

#1 NATIONAL BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

MEG CABOT

VALENTINE

*Princess*



A PRINCESS DIARIES BOOK

*Tuesday, February 11, 6PM, The Limo on the way home from Princess Lessons*

Today when I walked into my princess lessons with Grand-mère after school there was this totally creepy looking guy occupying the pink brocade settee where I normally sit (because it's nearest the bowl of sugared almonds which I sneak whenever Grand-mère isn't looking even though they aren't actually that good, like not candy or chocolate coated or anything, but beggars can't be choosers, and why do old people always have such sucky candy, anyway?), and I was all, "Who are you?" because this dude had on one of those monochromatic tie-and-shirt thingies, like a TV talk show host or Mafioso might wear, and that is not the kind of person you'd expect to see sitting in a dowager princess's living room suite at the Plaza. I mean, not to be pejorative. But it's true.

Then Grand-mère came out in a blue feather-trimmed wrap, like she was the Queen Mum and not the Princess's grandmum, and was all, "Oh,

good, Amelia, I'm so glad you're here. Meet Doctor Steve," and I was like, "Whaty who?" and she was all, "HOW DARE YOU SPEAK THAT WAY TO MY ASTROLOGIST???"

So yeah. Grand-mère has an astrologist.

I will admit I'm pretty worried because of course I thought of Rasputin—you know, that guy who was like "spiritual advisor" (aka mystic oracle) to the Russian royal family, before they all ended up getting shot by their angry populace. Not necessarily because of Rasputin, but the tsar's subjects did kind of lose respect for him because he and his wife were listening to the advice of a dude who collected hair from virgins as a hobby.

Obviously this didn't happen with Nancy Reagan, who was getting advice from astrologist Jeanne Dixon, but that's just because Jeanne Dixon's hobby was playing golf.

Anyway, I guess Dr. Steve isn't like Rasputin. I mean, he doesn't have a beard—in fact, he barely had any hair at all, being mostly bald. And he was wearing a suit, not monks' robes.

Still, I didn't like it much when he pointed at me and went, "Don't tell me! Let me guess! This is Her Royal Highness, Princess Amelia!"

Which made Grand-mère clap her hands and do a jig, practically.

"Yes!" she cried. "You're right! He's amazing! Isn't he amazing, Amelia?"

I don't see what's so amazing about it, since he'd heard Grand-mère say my name when I walked in. Plus, it's not like a picture of my face isn't plastered all over the cover of *Teen People* every week. But whatever.

"Tell us what you've learned about Amelia, Doctor," Grand-mère said, plopping herself down on one of the matching pink brocade chairs and snapping her fingers at me in her time-honored signal for *Fix me a Sidecar. Now.* "I gave him your birth date and time yesterday, Amelia, and Dr. Steve promised to read the results this afternoon, when you could be here to hear them."

"Um, that's okay," I said, as I headed for the bar. "I'm good. I don't need my fortune told."

Particularly by someone named Dr. Steve.

“Dr. Steve doesn’t tell fortunes, Amelia,” Grand-mère said, all scornfully. “He examines the positions of celestial bodies in the heavens at the time of someone’s birth, and interprets the meaning of that placement to come up with an educated prediction about the future course of events in the subject’s life. For instance, Dr. Steve believes I myself am currently in grave danger of incurring grievous bodily harm—”

“Assassination attempt?” I asked, hopefully, as I mixed her brandy and Cointreau. Maybe there was more to this Rasputin thing than I thought.

But Grand-mère just ignored me. “—and will soon be pursued by an ardent suitor. Isn’t that correct, Dr. Steve?”

“I definitely see danger for you, Your Highness,” Dr. Steve said, looking gravely at my grandmother. “As well as a marriage proposal.”

“I’m quite positive it’s that odious Lord Crenshaw,” Grand-mère said, as I handed her her drink. “He’s been quite persistent in asking to escort me to

the charity ball the Contessa is hosting for the American Heart Association on Valentine's Day. Now, Dr. Steve. About Amelia—”

“I don't want to know!” I yelled. Because, seriously, who wants to know their future? Not that I believe in astrology, but, you know, SOME of it is accurate. I mean, like the part about how Capricorns and Tauruses get along so well. Because how else can you explain why Michael Moscovitz, who is the most intelligent and gorgeous senior in the whole school (well, unless you're blind, like everyone who thinks JOSH RICHTER is the most intelligent and gorgeous senior in the whole school), would be going out with a lowly, flat-chested freshman like myself? It would be like if Josh Hartnett suddenly started dating Little Debbie, of snack cake fame. Mmmm, Little Debbies.

But Dr. Steve had already pulled out my chart, and was saying things like, “Her Royal Highness, the Princess Mia, is gifted with uncanny insight and takes great pleasure in nature and all living things—”

“Ah!” I cried, trying to get away, only to trip over Rommel, who was cowering in his fur-lined basket by Grand-mère’s magazine rack. “No! Don’t tell me!”

“She is tremendously persistent, particularly with her affections—”

“Don’t say another word!” I was trying to untangle myself from Rommel, but it was hard because he kept darting from one side of his basket to the other. It’s a very big basket.

“-and that’s why her longest-lasting partnership will be with a generous, caring Leo—”

Suddenly, I froze.

“A LEO?” I screamed, from the floor. “That’s not possible! Michael is a Capricorn!”

“Well, obviously, Amelia,” Grand-mère said, all primly, taking a sip of her Sidecar, “Michael isn’t who you’re meant to end up with. What else, Dr. Steve?”

But I stopped listening after that. Because I knew then that Dr. Steve was a charlatan.

Oh, he may not dress in monks’ robes or have a

beard or collect the hair of virgins, but he's no more a mystic oracle than Rasputin ever was.

Because any astrologer who can't interpret from my star chart that Michael Moscovitz and I are meant to be together forever is a hack.

Or possibly receiving a kickback from my grandmother, who can't stand Michael because he's not a royal or, even worse, super rich, and so therefore, in her eyes, not a worthy consort for her granddaughter.

I did thank Dr. Steve politely for letting me know I'm destined to do great things when I take over the throne of Genovia, just to be polite. But the truth is, any palm reader off the street could have predicted that. I mean, what with my plan to convert the palace to a giant animal shelter, and all. Geesh.

I wonder how much money Grand-mère has given this fraud. Maybe I should call my dad. I mean, the last thing we need right now is a coup attempt by a populace alienated by Grand-mère's profligate spending. Dad's still having a hard enough time

calming Parliament down about the parking meter controversy I inadvertently started over Winter Break.

Who knew a bunch of cabinet members could be so touchy? You'd think they'd be a little more grateful. It's only a matter of time until the constant barrage of tourists from U.S. cruise ships completely destroys Genovia's fragile infrastructure. We've got to start seeking revenue elsewhere, and phase out the cruise ships, or Genovia's going to start sinking, just like Venice. God, being a princess is hard.