A MOON BOY Loves my BEST FRIEND



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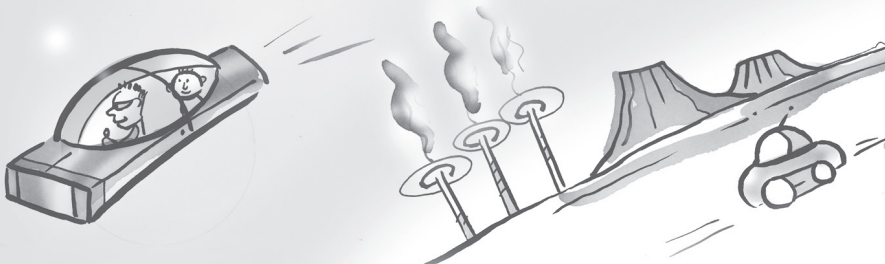
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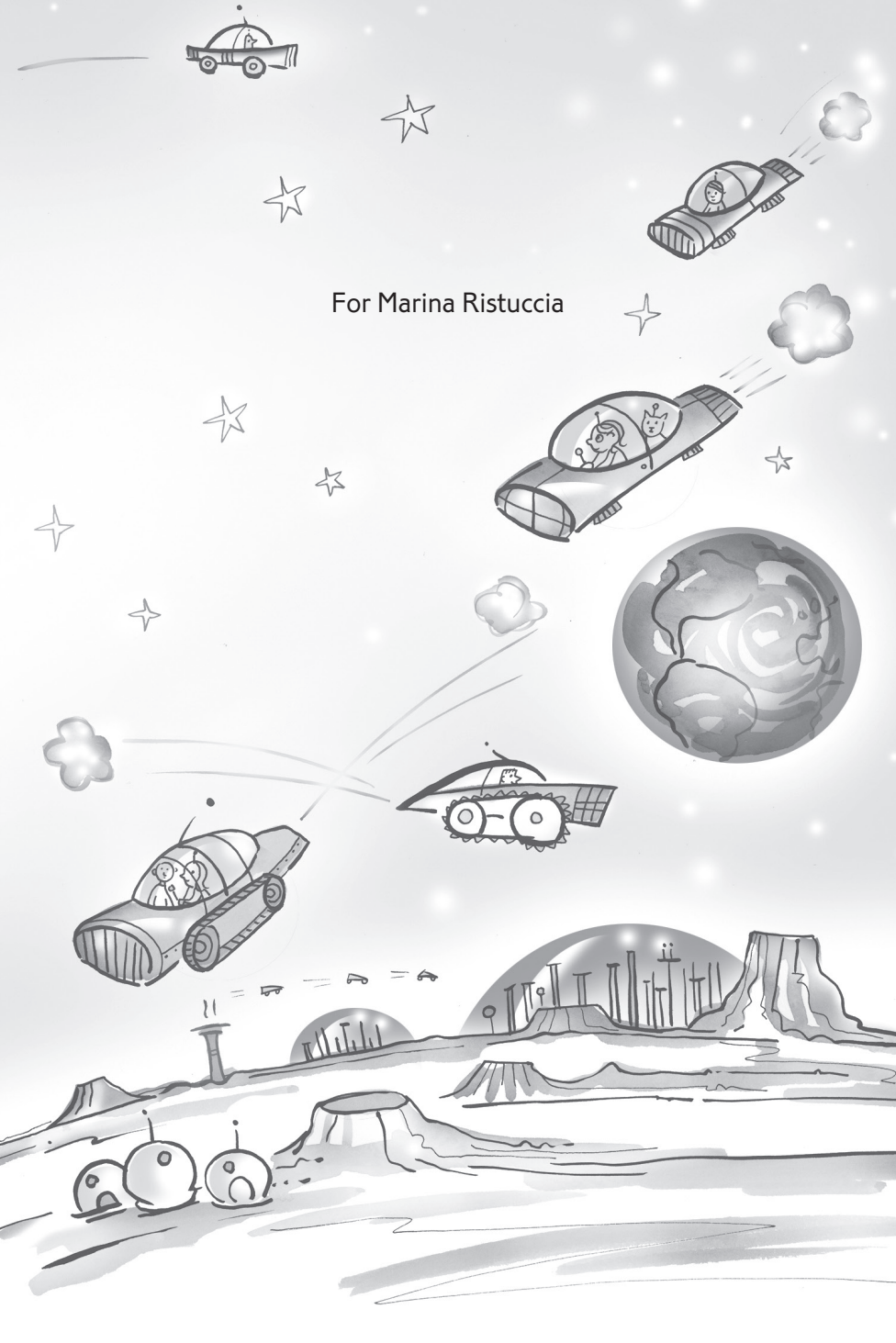
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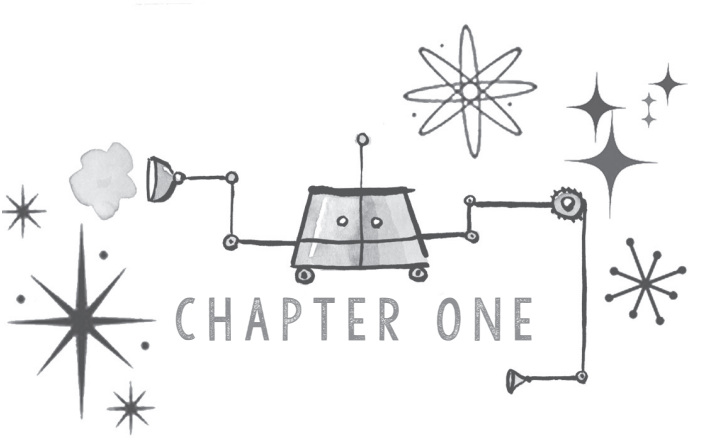
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For Marina Ristuccia





'No one,' I said to my best friend Bianca, 'wants to go to Flooded Plains Water Adventure Camp! No one!' We were on our way to school on our flykes, flying high above the trees and houses, just turning down towards the school playground. I braked a little as we began to fly down. 'Everyone said it was terrible last year – cold, boring and babyish! Plus it's only four minutes away by skybus, it's in Norfolk! How can they call it an adventure camp if it's in Norfolk?!'

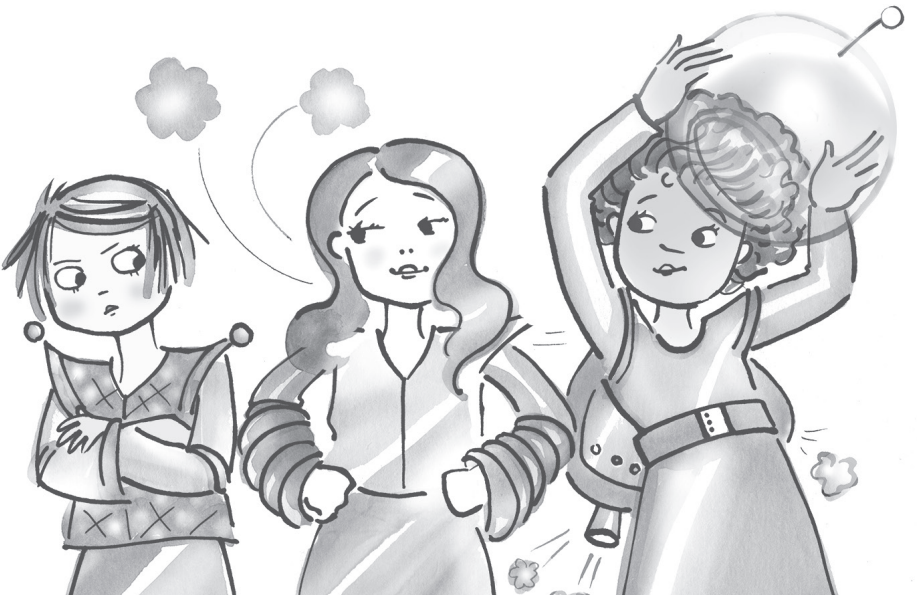
Bianca shrugged, 'Kayaking? Eating s'mores? Building campfires?'

We landed our flykes and put them in the flyke shed.

I raised my eyebrows at Bianca, 'Kayaking? S'mores?

No thank you, Grandma! It's sooo old fashioned. Plus they don't let you build a real fire, you just sit around a hologram of one.'

We heard a faint hum above us and looked up. Far up in the sky, just below the clouds, Mercedes was showing off in her persojet. She's the only kid who has one in our school. She got it from her auntie in Florida last year. Mercedes drew a smiley face with the pink vapour trail, before flipping over in a loop the loop and zooming down. She landed next to us with a bit of a skid and shook her hair out of her helmet. 'Did you see that?! My persojet skills are on fire. I could be an intergalactic pilot, I'm that good!' Then she looked at me. 'Ooh, look at little old sulky face! What's wrong with you, Lyla?'



'She's complaining about the residential trip.' Bianca smiled. 'Lyla says you can't have adventures in Norfolk and the camp is only for old ladies who like eating s'mores!'

'Lyla's right!' said Mercedes. 'My mum went to Flooded Plains when she was a kid, it was clank then and it's clank now. They have these little dome tents that let in the rain. How primitive is that?!'

We began walking towards the classroom portal together as a three. Amia ran up behind us. 'Hi! What's all this?'

'We're talking about how no one wants to go to Flooded Plains Water Adventure Camp!' I said.

'Ugh! I know!' said Amia. 'It sounds gross. Billie Luna-Jones, who went last year, said they saw an actual real live RAT. As big as a cat, two feet from their sleeping dome! Even Mr Caldwell was scared.'

'No way!' said Mercedes, shoving her coat into the suction hatch in the coatpod.

'Yes way!' went on Amia, arranging her hair a bit. 'And the food is really bad, Billie Luna-Jones said she got food poisoning from a caterfilla salad, plus they

just have really old robots like Mr Martinelli supervising all the activities, even on the mile-high zip line so it's actually seriously DANGEROUS!'

I stood still for a second. Then I said, 'So let's not go! I'll get a petition going to campaign for a better residential trip. I'll get everyone to sign and tell Mr Caldwell we demand a better trip!'

Amia and Mercedes looked doubtful. 'Dunno if that will work,' said Mercedes, and walked into the class hub.

Amia shrugged her shoulders at me. 'We probably don't have time now, Lyla.'

I watched her saunter into the class hub too.

'I bet if Mercedes suggested it, everyone would sign a petition. That lot never listen to me.' I shoved my coat into the suction hatch.

'Well, maybe Flooded Plains Camp place will be OK,' said Bianca.

'Rats the size of cats!' I said, mostly to myself, as I walked into class. 'No thanks! I'm starting a petition! I'm starting it today. First break.'

And that's what I did. Bianca signed it first and then she came with me as I took it round to more people.

'Didn't know you could be so . . . persuasive!' laughed Bianca, as I stopped a whole basketball game to get Burak and James to sign.

Mercedes saw me get Ibrahim, and all the boys who sit in the corner at break swapping little football clones, to sign it. 'Wow!' she said. 'Didn't think you'd get that lot to sign, they don't care about anything except footie!'

'They care about rats the size of cats.' I smiled.





Due to my suddenly 'persuasive' personality it only took two breaks to get everyone to sign my petition. Louis MacAvoy signed twice!

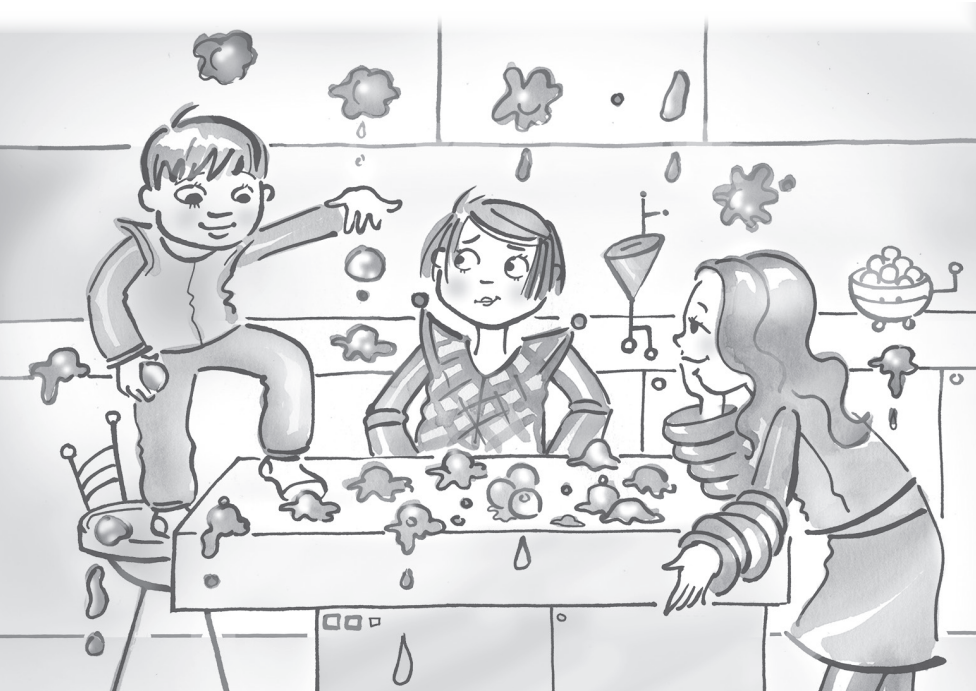
Bianca and I took it to Mr Caldwell at the end of the second break. He leaned back in his chair, 'Very enterprising of you, Lyla. Good leadership skills.' But then he said while he appreciated everyone had signed my petition, Flooded Plains Water Adventure Camp was much cheaper than many other residential trips and if we wanted to go anywhere else we'd all have to raise some extra money.

So because of my petition we had to have a bake sale every Thursday. And that meant Bianca and I had to spend every Wednesday making a tonne of cakes to sell. We normally did it at my house because we have a bigger kitchen and a new high-spec cookbot. Plus Bianca's mum is mess-phobic. We usually made about thirty blueberry bouncing buns because they were really popular. They always sold out first. They came out of the cookbot all lovely, little and round.



Once they're cooked, you can pick them up and drop them down onto your plate and they bounce back up so you can catch them in your mouth.

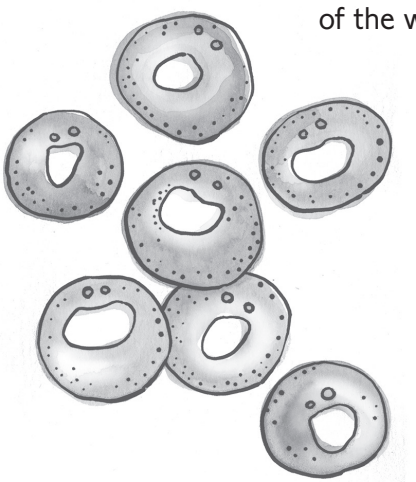
One day, we forgot to add the bounce dust so they didn't . . . bounce. Gus, my six-year-old brother, started throwing them really hard on the surfaces, trying to make them bounce back but just splatting them everywhere. 'They seriously don't bounce, Lyla!' he yelled. 'They just SPLAT! They all SPLAT! SPLATTY SPLAT!'



Dad said that I was partly responsible for the mess, so I had to get out the vacuum bot and help Gus clear it all up.

Gus said he didn't need to use the vacuum bot. 'Why would I need that? I am Vacuum Boy! My superpower is suction!' And started to suck up the blueberry bun splats off the table with his own mouth!

Anyway, as we didn't have any blueberry bouncing buns for the bake sale that week Bianca said, 'We'll just have to throw money at the problem and buy some cakes to sell.' So we did. We got a bargain pack of Ring-A-Ding-Sing Doughnuts on the way to school because who doesn't love one of those? When they come out of the wrapper, they sing you a little song through the hole in the middle. It's not *great* singing, but it's funny. We sold them for double what we paid for them. Bianca said I was turning into some kind of business whizzkid.



We had our bake sales outside our class hub just after school. Mr Caldwell let us take some tables out from the class hub. Mercedes was in charge of the stall because she's bossy and good at saying stuff to little kids like, 'You touch it! You buy it!' I did the money with Bianca, and Louis MacAvoy and James Defries did what they called 'Promotion and Advertising Strategy', which was just them running round the playground past all the parents and kids yelling, 'CAKES! WHO WANTS CAKES?' And, 'SAVE US FROM FLOODED PLAINS BORING CAMP!'



One Saturday Bianca's granny, who lives in the super-swanky Havendome, said we could come round to her beautiful pink house and cook a load of vintage-style cakes and sell them to her neighbours. 'They'll love it!' she said. 'Buying cakes just like our grandmothers might have eaten as girls!' So Bianca and I went.

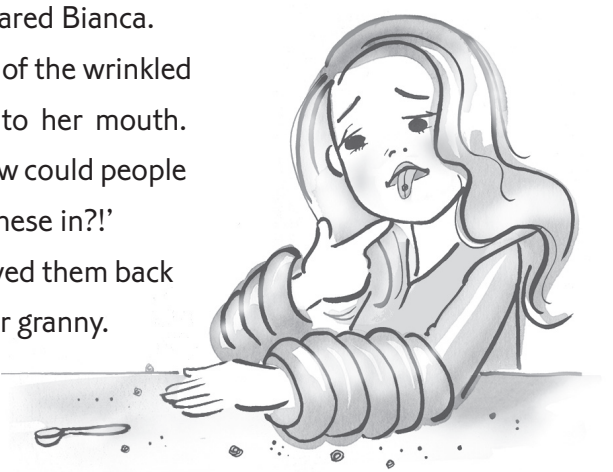
'I cannot believe they ate cakes with these horrible little black things in!' laughed Bianca, as she looked at the old-fashioned cake mix. 'What are they, dried beetles?'

'They're raisins, dear!' said her granny. 'Rather rare now. Dried grapes. I've had some of them in the back of my cupboard for years!'

'Try one!' I dared Bianca.

She put one of the wrinkled little things up to her mouth. 'Ugh! I can't. How could people eat cakes with these in?!'

'Oh, they loved them back then!' smiled her granny.



'What are these things I'm trying to make?' I asked, getting the messy brown mix all over the place.

'That's going to be cornflake cakes!'

'Looks bad!' said Bianca. 'These cakes are so dull, brown and yucky! Are you sure this is what they ate?'

'I'm sure,' said Bianca's granny.

'Why can't we just use the cookbot to make them?' asked Bianca. 'That's what we do at Lyla's house. This is *so slow.*'

'Well, this is the ancient art of "Home Baking". Now you can see how hard our ancestors had to work to get their bake sales together!'

'Can we make them look better with some Lightie Uppy Frootz sprinkled on top?' asked Bianca.

'No, dear. Let's keep them authentic!' said her granny.

As we placed the cakes outside on one of her granny's little old-style tables, Bianca made a face at me and said under her breath, 'Who's going to buy lumpy brown cakes full of dead grapes?'

Turns out, only every old person living in the Havendome!

We had a queue!

And all of them paid double what we asked. Two very swanky old women approached our stall. One had that diamond glitter hair and the other had a genuine pink micro tiger in her fancy laser-trim basket. They had a massive squabble over who should buy the last authentic vintage cornflake cake. And the one with the diamond hair said, 'But I haven't *seen* a genuine cornflake since 2067!'

In the end we had to cut it in half.

'Wow,' said Bianca, adding up how much we'd made, 'they really love old brown cakes!'





It was all worth it! The week just before half term, Mr Caldwell said, 'Well, Year Six, I've got some very exciting news! Thanks to your extensive fundraising, this year's residential trip will not be at Flooded Plains Water Adventure Camp. You've raised enough money to get us somewhere *really* exciting. This year we are all going to . . . Camp Crater! On the . . . MOON!'

The class went crazy.

Totally crazy!

Franka burst into tears and hung off Felicity's neck going, 'Oh my total gosh! I am going to die right now this minute with happiness!'

Burak got out of his seat and started punching the air and spinning round going, 'Oh yeah! Oh yeah!'

And Mercedes was clutching her chest with her eyes shut, saying, 'I'm gonna faint!'

Louis threw a little learning cube at my head and when I turned round he was doing a thumbs up at me.

'OK, settle down, class! Settle down. Back in your seat, please Burak!' said Mr Caldwell. 'Yes, it's

fantastic news. We're all off to Camp Crater just on the outskirts of the great Moon city of Catena Yuri, or the "Big Sparkle" as the Moonites call it. I haven't been up there for years. Absolutely brilliant! Now, you will need slightly different kit for this trip but luckily there are some old moonsuits and gravity boots in the PE store so no one will have to buy any new stuff. We'll try them on next Monday after registration.'

'Mr C!' said Amia. 'Can we pack little helper bots? Like the ones that dry our hair?'

'Yes, if you have room.'

'What about if we have pet cyborgs at home?' asked Louis. 'Can we bring them?'

'No,' said Mr Caldwell. 'It says in the brochure, "For health and safety reasons no electronic companions e.g. cyborg pets or robotic children, are allowed to attend Camp Crater."'



Everyone was chatting like mad in the coatpod at the end of school. When Bianca was putting on her coat, she smiled at me. 'Just think, if it wasn't for you and

your petition, we'd all be going to eat s'mores in Norfolk with giant rats!'

'I know!' I said, all excited.

Louis got up and stood on one of the benches. He cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted, 'GUYS! GUYS! WE NEED TO SAY THREE CHEERS FOR LYLA!'

'Yeah, wait . . .' said Mercedes getting up on the bench next to Louis. 'Guys! I present Lyla Hastings! Class hero! She saved 6C from Flooded Drains Rat Camp!' And she hauled me up next to her and started shouting, 'SPEECH!'



So I did a little bow and said, 'I'd like to thank my assistants Bianca, Mercedes, Amia, Louis and James . . . and to everyone who baked us into this historic moment!' I did a little fake sob like they do at awards ceremonies and then I shouted, 'WE'RE GOING TO MOON CAMP!' And I punched the air.



Everyone cheered and then Mr Caldwell came into the coatpod to tell us all to stop yelling and standing on the benches and didn't we have homes to go to?

As we walked across the playground Louis said, 'I'm in a daze. I'm actually going to the Moon Colonies. Me! I've only ever been as far as Hunstanton! Did you know kids are allowed to drive skycars up there? Not just stupid pedal flykes like us! I think all of them get a kid-size skycar when they're like three years old or something.'

'Yeah, right!' said Mercedes. 'I don't think so. Anyway, I really hope we get to go to the malls in Catena Yuri! They have *real* shopping up there. Not the stupid old Trading Hub with virtual everything and glitchy old robots trying to make cappuccinos.'

'Yeah!' said Amia. 'My mum's cousin had her wedding in Catena Yuri! She said it's amazing. They've created the "Optimum Living Experience" up there. Real actual malls with all the things you can actually touch and buy! And there's all these amazing parks! And everyone is beautiful! She went to the Luna Spa Thermal Pools and got her nails done with a real sapphire finish!'

'Pah! I'm not going to the Moon to get my nails done!' said Louis. 'I'm going for the crater climbing! They have craters miles high up there. And for the laser blaster archery! Boom!' And he ran to his flyke and started pedaling up into the air. 'SEE YOU MONDAY, MY FELLOW MOONITES!' he yelled as he flyked up high above us and off home.



Mum collected me and Gus that afternoon in our old skycar. Gus was already in his seat when I got in. 'You were ages!' he said.

'I was busy. Everyone had to clap me because I am the class all-time hero!'

'You?' said Gus, looking at me sideways, doubtfully. 'How?'

'Because I started the petition which started the bake sales which raised the money so our class residential trip is . . . ON THE MOON! It's basically MY trip to the Moon. I made it happen!'

'Oh well done, love! Nice to see you taking the initiative!' said Mum as she launched our car up into the Fly Zone with all the other flying cars.

'We're going to Camp Crater just outside Catena Yuri. We get to try on moonsuits and gravity boots on Monday!'

Gus folded his arms across his chest crossly. 'Not fair! I want to go to the Moon. I've only been to Florida. And Granny J's in Bootle!'

'You might go there when you're in Year Six, like Lyla,' said Mum as she powered our skycar up over a skylorry.



I looked out across the city with its buildings, bridges, launch pads and balconies, the view I'd seen all my life. There was the big, old Trading Hub, the Havendome where Bianca's granny lives, the same old houses, blue sky, clouds . . . I said softly to my reflection in the window, 'I'm actually going to . . . the . . . Moon Colonies. For real! In four weeks!'

'Yeah, well, Lyla Pyla-poo,' shrugged Gus, 'when I'm in Year Six I'm gonna have the biggest bake sale in the universe and my class will have our residential trip on MARS!'

