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Friday, January 1, Midnight, Royal Genovian Bedchamber

My New Year's Resolutions by Princess Amelia Mignonette Grimaldi Thermopolis Renaldo aged 14 and 8 months

1. I will stop biting my fingernails, including the fake ones.
2. I will stop lying. Grandmere knows when I am lying anyway, thanks to my traitorous nostrils which flare every time I tell a fib, so it's not like there is even a point in trying to be less than truthful.
3. I will never veer from the prepared script while delivering televised addresses to the Genovian public.
4. I will stop accidentally saying French swear words in front of the ladies-in-waiting.
5. I will stop letting François, my Genovian bodyguard, teach me French swear words.
6. I will apologize to the Genovian Olive Growers' Association for that thing with the pits.
7. I will apologize to the Royal Chef for slipping Grandmere's dog that slice of foie gras (even though I have told the palace kitchen repeatedly that I do not eat meat).
8. I will stop lecturing the Royal Genovian Press Corps on the evils of paparrazism.

9. I will achieve self-actualization.
10. I will stop thinking so much about Michael Moscovitz.

Oh, wait. It's OK for me to think about Michael Moscovitz, BECAUSE HE IS MY BOYFRIEND NOW!!!!!!!!!!

MT + MM = TRUE LOVE 4-EVER

Saturday, January 2, Royal Genovian Parliament

You know, I am supposed to be on vacation. Seriously. I mean, this is my Winter Break. I am supposed to be having fun, mentally recharging for the coming semester, which is not going to be easy, as I will be moving on to Algebra II, not to mention Health and Safety class. Every other kid I know is spending his or her Winter Break in Aspen, skiing, or in Miami, getting tanned.

But me? What am *I* doing for my Winter Break?

Oh, well, right now I am just sitting in on a session of the Royal Genovian Parliament, pretending to be paying attention while these really old guys in wigs go on about whether or not to give free parking to the patrons of Genovia's many casinos.

Oh, yeah. That's a good way to spend the precious few weeks I have off from school. At this rate I will absolutely return to New York well-rested and ready for whatever awaits me in my second semester of my freshman year at Albert Einstein High School. Thanks, Dad. Thanks, Grandmere. Thanks so much.

No one even wants to hear my opinion about the whole parking thing, of course. That if we don't charge for parking it will encourage more people to drive over the French and Italian borders instead of taking the train, clogging up Genovia's already very busy streets and causing yet more strain on our infrastructure.

But why should anyone be interested in what *I* have to say on the matter? I am just the Princess of Genovia. My opinion obviously doesn't matter. Which would be why no one is listening to me, just arguing over the top of my head with my dad, who fortunately shares my opinion that a nominal parking charge – I'd jack it up to about thirty Euros a day, if I were him – is appropriate.

Fine, whatever. Like I care. I am pretending to take notes, since Grandmere told me I had to, as one day I will be sitting in my dad's chair (sadly not the throne – that is in the throne room back at the palace) in the front of Parliament and have to make all the decisions. But really I am recording my innermost thoughts and feelings in this book. Like the fact that I think Interior Minister Pepin looks exactly like this howler monkey I once saw on *World's Funniest Animals*. Or that Secretary Renard needs to start watching his saturated fats intake.

Not that it is at all princesslike to comment on the physical inadequacies of others. Especially when I have so many physical inadequacies of my own.

But it isn't like I don't have enough to worry about. I mean, I can barely bring myself to believe that a whole new year has actually started. Seriously. So much has happened to me since last year – enough that probably a better-adjusted person might have totally lost it. Fortunately, since I was born a biological freak, and am therefore very used to adversity, I was able to take it all in my stride, for the most part.

But if I had been anyone else – like Scarlett Johansson, or maybe Natalie Portman – I so fully would have not been able to deal. Because, you know, Scarlett and Natalie are totally gorgeous and self-actualized, and never have to worry about anything. Whereas I, in less than a year's period, have been through so much trauma and angst it is a wonder I am not on *Oprah* every single day, pouring my heart out to Dr Phil. I mean, in the last four months alone, I have found out that:

1. My dad is the Prince of Genovia, and that I am his heir.
2. My grandmother is the Dowager Princess of Genovia,

and that it is her duty to train me for the day I will ascend the throne.

3. My mom is having my Algebra teacher's baby (but unlike me, my new brother or sister will not bear the stigma of illegitimacy, since Mom and Mr Gianini are married).
4. My best friend Lilly's brother, whom I have loved since the day I met him, when I was in the first grade and he was in fourth and he came over in the playground to give Lilly her social studies project which she had forgotten (an exact replica of the Parthenon, in red Play Doh), actually loves me back, and now we are going out.

Or at least we will when I get done with my first official visit to Genovia since discovering I am the sole heir to its throne, and am allowed to return to my normal life as a ninth-grader in New York City.

I am telling you, a lesser person would have had to check herself into Bellevue. These are extremely startling, almost earth-shattering discoveries. It is only due to the fact that so many excruciatingly horrible things have happened to me throughout my life – excessively large feet; lack of notable mammary growth; general difficulty in asserting myself in front of peers, resulting in unpopularity; owning an overweight pet cat; inability to comprehend multiplication of fractions – that I have been able to cope at all. I mean, I am way used to affliction by now.

Not that the part about Michael is an affliction. The knowledge that my love for him is not unrequited, like Wolverine's for Jean Grey in *X-MEN*, is the only bright spot in my otherwise hideous existence.

Oh, and the baby brother or sister thing. That's pretty cool, too. Though I'd prefer it if my mom would let the

doctor tell her what it is she's having, so I don't have to keep writing *brother or sister* all the time. Mom says she doesn't want to know, since if it's a boy she won't push, due to not wanting to bring another Y-chromosomed oppressor into the world (Mr G says that is just the hormones talking, but I'm not so sure. My mom can be pretty anti-Y chromosome when she puts her mind to it).

I can't help wondering, as I sit here, listening to some dude whose title I don't know -- although in his purple and gold sash he looks a little like Mayor McCheese -- go on about the cost of parking-garage time clocks, not to mention parking-garage attendants, what lies in store for me in the coming year. I mean, last year I got:

- a. a crown
- b. a new stepdad
- c. a potential baby brother or sister, and
- d. a handsome, smart, funny boyfriend . . . my heart's one desire.

What could *possibly* happen next?

Sunday, January 3, Royal Genovian Rose Garden

Poem for M. M.

Across the deep-blue shining sea,
is Michael, far away from me.
But he doesn't seem so far away –
though I haven't seen him for sixteen days –
because in my heart Michael stays
and there he'll beat forever always.

OK, that poem sucks. I can see I am going to have to
work harder if I am to come up with a fitting tribute to my
love.

Tuesday, January 5, Royal Quarters of the Dowager Princess

Grandmere is yelling at me again.

As if I don't totally get why everybody is so mad about the whole speech thing. I mean, I have already resolved that I will never again veer from the prepared script while addressing the Genovian populace.

But why am I the only one in this country who thinks pollution is an important issue? If people are going to dock their yachts (at least cruisers are banned) in the Genovian harbour, they really ought to pay attention to what they are throwing overboard. I mean, dolphins and sea turtles get their noses stuck in those plastic six-pack holders all the time, and then they starve to death because they can't open their mouths to eat. All people have to do is snip the loops before they throw the holders out, and everything would be fine.

Well, all right, not *everything*, since you shouldn't be throwing trash overboard in the first place. That is why my dad fully had all those Grecian-urn-shaped trash receptacles placed at convenient intervals all along the pier. You would think people would consider actually using them. I mean, the sea is not their garbage can.

I cannot stand idly by while helpless sea creatures are being abused by trendy Bain de Soleil-addicts in search of that perfect St Tropez tan.

Besides, if I am to be the ruler of Genovia someday, people need to realize I am not going to be merely a figurehead – unlike *some* royals I could mention. I intend to tackle serious issues during my reign, such as the tossing of plastic six-pack holders in the bay. And the fact that all the foot traffic from the day-trippers coming off the yachts that dock in the

Genovian harbour is destroying some of our most historically important bridges, such as the Pont des Vierges (Bridge of the Virgins), so named after my great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandmother Agnes, who threw herself off it rather than become a nun like her father wanted her to be. (She was all right: the Genovian royal navy fished her out and she ended up eloping with the ship's captain, much to the consternation of the house of Renaldo).

You would think people – OK, Grandmere and my dad – would recognize that it is important for me to establish my voice as heir to the throne now. Mr Gianini once told me that it is better to start off mean and get nicer as the semester goes by than start nice and have everybody think they can walk all over you.

Whatever. I wish I could call Michael, or even Lilly, but I can't because they are spending Winter Break at their grandmother's in Florida and I don't even know the number. They are not getting back until the day before I do! How I have survived this long, without my boyfriend and best friend to talk to, is a mystery wrapped in an enigma.

I am fully starting to hate it here. Everybody at school was all, 'Oh you are so lucky, you get to spend Christmas in a castle being waited on hand and foot . . .'

Well, believe me, there is nothing so great about living in a castle. First of all, everything in it is really old. And yeah, it's not like it was built in 500AD or whenever it was that my ancestress, Rosagunde, first became princess or whatever. But it was still built in, like, the 1600s and let me tell you what they didn't have in the 1600s:

1. Cable TV
2. DSL
3. Toilets

Which is not to say there isn't a satellite dish, but hello,

this is my dad's place, the only channels he has got programmed are like CNN, CNN Financial News, and the golf channel.

Where is MTV 2, I ask you? Where is the Lifetime Movie Channel for Women?

Not that it matters because I am spending all my time being run off my feet. It isn't as if I ever even get a free moment to pick up a remote and go, 'Ho hum, I wonder if there's a Tracy Gold movie on'.

No. I mean, even now I am supposed to be taking notes on Grandmere's lecture about the importance of sticking to the prepared script during televised public addresses. Like I didn't get it the first time she said it, or the nine-hundredth time, or however many times it has been since Christmas Eve, when I supposedly ruined everything with my treatise on plastic six-pack holders.

But let's say I even did get a moment to myself, and I wanted to, you know, send an email to one of my friends, or perhaps even my BOYFRIEND. Well, not so simple, because guess what, castles built in the 1600s simply aren't wired for the World Wide Web. And yeah, the Palais de Genovia audio-visual squad is trying, but you still have, like, three feet of sandstone, or whatever the palace is made out of, to bore through before you can even start installing any cable.

It is like trying to wire the Alamo.

Oh, yeah, and the toilets? Let me just tell you that back in the 1600s, they didn't know so much about sewerage. So now, four hundred years later, if you put one square too much toilet paper in the bowl and try to flush, you create a mini indoor tsunami.

Plus, the only person living here in the castle who is remotely close to my age is my cousin, Prince René, who spends inordinate amounts of time gazing at his own

reflection in the back of his ceremonial sword. And technically he isn't even really my cousin anyway. Some ancestor of his was awarded a principality by the king of Italy way back in like 600AD, same as great-great-and-so-on Grandma Rosagunde. Except that René's principality no longer exists, as it was absorbed into Italy three hundred years ago.

René doesn't seem to mind, though, because everyone still calls him His Highness Prince René, and he is extended every privilege of a member of the royal household – even though his palace now belongs to a famous shoe designer, who has turned it into a resort for wealthy Americans to come for the weekend and make their own pasta and drink two-hundred-year-old balsamic vinegar.

Still, just because René is four years older than me, and a freshman at some French business school, doesn't mean he has the right to patronize me. I mean, I believe gambling is morally wrong, and the fact that Prince René spends so many hours at the roulette wheel instead of utilizing his time in a more productive fashion – such as helping to promote the protection of the nesting grounds of the giant sea turtles who lay their eggs on Genovian beaches – irks me.

So yes, I did mention this to him. It just seems to me that Prince René needs to realize there is more to life than racing around in his Alfa Romeo, or swimming in the palace pool wearing nothing but one of those little black Speedos (which are very stylish here in Europe). I also asked my dad to please, for the love of all that is holy, stick to swimming trunks, which, thankfully, he has.

And, OK, René just laughed at me.

But at least I can rest easy knowing I have done everything I could to show one extremely self-absorbed prince the error of his profligate ways.

So that's it. That is my life in Genovia. Basically, all I want

is to go home. I would not even mind having to start school early if it meant I could forgo this evening's dinner with the Prince and Princess of Liechtenstein. Who are totally nice people, but hello, it's Tuesday, I could be watching *Buffy* instead.

With my new boyfriend.

My new boyfriend with whom I have not even been able to have a date yet, because the very day after we finally confessed our secret passion to one another, we were cruelly torn apart and cast to opposite sides of the earth – I to my castle in Genovia, and he to his grandmother's condo in Boca Raton.

You know, it has been exactly eighteen days since we last spoke to one another. It is entirely possible that Michael has forgotten all about me by now. I know Michael is vastly superior to all the other members of his species – boys, I mean. But everyone knows that boys are like dogs – their short-term memory is completely nil. You tell them your favourite fictional character is Xena, Warrior Princess, and next thing you know, they are going on about how your favourite fictional character is Xica of Telemundo. Boys just don't know any better, on account of how their brains are too filled up with stuff about modems and *Star Trek Voyager* and Limp Bizkit and all.

Michael is no exception to this rule. Oh, I know he is co-valedictorian of his class, and got a perfect score on his SATs and was accepted early-decision to one of the most prestigious universities in the country. But, you know, it took him about five million years even to admit he liked me. And that was only after I'd sent him all these anonymous love letters. Which turned out not to be so anonymous because he fully knew it was me the whole time thanks to all of my

friends, including his little sister, having such exceptionally large mouths.

But, whatever. I am just saying, eighteen days is a long time. How do I know Michael hasn't met some other girl? Some Floridian girl, with long, sun-streaked hair, and a tan, and breasts? Who has access to the Internet and isn't cooped up in a palace with her crazy grandma, a homeless, Speedo-wearing prince and a freakish, hairless miniature poodle?

'Amelia!' Grandmere just shrieked at me. 'Are you paying attention?'

Yeah, sure, Grandmere. I'm paying attention. You are only squandering what are supposed to be the best days of my life. And probably, because of you, right now my boyfriend is strolling down the beach with some girl named Tiffany who can do long division in her head and knows how to ride a boogie board.

But yes, I am paying attention to your very boring lecture about maintaining regal poise at all times.

'I swear I do not know what is wrong with you,' Grandmere said. 'Your head has been in the clouds ever since we left New York. Even more so than usual.' Then she narrowed her eyes at me – always a very scary thing, because Grandmere has had black kohl tattooed all around her lids so that she can spend her mornings shaving off her eyebrows and drawing on new ones rather than messing around with mascara and eyeliner. 'You are not thinking about *that boy*, are you?'

That boy is what Grandmere has started calling Michael, ever since I announced that he was my reason for living. Well, except for my cat, Fat Louie, of course.

'If you are speaking of Michael Moscovitz,' I said to her, in my most regal voice, 'I most certainly am. He is never far from my thoughts, because he is my heart's breath.'

Grandmere gave a very rude snort in response to this.

'Puppy love,' she said. 'You'll get over it soon enough.'

Um, I beg your pardon, Grandmere, but I so fully will not. I have loved Michael for approximately eight years. That is more than half my life. A deep and abiding passion such as this cannot be dismissed as easily as that, nor can it be defined by your pedestrian grasp of human emotion.

I didn't say any of that out loud, though, on account of how Grandmere has those really long nails that she tends to 'accidentally' stab people with.

Except that even though Michael really is my reason for living and my heart's breath, I don't think I'll be decorating my Algebra notebook with hearts and flowers and curlicue Mrs Michael Moscovitzes, the way Lana Weinberger decorated hers (only with Mrs Josh Richters, of course). Not only because doing stuff like that is completely lame and because I do not care to have my identity subjugated by taking my husband's name, but also because as consort to the ruler of Genovia, Michael will of course have to take my name. Not Thermopolis. Renaldo. Michael Renaldo. That looks kind of nice, now that I think about it.

Thirteen more days until I see the lights of New York and Michael's dark brown eyes again. Please God, let me live that long.

HRH Michael Renaldo

M. Renaldo, Prince Consort

Michael Moscovitz Renaldo of Genovia