

The Mystery in  
**NEW YORK  
CITY**



by  
Carole Marsh

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# 1 PACK YOUR BAGS!

“Start spreadin’ the news. . . ” Christina heard someone singing. She paused in the hallway at the door to Grant’s bedroom. Grant was singing as he dug around in his dresser for clothes to pack. A pair of khaki shorts flew over his shoulder and landed on the bed.

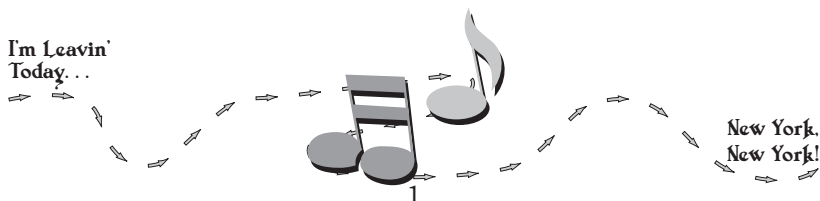
“I’m leavin’ today. . . ” Another pair of shorts, blue jeans this time, sailed across the room.

“I wanna be a part of it. . . ” One last pair of shorts atop the pile and Grant closed the drawer.

“New York! New York!” he shouted as he turned toward the closet to select his shirts. Christina smiled as she walked into the room.

“Are you having fun packing?” she asked.

Grant turned from the closet with a small armload of shirts. He nodded as he continued humming the song.



“Are you almost done?” Christina asked. “It’s time for dinner, you know.”

“I just have to pack my underpants,” Grant chirped. He tossed the shirts into a suitcase, hangers and all. Christina scrunched up her nose at the thought of underpants, anyone’s, clean or not. And you never knew with Grant’s, since he was always jumbling up his clean and dirty laundry!

“Well, Mimi and Papa are here,” Christina said, “and we’re putting dinner on the table, so c’mon.”

As they made their way to the dining room, Grant belted out, “NEW YORK, NE-EW YOOORK!!”

Papa greeted them at the dining room archway. “Hey, Christina! Hey, Grant! How are you? Ready to go to the Big Apple?”

“To the city that doesn’t sleep?” Mimi appeared from the kitchen. “Hey, kids! Are you ready?”

“YES!” they shouted in stereo.

“I have everything we need right here,” Christina smiled. She proudly presented a red three-ring binder. It was stuffed with all sorts of things for their trip.

“It’s got the field journal my teacher gave me, brochures from historic sites in the city, and even subway route maps.”



“All neatly organized, I’ll bet,” Papa said, knowing Christina’s everything-in-its-place way of doing things.

“Yes, sir!” she assured him.

“Are we going to eat?” Grant asked. “Singing makes me hungry!”

Everyone ate quickly, as if there was a big rush, but they were all packed and ready to fly to New York City the next morning. Everyone was excited about the trip. And, to make it more special—they would be there on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July! A local friend had arranged for them to watch the fireworks extravaganza from a chartered riverboat.

“The 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks display is going to be spectacular!” Mimi said.

“Breathtaking!” Christina said.

“Cool!” Grant piped in.

“LOUD!” grumbled Papa.

“Did you know,” Papa asked, “that the fireworks display in New York City has been presented since 1800?”

“The first Independence Day fireworks display was in Philadelphia,” Christina reported, “in 1777.”

“That’s very good, Christina,” Mimi said. “So, do you know where we’re going? All the places, I mean?”



“Yes, it’s all in my notebook.”

“I thought it was a binder,” Grant said.

“I can call it a notebook since it has a notebook in it,” Christina said. Sometimes her little brother could be so. . . little brotherly! “Anyway, I planned out subway routes and bus routes to and from all of the places we’ll be going to.”

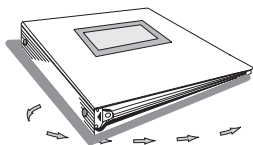
“We won’t be taking subways or buses,” Papa said. “We have transportation for the whole time we’re there. Ben’s uncle is a taxi driver, and he has a special van for tourists. We’ll get to see New York City the nitty-gritty way it needs to be seen—up close and personal—from the streets!”

Christina felt a little frustrated by that. She had worked so hard planning their trips around the city. But Mimi *had* said that the subway—one of the oldest in the world, and the largest in North America—was its own underground world. She also said that they really didn’t need to spend much time down there. Mimi did *not* like to be ‘underground’.

“We’ll get to see *everything!*” Grant giggled. “Not just those smelly old subway trains!”

Christina sighed. All that hard work, she thought. But she knew that Papa and Mimi and Grant were right.

New York  
Fireworks



Christina's  
Planning

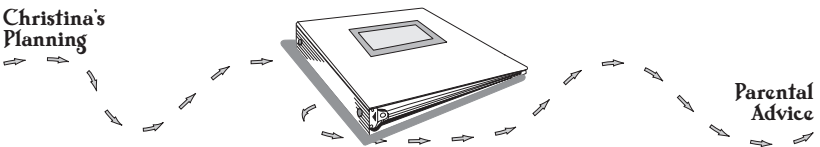
They were going to the greatest city in the world, and they shouldn't have to look at subways all the time.

Besides, they were going to New York for Christina's summer project and Mimi's mystery book research. Mimi probably wouldn't want to write a mystery about the subway or anything that happened on it!

Later, as they left to spend the night at Mimi and Papa's house, they gave hugs and kisses to Mom and Dad, and listened to all the parental advice: "Listen to Mimi and Papa; remember to wash your hands whenever you can; don't take off by yourselves; and stay out of trouble!"

Christina was slightly amused by the one phrase that always followed all the others: "Don't go getting involved in any crazy mysteries!"

As they fell asleep that night, dreaming of skyscrapers, taxicabs, and alligators in the sewers, they had no idea what was in store for them this time!



# 2 LEAVIN' ON A JET PLANE

Christina looked past Grant out the window of the jet airliner that was in line for takeoff. All she could see was tarmac and grass and little yellow signs. Across the aisle, Papa marveled at the hustle and bustle at the terminals of the busy Atlanta airport. Planes, trucks, baggage carts, and people everywhere!

“I hope we get to see Stone Mountain as we take off,” Grant said. “Do you remember when we saw the Christmas tree on top of the mountain?”

“I do! That was so neat!” Christina said.

They heard the jet’s engines get louder, and the plane rolled forward and turned. Now they were looking down the runway, where a huge plane was hurtling away from them and lifting its nose into the sky.

“Wow!” Grant exclaimed. “That’s even better than

Atlanta  
Airport



Taking Off!



seeing them from the highway!”

Christina smiled. Planes landing at Hartsfield International Airport flew *very* low over Interstate 85. They both had shrieked in terror the first time a 727 crossed the highway right in front of their speeding car!

The plane’s engines got louder, then the aircraft turned again, and aimed down the runway. Christina held onto the armrests with a strong grip. Grant’s eyes opened as wide as they could. The engines got really loud, and the big plane lurched forward, forcing everyone back into their seats.

“Hee hee hee!” Grant laughed, as their plane sped faster and faster down the runway and lifted off into the sky.

Almost the second after they were off the ground, Christina was thumbing through a New York City tourist’s guidebook. “Hey, Grant,” she said, “do you know how many taxicabs there are in New York City?”

“A million?” Grant responded.

“‘There are more than 12,000 Yellow Cabs in New York,’” Christina quoted from her guidebook, or “survival guide,” as Mimi called it.

“Where do they park at night?” Grant wondered aloud.

Taking Off!



“Do you know how old the subway system is?” Christina asked.

“Ummmm. . . one hundred years old?”

“That’s right, Grant!” Christina beamed proudly. Grant smiled. Christina knew her brother was smart, especially when it came to remembering tidbits of trivia.

“Do you know how tall the Empire State building is?” Grant asked Christina, hoping she hadn’t marked that page in her survival guide. She hadn’t—but she had already written it in her field journal.

“One thousand four hundred fifty-four feet,” she proclaimed, “with the mast.”

“Mast? Like on a sailboat?” Grant looked confused.

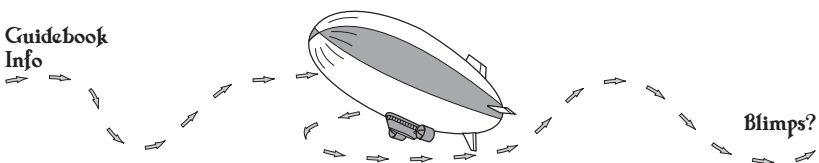
“No, silly,” Christina said. “It’s a big, giant radio and TV tower.”

“Christina,” Papa called from across the aisle. “The mast was originally designed to be a mooring for zeppelins.”

“For *what*?” Christina and Grant asked.

“Zeppelins!” Papa said. “Big blimps that used to carry passengers.”

Christina was amazed. She could picture a huge blimp hovering above the Empire State Building, but she just couldn’t see how people would get off.



“How did the passengers get down?” she asked.

Papa laughed. “There never were any passengers. They discovered that it was too tricky to tie an airship to the top of the building. It was too windy.”

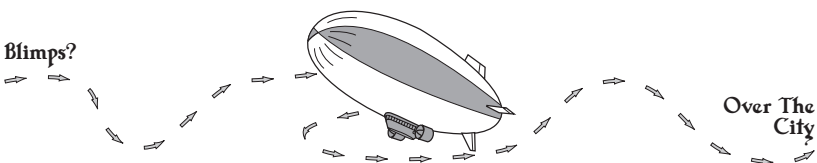
Christina wrote everything Papa said in her field journal. “I didn’t know that! Thanks, Papa!”

Papa smiled and went back to reading his magazine. Grant watched the patchwork quilt of land below glide by. Mimi slept. Christina read her guidebook, searching for the next interesting trivia fact she could ask Grant.

“I see city down there!” Grant exclaimed. They had been flying for about two hours. Christina looked out the window at the amazing sight—Manhattan Island filled with skyscrapers that looked so tiny from way up high.

Just then, the pilot spoke over the intercom. “Ladies and gentlemen, we’ll be landing at LaGuardia International in just a little while. If you look out the port side—the left side—of the aircraft, you’ll be able to see Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty. Currently, the weather in New York City is sunny and warm. Enjoy the rest of your flight, folks.”

Grant immediately glued his nose to the window.



Christina busied herself packing her books. After the plane turned and began its ear-popping descent, Christina crammed herself up next to Grant so she could see out the window, too. But Grant squirmed around so only he could see out the whole window.

“There it is!” Grant shouted. “The Statue of Liberty!”

Christina finally moved him aside and got her first glimpse at Lady Liberty. The gray-green statue was beautifully framed by the lush green of Liberty Island and the deep blue waters of New York Harbor.

“Wow!” Christina exclaimed. “It’s beautiful! And, it’s the first place we’re going!”



# 3 MYSTERY VAN WITH A VIEW

LaGuardia Airport was awash in noise from thousands of people talking and laughing, kids yelling and babies crying, baggage being thrown around, announcements blaring over the public address system—Christina thought it would probably be quieter out on the tarmac with the planes!

“Christina! Grant! Over here!” came a shout through the cacophony. They turned to see who was calling them. A boy with spiky hair and big brown eyes jogged toward them.

“Hi, Ben!” Christina called back and waved. Ben skidded to a halt in front of them. He gave Christina a big hug and a kiss on both cheeks.

“Hi Grant!” Ben reached out his hand and shook Grant’s with a crushing grip.

LaGuardia  
Airport



“Ow! Hi. . .” Grant muttered.

“Binyamin!” Mimi greeted him. “Shalom!”

“Shalom!” he replied, then greeted Papa and shook his hand.

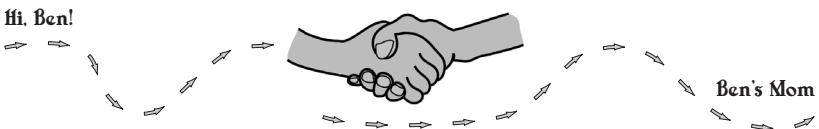
Christina was always excited to see Ben, or Binyamin, his Jewish name. His family honored all the Jewish customs, even though his mother was a full-blooded Italian. That always made for an interesting Hanukkah/Christmas season!

Ben was two years older than Christina. He had stayed with Christina and Grant on a month-long student exchange program a couple of years earlier. He had also changed a lot since the last time they had seen each other. That probably was why Grant was staring at him like he’d never seen him before.

“Hey, you guys!” a heavily accented voice from the past shouted. “It’s good to see you again! I thought you’d never get here! It’s been so long! How long has it been? Years! I can’t believe it!”

Ben’s Mom, Viviana, with arms outstretched, came bursting through a steady river of people to the little island the group had formed. A young girl about Christina’s age, whom they had never met, trailed behind her.

Christina braced for another round of hugging and



kissing and shaking hands. Grant tried to hide behind his bag, but he still got a big smacker of a kiss from Ben's Mom.

"Guys, this is Katarzyna," Viviana introduced the girl, pronouncing her name slowly, like 'cat-are-zhee-na'. "She's from Poland, she's staying with us for the summer, and she's having a wonderful time, aren't you, Kate?"

Kate nodded. "It's nice to meet you all. I hope I won't be imposing if I accompany you on your sightseeing."

Christina was surprised. She hadn't heard about this! She looked up at Mimi, who read the question on her face.

"Surprise, Christina!" Mimi said, with a sly smile. "You planned our trip so well that I just had to throw in a surprise!"

"Okay, you guys!" Viviana said. "My brother, Vinny, he's outside in the cab waiting to take you wherever you can take a cab. I've got to get back to our new restaurant near Central Park North! Lunchtime starts real soon—say, are you guys hungry? I can call ahead and have Paolo set a table and have today's special waiting for us when we get there. I'm going to call him. You got all your bags? Okay, follow me!"

And just like that, Viviana whirled and made her way



to the exit. She whipped out her cell phone and called her restaurant, speaking loudly in Italian.

Christina, Grant, Ben, Kate, and Mimi followed her to the exit. Papa, pushing the luggage cart, huffed behind them. Christina wondered if Viviana's brother Vinny was as colorful a character as she was.

Outside, it *was* quieter. The sounds changed from those of humans to those of vehicles. A big yellow taxivan was waiting for them. As they approached, the sliding door on the side opened automatically. Uncle Vinny came around the back to introduce himself and to help Papa load their bags.

Vinny didn't say much. Christina thought that maybe it was because his sister got all the talking genes. She grabbed her small suitcase from the luggage cart and handed it to him. He just smiled and said, "Buongiorno, signorina!"

Christina went to get into the van and saw Grant standing there with a silly look on his face. "What is it, Grant?"

Grant pointed at the van. "It's a mystery van!" he blurted. "Cool!" On the van's door was an advertisement for the Broadway show *Phantom of the Opera*. It was a spooky-looking banner featuring the famous half-face mask

Off And  
Running



Meeting Uncle  
Yinny



and shadowy silhouettes of the characters.

Christina rolled her eyes. She wasn't planning on a being involved in a mystery—they had so much to do, so much to see! She took Grant's hand and led him into the van. They took the second row seats. Viviana was sitting up front, still talking to Paolo on the phone.

"Wow!" Grant exclaimed. "Check it out, Christina!"

Christina looked at him—Grant was staring up at the van's roof. Christina followed his gaze—and looked up and up and up! The roof of the van was one huge window!

Ben and Kate got in and took the seats behind Christina and Grant.

"What a view, eh?" Ben said. "Just wait till we get into the city! You'll think the skyscrapers never end!"

Papa helped Mimi up into the van and they went straight to the back. Vinny closed the sliding door and it got real quiet in the van.

"Okay, you guys," Viviana said, "we're heading to the restaurant! We'll be there in about 20 minutes. Paolo is going to have lunch on the table when we get there!"

Christina's tummy rumbled. It had been a long time since breakfast—and the airlines didn't give you snacks anymore. "What's for lunch, Miss Viviana?" she asked.

Viviana started to reply, but Vinny interrupted her.

Meet Uncle  
Yinny



What A View!

“Ah! Lunch! My favorite meal of the day!” Vinny proclaimed. “Today, for lunch, we are having *agnello all’aceto balsamico e bocconnoti!*” He turned in his seat and smiled hungrily at them. “I can already smell it!” He took a big sniff, and let it out. “Ahhh!”

“What’s that?” Grant asked.

“Lamb with balsamic vinegar and pastries filled with ricotta cheese,” Viviana translated.

“Mmmmm!” Papa rumbled from the back seat.

Grant scrunched his eyebrows. “Can I just have plain old spaghetti?”

What A View!



Thinking Of  
Lunch!

# 19 A FOURTH TO REMEMBER

*“We interrupt this broadcast with breaking news,” the news anchor said. “An original torch from the Statue of Liberty is missing. It was taken by cargo ship from Liberty Island three days ago to be refurbished.*

*“The crate was unloaded at a pier in Queens. The crate, which should have contained the 1916 torch, was filled instead. . . with. . . frozen fish. Workers opened the crate this morning when they noticed water leaking and a . . . fishy smell coming from the crate.*

*“Police, the FBI, and other state and federal agencies are on the case, examining the crate and a potential crime scene at Liberty Island. A spokesman for the NYPD stated that a note to contact the kidnappers, along with a clue, was left in the crate, but did not release any further details. We will bring you more of this incredible story as it unfolds. We now*

Breaking News!



*return you to the regularly scheduled programming.”*

Papa, Mimi, and the other adults in the family restaurant were shocked into silence by the terrible news. They were so stunned that they didn't notice Christina, Grant, Ben and Kate walk right out the front door.

“Well, there you have it,” Christina said. “The news is out. People all over the country—all over the world!—know that the torch is missing!”

“And all *we* can do is *wait*,” Grant added. “Bummer!”

Vinny had arrived at Times Square at 2:57, according to the time below the Jumbotron screen, and he had intently watched for anything out of the ordinary. Nothing strange appeared at 3 pm, but at 3:30 pm, this message appeared:

*Be back in 24 hours. Give or take . . .*

Torch Taken!

