.

I felt much better this morning. I didn't feel depressed because I have no special talent. Not everyone can be as clever as Lilly and Michael. Not everyone can be as good at music as Boris.

It was wonderful seeing Michael again this morning.

Wednesday, January 20th. Outside Principal Gupta's Office

I am sitting here outside Principal Gupta's office. Principal Gupta has asked to see me and I don't know why. I haven't done anything wrong.

I know I didn't finish my homework, but I have a note from Mr Gianini. I gave the note to the school office this morning.

Please excuse Mia for not bringing her homework. She was very tired because of jetlag and couldn't do her schoolwork yesterday evening. She will do the work tonight.

Frank Gianini

I can hear a voice coming from Principal Gupta's office. I'm sure I know that voice. It sounds like... Grandmere!

Wednesday, January 20th. Grandmere's Limousine

I can't believe what Grandmere did. She told Principal Gupta a big lie and she made me feel very worried about my dad.

When Grandmere came out of Principal Gupta's office, she was talking about someone who was very ill.

"Well, we are all hoping he gets better soon," she was saying to Principal Gupta.

I felt my face go pale. Who was Grandmere talking about? Was my father sick again?

I stood up. My heart was beating very fast.

"What is it?" I said in a nervous voice. "Is it my dad? Has the cancer come back?"

"I will tell you in the car," said Grandmere in a firm voice. "Come with me."

"Don't worry about your homework, Mia," called Principal Gupta. "Just give all your attention to your father."

So it was true! Dad was sick!

"Is it the cancer again?" I asked Grandmere as we walked down the steps outside the school towards the limousine. "Will he have to have more chemotherapy?"

Grandmere didn't reply. When we were in the car, she turned to me.

"Really, Amelia," she said. "There's nothing wrong with your father."

I stared at Grandmere. I couldn't believe what she was saying.

"Wait a minute," I said. "You mean... Dad isn't sick?"

"He sounded very healthy when I spoke to him this morning," said Grandmere.

"Then what...?" I stared at her. "Why did you tell Principal Gupta...?"

"Your school principal only lets pupils out of school if the reason is very serious," said Grandmere. "So I had to tell her that your father was sick. That was the only way to get you out of school for the day."

I was very shocked.

"Grandmere," I cried. "You can't just take me out of school whenever you want to. And you can't tell Principal Gupta my dad is sick when he isn't! How could you say that? If you tell a lie like that, it may become true. Perhaps Dad really will get sick."

"Don't be silly, Amelia," said Grandmere.

"Where are we going?" I asked. "We must be back at school in time for lunch. Because Michael will wonder where I am."

"Not that boy again," said Grandmere.

"Yes, that boy," I said. "The boy I'm in love with."

"Oh, we're here," said Grandmere suddenly. "Get out of the car, Amelia."

I got out and looked around. We were outside the big Chanel shop on Fifty-Seventh Avenue. But why had Grandmere brought me here?

Grandmere was walking quickly towards the big glass doors.

"Grandmere," I cried, rushing after her. "Did you take me out of school just to go shopping?"

"You need a dress," Grandmere said, "for the black-and-white ball at Contessa Trevanni's this Friday evening."

"What black-and-white ball?" I asked.

"Didn't your mother tell you?" said Grandmere. "Contessa Trevanni is having a ball on Friday. It's a special ball where all the guests wear only black or white clothes."

A tall thin woman with red hair was approaching us. She was the sales lady. "Your Royal Highnesses!" she cried. "How delightful to see you!"

"My mother didn't tell me about a ball," I said to Grandmere. "When did you say it was?"

"Friday night," said Grandmere. Then she turned to the sales lady and said, "I believe you have some white dresses for my granddaughter. She's too young to wear black."

"Of course," the sales lady replied with a big smile. "Come with me, Your Highnesses."

"Friday night?" I cried. "Grandmere, I can't go to any ball on Friday night. I've already made plans with...."

But Grandmere just put her hand on my back and pushed me after the sales lady.

Wednesday, January 20th. Grandmere's Limousine, on my way back to school

My mother must have given Grandmere permission to take me to this ball. Why didn't my mom tell me? Why is Contessa Trevanni having this ball? And why does Grandmere always ruin my life?

I told Grandmere I couldn't go to this ball because Michael and I are having our first date. But Grandmere told me that the first duty of a princess is always to her people.

I explained that Friday night is the only night that Star Wars is showing at the Screening Room. But Grandmere said that my date with Michael isn't as important as Contessa Trevanni's black-and-white ball.

She told me that the Contessa is an important member of the royal family in Monaco. She is also a cousin of our family. If I don't go to the ball, the Contessa will be upset.

We're at the school. It's lunchtime. I will have to explain to Michael why I can't go on our first date.

Wednesday, January 20th. Special Project class I couldn't tell him.

At lunch everyone was worried because they thought my father was ill. Michael was very nice to me too.

"Is there anything I can help you with?" he asked. "Your Algebra homework? I know it isn't much, but it's all I can do."

How could I tell him the truth-that my grandmother told a lie to Principal Gupta because she wanted to take me on a shopping trip?

I couldn't tell him. I sat there very quietly at lunch. Everyone thought I was worrying about my dad. But I was thinking I HATE MY

GRANDMOTHER. I HATE MY GRANDMOTHER. I HATE MY GRANDMOTHER.

As soon as lunch was over, I went to one of the payphones and called home. My mom answered.

"Why didn't you tell me about the ball on Friday?" I asked.

"Oh, Mia, I'm so sorry," she said.

"Mom," I said. "Why did you tell Grandmere it was OK for me to go to this stupid ball? You said that I could go out with Michael that night!"

"I did?" said my mom in a surprised voice. She couldn't remember because she hadn't been awake when I asked her. "Oh, I am so sorry, Mia," she said. "You'll just have to cancel your date with Michael. He'll understand."

"Mom," I cried. "You've got to do something to help me!"

"Well, Mia," said my mom. "I'm surprised you're so unhappy. I thought you didn't want to chase Michael. So if you cancel your first date with him, you aren't chasing him."

"That's very funny, Mom," I said. "But Jane Eyre wouldn't cancel her first date with Mr Rochester. You've got to help me."

My mom said that she would call my dad in Genovia and talk to him about the ball. But I know what my dad will say. He'll make me go to the ball. My dad believes that duty is more important than love.

Now I am sitting here in the Special Project class. How am I going to tell Michael that our first date is canceled? Will he be so mad that he never asks me on a date again? Perhaps he'll ask another girl to go and see Star Wars with him!

Lilly keeps passing me little notes in the class. She has noticed how unhappy I look.

Is your dad very sick? Are you going to have to fly back to Genovia?

No, I wrote back.

Is it the cancer?

No, I wrote back.

Well, what is it, then? Why won't you tell me what's wrong?

Lilly kept writing notes, so finally I told her the truth. Nothing's wrong, I wrote. Grandmere just wanted to take me shopping at Chanel, so she told Principal Gupta a lie.

That's terrible, Lilly wrote back.

But Lilly doesn't know about all the problems that Grandmere has caused. She doesn't know that I have to cancel my date with Michael on Friday.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **A Shock for Tina**

Tina Hakim Baba is very upset. She got a text message on her cell phone from her boyfriend, Dave Farouq El-Abar. The text message said,

U NEVER CALLED BACK.

AM TAKING JASMINE TO RANGERS HOCKEY GAME.

HAVE A NICE LIFE.

That is the meanest text message I have ever read.

Lilly and I tried to say things to make Tina feel better.

"Don't worry, Tina," said Lilly. "You'll find somebody better."

But Tina wouldn't stop crying.

"I d-don't want someone b-better," she sobbed. "I only - want D-Dave!"

It's terrible to see Tina in such pain. But I think I have learned a lesson from what has happened. Tina and I decided that the best way to keep our boyfriends was not to chase after them. That's why Tina stopped calling Dave. But now Dave has broken up with her.

Lilly has had her boyfriend, Boris, for a long time. She doesn't chase after him. He chases after her instead.

I must learn the secret of keeping my boyfriend. I never want to get a text from Michael like the text Tina got from Dave.



I can't cancel my date with Michael now. I am not going to that black-and-white ball. I don't care if Grandmere and Contessa Trevanni are really angry with me.

Wednesday, January 20th. In the Limousine on the Way Home from Grandmere's

Grandmere wants to destroy my love life because she doesn't like Michael. Michael makes me very happy, but Grandmere doesn't care about that. She doesn't like Michael because he isn't a member of a royal family.

How do I know this? Because when I walked into Grandmere's hotel suite today for my princess lesson, I had a big shock. Prince Rene was there, carrying a tennis racquet. He had just come from a tennis lesson at the New York Health Club.

"What are YOU doing here?" I asked. Grandmere told me later that I sounded very rude.

"Enjoying your beautiful city," Rene replied. Then he went off to have a shower.

"Really, Amelia," said Grandmere. "Is that a nice way to greet your cousin?"

"Why isn't he back in school?" I asked. Prince Rene was studying business at a college in France.

"He's on a break," replied Grandmere. "European schools have a longer break than American colleges. So I invited Rene to Manhattan. He has never been here before and he wanted to see New York - the city that never sleeps."

Then Grandmere started talking about the black-and-white ball on Friday. She said that many of the guests would be daughters of

very rich and important people in New York.

Suddenly I had an idea.

Why couldn't Michael come with me to the black-and- white ball as my escort? But how would I make Grandmere agree to my plan?

"About this dance, Grandmere," I said. "Do you think the Contessa would mind if I brought someone?"

Grandmere looked at me. Her dog, Rommel, was sitting on her lap and she was combing his fur.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "Do you mean you want to bring your mother? I don't think she would have a very nice time at the ball."

"Not my mom," I said. "I was thinking, you know, of an escort."

"But you already have an escort," said Grandmere. "Prince Rene has very kindly offered to escort you to the ball."

"Rene is going to be my escort?" I said in surprise. "Rene is taking me to the black-and-white ball?"

"Well, yes," Grandmere said. "He is a stranger to New York - and to America. You should be happy to make him feel welcome."

"Grandmere, are you trying to fix up Prince Rene and me?" I asked. "First of all, you made me dance with Prince Rene at the ball in Genovia..."

"That was for a picture in a magazine," said Grandmere.

"... and you don't like Michael..." I told her.

"I never said I didn't like Michael," said Grandmere. "But you're not like other girls, Amelia. You're a princess. You have to think about what is best for your country."

"... then Rene comes here," I went on, "and you tell me he's taking me to the black-and-white ball."

"I just want Rene to have a good time while he's here," replied Grandmere.

What am I supposed to do now? About Michael, I mean? I can't take him and Prince Rene to the ball.

This new year has not started very well. First, Tina hurts her foot and loses her true love. Then I realize I have no special talent. AND now I have to go to a black-and-white ball with Prince Rene.

Wednesday, January 20th. The Loft

My mom came to see me while I was doing my homework in my room. She said that she still hasn't been able to speak to my dad about the black-and-white ball. He's very busy with important government business in Genovia.

"You should let Michael know," she said, "that you won't be able to go out with him on Friday."

"Mom," I said. "I don't want to say anything to Michael until we've heard from Dad. What if Michael breaks up with me and then Dad says I don't have to go to the stupid ball?"

"Mia," my mom said, "Michael is not going to break up with you just because you have to do something for your family."

"Dave Farouq El-Abar broke up with Tina today because she didn't return his calls," I told her.

"That's different," said my mom. "It's rude if you don't return someone's calls. Let me give you some advice, Mia. If you think you may not be able to go out with Michael on Friday, you should start

letting him know now. Then, when you tell him you can't go, he won't get such a shock."

"Oh," I said. "You think that if I start preparing him for bad news now, he won't dump me?"

"Mia," my mom said. "No boy is going to dump you because you have to cancel a date. And if he does, then he's not the right boyfriend for you. Now do your homework." But I couldn't concentrate on my homework because I was thinking about my mom's advice. So I went online to send Michael an Instant Message. But I found that Tina was Instant Messaging me. Tina's online name is Iluvromance because she loves romantic stories.

Iluvromance: Hi Mia. What are you doing?

FtLouie: I'm just doing my Biology homework. How are you?

Iluvromance: OK. But I miss him so much!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I wish I had never even heard of Jane Eyre.

I remembered what my mom said, so I wrote:

FtLouie: Tina, if Dave broke up with you just because you didn't return his calls, then he was not the right boyfriend for you. You will find a new boy who appreciates you.

Iluvromance: Do you really think so?

FtLouie: Yes. Don't worry, we'll find someone for you.

I have to go now. I have to send an instant message to my dad.

Iluvromance: OK. If you feel like chatting later, I'll be here. I have nowhere else to go.

Poor Tina. She sounded so sad. I didn't want to tell her that the person I was going to email was Michael, not my dad. I didn't want to remind her that I had a boyfriend and she didn't.

I think Tina's life will be much better without Dave. He didn't behave in a very kind way towards her.

I'm glad MY boyfriend is so different. Well, I hope he is different. Wait, of course he is. He's MICHAEL.

Then I emailed Michael.

FtLouie: Is there a later showing of the Star Wars movie on Friday than the seven o'clock showing?

LinuxRulz: Yes, there's a showing at eleven o'clock. Why?

This was my chance to tell Michael that I couldn't go out with him. But I couldn't tell him. I was remembering Tina and how sad she sounded. I didn't want to lose Michael. We chatted for a few minutes longer, then Michael wrote:

LinuxRulz: Do you have a princess lesson on Friday? Was that why you were asking if there was a later showing of Star Wars? Are you worried your grandmother isn't going to let you out in time for the film?

It was the perfect time to tell Michael about the ball. But I still couldn't do it. What would I do if he dumped me and found another girl to take to Star Wars?

So instead, I wrote:

FtLouie: No, it will be OK. I'm sure I can get out of my princess lesson early.

WHY AM I SO STUPID??? WHY DID I WRITE THAT?  
Because of course I won't be able to leave the stupid black- and-white ball early, I'll be there ALL NIGHT!!!!

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **Shameeka's Surprise**

Thursday, January 21st. Homeroom

This morning at breakfast, Mr Gianini asked,

"Has anyone seen my brown pants?"

Then my mom said,

"No, but has anyone seen my red T-shirt with the long sleeves?"

And then I said, "No, but I still haven't found my Queen Amidala underwear."

And that's when we realized that someone has stolen our laundry. That's why I can't find my underwear.

We send our dirty clothes to a laundry on Thompson Street. When the clothes have been washed and ironed, the laundry puts them in a bag and sends them back to us. But when they deliver the bag of clothes back to our building, they leave it in the hall downstairs.

Our apartment is three flights of stairs up from the hall. So sometimes the bag stays there in the hall until one of us comes in and sees it. Then we carry it up to our apartment.

We sent a bag of dirty clothes to the laundry on the day I went to Genovia. But it hasn't come back from the laundry. So maybe someone has stolen it.

That means everyone will find out that I wear Queen Amidala underwear. Everyone will know that the Princess of Genovia has lucky Queen Amidala underwear. Perhaps the person who has stolen it will try to sell it!

Thursday, January 21st. Algebra class

Today, before class started, I heard Lana talking to a friend on her cell phone.

"I've got to go to a stupid dance on Friday evening," she was saying. "One of my dad's patients is holding it. Everyone has to dress up in black-and-white clothes."

Then I remembered that Lana's dad was a plastic surgeon - his job is to carry out medical operations to make people look more attractive. He improves parts of their bodies by changing them.

I remembered Grandmere told me that Contessa Trevanni had had a facelift operation - an operation that makes a woman look younger. Had Lana's dad given Contessa Trevanni her facelift?

"This woman claims she's some kind of countess," Lana was saying to her friend on the phone. "This city is full of people who think they are royal."

As she said this, Lana turned round and looked at me. Her long blonde hair fell all over my Algebra book.

"No, I'm not taking Josh," she said to her friend. Josh is Lana's boyfriend and one of the best-looking boys in the school. "He is too immature," she went on. "He doesn't know how to act in a grown-up way. I'm looking forward to meeting some older boys at the dance."

I was shocked. How could Lana want to go to the ball without her boyfriend? I'm not looking forward to going to it without Michael.

And it's going to be even worse if Lana is going to be there too.

Thursday, January 21st. Special Project class

Tina is mad at Jane Eyre. At lunchtime today, she said that Jane Eyre had ruined her life. She also said that she is giving up reading romantic stories because they ruined her relationship with Dave. We were all very upset when she said this. Tina loves reading romantic stories. She reads a new story every day.

Lilly and I wanted to show Tina that her relationship with Dave didn't end because of romantic stories. Dave caused the relationship to end, not Jane Eyre. So we made a list of ten romantic heroines like Juliet in Romeo and Juliet. After she had read our list, Tina said that we were right and romantic heroines were her friends. So she wasn't going to stop reading romantic stories.

Then my other friend, Shameeka, said,

"I'm going to apply to get onto the cheerleading team. I'm going to try and become a cheerleader."

We were very surprised. Shameeka would make a very good cheerleader. She is tall and attractive and very good at dancing and gymnastics. She knows a lot about fashion and make-up too.

But Lana Weinberger and her friends are all cheerleaders. Why does Shameeka want to be like Lana?

"Why do you want to do that?" asked Lilly.

"Lana and her friends are always telling me what to do," said Shameeka. "But I'm just as good as they are. So I should try to become a cheerleader too!"

"That's true," said Lilly. "But if you become a cheerleader, you will have to support Lana's boyfriend, Josh Richter, when he plays at



sports events. Do you want to do that?"

"Well," said Shameeka. "Cheerleading is an excellent way to keep fit and active. It's a mixture of two things I love - dancing and gymnastics. Also, if I become a cheerleader, it will look good when I apply for college."

"But if you join the cheerleading team," I asked, "will you stop eating lunch with us? Will you go and sit with the cheerleaders?"

I pointed across the cafeteria to a long table where Lana and Josh and the rest of the cheerleading team were having lunch. I felt very sad. I didn't want Shameeka to leave our little group.

"Of course not," said Shameeka. "If I become a cheerleader, my feelings for my friends aren't going to change. I'm not going to become a different person. I just won't be able to spend as much time with you as before."

We sat there thinking about Shameeka becoming a cheerleader. She would have to spend a lot of her free time doing dance practice with the team. I understood that this could be fun.

But why would anyone want to spend all that time with Lana Weinberger?

Thursday, January 21st. French class

My dad is wonderful.

My mom finally managed to speak to him in Genovia. She asked him if I had to go to the black-and-white ball on Friday. And my dad said no, I didn't have to go to the Contessa's party. He said that it was a stupid idea.

My dad said that the real reason Grandmere wants me to go to the ball is because she and the Contessa are rivals. Grandmere

thinks that she is better than the Contessa and the Contessa thinks that she is better than Grandmere. So Grandmere wants to show me off to the Contessa. The Contessa has a granddaughter too, but Grandmere wants to show her that I am better than the Contessa's granddaughter.

So I am free to spend tomorrow night with Michael! Everything is going to be all right, even though I have lost my lucky Queen Amidala underwear.

I am so happy.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Old Enemies

When I walked into Grandmere's suite at the Plaza Hotel today, I had a big shock.

Grandmere was sitting quietly in the dark. She looked terrible. Her hair wasn't brushed and she hadn't put on her make-up. She wasn't even drinking her favorite cocktail. She just sat there, with her dog, Rommel, on her knee.

"Grandmere," I cried out when I saw her. "Are you all right? Are you sick?"

"No," said Grandmere in a quiet voice. "I'm fine. Well, I will be fine. When I recover from the humiliation."

Humiliation? What humiliation?" I asked. I went over to kneel by her chair. "Grandmere, are you sure you aren't sick? You aren't even smoking!"

"I'll be all right," she said weakly. "I'm strong. I'm a Renaldo. I will get better."

"Grandmere," I said. "Do you want me to call a doctor?"

"No doctor can cure my illness," said Grandmere. "I am suffering from humiliation because I have a granddaughter who doesn't love me."

I had no idea what Grandmere was talking about. It's true that I don't like her sometimes. Sometimes I even think I hate her. But I still love her.

"Grandmere," I said. "What are you talking about? Of course I love you."

"Then why won't you come with me to Contessa Trevanni's black-and-white ball?" cried Grandmere. "Your father says that you don't want to go."

"Grandmere," I said. "You know why I don't want to go. You know that Michael and I..."

"That boy!" cried Grandmere. "That boy again!"

"Grandmere, stop calling him that," I said. "You know his name. It's Michael."

"And I suppose this Michael," said Grandmere, "is more important to you than I am."

"Grandmere, tomorrow night is our first date," I said. "Mine and Michael's. It's really important to me."

"It was really important to me that you go to this ball," said Grandmere. "Since I was a little girl, Contessa Elena Trevanni has thought that she is better than me - just because her family was richer than my family. She always had nicer clothes and handbags and shoes than my parents could afford for me. Then she married a very rich man, so she doesn't have to work. But I have had to work hard helping to attract tourists to Genovia."

"So she still thinks she is better than me," Grandmere went on. "But this time, I was hoping that I could show her my lovely granddaughter."

I was very surprised. I had had no idea that this ball was so important to Grandmere. But now I realized something about Contessa Trevanni and Grandmere.

Contessa Trevanni was like Lana Weinberger. She behaved to Grandmere like Lana behaves towards me.

"And now," said Grandmere in a very sad voice, "I have to tell her that my granddaughter doesn't love me. She won't even give up her date with her new boyfriend for one night."

Suddenly I realized what I had to do. I understood how Grandmere felt about Contessa Trevanni because that was how I felt about Lana. Lana has been mean and cruel to me for a long time. Not only to me, but to all the girls at school who aren't good-looking.

But I hadn't known there was someone who treated Grandmere like that. I started feeling very sorry for her.

"All right, Grandmere," I said. "I'll go to your ball."

Immediately Grandmere looked brighter.

"Really, Amelia?" she said. She took my hand. "Will you really do this for me?"

I knew if I went to the ball, I would lose Michael forever. Michael was going to dump me because I had canceled our first date. And I am doing this for Grandmere, who I don't even like!

Suddenly Grandmere started looking very happy. She rang for her maid to bring her a cocktail and cigarettes. Then we started our princess lesson.

When am I going to tell Michael about the ball? I'll have to tell him tomorrow morning. Then he can dump me in Homeroom, before our Algebra lesson. Lana will be in Algebra and I don't want her to see me crying when he dumps me.

Thursday, January 21st. The Loft

Tina doesn't think Michael is going to dump me tomorrow. She says he isn't going to break up with me because he loves me. I said yes, he will, because he only loves me as a friend.

Maybe I can change to another school from the Albert Einstein High School. I don't think I can continue going to the same school as Michael if we break up. I don't think I can see him every day in the hallway between classes, at lunch and in our Special Project class.

But maybe no other school in Manhattan will want me.

Friday, January 22nd. Homeroom

Well. It's over. Michael dumped me.

He didn't exactly say he wanted to break up with me. But I could read his feelings in his face and his eyes.

"I understand, Mia," he said. "You're a princess. So the most important thing is your duty. You have to put your duty first."

But I'm sure he didn't mean that.

I told him that I would try and leave the ball early if I could. He said that if I did, I should call in at the Moscovitzes' apartment.

I know what this means, of course.

He's going to dump me there.

I cannot blame him. I would do the same thing.

I will, of course, give him his birthday present. I went to a lot of trouble to steal it. But I know it won't do any good. Michael and I are finished.

They have just announced the name of the newest member of the Albert Einstein High School cheerleading team. It's my friend, Shameeka Taylor.

But I'm so unhappy about Michael that I don't even care.

Friday, January 22nd. Algebra class

Michael didn't come into my Algebra class today to say "Hi" on his way to his English class.

I know why. We are broken up. He hates me now. I don't blame him. I hate myself.

Lana just turned around and said,

"Your friend is on the cheerleading team now. But that doesn't mean anything is going to change between us, Mia."

Then she turned around again. But she wasn't fast enough. Her long blonde hair was still lying across my Algebra book.

I closed my book sharply. Lana's hair was caught inside, and she screamed in pain.

Mr Gianini was at the front of the class, writing on the board. When he heard Lana scream, he turned around.

"Mia," he said in a tired voice. "Lana. What is the matter?"

"She closed her book on my hair," said Lana.

"I didn't know her hair was in my book," I told him.

Mr Gianini made me open my book again. But he didn't send me to the principal's office.

I felt very good because I had hurt Lana, my enemy. I almost forgot that I had a broken heart and that Michael is going to dump me after the black-and-white ball tonight.

Friday, January 22nd. Special Project class

At lunch today, everyone had a reason to be happy.

Shameeka was happy because she had got onto the cheerleading team.

Tina was happy because she had decided to forget Dave, but she wasn't going to stop reading romantic books.

Boris, Lilly's boyfriend, was happy because he is always happy.

But I don't know if Michael was happy or sad because he didn't come to lunch. He told me he had some things to do, and that he would see me in Special Project class.

Some things to do. Is he looking for another girl to take to the movie tonight?

Maybe I should just ask him. I should just say, Look, are we broken up? But I can't ask Michael right now because he is talking with Boris about music.

How can Michael talk about music while my heart is breaking?

Friday, January 22nd, 6 p.m., Grandmere's Suite at the Plaza

Grandmere made me come here straight after school. Paolo is here too. Paolo is a beauty stylist so he is helping us with our clothes and hair and make-up for the ball.

I look good. But inside I feel terrible. I'm trying not to show it. I want Grandmere to think I'm having a good time. I'm only going to



the ball because of her. She is an old lady and my grandmother and I want to make her feel happy.

Well, it's time to go. Grandmere has a black dress on. My dress is white. Grandmere says I look like a snowdrop.

Maybe I've found my secret talent. Maybe my talent is to look like a snowdrop.

## CHAPTER TEN

### **The Black-and-White Ball**

Friday, January 22nd, 8 p.m., Bathroom at Contessa Trevanni's Mansion on Fifth Avenue

I'm in the bathroom again. I'm thinking about Grandmere.

Grandmere told me that she and Contessa Trevanni were old enemies, and I believed her. I felt sorry for her. But it was just a trick. Grandmere wanted me to come to the ball so that people would think I was PRINCE RENE'S NEW GIRLFRIEND!!!!!!

I don't think that Rene knew what Grandmere was going to say. When Grandmere introduced me to Contessa Trevanni, he looked very surprised.

"Contessa, may I present to you my granddaughter, Princess Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Renaldo," said Grandmere. Then she added, "And of course you know Amelia's boyfriend, Prince Pierre Rene Grimaldi Alberto."

Boyfriend? BOYFRIEND??? Rene and I looked at each other in surprise. Just then I noticed that Lana Weinberger and her dad, and her mom were standing RIGHT THERE BEHIND US.

I noticed Lana's mom had allowed her to wear a black dress to the ball. But Grandmere had told me I was too young to wear black. And Lana is the same age as me.

I knew that Lana had heard what Grandmere said about me and Rene. She had a very strange look on her face.

"So now Lana is going to tell everyone at school that I'm dating Michael and another boy," I thought.

Rene was looking amused but I was very angry.

"I can't believe you did that!" I cried, as soon as we were away from the Contessa. "You told that woman that Rene and I are going out. Grandmere, how many times do I have to tell you? I'm going out with Michael Moscovitz!"

"Rene," said Grandmere sweetly. "Please go and get us some champagne."

When Rene had gone, Grandmere said,

"Amelia. I was only trying to make Rene feel welcome. And what's wrong with him? He's very charming and handsome. How can you prefer a high school boy to a prince?"

"Because, Grandmere," I said. "I love Michael. I know you want me to marry Prince Rene because he's royal. But that isn't going to happen. Even if Michael and I broke up, I am not going to become Rene's girlfriend. He's not the kind of boy I like."

"All right," Grandmere said. "I will stop calling Rene your boyfriend. But you must dance with him. Just one time."

"Grandmere..." I said. I really didn't feel like dancing. "Please. Not tonight."

"Amelia," said Grandmere in a different kind of voice. "One dance. That's all I am asking for. I believe you owe me one dance with Prince Rene."

I started to laugh.

"Owe you?" I said. "What do you mean?"

"Because something was taken from the palace museum," said Grandmere. "A very valuable object. It was given to me by my dear friend, the former American President, Richard Nixon. Richard is now dead, of course, but when he was alive, he helped Genovia a

lot. But I suppose you don't know anything about this, do you, Amelia?"

I didn't know what to say. I felt very embarrassed. How had Grandmere found out that I had taken something from the palace museum? There was only one thing that I could do now.

"You know what, Grandmere?" I said. "I'll be happy to dance with Prince Rene."

"Good," said Grandmere, looking very happy.

So I was forced to dance with Prince Rene. While we were dancing, a strange thing happened. Suddenly Rene said,

"Who's that blonde girl who keeps staring at us? Do you know her?"

I looked over to see who he was talking about. Lana was dancing nearby with an older man. She didn't look very happy. She was giving me very jealous looks.

I suppose to Lana, I looked like I had everything. I looked like a snowdrop, and I was dancing with the most handsome guy at the ball.

Unfortunately, I was in love with someone else.

Suddenly I started feeling sorry for Lana. Until then, I had always thought of her as my enemy. But now I wanted to do something nice for her.

So I looked up at Rene and said,

"Yeah, I know her. Her name is Lana. She goes to my school. When this dance is over, you should ask her for the next dance. She'll be very excited about dancing with a handsome prince."

"But you're not excited about dancing with a prince," said Rene with a smile.

"Rene," I said. "I already met my prince, long before I met you. But if I don't leave this ball soon, I'm afraid he won't be my prince for much longer."

And that's why I'm in the bathroom. Rene said he would help me leave the ball. He told me to hide. Then he told Lars to go out and get a cab. While Grandmere is busy, Rene is going to knock on the door so I'll know I can leave. Later, Rene is going to explain to Grandmere that I felt sick, and so Lars took me home.

Rene's just knocked on the door. I have to go.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### **Michael's Birthday Present**

Friday, January 22nd, 11 p.m., the Moscovitzes' Bathroom I'm so happy. I don't think Michael is going to break up with me.

When Lars and I arrived at the Moscovitzes apartment, I rang the bell. We waited in the hall outside. I was still wearing my ball dress because there hadn't been time to go home and change.

Michael opened the door. He was surprised to see me in my white snowdrop dress.

"Oh, hey, come in, you look... you look really beautiful," Michael said. I went in and so did Lars. Then Lars went into the living-room to watch TV with Michael's mom and dad.

"Did you eat yet?" asked Michael. "Because I have some veggie burgers..."

I looked at him in surprise. Do guys usually offer their girlfriends a veggie burger before they break up with them? I didn't know. But I didn't think so.

"Um," I said. "I don't know. If you're having one..."

So we went into the kitchen. Lilly was there.

"Hello," she said. "Why are you wearing that dress?"

"I was at a ball," I explained.

Michael started cooking. He took out two veggie burgers and heated them up. Then he put them on two pieces of bread, and put

the bread on plates. He put everything on a tray and took it into the TV room.

I followed him. And there, on the TV screen, were the words Star Wars. It was the beginning of the movie.

"Michael," I said in surprise. "What is this?"

"Well," he said, "you couldn't go and see Star Wars at the Screening Room tonight. So I've brought Star Wars to you. It's on a DVD."

"Wait a minute," I said. "You aren't breaking up with me? When I told you I couldn't go out with you tonight, you went very quiet. And you didn't have lunch with us."

"I was thinking about what we could do tonight," said Michael. "Then I had to order the veggie burgers and get the Star Wars DVD. That's why I wasn't at lunch."

"Oh," I said. "So you don't want to break up with me?"

"No," said Michael. "Mia, I love you, remember? Why would I want to break up with you?"

I felt wonderfully happy. But still, something wasn't right. There was one more question I had to ask.

"Do you just love me as a friend?" I asked. "Or are you in love with me?"

Michael was staring at me. I felt my face turn red. Then he took both my hands in his and gave me a really long kiss.

"Of course I'm in love with you," he said. "Now come and eat."

It was the most romantic moment of my whole life. I will never be as happy again. Michael Moscovitz is in love with me, Mia Thermopolis!

We sat there, eating our veggie burgers and watching Star Wars. Later, Michael went into the kitchen to get some ice-cream. While he was there, I put a small box on the table.

"What's this?" asked Michael when he came back.

"It's your birthday present," I said, feeling very excited.

"I told you that you didn't have to give me anything," said Michael, picking up the box.

"I know," I said. "But I saw this, and I thought it was perfect."

"Well," said Michael. "Thanks." He lifted the lid of the box. And there inside was a dirty little rock.

"It's... it's really nice," said Michael.

I laughed happily. "You don't know what it is! Can't you guess?"

"Well," he said again. "It looks like... mean, it looks very much like a rock."

"It is a rock," I said. "Guess where it's from."

Michael looked at it. "I don't know. Genovia?" he asked. "No," I said. "It's from the moon! It's a moon rock! From when Neil Armstrong was there. He collected a lot of rocks, and Richard Nixon gave some to my grandmother when he was President. And I saw them in the museum in Genovia and I thought... well, that you should have one. I know you like things that are about outer space."

Michael looked up. "Mia," he said, "I can't accept this."

"Yes, you can," I replied. "There are plenty more rocks back at the palace museum."

"Mia," said Michael. "It's a rock. From the moon. From two hundred and thirty-eight thousand miles away."



"Yes," I said. I wasn't sure what he meant. Didn't he like it?

I suppose it was weird to give your boyfriend a rock for his birthday. But it was a very special rock. And Michael was a very special boyfriend. I really thought he'd like it. "Michael, if you don't like it, I can give it back..."

"No," he said, moving the box away from me. "I just don't know what I'm going to get you for your birthday. I can't think of anything as special as this."

So then we ate our ice-creams and watched the rest of the movie. I couldn't stop smiling. In fact, that's why I've locked myself in the bathroom. To try and calm down a little. I am so happy that it's difficult to write. I...

Saturday, January 23rd

I had to stop writing last night, because Lilly started banging on the bathroom door. She was trying to get in. When I opened it, she saw me with my journal and pen. Then she said,

"Have you been in here for the past half hour, writing in your journal?"

I admit that it is a little weird, but I was so happy, I had to write it down. Then I would never forget how I felt.

"And you still don't know what you're good at?" asked Lilly. When I shook my head, she went away, looking mad.

But I can't be mad with Lilly, because... well, I'm so in love with her brother.

I can't be mad with Grandmere either. She called me here at home a little while ago. She wanted to know if I was feeling better. My mom told her I was fine. So then Grandmere wanted to know if I

could go and have tea with her and the Contessa. But I said that I was busy with homework.

And I can't be mad with Rene. He helped me a lot last night. I wonder how he and Lana got along. I wonder if she'll break up with Josh Richter and start going out with Rene.

And I have my special lucky Queen Amidala underwear back. Our neighbour had taken our bag of laundry from the hall by mistake. She went on vacation and has only just come back. So she didn't notice until now that she had the wrong bag of laundry.

Another wonderful thing happened last night. When Lilly walked away from the bathroom, Michael asked me what was wrong.

"Oh," I said, putting away my journal. "She's mad because I don't know what my secret talent is. You and Lilly are good at so many things, and I'm not good at anything."

"Mia," Michael said. "You have a great talent. You are very good at writing. Everyone knows you can write. And you always get 'A' grades for your papers in English."

I realized Michael was right. I am always writing in this journal. And I write a lot of poetry, and I write notes and emails. But I never thought that writing was my talent. It's just something I do all the time, like breathing.

Perhaps I can start writing lots of things for the Genovian parliament.

But first I'm going bowling with Michael and Lilly and Boris. Because even a princess has to have fun sometimes.

- THE END -

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