

# MOON PRINCESS

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## 1. SHANGHAI—OVER THE SEA

Sienna's invisible dog, Rufus, had fallen asleep on her lap.

"Mmm, first class," the little spaniel murmured contentedly, before sinking his nose into Sienna's legs. The dull roar of the plane's engines had sent him to sleep, his long black floppy ears twitching as he dreamed.

Sienna stroked his fur. She was glad Rufus was with her. Her invisible friend had been by her side for as long as she could remember. Surprisingly, given he could be a little bad-tempered, Rufus had taken the news of the move from London to Shanghai pretty well.

Sienna had been less happy. “You can’t be serious, Dad. Why do we have to move to China? And why now? What about my school, and our home?”

“I don’t have a choice,” he replied. “If I want to keep my job, I have to go to China.”

They were both silent for a moment; then Dad hugged Sienna tightly. “I can’t stay here,” he finally whispered.

Sienna wanted to cry, but she had held back her tears and breathed out heavily against Dad’s T-shirt. *And what if I can’t go to China?* she thought. But she hadn’t said it out loud. She didn’t want to make things even harder for her dad. Even though she was only eleven years old, *she* had learned to be strong for *him*.

Now her dad was sitting next to her on the plane, working on his laptop. The small light above his seat was on. He took off his glasses briefly and rubbed his eyes. He looked tired and sad. Sienna gazed out of the window into the dark sky, Rufus licking her hand in his sleep. It was one of his little habits.

“Stop it, Rufus, that tickles!” she said with a smile.

Her dad looked across at her, tired and irritable. “Sienna, we’ve talked about this. You’re going to have to stop this nonsense.”