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For Luna



Chapter 1

I live in Primrose Mansions.

It doesn't look like how a *real* mansion is meant to look. It's tall and cold and grey and split into lots of small flats.

If you look at our building from far away, it looks like a remote control for a giant's TV – a big rectangle standing up on one end, covered in teensy window buttons.

And we live all the way up on the twelfth floor.

Me. Mum. And my baby brother, Stitch.

Up here I can pretend I'm the princess of the city, sitting on my throne. Looking down on the world from my high tower.

We are safe up here. Hidden in our fortress. Mum and me and baby Stitch.

And our home *is* a special palace.

It is.

I'll tell you why.



Chapter 2

My mum is probably one of the most important people on the planet. But it's difficult because she doesn't even know it. You see, my mum is a "maker" and that means she "makes" stuff with her hands. She makes clothes. And not just any clothes. She makes magnificent ball gowns and glorious frocks, fancy three-piece suits and decorated quilted coats.

You know those amazing outfits that famous people wear on the red carpet at film premieres and award parties? Guess who makes them?

My mum!

Have you seen the dresses the women in perfume adverts in magazines wear as they spread out across sofas? Guess who makes them?

Yep, my mum!



She works so hard, night after night, crouched over her desk under the peachy lamp in our living room. She sips tea after tea, sews stitch after stitch, bead after bead, embroidering and braiding, lacing and hemming and bordering. She works until her fingers bleed and her back aches and she is so tired she says she can "see stars".

The beads and sequins on the clothes make me feel as if I'm surrounded by a princess's precious jewellery. So, to me, our flat is a palace. And it's perfect.

Well, all apart from our annoying downstairs neighbour, grumpy Moany Bony Mr Tony (I'm not allowed to call him that to his face). He smokes one billion and five cigarettes a day and makes our palace stink with the stench of them. He used to smoke indoors and that was bad because the smell seeped in through the ceiling. So then we asked him to smoke on the balcony and it got even worse

as we can hardly ever open the windows now. But we're too scared to tell him because he's so miserable. Moany Bony Mr Tony absolutely hates life (and us) and always bangs on our floor with a broomstick when we have the TV too loud or do too much dancing or jumping.

He shouts, "WILL YOU KEEP THAT BLEEDIN' RACKET DOWN?!"

And we shout back, "SORRY, TONY!"

Even though he should really be the one saying sorry to us for making our home smell like an old boot.

I said to Mum that Moany Bony Mr Tony should give up smoking because it's really bad for him. But Mum said that sometimes people need something bad to make them feel good.

And I said, "What? Like me and sweets?"

And she said, "Exactly – like you and sweets."

"I think Moany Bony Mr Tony fancies Mum," I whisper to Stitch. But Stitch is just a baby, so he says nothing back.

Not that it matters. Mum would never ever ever fancy Moany Bony Mr Tony's old wrinkled face and his bloodshot eyes. Not to mention his smelly old beard that is kind of white but stained brown like it's been dipped in a cup of tea.