

The security guard won't let me in. He told me his clients needed to be secure. Then he let a pair of old ladies with pale blue hair in. He made this perv guy sit next to me. I was in my school uniform, so I felt uncomfortable. The perv guy kept staring at me and I wasn't sure if it was because he was a perv or because he recognized me. That happens sometimes. I bet there is a boy band staying on Floor 21. It is a common mistake to think that the rooms for famous people are on the top floors.

"Lost maps?" I guess in the most innocent voice I could pull off. Some girls at school were talking about going to their concert. They would probably stay here, if they were any good. I learned today you pronounce the "l" like an "L". They just want to seem special.

He scowls. I must be right. I heard some girls at school talking about their concert on Friday. He asks for some id. I don't have anything with me besides a metro card.

I tell him I live here. He tells me this is a hotel. He says he needs the number of a parent.

I tell him to screw himself. Actually, I don't say that, but I want to. It wasn't even *L'espirit d'escalier*. It was on the tip of my tongue, but I swallowed it whole before a hint could come out. Julia Violet Park told me bad words live under your throat and you can't say them because it gives them more power. Julia Violet has an active imagination. The things she calls truths may not be facts.

What I did to the guard might have been even worse:

"Do you know who I am?"

"Trouble,"

Very funny Mr. Security.

"No, guess again,"

"Twelve,"

I was very pleased with that actually. No one ever thinks I'm older than I am even though I'm tall because of Mama.

"Do you know?"

The perv next to me squints and studies me really hard. I feel a little scared.

"No"

The guard reaches for his walkie-talkie and as he does I see he has a gun and I read humans have a flight or fight response and I learn I am a flighter. Sometimes it is scary how stupid I am. I run for the front desk where Harry will be working, but he isn't there and I can't go to the elevator because there will probably be backup for Mr. Security. I can feel everyone in the lobby watching. I run to the gift shop and I want to bury myself in all of the replica Snarkles. There he catches up to me. At first Mr. Security sees this scared kid huddled in a gift shop, but then he looks around and then he sees me again. He looks at me and whispers *Inora* really quietly. I whisper back *yes* because I am being stupid. I don't like when people call me that. I brush myself off and walk out because I don't think I can stay thematically and the doll mes are creeping me out. Doll mes are probably creeped out by me too.

I scuttle out of the shop. My body is scrunched up like I'm just about to explode. I just want to get to the elevator. I'll be okay if I get into the elevator. I bump into a little boy. He looks about 5. He's wearing a pink Snarkle t-shirt. I cringe as soon as I see it, but if anyone should wear a Snarkle shirt, it's this boy. I'm glad he has parents who let him wear pink. I'm worried he's going to be mad that I bumped into him and start crying, but I don't think he really noticed. I try to scuttle around and pretend the bump never happened. I run to the elevator button faster now. The button is sticky because everything is against me today.

The elevator on the way up is weird. I mean it's the same, but it's different. Usually there are at least two other people, except when I use the residential/VIP elevator, which I never do. They didn't change the music or anything; it's this sort of sad acoustic piece. Harry told me Mr. Cress actually hired a composer to write a four-minute piece because he wants the Kalends to be a *unique and immersive experience*.

The elevator is extra-reluctant to go up today. Once Julia Violet and I timed how long it took to get from the lobby to my floor. The time was 3 minutes and 17 seconds. Julia Violet called my elevator a *glamorous cocoon*. She said we would emerge debutantes. I found it weird because everywhere has an elevator. I guess my elevator must be extra special.

No one lives on my floor for tax reasons, well there are a lot of people, a Russian businessman and an ageing English heiress and a sad French jeweler and a Chinese art dealer, but they all have real houses elsewhere. It is expensive to live in a hotel I guess, but you would think that if it was expensive people wouldn't be able to afford other houses along with it. The Kalends gave us this room forever because I am good for publicity. We don't have a second house except if you count the flat in London Mama owns with her friends. I like this mostly, because I can have races in the hallway or bike indoors, but the quiet scares me sometimes. It isn't just the people because the walls sag and the floors creak. Buildings make noise usually. On my floor the Kalends doesn't.

The weirdness continues to follow me into our room. I say "not now" to the weirdness. I have what Bridget likes to call *inner monologue issues*. I don't know what to do. I order some hot chocolate so I can think. I can't talk to anyone about this and really, when I think about it, I shouldn't because it wasn't a big deal. None of my friends know because I am good at being secretive. I feel like it would be hard to bring up in conversation.

I go by Jinny at school even though Bridget and Mama call me Jinorasa. It was Bridget's idea actually. I told her I didn't want people to know about the books. We wrote down all of the possible names we could think of on a sheet of paper the day before I started. I walked into Unity with that name. Emma asked me if my parents named me after Ginny Weasley and I wanted to say *no I was named after a character from Firefly and this writer my mom likes*, but I just nodded and it felt so good. I like being known as Jinny.

Sometimes strangers call me Inora. It makes me angry. No one ever calls me that if they know me. I want to tear out my hair and call the strangers by fake names too. I don't mind the name as much as the singsong soft tones they use. It sounds like they're talking to a baby or a pet. They stay on the 12th Floor and yell at Angela when they order from room service the wrong way. I've called them vulture people for a while; I thought they just went around gawking at everyone.

I used to imagine that Mama kept a little girl in a hotel in every city and one day on our thirteenth birthdays she would come and reveal to us we had sisters. I know she doesn't, but it is nice to imagine that there are other girls who live in hotels and have just

one mother who is away all the time and is foreign and young and strange and they go to private schools and don't tell their friends about all of this. I googled her name once just to make sure it wasn't the case. All I could find were pictures of her.