The Rosewood Chronicles

Undercover Princess

CONNIE GLYNN



PENGUIN BOOKS

PENGUIN BOOKS

UK | USA | Canada | Ireland | Australia
India | New Zealand | South Africa

Penguin Books is part of the Penguin Random House group of companies whose addresses can be found at global.penguinrandomhouse.com.

www.penguin.co.uk
www.puffin.co.uk
www.ladybird.co.uk

Penguin Random House UK

First published 2017
This edition published 2018

001

Copyright © Connie Glynn, 2017

Cover illustration by Qing Han

The moral right of the author has been asserted

Set in 11.7/14.4 pt Goudy Old Style
Typeset by Jouve (UK), Milton Keynes

Printed in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–0–141–37989–0

All correspondence to:
Penguin Books
Penguin Random House Children's
80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL



Penguin Random House is committed to a sustainable future for our business, our readers and our planet. This book is made from Forest Stewardship Council® certified paper.

PART ONE

Welcome to Rosewood Hall

1



There is a small blue bakery in St Ives with bushy clumps of wisteria growing on the pebbledashed walls. Through the front windows there lies a visible thick coat of dust over the sheet-covered surfaces that glitters in the air when the sun shines. A faded candy-striped canopy covers the doors with a sign above reading MS PUMPKIN'S PASTRIES, although no baking has taken place for many years. Above the bakery you will find a previously humble home, now crammed with gaudy items and kitsch displays, a futile attempt by the new owner to enhance the homely setting. Yet one room remains untouched by the new inhabitant, a soft haven filled with the house's happy memories.

Lottie Pumpkin lives in the attic of 12 Bethesda Hill, St Ives, with her stepmother, Beady. There she has made herself a sanctuary, hidden away in the cosy loft overlooking the sea. It is a room of creaky floorboards, walls lined with photos from her childhood and books bursting with fairy tales. But today she will be leaving her bedroom and her house, and Cornwall. Today she will be moving away to live at Rosewood Hall.

*

'Lottie!' Beady's piercing tone rang in Lottie's ears, making her freeze as she lowered the last item of clothing into a suitcase.

'Yes?' Lottie replied, her eyes involuntarily squeezing shut. She heard movement and Lottie's stepmother appeared in the doorway. A creamy green mask covered her face, and her red hair was hidden away in a neat towel bun. Beady was an incredibly beautiful woman who took her appearance very seriously. She was also far too young to be burdened with the responsibility of taking care of Lottie and it was extremely generous of her to sacrifice her life for someone else's kid, which she regularly reminded Lottie about.

'I completely forgot you were leaving today!' She said this as if it were extremely amusing.

Lottie gave her a pleasing smile that she'd performed a million times. 'That's OK, I'm –'

Before she could finish, Beady let out a loud cackle.

'I mean, how could I forget? You never shut up about the place –' she laughed again – 'although if they're letting you in it can't be *that* prestigious.' Lottie flinched a little and Beady paused in her laughter. 'I'm only kidding, Lottie. Don't take things so seriously.'

Lottie held her smile tightly and attempted a laugh, but Beady's eyes had moved to the two pink suitcases on the floor.

'Those are big. I hope you're not expecting a lift. That's a lot to ask of someone.' Beady gave her an injured look, as if she were being very patient.

'No, it's fine,' Lottie replied, trying to be as pleasant as she could. She absolutely did not want to upset Beady: she knew how difficult it had been for her having to look after Lottie

when her mother passed away. All she wanted was to make life easy for her. 'Ollie and his mum are giving me a lift.'

Beady's eyebrows shot up in a disapproving way.

'That's very generous of them. I hope you make sure his mum knows how grateful you are she has to do that for you.'

'Of course.' Lottie nodded and that appeared to satisfy Beady.

'Good, well . . .' Beady paused, looking around the room as if taking it in for the first time. She chewed the side of her mouth, turning her gaze to give Lottie a once-over, then she took in a long breath as if preparing herself for what she was about to say. 'You worked hard . . . I hope it doesn't disappoint you.'

Lottie gulped. She knew Beady was happy she'd got into Rosewood; it meant she could have the house to herself at last. Getting into Rosewood not only fulfilled a promise Lottie had made to her mum but it was the greatest gift she could give her stepmother.

'Thank you,' Lottie replied.

Beady waved her hand as if dismissing the conversation.

'Anyway, I need to go and wash off this face mask. Have a safe trip.'

As soon as she was gone, Lottie quickly got back to packing, but it wasn't long before she was interrupted again.

'What on earth are you wearing?' Ollie's sarcastic tone drifted into Lottie's bedroom. He stood leaning against the door frame, his arms crossed as he watched Lottie pack up the last items in her room.

'Ollie!' Lottie's hand rushed to her chest in shock at the sudden appearance of her best friend. 'How did you get up

here? And how many times do I have to tell you to knock?' Lottie was huffing slightly from trying to squish down her suitcases. Ollie was fourteen, the same age as Lottie, yet even though he was taller than her he'd retained his baby face, which reminded her of soft-serve ice cream on the beach and other happy memories.

'I had to sneak past the wicked witch. Did you know her skin's turned green finally?' Ollie said with a devilish smile.

Lottie giggled, but she couldn't ignore his comment. She looked down at her outfit, brushing down her dress self-consciously. 'And what exactly is wrong with my outfit?' she said indignantly.

Ollie laughed, grinning at her with his signature cheeky smile. Clumps of dog hair dotted his jeans, a permanent feature that he never seemed to care about.

'Isn't it a little too fancy for the first day of school?'

'*Too fancy?!*' Lottie couldn't believe he'd suggest something so ridiculous. 'Nothing is *too fancy* for Rosewood Hall. I need to fit in. I can't have my clothes making me an outcast on the first day.'

Lottie began picking at a non-existent spot on the collar of her dress. 'Most of the students probably have their clothes tailor-made out of gold or something.'

Ollie casually strolled into the room, taking a seat on Lottie's bed. He pursed his lips as he glanced around the bedroom. Usually so alive with Lottie's special brand of handmade quirkiness, it was now stripped bare, everything she owned crammed into two pink suitcases.

'Well,' Ollie began, reaching into his pocket, 'if you can take a moment off from worrying about what other people

think of you . . .' He pulled out a crumpled envelope and a worn-out Polaroid that Lottie recognized from his bedroom wall. 'These are for you.'

Lottie reached out for them, but Ollie whipped his hand back.

'You can't open the letter until you're on the train.'

Lottie nodded with an exasperated smile and he slowly placed both gifts in her hand. It was a photograph she'd seen thousands of times: the two of them at the beach, their noses covered in ice cream and beaming grins on both their greedy faces. Even though the colours had begun to fade to sepia, you could still see the tiara on Lottie's head and the horns on Ollie's. As children, the two had demanded to wear these fancy-dress items every day and everywhere. Ollie had declared he was the fairy Puck from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* after they'd watched an open-air performance at the beach one evening. He'd been completely infatuated with all the mischief the character got away with and assumed he too could get away with being naughty so long as he was wearing his horns. Lottie's tiara, on the other hand, had a less happy-go-lucky origin. Her thumb lingered over the accessory in the photo, a little pang striking her heart as she remembered the day she'd received it.

'I'll give you some time to say goodbye,' he said, before effortlessly picking up both her suitcases and carrying them down the stairs to the car. When he was gone she thoughtfully placed Ollie's gifts with the rest of her most important belongings, which she'd laid out on the now-bare bed so as not to forget them. She put each item into her handbag: first the weathered Polaroid and letter from Ollie, followed by her

favourite sketchbook, her most loyal stuffed companion, Mr Truffles, a framed photo of her mother, Marguerite, in her graduation gown, and, finally – looking very out of place among the other objects – a crescent-moon tiara, her most valued possession. It had taken Lottie all of sixty minutes to pack her entire life into two pink suitcases, one denim backpack and a small over-shoulder handbag with a sturdy white strap. She looked over the now-empty room.

I did it, Mum, she thought. *I got into Rosewood just like I promised.*