

Fer Alcalá
Geòrgia Costa

Ness the Princess

Princess
Academy



María
Serano

bromera







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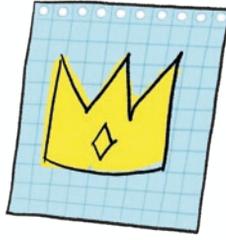


LA TIRA

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*For my niece Gala. Because if princesses
are measured in kindness, you're the best of them all.*

Your uncle Fernandito.



BOTONIA

Being a princess is really hard. Don't believe me? Well, what about that time when we had to hold a dance at school and it was a complete disaster? Or when we found a lost crown? Don't you remember when we had that cookery contest at the princess academy?

Hold on, hold on...you don't know any of these stories?

See? I'm a disaster!

I'm Ness and I'm a princess.

Yes, I know it rhymes, I get that all the time.

I'm a princess, of course, because my parents are the king and queen of Botonia. I'm sure you've heard of Botonia: it's the smallest kingdom in the world.



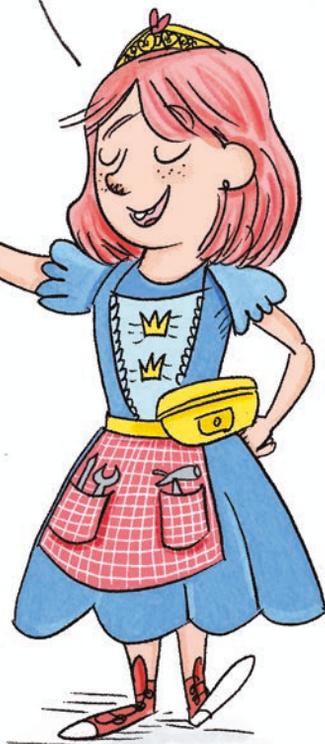
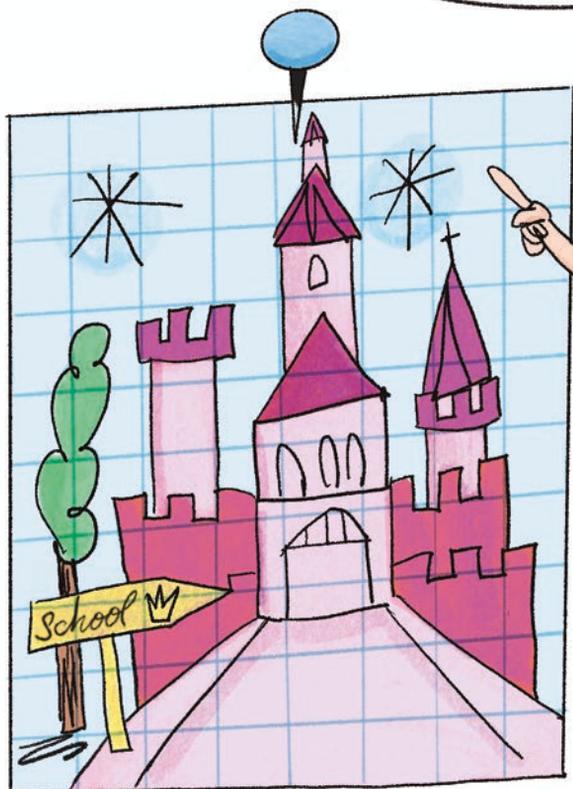
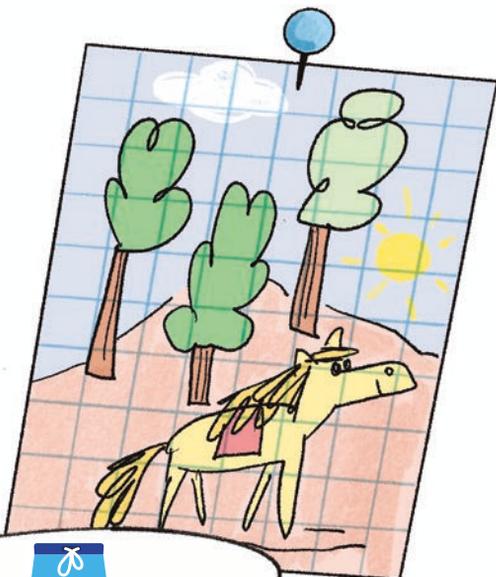
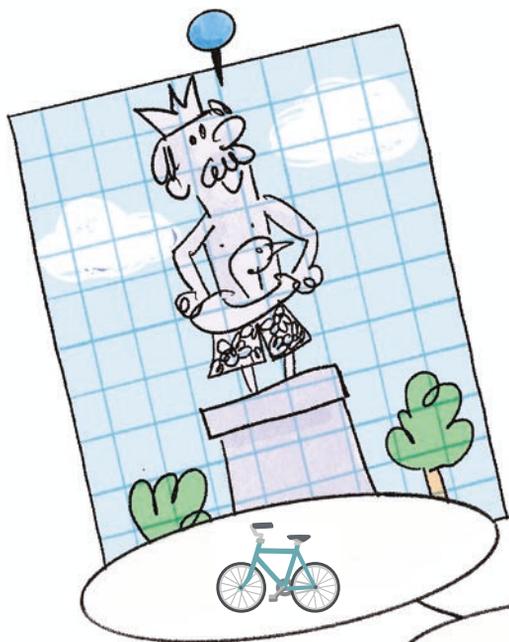
You will have also heard of Botonia's royal forest and the statue of Otón Botón, the first king of this wonderful place. And of the International Academy for Princes and Princesses!

No? It really doesn't ring a bell? But it's super famous!

Well, that's a shame, but...listen! I have an idea! What's more, it's one of the good ones. I say that because sometimes my plans can be pretty bad. Well, not bad, just a little crazy, like that time I wanted Botonia to have a beach and the whole country ended up flooded...

What I've thought is that I could tell you some of my stories. As I said earlier, being a princess is really hard, especially a princess of a country as small as mine. Although I do have people who help me; for example, my friends. Or the residents of Botonia.

Here, I've got it. Since I've just mentioned my friends, I tell you the story of how I met them. Sound good?





WHAT HAVE YOU GOTTEN YOURSELF INTO, NESS?

This story begins in my house.

Actually, it begins out back, where my favourite room is: the garage. I spend loads of time there because I love building and repairing machines.

For example, that day, very early in the morning, I was fixing a mini oven for Eclair, Botonia's pastry chef.

'Get down from there! Bad oven!' I shouted.

Weird, right? Shouting at an oven. I know. It was my fault. It was a small oven that the pastry chef took everywhere with her, just in case she needed to bake an emergency cake. It had four little wheels so she could pull it along, but, seeing as I was fixing it, I thought Éclair would appreciate it if I swapped the wheels for little feet and added a motor and chip, as well, so that the oven would follow its owner...

But it had gone wrong and, by this point, the oven had perched itself atop a wardrobe and was refusing to come down.

'Come on! Come here!' I insisted. I think the problem was that I had put a chip in it so it would follow its owner everywhere but I, of course, was not its owner.

These things happen sometimes. With my inventions, I mean. Sometimes they did unexpected things.

I stood on tiptoe, but the oven was too high up. In the end, I grabbed a broom that was in a corner.

'Now you'll see...'

Then, I heard footsteps on the other side of the house and my parents calling me, but I couldn't leave Eclair's oven up there...

I gave it a nudge with the handle of the broom, but instead of coming down from the cupboard, it leapt right over my head and landed behind me.

I didn't have time to grab it. The oven ran off up the stairs from the workshop to the floor above. I sprang after it, so fast that I went right past my mother without realising it.



'Ness! What on earth are you doing? You're going to be late!

'Just a minute! Just a minute!' I said.

The oven had gone into my room. It was balanced on the window sill and moving about on its four feet as if dancing. No! It was as if it were mocking me. Some cheek!

Then, my father arrived.

'Ness! Have you forgotten what day it is?'

What had I forgotten?

It could be many things: clearing away the breakfast things, taking our dog Mimi for a walk,



making my bed... I was always forgetting something!

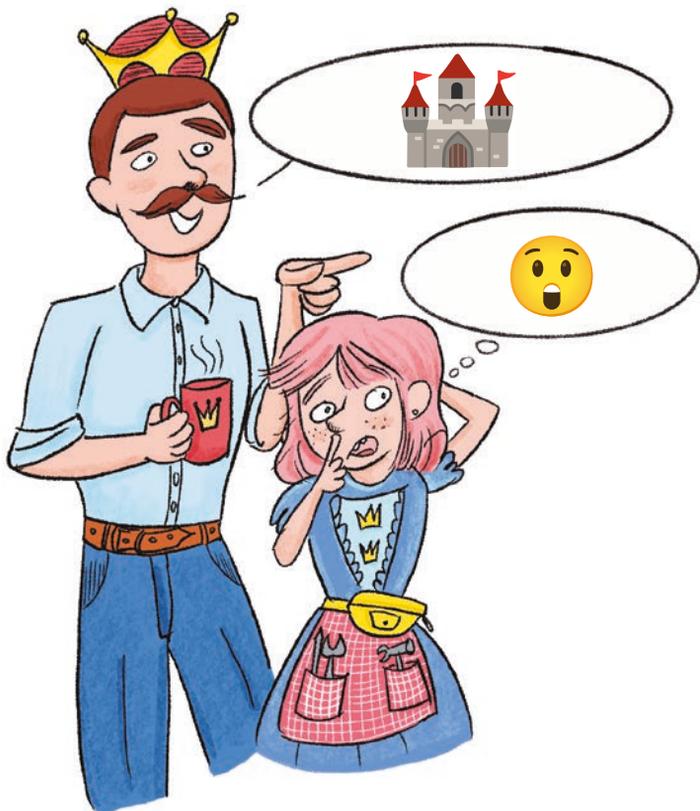
So, as fast as I could, I jumped towards the oven. This time it wasn't quick enough to escape and I was able to press its power switch. Phew! What a relief!

But the relief only lasted a second because, right then, my father insisted:

'Have you forgotten that today is the first day of school?'

I turned my head. From the window where the oven had been, I could see, on a hilltop, a huge castle. It had four enormous towers that looked like





upside-down ice cream cones, a wall and even a moat and drawbridge.

‘Yes, I remember,’ I said finally, even though it was a lie. I know lying isn’t good, but, to be honest, I didn’t want to admit that with the whole oven business I had forgotten.

What a fiasco!

‘Perfect. Well, if you’re ready, we’ll go with you,’ my father started saying while straightening his moustache.

Oh no!

‘No need, dad. I can go by myself; it’s just round the corner.’

You see, the thing is, my parents, as king and queen, are always really busy. Also, I could take care of myself by now.

'The one time we can leave work until later, Ness,' my mother insisted, as she too entered my room.

'It's fine, honestly!' I told them quickly while giving first mum then dad a hug. Then, I ran out of there and downstairs. I didn't want to be late!

Oh! I didn't tell you yet, did I?!

Do you remember that enormous castle you could see from my room? For many years it was the castle of Botonia's royal family, but it was so big and unpractical that my parents moved into a smaller house in the village. After that, the castle became Botonia's International Academy for Princes and Princesses.

And, that very day, was the first day of term.





WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING!

At full speed, I got as far as the porch of my house, but, suddenly, I got scared. I stopped in my tracks just before opening the door. Because...would I be able to do everything asked of me at the academy?

You see, Botonia is a very small country.

By contrast, the International Academy for Princesses and Princesses was in a huge castle.

You see where the problem is, right?

Imagine...I don't know... if I got lost in that massive castle!

I went out the door. As Botonia was so small, we didn't have a car. Instead, my father walked everywhere and my mother had an electric scooter. I had an awesome purple bike with a basket on the front.

As soon as I got on it, I felt better. In fact, I felt braver.

I began to pedal so hard that I left my house's garage at full pelt.

I crossed Botonia's central square, home to the Otón Botón statue. Unlike many other sculptures of monarchs or important people, the one of Otón



Botón didn't show him on horseback or giving a speech. Here, the statue showed Otón Botón wearing his crown and a colourful swimsuit, on a diving board, about to jump. Swimming was his favourite pastime, you see.

After that, I made my way to Botonia's high street, where almost all the shops in the kingdom are. The more I peddled, the better I felt. When I reached the end of the street, my fear had almost completely gone.



A few minutes later, I had already left the village. Not only had my fear completely gone, but I was almost, almost, excited to begin the new term.

I was even glad my parents weren't coming with me on my first day at the academy. I was sure that everything would go well.

obvious that the only one doing so on a bicycle was me.

When I finally pulled up in front of the castle, there was an enormous bus, two helicopters, a private jet and a hot-air balloon. There were also lots of princes and princesses who, by then, were entering the massive doors to the academy.

I took a deep breath. I left my bike parked next to a helicopter and tried to gee myself up. Okay, my journey to the academy had been very eventful, but surely the worst was now behind me.

But, guess what? I was wrong.

'You! Hold up!'

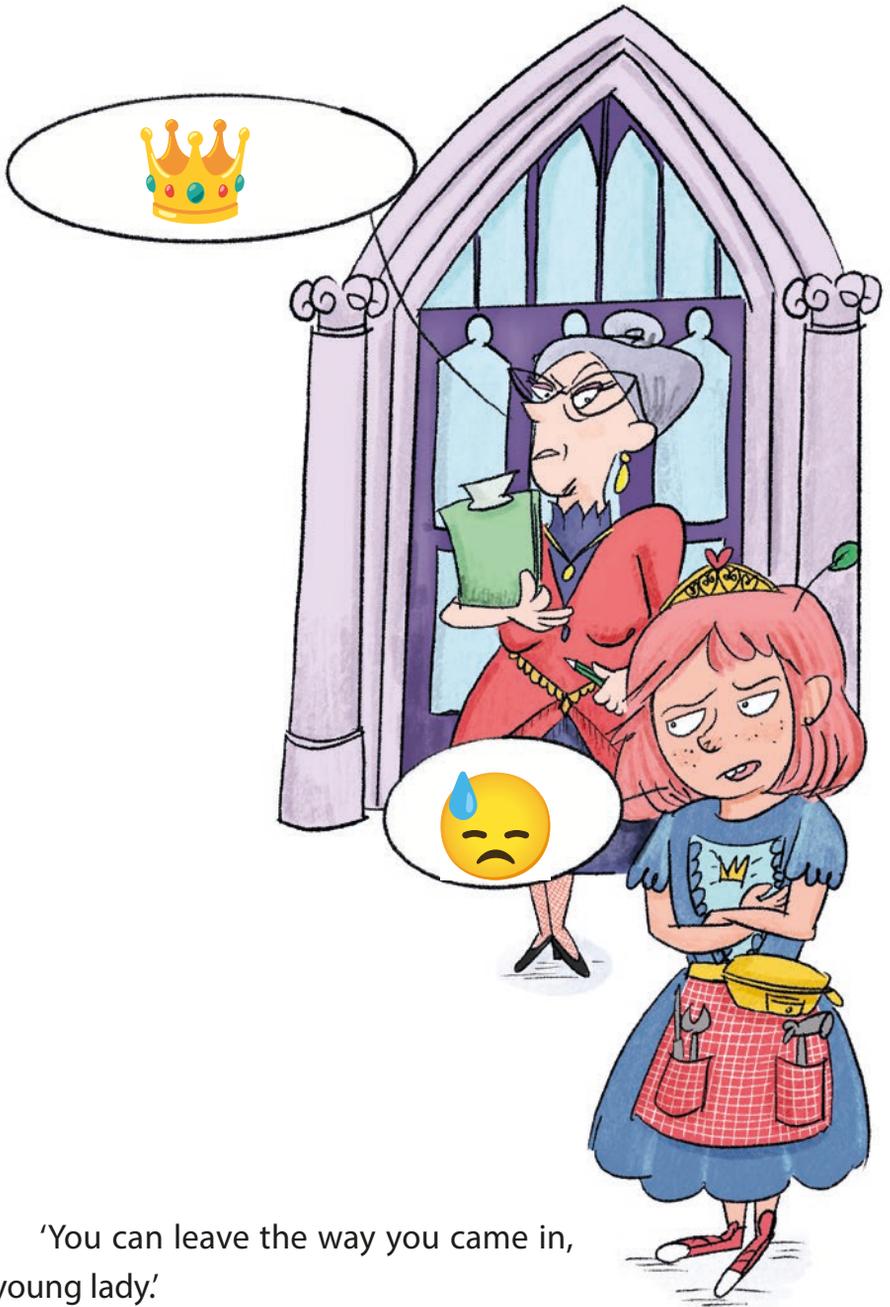
By the door to the castle, there was a very short woman. She wore her hair in a tight bun and her red dress was made of elegant velvet. When I stopped next to her, she lifted her nose as if one of us had poo on their shoes.

'I'm...'

'This is a private academy, young lady,' roared the woman, 'you can't be here.'

'But I'm...' I tried to say again.

The woman looked me up and down as she were observing something disgusting, like a pile of bogies or a plate of kale. To be fair, my dress was covered in earth and twigs and my hair was so tangled it looked like a storm cloud.



'You can leave the way you came in,
young lady.'

I couldn't take it anymore. My face went red.
I was so hot, steam was coming out my ears.

'I'm Princess Ness of Botonia!'



WHAT A BUMP!

That short woman, whose face always looked angry, turned out to be the headteacher of the academy. She was Countess Susan Crush-Down.

Yes, I think it's a very strange name, too.

'A princess you say, girl?' Her voice was very high-pitched yet, at the same time, hoarse, like a crow with a cold. 'And where's your crown?

Oh! As I looked around, I realised that all the other princes and princesses who were going into the academy were wearing all kinds of crowns, tiaras and headdresses.

I had a crown, of course, but I had put it in my pocket for the bike ride.

'And your ball gown?' carried on the countess, but I just shrugged my shoulders. What was wrong with my dress? It was my favourite; purple, like the flag of Botonia, and full of pockets for storing things.

Then, the countess sighed.

'And your entourage? Where is your entourage,

princess of Botonia?’ The countess pursed her lips until they became as small and wrinkled as a raisin.

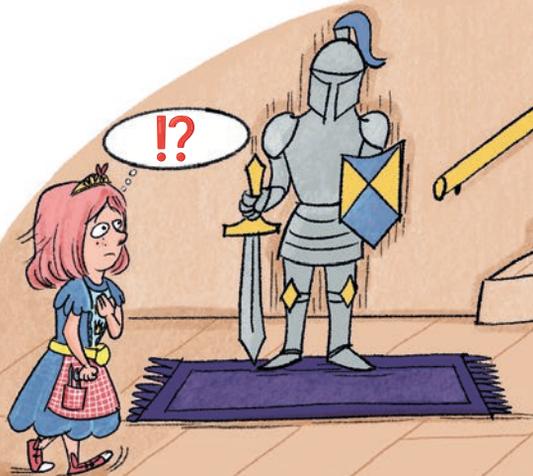
‘My what?’

‘An entourage means your servants! Butlers, secretaries, bodyguards, royal cooks, luggage carriers...’

‘No,’ I had to reply. Perhaps in the larger kingdoms they needed such things, but clearly not in Botonia. ‘I came by myself on my bike.’

At that moment, the countess let out a strange noise, as if she were a balloon beginning to deflate. It was obvious that I didn’t look at all like the other princesses she was used to, but she let me in anyway.

Just as I feared, the castle was gigantic. It was full of never-ending corridors, winding staircases and

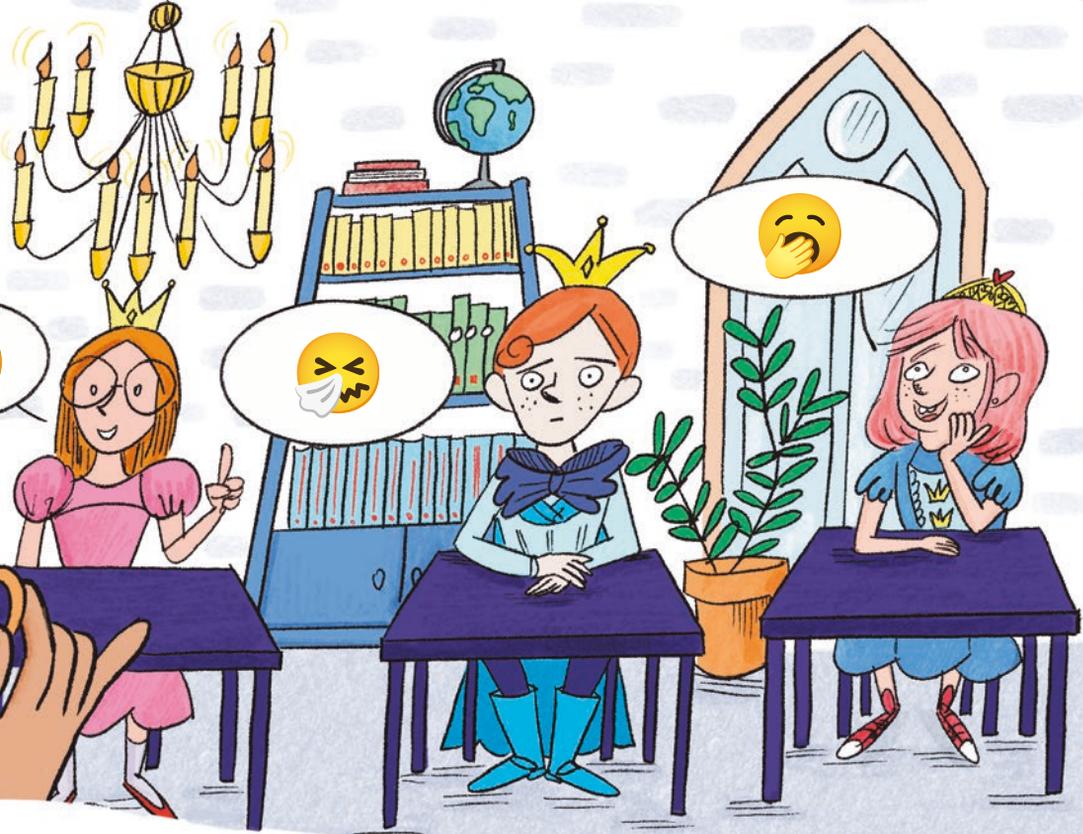




high-ceilinged rooms. Luckily, since there were other students who were beginning their studies, just like me, I only had to follow them to not get lost.

The first classes of the day went well. They were subjects just like at any other school, like English, maths and science. In science we did experiments in a lab and I loved it!

The worst part was the next class: PROTOCOL. 'Welcome, your royal highnesses, to your Protocol class,' said Professor Sacrebleu. Unlike the countess, he was very tall, with a thin moustache



under his nose, and he instantly seemed friendly. 'Here you will learn how to conduct yourselves like true monarchs.'

Then, the teacher told us that our first class would be about greetings. He said that, as princes and princesses, we should know the correct way to greet any person from any country in the world. And then he said,

'The best way to learn is by practising! Get into pairs!'

As soon as I heard this, I felt nervous. I still hadn't dared to speak to any of my classmates.

With their crowns and headdresses, they all looked taller than me and, in their fancy clothes, too serious. The thing is, and it might seem weird to you, but until then I had never spoken to a prince or princess!

I mean I was the only one in Botonia!

In the end, a girl stood right in front of me. She was very tall and wore a stunning red silk dress. The strangest thing was that behind her there was a cat that was staring at me with narrowed eyes.

'Now you must copy me,' said the teacher. 'This is the classic bow.'

The teacher bent forward until his nose almost touched the floor.

We copied him. It was easy. The teacher made us practise shaking hands and, then, another bow that consisted simply of crouching down with our legs crossed. I couldn't help smiling, but the girl opposite me remained serious.



'Hello, my name's Ness,' I introduced myself. I was tired of not having anyone to talk to. 'What's yours? Where are you from?'

'Lin. Princess Lin of Kitaipon. I'm sure you've heard of it. We're very well known. And this,' she added, pointing at the cat, who kept scowling at me, 'is my bodyguard, Niko.'

'Oh!' I said, because to be honest I had never heard of such a place. Neither, of course, had I heard of a cat bodyguard... Then, Princess Lin slightly wrinkled her nose.

'You're the one who came on a...what's it called? A bicycle?'

Blimey, what was wrong with my bike?

'Very good, very good! Now, this type of bow is very much the fashion in some kingdoms in the jungles of New Restonia. Pay attention!' interrupted Professor Sacrebleu.

Then, the teacher balanced on one leg and spread his arms out wide like a dizzy flamingo. Although it was difficult, I tried to copy him. I almost had it.

Oh! No! No I didn't!

I lost my balance. I started to fall forward. I was about to bump into Princess Lin, but then I heard a snarl. It was the cat! It leapt and pushed me back.

'Careful! Be very careful!' Professor Sacrebleu reminded us.

If you ask me, he could have warned us beforehand. When the cat pushed me, I fell backwards. Then, I bumped into another of my classmates. And he bumped into a princess who was wearing an enormous dress, covered in embroidered bows, and she, in turn, bumped someone else...

You can imagine the scene, right? In a few seconds, we all ended up on the floor.

I couldn't help it: I burst out laughing. How could I not laugh after that disaster?

But I was the only one who laughed.



CONTENTS

1. Botonia	3
2. What have you gotten yourself into, Ness?	6
3. Watch where you're going!	12
4. What a bump!	18
5. The bicycle	25
6. A history lesson	31
7. A royal heart	36
8. Out of my way!	43
9. Help!	50
10. Better to go slowly but surely.	57





I'm Ness and I'm a princess. Yes, I know it rhymes, I get that all the time. Being a princess is really hard.

Especially when you are princess of a country as small as mine, Botonia, and you can only think of ideas that are a bit...crazy. Luckily, I can count on the help of my best friends.

**Do you want me to tell you
how I met them?**



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