

When you wish upon a star

by Maria Gill

Chapter One

You've probably heard of the saying, 'be careful what you wish for because it might come true'. Well, I wished upon a star, it came true and it was nothing like I imagined.

It all began when I was in Year six at school. Mrs Montgomery had set up pen pals to write to us.

I said I would only do it if she matched me with someone my own age and a girl. "Oh, but I have," Mrs Montgomery said with a gleam in the eye.

Mrs Montgomery thought she had my card. She was always trying to outsmart me. Not that I'm extra special smart or anything. It's just that I can be a bit determined to get my own way. My mum says I'm stubborn but I disagree. There's a difference. Stubborn people, like my brother Steve, refuse to do things. I, on the other hand, will do it, but only my way.

Mrs Montgomery slipped the card with my penpal's name, on to my desk. It read:

*Chloe Papadopolis
Village Post Office
Isle of Santorini
Greece*

Mrs Montgomery turned to read my reaction. I hung my head down to read the address again so that my hair hung over my face and hid my smile. 'A girl with the same name as me that lives in Greece'.

Mrs Montgomery knew I had a 'thing' for Greece ever since my Grandmother had come to stay. Grandma worked with a Greek lady and had learnt the language to surprise her friend. Grandma practiced on me, when she stayed with us.

I also had a 'thing' about my name. I love it but it sets up an oxymoron. You know, something that should be one way but is another. And that's me. I have an exotic name but a plain face. You can see it on people's face when they meet you for the first time. They turn round to greet you with the phrase half out... 'Chloe, what a lovely name.' They look at you, try to find a redeeming feature about your face. Their mind chucks out the phrases... 'my what a lot of freckles you've got' or 'what a head of hair you've got'. They usually settle with 'what lovely blue eyes you've got'. Then the next time they meet you they struggle to remember your name because they feel it doesn't suit your face.

Mrs Montgomery walked to the front of the class. "Quiet, class." Her voice came down an octave. "I want you to spend fifteen minutes writing a letter to your pen pal. In this letter, you will tell the pen pal a bit about yourself."

Then she gave us one of her looks that says, 'get on with it'. And we did. The room kinda hummed. I wasn't the only one, whose number she had. I could see Violet sucking on her pen, while she thought of what to say. I bet the teacher had found someone who loved astronomy for her.

Joseph banged his pen against his nose to a beat, a tune thrumming though his body. His penpal would have to be a musician or singer of some kind.

Rima jiggled her leg while she wrote furiously across the page. Her penpal would most likely be a sport's person.

I looked around the room and just about everyone was bursting with excitement. This was the most exciting thing we had done all term. Of course, the troublesome threesome: Caitlen, Petra and Dominique, were throwing their eyes about and looking nonchalantly around the room. There would be no way they would let the teacher know they were excited – about anything. Boys, beads and beauty were their thing and everything else was 'naff'. But, I bet Mrs Montgomery had found them someone who could communicate at their level. Only they weren't going to let on that they were interested.

I wrote furiously until I had gone to the end of the page and put my hand up. Mrs Montgomery had already anticipated my request and slipped more paper on to my desk as she walked by.

I wrote until the bell went, then quickly checked my letter.

Yassou Chloe, Kía ora (Maori)

Guess what? I am a Chloe from across the other side of the world. How cool is that! Mrs Montgomery, our teacher, wants us to write about ourselves so here it is one go:

Likes: ice cream, pizza, sunny days at the beach, baby chicks (we've got six cute ones at home), baby lambs (we've got twins), books, books and more books (mum calls me a book worm), English (I like to write), swimming, dance classes and probably lots more but that will do for now.

Dislikes: potatoes, pumpkin, rainy days at school, our bossy guinea fowl (we've got two), maths, running, softball, exams of any kind and my big brother (called Steve, he's a big lump).

I'm eleven. I live out in the country and have loads of farm animals. I go to a country school. Next year, I'm going to Intermediate.

My grandma taught me a few Greek words but not that many. I'm hoping you know more English or we'll have troubles talking to each other.

I'd love to hear about your country, it sounds soooooo exciting. I wish that one day I could visit you in Greece.

Adio,

Ka kite (Maori)

Chloe Smythe

Ps: My best friend Rima teaches me Maori words. I like to collect words.

Chapter Two

It was several weeks before I heard from my Greek Chloe.

We had so much in common: she liked to write and dance too. Though, we didn't look alike: she was all black hair and bronzed skin. Just how I imagined the real 'me' would look. The amazing thing was; she wished she lived in a country like ours. And that was where it all started.

I wrote back and said 'imagine if we could swap lives for a week'.

Greek Chloe wrote back and said, we'll have to find a way. I was intrigued; my wish – was just that – a wish. It sounded like Greek Chloe was more determined than me, and was looking for a loop hole. And she found one.

Meanwhile, back in the class - a giggle broke out, from the back of the room.

"Have you got a little joke you want to share, Caitlen? Mrs Montgomery strained her neck to look over the faces to where Caitlen sat with her two villain-in-arms: Petra and Dominique. Petra slipped a piece of paper into her pocket and stared with wide-eyed innocence back at the teacher.

But Mrs Montgomery doesn't miss a trick. She might be small and wear glasses and you'd think she wouldn't notice a slight of arm but she does. I reckon she can read our minds. "Pass the note down the front of the class, Petra."

Petra's smirk dropped into a sulk, as she fished out the note and passed it to Jordan in front of her. When it was my turn to pass, I quickly glanced at it, as I passed it in slow motion. It read:

'Do you reckon she wears green knickers, as well?'

A flush shot up my face. They were talking about me. You see, most my clothes were green: socks, shorts, dresses, tops, shoes, headbands, head ties. It was my favourite colour. If I like something, I tend to go overboard with it. That's what my dad says.

And Caitlen and her gang had it in for me, ever since I had been selected for the Writing Club and they hadn't. Professional jealousy, my dad calls it. He says when you're good at something someone will always be jealous. My talent was writing. I was lousy at maths, had no interest in music, liked sports but only the solitary types like dance and swimming. But I could write – streams of it. Mum says quantity doesn't mean quality and I should spend more time editing.

Mrs Montgomery put the note on the table without reading it.