

**Mia
the
Meek**

Eileen Boggess

Mia the Meek

The Mia
Fullerton
Series

Eileen Boggess



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*For Todd, Erin, and Nolan
And my former seventh grade class at St. Pius X School*



Chapter *One*

Strapped into the front car of a giant roller coaster, I struggled against the shoulder harness, but couldn't escape its intense grip. An ominous *click, click, click* echoed in my ears as I was pulled to the summit of a monstrous hill. The car teetered precariously at the top, and my body tensed, waiting for the big drop.

At a deafening speed, I plunged downward, timidly peering over the top of my runaway car. With a white-knuckled grip on the safety bar, I screamed in horror. Past the first gargantuan hill, I was catapulted through the atmosphere, and crashed back to Earth looking like a meteor with a pony tail. Right before I became fertilizer, a thunderous voice exploded in my ears.

"Mia, it's high time you get up! Are you going to sleep your entire life away?"

Bolting upright in bed, twisted in a tangle of sheets, I came face to face with my mother. Catching my breath, I muttered, "I'm up already. Jeez, it's still summer break, in case you've forgotten."

"I've hardly forgotten, because you remind me of it every day," my mother said. "But my vacation is over, so I need you to get moving so I can get to work."

I raised my eyebrows. "You're not really going to wear that, are you?"

"What's wrong with this outfit?" My mom's red hair floated around her head in a halo of unmanageable curls as she looked down at her "flower power" T-shirt and bell-bottom jeans. "You used to like

the way I dressed.”

“I also used to like Pokémon, so I don’t think what I *used* to like counts for much. Sometimes, a person needs to grow up.”

“I refuse to change just because you don’t approve of my funky clothes. Some people are happy with who they are and aren’t constantly trying to change themselves.”

“First of all, nobody says ‘funky’ any more, and secondly, forty-year-old women shouldn’t wear tight T-shirts and hip hugging jeans.”

“Excuse me, but I am only thirty-eight years old, and I can use any words I want because I am an English teacher, and etymology is my specialty.”

“Isn’t etymology the study of bugs?”

“No, etymology is the study of words. You’d better know things like that if you’re going to be on the Academic Quiz Bowl team this year.”

I rolled my eyes as my mom droned on.

“I’ll be in my classroom, and Dad’s at the office, if you need to reach either of us. And remember to wear your retainer and make sure you and Chris eat a healthy lunch—not what you ate yesterday.”

“What’s wrong with fish and chips?”

“Goldfish crackers and corn curls do not qualify as a nutritious meal.”

“Fine, I’ll feed the dork some granola.”

“Look, as the older sister, you’re expected to lead by example.” She kissed me on the top of my head. “And I don’t want you two watching TV all day.”

“What would we watch? We don’t have cable. You know, even people in prison have cable, Mom.”

“Maybe that’s why they’re in prison in the first place—they watched too much TV when they were young.” She headed toward the door and I dropped the TV issue. I had a much bigger battle to

fight today. Tilting my head to the side, I put on my most innocent expression.

“What do you think about teaching seniors next year? They need a good teacher to get them ready for college term papers, and I know how much you get into writing thesis statements.”

She ran her fingers through her hair.

“How many times have we had this conversation? I’m the freshman English teacher at St. Hilary’s High School, and you’re stuck with me this coming year. You should be glad someone who loves you will be grading your essays.”

“If you really loved me, you wouldn’t torture me by being my teacher. Most of my friends hardly ever see their parents, but I’m being forced to spend more time with you. I’m being given a prison sentence—without cable TV, I might add—of having to see you every day for over an hour.”

“There are worse things in life than spending time with your mom.”

I sighed. “If you’re so intent on ruining my life, can you at least promise me you won’t dress up like Sherlock Holmes when you do the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle unit? And that you won’t wear the wizard’s cloak for your unit on fantasy literature? You look like a freak.”

“I like my costumes, and so do my students.”

“Your students think you’re weird, Mom.”

“I may be weird, but I’m also going to be your teacher next year.” She continued toward the door. “Oh, by the way, a new family is finally moving into the Petersons’ house next door. Why don’t you bake some cookies and take them over as a house warming present? Maybe they’ll have some kids your age to play with.”

“Mom, I’m fourteen, not seven—I don’t *play* any more. And there’s no way I’m going over to a stranger’s house with cookies.”

“Why? It’ll make them feel welcome and it’ll give you something to do.”

"I wouldn't even know what to say to them."

"You'd say, 'Here are some cookies, and welcome to the neighborhood.' It amazes me how you can shoot your mouth off to your family with absolutely no trouble at all, yet you're too terrified to utter a peep to a stranger." She looked at her watch. "Look, I know you get nervous talking to new people, but I need your help. And I'm really late, so I've got to get going." She hurried from my room, leaving behind a trail of Birkenstock shoeprints.

After I heard the front door slam, I reached under my bed and pulled out my library book: *Excruciatingly Shy: How to Defeat Public Fear and Become Popular*. "Chapter One: Methods for Mastering Social Anxiety: Face Your Fears and Commit to Change." I snuggled into my pillows. Good-bye, "Mia the Meek."

"Exercise one: Imagine you are at a party and someone asks you to dance." I closed my eyes and imagined Jake in my arms.

"Are you having a seizure or something?" I opened my eyes and saw Chris, his red, curly hair matted from sleep.

I turned my attention back to my book. "Get out of my room."

Chris scratched his stomach, pulled up his oversized boxer shorts, and burped. "What are you reading, *The Joys of Geekdom*?"

I covered the title with my hand, but he pulled the book away from me and laughed.

"*Excruciatingly Shy: How to Defeat Public Fear and Become Popular*? You're a bigger loser than I thought. Jake Harris will never like you, no matter what you read."

"What do you know about Jake Harris? Have you been reading my diary again?"

"Only when I need help falling asleep." Chris tossed the book on the foot of my bed. "Reading a book isn't going to stop people from calling you 'Mia the Geek.'"

"The name is Mia the *Meek*, and for your information, I'm no longer going to be known by that name. This year, I'll be known as 'Mia the Magnificent.'"

“More like Mia the Moron,” Chris replied.

“If your brain was chocolate, it wouldn’t fill an M&M,” I said, picking up my book.

“Come on, tell me how you’re going to try to become normal—I could use a good laugh.”

“All right, I’ll tell you, but only since you’re begging me to.” I put my book down and laid out my plan. “You see, I figured out there were two classes per grade at Assumption, and each one had about twenty-five students in it.”

“And how long did it take you to figure that out?”

“Oh, shut up,” I said. “Do you want to hear my plan or not?” I pushed him away. “And what are you doing? Get away from me!”

“I was just listening to see if I could hear the ocean.” He sat back on the end of my bed and started picking between his toes. “Well, don’t stop there, Einstein. I can’t wait to be blown away by the rest of this amazing scheme.”

“Have you ever considered suing your brain for non-support?” I took a deep breath, praying for patience *and* the restraint not to kill him. “Anyway, me and my classmates have all gone to school together at Assumption since kindergarten, so I’ve been with the same 49 people for approximately 1,620 school days.”

“So?”

“So, I know every disgusting detail of their lives, and vice versa. But I start high school at St. Hilary’s next week and a lot of people there won’t have heard of Mia the Meek. I’m changing myself into a new, more outgoing me.”

“Will the new you be as ugly as the old you?”

“Sometimes I wonder what you’d be like if you’d had enough oxygen at birth.”

“All right, keep talking about this miraculous makeover. I’ll yawn when I’m interested.”

“That’s it,” I said, holding out my hands, palms up. “That’s my whole plan.”

“That’s it? By reading a dumb book, you think you’ll be able to change yourself into some big party girl? You are so bent. Don’t you know that popular kids have either got it or they don’t? And you definitely don’t have it.”

“I should’ve known better than to try talking to you like a human being rather than a primate.” I pointed to the door. “And if you don’t leave my room this instant, I’ll tell Mom you have a *Victoria’s Secret* catalog under your bed.”

“Then I’ll show Mom your diary with all your fantasies about Jakey-poo.”

I got out of bed and stood an inch from his face. “I’ll give you one last warning: Get out of my room, or else.”

“Only if you promise you’ll miss me,” Chris replied, running out the door and slamming it behind him.

Faced with another monotonous morning stuck with the ignora-mus imbecile, I lay back on my bed and stared out the window. The movers were hauling in our new neighbors’ furniture. It all looked boring and beige. So as not to prolong the misery of being forced to hand cookies over to strangers, I wearily hoisted myself out of bed and headed down to the kitchen to whip up my special recipe of chocolate chip cookies. If I timed it right, the neighbors would be so busy with the movers that I could drop the cookies and run.