

Mia

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Chapter One: Mama vs Mia

It was a dark, damp evening after a rainy day in April. The air was crisp and moist with a slight feeling of springtime. A young girl, by the name of Mia, sat looking out of her window onto the dark street below. To her, things seemed peaceful. Nothing ever seemed to happen in her sleepy, little town. She opened her window and took in a deep, relaxing breath. She could smell every note of the fresh earth down below.

Mia sighed and put her head in her hands. “Spring is here,” she thought to herself. Spring always meant one thing to Mia: a fresh, new start. Everything around her seemed to start anew in the springtime. Mia always felt that should apply to her as well. Mia looked over to a patch of trees across the street from her house. They were all starting to form buds on the ends of their limbs. The light greens mixed with pink seemed to lead to the upcoming events of the next season.

Mia lifted the screen to her window and snuck out onto the cold roof-top overlooking Pegwell. The quiet and serenity of the roof seemed to block out any negative possibilities. The wind rustled her short, brown hair around her face. Mia gracefully tucked it behind her ears as she listened

carefully to the sounds of her small village. The trees were rustling as the wind danced through the branches creating a symphony of sounds.

Mia could feel the temperature dropping by the second and decided it was best to head back inside. She carefully climbed back into her room, placed the screen back into the window, and left the window open to let the fresh air in. The smell of springtime lingered in her room. For one o'clock in the morning, it was very nice. She sat down on her bed when a horrible realization crossed her mind. With springtime comes spring cleaning. Her mother would be in to wake Mia up in about six hours to start the process of cleaning her room. She would have to pack up all of her winter sweaters first. Mia decided it was best to get some sleep rather than worrying about it right that second. She pulled the blankets on her bed, climbed under them, and fell lightly into sleep.

Mia shot up with a start after what only felt like a matter of seconds of sleep. She had no idea what had caused her to wake, but she couldn't help but flick the light on and scan her room. She waited a minute to see if the noise would happen again to no avail. Mia slowly laid back down on her pillow. She listened very carefully as she fell back to sleep for a sound that would not repeat itself.

“You Idiot! Mia could have heard you! What are you doing here, Milo?” A young lady, maybe in her late twenties, was staring at an older looking man. He was very gangly with sandy brown hair which was speckled with gray. He had

tears in his eyes as his hand ran down the window pane. He was sitting in the exact same spot that Mia had been in only an hour before. The younger woman was still staring at him, expecting an answer, but all Milo did was stare in at Mia. The young woman continued, “You are so lucky that I shut the window before Mia heard you out here! What were you thinking calling her name? She might have heard you, or seen you, and called the police! What would you have done then?”

“I don’t know, Jane,” Milo said quietly as he continued to look in at Mia. “I just don’t see why we have to tell her the hard way. What if she can’t figure it out? What if we are too late?”

“That is a risk we have to take,” Jane whispered, noticing that Mia had stirred. “We have to leave, Milo. Ann will be waking her up soon.”

No sooner had Jane finished speaking to Milo than Mia’s mother, Ann, opened the door to her room. Before turning on the light, Ann looked toward the window and saw Milo and Jane sitting there. She half smiled, but was clearly annoyed with their presence there.

“You both better get going. You know the rules. Besides, she has a big day ahead of her.” Ann winked at both of them as they disappeared from the window. She waited a moment before waking up Mia. Ann sat down at the edge of the bed and began to lightly shake Mia awake. “Come on, now. You know you have to get up. It is spring cleaning day. Time to make a fresh start.”

Mia slowly sat up feeling her lack of sleep. Ann left the room to let her get ready for the day, fully knowing there was more in store for Mia than she knew at that moment. Mia walked to her dresser and put on a pair of jeans and hoodie. She had no desire to put anything nice on given that she was going to be cleaning and doing chores all morning. Mia had just finished putting her hair into a short ponytail, when her mother came back with a very large box.

“What is that for?” Mia questioned with a complaining tone.

“This is for all of your sweaters. Might as well put them all in one box,” replied her mother simply.

“You’re kidding, right? Do you have any idea how heavy that box is going to be?”

“Mia, we need to make space in your room. The more you get out of here, the better.”

Mia rolled her eyes and started to load the sweaters haphazardly into the box. Ann instantly started pulling the sweaters back out of the box and raised her eyebrows at Mia. Defeated, Mia looked up at her mother to get an explanation. Mia was taken aback when she noticed that her mother’s eyebrows were dangerously close to disappearing into her hairline. Clearly she wanted Mia to put everything away nicely, despite Mia’s desire to let her frustration out on the box. She carefully began folding the sweaters and placed them into the box. Ann, definitely more pleased, left Mia’s room shutting the door behind her.

The minute the door shut, Mia relaxed back off of her knees. She gently massaged her temples to try and delay the headache that she could feel coming. She hated when her mother got so crazy into cleaning. It frustrated her more than anything. Seeing as her mother wasn't watching over her shoulder anymore, Mia whispered a couple choice obscenities and started throwing the sweaters into the box once more. She had almost all of the sweaters in the box again when she heard her mother's voice yelling up the stairs.

"Mia! If those sweaters are thrown into that box without being folded, I will come up with something much worse for you to do!"

Unbelievable! It was like her mother had some kind of radar in her head that told her when chores weren't being done correctly. Exacerbated, Mia walked away from the box to her window and looked at how nice it was becoming outside. She could easily take a five minute break. Her mother was downstairs watching the news and eating breakfast at this point. Mia put her hands on the edge of the lift handle of the window and immediately let go. She took a couple steps back and realized for the first time that her window was shut. She never shut it. Her mother would not have shut it. She made the motions of opening and shutting the window, turned and looked at her bed, and returned to looking at the shut window.

Deciding that she must have shut it at some point, Mia opened the window to climb out onto her favorite spot on

the roof. She leaned back against the side of the house as she took in a deep, relaxing breath. Closing her eyes slowly to take in the relaxing aroma of the fresh plant life, Mia put her hands down on the shingles of the roof and was startled when her hand touched a piece of crumpled paper. Odd, but it may have blown up there in the spring wind. Mia picked up the paper and started to open it when she heard a noise from inside. She shoved the paper in her pocket as she scrambled back inside the window. She quickly put the screen back in its place. As she looked out across the street to the woods before turning back to work, she noticed something staring back at her. A black wolf with thick patches of a deep grey was standing at the very edge of the woods. Mia gasped and fell backwards onto her floor. She immediately pulled herself back up to peer over the edge of the window. She looked back to the spot where the wolf stood and rubbed her eyes when she realized the wolf was no longer there. She must have been hallucinating.

Mia returned to putting the sweaters in the box provided, carefully listening to find out if her mother was going to come charging upstairs to make sure she was still working. There was no noise whatsoever coming from anywhere in the house. That didn't seem right. She could usually at least hear the television downstairs or her mother doing dishes. Mia carefully snuck downstairs, down the hall to the kitchen, and discovered that her mother was not there. Mia paused to listen for any sign of her mother when she heard harsh voices coming from the basement. Mia decided to investigate into the argument, but, the minute

she took a step, the voices stopped. Mia froze. She waited, barely breathing, to see what was about to happen. After a moment of silence, the voices started back up again. Mia lowered herself slowly and pressed her ear to the floor.

“What do you mean it must be on the roof!? Did you drop it? If so, where?” Mia immediately recognized her mother’s voice, but who was she yelling at? “You know the rules! Mia must not find out!”

“I know. I am sorry, but we had to leave so abruptly. I must have left it on the roof by accident,” said a man’s voice, less than convincingly.

“Oh my god. You did it on purpose! Milo, no!”

The third voice was another woman’s which Mia did not recognize. Definitely was not her mother’s voice; Mia’s mother’s voice was rough and husky. This woman’s voice was light and high pitch, like a small bell. Mia lifted herself off the floor and realized. The roof! He left something on the roof! The piece of paper! She thrust her hand into her pocket only to discover the paper was gone.

“When I give this paper back to you, keep it at home!” Mia’s mother was speaking again. She must have the paper, but how? Mia had it in her pocket the whole time. She stopped analyzing when she realized that her mother was speaking again. “And Milo, please stay away from Mia until her work is done. She can’t be distracted. Not now. Not when she is so close!”

“Sorry, Ann. I just miss Mia. I want her to come home.”

The man finished with a sigh. That man must be Milo, but what did he mean he wanted me to come home? Wasn't she home already?

Mia could hear her mother coming up the stairs and she immediately bolted up the stairs. She didn't stop until she was in her room in the safety of her bed. A man was outside of her window. A man her mother knew was outside of her window, and, from what it sounded like, it wasn't the first time. Mia started massaging her temples again to prevent the headache she started feeling. Her head was flooding with a thousand questions about who the man was, why he was outside of her window, how did her mother know him, and why didn't she know Milo?

Mia decided to try to keep her mind off of all of it. She went back to packing up her sweaters, but it wasn't helping to keep away all the thoughts about what she had heard downstairs. Mia walked through the motions of everything she had done the night before. She sat on the floor next to the box after getting slightly frustrated with it all. She never closed that window. That must have been what woke her up in the middle of the night. She bolted up from her seat on the floor and began to run downstairs. She wanted answers. She didn't care if her mother got angry at her for eavesdropping. She whipped down the hallway like a whirlwind, stormed into the kitchen, and stopped at the basement door.

"Mom!" she bellowed down the stairs. "Mom, I need to talk to you!"

Something hit Mia with a deep penetrating fear. Her mother was not answering her. Panic started growing inside her chest. She instantly started running through the house screaming for her mother. There was never an answer. She ran down into the basement, not there. Full panic mode was starting to set in. What if something happened with that man she was angry with? What if something had happened to her mother?

Mia ran back up into the kitchen on a mission to call the police. She knew Milo's name. How many people could be named Milo? She reached for the phone when she noticed a small piece of paper sitting on the corner of the table. It was addressed to her.

Dearest Mia, I went to the market. I will be back within the hour. Put your sweaters in the attic near the chimney. Love, Mom

“Great,” thought Mia. Not only did her mother just give her a panic attack, but now she had to lug that humongous box up into the attic with no help. Mia groaned as she headed back up the stairs. She was getting so beyond irritated with this whole day. She entered her room, which was full of sunny springtime splendor, and instantly felt better. A small smile crossed her face as she saw her room sparkling with warm sunlight. Her happiness was short lived when she caught a glimpse of the box full of sweaters that she needed to take to the attic.

With a deep sigh, Mia put the lid on the box and began to push it out of her room. She wasn't going to lift the box

until she absolutely had to. The box was about half of her weight, or it felt like it at least. She dragged the box down the hallway to the attic stairs. The stairs looked completely daunting, even if there were only ten steps. "It would be nice if I had some help!" She screamed in anger, forgetting no one was there.

Mia lifted the box and began the trek up the never-ending stairs. She had to stop a lot to get a different grip on the box or to catch her breath. Once she reached the top of the stairs, Mia sat on the top step to relax. At least it was up the stairs. Now she could just push the box over to the chimney. She took a deep breath and began to push the box over towards the chimney, only to get stuck after a matter of feet. Mia walked around to the front of the box and discovered there was a pipe sticking up out of the floor. Aggravated, she lifted the box to carry it over the pipe when her foot tripped over that same pipe.

The box went flying out of Mia's hands and she hit the floor with an extreme force. Her head rang with the force of it slamming into the floor. She shut her eyes and could feel them burning with pain. She rolled onto her side and carefully opened her eyes. Something was sparkling back behind a rack of clothes. She could see glints of gold coming from the dark corner. Mia crawled under the clothes to see what it was back behind the clothes. As she moved closer, she could see the outline of a door. Not a normal size door, but one the size of a cupboard. She reached back and moved some of the clothing out of the way to let more light in. The light allowed Mia to see the door in its entirety. A bright

crimson door with golden hinges and handle.

Completely baffled by her discovery, Mia stared at the door. What was a door no bigger than a cupboard doing in the attic? It looked very old, maybe even hundreds of years. That couldn't be true. The house was built less than twenty years ago. Her mother and father built it when they got married. Mia was born a couple years after the house was completed. Her father disappeared shortly after that.

Mia shook her head to get those memories out. She focused back on the unusual door that was right in front of her. The door looked like it hadn't been open in years. After all, it had been hidden behind clothes and shelves since the house was built. Mia began to wipe some of the dust and cobwebs from the door and decided to reach for the handle.

"There could be something awful behind that door," Mia thought to herself as her hand lingered in front of the door knob. Shrugging her shoulders, Mia closed her hand over the door knob and braced herself for anything. She turned the doorknob and nothing. The door was locked.