From the Notebooks of a Middle School Princess

Royal Wedding Disaster

Written & illustrated by

MEG CABOT

Feiwel & Friends  New York
Hi, Olivia! Is everything OK? I know it must be super stressful getting ready for your sister’s wedding, but I’m coming there this week (!!!) and you haven’t texted me back about how many bathing suits I should bring.

My mom says 5 is too many. But I don’t want to be unstylish in Genovia, especially around all those royals and celebrities.
I really hope you aren’t mad at me or anything and that’s why you haven’t written back. Did I do something wrong? OK, well, write back soon (if you aren’t mad)!!! ☺️ ☺️ ☺️ Nishi

Oh no. My best friend, Nishi, thinks we’re in a fight or something.

But that’s not why I haven’t texted her in so long. I’ve just been really super busy. It’s no joke, training to be a princess. I’ve barely had time to write in this notebook, let alone text!

Of course, it hasn’t exactly been horrible, though, either. Not to sound like I’m bragging or anything, but things have been going really SUPER GREAT.

And it’s not just because I:

1. Get to live in a castle that has its own throne room and ballroom and private library filled with about fifty thousand books (not exaggerating).

2. Have a completely brand-new wardrobe and my own room with orange trees outside my
windows and a private bathroom and a walk-in closet with a couch inside it where I can sit while my personal style consultant, Francesca, figures out what I’m going to wear (only on the days when I have state functions, though. Francesca says it’s important not to wear the same thing twice in a row, or it “disappoints the populace”).

3. Get to live in Genovia, which is a tiny country between Italy and France along the Mediterranean Sea, which has white sand beaches and really nice weather year-round.

No! Although that stuff really is pretty awesome. The reason things are going so great is because I finally get to live with people who actually care about me.

Now, when I come down to breakfast in the morning, my dad and Grandmère and sister, Mia, and her fiancé, Michael, ask how I slept, and what I’d like to eat, and what I’m going to do today, and things like that.

My aunt and uncle and cousins back in New
Jersey never *once* asked me any of that stuff. They never cared whether I wanted cereal or French toast or waffles or pancakes or asked me how I liked my eggs. They never even gave me a choice! All we ever got for breakfast back at my old house was oatmeal. Not because they were poor or anything, but because oatmeal is low in fat and high in fiber.

“Oats are nature’s broom.” That’s what my aunt always used to say.

“Oats?” Grandmère said when I told her this. “Oats are for horses!”

Ha! I know this is true because as part of my princess lessons, I’m learning how to horseback ride. Dad even got me my very own pony (I was never allowed to have pets at my old house because my aunt didn’t want the carpets getting dirty, but now I have a poodle puppy, Snowball, *and* a pony).

The pony’s name is Lady Christabel de Cham­paigne, but I call her Chrissy for short. Chrissy is tan all over, except for her mane and tail, which are gold colored. When I’m grooming Chrissy—I love to
brush her—she makes happy puffing noises with her mouth.

I’m not saying that everything is perfect, of course. Nothing is perfect, not even being a princess and having people who love you and living in a palace on the Mediterranean with orange trees outside my bedroom window.

Like right now, for instance, Grandmère and Mia are having another one of their fights. (Sorry, I mean disagreements. Grandmère says royals never fight. They have “disagreements.”)

This disagreement is about Mia’s royal wedding, which is exactly one week away.

“No, Grandmère,” Mia is saying. “I told you before. No purple.”

“But purple is the color of royalty, Amelia. And it’s a royal wedding.”

“It’s a summer wedding in a palace next to the beach. Purple is too dark. Besides, the dresses have already been delivered, and they’re cream colored, just like I asked. We can’t change them now.”
“Can’t we, Amelia?” Grandmère asked. “There’s such a thing as dye, you know.”

“Grandmère,” Mia said. “My bridesmaids’ gowns are cream colored. And that is final.”

Oh! Mia looks mad. But then, so does Grandmère. There’ve been a lot of disagreements like this, especially since the wedding is going to be on television and shown worldwide. Five hundred people, including some of the world’s most well-known celebrities and royals, have been invited. There’s barely room for all the wedding gifts that have already arrived and are on display in the Great Hall.

There are some pretty cool gifts:

- A solid-gold decorated ostrich egg from Australia
- A two-hundred-piece tea set from China
- Silver plates from the people of Austria
- A Moroccan-style crystal-encrusted pet bed for Mia’s cat, Fat Louie, from the royal family of Qatar
And a charitable donation in Mia and Michael’s names to Doctors Without Borders from the president of the United States!

(Personally I don’t think charitable donations are a very interesting gift, but donations are what Mia and Michael asked for.)

But here’s a secret that almost no one knows, and why there’s been so much *fighting* disagreeing around the palace:

Almost nothing is ready.

It’s true! You would think that in a palace that is used to putting on state functions for hundreds of guests, everything would run like clockwork.

But that doesn’t turn out to be the case when you’re talking about a royal wedding for five hundred that had to be moved up several months because it turns out the bride is having twins.

That’s right: I’m going to be an aunt! I went from basically having no family to having SO MUCH FAMILY.
I’m pretty excited about this. I’m especially excited because I get to help pick out the names. The names I’ve chosen are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girl Names</th>
<th>Boy Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minnie</td>
<td>Cecil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivian</td>
<td>Roberto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve</td>
<td>Julian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvette</td>
<td>Steve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mia and Michael won’t say yet which names they’ve chosen (they don’t even know if the babies are girls or boys).

But Michael keeps joking that if they’re boys, he’s going to call them Han and Solo (although Mia says she doesn’t think this is very funny, and I agree. Naming your baby is serious business, especially if they’re in line to a throne).

Anyway, all this hurried-up wedding planning means that in addition to the thousand tourists we get inside the palace every day (it’s open for public tours every day from ten a.m. to five p.m., except on Sundays and national holidays), we’ve also been getting huge amounts of:
Florists, landscapers, stylists, decorators, designers, dressmakers, bakers, musicians, photographers, electricians, builders, contractors, caterers, and television studio executives, all running around, trying to get everything ready in time for the Big Day.

But since Mia is what Grandmère calls “hormonal”—and my dad calls “stressed”—whenever anyone asks her a wedding-related question, she just goes, “Pick whatever. I’m sure it will be great.”

But other times—like with the color of the bridesmaid dresses—she totally has an opinion. And it’s usually a very boring one, because she doesn’t want anyone to make a fuss.

But you HAVE to make fuss over a ROYAL WEDDING. That’s the whole point of being a princess bride!

“It’s because your sister is a Taurus,” Grandmère says. “The Taurus is the bull of the astrological signs, and bulls are loyal, but stubborn, which make them strong leaders, but absolutely terrible brides.”

I wouldn’t know. I’m a Sagittarius. Sagittarians always look on the bright side.
And my dad is “no help,” according to Grandmère, not only because he’s “a man” and weddings “scare men” (although I don’t think this is true of all men. Michael doesn’t seem very scared), but because he decided to retire as prince so he could spend more quality time with me, since he missed out on so many of my “formative years” already.

Except now he’s super busy having the summer palace renovated so I can go live in it with him, Mia’s little brother, Rocky, and Rocky and Mia’s mom, Helen Thermopolis, who Dad says he’s going to marry as soon as the summer palace is finished. That way we can “leave Mia and Michael to enjoy being new parents in peace.”

But it turns out it’s going to take months and months to renovate the summer palace because it’s nearly five hundred years old and the whole place is sinking into the ground because the foundation is rotten, which Grandmère says is “ironic.”

I don’t really care, though, because until it’s fixed, I get to keep living here in the main palace with Mia
and Michael and Grandmère and Fat Louis and the twins when they’re born!

“Honestly, I don’t know what your sister would do without us,” Grandmère said to me just this morning while we were in the royal greenhouse, canceling the teeny boring white roses that Mia had ordered and replacing them with much more beautiful huge purple irises. “Now that your father has stepped down from the throne, she’s so busy consulting with that new prime minister about important matters of state—such as where to house all those refugees from nearby war-torn countries, and what to name that new strain of genetically modified Genovian orange—that she hasn’t a moment to herself. I’ve no doubt your sister will save the country, of course. But we’re the ones who are going to save this wedding, Olivia.”

“I know,” I said. “Right?”

“It is,” Grandmère said, “a blessing that we’re here.”

It totally is! I hope the summer palace never gets a new foundation.
So I don’t feel bad about writing in my journal or even texting Nishi back while Mia and Grandmère are fighting disagreeing, since they aren’t even paying attention to me and I know it’s all for Mia’s own good, anyway.

OlivGrace ➢

Of course I’m not mad at you! It’s just that things are super busy. I hope you like the color purple, because that’s what we’re going to dye the bridesmaid dresses.

I think 5 bathing suits is fine. Remember, there’s a pool here AND the beach. Plus, Grandmère says you can never have too many of anything, except enemies.

Guess what else?? Grandmère says we have the most important job of the ENTIRE wedding party, because we have to hold up Mia’s train as she walks down the aisle. I’m so excited!!! Can’t wait to introduce you to Chrissy!!! And everyone else, of course.
Nishi finally texted back, but she didn’t say what I was expecting her to.

<NishiGirl>

I’m glad things are going OK and you aren’t mad at me!

OK, 5 bathing suits it is.

I can’t wait to see you!!!!!!!
It’s going to be so so fun to hold up your sister’s train! And meeting your pony.

But I don’t see how you’re going to have any time at all to spend with me when you’re going to be so busy starting princess school on Monday.

School? Who said anything about school?

I think Nishi must be confused. Grandmère and Mia give me princess lessons every day so I won’t embarrass myself (or the rest of the family) at the wedding or in front of the paparazzi who follow us around every time we leave the palace, trying to get a photo of “the princess bride.”

I’m getting a princess lesson right now, as a matter of fact, which is the only reason I’m allowed to be writing in my journal during high tea. Everyone thinks I’m taking notes . . . which I am, sort of.

But princess lessons aren’t the same as real school.

They’re still super important, of course. Nobody wants a loser who doesn’t have any manners
representing their country, even a country as tiny as Genovia (which is only two miles by four miles long).

Then again, I’m sure nobody wants a loser who doesn’t know what the capital of France is representing their country, either.

So maybe Nishi is right.

But Dad said I need to take time to adjust to living in a new country (with a new family) before starting at my new school. And even though I’ve been here a month, I don’t feel that I’ve totally adjusted yet. I don’t even know the names of all my cousins or my way around the palace. There are more rooms in this palace than there are days of the month! I haven’t even been in them all yet.

Not that I don’t think education is valuable. It’s important to learn stuff like math and geography in addition to curtsying and drinking out of the right glass. There were so many glasses on the dining table in the Great Hall at the fancy dinner I went to last night in honor of all our out-of-town guests who’ve started to arrive for the wedding, I couldn’t
even tell which water glass was mine and which one belonged to the very large man who was sitting next to me. Finally Mia nudged me under the table.

“Olivia,” she whispered. “Do this.” She made circles with her index fingers and thumbs and held them in front of her, making the letters b and d. “The bread plate on your left—‘b’—is yours, and so are the glasses on your right—‘d’ for drink. Get it?”

I got it, but too late. I’d been drinking out of the very large man’s water glass the entire time!

And so was he! *We were drinking out of the same glass.*

Being a princess is *way more* complicated than I ever thought it was going to be.

So given what an embarrassment I already am, it’s totally possible they want me to go to some school to learn how to be a better royal.

But I don’t know. Right now, with the wedding only a week away and Grandmère needing me so much? Something like that, you’d think someone would have mentioned it.

Normally I’m not allowed to look at my phone
during meals—especially high tea!—because Grandmère says it’s \textit{extremely rude} not to give your full attention to the person sitting in front of (or beside) you.

“For all you know, Olivia,” Grandmère always says, “that person could be the leader of a country that is much, \textit{much} bigger than yours.”

“Or,” Mia says, “they could just be very nice, and you don’t want to act like a jerk by sitting there looking at your cell and not paying attention to them.”

But since this seems very important and Grandmère and Mia are still fighting disagreeing over the color of the bridesmaid dresses, I figured no one would notice if I quickly texted Nishi back. So I wrote:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{OlivGrace} >

What are you talking about? Who told you I’m starting school on Monday? Also, if you mean the Royal Genovian Academy, it’s not “princess school,” it’s just regular school. Boys go there, too.

\textbf{W/B soon!}
\end{quote}
But it’s been nearly ten minutes and I haven’t heard back.

Which reminds me . . . it’s June. No one *starts* a new school in June. That’s when school gets out for summer vacation! Nishi got out of school last week!

So she must be wrong. Why would I be starting school now, right when everything is getting busiest with the wedding planning? That would be simply—WHAAAA!
Saturday, June 13
5:50 P.M.
Royal Genovian Gardens
High Tea

Busted.

Nishi texted me back just as I was writing all that, but Grandmère heard the chime and got angry.

“Princesses don’t text at tea!” she yelled, startling me so badly that I dropped my phone into a nearby potted hydrangea. Fortunately when I managed to fish it out I found that the screen wasn’t even cracked—well, any more than it already was from when I dropped it a few days before by the pool. So that was all right.
Then Rommel, Grandmère’s hairless poodle, started barking, and Grandmère had to distract him with a ham sandwich, even though I’ve told her a bunch of times that this is why all Rommel’s fur has fallen out: Dogs aren’t supposed to eat people food.

This caused enough of a distraction from the argument she and Mia were having for me to ask, “Is it true I have to go to school on Monday?”

“School?” Grandmère raised her painted-on eyebrows very dramatically. “Don’t be ridiculous. Who said anything about school? We’re much too busy with your sister’s wedding right now to worry about something like school.”

“Grandmère,” Mia said severely. “School is important. Lack of education limits opportunities and prospects, especially for women . . . even princesses.”

“Is that why Nishi just texted me this?” I asked, showing them my phone (once I’d brushed the dirt from the screen).

<NishiGirl>
There was just a headline on RateTheRoyals.com:
Her Royal Highness Olivia Grace of Genovia will join
her regal classmates on Monday for her first day at the Royal Genovian Academy.

“Pfuit!” Grandmère exclaimed after she read the text. *Pfuit* is the noise she makes when she’s truly disgusted. “*This* is what passes for news in America? Whatever is the matter with journalists there? Have they nothing else to do but focus on us royals? Are there no celebrity couples divorcing at the moment?”

“Grandmère, please,” Mia said sternly.

“But how can this even be happening?” I asked. “How can reporters know about this if *I* don’t? It isn’t true, is it? No one mentioned anything to *me* about starting school on Monday.”

“Oh dear,” Mia said, looking a little ill. According to Nishi—who spends a lot of time online—this is normal when you’re pregnant with twins and suffering from hormones. Only I hope I never get them as bad as Mia, since her hormones cause her to have to run to the royal powder room a *lot*. “I’m afraid it *is* true, Olivia. With everything going on with the wedding, it completely slipped my mind.”
“What slipped your mind?” I could feel myself beginning to panic.

“We got a letter here at the palace last month from Madame Alain, the head of the Royal Genovian Academy. The letter said that if you weren’t in class by Monday morning, you’ll be considered truant and dropped from the school’s enrollment . . . permanently.”

WHAT????

“How dare that woman?” Grandmère cried. “She doesn’t have the authority. Doesn’t she know who we are?”

“Yes, of course she does, Grandmère,” Mia said. “And Madame Alain is right. She says we’re setting a bad example for the rest of the populace by keeping Olivia out of school—unless we’re homeschooling her, which of course we aren’t.”

“What do you mean?” Grandmère looked angry. “Olivia’s learning valuable life lessons by spending her time with me.”

“It’s true!” I said. “Haven’t I been doing a good
job at my princess training?” I gasped, remembering last night’s dinner. “Is this because of the water glass?”

“Of course not!” Mia said. “You’ve been doing very well, Olivia. But life lessons aren’t the same as academics, and Dad and Grandmère and I simply don’t have time—or the knowledge—to teach you everything you need to know in order to become a well-rounded Genovian citizen.”

Grandmère snorted delicately. “Speak for yourself, Amelia.”

Mia gave her a pained look. “Certainly we can teach you deportment and diplomacy. But I meant things like math, literature, and science. And while I know the timing isn’t ideal, it probably isn’t the worst thing in the world for you to go to school on Monday. Things here at the palace are getting a little . . . well, hectic, with all of the guests and television crews and reporters arriving.”

Now I felt a little sick. And it wasn’t from eating too many tea cakes, either (although I’d eaten quite a few).
“Hectic?” I echoed. “I think you mean fun!”

Suddenly there was a loud TWANG! followed by a THUNK.

This was because Grandmère had fired off the bow and arrow she’d stolen from Mia’s half brother, Rocky.

“Drat,” Grandmère said, lowering the bow. “Missed again.”

“Grandmère, please.” Mia dropped her head into her hands. “Please stop shooting arrows at the drones.”

One thing no one tells you about being royal (besides the fact that a mean lady is going to force you to go to royal school) is that the paparazzi will basically stop at nothing to try to get a picture of you, even fly drones with cameras over the palace walls. They’re always doing this, despite the fact that it’s against the law.

It’s kind of fun to hit the drones with sticks (or towels, if you happen to be by the pool).

But Grandmère likes to shoot at them with
Rocky’s bow and arrow. She says she enjoys the exercise, and that it’s important to maintain her hand-eye coordination.

“I’ve told you,” Mia said to Grandmère. “The Royal Genovian Guard will take care of the drones. We can’t have you shooting at them yourself. You’re going to hurt someone . . . like my friends, if they ever get back from shopping.”

“Oh, I wasn’t shooting at a drone,” Grandmère said matter-of-factly. “I was shooting at another one of those hideous creatures.”

Mia lifted her head sharply. “Grandmère! No!”

“Well, what else am I to do, Amelia? They’re simply ravaging my hibiscus, and I want the garden to look beautiful for your wedding.”

I love animals very much—I want to be a wildlife illustrator someday (if I can do it in between my important work of being a princess).

But iguanas—which Grandmère calls “those hideous creatures”—are not that cute. There’s a kind-of-cute one that hangs out near the orange tree
beneath my bedroom window and is bright green. Since he’s just a baby and iguanas don’t eat citrus, I don’t mind him. I’ve even named him Carlos.

But the grown-up ones that roam around the Royal Genovian Gardens are bigger than Snowball! And they have long claws and spikes coming out of their backs and sometimes they poop right next to the pool or even in it, which is not only disgusting, but unhealthy and rude.

Still, I don’t think Grandmère should be shooting at them, especially with real arrows instead of the rubber-tipped ones Rocky was using to shoot at the busts in the Hall of Portraits (which is how he got his bow taken away from him by his mother in the first place).

Fortunately for the iguanas—especially Carlos—Grandmère has pretty terrible aim.

So this particular arrow went sailing harmlessly into the blue-and-white striped cushion of one of the pool lounges, instead of into the iguana.

But not before it almost hit one of the footmen in the leg.
“I do beg your pardon, André,” Grandmère said to the footman as he returned her arrow.

“Tut, André,” Grandmère said to the footman as he returned her arrow. “I quite understand, Your Highness,” André said with a bow. “I find the iguanas a nuisance as well.”

“It isn’t the iguanas’ fault,” I felt I should remind them. “Dad says they aren’t even from around here. Someone must have let a caged pair go, and somehow they ended up here in the Royal Genovian Gardens, where they had babies, and then the babies had babies, and now there are hundreds of iguanas everywhere, having even more babies.”

“Yes!” Grandmère cried. “And eating all of my hibiscus!”

“They’re herbivores, Grandmère,” Mia said. “Flowers are all that iguanas eat. And if Genovia can make room for all of the refugees, certainly we can make room for a few iguanas.”

“The refugees don’t go to the bathroom in my pool, Amelia,” Grandmère said. “And we can’t have
lizards dropping down from the trees on top of people’s heads during your wedding reception. Everyone will think they’ve stepped into *Jurassic World.*”

“But you can’t go around shooting at them with a bow and arrow, either,” Mia said. “Someone is going to get seriously injured. Is that what you want, Grandmère?”

“It depends on who it is that I’ve injured.” Grandmère looked thoughtful.

“I have an idea,” I said, before Mia could get even more upset. “Why don’t I stay here and help Grandmère with the iguanas? That’s a much better idea than my going to royal school. I’ve learned so much more from being around both of you than I ever could in school, anyway. See, I can prove it. . . . I’ve been writing down everything you’ve taught me.”

I opened my notebook and read aloud so that they’d know I’d been paying attention:

- Royals never chew gum in public because that makes them look like a cow chewing cud.
Royals do not allow their poodle puppies to dig (or bury things they’ve dragged from the kitchen) in the exotic flower beds of the Royal Genovian Gardens especially considering how few there are left, thanks to the iguanas.

Royals do not drop things from the top of the Grand Royal Staircase on the fourth floor all the way down to the grand entranceway in the Great Hall as “an experiment” to see whether they will bounce, as the grand entranceway is made of very expensive Carrara marble.

Royals do not put seven lumps of sugar into their tea. Three is more than adequate.
Royals never spit food back onto their plates because they don’t like it. They swallow what’s in their mouths, then lay down their fork and sit quietly. When asked why they aren’t eating, instead of saying they dislike the food (since this is an insult to the chef), they should say that they are “leaving room for the next course,” which they’ve heard is going to be even more delicious. If they dislike that course, as well, they should repeat the advice above, until the end of the meal, at which point they should politely thank their host and go home to eat a sandwich.

Royals do not slide down the Hall of Portraits in their socks during public touring hours.

Royals send thank-you notes promptly, and in their own handwriting.

Royals may apply lip gloss at the table, and even sparkle lip balm, but a royal may not “fix her braids” at the table, even a braid that is “bothering her.” She must instead retire to the restroom to do so.
Royals act confident at all times, even when they least feel it.

Mia smiled at me kindly. “That’s very nice, Olivia. And I understand that you feel insecure about starting a new school. But I’m confident that you’ll love it at the RGA—and learn much more there than you could staying here. In addition to all the regular academic courses, they have art and fencing and self-defense and drama classes—even horseback-riding lessons. It’s not just dance and deportment anymore, like it used to be.”

“Ah,” Grandmère said, a faraway look in her eye, “dance and deportment. How well I remember my days at the RGA! My waltzing partner was Prince Wilhelm of Prussia. Such a good-looking boy—unfortunate about his lack of coordination, though. It took months before the feeling came back in my toes.”

Mia frowned at Grandmère. “That isn’t going to happen to Olivia. The RGA is different now. It offers state-of-the-art education for modern young royalties. So, Olivia, for a variety of reasons—but mostly
because I’ll feel much, much more comfortable about your safety this week if I know you’re there—I’m afraid you’re going to have to add one more thing to your list: Royals go to school, because they understand that education is the key to success in life.”

I couldn’t believe it, but I didn’t want to seem uncooperative. After all, she’s the bride, and I’m only a junior bridesmaid. Junior bridesmaids are too old to be flower girls, but not old enough yet to be full-fledged bridesmaids . . . though really the only thing bridesmaids can do that junior bridesmaids can’t is drive.

“And,” my sister added, “it’s only for a week. School gets out for the year on Friday.”

That’s when I said, “All right.” It seemed the gracious thing to do, especially since what bridesmaids are really supposed to do is emotionally support the bride, even if what the bride wants is completely and totally dumb.

I think Mia must have noticed that’s what I was thinking, since she said, “I promise it won’t be so bad, Olivia. And you won’t be alone. Rocky will be
going to the RGA, too. Madame Alain sent a letter about him, as well.”

If this was this supposed to make me feel better, it didn’t.

Technically, Rocky and I have a lot in common, so you’d think we get along great.

- Princess Mia is his big sister, too.
- He just had to move to Genovia.
- His dad died, just like my mom died (well, not in the exact same way, but we’re both half orphans).
- His mom, Helen Thermopolis, and my dad are getting married someday (after the foundation gets fixed).

But we have a lot more not in common:

- He’s not in line for the throne, so he never has to go to high tea or state dinners.
- He’s nine, and sometimes he really acts like it, if you know what I mean.
He loves the iguanas and spends hours every day trying to think up ways to catch them (but so far never has, because iguanas can be very quick when they want to be).

All he ever talks about are dinosaurs, farting, and space travel. In that order.

Even worse, he’s going to be the ring bearer in Mia’s wedding. The ring bearer, unlike a junior bridesmaid, has only one job to do, and that’s walk down the aisle carrying the wedding rings.

All I can say to that is, if those rings actually make it all the way down the aisle and onto Princess Mia’s and Michael’s fingers, it will be a miracle.

Whose idea was it to slide down the Hall of Portraits in our socks? Rocky’s.

Whose idea was it to do the “experiment” and drop all those things from the fourth floor? Rocky’s.

But did Rocky get in trouble for doing those
things? No, because I was there, too, and I took the blame.

I know I should have been the mature one who said, “No. Stop. Let’s not do these things. They’re disrespectful and wrong.”

But doing them was a tiny bit fun (and also Grandmère loves Rocky almost as much as she loves me, and she thinks his “boyish high jinks” are hilarious).

Still, finding out that Rocky’s going to be going to the same school as me? Not making anything better, since it means I’m probably only going to get in more trouble.

Then, though I didn’t think it could be possible, things got even worse!

“Oh, and your cousin Luisa,” Mia added cheerfully. “She goes to the RGA, as well, Olivia. You met her at the bridesmaid gown fitting last month, remember?”

Remember? How could I forget? Especially since my cousin—three or four times removed—Lady
Luisa Ferrari is my same age, but looks, talks, and acts like she’s in high school, practically.

I suppose that’s because Lady Luisa is from the Italian side of the family. Italians are very sophisticated. Instead of saying hello or good-bye, they say ciao.

Of course I only found out that ciao is pronounced “chow,” and not “kee-yow,” like it’s spelled in books, after I said it wrong in front of Luisa.

I don’t think it was very polite of Luisa to laugh so hard at my mistake. You’re supposed to try to make newcomers to your country feel welcome, not make fun of them, even when they say or do dumb things because they’re not familiar with your language or culture. That’s one of the many things I’ve learned during my princess lessons (but actually I already knew it, because I’m not rude enough to laugh at other people’s mistakes, unlike some people I could mention).

“You two looked as if you were getting along
really well at the fitting, from the way you were laughing,” Mia went on.

“How,” I said faintly. “Sure, yeah, we were.”

How could Mia not have seen that Luisa was the only one laughing? And that she was laughing at me?

And that after Luisa got done laughing at me for mispronouncing ciao (which wasn’t my fault), all she’d done the whole rest of the dress fitting was talk nonstop about another one of our distant cousins, Khalil, who is going to be a groomsman.

Groomsmen are like bridesmaids, only boys. During the wedding, Michael is going to be crowned Mia’s prince consort, so he needs to have as many groomsmen as she has bridesmaids, so it looks as grand as possible. But apparently Michael doesn’t have that many male relatives, so Mia is letting him borrow some of ours.

Of course Khalil is the prince of some country I have never heard of. I think it doesn’t even exist anymore, due to one of the wars that’s causing all the refugees to flee for safety here in Genovia. That’s
why he’s a boarding school student at the RGA, and why his parents now live in Paris, France.

I swear, I went from having practically no family to having more cousins (all three and four times removed, so it’s like we’re not even really related, but still) than I can count!

And all of them are royalty of some kind.

“Prince Khalil is the cutest boy in the RGA.” Luisa had gone on and on. “He is also the tallest, with the thickest, longest, curliest brown hair you’ve ever seen. So we will make the best pair when we dance at the ball after the royal wedding.”

“Oh, Prince Khalil,” another one of my cousins, Marguerite, had said knowingly. She pronounced it Kuh-leel, with the emphasis on the leel. “He’s cute.”

“But he wants to be a herpetologist,” said another cousin, Victorine. “That’s not cute.”

“Ugh, yes!” Luisa replied, shuddering. “But I will soon cure him of that.”

I don’t know what a herpetologist
is, but I agree it doesn’t sound very cute. Still, the fact that Luisa wants to cure him of it makes me feel a bit sorry for Prince Khalil.

“Oh yes,” Marguerite said. “My mother says that once a boy is in love with you, you can make him do anything you want.”

“Yes,” Luisa agreed. “So as soon as Prince Khalil and I are going out, I will make him do whatever I say, including give up herpetology, then dance every dance with me at the wedding reception ball, under the moonlight by the fountain in the Royal Genovian Gardens. It will be so romantic!”

I had to try really hard not to gag out loud at that. None of what Luisa was describing sounded romantic to me . . . especially the part about dancing with a boy by the fountain in the Royal Genovian Gardens!

Of course, Luisa doesn’t know how many iguanas there are back here. One of them is bound to fall out of the palm trees onto their heads.

I only hope I’m here to see it when this happens.

“Luisa Ferrari thinks far too highly of herself,”
Grandmère said now, stuffing a tea cake into her mouth. “Just like her grandmother. Did you know that her grandmother, the Baroness Bianca Ferrari, had the nerve to suggest to me that Luisa be the one to carry your bridal train in the wedding, Mia? She said she thinks Olivia doesn’t have enough experience yet as a royal to do it, and might embarrass the family on international television.”

What? I almost choked on a tea cake of my own at hearing this. How hard is it to carry a bridal train? It’s only a dress, for goodness’ sake.

Also, I’ve had lots of experience in front of the camera! I’ve been doing the Smile and Wave for weeks.

“Grandmère,” Mia said in a warning voice, possibly because she’d noticed my expression once again.

“Of course,” Grandmère went on, “Luisa probably would have carried your train if we hadn’t found Olivia. The fact that Luisa still gets to be a junior bridesmaid ought to be enough for her grandmother. Did you know that woman had the nerve to ask me for ten extra tickets to your reception, Amelia? How we’re ever going to fit all the people we’ve invited, I
don’t know, let alone the riffraff Bianca Ferrari thinks she can—”

“Grandmère!” Mia must have noticed that I looked a little freaked out, since she asked, “Are you all right, Olivia? You’re not worried about starting this new school, are you?”

Uh, yes! And I could think of a million reasons—not even counting Luisa!—that I should be.

At my last school back in New Jersey, a girl had really, really disliked me, for no better reason than that I’d been born.

Well, born a princess. But still!

And now they want me to go to a school that’s filled with girls (and boys) who’ve been royal their whole lives, and have had years of training at it, while I’ve only been at it for a few weeks?

I’m a pretty confident person, as Nishi would agree. She says I’m an optimist (not only because I’m a Sagittarius, but because we took a quiz online at her house once that confirmed it). I really don’t let things get me down for long.

But it’s kind of hard to feel optimistic about this
new school—especially knowing that Lady Luisa is going to be there, too. In fact, I think I could turn out to be an even worse disaster there than I was at my old school! People like me, who enjoy drawing better than sports or playing video games or fashion or dancing, are usually never that popular anyway.

And princesses who’ve only just found out they’re princesses and who also like to draw?

Well, I’m not sure, but there’s a chance I could be the first person in my family to flunk out of the Royal Genovian Academy.

But all I said in answer to Mia’s question was, “No. I’m sure everything is going to be great!”

Because there’s one last thing royals are supposed to do:

- Project a positive attitude.

Even though positive is not what I’m feeling right now, about school, this wedding, or much of anything, really.