



ALICE- MIRANDA AT SEA

Mystery and
intrigue above
deck and below!

Jacqueline
Harvey



Praise for the Alice-Miranda series

'Alice-Miranda has a beguiling ability to enchant those around her and an enthusiasm for helping people in need. This new series, with its sprightly, resilient heroine, who is sweet without being cloying, offers readers a lively blend of humour and intrigue.'

Kirkus Reviews

'Alice-Miranda's optimism and determination is infectious. An immediately lovable character that young girls are going to want to be or be with.'

Deborah Abela, bestselling author of *Max Remy*

'What's the worst thing about reviewing kids' books? When you find a book so enchanting that you want to ignore your own child to keep reading it! A modern story with a touch of the classics about it.'

Megan Blandford, Kids' Book Review blog

'Full of humour and with very likeable characters, this book sets a benchmark for a fantastic new series.'

Donella Reed, Read Plus blog

'Alice-Miranda is a powerhouse of positive thinking, a problem solver and a friend to all – she's quite simply unstoppable.'

Maitland Mercury

'It is a welcome change to read about a small child who changes adults' lives . . . even though she never changes, everyone around her does, for the better.'

Sydney's Child

'Her generosity of spirit, enthusiasm and ultra well-heeled practicality endear her to the reader.'

Katharine England, *Adelaide Advertiser*

'A great book for ages 6 and up.'

Kate O'Donnell, *Magpies Magazine*

'Ever since reading the first Alice-Miranda book, I've been dying to read the second book. Finally, here it is, and I love it . . . Now I want the third book.'

Matilda Murrihy (11 years), *Herald Sun*

'In the best tradition of Pollyanna, Pippi Longstocking and Milly-Molly-Mandy . . . A modern fairytale, *Alice-Miranda On Holiday* is a delightful read full of quirky characters and events, plenty of chuckle-worthy moments, and a wonderful sense of fun.'

NSW Association for Gifted and Talented Children website

Alice-Miranda at Sea

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RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

For Ian and Sandy

A Random House book

Published by Random House Australia Pty Ltd
Level 3, 100 Pacific Highway, North Sydney NSW 2060
www.randomhouse.com.au

First published by Random House Australia in 2011

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Addresses for companies within the Random House Group can be found at www.randomhouse.com.au/offices.

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication Entry

Author: Harvey, Jacqueline

Title: Alice-Miranda at sea / Jacqueline Harvey

ISBN: 978 1 86471 848 5 (pbk.)

Subjects: Girls – Juvenile fiction

Ocean travel – Juvenile fiction

Dewey Number: A823.4

Cover and internal illustrations by J.Yi

Cover design by Mathematics www.xy-1.com

Internal design by Midland Typesetters, Australia

Typeset in 13/18 pt Adobe Garamond by Midland Typesetters, Australia

Printed in Australia by Griffin Press, an accredited ISO AS/NZS 14001:2004

Environmental Management System printer

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



The paper this book is printed on is certified against the Forest Stewardship Council® Standards. Griffin Press holds FSC chain of custody certification SGS-COC-005088. FSC promotes environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.

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Prologue



Neville Nordstrom stared at the screen. His thick vanilla eyebrows furrowed together like a pair of hairy caterpillars and his nose began to twitch.

‘Is it really you?’ Neville whispered at the computer. But of course there was no reply. His friend had logged out moments ago, signing off with the usual ‘so long and happy hunting’.

They’d been talking via the secure chat area of the club for only a couple of months. But in that time Neville had come to realise that his friend,

wherever he was, was the most passionate collector he'd encountered yet. Smart too.

But perhaps not smart enough. Neville was sure that his new friend was conversing under an assumed name; he'd laughed out loud when he saw it. *F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Wasn't that a famous writer – and a dead one at that?

Then again, Neville hadn't exactly been honest either. He wanted to tell his parents about his hobby but he knew they wouldn't understand. And it was getting harder to keep up the ruse. He'd overheard his mother talking to his father last week – wondering how on earth Neville's shorts could be getting tighter when he was playing football every other day. Neville made a mental note not to eat so many doughnuts while he was hunting.

Then yesterday, his online friend's disguise had begun to slip. He had said too much and one by one Neville was joining the dots. Neville was almost certain that he was chatting to someone very important – more important than most people in the world, really. And definitely the one man who could help him to save the species. Now all he had to do was prove it.

Chapter 1



Alice-Miranda Highton-Smith-Kennington-Jones turned towards the driver as the limousine weaved its way through the streets from the airport.

‘Excuse me, Mr Fernandez, are we nearly there?’ she asked through the opening that separated the driver from his passengers.

The man smiled to himself and kept his eyes firmly on the road ahead. ‘Soon, miss. Very soon. In fact just around this corner you will see the sea.’

Alice-Miranda clasped her hands together in

delight. She nudged Millie and Jacinta, who were sitting either side of her. Millie was fiddling with her camera and Jacinta was staring wide-eyed out of the window.

‘Look, over there!’ Jacinta pointed at the sparkling harbour spread out in front of them.

Millie looked up and craned her neck to get a better view. ‘Oh, wow! I have to get a photo of that.’

‘It’s a pity we’re leaving straight away,’ Alice-Miranda told her friends. ‘Barcelona has some very interesting buildings.’

‘Well, that sounds boring,’ Jacinta said and wrinkled her nose.

‘No, not at all. Mummy and Daddy once took me to visit an enormous cathedral called the Sagrada Família. It sort of looks like it was made by a giant out of plasticine and soft cheese,’ Alice-Miranda replied.

Hugh Kennington-Jones glanced up from his newspaper. ‘Not everyone’s cup of tea. But Mr Gaudí’s constructions are certainly, um, unique.’

‘Sounds weird.’ Jacinta’s eyes were fixed on the coastline. ‘Look! There’s a ship. I wonder if that’s the *Octavia*.’

Cecelia Highton-Smith turned to look out the window. ‘Oh yes, I think it could be. Aunty Gee is

so kind allowing Charlotte and Lawrence to have their wedding on board. It's very clever of them to get married at sea.'

Millie lowered the window and snapped away with her camera as the limousine headed towards the dock.

'And hopefully, since we've come all the way to Spain, we might be able to shake off those jolly pesky photographers who don't seem to leave Lawrence and Charlotte alone at the moment,' Hugh frowned.

'They're called paparazzi, Daddy, and they're only doing their job,' Alice-Miranda informed him.

'Well, it's a stupid job.' Millie laid her camera back in her lap. 'I really don't understand why people would want to see photographs of Lawrence eating a banana or getting his morning coffee or buying groceries – I mean, he is handsome and everything, but that's just ridiculous.'

'Aunt Charlotte will have to get used to it too, I suppose,' Alice-Miranda nodded.

'My mother loves them,' Jacinta said.

'Who?' Millie asked.

'The paparazzi, of course,' Jacinta replied.

Jacinta's mother, Ambrosia Headlington-Bear, spent her life travelling the world looking glamorous,

with a trail of hangers-on longer than most red carpets. The last time she had seen her daughter was over ten months ago and their most recent conversation had consisted of a terse exchange about the school play.

The limousine suddenly seemed very small – as though an elephant had hopped on board and no one was willing to acknowledge its presence. Cecelia pursed her lips and wondered if her decision had been the right one.

Millie hastily changed the subject. ‘I can’t believe that we’re going on Queen Georgiana’s ship. And do you remember when I first met her; I thought she was Mrs Oliver’s sister. She must think I’m completely thick.’

‘Of course not,’ Cecelia laughed. ‘Aunty Gee would have taken it as a compliment. She adores Mrs Oliver. And there is more than a passing resemblance – everyone says so.’

The car rolled to a halt at a set of security gates, where Mr Fernandez hopped out of the driver’s seat to open the boot for inspection. Hugh lowered the darkly tinted windows and handed over a wad of passports to a young Spanish policeman who looked in at the group.

‘*Hola.*’ Alice-Miranda waved. The man grinned. He disappeared into the small sentry building and returned a few minutes later.

‘Enjoy your *vacaciones*,’ the policeman called as he handed the passports back through the window to Alice-Miranda’s father.

The car proceeded past the checkpoint towards the ship moored at the end of the dock. No one inside the vehicle noticed the fair-haired boy, with a kit bag slung over his right shoulder and a worn leather trumpet case clutched in his left hand, approach the security checkpoint behind them. The lad put his bags down and reached inside his jacket pocket. His outstretched hand trembled as he gave his passport to the dark-eyed officer.

‘*Billete?*

Neville chewed nervously at his left thumbnail. He wished he’d paid more attention in class since moving to Barcelona. His Spanish was terrible.

‘S-s-sorry?’ Neville squeaked.

‘Your ticket, young man,’ said the officer, this time in English. ‘Where are you going?’

‘Oh.’ Neville fumbled around in his jacket pocket and produced another official-looking document.

The officer smiled. ‘Your bags?’

Neville's stomach flipped. Why did they want his bags? Beads of perspiration formed along his brow.

The officer reached out and was just about to pick up Neville's case when a police motorcycle, siren blaring, turned onto the road. Behind it Neville could see a motorcade of at least six vehicles, adorned with flags on either side of the bonnets and speeding towards the checkpoint.

'Antonio, *rapidamente*,' another man called from inside the security booth.

The officer handed Neville his passport and ticket and gestured for him to move on.

'*Ir, Ir*,' he ordered, flicking his hand. 'Go!'

'Which ship?' Neville wheezed. But the policeman had already turned to greet the incoming fleet.

Neville had no idea who was in that motorcade, but clearly they were much more important than a nervous kid with a battered trumpet case and a ticket to New York.