

Princess on Holiday

4:45 PM, Saturday, Marie's car heading back to the Bertrand residence

We spent about an hour looking at boutiques with fancy clothes--the places Grandmère has been taking me to since, well, forever. Funny how the boutiques (which are on a street like Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills) are the only part of Genovia I have seen--besides the palace (and I have only driven by the palace until this week). As far as my country is concerned, I have been extremely sheltered.

Marie and I talked about my situation some more. She realizes that she took major risks in simply taking me home and not reporting me to the police (ya think?), but she believes it's worth it, because I should see Genovia--the real Genovia. I have to say I agree with her, and not just because I haven't been hassled by the press and hounded by bodyguards (unless you count the goons who have been shadowing me).

Problem is, she might get in HUGE trouble when I go back, if they find out that she and her husband took me into their home. I told her it would be okay because I apparently went willingly, and that it was my decision and mine alone. I also told her that I would not let her and her family get into trouble on the account of me, and my stupid decisions.

Then she told me that it wasn't stupid, it was simply unplanned. Yeah, that's a real comfort.

5:30 PM, Saturday, Bertrand residence

Mr. Bertrand has been home for a while now, and I have been babysitting Amelia while they cook dinner. They are like an American family in so many ways, and yet are totally foreign in others. Like tea time, for example. They're like the British in that sense, because everything stops for tea at five in the afternoon. Tea was fine, but Amelia cried the whole time. Poor kid. Tea lasted for fifteen minutes and then we gave Amelia a bath. She's in her bassinette, and I am rocking it back and forth as I write in this journal.

Today has been very interesting, but I keep thinking about how much fun it would be if Lilly were here. She would've kicked those goons' asses, I know she would've. And while Lilly was doing that, Michael would've ran off with me, taking me somewhere safe.

Tina Hakim Baba would've loved the boutiques, and would've picked out an ensemble for my press conference and subsequent dinners.

I just looked into the bassinette, and Amelia is fast asleep. Marie is coming out of the kitchen to take her to her bedroom. I have just realized that I will probably never see any of these people again. How sad. I

mean, who would've thought there were such nice people in the world? People who would take in a total stranger--a stranger who is so incredibly selfish and naive.

As much as I want to stay, I absolutely must go back. It is my duty, and no matter what happens I must not shirk any of my duties. That is what Mr. Bertrand told me at tea, and he is so right. All I am afraid of now is what my father is going to say. God, he is going to be *so* angry.

6:22 PM, Saturday, On a bench at the pier.

My life doesn't mimic the movies THAT much. Mr. Bertrand offered to drive me to the palace, but I said no, because then they would find out the truth--that I stayed at their house, and I don't want them to get in any trouble. This is my responsibility.

Dinner was lovely--vegetarian Italian. Veggie lasagna with bread rolls. Simple, but oh-so *good*. We talked about the day some more, and we told Mr. Bertrand all about the carnival incident. He thought it was rather humorous, and was amazed I got away from the goons. We all wondered if they followed us through Italy. Marie said no, because once we crossed the border we were out of their jurisdiction. Mr. Bertrand said they could've waited at the border, and could've notified the Italian authorities of my presence and such. Marie shuddered at that.

I reassured them that it would be all right, and that I would defend them if anyone at the palace tried to have them arrested or anything like that.

Mr. Bertrand told me about the university (he also teaches on the weekends, so that is why he was at work today), and he said that he hopes I will attend. It sounds like a really good school, and it would be nice to know someone on campus, even if I've only known them for a couple of hours. It's as if we've known each other for years. Then we talked about math--because that is what Mr. Bertrand teaches, some complicated-sounding math course and physics--and how much I suck at it. He told me that I must persevere, and to try my best, because as Princess of Genovia I will need it. Damn it! Since I am an actual RULER and not a symbolic head of state (like the Queen of England) I will have to know how to balance a budget, and I will need to know how Parliament runs. Oh my god. He told me that my major should be law, or political science, and that my major should be business economics or something. That sounds really, really hard.

I am crying now--I miss them so much! Especially Amelia! Marie gave me her e-mail address and her website address, and I fully plan to visit it. I will be able to talk to them after this, and maybe even visit them. I told her I hope she writes about our day together, because I deserve it. They both told me I was being too hard on myself.

I'd better go--I promised them both I'd head straight home after seeing the ships go by.

6:55 PM, Saturday, Royal Genovian Bedchamber.

Oh. My. **GOD!** I am in such big trouble. Well, I should've seen **THAT** coming.

I stopped writing in my journal and walked back to the palace, which wasn't far away. I looked at my watch and then ran, because I was seriously running out of time. I got back in record time. My father and Grandmère were waiting for me. Grandmère gave me holy hell for running away and 'almost ruining the monarchy' and causing a serious crisis. My father had told me he had to lie to the nation so that nobody would be worried. I told him he should've told them the truth; they would've found me a lot faster. My father retorted something about security and stuff.

He is seriously disappointed in me, and he let me know that my schedule will not be amended for any free time, as a punishment--"Seeing as you've had a whole day to goof off anyway" were his exact words. I couldn't believe it. I had seen the **REAL** Genovia and all he can do is call it 'goofing off!!!!'

Grandmère told me I should go to bed early, because at six o'clock **SHARP** I am going to give my press conference. Six in the **MORNING**, mind you.

So now I am still staying here in Genovia, and I will be stuck in this palace until next year, when I can finally go home. My mother has been informed of the real situation, and even **SHE** is disappointed in me. She told me that no matter how bad I have it, I had no right to go off and make everyone worry.

She has a good point, but Jesus! I **KNOW** that! I have spent the last twenty minutes groveling and apologizing to everyone, and they don't even pay attention! All they want to do is punish me, and punish me good. So tomorrow the King and Queen of Sweden will be here along with their three children (all who are older than me, but not by much) for dinner. I shudder at the thought. It was bad enough to expose my clumsiness in front of the royals of Monaco. Now I get to spill my wine on the Queen of Sweden. Lovely.

Get this--Spring Break will have **ME** accompanying my father to England on a state visit. I am so thrilled. No, really. Three days out of one week (a five-day week, mind you) embarrassing myself in England. Don't even get me started on the last time I was there. So in March I get to go back to the horror that is royal life.

What am I going to do? I don't care about that as much as I care about my father being angry at me. He can barely look at me. I can't take it anymore, I am going to apologize one more time.

8:00 PM, Saturday, Royal Genovian Bedchamber.

My father and I had a wonderful discussion. I went into his study, sniffing from crying, and the first thing I said was "I'm sorry. I am so sorry I made you worry, and I have learned something today--that you can't take anything for granted, and that you mustn't shirk your duty, no matter what." He sighed, because I have said this before. I told him that I meant it, and that I don't want him to be angry anymore. I told him that I accept my punishment, and that I am prepared to tell the world what really happened and take full blame for it.

Apparently he was pacified by my more calm approach to it (when I got back, we had a hell of a screaming match). We sat down and talked about my schedule. He told me the Bernadottes were very nice and that I had nothing to worry about, and that it wasn't that long. He told me that the reason why he made me stay longer was because Grandpère's sister was very sick, and couldn't accompany him at the dinner and at the New Year's ceremony, so I had to fill in. I asked him about Grandmère, but he told me she had other commitments. That is when I realized something--I am selfish. Seriously. I spend all day thinking about myself, and only myself. That is what being a princess is, essentially. Aside from the tiaras, balls, and countless suitors, there's putting others and duty before oneself.

My father apologized for wrecking my vacation, and I graciously accepted. Besides, this is the first Christmas I have spent in Genovia. And he and Mom talked about it and she accepts it as well. We all have to make sacrifices sometimes. So my father and I made up and he told me to go to bed, and I should be in bed right now, but I just had to write this down.

I seriously hope I don't blow it tomorrow.

12:09 AM, Sunday, December 28, Royal Genovian Bedchamber

I was so tired from yesterday (I didn't get much sleep last night, AND I was out all day) that I went to bed after the last entry. I mean, the press conference is at SIX in the MORNING. It's even before church, which shocked me. Grandmère never, ever misses church, even though she is not the most Christian woman on earth. I guess it's something *royalty* does--going to church every Sunday. I don't care much for church, really, but whatever.

So let me refresh you on what's happening tomorrow. I wake up at 4:30 AM, which is in four hours and thirty minutes--okay, not exactly, approximately four hours and thirty minutes. I shower while the royal dresser lays out my first outfit (that is one thing I hate about this--there is NO reason to change clothes three or four times a day unless you're working in a coal mine), then she helps me put it on (as if I'm invalid or something--I CAN dress myself, thanks), then a hairdresser quickly puts my hair into some 'low-maintenance' style (low-maintenance by royal standards), and then I have a very quick breakfast by five (yes, all of this in only thirty minutes). Then I go over the itinerary, and then I will 'rehearse' for the press conference. My father's advisers will tell me what I can discuss and what I cannot discuss. Then I will go to the Prince Louis Ballroom for the actual conference and that could last anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours. Dad is hoping it will be just an hour, because church services start at seven. Aren't *we* supposed to dictate how long the conference should be?

So after the conference I have to go to church, and then after that we will visit a school and a hospital, and then I have the remainder of the day free until five in the afternoon, when the Swedish royals will arrive. Until then, I have to get into my second outfit. The Swedish royals will do what I did that morning--touring hospitals, and giving a speech at the university. Then it's back home for another change and then THE DINNER, of which I am in mortal dread.

Lord, help me.

5:03 AM, Sunday, Palace kitchen

I told you this would be quick. I am having a grapefruit and some toast, because I am way too nervous to eat. I will have water during the conference for rather obvious reasons.

I actually slept well, with the exception of my journal writing, of course. Two minutes after finishing it I fell asleep. I woke up on the dot (thank god for alarm clocks), and managed to get dressed by five. I tripped over a lamp on my way to the kitchen. A great omen, I'm sure.

There are so many engagements, I won't have time to make many entries. Well, here goes.

7:15 AM , Sunday, Bathroom at the St. Mary Magdalene Cathedral

I was nervous as heck, and the advisers came in and briefed me on what to say. It was a bunch of hooley about not talking about politics and such. Duh.

There were reporters there already--lots of them, and it was really, really early in the morning. Could they be any more desperate? I asked my father why it had to be held so early--nobody holds a press conference THIS early. He told me it was 'booked' at the last minute, no thanks to my Genovian holiday. Oh, *yeah*. Oops.

One journalist from Norway asked me about my so-called 'illness.' I looked at Dad, but he was totally expressionless. I am sorry, but this is one of those instances where I cannot lie. I mean, seriously. If I did, someone would analyze the footage and see my nostrils flaring, and then it will be all over, because I will DIE of embarrassment and shame.

So I told him the truth.

I told him that I ran away from the palace, and spent a day wandering around Genovia. There were gasps from the press pack, and my father nearly fainted. I had just revealed the palace in a blatant lie. I did my best to remedy the situation.

"I was not sick yesterday. I cannot lie to the entire world. I selfishly ran away from home, making my family worry, and subsequently making them lie to keep my country-men from worrying too much. I wanted to see Genovia, and have a break from this hectic schedule, but by the end of the day, I realized that I was being irresponsible and selfish. Hopefully I have learned a lesson and refrain from running away from my responsibilities in the future."

That is what I said, and let me tell you, those advisers looked totally confused. They wanted to be proud of

my answer (because it was pretty good if you ask me), but at the same time they would've preferred it if I had allowed the world to go on believing a lie. I saw no point in lying, because someone is bound to find out what happened, and will report it to the highest bidder.

Then a reporter from Canada asked me if I am worn out by the hectic schedule. What a dumb question. Wasn't he paying attention? I was patient, and said that I wasn't worn out, I was simply frustrated and overwhelmed. I hadn't DONE much of anything until that point. I also said that maybe I was a little tired, but not completely worn out. Then I got even MORE honest and told them I was angry over losing my Christmas vacation.

Then I told them that I had a momentary lapse of judgment, and that my country needs me, and that I was more than happy to stand in for my great-aunt, who was sick. I wished her well, and the press pack were impressed.

Then a question from a French reporter. He asked me how I felt about today's activities. I told him that I was looking forward to visiting the school, hospital, and meeting the Swedish royals. He interrupted me and asked me if I thought Prince Carl Philip was cute. I was so embarrassed. All I said was that he seemed like a nice person. Yeah right--I don't even know what the guy looks like.

An American reporter asked me about the vacation bit--she asked me about my family in New York, and what I plan to do for the New Year. I told her I didn't know about the New Year, and that I missed my family and friends in New York. This is where I turned into a total dork. I made a shout-out to Michael, Lilly, Boris, and Tina, as if it were TRL! The press pack giggled at that and my father gave me a Look.

The rest of the questions were about politics, and I repeatedly told those morons that as a princess, I couldn't comment on politics. Then Dad announced the end of the conference and thanked everyone for coming, and etcetera. I didn't meet the press like Princess Ann did in the movie, but I noticed something very interesting among the press pack: a blond guy and an Arab guy. Whoa. They looked awfully familiar.

As we went back to the kitchen, I asked my father if he had anyone look for me yesterday. He told me that at first they assumed I got lost in the palace, but by the end of the day, they had searched the entire palace and didn't find me. He said that if anyone was following me, it would've been uniformed policemen. The two goons weren't uniformed. They must've been tabloid reporters then.

Dammit. I was right--it was no use trying to lie.

Well, I'd better go back out. Whew, what a weekend. I am very excited to visit that school and hospital--very, very excited.