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DRAMA QUEEN



SUSANNAH MCFARLANE





Sydney Radisson's cat was named
by Emma Chapman

Chapter 1



It was late Saturday afternoon. Emma threw her gym bag in the cupboard and raced to her room. She had performed her best beam routine ever and she wanted to write about it in her diary before she forgot how she felt. She went straight to the secret spot under her beanbag and reached underneath. There was nothing there. Emma scrunched her nose and frowned as she picked the beanbag right up off the floor and shook it hard. The diary had to be there; she'd put it back carefully that morning, she was sure of it. But it wasn't.

Perhaps she'd forgotten to put it back in its

usual place? Emma looked on her desk and under her bed. But there was still no diary. *What had happened to it or, she suddenly thought, what had someone done to it? Had someone found it and taken it?* Emma's mind raced. *Who has taken my diary?* This needed investigating, now. She stomped out of her room.

'Someone has taken my diary,' she yelled to no one in particular, now convinced that this was what had happened to her diary. No one answered.

She continued stomping down the hallway and stopped outside her brother Bob's bedroom. Emma looked in through the open door and there, in the middle of the floor, on a pile of disgustingly dirty clothes, was her diary. Open.

'No!' cried Emma, horrified, but, as she went to pick up the diary, she saw it was even worse. There were muddy, smudgy marks all over the page and one of the corners was torn. 'It's ruined!' Emma gasped. 'Did Bob do this?'

Emma, her face nearly scarlet with anger, raced

into the kitchen where Bob, still in his dirty soccer gear, was drinking a glass of milk. Dad was stirring the pasta and Mum was reading the newspaper. Emma looked from Bob in his muddy soccer kit to the dirty pages of her diary, found in his room. She was right; it was Bob who'd taken it.

Emma exploded. 'Look at this!' she shouted. Mum, Dad and Bob spun around, looking slightly alarmed. 'It's ruined, completely ruined. I won't be able to use it ever again! And,' she added, yelling and looking straight at Bob, 'it's all *your* fault!'

'What?' said Bob, his mouth hanging open. 'What is?'

'Don't pretend you don't know what I'm talking about!' cried Emma.

'I don't need to pretend, I *don't* have any idea what you are talking about,' replied Bob. 'Mum, Dad, I promise I don't.'

'You, you, you—*brother!*' Emma spluttered in fury. 'You've ruined my diary!'

'I didn't even know you had a diary,' said Bob.

'You did so! And you found my secret hiding spot and now you've ruined it with your dirty footy boots or your dirty hands or your, your dirty something. It's not fair, why do you have to be so mean?' Emma's eyes were watering and she was angry, so angry that she didn't notice that Bob was looking blankly at her, completely confused. She kept going. 'And you read it and you put your stupid muddy football mud all over it! And then you ...'

'I did not,' said Bob flatly. 'And, anyway, when would I have done it? I've been at soccer all afternoon.'

Emma ignored him and turned to her parents. 'Mum! Dad! Say something!'

'I was hoping you might calm down a bit first,' said Dad.

'How can I be calm? My stupid brother has ruined my diary!'

'Are you sure Bob took it?' he said, peering over at the diary. Continuing in an irritatingly calm voice, he added, 'Are you sure it is ruined? It looks like only

a few little spots and I reckon we could—'

Emma broke in, not giving him a chance to finish.

'They're *not* little spots, they're *huge* dirty spots and they are right across the page, probably the most important page in the whole book!' cried Emma. 'It *is* ruined, completely ruined!'

'Get a grip, Emma. You're such a drama queen!' said Bob.

'I am not!' Emma screeched rather dramatically.

'You so are!' replied Bob. 'I didn't touch your diary. Why would I want to?'

'Because, because ...' Emma couldn't actually think of a good reason but it didn't stop her being convinced that it was Bob's fault. 'Because you're a mean brother! Because you did!'

'I didn't,' repeated Bob. 'Drama queen!'

'Dad!' cried Emma.

'Well, you might be overreacting just a little,' suggested Dad.

'Mum!' Emma looked to her mother pleadingly.

'I'm *not* being a drama queen, am I?'

But her mother just smiled. Emma knew what that smile meant. Her mother agreed with the others. She did think Emma was overreacting.

'Gee whizz, lemonfizz!' cried Emma. 'I'm *not* being unreasonable!'

And with that, Emma stomped unreasonably out of the kitchen, back up the hall and into her bedroom, slamming the door hard behind her. She heard the plaque with her name on it fall onto the floor and break. Now even grumpier, she threw herself down on to her beanbag and folded her arms tightly across her chest. 'Why doesn't *anyone* understand?' she fumed to herself. 'I'm *not* being unreasonable. It is my special, secret diary and now it is not special anymore. Who wouldn't get angry about that?'

But somewhere quite deep down, just for a moment, Emma thought that maybe she might have got a little carried away. Still, Bob shouldn't have taken her diary. Now that she thought about it,

how did Bob find it? It had been so well hidden. No one could have suspected anything was under her beanbag—could they? Then the thought that she may have hidden it badly crossed her mind. Emma felt worse. After all, what sort of secret agent must she be if she couldn't even hide a diary from her brother?



Being a secret agent, that was Emma Jacks' other secret thing. When she wasn't a schoolgirl, a gymnast and an irritated sister of Bob Jacks, she was Special Agent EJ12, field agent and code-cracker in the under-twelve division of the **SHINE** agency.

SHINE was an international agency that helped keep the world safe from the plots of evildoers, particularly those belonging to the **SHADOW** agency, which was as bad as **SHINE** was good. **SHADOW** was constantly launching new schemes that endangered the environment and the world;

SHINE was constantly sending its agents out to find and stop *SHADOW*. **SHINE** had agents of all ages, all with special talents that they could use to help in the fight against *SHADOW*. But a secret agency couldn't simply put an advertisement in the paper or on the Internet for special agents. Instead, they had quieter ways to find clever, good people to work for them. They had found Emma Jacks at an inter-school maths competition.

Emma loved maths, she loved the way it always made sense and didn't change, that the answer was always the same answer and you could always find that answer if you found the right clues. And that was why **SHINE** wanted Emma: they needed code-crackers, people who looked calmly at a problem, patiently found the clues and cracked the code. They then used that decoded message to stop the evil scheme. And as EJ12, Emma was a great agent, in fact one of **SHINE**'s best. She always stayed calm and thought things through.

But Emma Jacks was not doing any of that now.

As she sat on her beanbag furiously writing in her dirty diary, she didn't think anything of her kitten Inky walking off with her hair ribbon. It just made her more annoyed.

'Oh great,' she cried. 'Now everyone is taking my stuff!'

And she certainly didn't notice Inky's dirty paws as the kitten walked out of her bedroom and padded her muddy way down the hallway.