

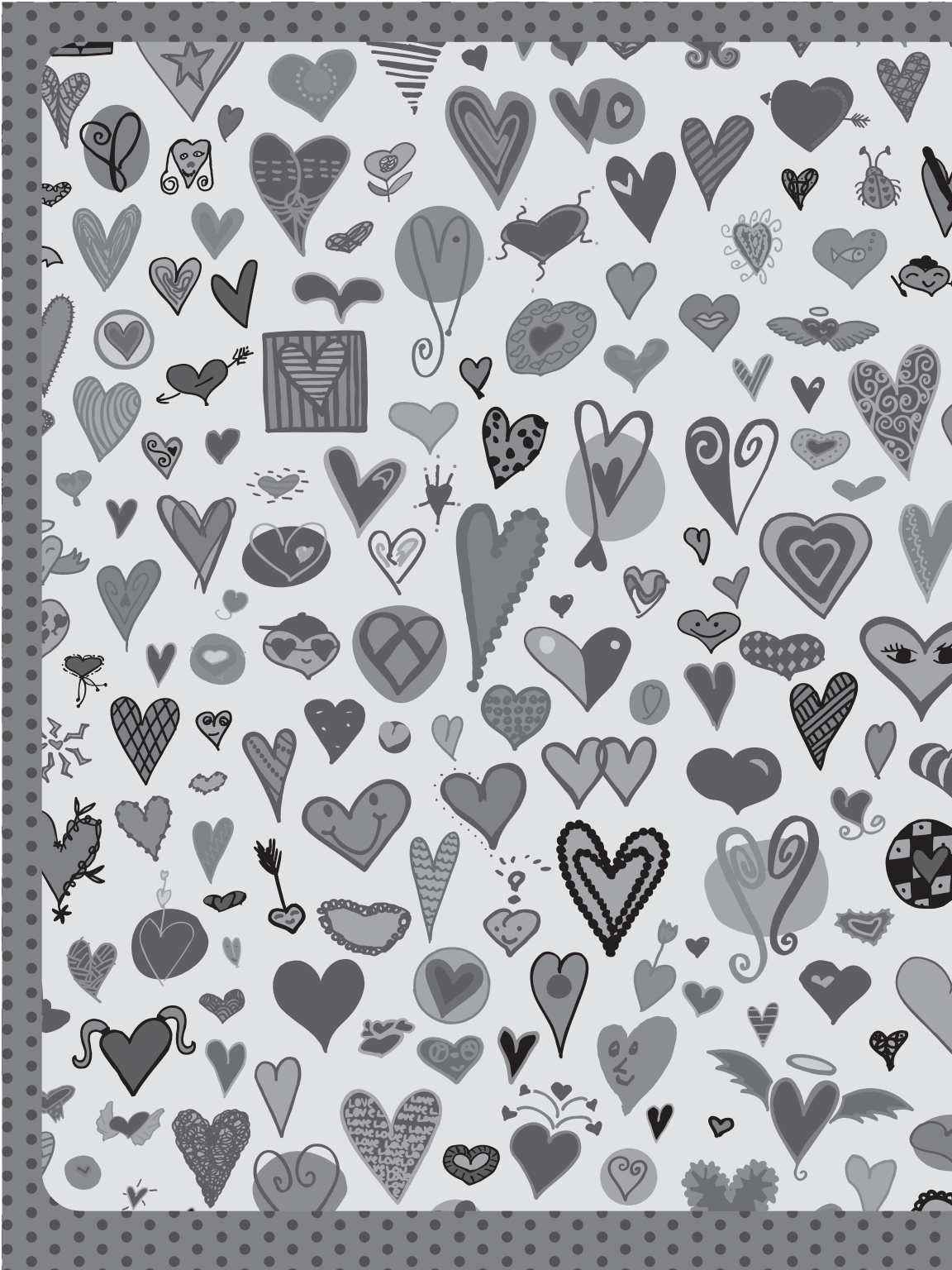
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Hurrah for the Spa!

FEATURING SERAFINA™

BY SUSAN HUGHES
ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE





our
generation.

This is Serafina's story.



SERAFINA™

HURRAH FOR
THE SPA!

BY

SUSAN HUGHES

ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE

An Our Generation® book

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EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

*Big words, wacky words, powerful words, funny words...
what do they all mean? They are marked with this symbol *.*

Look them up in the Glossary at the end of this book.



Chapter One

COMING SOON!

“So, you know my tenth birthday is only three weeks away,” I reminded my best friend, Isabella, “but I still haven’t decided what I want to do for my birthday party.”

It was Monday, the second week of fourth grade, and like most days, we were walking home from school together. We always take the same route because Isabella loves walking along Central Avenue, the main street in our neighborhood. She thinks it’s fun to dress up, style her hair, and make her own jewelry. So, naturally, she likes checking out everything in the windows of the hair salon and the jewelry store. Oh, and looking to see if there is any new face glitter or cool colored lip balm in the drugstore window.

Which she had just stopped to do.



Those things don't interest me much. I'd prefer to watch the gerbils and hamsters in the window of the pet store or admire the new soccer balls and basketballs, badminton sets, and fancy running shoes in the sports store displays.

But I don't mind waiting for my best friend. I just can't stand still.

So, I pulled out my rubber ball from my backpack and tossed it from one hand to the other, with a bounce on the pavement in between.

Isabella gave me a surprised glance. "You haven't thought of any party ideas yet, Serafina?"

"Oh, I have lots of ideas," I said. "Those riding lessons I took in the summer were awesome! Maybe I could have a horseback riding party. Or there are so many sports I love...I'm playing in the city youth soccer fall league again. Maybe I could have some kind of soccer-themed party."

"Yeah, maybe," Isabella said, moving closer to the window to examine the lip balms.

I enjoy trying new things and I'm still deciding which activities and sports I like best.



My parents say that's totally OK because I'm only nine and it's good not to concentrate on just one thing yet. I should have fun exploring my interests.

“And you know I've always wanted to try badminton one day too. A scavenger hunt or zip-lining or rock climbing could be fun.” I laughed, keeping my eyes on my ball as I bounced it back and forth. “Hey, Isabella, maybe my birthday party could have all those fun activities!”

But Isabella said, “Oh, hang on, Serafina! Look!”

I caught my ball and looked toward where she was pointing—to an empty storefront. The windows had been covered in brown paper for weeks. Now, the brown paper was gone and a new sign on the front announced in big letters:

Splendiferous Spa
Coming Soon!

“I spy a spa! Let's go,” Isabella said, grabbing



my arm and pulling me down the street.

When we got closer, I could read the smaller writing on the sign:

*Grand Opening this Saturday!
Specials on spa visits and parties!*

We peered in the window.

“Oh, wow!” Isabella said.

All I saw were cozy-looking armchairs, a row of sinks, some robes hanging on the wall, tons of jars and bottles...nothing very exciting.

But Isabella had a totally different reaction.

“Serafina, this is perfect! Just perfect,” she cried. “You can have a spa day for your party!” She smiled at me. “It’ll be so relaxing. We’ll have manicures* and pedicures*. We can even get our nails painted. It’ll be so much fun!”

I wasn’t sure what a manicure or pedicure was, exactly. But I didn’t ask. Because if being at a spa was relaxing, I wasn’t excited about it. I don’t find sitting still fun at all, especially not at a





Splendorous Spa
Coming Soon!
Grand Opening this Saturday!
Specials on spa visits and parties!

Jewelry

Jewelry

birthday party!

I didn't want to hurt my friend's feelings, though, so I said, "Hmmm...maybe. I'll think about it, Isabella."

The rest of the way home, Isabella chatted on about finally going to a spa, while I was thinking about other party ideas, like bowling, mini-golf—and hot-air ballooning!



"Serafina, honey," Mom said, "you asked us about having a birthday party, but it's coming up soon."

"Yup," I said, taking another bite of salad.

Mom and Dad, my younger brother, Sebastian, and I were chatting while we ate dinner.

"What do you want to do for your party, Serafina?" Sebastian asked. "You could have a monster party or a race car party. Or a *dinosaur* party!"

I laughed, and Mom and Dad did too.



“Those are good ideas, Sebastian,” I said.
“Thanks. I’ll think about them.”

“Don’t take too much longer, though,”
Mom told me. “We need to plan it, so you need to
decide soon.”



Chapter Two

NEW GIRL IN CLASS

I brushed my teeth, washed my face, got into my pajamas, shot a few balls into my wastebasket net, and jumped into bed.

But three seconds later, I hopped out of bed and ran to my desk.

I quickly scribbled down a list of all the possibilities I'd come up with for my party. I hurried back into bed.

But then, I jumped out of bed again and ran back to my desk. Thinking of Isabella, I wrote at the bottom of my list: *spa day*.



“Class, I’d like to introduce you all to a new student,” said our teacher, Ms. Cohen, the next



morning in class.

“Hey, I’m Alyna,” said the girl, with a big smile and a wave. “It’s really nice to meet you all.”

Alyna didn’t seem even one little bit nervous to be at a new school meeting new kids. She seemed really confident and super-friendly.

I looked over at Isabella, wondering if she thought the same. But she didn’t catch my look. She was smiling back at Alyna.

I had pretty much decided that horseback riding was my top choice for my party, even though I’d probably only be able to bring a few friends. It was OK. I’d just ask one friend, my best friend, Isabella. Everyone at school would understand why I’d chosen her as the one guest, and no one would feel left out.

As we headed outside for recess, I hurried to join Isabella so I could ask her what she thought.

But before I could say anything, she said, “C’mon, Serafina. Let’s go talk to Alyna.”

So, Isabella and I, and several other girls from our class, gathered around Alyna. She wasn’t at all



shy. She laughed and joked, and she asked lots of questions. She answered everyone's questions too.

Alyna explained she's always moving from city to city, and from school to school. Her mom works making high fashion clothes with a famous designing house that has locations in the fashion capitals of many countries. Her mom stays in a city for a year or so, helping train the designers there, and then moves to a new city—and Alyna and her dad go along with her. She told us her mother transferred to our city just a week or so ago, but this time, she asked for a position that doesn't require so much travel.

She also said her dad is a financial planner. He works with people in different time zones all around the world, helping them manage their money.

"I never know when Dad will be asleep or awake," Alyna said, laughing. And all of us laughed with her.

I had to force myself to laugh, though. Last year, I'd been the one the other kids gathered





around at recess most often. I usually had ideas for what games we could play and liked organizing them—instead of standing around waiting for someone else to do it!

So, it felt a little strange that all my friends were out here gathered around the new girl, just talking. It was sort of boring.

The bell rang to end recess, and Isabella and I followed the others to line up. Isabella grabbed my arm and repeated lots of the things Alyna had said.

“Isn’t she nice?” Isabella asked.

“Definitely,” I agreed. I decided I’d talk to Isabella about my horseback riding birthday plans at lunch.

But at lunch and afternoon recess, the same thing happened. Isabella wanted to make Alyna feel welcome, so she and I didn’t get a chance to talk alone.

Right when school ended, Isabella’s mom picked up Isabella and my dad picked me up. Isabella headed off to her singing lesson, and Dad



took me to the field for my soccer team practice. I also take swimming lessons on Saturdays. I plan to try gymnastics and maybe diving lessons this winter. And I was really hoping to play soccer again next spring—and sign up for baseball too!

So in the end, I didn't get a chance to talk to Isabella about my party plans. It would have to wait until tomorrow.



Chapter Three

PARTY POSSIBILITIES

After dinner, I looked at my list of party possibilities. I put three little stars beside horseback riding. It was my top pick. “Spa day” was at the bottom of the list. Isabella was so excited when she talked about going to a spa. Maybe it would be something fun to try one day. I added one little star beside it.

As I put away my list, I looked over, and there were my two beautiful model horses on my shelf. It was almost like they were shaking their manes and stamping their hooves for attention.

I just had to play with them! I brushed their manes and tails. I set up obstacles for them to jump over. Then I walked them around so they could cool down, fed them, and put them back in their places for the night.





I was even more certain—Isabella and I would go horseback riding for my birthday.

Just then, Mom came into my bedroom to ask me to get ready for bed.

“Mom, what if I decide I want to go horseback riding for my party? Just me and Isabella,” I said. “Would that be OK?”

She smiled and said OK. And that I had to let her know for sure soon so she could book it.

“I will,” I said, grinning. Fingers crossed Isabella would love my idea, too.



The first chance I had to speak with Isabella was in class the next morning. It was “quiet time” but I couldn’t wait any longer.

Isabella was reading in the book corner. I sat down beside her with my book. “Isabella,” I whispered. “I’ve been thinking a lot about what to do for my party.”

“Oh, good,” she whispered back, sounding



excited.

“I asked my mom, and she said I could actually choose horseback riding for my party, if I wanted. What do you think?” I asked. “It would be just you and me. Wouldn’t it be great?”

Isabella’s face fell. “Ummmm...I’m not so sure,” she said. “Serafina, I’ve never ridden a horse before, and...I’m sort of afraid of falling. I wouldn’t mind trying it some time,” she went on quickly, “but for your birthday, I was hoping we could...”

“Girls,” Ms. Cohen warned us, putting her finger to her lips.

Isabella turned back to her book, and I opened mine.

OK, so my party wouldn’t be horseback riding. I’d pick something else. Not the spa, even though I did give it one star, but something both Isabella and I would definitely enjoy.

When we headed out for morning recess, I was hoping to suggest a soccer party or a trampoline party to Isabella. But I didn’t have a



chance. Isabella wanted us to play with Alyna and some of our other friends.

“Alyna’s really nice, Serafina. She likes lots of the same things I do,” Isabella told me.

“Great!” I said, although—was it?

We joined in the girls’ clapping game, and everyone laughed and talked.

“So, my birthday is really soon,” Alyna said. She told us the date.

What? Oh no! It was the day after mine!

“I’m hoping to have a party, so...stay tuned,” she said.

As we headed back inside after recess, I wondered, *what if Alyna and I end up having our parties on the same day?* Alyna is really nice, and I like her. But what if all my friends choose to go to Alyna’s party and not mine?



Chapter Four

THINGS ARE GETTING SO COMPLICATED!

Now what?

I needed to find out what kind of party Alyna was having before I chose what to do for mine, because it would be awkward to do the same activity. Maybe even more importantly, I needed to find out what *day* Alyna's party would be before I chose mine. That way, I could be sure all my friends would celebrate my birthday with me.

But how could I find out?

In the meantime, I didn't want to tell Mom and Dad I'd decided against riding because they'd ask me what I *did* want to do—and I wasn't sure yet.

I sighed. Planning a birthday was supposed to be fun. *This* was getting so complicated!

But luckily, when Sebastian and I sat down



for dinner, only Mom was there. I'd forgotten that Dad goes to play basketball with his friends every Wednesday night.

Just after Mom set out our dinner, she got a last-minute important phone call and told Sebastian and me that we should go ahead and start eating without her.

So, it was Sebastian who ended up asking me!

“What’re you going to do for your birthday, Serafina?” he asked, between mouthfuls of mashed potatoes. “Hey, I know! Why don’t you have a toy car racing contest? Or make paper airplanes?”

I laughed. “Those are both good ideas. I’ll keep them as backup plans if I don’t decide soon!”

After dinner, to distract Mom from asking about my party while Sebastian and I helped her clean up, I asked Sebastian questions about his favorite TV shows. And when Mom said she had a few more calls to make, I offered to help Sebastian get ready for bed. That was only partially to distract Mom though. I actually like hanging out



with my little brother. Mom kissed Sebastian good night, and we headed upstairs.

Later, when it was my bedtime, Dad was home from basketball, and he came up to say good night to me.

“I know there’s something I need to ask you,” he said, after he kissed me and tucked me in.

I held my breath. Oh-oh. This was it.

But as he was trying to remember, Sebastian called from his bedroom. “I need a glass of water, Dad!”

So, Dad said, “Good night, sleep tight, Serafina.” He gave me another kiss and hurried off to check on Sebastian. *Whew!*



All the next day at school, Isabella talked to Alyna and laughed with her. I couldn’t stop noticing.

By the middle of the afternoon, I decided my best friend was becoming quite good friends with



Alyna. Which was fine. Really.

Except—OK. It did bother me a little bit. I wasn't sure why though. What was wrong with Isabella being nice to the new girl? Was I a little jealous?

That would be silly.

When the end-of-day bell rang, I had to head out to a dentist appointment, so once again, I didn't have time to talk with Isabella.

The next day, our class and the two other fourth-grade classes went on a field trip. We all got on buses, rode out to the countryside, and spent the day on a farm, seeing how they grow different vegetables. They had hayrides and a corn maze too. Isabella and I were in different groups, so I hardly even saw her all day.

After we all returned to school, we were only back in class for a short time before the bell rang and the school day was over. I hurried out to the hallway to my coat hook. I could talk to Isabella now, on the way home. Neither of us had any regular activities on Fridays, so we usually walked



home together.

I grabbed my jacket and backpack and headed over to Isabella.

But when she saw me, she bit her lip. “Oh, no, Serafina, I’m sorry. I forgot to tell you that Alyna invited me to go out with her and her mother after school today.”

“Oh,” I said.

“Her mom is picking us up and taking us out for a special treat,” said Isabella. “Alyna says when her mother had her other job, she was always too busy to spend much time with her. This year her mom’s job is more flexible, so she can arrange her schedule differently. So she’s trying to do extra-special things with Alyna.”

“OK,” I said.

“I said I’d go because it’s still just her first week at our school and I want her to feel included,” Isabella said.

“Sure, I get it. That’s nice of you,” I said, because it was. My best friend really is the best.

But again, that feeling was there, bothering



me. And I suddenly got an idea.

“Isabella,” I said, “do you want me to come over to your place tomorrow after my swimming lesson and you can do my hair?”

“What, really?” Isabella grinned and she grabbed my arm. “Are you kidding? Yes, of course, I do! I can’t believe you’re finally agreeing!”

“Well, we’re best friends,” I said, with a shrug, trying to look casual.

“I’m so excited! This is going to be great, Serafina,” Isabella said. “Alyna’s waiting for me, so I have to go, but I’ll see you tomorrow afternoon?” Isabella said.

“Yes, see you,” I said, watching Isabella go.

Then I hurried to catch up with some other friends who also walk home in the direction of my house.

Isabella had been asking to style my hair for months and I’d always said no. Sit still for hours just to try out ways to look different? It didn’t sound fun to me. I couldn’t believe I’d actually offered to have her do my hair.





Which meant I was definitely feeling jealous of Alyna. And definitely afraid Isabella might like Alyna more than she liked me.



Chapter Five

BRAIDS, BUNS, AND PONYTAILS

“Pink or blue? Or yellow or purple?” Isabella asked.

“Um...” It didn’t really matter to me. “You choose,” I said.

“Oh, nice! OK...let’s do three colors—purple, pink, and yellow!” Isabella exclaimed.

My dad had dropped me off at Isabella’s after my soccer practice, like we’d planned. Now we were up in Isabella’s room.

She had gotten some “hair chalk” for her birthday a few months ago but hadn’t used it yet. She had all the colors laid out on her desk—red, blue, yellow, purple, pink, green, black, and orange.

“So, to make the color brighter, we need to get our hair wet,” Isabella said. “Let’s bring the



chalk and the two hairbrushes into the bathroom with us.”

I followed her into the bathroom, and we filled the sink with water. Isabella brushed sections of my hair with water.

“I’ll start with pink,” Isabella said. She giggled as she rubbed the chalk down my hair several times.

She wet more sections and colored them yellow and purple.

“There, look in the mirror, Serafina,” she said.

I laughed. My hair looked wild!

“Now your turn to do my hair,” Isabella said. So, I brushed her hair with water, and then colored it in the colors she chose: red, yellow, and green.

“Nice,” she said, turning her head this way and that as she looked in the mirror. “Oh, and the color washes out really easily, but I want mine to last until the end of the weekend. Can you please blow-dry it? The warm air will make the color stay



longer.”

“Sure,” I said. I carefully blow-dried her hair, keeping the temperature warm and making sure the air didn’t go near her face.

“Want me to do yours now?” Isabella offered.

“Um, no, thanks,” I said quickly.

Isabella burst out laughing. “I was teasing, Serafina,” she said. “I know you well enough to know you don’t want your hair to stay colored for the whole weekend. OK, now back to my room to do some styling.”

Isabella set out a hand mirror and lots of colorful hair clips, hair elastics, ribbons, and bows. We spent the rest of the afternoon using them to make wild hairstyles. We checked out hairstyles in some magazines Isabella had, but mostly we just used our imaginations.

We put each other’s hair in tiny braids and thick braids, buns of all shapes and sizes, and ponytails—single ones and many at one time. We gathered strands of hair and made crisscrosses,





loops, and zigzags. And the whole time, we told funny jokes and stories.

At one point, Isabella asked, “Hey, Serafina! What about your party? Are you going horseback riding? Have you decided what you want to do?”

Oh no! I’d forgotten all about my party, even though I needed to tell my parents my final decision this weekend.

I’d always said no to Isabella about doing hairstyling, but today, we were actually having lots of fun with it. I was trying to be open to liking it, especially as I’d never done it before, and maybe that helped. I guess I shouldn’t have been so sure I wouldn’t like it without even trying it once.

So...maybe I needed to think more positively about going to a spa. Maybe it could be fun like this.

“I think I’ve made up my mind about my party,” I said. “It’s just...do you happen to know what Alyna’s doing for her party? I don’t want to do the same thing as her.”

“No, I don’t know,” Isabella said.



“OK,” I said. “I’m going to ask my parents if I can have a birthday party at the new spa.”

Right away, Isabella jumped up and cheered, “Oh, wow! Yay!” She took my hands and pulled me up as well and started dancing with me. We made up a “hurrah for the spa!” song. With our hair wild and colorful, we danced all around her room, singing our song over and over.



Chapter Six

DAD'S MAGIC ACT

“I know,” said Dad. “All your friends can come here, and I’ll put on a magic show for them. I’ll pull a rabbit out of a hat. I’ll saw my assistant in half...”

“Me! Me! Can I be your assistant, Dad?” Sebastian begged.

“Sure,” said Dad, with a nod. “And for my finale*, *poof!* I’ll vanish!”

Mom and I burst out laughing.

It was Sunday morning, and we were all digging into Mom’s famous banana walnut pancakes with loads of maple syrup. My hair was still colored in various bright colors from hanging out with Isabella the day before. I hadn’t told my parents about my party choice yet, but they were asking me again to decide.



“Dad, thanks for offering, but you aren’t a magician,” I said. “You don’t know one single magic trick!”

“And there is no way I am permitting you to attempt to saw our one and only son in half,” said Mom, with a grin.

“OK, fine,” said Dad, pretending to pout. “But Serafina, I may be your only option soon if you don’t tell us what you’d prefer to do for your birthday party. It’s only two weeks away.”

“Yes, honey,” said Mom. “Come on. It’s now or never—or Dad’s magician act. What’s your choice for your party?”

“Choose Dad’s magician act,” whispered my brother.

But...no way.

“OK, I’ve made a decision,” I said. I took a deep breath. “I want to have a spa birthday party.”

“Ugh!” said Sebastian. “Dad, you can be the magician at my next birthday party,” he promised before he stuffed the last, big bite of pancakes into his mouth.



Mom and Dad looked surprised. “Are you sure?” Mom asked.

“Yes,” I said, although I wasn’t completely sure.

“Isabella and I saw a new spa on Central Avenue on our walk home from school. It’s called Splendiferous Spa and it’s just opening up, so they’re offering specials,” I said. “It could be the perfect place for my party.”

“Yes, perhaps,” said Mom, slowly, “if you’re really sure that’s what you want.”

“Thanks, Mom. And yes, I’m absolutely sure,” I told her.

Half an hour later, Mom had called the spa and discovered they did host birthday parties for children, and they even had one final opening for their party special. They could only do the party at a specific time on one specific day—at ten o’clock in the morning on the Saturday that just happened to be my actual birthday, so Mom said that was perfect.

She put down a deposit* toward the fee for



the event, and that was that!

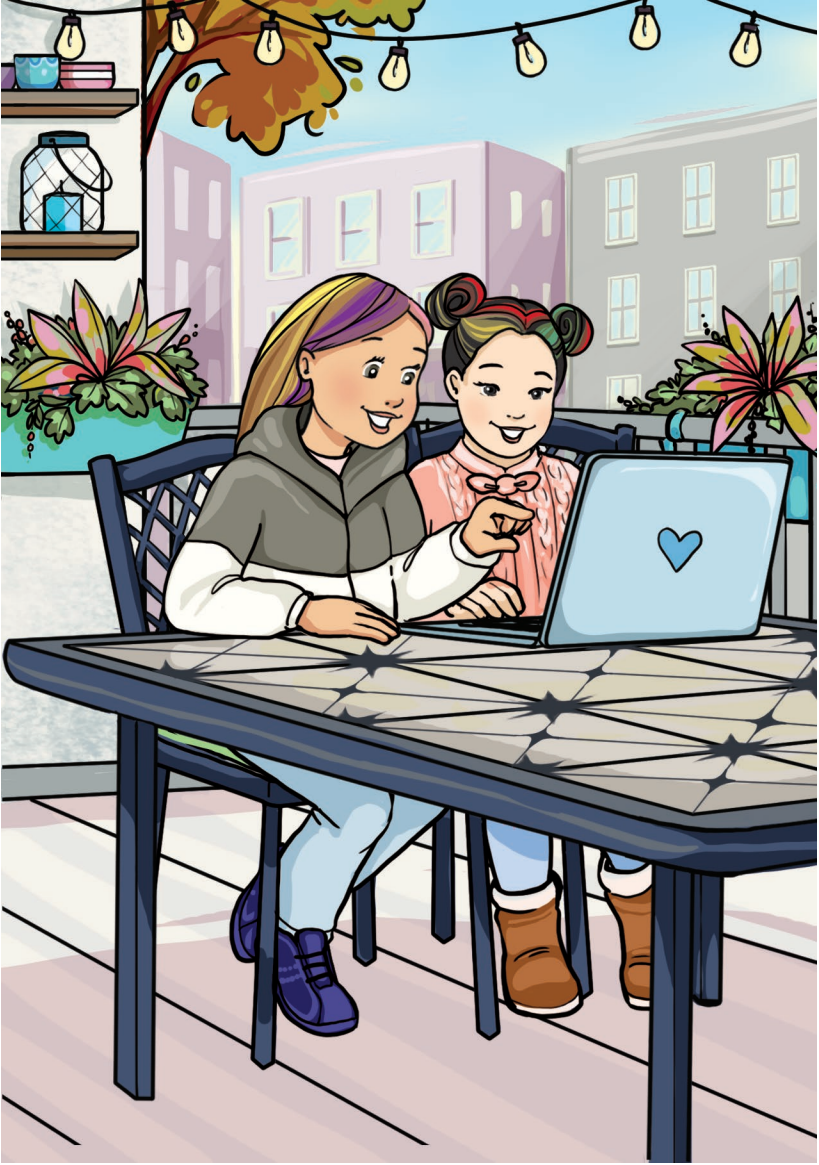
“You can go ahead and make the party invitations now, Serafina,” Mom said, after hanging up. “And you should try to send them out tomorrow or the next day.”

“Yay!” I cried, throwing my arms around Mom. Is it OK if I ask Isabella to come over this afternoon to help me make them—and can we use the computer to create the invitations?

“OK, sure,” said Mom. “But let me see it when it’s ready. Then I can help you email the invites to your guests.”

I made a quick phone call to Isabella, and my best friend arrived right after lunch, with a huge smile on her face. Mom got us set up on the home computer, and then Isabella and I had a fun afternoon making a special birthday invitation to Splendiferous Spa.





Chapter Seven

NOT SURE ABOUT ALYNA

“How long until dinner, Dad?” I asked.

“An hour or so,” Dad said. He was standing at the kitchen counter, chopping vegetables. “Which means there’s plenty of time for you and your brother to set the table.”

I laughed. “We will, Dad,” I said. “But first, I need to decide who to invite to my birthday party so I can send out the invites before dinner.”

My parents had already checked over the invitation Isabella and I made to make sure it had all the information needed and that everything was correct.

I had sort of worried about picking the time and day of my party without knowing what day and time Alyna’s party was. What if there was a conflict, and the girls in my class all wanted to go



to her party instead of mine?

“Oh!” Dad said. “Is there a limit on how many guests you can have? That might be awkward. Don’t you usually just invite all the kids in your class to your parties?”

“Usually,” I agreed. “But I thought I’d only invite girls to the spa party, because...well, I don’t know if the boys would want to come.”

“I definitely wouldn’t want to go,” said Sebastian, who was sitting at the kitchen table, coloring a picture. “Not if it’s boring stuff like face washing and cutting fingernails. Ugh.”

I grinned. “Well, it’s not exactly like that, but yeah.” And for a moment, I wondered again... Would I even enjoy my own party? What if it ended up being really dull with too much sitting around after all?

“Maybe you can just invite the girls in your class, then,” Dad said. “There’s only eight or nine, including you, right? And I thought I heard your mom say it was OK if there were ten of you altogether.”



Mom had said that, but the problem was that I just was not sure about Alyna. I didn't want to invite her. I felt so bad about feeling this way, but I was worried my friends might like Alyna more than me. What if she came and no one paid any attention to me because they all wanted to be with her?

No, that was silly. And it would be really mean if I didn't ask the one new girl in the class. She was probably the first one I should have on my list.

So, I added Alyna—right at the top.

While Dad continued preparing dinner, Mom got my class list with all the parents' email addresses, and we headed to the computer. Mom was going away on a work trip early the next morning, so she wanted to help me get this done before she left. And with her help, I sent out all nine of the invitations, including one to Alyna.

"Thanks, Mom," I said.

"Serafina, come set the table with me," called Sebastian. "We're eating really soon."



You're invited to a

Spa Party

**TO CELEBRATE
SERAFINA'S 10TH BIRTHDAY!**

When?

Saturday, September 29
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Where?

SPLENDIFEROUS SPA
232 Central Avenue



“OK, we’re just done now. I’m coming,” I called back.

As I hurried to the kitchen, I was excited. I hoped everyone got back to me soon so I could begin to look forward to my party.



Chapter Eight

ALL BY MYSELF

“How long is Mom away on her work trip?” I asked Dad, as he drove me to school.

“Just until tomorrow night,” answered Sebastian from beside me on the back seat.

I said goodbye to Dad and my brother and hurried into the schoolyard. Just as the bell rang, I saw Isabella in the yard. We headed to line up at the same time.

“Thanks for the invitation, Serafina,” she said, as we began slowly moving into the school.

“You’re coming, right?” I asked, with a laugh. Of course she was coming. “No matter what?” I joked.

But Isabella didn’t really answer. Instead, she looked worried.

“Serafina...” she began.



But the teacher on yard duty called out to us, saying, “Remember to walk quietly, girls!” So Isabella and I continued along the hallway and into class.

It was only as we got to our seats that Isabella had a chance to tell me she got my digital birthday invitation *and* a birthday invitation from Alyna as well.

“And Serafina, Alyna is having her birthday party at her house, but it’s on the same Saturday as yours, and at the same time,” she said, looking worried.

Oh no. This was a disaster!

I couldn’t talk more about it with Isabella because all the other girls in my class started coming over to thank me for my invitation. They were thanking Alyna, too, though.

One of the girls, Megan, grinned at me. “You and Alyna should have your parties together,” she said. “That way, none of us will need to choose which party to go to.”

I tried to smile back, but my stomach was in



a knot.

What if everyone chose to go to Alyna's party and not mine?

Also, I didn't get a birthday invitation from Alyna! Was I the only girl without one?

I couldn't really ask, but from what I could see, it definitely seemed that way.

Why didn't she include me?

I wasn't sure what to say or do. I tried to pay attention to the story Ms. Cohen was reading to us but being left out was all I could think about. And when Ms. Cohen asked us to get into groups to discuss the story, I didn't want any of the girls to ask me about my party or Alyna's, and what would happen. So, I asked two of my friends who were boys if I could be in their group.

Even then, it was hard to talk about the book. My stomach was hurting, and before too long, it began to get more and more sore. By the time the morning recess bell rang, my stomach was really hurting. Almost as much as my feelings were hurting.





When I told Ms. Cohen, she sent me to the school nurse's office. The nurse called my dad, and he came from work and got me.

I was really glad Dad had work he could bring home because he could continue on with what he was doing, and I could lie in bed and feel bad all by myself.

Soon, my stomach didn't even hurt anymore, which should have made me feel good, but I didn't. Because all I could do was worry about my party. What was going to happen with it? And why wasn't I invited to Alyna's party? Especially after I'd invited her to mine.



Chapter Nine

P-ROBABLE P-ARTY P-ROBLEM

“How are you feeling this morning?” Dad asked, poking his head into my bedroom.

I knew I should go to school. My stomach had been fine all yesterday afternoon and evening, but suddenly, at the thought of going into my classroom and seeing all the other girls, it began hurting again.

“I don’t feel great, Dad,” I said.

“OK, sweetie,” Dad replied, looking worried. “I wonder if I should be trying to get you in to see Dr. Olensky.”

“No, that’s OK. I don’t need to go to the doctor,” I said quickly. “I don’t feel as bad as I did yesterday. I probably just need to stay in bed a little longer. Maybe just today and tomorrow.”

“OK, if you’re sure,” Dad said. “So, yes. Just



stay in bed, then, and I'll bring you some toast and juice a little later."

Just then, Sebastian stuck his head into my room, too.

"I'm sorry your tummy hurts, Serafina," he said, looking sad.

I smiled. "Hey, buddy, thanks," I said, and then asked Dad, "What about Sebastian? We need to take him to school!"

Mom wasn't back from her business trip yet, so I couldn't stay in bed. I had to go with Dad to take Sebastian to school. I wasn't old enough to stay home alone yet.

"No, that's OK," Dad said. "I'll call around and arrange for one of Sebastian's friends' parents to come by and pick him up for school. You just stay there, Serafina."

"Yeah, I don't mind," Sebastian said.

"Thanks, you two," I said and snuggled back into my covers.



“Serafina, you haven’t been feeling well?” Mom asked. It was Tuesday night, and she’d just gotten home. Sebastian was already asleep in bed. I’d been up in my room, reading, but when I heard her come in, I went downstairs and joined her in the living room.

“I’ve had a stomachache since Monday,” I said.

I’d had a day at home, and my stomach didn’t hurt as much now, but every time I thought about going back to school, it began hurting again.

I was dreading going back to school. Isabella had called a few times, but I didn’t want to talk to her. What if she said she was choosing to go to Alyna’s party instead of mine?

“I’m so sorry,” Mom said, stroking my hair with her hand. “But maybe this will cheer you up.”

Mom took out her phone and scrolled through it. She showed me the screen. It was a party invitation—to me.

I tapped and it opened. It was an invitation to Alyna’s birthday.



I stared.

“It arrived on my phone Monday morning, but I was on my way to my first meeting, and then I forgot all about it until I got home tonight,” Mom said. “I’m sorry I didn’t let you know sooner.”

“That’s OK, Mom,” I said in a wobbly voice.

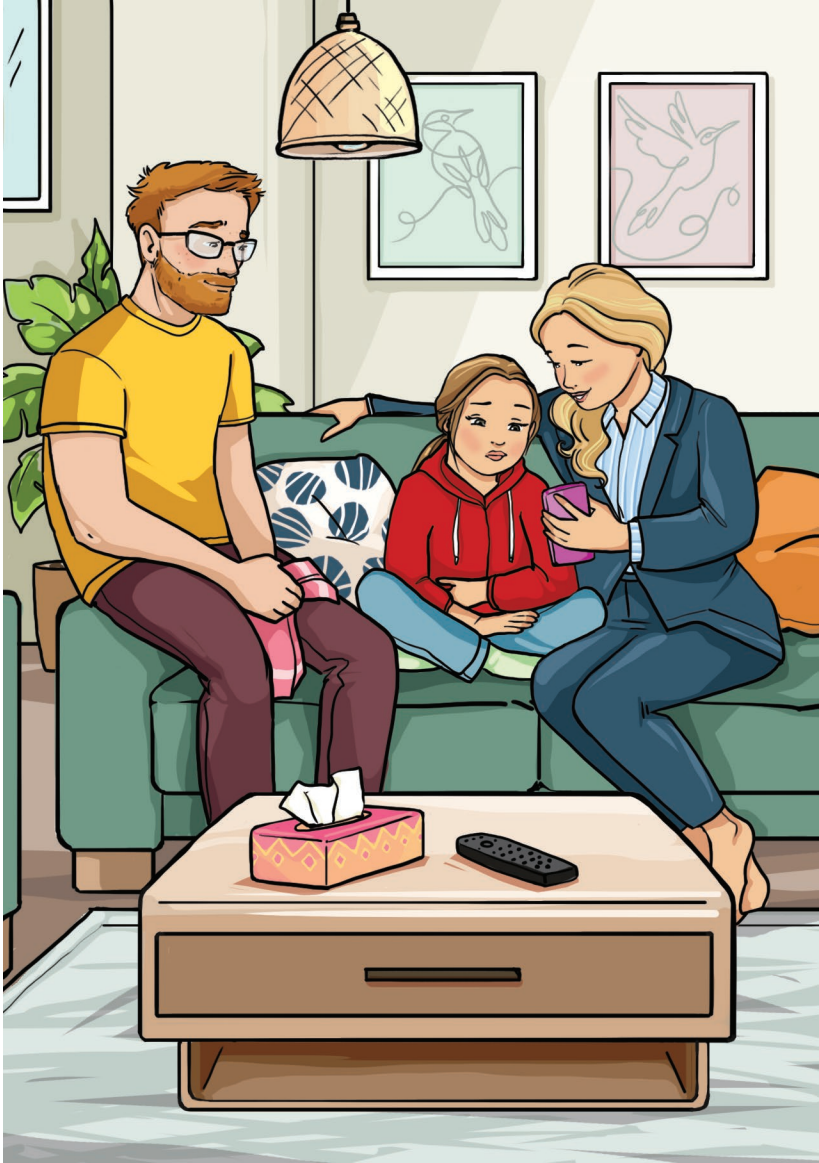
And then it all poured out. All my feelings about Isabella and Alyna, and my birthday, and why I chose to do my birthday at the spa, and how it was all going wrong. How Alyna’s party was at the same exact time on the same day!

Dad came in while I was talking, which was good, because I wanted him to hear all this too.

I explained that I didn’t make up the stomachache. That my stomach really did hurt when I was in class and realized Alyna didn’t include me in her party invitations. And that I was worried about Isabella wanting to be Alyna’s friend more than she wanted to be mine. And that my stomach had kept hurting every time I thought about going back.

Dad nodded. “We believe you, Serafina.”





“I’m sorry you felt so bad, honey,” Mom said. “I’m also sorry you didn’t feel you could talk to us about this. Or to Isabella. She’s been your good friend for so long.”

I nodded. Talking to my parents or Isabella would probably have made me feel better. But I just wanted to hide from it all, I guess.

“So,” Mom said, patting my knee, “do you have any ideas about how we can solve this probable party problem?”

Dad grinned. “Lots of p’s there,” he said. “P-robable p-arty p-robblem!”

I grinned, too. I was already feeling better. “P-ossibly,” I said.

“P-otentially?” asked Dad.

“P-erhaps,” I agreed.

“Oh, you two!” Mom laughed.

“Maybe Alyna and I could somehow combine our parties,” I suggested, “but...I don’t know exactly how it would work...”

Mom stood up.

“Well, why don’t you get ready for bed, and



your dad and I will put our two heads together and see what we come up with?” she said. “Oh, and you are definitely going to school tomorrow,” she added.

I nodded. “Sounds like a p-erfect p-lan,” I said, giggling.



Chapter Ten

BIRTHDAY PARTIES AREN'T COMPETITIONS

The next morning before school, while Mom, Dad, Sebastian, and I ate breakfast together, Mom and Dad told me the plan they'd come up with.

I agreed it was a good idea. It meant I would have to be brave, but I knew it was for the best. I gave my brother a quick summary of the whole situation, and he got very excited about the plan.

“I'm glad that your tummy ache is gone, too,” he added.

Mom dropped me at school, and right away, Isabella came running up.

“Serafina, how are you feeling? I'm so excited you're back. I missed you!” she said.

I gave her such a big hug. I felt relieved and happy.



That feeling gave me courage. I told Isabella I'd be right back and I hurried over to Alyna, who was just walking into the yard through the school gates.

I took a deep breath. "Hi Alyna," I said to her. "Can I talk to you alone for a minute, before school starts?"

"Oh hi, Serafina," Alyna said, sounding a bit surprised. "Um, I guess so. Sure."

I took another breath. This was hard.

"I just want to say sorry. I've been jealous of you ever since you joined our class, and I'm sorry about that," I said. "You are so confident and nice, and everyone likes you, especially Isabella. Isabella has always been my best friend..."

I was looking at the ground. But I knew I had to look Alyna in the eyes when I said this part.

"I was worried she liked you more than me, and that made me feel bad," I said. "I was worried everyone would go to your party and not mine. Also, I thought you didn't invite me to your party..."



“But I did invite you!” Alyna interrupted.

“Yes, I know that now,” I said, quickly. “But at first, I didn’t. And I felt bad about feeling left out.”

Alyna shook her head. “Serafina, that’s really nice of you to tell me all this, but you know, you’re wrong. I’m not brave or confident. I’ve just been pretending.” She looked away.

What?

“I’ve had to go to so many new schools, and every time, I’m scared and nervous no one will like me. So I just pretend,” she said, her voice shaking. “I pretend to be confident. I act friendly. And I just hope that I fool other kids into thinking I’m really great, so they’ll want to be friends with me.”

She swallowed. “You know, I didn’t want to have a birthday party so soon after starting this new school because...what if no one wanted to come? But my parents said I should.”

I was staring at her. I couldn’t believe it.

“Hey, everyone does really like you though. I know they’re excited about your party,” I said.



“But your party is at the same time,” Alyna said, looking worried. “It’s not really fair to make people choose, or for us to have to feel like we’re competing for guests.”

“Exactly,” I said, smiling. “Birthday parties aren’t competitions!”

Alyna smiled back.

“So, my parents have a plan. Let me tell you.”



“Happy birthday, Serafina and Alyna!” announced the banner hanging inside the welcome area of the Splendiferous Spa.

It was the day of my birthday. Alyna and I, our parents, and Sebastian were waiting for our party guests. My parents had called Alyna’s parents and talked—and we’d agreed on this combined spa birthday party. But would it work out?

And...would I have fun at my spa birthday party?



Just then, Isabella came racing through the doors.

“Happy birthday, Alyna! Happy birthday, Serafina!” she cried, and grabbed each of us in a huge hug. “This is the best! I don’t think I’ve ever been so excited for a birthday party.”

I laughed. My favorite friend in the world had shown up, and her happy face was already making me feel optimistic*.

Then the spa doors opened again, and seven more of our classmates came rushing in, laughing and chatting. I looked at Alyna, and we smiled at each other. Maybe this would work!

But...a spa. It was great all my friends were here, and I knew Isabella was excited by the spa activities, but what was I in for?

Three women wearing bright pink uniforms with their names embroidered on them came out to greet us.

“Hello, I’m Angela, and this is Pearl and Lena,” said one woman with a smile. “First, we want to say welcome to the birthday girls, Alyna



and Serafina, and to your guests! Parents, you're welcome to relax here or join us at any time."

As Dad, Alyna's dad, and Sebastian headed off to go bowling, Mom told Alyna and me, "We'll peek in on you in a bit." Then she and Alyna's mom settled down in the comfortable waiting room to have a juice and, as Mom told Alyna's mom, "to get to know each other."

"Now, girls, please follow us," Angela said. She led all of us girls down the hall into another room, the room with all the comfortable looking chairs and robes that I had spotted through the window when Isabella and I had first noticed the "Coming Soon" sign.

Now, the room was decorated with balloons, paper flowers, and colorful streamers. Off to the side was a little table where all our guests began putting their cards and gifts, chatting excitedly.

Alyna turned to me with a big grin, and we did a high five.

"We have so many fun things planned for you today," said Angela, "including some spa



treatments*. But first—some games to get you on your feet and moving, beginning with...a scavenger hunt!”

My eyes opened wide. A scavenger hunt?

“Oh, yay!” cried Megan.

“Scavenger hunts are awesome!” agreed our friend, Lissa.

Isabella leaned into me to whisper that the scavenger hunt was Alyna’s idea. She had planned to have one at her party. “When I told her you’d love that too, Alyna said, ‘We should have one at our shared spa party!’”

I grinned. It was cool to find out Alyna loved scavenger hunts too.

“It’s perfect!” I said to Alyna. “Thanks for suggesting it for our party today.”

Soon we were all racing around with our lists, hunting for certain spa items.

Next, we got to play musical spa chairs. There were ten of us and ten chairs, but only nine chairs had pink pillows on them. We moved past the chairs while music played. When the music



stopped, we had to grab a pillow from the nearest chair. Whoever missed out on a pillow had to sit out, and another pillow was removed from a spa chair for the next round.

Finally, there were only two chairs left. Then I lost out, and there were just two girls, Alyna and Megan, and one chair with a pillow. And—Alyna won!

There was one last game. Pin the Tail on the Donkey has been my all-time favorite party game since I was little. And the third and final game today was Pin the Eye Mask on the Face!

“You first, birthday girl,” said Isabella. She pointed me toward the drawing of a face pinned to the wall, handed me a paper eye mask with a piece of sticky tape on the back, and slipped a spa eye mask over my eyes so I couldn’t see. Then she spun me around three times and pointed me in the direction of the face—I think!

“OK, go!” cried all the girls.

Giggling, I attempted to make my way to the other side of the room and pin the mask on the





face. Yes, it was happening. I was having a good time at the spa!



Chapter Eleven

MANI-PEDI

Ahh...

I was wearing a plush robe and spa sandals, my hair pulled back out of the way with a matching plush headband, sitting in a comfy chair, soaking the tips of my fingers in warm bubbly water. Having a manicure was a totally new experience for me! Who knew sitting still could be so much fun?

“Okie-dokie!” said Pearl after a few minutes, gently lifting each of my hands out of the water and drying it with a fluffy towel. Next, she trimmed my nails, filed them with a thin nail file, and buffed* them to make them shiny.

Pearl rubbed my hands with moisturizing lotion*. Then she asked me if I wanted her to put some polish on my nails. Normally, I’d say no, but





today was a special day. I wanted to try something new—to be adventurous!

So, I said OK to Pearl.

I chose something more my style—a shiny, iridescent* polish, and then glanced around the room again as Pearl painted it onto my nails.

Isabella was grinning, talking excitedly with Lena, and looking intently at something on a small tray. What were they talking about? Oh, of course! I smiled. Isabella was trying to decide what nail polish to choose.

“This one,” she finally said, pointing. “I’m going to go sparkly today because it’s my best friend’s birthday!”

Alyna looked like she was enjoying herself, too—in fact, all our friends looked happy!

When our nails were dried, it was time for a pedicure.

First, Pearl put warm water in my foot basin. When I saw she was about to drop a small pink ball in the water, I asked, “Hang on. What’s that?”

“It’s a bath bomb*. Watch!” she said, smiling.



Phzzzzzz! Pearl dropped it in, and the water all fizzed up!

“Now, your feet,” she said.

Oh-oh!

“Are you going to touch my feet? My feet are so ticklish!” I said, squirming.

But she just laughed. “No, you can just slip your bare feet in the basin and soak them,” she said.

Ahhhh! She was right. It felt so good!

Next, Pearl showed me two cold cucumber slices.

“What are *those* for?” I said, surprised.

“They’ll soothe your eyes and your skin,” she said.

What? Really?

I looked over at Alyna. She must have seen the doubtful look on my face because she nodded and gave me a thumbs-up.

So, I leaned my head back, like Pearl suggested, and closed my eyes and...*mmmm*...it did feel nice!



After our pedicures were done and the cucumber slices were removed, Angela introduced all of us to Mila.

“Hello, birthday party girls,” Mila said, as she turned on some beautiful calm music. “I’m the relaxation instructor. Yes, some people need help learning to relax! It doesn’t come naturally to everyone.”

I smiled. She was right about that. I definitely have never liked relaxing.

“But relaxing is an important part of having a happy life. It is vital* to spend time being still and quiet sometimes, doing nothing,” Mila said in a soothing voice. “This helps keep our minds free, clear—and creative.”

Being still? Keeping quiet? Even though I’d been surprisingly happy sitting here so far, there was no way I was going to be able to sit still much longer. Not at my own birthday party!

She explained she was going to guide us in a simple breathing exercise.

“First, put your heads back, keep your eyes



closed, and relax,” she suggested.

I glanced around. All the other girls were closing their eyes.

“Give it a try, Serafina!” Isabella whispered to me in an encouraging voice.

I was sure I’d feel antsy* if I closed my eyes and tried to relax, but I’d try my best.

“Think of a safe place where you feel calm,” said Mila. “Do you like being in natural settings? Where are your favorite places in nature where you feel safe and peaceful?”

I closed my eyes. While she talked, I listened.

“You can visit this place anytime in your mind,” Mila continued. “Go there now. What is it like? Use all your senses. Describe to yourself how it feels to be there.”

I tried not to think about anything else. I did what she suggested. I thought of a place that is special to me...and I went there.

When the session was over, I opened my eyes, sat up, and my friends and I all grinned at one another. I couldn’t believe it! I’d done it! I felt



relaxed and ready for anything. If only this day
wouldn't end!



Chapter Twelve

ONE HAPPY BIRTHDAY SONG

Unfortunately, it was time to take off our comfy robes and headbands. Our birthday parties were over.

But no! Suddenly Mom, Dad, Sebastian, and Alyna’s parents came into the spa room cheering “Happy Birthday,” and carrying two gorgeous birthday cakes.

Angela lit the birthday candles on the cakes, and everyone sang the happy birthday song to Alyna and me together. It felt just right.

While everyone ate birthday cake and drank pink lemonade in cups with ice cubes and little paper umbrellas in them, Alyna and I opened our birthday gifts.

“A brand new soccer ball! I need a new one. It’s just what I wanted.” I leaned over and gave



Isabella a big hug. “Thanks again for suggesting a spa birthday party.”

My best friend had just put a big chocolate icing flower in her mouth.

“Hno pfproblem,” she sputtered with a grin, trying not to spray me with chocolate.

Alyna laughed. Then she reached over and gave me a big hug too.

“This was such a great idea to combine our birthday parties, Serafina,” she said. “I think it’s my best birthday ever.” Her eyes were even glistening a little.

“Mine too,” I told her, and I really meant it.

I sat there, holding the soccer ball in my hands, and I had an idea.

“Hey, you two. This spa day was great, but soccer is super great! How about the three of us meet up tomorrow and try out my new ball at the soccer field? Doesn’t that sound fun?”

“Totally,” said Alyna, instantly.

Isabella popped another big chocolate flower in her mouth.





“Tffotffally!” Isabella shouted, splattering chocolate all over Alyna and me. The three of us burst out laughing.

“It’s a plan,” I cried. “An excellent plan!”



Glossary

*Many words have more than one meaning. Here are the definitions of words marked with this symbol * (an asterisk) as they are used in this story.*

antsy: *restless*

bath bomb: *a powdered-soap ball that fizzes and makes bubbles when it is dropped into water*

buff: *gently rub fingernails or toenails with a special tool to smooth them*

deposit: *a small amount of money you pay for a party or other event before it takes place, with the rest of the money to be paid later*

finale: *the final part of a show which is often when something special happens*

iridescent: *appears to have changing rainbow-like colors when looked at from different angles*



manicure: *soaking, shaping, and painting fingernails*

moisturizing lotion: *creamy liquid that softens and smooths skin and helps keep it from becoming dry*

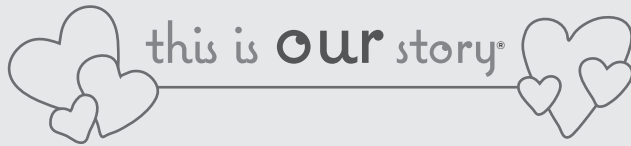
optimistic: *looks on the bright side, hopeful*

pedicure: *soaking and massaging feet; also trimming and painting toenails*

spa treatments: *calming, soothing activities (such as manicures, foot soaks, and face masks), which are done in a relaxing space by specially trained people*

vital: *necessary*





We are an extraordinary generation of children.
And have we got a story to tell.

Our Generation® is unlike any that has come before. We're making a positive impact on our community by performing small, but powerful, acts of kindness, standing tall for causes we believe in, and creating a narrative where everyone can make a difference.

We're speaking up for those around us, taking leaps to develop big ideas, and embracing new opportunities without ever forgetting to build lasting memories along the way. From playing sports outdoors and learning new instruments, to singing out loud and dancing around, we're laughing together with friends as we share in the best moments of being a kid.

Our dreams have no limits, our voices echo around every corner, and we have the strongest belief that we can make anything and everything possible with our greatest gift: imagination.

This is our time. This is our story.

ourgeneration.com

About the Author

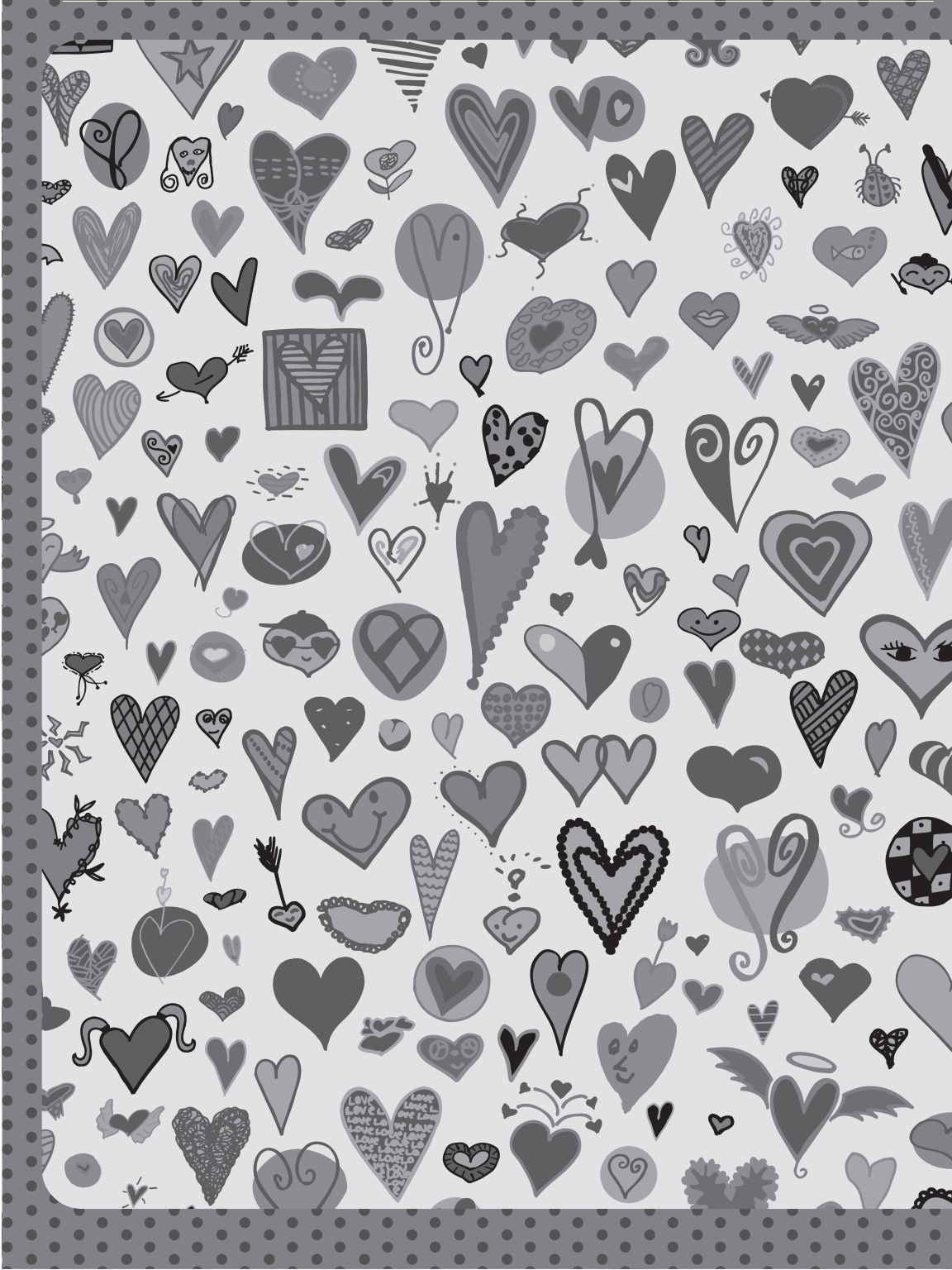
Susan Hughes is an award-winning author of many children's books, including picture books, chapter books, young adult novels, nonfiction books for all ages, and even a graphic nonfiction book. Susan is also a freelance editor and writer. She helps coach and guide other writers in revising and polishing their own manuscripts.

About the Illustrator

Passionate about drawing from an early age, Géraldine Charette decided to pursue her studies in computer multimedia in order to further develop her style and technique. Her favorite themes to explore in her illustrations are fashion and urban life. In her free time, Géraldine loves to paint and travel. She is passionate about horses and loves spending time at the stable. It's where she feels most at peace and gives her time to think and fuel her creativity.



Hurrah for the Spa! became the book that you are holding in your hands with the assistance of the talented people at Maison Battat Inc., including Joe Battat, Dany Battat, Alexandra Bonfà, Loredana Ramacieri, Sandy Jacinto, Véronique Casavant, Cynthia Lopez, Laurie Gaudreau-Levesque, Ananda Guarany, Jenny Gambino, Arlee Stewart, Sophie Trudel, Natalie Cohen, Zeynep Yasar, Joanne Burke Casey, and Pamela Shrimpton.





this is OUR story®

Hurrah for the Spa!

Serafina™ is excited! Her birthday is coming, and she gets to choose the kind of party she wants to have. It's not easy to pick—she loves so many sports and outdoor activities. Horseback riding? Soccer? A scavenger hunt?

But then her best friend, Isabella, spies the sign on a boarded-up storefront announcing, “Splendiferous Spa—Coming Soon!” and begs Serafina to have her birthday party at the spa. And Alyna, the super-popular new girl in their class, seems to like spas just as much as Isabella does.

Serafina isn't sure what to do. Could a sit-down party anywhere be much fun?
What if she makes the wrong choice?

It's impossible to separate Our Generation® characters from the generation of girls who read about and play with them, for they are one and the same. They're changing the world by making their households greener. They're baking cupcakes to help charities. They're writing in their journals, practicing for recitals, doing cartwheels down the block and giggling with their friends until they can hardly breathe. Our Generation is about girls growing up together. “This is our story” reflects the community of these amazing girls as they laugh, learn and create the narrative of their own generation.

Ages 7 and up

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