

Ode to Algebra Thrust into this dingy classroom . . .

Wednesday, October 8

Oh no.

She's here.

Thursday, October 9

I found out why.

She's giving me princess lessons.

Friday, October 10

Princess lessons.

I am not kidding. I have to go straight . . .

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

So I was right: Lilly does think the reason I'm not participating in the taping today is because . . .

Saturday, October 11

I can never go to school again. I can never go anywhere again. I will never leave this loft, ever, ever again.

Later on Saturday

Well, I don't know who Lilly Moscovitz thinks she is, but I sure know who she isn't: my friend.

Past Midnight, Sunday, October 12

She still hasn't called.

Sunday, October 12

Oh my God. I am so embarrassed. I wish I could disappear. You will never believe what just happened.

But Lilly doesn't care about things like that. I mean, she's short and sort of round and kind of resembles a pug, but she totally doesn't care how she looks. I mean, she has her own TV show, and guys call in all the time and say how ugly they think she is, and ask her to lift her shirt up (she isn't flat-chested; she wears a C cup already), and she just laughs and laughs.

Lilly isn't afraid of anything.

So when Lana Weinberger started in on her for telling her to curl up and die, Lilly just blinked up at her and was like, "Bite me."

The whole thing would have escalated into this giant girl fight—Lilly has seen every single episode of Xena: Warrior Princess, and can kick box like nobody's business—if Josh Richter hadn't slammed his locker door closed and said "I'm outta here" in a disgusted voice. That was when Lana just dropped it like a hot potato and scooted after him, going, "Josh, wait up. Wait up, Josh!"

Lilly and I just stood there looking at each other like we couldn't believe it. I still can't. Who are these people, and why do I have to be incarcerated with them on a daily basis?

HOMEWORK

Algebra: problems 1–12, pg. 16 English: proposal World Civ: questions at end of Chapter 4 G & T: none French: use avoir in neg. sentence, rd. lessons one to three, pas de plus Biology: none

$$B = \{x | x \text{ is an integer}\}$$

$$D = \{2, 3, 4\}$$

$$4ED$$

$$5ED$$

$$E = \{x | x \text{ is an integer greater than 4 but less than 258}\}$$

Tuesday, September 30

Something really weird just happened. I got home from school, and my mom was there (she's usually at her studio all day during the week). She had this funny look on

her face, and then she went, "I have to talk to you."

She wasn't humming anymore, and she hadn't cooked anything, so I knew it was serious.

I was kind of hoping Grandmère was dead, but I knew it had to be much worse than that, and I was worried something had happened to Fat Louie, like he'd swallowed another sock. The last time he did that, the vet charged us \$1,000 to remove the sock from his small intestines, and he walked around with a funny look on his face for about a month.

Fat Louie, I mean. Not the vet.

But it turned out it wasn't about my cat, it was about my dad. The reason my dad kept on calling was because he wanted to tell us that he just found out, because of his cancer, that he can't have any more kids.

Cancer is a scary thing. Fortunately, the kind of cancer my dad had was pretty curable. They just had to cut off the cancerous part, and then he had to have chemo, and after a year, so far, the cancer hasn't come back.

Unfortunately, the part they had to cut off was . . .

Ew, I don't even like writing it.

Histesticle.

GROSS!

It turns out that when they cut off one of your testicles, and then give you chemo, you have like a really strong chance of becoming sterile, which is what my dad just found out he is.

Mom says he's really bummed out. She says we have to be very understanding of him right now, because men have needs, and one of them is the need to feel progenitively omnipotent.

What I don't get is, what's the big deal? What does he need more kids for? He already has me! Sure, I only see him summers and at Christmastime, but that's enough, right? I mean, he's pretty busy running Genovia. It's no joke trying to make a whole country, even one that's only a mile long, run smoothly. The only other things he has time for besides me are his girlfriends. He's always got some new girlfriend slinking around. He brings them with him when we go to Grandmère's place in France in the summer. They always drool all over the pools and the stables and the waterfall and the twenty-seven bedrooms and the ballroom and the vineyard and the farm and the airstrip.

And then he dumps them a week later.

I didn't know he wanted to marry one of them and have kids.

I mean, he never married my mom. My mom says that's because at the time she rejected the bourgeois mores of a society that didn't even accept women as equals to men and refused to recognize her rights as an individual.

Well, maybe in Russia they do.

But this isn't Russia. Also, someone should tell him to learn a new song. If I have to hear that requiem for dead King Whoever one more time . . .

You're just jealous because Boris is a musical genius and you're flunking Algebra.

Lilly, just because I am flunking Algebra does NOT mean I'm stupid.

OK, OK. What is wrong with you today?

NOTHING!!!!

slope: slope of a line denoted m is $\frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1}$

Find equation of line with slope = 2

Find the degree of slope to Mr. G's nostrils

Thursday, October 2,

Ladies' Room at the Plaza Hotel

Well.

I guess now I know why my dad is so concerned about not being able to have more kids.

BECAUSE HE'S A PRINCE!!!

Geez! How long did they think they could keep something like that from me?

Although, come to think of it, they managed for a pretty long time. I mean, I've BEEN to Genovia. Miragnac, where I go every summer, and also most Christmases, is the name of my grandmother's house in France. It is actually on the border of France, right near Genovia, which is between France and Italy. I've been going to Miragnac ever since I was born. Never with my mother, though. Only with my dad. My mom and dad have never lived together. Unlike a lot of kids I know, who sit around wishing their parents would get back together after they get divorced, I'm perfectly happy with this arrangement. My parents broke up before I was ever born, although they have always been pretty friendly to one another. Except when my dad is being moody, that is, or my mom is being a flake, which she can be sometimes. Things would majorly suck, I think,

if they lived together.

Anyway, Genovia is where my grandmother takes me to shop for clothes at the end of every summer, when she's sick of looking at my overalls. But nobody there ever mentioned anything about my dad's being a PRINCE.

Come to think of it, I did that fact sheet on Genovia two years ago, and I copied down the name of the royal family, which is Renaldo. But even then I didn't connect it with mydad. I mean, I know his name is Phillipe Renaldo. But the name of the prince of Genovia was listed in the encyclopedia I used as Artur Christoff Phillipe Gerard Grimaldi Renaldo.

And that picture of him must have been totally old. Dad hasn't had any hair since before I was born (so when he had chemo, you couldn't even tell, since he was practically bald anyway). The picture of the prince of Genovia showed someone with A LOT of hair, sideburns, and a mustache, too.

I guess I can see now how Mom might have gone for him, back when she was in college. He was something of a Baldwin.

But a PRINCE? Of a whole COUNTRY? I mean, I knew he was in politics, and of course I knew he had money—how many kids at my school have summer homes in France? Martha's Vineyard, maybe, but not France—but a PRINCE?

So what I want to know is, if my dad's a prince, how come I have to learn Algebra?

I mean, seriously.

I don't think it was such a good idea for Dad to tell me he was a prince in the Palm Court at the Plaza. First of all, we almost had a repeat performance of the shorts incident: The doorman wouldn't even let me in at first. He said, "No minors unaccompanied by an adult," which totally blows that whole Home Alone II movie, right?

And I was all, "But I'm supposed to meet my dad—"

"No minors," the doorman said again, "unaccompanied by an adult."

This seemed totally unfair. I wasn't even wearing shorts. I was wearing my uniform from Albert Einstein. I mean, pleated skirt, kneesocks, the whole thing. Okay, maybe I was wearing Doc Martens, but come on! I practically WAS that kid Eloise, and she supposedly ruled the Plaza.

Finally, after standing there for like half an hour, saying, "But my dad . . . but my dad . . . but my dad . . ." the concierge came over and asked, "Just who is your father, young lady?"

As soon as I said his name they let me in. I realize now that's because even THEY knew he was a prince. But his own daughter, his own daughter nobody tells!

Dad was waiting at a table. High tea at the Plaza is supposed to be this very big deal. You should see all the German tourists snapping pictures of themselves eating chocolate chip scones. Anyway, I used to get a kick out of it when I was a little girl, and since my dad refuses to believe fourteen is not little anymore, we still meet there when

And then I hung up.

HOMEWORK

Algebra: problems 1–12, pg. 119 English: proposal World Civ: questions at end of Chapter 4 G & T: none French: use avoir in neg. sentence, rd. lessons one to three, pas de plus Biology: none

Saturday, October 4,

Early, Still Lilly's Place

Why do I always have such a good time when I spend the night at Lilly's? I mean, it's not like they've got stuff that I don't have. In fact, my mom and I have better stuff. The Moscovitzes only get a couple of movie channels, and because I took advantage of the last Time Warner Cable bonus offer, we have all of them, Cinemax and HBO and Showtime, for the low, low rate of \$19.99 per month.

Plus we have way better people to spy on through our windows, like Ronnie, who used to be a Ronald but is now called Ronette, and who has a lot of big fancy parties; and that skinny German couple who wear black all the time, even in summer, and never pull down their blinds. On Fifth Avenue, where the Moscovitzes live, there's nobody good to look at: Just other rich psychoanalysts and their children. Let me tell you, you don't see anything good through their windows.

But it's like every time I spend the night here, even if all Lilly and I do is hang out in the kitchen eating macaroons left over from Rosh Hashanah, I have such a great time. Maybe that's because Maya, the Moscovitzes' Dominican maid, never forgets to buy orange juice, and she always remembers that I don't like the pulpy kind, and sometimes, if she knows I'm staying over, she'll pick up a vegetable lasagna from Balducci's, instead of a meat one, especially for me, like she did last night.

Or maybe it's because I never find moldy old containers of anything in the Moscovitzes' refrigerator. Maya throws away anything that's even one day past its expiration date. Even sour cream that still has the protective plastic around the lid. Even cans of Tab.

And the Drs. Moscovitz never forget to pay the electricity bill. Con Ed has never once shut down their power in the middle of a Star Trek movie marathon. And Lilly's mom, she always talks about normal stuff, like what a great deal she got on Calvin

you wouldn't want to see. Plus, even though she takes her makeup off to sleep, she still has on eyeliner, because she had it tattooed onto her eyelids back in the eighties when she went through a brief manic phase shortly after Princess Grace died (according to my mom). It looks pretty weird, seeing this little old lady in a lace nightie with big black lines around her eyes first thing in the morning.

Actually, it's scary. Scariest than Freddy Kruger and Jason put together.

No wonder Grandpère died of a heart attack in bed. He probably rolled over one morning and got a real good look at his wife.

Somebody ought to warn the president she's here. I mean it; he really ought to know. Because if anybody could start World War III, it's my grandmother.

Last time I saw Grandmère, she was having this dinner party, and she served everybody foie gras except this one woman. She just had Marie, her cook, leave that lady's plate bare for the foie gras course. And when I tried to give the lady my foie gras, because I thought maybe they had run out—and anyway, I don't eat anything that once was alive—my grandmother was all, "Amelia!" She said it so loud, she scared me. She made me drop my slice of foie gras on the floor. Her horrible miniature poodle pried it up off the parquet before I could even move.

And then later, after everybody left, when I asked her why she wouldn't give that lady any foie gras, Grandmère said it was because the lady had had a child out of wedlock.

Hello? Grandmère, may I point out that your own son had a child out of wedlock, namely me, Mia, your granddaughter?

But when I said that, Grandmère just yelled for her maid to bring her another drink. Oh, so I guess it's okay to have a child out of wedlock if you're a PRINCE. But if you're just a regular person, no foie gras for you.

Oh, no! What if Grandmère comes to the loft? She's never seen the loft before. I don't think she's ever been below Fifty-seventh Street. She's going to hate it here in the Village, I'm telling you right now. People of the same sex kiss and hold hands in our neighborhood all the time. Grandmère has a fit when she sees people of the opposite sex holding hands. What's she going to do during the Gay Pride Parade, when everybody is kissing and holding hands and shouting "We're Here, We're Queer, Get Over It?" Grandmère won't get over it. She might have a heart attack. She doesn't even like pierced ears, let alone pierced anything else.

Plus it's against the law to smoke in restaurants here, and Grandmère smokes all the time, even in bed, which is why Grandpère had these weird disposable oxygen masks installed in every single room at Miragnac and had an underground tunnel dug that we could run through in case Grandmère fell asleep with a cigarette in her mouth and the chateau burst into flames.

Also, Grandmère hates cats. She thinks they jump on children while they're sleeping on purpose to suck out their breath. What's she going to say when she sees Fat Louie? He sleeps in bed with me every night. If he ever jumped on my face, he'd kill me instantly. He weighs twenty-five pounds and seven ounces, and that's before he's had

thinks Princess Diana was a “twink”! That’s what she called her. A “twink.”

Only she pronounced it “tweenk.”

Geez!

After we’d rehearsed sitting for an hour, Grandmère said she had to go and take a bath, since she’s having dinner tonight with some prime minister. She told me to be at the Plaza tomorrow no later than ten o’clock—A.M.10A.M.!

“Grandmère,” I said. “Tomorrow is Saturday.”

“I know it.”

“But Grandmère,” I said. “Saturdays are when I help my friend Lilly film her TV show—”

But Grandmère asked me which was more important, Lilly’s TV show or the well-being of the people of Genovia, who, in case you didn’t know, number in the 50,000 range.

I guess 50,000 people are more important than one episode of Lilly Tells It Like It Is. Still, it’s going to be tough explaining to Lilly why I won’t be there to hold the camera when she confronts Mr. and Mrs. Ho, owners of Ho’s Deli, across the street from Albert Einstein, about their unfair pricing policies. Lilly has discovered that Mr. and Mrs. Ho give significant discounts to the Asian students who go to Albert Einstein, but no discounts at all to the Caucasian, African American, Latino, or Arab students. Lilly discovered this yesterday after play rehearsal when she went to buy ginkgo biloba puffs and Ling Su, in front of her in line, bought the same thing. But Mrs. Ho charged her (Lilly) five whole cents more than Ling Su for the same product.

And then when Lilly complained, Mrs. Ho pretended like she couldn’t speak English, even though she must speak some English, or why else would her mini-TV behind the counter always be tuned to Judge Judy?

Lilly has decided to secretly videotape the Hos to gather evidence of their blatantly preferential treatment of Asian Americans. She’s calling for a school-wide boycott of Ho’s Deli.

The thing is, I think Lilly’s making a really big deal about five cents. But Lilly says it’s the principle of the thing, and that maybe if people had made a big deal about how the Nazis smashed up Jewish people’s store windows on Kristalnacht they wouldn’t have ended up putting so many people in ovens.

I don’t know. The Hos aren’t exactly Nazis. They’re very nice to the little cat they’ve raised from a kitten to chase rats away from the chicken wings in the salad bar.

Maybe I’m not too sorry about missing the taping tomorrow.

But I am sorry Grandmère tore up my list of the ten women I admire most. I thought it was nice. When I got home, I printed it out again, just because it made me so mad, her tearing it up like that. I put a copy in this book.

And after carefully reviewing my copy of the Renaldo-Thermopolis Compromise, I seenothing about princess lessons. Something is going to have to be done about this. I

for me. I also respect her because she is deeply principled: She says she would never think of inflicting her beliefs on others and would thank others to pay her the same courtesy.

Can you believe Grandmère tore this up? I'm telling you, this is the sort of essay that could bring a country to its knees.

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

So I was right: Lilly does think the reason I'm not participating in the taping today is because I'm against her boycott of the Hos.

I told her that wasn't true, that I had to spend the day with my grandmother. But guess what? She doesn't believe me. The one time I tell the truth, and she doesn't believe me!

Lilly says that if I really wanted to get out of spending the day with Grandmère I could, but because I'm so codependent, I can't say no to anyone. Which doesn't even make sense, since obviously I am saying no to her. When I pointed that out to Lilly, though, she just got madder. I can't say no to my grandmother, since she's like sixty-five years old, and she's going to die soon, if there's any justice at all in the world.

Besides, you don't know my grandmother, I said. You don't say no to my grandmother.

Then Lilly went, "No, I don't know your grandmother, do I, Mia? Isn't that curious, considering the fact that you know all my grandparents"—the Moscovitzes have me over every year for Passover dinner—"and yet I haven't met any of yours?"

Well, of course the reason for that is that my mom's parents are like total farmers who live in a place called Versailles, Indiana, only they pronounce it "Ver-sales." My mom's parents are afraid to come to New York City because they say there are too many "furinners"—by which they mean foreigners—here, and anything that isn't 100 percent American scares them, which is one of the reasons my mom left home when she was eighteen and has only been back twice, and that was with me. Let me tell you, Versailles is a small, small town. It's so small that there's a sign on the door at the bank that says if bank is closed, please slide money under door. I am not lying, either. I took a photo of it and brought it back to show everyone because I knew they wouldn't believe me. It's hanging on our refrigerator.

Anyway, Grandpa and Grandma Thermopolis don't make it out of Indiana much.

And the reason I'd never introduced Lilly to Grandmère Renaldo is because Grandmère Renaldo hates children. And I can't introduce her now because then Lilly will find out I'm the princess of Genovia, and you can bet I'll never hear the end of that. She'd probably want to interview me, or something, for her TV show. That's all I need: My name and image plastered all over Manhattan Public Access.

have my hair color chemically altered. But paying one hundred dollars per day to Greenpeace? That's \$356,000 per year! In my name! Why, Greenpeace will have to hire me after I graduate. I practically will have donated a million dollars by that time!

Wait, maybe that's only \$36,500. Where's my calculator????

Later on Saturday

Well, I don't know who Lilly Moscovitz thinks she is, but I sure know who she isn't: my friend. I don't think anyone who was my friend would be as mean to me as Lilly was tonight. I couldn't believe it. And all because of my hair!

I guess I could understand it if Lilly was mad at me about something that mattered—like missing the taping of the Ho segment. I mean, I'm like the main cameraperson for Lilly Tells It Like It Is. I also do a lot of the prop work. When I'm not there, Shameeka has to do my job as well as hers, and Shameeka is already executive producer and location scout.

So I guess I could see how Lilly might kind of resent the fact that I missed today's taping. She thinks Ho-Gate—that's what she's calling it—is the most important story she's ever done. I think it's kind of stupid. Who cares about five cents, anyway? But Lilly's all, "We're going to break the cycle of racism that has been rampant in delis across the five boroughs."

Whatever. All I know is, I walked into the Moscovitzes' apartment tonight, and Lilly took one look at my new hair and was like, "Oh my God, what happened to you?"

Like I had frostbite all over my face, and my nose had turned black and fallen off, like those people who climbed Mt. Everest.

Okay, I knew people were going to freak and stuff when they saw my hair. I totally washed it before I came over, and got all the mousse and goop out of it. Plus I took off all the makeup Paolo had slathered on me, and put on my overalls and high-tops (you can hardly see the quadratic formula anymore). I really thought, except for my hair, I looked mostly normal. In fact, I kind of thought maybe I looked good—for me, I mean.

But I guess Lilly didn't think so.

I tried to be casual, like it was no big deal. Which it isn't, by the way. It wasn't as if I'd had breast implants or something.

"Yeah," I said, taking off my coat. "Well, my grandmother made me go see this guy Paolo, and he—"

But Lilly wouldn't even let me finish. She was in this state of shock. She went, "Your hair is the same color as Lana Weinberger's."

"Well," I said. "I know."

I went, “You know what? I don’t have a problem. You’re the one with the problem. You seem to have a big problem with me. Well, you know what? I’m going to solve your problem for you. I’m leaving. I never wanted to help you with your stupid Ho-Gate story anyway. The Hos are nice people. They haven’t done anything wrong. I don’t see why you have to pick on them. And”—I said this as I opened the door—“my hair is not yellow.”

Then I left. I sort of slammed the door behind me, too.

While I was waiting for the elevator, I sort of thought Lilly might come out and apologize to me.

But she didn’t.

I came straight home, took a bath, and got into bed with my remote control and Fat Louie, who’s the only person who likes me the way I am right now. I was thinking Lilly might call to apologize, but so far she hasn’t.

Well, I’m not apologizing until she does.

And you know what? I looked in the mirror a minute ago, and my hair doesn’t look that bad.

Past Midnight, Sunday, October 12

She still hasn’t called.

Preview from Notesale.co.uk
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Sunday, October 12

Oh my God. I am so embarrassed. I wish I could disappear. You will never believe what just happened.

I walked out of my room to get breakfast, and there were my mom and Mr. Gianini sitting at the table eating pancakes!

And Mr. Gianini was wearing a T-shirt and boxer shorts!! My mom was in her kimono!!! When she saw me, she choked on her orange juice. Then she went, “Mia, what are you doing here? I thought you spent the night at Lilly’s.”

I wish I had. I wish I had never chosen to be assertive last night. I could have stayed over at the Moscovitzes’ and never had to look at Mr. Gianini in his boxer shorts. I could have lived a full and happy life without ever having seen that.

Not to mention him seeing me in my bright red flannel nightie.

How am I ever going to go to a review session again?

her go anywhere with a guy alone (even a totally harmless guy like Aaron Ben-Simon, whose neck was as thick as my upper arm), but when we went with her she sort of ignored us, which I guess is the point. Only for the two weeks they went out, you sort of couldn't talk to Shameeka, because all she could talk about was Aaron.

Not that all my mom can talk about is Mr. Gianini. She's not like that at all. But I had a feeling if I went to Central Park I might have to see kissing. Not that there's anything wrong with kissing, like on TV. When it's your mom and your Algebra teacher, though . . .

You know what I mean, right?

REASONS I SHOULD MAKE UP WITH LILLY

1. We've been best friends since kindergarten. 2. One of us has to be the bigger person and make the first move. 3. She makes me laugh. 4. Who else can I eat lunch with? 5. I miss her.

REASONS I SHOULD NOT MAKE UP WITH LILLY

1. She's always telling me what to do. 2. She thinks she knows everything. 3. Lilly is the one who started it, so she should be the one to apologize. 4. I will never achieve self-actualization if I always back down from my convictions. 5. What if I apologize and she STILL won't talk to me????

Even Later on Sunday

I just turned on my computer to look up some stuff about Afghanistan on the Internet (I have to write a paper for World Civ on a current event), and then I saw that someone was instant messaging me. I hardly ever get instant messages, so I was totally excited.

But then I saw who it was from: CracKing.

Michael Moscovitz? What could he want?

Here's what he wrote:

CRACKING:HEY, THERMOPOLIS. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU LAST

Operations on Real Numbers: negatives or opposites—numbers on opposite sides of the zero but the same distance from zero on the number line are called negatives or opposites

What to Do During Algebra

O what to do during Algebra! The possibilities are limitless: There's drawing, and yawning, and portable chess. There's dozing, and dreaming, and feeling confused. There's humming, and strumming, and looking bemused. You can stare at the clock. You can hum a little song. I've tried just about everything to pass the time along.

BUT NOTHING WORKS!!!!!!

Later on Monday, French

So even if Lilly and I weren't in a fight, I wouldn't have been able to sit with her at lunch today. She's become the queen of the cause célèbre. All these people were clustered around the table where she and I and Shameeka and Ling Su normally eat our dumplings from Big Wong. Boris Pelkowski was sitting where I usually sit.

Lilly must be in heaven. She's always wanted to be worshiped by a musical genius.

So I was standing there like a total idiot with my stupid tray of stupid salad, which was the only vegetarian entree today, since they ran out of cans of Sterno for the bean and grain bar, and I was like, Who am I going to sit by? There are only about ten tables in our caf, since we have rotating lunch shifts: There's the table where I sit with Lilly, and then the jock table, the cheerleader table, the rich kid table, the hip-hop table, the druggie table, the drama freak table, the National Honor Society table, the foreign exchange students table, and the table where Tina Hakim Baba sits every day with her bodyguard.

I couldn't sit with the jocks or the cheerleaders, because I'm not either. I couldn't sit at the rich kids' table because I don't have a cell phone or a broker. I'm not into hip-hopping or drugs, I didn't get a part in the latest play, and with my F in Algebra the chance of my getting into the National Honor Society is like nil, and I can't understand anything the foreign exchange students say since there are no French ones.

I looked at Tina Hakim Baba. She had a salad in front of her, just like me. Only

Tina eats salad because she has a weight problem, not because she's a vegetarian. She was reading a romance novel. It had a photograph on the front of a teenage boy with his arms around a teenage girl. The teenage girl had long blond hair and pretty big breasts for someone with such thin thighs. She looked exactly the way I know my grandmother wants me to look.

I walked over and put my tray down in front of Tina Hakim Baba's.

"Can I sit here?" I asked.

Tina looked up from her book. She had an expression of total shock on her face. She looked at me, and then she looked at her bodyguard. He was a tall, dark-skinned man in a black suit. He had on sunglasses even though we were inside. I think Lars could probably have taken him, if it had come down to a fight between the two of them.

When Tina looked at her bodyguard, he looked at me—at least I think he did; it was hard to tell with those sunglasses—and nodded.

Tina smiled really big at me. "Please," she said, laying down her book. "Sit with me."

I sat down. I felt kind of bad, seeing Tina smile like that. Like maybe I should have asked to sit down with her before. But I used to think she was such a freak because she rode to school in a limo and had a bodyguard.

I don't think she's as much of a freak now.

Tina and I ate our salads and talked about how much school food sucks. She told me about her diet. Her mother put her on it. She wants to lose twenty pounds by the Cultural Diversity Dance. But the Cultural Diversity Dance is this Saturday, so I don't know how that's going to work out for her. I asked Tina if she had a date for the Cultural Diversity Dance or something, and she got all giggly and said yes she did. She's going with a guy from Trinity, which is another private school in Manhattan. The guy's name is Dave Farouq El-Abar.

Hello? It isn't fair. Even Tina Hakim Baba, whose father doesn't allow her to walk two blocks to school, has been asked out by someone.

Well, she's got breasts, so I guess that's why.

*Tina is pretty nice. When she got up to go to the jet line to get another diet soda—the bodyguard went with her; God, if Lars ever started shadowing me like that, I'd kill myself—I read the back of her book. The book was called *I Think My Name Is Amanda*, and it was about a girl who woke up from a coma and couldn't remember who she was. This really cute boy comes to visit her in the hospital and tells her that her name is Amanda and that he's her boyfriend. She spends the rest of the book trying to figure out whether or not he's lying.*

I am so sure! If some cute boy wants to tell you that he's your boyfriend, why wouldn't you just let him? Some girls don't know when they've got it made.

While I was reading the back of the book, this shadow fell over it, and I looked up and there was Lana Weinberger. It must have been a game day, because she had on her

I'm dead.

That's it.

Now I know what everyone was looking at outside. I know why they were whispering and giggling. I know why those girls ran out of the bathroom. I know why Josh Richter talked to me.

My picture is on the cover of thePost.

That's right. TheNew York Post. Read by millions of New Yorkers daily.

Oh, yeah. I'm dead.

It's a pretty good picture of me, actually. I guess somebody took it as I was leaving the Plaza Sunday night, after dinner with Grandmère and my dad. I'm going down the steps just outside the revolving door. I'm sort of smiling, only not at the camera. I don't remember anybody taking my picture, but I guess somebody did.

Superimposed over the photo are the wordsPrincess Amelia, and then in smaller lettersNew York's Very Own Royal.

Great. Just great.

Mr. Gianini was the one who figured it out. He said he was walking to catch the subway to work and he saw it on the newsstand. He called my mother. My mom was taking a shower, though, and didn't hear the phone. Mr. G left a message. But my mom never checks the machine in the morning, because everyone who knows her knows she is not a morning person, so nobody ever calls before noon. When Mr. G called again, she had already left for her studio, where she never answers the phone, because she wears a Walkman when she paints, so she can listen to Howard Stern.

So then Mr. G had no choice but to call my dad at the Plaza, which was pretty nervy of him, if you think about it. According to Mr. G, my dad blew a gasket. He told Mr. G that until he could get there, I should be sent to the principal's office, where I would be "safe."

My dad has obviously never met Principal Gupta.

Actually, I shouldn't say that. She hasn't been so bad. She showed me the paper and said, kind of sarcastically, but in a nice way, "You might have shared this with me, Mia, when I asked you the other day if everything was all right at home."

I blushed. "Well," I said, "I didn't think anybody would believe me."

"It is," Principal Gupta said, "a bit unbelievable."

That's what the story on page 2 of thePost said, too.FAIRY TALE COMES TRUE FOR ONE LUCKY NEW YORK KID was how the reporter, one Ms. Carol Fernandez, put it. Like I had won the lottery, or something. Like I should behappy about it.

Ms. Carol Fernandez went on at length about my mom, "the raven-haired avant-garde painter Helen Thermopolis," and about my dad, "the handsome Prince Phillipe of Genovia," who'd "successfully battled his way back from a bout of testicular cancer." Oh, thanks, Carol Fernandez, for letting all of New York know my dad's only got one

has this big black mole on the side of her nose. And she totally fell for it! She was eating it up!

I wonder if Tina Hakim Baba will still sit with me at lunch. Well, if she does, at least our bodyguards will have something to do: They can compare civilian defense tactics.

More Wednesday, French Class

I guess I should have my picture on the front of the Post more often.

Suddenly I am very popular.

I walked into the cafeteria (I told Lars to keep five paces behind me at all times; he kept stepping on the backs of my combat boots), and Lana Weinberger, of all people, came up to me while I was in the jet line getting my tray, and said, “Hey, Mia. Why don’t you come and sit with us?”

I am not even kidding. That lousy hypocrite wants to be friends with me now that I’m a princess.

Tina was right behind me in line (well, Lars was behind me, Tina was behind Lars, and Tina’s bodyguard was behind her). But did I dare invite Tina to join her? Of course not. The New York Post hadn’t called Tina a “statuesque beauty.” Short, heavyset girls—even one whose father is an Arab Sheikh—aren’t good enough to sit by Lana. Oh, no. Only purebred Genovian princesses are good enough to sit by Lana.

I nearly threw up all over my lunch tray.

“No, thanks, Lana,” I said. “I already have someone to sit with.”

You should have seen Lana’s face. The last time I saw her look that shocked, a sugar cone had been stuck to her chest.

Later, when we were sitting down, Tina could only nibble at her salad. She hadn’t said a word about the princess thing. Meanwhile, though, everybody in the whole cafeteria—including the geeks, who never notice anything—were staring at our table. Let me tell you, it was way uncomfortable. I could feel Lilly’s eyes boring into me. She hadn’t said anything to me yet, but I think she had to have known. Nothing much escapes Lilly.

Anyway, after a while I couldn’t stand it anymore. I put down a forkful of rice and beans and said, “Look, Tina. If you don’t want to sit with me anymore, I understand.”

Tina’s big eyes filled up with tears. I mean it. She shook her head, and her long black braid swayed. “What do you mean?” she asked. “You don’t like me anymore, Mia?”

It was my turn to be shocked. “What? Of course I like you. I thought maybe you might not like me. I mean, every-one is staring at us. I could see why you might not want

Hello! I guess all that training in the Israeli army paid off. (I overheard Lars telling Wahim that's where he'd learned how to work an Uzi. Wahim and Lars actually have some mutual friends, it turns out. I guess all bodyguards go to the same training school out in the Gobi Desert.)

Anyway, as soon as Lars slammed the back door shut, he said "Drive," and the guy behind the wheel hit the gas. I didn't recognize him, but sitting in the passenger seat beside him was my dad. And while we're pulling away, brakes squealing, flashbulbs going off, reporters jumping onto the windshield to get a better shot, my dad goes, all casual, "So. How was your day, Mia?"

Geez!

I decided to ignore my dad. Instead, I turned around in my seat to wave good-bye to Mr. G. Only Mr. G had been swallowed up in a sea of microphones! He wouldn't talk to them, though. He just kept waving his hands at them and trying to head for the subway, so he could take the E train home.

I felt sorry for poor Mr. Gianini then. True, he had probably stuck his tongue in my mom's mouth, but he's a really nice guy and doesn't deserve to be harassed by the media.

I said so to my dad, also that we should have given Mr. G a ride home, and he just got huffy and tugged on his seat belt. He said, "Damn these things. They always choke me."

So then I asked my dad where I was going to go to school now.

My dad looked at me like I was nuts. "You said you wanted to stay at Albert Einstein!" he kind of yelled.

I said, well, yes, but that was before Carol Fernandez outed me.

Then my dad wanted to know what outing was, so I explained to him that outing is when somebody reveals your sexual orientation on national TV, or in the newspaper, or in some other large public forum. Only in this case, I explained, instead of my sexual orientation, my royal status had been revealed.

So then my dad said I couldn't go to a new school just because I'd been outed as being a princess. He said I have to stay at Albert Einstein, and Lars will go to class with me and protect me from reporters.

So then I asked him who'll drive him around, and he pointed to the new guy, Hans.

The new guy nodded to me in the rearview mirror and said, "Hi."

So then I said, "Lars is going to go with me everywhere I go?" Like how about if I just wanted to walk over to Lilly's? I mean, if Lilly and I were still friends. Which is certainly never going to happen now.

And my dad said, "Lars would go with you."

So basically, I am never going anywhere alone again.

This made me kind of mad. I sat in the backseat with red from a traffic light

my mother. She went into the room to talk to him, and when she came out again she looked all smug, in an I-told-you-so sort of way.

I wish I could tell Lilly about Josh Richter talking to me.

Friday, October 17, English

OH MY GOD!!!

JOSH AND LANA BROKE UP!!!!

I am not even kidding. It's all over school. Josh broke up with her last night after crew practice. They were having dinner together at the Hard Rock Cafe, and he asked for his class ring back!!! Lana was completely humiliated under the pointy cone bra Gaultier made for Madonna!

I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy.

Lana wasn't hanging around Josh's locker this morning, like usual. And then when I saw her in Algebra, her eyes were all red and squinty, and her hair looked like it hadn't been brushed, let alone washed, and her thigh-highs had come unglued and were all baggy around her knees. I never thought I'd see Lana Weinberger looking like a mess!!! Before class started, she was on her cell phone with Bergdorf's, trying to convince them to take her Cultural Diversity Dance dress back even though she'd already removed the tags. Then, during class, she sat there with a big black marker crossing out "Mrs. Josh Richter" from where she'd written it all over her book covers.

It was so depressing. I could hardly factor my integers, I was so distracted.

I WISH I WERE

1. A size 36 double D 2. Good at math 3. A member of a world-famous rock band 4. Still friends with Lilly Moscovitz 5. Josh Richter's new girlfriend

More Friday

You will not even believe what just happened. I was putting my Algebra book away in my locker, and Josh Richter was there getting his Trig notes, and he goes, in this totally casual way, "Hey, Mia, who you going to the dance with tomorrow?"

Needless to say, the fact that he actually spoke to me at all practically caused me to

pass out. And then the fact that he was actually saying something that sounded like it might be a prelude to asking me out—well, I nearly threw up. I mean it. I felt really sick, but in a good way.

I think.

Somehow, I managed to stammer out, “Uh, no one,” and he goes, and I kid you not:

“Well, why don’t we go together?”

OH MY GOD!!!! JOSH RICHTER ASKED ME OUT!!!!

I was so shocked I couldn’t say anything at all for like a minute. I thought I was going to hyperventilate, like I did the time I saw that documentary about how cows become hamburgers. I could only stand there and look up at him. (He’s so tall!)

Then a funny thing happened. This tiny part of my brain—the only part that wasn’t completely stunned by his asking me out—went: He’s only asking you out because you’re the princess of Genovia.

Seriously. That’s what I thought, for just a second.

Then this other part of my brain, a much bigger part, went: SO WHAT???

I mean, maybe he asked me to the dance because he respects me as a human being and wants to get to know me better and maybe, just maybe, likes me sort of.

It could happen.

So the part of my brain that was rationalizing all this made me go, all nonchalantly, “Yeah, okay. That might be fun.”

Then Josh said a bunch of stuff about how he’d pick me up and we’d have dinner beforehand or something. But I barely heard him. Because inside my head, this voice was going:

Josh Richter just asked you out. Josh Richter just asked YOU out. JOSH RICHTER JUST ASKED YOU OUT!!!!

I think I must have died and gone to heaven. Because it had happened. It had finally happened: Josh Richter had finally looked into my soul. He had looked into my soul, and had seen the real me, the one beneath the flat chest. AND THEN HE’D ASKED ME OUT.

Then the bell rang, and Josh went away, and I just kept standing there until Lars poked me in the arm.

I don’t know what Lars’s problem is. I know he’s not my personal secretary.

But thank God he was there, or I’d never have known Josh was picking me up tomorrow night at seven. I’m going to have to learn not to be so shocked the next time he asks me out, or I’ll never get the hang of this dating thing.

THINGS TO DO (I THINK, NEVER HAVING BEEN ON A DATE BEFORE, I

AM NOT EXACTLY SURE WHAT TO DO)

- 1. Get a dress 2. Get hair done 3. Get nails redone (stop biting fake ones off)**

Friday, G & T

Okay, so I don't know who Lilly Moscovitz thinks she is. First she stops talking to me. Then, when she finally does deign to speak to me, it's only to criticize me some more. What right has she got, I ask you, to dump all over my Cultural Diversity Dance date? I mean, she's going with Boris Pelkowski. Boris Pelkowski. Yeah, he might be a musical genius and all, but he's still Boris Pelkowski.

Lilly goes: "Well, at least I know Boris isn't on the rebound."

Excuse me. Josh Richter is not on the rebound. He and Lana had been broken up for sixteen whole hours before he asked me out.

Lilly goes: "Plus Boris doesn't do drugs."

I swear, for someone so smart, Lilly sure does go for the whole rumor and innuendo thing in a major way. I asked her if she'd ever seen Josh do drugs, and she looked at me all sarcastically.

But really, if you think about it, there isn't any proof Josh does drugs. He definitely hangs out with people who do drugs, but hey, Tina Hakim Baba hangs out with a princess, and that doesn't make her one.

Lilly didn't like that argument, though. She went: "You're overrationalizing. Whenever you overrationalize, Mia, I know you're worried."

I am not worried. I am going to the biggest dance of the fall semester with the cutest, most sensitive boy in school, and nothing anyone can do or say will make me feel bad about that.

Except that it does kind of make me feel weird, seeing Lana looking so sad and Josh looking like he doesn't care at all. Today at lunch, he and his entourage sat with Tina and me, and Lana and her entourage sat back with the other cheerleaders. It was just so strange. Plus neither Josh nor any of his friends talked to me or to Tina. They just talked to each other. Which didn't bother Tina any, but it kind of bothered me. Especially since Lana kept trying so hard not to look over at our table.

Tina didn't say anything bad about Josh when I told her the news. She just got very excited and said tonight, when I spend the night, we can try on different outfits and experiment with our hair to see what will look best for tomorrow night. Well, I have no hair to experiment with, but we can experiment with her hair. Actually, Tina's almost more excited than I am. She is a much more supportive friend than Lilly, who went, all sarcastically, when she heard: "Where's he taking you to dinner? The Harley-Davidson

So I was standing there, listening to my mom and dad over the speakerphone go on about how they both think I'm too young to date and that I SHOULDN'T date, since this has been a very confusing time for me, what with finding out I'm a princess and all. They were planning out the rest of my life for me (no dating until I'm eighteen, all-girls dorm when I get to college, etc.) when the buzzer to the loft went off, and Mr. G went to answer it. When he asked who it was, this all-too-familiar voice went, "This is Clarisse Marie Grimaldi Renaldo. Who is this?"

Across the room, my mom nearly dropped the phone. It was Grandmère. Grandmère had come to the loft!

I never in my life thought I'd be grateful to Grandmère for something. I never thought I'd be glad to see her. But when she showed up at the loft to take me shopping for my dress, I could have kissed her—on both cheeks, even—I really could have. Because when I met her at the door, I was like, "Grandmère, they won't let me go!"

I forgot Grandmère had never even been to the loft before. I forgot Mr. Gianini was there. All I could think about was the fact that my parents were trying to low-ball me about Josh. Grandmère would take care of it, I knew.

And boy, did she ever.

Grandmère came bursting in, giving Mr. Gianini a very dirty look—"This is he?" she stopped long enough to ask, and when I said yes, she made this sniffing sound and walked right by him—and heard Dad on the speakerphone. She shouted, "Give me that phone," at my mother, who looked like a kid who'd just gotten caught jumping a turnstile by the Transit Authority.

"Mother?" my dad's voice shouted over the speakerphone. You could tell he was in almost as much shock as Mom. "Is that you? What are you doing there?"

For someone who claims to have no use for modern technology, Grandmère sure knew how to work that speakerphone. She took Dad right off it, snatched the receiver out of my mother's hand, and went, "Listen here, Phillipe," into it. "Your daughter is going to the dance with her beau. I traveled fifty-seven blocks by limo to take her shopping for a new dress, and if you think I'm not going to watch her dance in it, then you can just—"

Then my grandmother used some pretty strong language. Only since she said it all in French, only my dad and I understood. My mom and Mr. Gianini just stood there. My mom looked mad. Mr. G looked nervous.

After my grandmother had finished telling my dad just where he could get off, she slammed the phone down, then looked around the loft. Let's just say Grandmère has never been one for hiding her feelings, so I wasn't too surprised when the next thing she said was, "This is where the princess of Genovia is being brought up? In this . . . warehouse?"

Well, if she had lit a firecracker under my mom, she couldn't have made her madder.

"Now look here, Clarisse," my mother said, stomping around in her Birkenstocks.

about what kind of car he was driving (his dad's BMW), where we're going (duh), and what time we would be back (in time for breakfast, Josh said). My dad didn't like that, though, and Josh said, "What time would you like her back, sir?"

SIR! Josh Richter called my dad SIR!

And my dad looked at Lars and said, "One o'clock at the latest," which I thought was pretty decent of him, since my normal curfew is eleven on weekends. Of course, considering that Lars was going to be there, and there wasn't anything that could actually happen to me, it was kind of bogus that I couldn't stay out as late as I wanted, but Grandmère told me a princess should always be prepared to compromise, so I didn't say anything.

Then my dad asked Josh some more questions, like where was he going to college in the fall (he hasn't decided yet, but he's applying to all the Ivy Leagues) and what does he plan on studying (business), and then my mom asked him what was wrong with a liberal arts education, and Josh said he was really looking for a degree that would guarantee him a minimum salary of eighty thousand a year, to which my mom replied that there are more important things than money, and then I said, "Gosh, look at the time," and grabbed Josh and headed out the door.

Josh and Lars and I went down to Josh's dad's car, and Josh held the door to the front seat open for me, and then Lars said why didn't he drive so Josh and I could sit in the back and get to know each other. I thought this was way nice of Lars, but when Josh and I got in the back, we didn't have a whole lot to say to each other. I mean, Josh was like, "You look really nice in that dress," and I said I liked his tux and thanked him for my corsage. And then we didn't say anything for like twenty blocks.

I am not even kidding. I was so embarrassed! I mean, I don't hang around with boys that much, but I've never had that problem with the ones I HAVE hung around with. I mean, Michael Moscovitz practically never shuts up. I couldn't understand why Josh wasn't SAYING anything. I thought about asking him who he'd rather spend eternity with if it was the end of the world and he had to choose, Winona Ryder or Nicole Kidman, but I didn't feel like I knew him well enough. . . .

But finally Josh broke the silence by asking if it was true my mom was dating Mr. Gianini. Well, I should have expected that to get around. Maybe not as fast as my being a princess, but it had gotten around, all right.

So I said, yes, it was true, and then Josh wanted to know what that was like.

But then for some reason I couldn't tell him about seeing Mr. G in his underwear at my kitchen table. It just didn't seem . . . I don't know. I just couldn't tell him. Isn't that funny? I had told Michael Moscovitz without even having been asked. But I couldn't tell Josh, even though he had looked into my soul and everything. Weird, huh?

Then after like a zillion more blocks of silence we pulled up in front of the restaurant, and Lars surrendered the car to the valet and Josh and I went in (Lars promised he wouldn't eat with us; he said he'd just stand by the door and look at everybody who arrived in a mean way, like Arnold Schwarzenegger), and it turned out all of Josh's entourage was meeting us here, which I didn't know but was kind of

writing my Algebra notes in my journal, not be so messy with my columns, and to cross things out when I borrow during subtraction. Michael got all embarrassed and claimed not to have had anything to do with it, but Mr. G didn't hear him since he had to hurry off and dissuade a group of Goths from embarking upon a demonstration over the unfair exclusion of a table dedicated to Satan worshipers by the event organizers.

Then a fast song came on and everybody came back, and we sat around and talked about Lilly's show, which Tina Hakim Baba is now going to be producer of, since we found out she gets \$50 a week in allowance (she is going to start borrowing teen romances from the library instead of buying them new so that she can use all of her funds for promoting Lilly Tells It Like It Is). Lilly asked if I'd mind being the topic for next week's show, titled "The New Monarchy: Royals Who Make a Difference." I gave her exclusive rights to my first public interview if she'd promise to ask me about my feelings on the meat industry.

Then another slow song came on, and everybody went to go and dance to it. Michael and I were left sitting amid the rice again, and I was about to ask him who he'd choose to spend eternity with if nuclear armageddon wiped out the rest of the population, Buffy the Vampire Slayer or Sabrina the Teenage Witch, when he asked me if I wanted to dance!

I was so surprised, I said sure without even thinking about it. And then the next thing I knew, I was dancing my first dance with a boy who wasn't my dad.

And it was aslow one!

Slow dancing isstrange. It isn't even dancing, really. It's more like standing there with your arms around the other person, moving from one foot to the other in time to the music. And I guess you aren't supposed to talk—at least, nobody else around us was talking. I guess I could sort of see why, since you're so busyfeeling stuff it's hard to think of anything to say. I mean, Michaelsmelled so good—like Ivory soap—andfeltso good—the dress Grandmère picked out for me was pretty and everything, but I was kind of cold in it, so it was nice to stand close to Michael, who was so warm—that it was next to impossible tosay anything.

I guess Michael felt the same way, because even though when we were sitting there on the table with all the rice neither of us ever shut up, we had so much to talk about, when we were dancing together neither of us said a word.

But the minute the song was over Michael started talking again, asking me if I wanted some Thai iced tea from the Thai Culture table, or maybe some edamame from the Japanese Anime Club's table. For somebody who'd never been to a single school event—aside from Computer Club meetings—Michael sure was making up for lost time in his enthusiasm over being at this one.

And that was how the rest of the night went: We sat around and talked during the fast songs and danced during the slow ones.

And you know, to tell the truth, I couldn't say which I liked better, talking to Michael or dancing with him. They were both so . . . interesting.

In different ways, of course.