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## Hair Salon Secrets

FEATURING DREW™

BY LAURA LEIGH MOTTE  
ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE





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This is Drew's story.







D R E W <sup>TM</sup>

# HAIR SALON SECRETS

BY

LAURA LEIGH MOTTE

ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE

*An Our Generation® book*

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who understands the importance  
of great hair and great stories.*

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**EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!**

*Big words, wacky words, powerful words, funny words...  
what do they all mean? They are marked with this symbol \*.  
Look them up in the Glossary at the end of this book.*







# Chapter One

## STORYTIME...FOR CHICKENS?

It all started because I love books. I love the feel of a book in my hand. I love the stories books tell: stories about people, their thoughts, feelings, and even their secrets. But I'll get to that part later, the part about secrets, which can also get you in a pile of trouble.

It was Saturday afternoon. I was sitting in a sycamore tree, reading *The Well of Evil Spells* out loud to my pet chickens Faith, Hope, and Charity. It's Book Three in the *Hannah the Hapless Witch* series by H.K. Dowdy. She is my favorite writer in the world.

The sun was bright, but the leaves on the tree branches gave me just the right amount of shade for reading.

While the chickens pecked at the ground below, the words from the book floated down into their tiny ears. They seemed to enjoy it. Occasionally, I stopped reading



to look down at them.

Away from the others, perched on an upside-down apple crate, the little hen called “Pippi” was flapping her feathers really hard, as if she wanted to fly. It’s easy to tell Pippi apart from the others, and not just because she’s the smallest. Faith, Hope, and Charity have feathers as white as snow, but Pippi has rusty-red feathers. The color suits her because she has a fiery temper and likes to cause trouble.

Dad was working in his vegetable garden nearby.

“Too much water or not enough?” I heard him mumble as he leaned over a cluster of green bean plants. The leaves on the plants were turning yellow.

Dad scratched his head. I smiled as I watched him cradle a leaf in his hand and study it. Dad loves nature and knows the names of all the local plants, trees, and even mushrooms. But he still has lots to learn about making things grow.

We arrived here from the city in the late spring, just after school finished. Dad had always wanted to live closer to nature, and now we do. He takes care of the farm along with his other job, designing websites. When he’s not





staring at green beans, he's staring at the computer screen in his new home office.

Taking care of our four chickens is one of my farm chores. But it's not a chore at all. I love it. I feed them, collect eggs every morning, clean the coop, and make sure the henhouse is closed up tight each night. I also read to them.

When I finished the book, I said, "the end!" and slapped the cover closed. The sound must have startled the chickens because they stopped pecking and looked up at me.

"Did you all enjoy it?" I asked them.

Hope, a big bouncy chicken with a bright red comb\*, cocked her head and started clucking. I knew exactly what was up.

"You want to know what happens next, don't you?"

Hope's one sharp cluck said yes. My chickens like to talk to me, at least I pretend they do.

"Me too," I replied. The book ended with Hannah Porter, the Hapless Witch, dropping out of The Sassafras School for Sorcery to search for her long-lost twin sister, Hyacinth. I nearly fell out of the tree when I read that part. Imagine finding out that you have a twin sister you never





knew about!

“The only way to know what happens next is to read Book Four,” I told Hope.

Hope clucked loudly.

“So, let’s get it!” she seemed to say.

I frowned. If only it were that easy. The next book in the Hannah Porter series wasn’t out yet. Supposedly, H.K. Dowdy was working on it in secret somewhere.

I opened the book, flipped back to the first page, and started to read the story again from the beginning. I like re-reading stories. I always discover things I missed the first time. I got so caught up in Hannah’s adventure the second time, I didn’t notice that one of my chickens had wandered off. Until I heard a voice calling me.

“Drew! We need you!” It was my mother.

Then I heard wild clucking and a woman shrieking.

“HELP! GET THAT AWFUL BEAST AWAY FROM ME!”

The ruckus was coming from Hair on Wheels. I scrambled down the tree and ran toward it as fast as I could.



## Chapter Two

### HAIR ON WHEELS

My mom is a hairstylist. A *really good* hairstylist. In the city, she had a job in a fancy salon. She was hoping to find a job styling hair in our new town. But Cherry Lake, Virginia is too small. Just 1237 people! (At least according to the sign next to the gas station.) The nearest salon is an hour away, in a big, gray mega-mall.

Mom was disappointed. Thankfully, a solution to her problem was sitting on the farm, waiting to be discovered.

When we first saw it, it was a rusty hunk of metal, hidden by weeds in a corner of the yard. Dad called it “a heap of junk.” But Mom knew better. She said it was an old travel trailer and that it was special.

*Could it my clubhouse?* I wondered. Then, in a flash, I had another idea. It could be Mom’s new hair salon.



In only a few weeks, and with a lot of elbow grease\*, Mom and I cleaned and polished it and pumped up the tires. When we were done, it looked brand new. Dad installed a hair-washing sink and Mom found two styling chairs at a country auction.

Since the trailer is small, we put two patio chairs and a table outside, under a striped umbrella, where customers could wait outside for their appointments. Surrounded by trees and grass and flowers, it was a magical sight.

All we needed was a name.

Mom suggested “Hair on Wheels.” We handed out flyers at the Cherry Lake Library, the grocery store, and the Cherries on Top Diner. Folks said it was the most delightful thing to happen in Cherry Lake in years.

But the shouting I heard coming from inside Hair on Wheels today didn’t sound very delightful. It sounded more like an emergency! What could have happened?

“HELP!” I heard a voice scream again.

When I ran into the trailer, Miss Georgia was crouching on top of one of the styling chairs. Miss Georgia is the town librarian. I had given her a flyer when I was checking out the last *Hannah the Hapless Witch* book.





“Don’t let it claw my eyes out!” She was wearing a salon cape and her hair was in sections, tucked into colorful hair clips. Under her chair, looking just as frightened, was little Pippi, the rusty-red chicken.

Mom was trying to calm Miss Georgia down.

“It’s OK. She won’t hurt you,” Mom said.

I held out my arms and walked toward Pippi.

“Naughty girl,” I scolded. “Come on. Time to go.”

Pippi squawked and backed her way under the hair sink. The game was on.

There are many things I have learned from living on a farm in the last few months. One of them is this: It is not easy to catch a chicken. They dart around so fast. They spread their wings too, fluttering around in a feathery frenzy. It’s a little scary, especially when you are inside a small trailer.

Instead of catching chickens, you have to herd them. That means blocking their path and forcing them in the direction you want them to go. After a lot of running around and darting and fluttering, I got Pippi out the door and back toward the coop where her friends were waiting for her.





When I finally returned to the salon, Miss Georgia was seated back down in her chair.

“Well, that was truly an adventure,” she said, with a smile that told me she wasn’t too upset about the runaway chicken. Miss Georgia was admiring her new hair color in the mirror.

“Why, Christie, it is the best approximation\* of fresh cranberries I’ve ever seen,” she exclaimed.

“Told you my mom was good,” I beamed.

As my mom started styling Miss Georgia’s hair, I plopped down in the empty salon chair and reached for a pink notebook that was tucked under the cushion. It’s my journal. Next to reading, keeping a journal is my favorite hobby. I especially like to write about all the funny things that happen in the hair salon.

I was just going to write about today’s chicken adventure when Miss Georgia started talking about her niece, who is almost my age. Her birthday was coming up in a few weeks.

“I am going to get her a lump of coal,” she said.

Mom laughed. “Isn’t that what Santa gives to naughty children?”



“What’s coal?” I asked. I thought I knew, but I wasn’t sure.

“It’s a soft black rock that burns,” my mother said. “We use it for our barbecue.”

“Oh...” That didn’t sound like a nice gift at all.

“That’s exactly the point,” said Miss Georgia. “She’s already getting far too many gifts from her parents. This year, she’s getting her very own pony! Imagine that? A pony!”

“Wow,” I mumbled softly. I could definitely imagine having my own pony. It would be wonderful.

“Let me tell you all something.” Miss Georgia looked around to be sure no one was listening, even though there was no one else in the salon but the three of us.

Miss Georgia dropped her voice to an almost whisper, “That niece of mine is spoiled rotten.”

My mother didn’t say anything. She just kept combing. She’s used to hearing peoples’ secrets.

Maybe it’s the smell of the lavender shampoo, and the fact that my mom’s a really good listener. Mom says there is something about being in a hair salon that makes



people feel they can open up. And do they ever!

I already knew all kinds of secrets about the town. I knew the secret ingredient in the Cherry Lake Bakery's Wild Berry Pie (it's cinnamon) and that the town mechanic is a thief (because he charges too much). I also knew that Winona Leblanc is going to have twin boys—and her husband doesn't know yet! That was going to be a really big surprise.

I write down all these secrets in my journal. So, my journal is more than just a journal, it's also a Book of Secrets!

I found Miss Georgia's secret to be particularly interesting. It also made me think. I uncapped my pen and started scribbling.

*Miss Georgia says her niece is getting a pony for her birthday. Miss Georgia isn't happy about it. She thinks her niece is spoiled. Why do people call other people spoiled when what they really are is lucky?*



Wednesday morning was quiet in the salon. While mom arranged magazines in the wall rack, I was busy counting how many spins I could do in the salon chair before I got dizzy.

Just then, a new customer came in. I looked up and was surprised to see it was a boy, about my age. He was with a tall woman in a crisp white shirt and navy pants.

“Do you do children’s hair? My son needs a cut before school starts.” The woman sounded a little panicked. She was holding one of the salon flyers.

“Of course,” my mom said. “I do my daughter’s hair all the time.” She pointed to me.

That was my cue\*. I stood up and did a little turn. My hair was in a bun, sprinkled with tiny butterfly barrettes and flowers. Mom and I love making up hairstyle themes for the seasons. Once she styled my hair in the shape of a Christmas tree.

The boy’s mother must have liked what she saw because she looked at her son and said, “OK Benjamin, this will have to do.”

I looked at Benjamin. He seemed nervous as my mother led him over to the empty salon chair. When he



took off his cap, his hair fell over his shoulders in long blond strands.

My mother started touching his hair, feeling the texture. It's part of her process.

"Thick and gorgeous," she said.

"We'd like it cut as short as possible," Benjamin's mother said.

Mom and I exchanged surprised glances.

Benjamin's mom sighed.

"I know, I know...but we have no choice. He had head lice," she explained. "Twice last year. It always happens at school, so, this year, we've decided—"

"Tell the whole world why don't you!" Benjamin snapped. He wasn't happy with his mother at all.

I felt bad for him. I knew lice were little crawling insects that live on your scalp. A friend at my old school had them. Some of the other kids teased her about it when they found out. But it's really not such a big deal. She used a special shampoo and they went away.

"Don't worry," my mom told Benjamin. "Your secret is safe with us. Right, Drew?"

Mom looked straight at me and I nodded. I knew





the Hair on Wheels Code of Conduct. What's said in the salon, stays in the salon. (And in my top-secret journal.) Mom says having a client's trust is just as important as being good at cutting hair. You lose trust, you lose clients.

My mother draped a salon cape over Benjamin's shoulders and snapped the button closed behind his neck.

"What do you think, Benjamin?" my mother asked. "Are you ready for a new look?"

He shrugged, and said, "Short is boring."

"It's not true!" I blurted out. Mom looked at me. Normally I don't interrupt her when she's cutting hair. It's not my place. But I couldn't help myself.

"Lots of boys have long hair now," I continued. "Maybe long hair is boring."

Benjamin scratched his chin. He seemed to be thinking about this.

To prove my point, Mom picked up a magazine and flipped through.

"How about something like this?" she said, showing Benjamin a picture of a boy wearing a school uniform. One side of the boy's hair was shorter than the other. Mom called it a "side fade." When you looked closer, shaved



into the hair was a lightening bolt.

Benjamin's eyes practically popped out of his head.

"That's so cool!" he said.

Benjamin's mother frowned when she saw the picture. "No lightning bolt."

"But that's the best part!" moaned Benjamin.

"Wait a sec," Mom jumped in. "How about instead of a lightning bolt, we do a simple straight line. That's cool, but also a bit more...*mom-friendly*."

Benjamin's mother pursed her lips. "OK," she said. "We'll take the mom-friendly version."

My mom grabbed her electric clippers and went to work. As she clipped and shaved, strands of long, blond hair fell to the floor. There was so much hair, you could have made a haystack out of it.

Mom looked at me and nodded. I knew what that meant—time to get the broom! I'm the salon's official hair sweeper-upper, coffee pourer, *and* chicken chaser.

When Mom was finished, she gave Benjamin the hand mirror so he could see his new haircut in the big mirror from all angles, even from behind.

"Feels cool!" he said, rubbing his scalp like it was



an alien planet. I was standing behind him, holding my broom. His eyes found mine, reflected in the mirror. I gave him a big thumbs up.

After Benjamin and his mother left, I reached for my journal and started scribbling.

*Today I met a boy my age, or almost my age. His name is Benjamin. He had lice twice last year, which seems like a lot of times to have lice. Maybe the lice want to be his friend? I hope I will be his friend.*



## *Chapter Three*

### THE FROZEN STRAWBERRY

The country school bus takes forever to get all the children to school. Even though we don't have to travel very far, the bus makes many stops and detours. This is a good thing, if you have friends to talk to. Or it can be a bad thing, if you don't know anyone. On the first day of school, I was in the second category.

I got on the school bus and took a seat near the middle. I looked out the window. I love the country roads. They loop and curve around like a maze. So many trees too. Sycamores, ash, fruit trees, and even a few pines.

The houses are far apart and each one is so different from the others. Some are small, some are big, and some aren't houses at all, but mysterious ruined shacks. A dog on a porch saw me looking his way and yapped. I wanted to yap back but kept my mouth shut. I didn't want to embarrass myself on my first day.



At the next stop, five kids got on the bus. I didn't know any of them. They were small and bouncy with chubby cheeks. They looked like they were in first or second grade. They were chattering away as all of them crammed into the two front seats together.

A girl got on at the next stop. Right away I noticed her hair—she had two amazing bow-shaped buns perched right on top of her head. They were easy to spot since they had touches of hot pink temporary\*color. Some people say country people aren't as stylish as city people. Not true! This girl was super cool.

I had temporary pink and green hair extensions in my braids. Mom helped me put them in. I wondered if the girl noticed *my* hair.

I moved my bag over to make room beside me. Then I smiled up at her. *Sit here, sit here!*

But she sat down in front of me. Did she not see me? Then some other kids got on the bus at the next stop.

“Hi, Reid,” they said to Miss Pink Bow Buns.

But Reid didn't answer. I guess she was too good for them too.

I opened my journal and wrote.



*I saw a girl on the bus today. Her name is Reid. Her hair is hot pink but her heart is as cold as a frozen strawberry inside a snowball on an iceberg at the North Pole.*

I read the sentence again and smiled. I felt better. Writing about a feeling, even a bad one, can make you happier.

At the next stop, a boy got on the bus. I recognized him right away. It was Benjamin, the boy from the salon. As he strutted\* down the aisle, some of the kids on the bus started hooting.

“Hey Ben, what’s with the crew cut?” one boy with long-ish hair smirked.

Benjamin grinned. “It’s not a crew cut. It’s a side fade. Check it out.”

He turned his head to show the line my mother had drawn with a razor on the left side of his head, where the hair was cut closer to the scalp.

A bunch of “oohs” and “ahhhs” filled the bus. The little kids in the front seats stood up to get a better look. Some kids wanted to touch Benjamin’s head.





“My mom would never let me do that!” said a boy with long, curly hair.

“Maybe when you get older,” Benjamin said, which I thought was very kind.

Finally, Benjamin noticed me. He looked at me for a moment and his smile faded.

*Did he wonder if I was going to tell his secret?* I hesitated, then lifted my hand and gave him a little wave.

But Benjamin didn’t wave back. Instead, he walked over and sat down right beside me!

The other kids looked impressed. Benjamin seemed to be very popular (and not just with lice).

“This is Salon Super Star,” he said, introducing me to his friends on the bus. They were all wearing the same soccer jerseys.

“Her mom has this awesome hair salon. It’s in a trailer!”

All the eyes in the bus turned to me and I suddenly felt shy. I looked out the window to escape from all the attention. The bus passed a high stone wall, covered in ivy. Beyond the wall, the green shingles of a large, old mansion peeked out from behind a bunch of tall cedar trees.





I sat up in my seat to get a better look, but the bus was moving too fast. As I looked back, a black cat hopped up onto the stone wall. It was very mysterious. Benjamin must have noticed too.

“That’s Stone Wall Manor,” he said.

“Who lives there?” I asked.

“Now that’s a secret everyone wants to know.”

“Secret?” That word certainly got my attention.

“My dad works at the post office,” said Benjamin. “He says the letters and packages for Stone Wall Manor are always addressed to Occupant\*. But they never actually say who the occupant is. There’s no car in the driveway. Nobody even knows when or how anyone got there. They just arrived there one day last spring.

“All we know is that it’s a lady, because once Dad heard her voice on the other side of the door. He calls her ‘Madame X.’”

“Maybe I can find out who she is,” I suggested. “I’m kind of an expert at secrets.”

Benjamin raised his eyebrows. He seemed very interested.

“Really? How’s that?”



I shrugged. “I just am.” I didn’t tell him about my mom’s secret-spilling lavender shampoo or my Book of Secrets.

That’s when I realized that my journal was still on my lap. I carefully put it back in my backpack.



When I found my classroom, my teacher, Mrs. Coralee, showed me to my seat.

“Welcome to Cherry Lake Elementary, Drew,” she said, in a sweet, soft voice. Her eyes were kind and when she smiled, her eyes sparkled.

“Hey, it’s Salon Super Star!” I heard someone say. I looked over and saw one of Benjamin’s friends from the bus. I’d never had a nickname before, and even though I was still getting used to it, it made me feel like I belonged.

I sat next to a girl named Sabrina. I knew we’d get along because I noticed a copy of *The Hannah Porter Handbook* peeking out of her backpack. We talked about the last *Hannah the Hapless Witch* book and how we couldn’t wait for the next one to come out.

Sabrina and I were both eager to find out more



about Hannah's long-lost twin sister. We hoped the library would buy the new Hannah Porter book when it came out.

At lunch, Sabrina introduced me to her friend Ashanti and we all sat together. They were both curious about my mother's hair salon so I gave them flyers. I kept a few in my backpack just in case. They asked if I like styling hair too.

"Of course," I said. They looked at each other and nodded. They seemed to approve.

A few minutes later, the girl from the bus (otherwise known as The Frozen Strawberry) appeared. She stood in the lunchroom doorway, like she wasn't sure if she wanted to come inside.

Sabrina stood up and waved.

"Reid! Over here. You have to meet Salon Super Star."

"Otherwise known as *Drew*," I added, sheepishly.

"You two are going to be great friends!" Sabrina told me. "Reid is all about hair. She wants to be a hairstylist some day."

Reid looked at me and frowned.



“Not anymore,” she said as she walked away.

I couldn’t believe my ears. *Did she have a problem with me?*

I turned to Ashanti and Sabrina.

“Is she always like that?” I asked them. They looked just as surprised as I was.

“No,” Sabrina replied. “Something must be up.”



## *Chapter Four*

### SOS HAIR REPAIR

We found Reid sitting on a swing in the school playground. Her backpack was on the ground beside her. Tears were streaming down her face.

“What’s wrong?” Sabrina asked.

Reid reached down and pulled a doll out of her backpack.

“Oh no!” moaned Sabrina, her face cringing in disgust.

“That’s so horrible!” gasped Ashanti, turning her eyes away.

The doll’s hair had been cut in different lengths. Some of the hair was long, some was short, and there were patches that were practically bald. There were smears of glue everywhere, and even bits of tape.

“Who did this?” Ashanti asked.

“Was it your little brother?” asked Sabrina.





Reid looked down at the ground. “No,” she said.  
“It was me.”

“What!?” we all said at the same time.

Reid explained. “I wanted to give Miranda bangs for a back-to-school makeover. It was way harder than I thought. I cut too much. I tried to glue the hair back on and got glue on the other side, by mistake, and had to wash it off. But the glue wouldn’t come out, so I cut those bits off too. And well, it just got worse and worse!”

Reid started to cry again.

“The only reason I brought her to school today was to drop her in the Used Toy Box that Mr. Stine set up in the gym. I couldn’t just throw her in the regular garbage. Then I realized nobody would want a doll that looked like this. Nobody but me.”

I could see she was very upset. That must have been why she was so quiet on the bus. She was on her way to a doll funeral!

“Miranda is my favorite doll,” Reid said. She held her in her arms like a real baby.

I couldn’t keep quiet. I had to say something.

“Reid, I think I can help you.”





Moira Sisley-Brown hasn't changed her hair style in twenty-five years. She always wears it twisted in a chignon\* and fastened with a scrunchie. A black one. Never pink. Never orange. Never even navy blue, which is almost like black.

Since she found out about Hair on Wheels, she has been a regular. Every other Tuesday evening, at seven o'clock, she gets her bangs trimmed. She always has a different reason why she can't do it herself. Her hair grows too quickly. Or her scissors broke. Mom thinks she just likes coming in for the company. She lives only a few minutes away and her husband died two years ago. She told my mother that sometimes she gets lonely.

"Are you sure we can't try something different?" said my mother, after the trim was done. "A new style maybe? I was thinking you'd like a crown braid. It would suit you."

"Yes, a crown braid!" I agreed. Crown braids are one of my specialties. I do them all the time, on myself and sometimes on my dolls. A crown braid is when you make





a braid that wraps around the head, like a crown.

“You’ll feel like a total princess,” I added.

Moira shook her head, and her whole body went stiff in her chair.

“I’m happy keeping my hair as is,” she replied.

“Of course,” Mom said, “It was just a suggestion.” As she combed Moira’s hair, Moira relaxed and closed her eyes.

“Are you ready for the pie contest?” my mother asked.

Every year Cherry Lake holds a pie contest. Moira told us all about it. She said she’s won three years in a row and that she is famous for her Wild Berry Pie. She sells it at the Cherry Lake Bakery. Dad and I tried some a few Saturdays ago. We had it with vanilla ice cream. It really was yummy.

During her last appointment, Moira had told Mom the secret ingredient. I flipped back in my journal and found my note.

*Moira’s secret pie ingredient! It’s cinnamon! Just a “whisper.” But I am not sure how you can whisper anything into a pie. Pies don’t have ears so*



*even if you shout they can't hear you.*

I looked over at Moira. I wondered what other secrets she might have.

I picked up my pen and started writing.

*Moira Sisley-Brown isn't just a pie baker. She's an international spy! She uses her pies to transport secret messages around the world. She bakes the messages right inside the fruit filling, on oven-proof spy paper.*

I held my pen up to my lips and smiled. That's another reason I like writing about people. If you don't know everything about them in real life, you can make things up.

As soon as Moira left, we heard a car pull up. It was our next customer. I knew exactly who it was going to be.

When Reid walked into the salon, my mother made sure to greet her with an extra-large smile. Reid's father came in a second later, but stayed in the doorway.

"I'll be waiting outside," he mumbled, and then



disappeared.

“It’s so nice to meet you, Reid,” Mom said. Her voice was warm and friendly. “Did you bring your little friend?”

“Yes,” Reid replied. She gave my mom a tiny smile, and then handed her the doll. Carefully, my mother lifted Miranda up and looked at her.

“Hmmm. This isn’t so bad,” she told Reid.

“It isn’t?” said Reid.

“No,” said my mother. “The first haircut I ever gave was much, much worse.”

Reid sighed with relief. My mother sat the doll on the counter, and then she went to get her salon supply cart. I love the rolling cart. It’s big enough to fit all kinds of supplies. I’d loaded it up with everything we’d need to fix Reid’s doll.

First Mom evened out the doll’s hair with her scissors. It wasn’t an easy job. When a section of hair was too short to match the others, she wove in one of the colored hair extensions I had put in the cart. The extensions also helped cover up the patches on Miranda’s head where there was no hair at all.



As Mom worked, Reid asked a lot of questions. She was really curious and seemed to know a lot about hairstyling. She knew about updos\* and side sweeps\* and even braided bangs\*.

“You’re so lucky to have a mom with a hair salon,” she told me.

“Yeah, I am.” I felt proud of my mother and Hair on Wheels.

“It’s my dream too,” Reid added. “Well, it *was* my dream. Until I realized that me and scissors—we don’t get along.”

I laughed. Reid was not at all like the “frozen strawberry” I’d seen on the bus.

When my mother was finished, the doll had a sassy bob\* with a swirl of temporary pink (just like Reid!).

“The bangs are very short,” Reid said, studying the doll.

“They’re micro bangs\*,” my mom said. “They’re very much in style now. I’ll show you.”

She pulled out a magazine from her collection and showed Reid a picture of a model with very short bangs.

“See how they show off the forehead and let her



eyebrows have a little room to say hello?”

Reid nodded. “I love it.”

That’s when Reid’s dad came back into the trailer. I could see the Hair on Wheels flyer I had given Reid sticking out of his jacket pocket.

“How much do I owe you?” he asked my mother.

“Please,” she said, waving his money away. “It’s always a pleasure to help my daughter’s friends, especially new friends.”

My heart jumped. *A new friend? Was she?* My question was answered when Reid turned toward me and gave me a big hug.

“Thanks so much, Drew,” she said. “You saved Miranda.”

“You’re welcome,” I replied.

“See you on the bus tomorrow?” Reid looked at me hopefully.

“For sure,” I replied.

“Good. See you then.” Reid picked up her doll and headed for the trailer door.



Later that night, in my room, I kept thinking about my new friend Reid, and Benjamin calling me “Salon Super Star,” and also about the secret identity of Madame X. How could I sleep? I went to my desk and pulled out my journal. Here’s what I wrote.

*I think I'm going to be happy in Cherry Lake.*

Then I wrote something else.

*Who is Madame X???????????*

That was a secret I really wanted to know!



# *Chapter Five*

## THE DOLL SALON

The first two weeks of school passed quickly, and Mom's salon was busier than ever. Students from school, and even entire families, started showing up at Hair on Wheels. I had a lot of hair to sweep up!

Unfortunately, Dad was having less luck with farming.

"Good thing we don't have to live off my vegetable garden," he said. He was still hoping that his cherry tomatoes would turn red. It was now September, and they were still hard and green. It turned out he had planted them in a spot of the garden with too much shade. He would have to be more careful about the spot he chose next time.

On Thursday evening, Isabella Higgins came into the salon. She runs a farm down the road. Mom was giving her a pixie cut\*. Mom said it would suit her face. It



was a big change from her long wavy hair, but Mom was right. She looked like a forest fairy!

As Mom styled her hair with a blow dryer, Isabella mentioned my dad. He often calls her for advice about his garden.

“He doesn’t exactly have a green thumb, does he?” she said, laughing.

“Of course not,” I said. “Why would he?”

“No dear. When you have a green thumb,” Mom explained, “it means you have a knack for making things grow.”

“Oh,” I replied. “That means Dad doesn’t have a knack for making things grow?”

Isabella looked down at the floor.

Mom put an arm on my shoulder. “He’ll learn,” she said.

I nodded, and then reached for my journal. I needed to write this down.

*Isabella Higgins says Dad doesn't have a green thumb. So, what color thumb does Dad have? Yellow? Brown? Or maybe just blue, because he's*





*so sad about his garden? Poor sweet Dad! Why, when you love something so much, can't you be good at it?*

That reminded me of Reid. She wants to be a hairstylist but is afraid of cutting hair. I wanted to help her. But how? Then I had an idea.



On Sunday, Reid, Ashanti, and Sabrina came over. Since Mom never takes clients on Sundays, I had asked if we could use the salon to play in. Everyone brought a few dolls, even ones they didn't play with anymore. We were going to give them new hairdos.

We set up the dolls in the waiting area outside, just like in a real salon. I even made an appointment book. Mom let us use her combs and brushes, as long as we promised to put everything back neatly.

"You're next, Flopsy Lu," I said to an old rag doll who was sipping a pretend coffee.

"There's not much I can do with her stringy hair," Ashanti complained. "Literally!"



The doll's hair was made of yarn. It was hard to style.

"So, let's give her some bows," suggested Sabrina.

Flopsy Lu looked very cute with two blue bows. Reid liked making bows and had brought over a whole basket of ribbons. It was another one of her talents.

After a little while, Mom came to our doll salon to check in. She even gave Reid a styling lesson, showing her how to hold the scissors and how to do a basic snip.

"Now you try," Mom said, as she held the scissors out to Reid.

"You can cut Finola's bangs," Sabrina said, holding out her doll. Finola had long red hair and was a present from Sabrina's grandmother, who lives in Ireland.

Reid shook her head and stepped back. "No way," she told Sabrina. "I might ruin her. Just look how I nearly destroyed my own doll!"

That's when I remembered something. I ran to our house and brought back a purple wig. I'd used it for a Halloween costume last year. It had been sitting in my dress-up trunk ever since.

"You can practice on this!" I said.



“That’s a great idea, Drew,” Mom said with a big smile.

Reid also liked the idea. She picked up the scissors.

“I don’t know if I can,” she said.

“It doesn’t matter if you make a mistake,” I told her. “I was going to give it away anyway.”

Reid’s tongue stuck out and she squinted her eyes in concentration as she snipped at the wig. As she held the scissors, her hands shook. Finally, she snipped off a large chunk.

“Oh no,” she gasped. “That’s way too much!”

“Try again,” my mother told her.

Meanwhile, I decided to make French braids on my doll Zoe Rose. Zoe Rose isn’t a regular doll. She’s actually a styling head. She has lots of hair that’s easy to work with. Ashanti wanted to learn, so she watched me carefully.

After each style, we pretended to charge the dolls for our haircuts.

“That’ll be ten dollars, Miss Zoe Rose,” I said, reaching out my hand. “And yes, I accept jelly beans as payment.” Since my styling doll doesn’t have hands, Ashanti paid for her. We both giggled.





“Maybe one day, we’ll all open a salon together,” Sabrina said, popping a red jelly bean in her mouth. “A roller derby salon! Where we all cut hair on roller skates.”

“Sounds dangerous,” I said, laughing. “What if you fall on a client and cut their nose off?”

“I could never be a real stylist,” said Reid, sadly. “I mean, this is just a wig. With a real person, I might really cut off their nose. And I wouldn’t have roller skates as an excuse!”

Mom laughed and told her she had time to practice.

Zoe Rose and Flopsy Lu agreed, but Reid didn’t seem sure.



## *Chapter Six*

### THE QUEST FOR MADAME X

“Hey, Salon Super Star!” Benjamin said as he got on the bus.

I couldn’t help but grin. I was beginning to see that nicknames were Benjamin’s way of making people feel special. Not just me. Sabrina is “Cupcake Genius,” named for the double-chocolate cupcakes she made at last year’s Bake Sale. Ashanti is “Drama Queen” because she loves acting and always has a big part in the school plays.

Since I sit with Reid now, Benjamin sits with his usual soccer friends, “Striker” (for his high goal scores) and “Noodle” (for what reason I still have no idea).

The bus passed Stone Wall Manor. I’d gotten used to keeping an eye out for the black cat and for any sign of Madame X.

That day, I saw a woman coming through the gate. It looked like she was going for a walk. She was wearing



dark sunglasses and a floppy hat. This was definitely someone who did not want anyone knowing who they were. The bus was going too fast for me to get a closer look.

Benjamin must have noticed because he tapped me on the shoulder.

“Did you find out the secret identity of Madame X?” he asked.

“No,” I replied.

“I thought you were the big secret-buster?” he teased.

“I am! I just need more time.”

For weeks, I had asked everyone who came to the salon if they knew who lived in the mysterious mansion. No one did.

There was only one solution. If the secret wouldn’t come to the salon, maybe I had to go to the secret!



“Mom, can you pull over here for a sec?”

Mom and I were heading out to do our grocery shopping in town. We had just passed Stone Wall Manor.



“What on earth for?” Mom asked.

“I want to pop a flyer in their mailbox,” I replied.

I figured if I could get Madame X into the salon, I would at least be able to see her face. And maybe, after one of my mom’s famous lavender shampoos, she’d spill the beans\* about who she was. Was she royalty? A criminal on the run? A secret agent?

As I rolled up the flyer and put it in the mailbox, I heard a soft meow. I looked up. On the top of the wall, there was a black cat with a pair of yellow eyes staring right back at me.

Then I heard tapping noises. The sound was fast and frantic\*. Was it a mouse running around? The cat disappeared. Maybe the cat was chasing after the mouse because then the tapping stopped.

The next sound was louder and stranger.

“Fiddle foodle, fuddle, and flap, I’ll turn your sister into a bat.”

I froze. *Did I just hear what I thought I heard?* It sounded like someone casting a spell. Was it for me? No, it couldn’t be. I don’t have a sister. Unless the voice thought my mother was my sister. At the meat shop, the butcher





once said he thought Mom was my sister because she looked so young. Mom laughed when he said that.

I really wanted to get a better look. But the wall was very high. I looked back at the car. Mom was on her phone. It sounded like she was talking about work.

“The whole wedding party? ... Of course, I’d be honored.” Mom reached for a pen in her purse.

“How many people? ... Yes. I’ll need some dates. ... Of course, I can style hair on location. Why, I could bring the whole trailer.”

Since Mom was obviously busy, this was my chance. I was pretty sure I had enough time.

I looked at the stones in the wall. At my last school, there was a climbing wall and my gym teacher said I was pretty good. I grabbed two round stones with each hand, found a solid footing on the bottom, and lifted myself up. I repeated the process a few times and was almost at the top edge of the wall when I heard a loud hissing. It was the black cat, standing right over my head, arching its back and showing its teeth!

Startled, I leaped back down to the ground. It wasn’t a very soft landing. Luckily, the wall wasn’t as high





as I thought.

“Drew, what on earth are you doing?” Mom’s call was finished and she was now standing outside the car.

“Uh, just practicing my climbing!” I said. “The wall looked too good not to climb.”

Mom shook her head at me. “Please! Drew! Do it at the gym, where there are safety ropes and the proper equipment. Besides, this is someone’s property.”

I gulped. Mom was right. I would have to crack open this secret another way. But I knew I was close. Was it possible that Madame X was a witch? The idea that Cherry Lake had its own witch was scary. And a little exciting.

Just in case, I took another flyer from my bag and made it into a paper airplane. With my best aim, I pointed it toward the top of the wall. The flyer sailed over the top.

Would she find it? Would she come to the salon? Did witches get their hair done? Was she even a witch at all? I had no idea. But who else would be chanting a weird spell in their garden in the afternoon in a mysterious house with a black cat on a stone wall covered with ivy?



In the car, I opened my journal and scribbled.

*BIGGEST SECRET EVER!*

*Cherry Lake has its very own witch! If she comes to Hair on Wheels, Mom will need to have a few toads on hand. Witches like toads. And even if she is a bad witch, she will be so happy with her new hair she will use her special powers to turn Dad's tomatoes red.*



## Chapter Seven

### I KNOW SOMETHING YOU DON'T KNOW

“I think you’ve been reading too much *Hannah the Hapless Witch*,” Sabrina said when I told her about my visit to Stone Wall Manor.

“Maybe,” I smiled, “but it’s fun to imagine.” I held out my hand. “Glue, please.”

We were in class, working on our family collages\*. Mrs. Coralee says it helps her get to know her students better. All the collages would be pinned on the bulletin board so everyone could see who’s in our family.

“Why are you gluing a vegetable beside your dad’s head?” Sabrina asked.

“Because he’s a gardener,” I replied. “Or trying to be.” Mom was there too. I glued a salon flyer beside her picture with some photos of combs, brushes, and scissors.

“Ah!” Sabrina nodded, and went back to her collage. Next to her mom, she drew a circle with a question



mark inside.

“What’s the question mark for?” I asked.

“That’s my baby brother or sister,” she said.

“A question mark is your brother or sister?” I asked.

“My mama’s having a baby,” she explained. “We don’t know if it’s a boy or a girl. Well, my mother knows, but Papa wants it to be a surprise. He thinks it’s more fun, not knowing. We have a bet going. Whoever guesses right gets a Special Day. That means the whole family has to do what you want. I want to go to the Science Center and have pizza after.”

“Are you going to guess boy or girl?” I asked.

“I think it’s going to be a girl. We will be an all-girl family!” she said. “My sisters say girl too, so if we win, we *all* get Special Days.”

I looked at the pictures in her collage. There was a photo of her two sisters. Her father had his arm around Sabrina’s mother, who had a very big belly. I looked at Sabrina’s mother’s face and my heart skipped a beat.

*Wait—I know that person!* It was Winona, one of my mother’s clients. Not only was she going to have a



baby boy, she was having *twin* boys.

I couldn't believe it. I knew the secret! *Should I tell Sabrina? If I did, she could change her bet and win.*

Then I realized that would be cheating. I'd have to be very careful not to let the secrets I knew slip out.

I closed my lips tight and went back to my collage.



Ashanti had invited Reid, Sabrina, and me over to her house for a sleepover on Friday night. Ashanti lives in a big house, right on Cherry Lake.

Ashanti's family has their very own dock, with a pedal boat and a rowboat too. There's also a tire swing they use to swing from the large elm tree right into the lake. I couldn't wait to try it out.

Ashanti's bedroom is also pretty special. It was decorated with horse posters and horse books. By her closet, there was a pair of shiny black riding boots. There were also ribbons from riding competitions hanging on the wall behind her bed.

On a bookshelf in the corner, I noticed that she had all of the Hannah Porter books. Like Sabrina and me, she



is a fan. I was a teeny bit jealous. I always borrow mine from the library. She was so lucky to have her very own set.

As I flipped through the books, dreaming of Hannah Porter and her adventures, Ashanti grabbed three pink envelopes from her desk and handed them out. They were invitations.

“You guys are the first to be invited to my birthday party!” she said.

“Do you know what you’re getting for your birthday? Did you ask for a pony?” Reid asked.

“Yes,” she sighed. “But I’m pretty sure I’m not going to get one.”

“How do you know?” asked Reid.

“I heard my Auntie G telling Mom she thought it was too much. Even though we have a big empty barn and I promised a million times I’d take care of it. I’d even shovel up all the pony poop!”

Sabrina laughed. Not me.

“It’s a lot of work,” I told her. I knew from cleaning the chicken coop that poop piles up fast.

*Wait a sec. Did she just say Auntie G?*





“What’s your aunt’s name?” I asked.

“It’s Miss Georgia. Didn’t you know?”

“The *librarian* Miss Georgia?” I couldn’t believe my ears. Was this yet another salon secret?

“Yes,” she said.

I wanted to jump up and down and scream, “IT’S A PONY! YOU’RE GETTING A PONY!”

But I held back. A birthday surprise is no good if it’s not a surprise.

I remember accidentally finding one of my birthday presents in the back of a closet. It was a tiny ceramic deer. I still remember the look on my mom’s face when I told her I knew what my present was before opening it. It was sad for both of us.

“I mean, I love horses. I’ve always loved horses. Just look at all the ribbons I’ve won! It’s not a silly whim, like my Auntie G says.”

As Ashanti went on about her pony problem, I sat on her bed and tried to act normal. But it was hard not to grin or even burst out laughing. I couldn’t believe I knew secrets about two of my new friends. I started to understand what Mom meant when she said, “Cherry



Lake is a small town. Everybody really does know everybody.” (Everybody except Madame X.)

Suddenly, Ashanti walked over to the wall and started taking down her horse posters and rolling them up.

“I mean, what’s the point if I’m never going to have a horse of my own. I’m going to get rid of the boots too. Stop my lessons. No more competitions either,” she said, and began removing her award ribbons from the wall.

“I am going to just toss these in the garbage,” she said, as she marched over to the wastebasket. She really was being a “Drama Queen.”

I had to do something. I took the ribbons out of her hand and put them back on the wall.

“Maybe you shouldn’t give it all up yet,” I said, choosing my words carefully. “Wait until your birthday. You never know.”

“It’s true,” Reid said. “Maybe your mom and dad won’t care what your Auntie G thinks.”

“Exactly!” I said. Miss Georgia’s secret was safe. And so were Ashanti’s ribbons.





## *Chapter Eight*

### RUNAWAY SECRETS

When I got home, I went straight to my desk. I had to write about this in my journal. I mean, two big secrets in one day. It was too much!

But when I opened my desk drawer, my journal wasn't there. I was shocked. I was sure I had left it there.

I looked in all the other places where I usually hide it, in case anyone comes snooping around my room. But after turning everything upside down and making a real mess, I still hadn't found it.

"Mom, have you seen my journal?" I asked, as I walked into Hair on Wheels. I tried to sound as casual as possible. It was true that I sometimes tucked it under one of the cushions at the salon.

"No, Drew," she said. "I haven't."

I looked under the sink, in the cabinets, on the magazine rack, and behind the purple bottles of lavender



shampoo. It was not in the salon.

The chickens were grazing when I scrambled up the sycamore tree. There's a hole in the trunk, left behind after a branch broke off during a storm. I call it my secret cubbyhole. Sometimes I leave my journal in there. But today, there was just a granola bar and a comic book.

"Not here," I mumbled to my chickens. They had no idea where my journal could be either.

Back in my room I looked again on my desk, on my bookshelf, under my bed, in my bed, in my nightstand drawer, and even under my nightstand. All I found was a crumpled lollipop wrapper and a quarter.

Then I gasped. I was at the library yesterday, before the sleepover. Did I accidentally drop it in the return box, along with my *Hannah the Hapless Witch* book? I suddenly imagined someone in the Cherry Lake Library finding my journal on a shelf and reading it. All sorts of disasters flew through my mind.

What if a pie maker read it? They would find out about Moira's secret ingredient and use it to win the pie contest.

What if Sabrina read it and knew she would soon



have twin baby brothers? Or if Ashanti knew she was getting a pony? Her surprise would be spoiled.

What if one of Benjamin's soccer buddies learned the *real* reason he cut his hair short? They might tease him and call him names, like "Bug Head" or "Lice Magnet." It would be awful. The worst. More than really terrible. He'd never say, "Hi, Salon Super Star" to me ever again. Instead, he'd call me "Snitch."

And what about my mom? She always says a hairstylist is nothing if their clients don't trust them. Now, no one would trust her again. All because of my stupid journal. She'd have to close down her salon forever.

That's when I saw my overnight bag on the floor. I hadn't finished unpacking it from the sleepover at Ashanti's. Actually, I had brought my journal there in case I had something important to write down.

In a rush, I pulled everything out of my overnight bag onto my bed. There was nothing but the pink envelope for Ashanti's birthday party and my sloth-print PJs. Then I remembered something. Something important.

At the sleepover, I couldn't find my toothbrush. I'd dumped everything out of my bag so I could find it. Maybe





the journal fell out too. I ran straight to the phone.

“Hi, Ashanti? Did I leave a notebook at your place? I think it may have fallen out of my overnight bag. It’s pink with sparkles. It also says ‘Secret! Do Not Open’ on the cover. And, there’s a lock, but it’s broken.”

That’s another problem with my journal. Once I hid the key so well I couldn’t find it. I had to break the lock. I should have gotten a new journal right away. I should have taken better care of my secrets.

“No, I didn’t see it,” Ashanti said. “Oh, wait. I think Sabrina found something like that. A pink book, right?”

“Yes. OK, great, thanks,” I said, and hung up in a hurry. Next, I called Sabrina’s phone number. Luckily, she was home too.

“Yes,” said Sabrina. “I found it on the floor after you left the sleepover. I gave it to Reid. She’s going to give it to you on the schoolbus on Monday.”

I hung up the phone with relief. At least it wasn’t in the Cherry Lake Library.

Then, I remembered something else. I remembered what I had written about Reid the first day I saw her on





the bus. I had compared her to a frozen strawberry in an iceberg at the North Pole. I didn't feel that way about her now, but how would she know that? If she opened my journal and read what I'd written, it would still hurt her feelings.

I couldn't take that chance. I had to call Reid right away.

"I'm sorry, Drew," said her mother. "She's busy now and can't come to the phone. Would you like to leave a message?"

"OK. Can you please just tell her to call me back as soon as she can?" I asked. When I hung up, I was worried. Was Reid really busy, or avoiding me?

When I didn't see Reid on the bus the next morning, I felt sick to my stomach. She must have read my journal and all the things I'd written about everyone, but especially about her, and now she didn't want to see me. Losing one of my new best friends because I couldn't keep secrets would be the worst thing in the world!

But I had one small comfort.

"Hey, Salon Super Star!" Benjamin called out to me when he got on the bus.



“Hi Benjamin,” I replied.

As he headed to the back of the bus to join his friends, no one called him “Lice Magnet” or “Worm Head.”

I felt a wave of relief. At least his secret was safe.  
For now.



## *Chapter Nine*

### TRUST

“There you are!” I said, as Ashanti walked over to the lunch table where Sabrina and I were sitting. I looked around. Reid was nowhere in sight.

“Where’s Reid?” I asked, trying not to sound panicked.

Ashanti and Reid are both in Mr. Gabriel’s class. They usually join us at the same time. I suddenly imagined Reid hiding out in the library, so mad about what she’d read that she refused to eat with me.

“She wasn’t in class this morning,” Ashanti replied. “I think she had a dentist appointment.”

“Oh,” I sighed with relief. Maybe she hadn’t read my journal after all.

Then I had another dark thought. What if she was reading my journal in the dentist’s waiting room? And then, when the dentist was ready to see her, she’d be too



upset to have her teeth cleaned.

That's when I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned around. It was Reid. She looked serious.

"Drew, can I talk to you about something?" she asked. "It's important."

I gulped and my heart started beating fast.

"Oh?" I said, in a high-pitched voice.

"I'd like to do another Doll Salon. You see, I was talking to my cousin last night, and I realized I'm not the only one who went *scissor-crazy* on a doll's hair. She did the same thing to one of her dolls."

"Really?" I was relieved to hear she was talking to her cousin last night and not reading my journal.

"This time, we could invite other kids too," Reid said.

"That's a great idea," I said. I was still a little stunned. Did she have my journal or not?

"But no cutting," Reid added, waving her finger in the air like a warning. "Just styling." Since her doll mishap, Reid was still afraid of scissors, even though she had been practicing with the purple wig. "Let's tell Ashanti and Sabrina."



Ashanti and Sabrina agreed that sharing our Doll Salon with other kids was a wonderful idea.

Then Reid showed us a picture of a doll with a small pumpkin in her hair as the top bun. It was cute and silly at the same time. “Since Halloween is coming up, we could do Halloween hair themes.”

We were so busy dreaming up hair themes and designing our new “Cherry Lake Doll Salon” flyer that I forgot all about my journal. When the lunch bell finally rang, Ashanti, Sabrina, and I packed up our lunch boxes. Reid grabbed her backpack.

“Oh, I have this for you,” she said, unzipping the backpack and pulling out my journal. “You left it at the sleepover. I was going to give it to you on the bus, but I forgot I had to go to the dentist.”

I stared at my journal in her hand. It was still pink, still sparkly. It looked exactly the same. But was it? Had anybody been flipping through the pages and reading it?

“Thanks,” I said, trying to hide my confusion. I looked at Reid’s face closely. She didn’t appear to be upset.

“S-so...” I had a hard time getting the next words out. “Did you read it?”





“What?” Reid replied, her voice suddenly sharp and high. “No. Of course not. You’re my friend, Drew, I would never read your journal. That would be like breaking a major friendship rule.”

I was relieved, and also ashamed for even thinking she would read it. I took the journal and gave her a hug.

“Thanks for keeping it safe,” was all I could say.

Even if she was afraid of scissors, Reid really would make a great hairstylist one day. You can trust her. That’s the most important thing of all.

When I got back home, I marched upstairs and went straight to my desk. I opened my journal and picked up my pen. I wanted to write about everything that happened, but mostly about Reid and what a loyal friend she is. I also wanted to scratch out the words I’d written about her. And maybe also the part about Moira’s secret pie ingredient. And Benjamin’s lice. And what I said about Dad’s thumb, and—

I put my pen down.

I knew what I had to do next. It wasn’t going to be easy, but it was the only way.



## Chapter Ten

### FAREWELL, SECRETS!

This was the plan.

There's a winding trail through the woods behind our house. It goes past a big white rock and brings you to a little footbridge that crosses over a stream. I decided that the bridge would be the perfect spot. I would go to there and toss my journal in the stream and the stream would carry the journal far away, where it couldn't hurt anyone.

When I reached the bridge, I could hear the soft gurgle of the water as it flowed and trickled over small rocks, making its way under the bridge.

"Farewell, secrets!" I said. Then I held up my journal.

Before letting it go, I looked down. I hoped the water was deep enough. When my dad and I went tadpole hunting here, early in the summer, the water went up to my knees. I was pretty sure that was deep enough for





my journal to sink to the bottom and disappear. Nobody would ever find it. And, if they did, it would be very hard to read. The ink would be streaky. Maybe a fish would eat it.

Just as I was wondering if fish eat paper, I heard a voice behind me.

“What are you doing, young lady?”

Coming up along the footbridge was an elegant looking lady. She was wearing a floppy hat and sunglasses. In a flash, I knew right away who it was. I’d already seen her outside Stone Wall Manor. It was Madame X!

I was too shocked to speak. She must have been out walking the trails, just like me.

“I repeat,” she said, looking very concerned, “what are you doing with that notebook?”

She had a funny accent. Like Mary Poppins or the Queen of England. She also reminded me of someone else, someone I like, but I couldn’t put my finger on\* who it was.

“I’m throwing it away so no one will ever read it.” I explained.

“Well, I don’t like to see a book being tossed in a



stream like a piece of rubbish. I daresay, it's very bad luck," she said. "And it's polluting."

"Polluting?" I repeated. I hadn't thought about that. "But I'm afraid if I throw it in the garbage someone will find it," I explained. "And I can't burn it because I'm not allowed to use matches."

"Why do you want to get rid of it so badly?" she asked me.

I couldn't help it. In a rush, it all came out of me, everything that had happened. I told her how I like writing down secrets and even inventing new secrets and that writing just makes me feel better sometimes. But I had also found out that my journal could be dangerous, especially if my secrets broke free and ran around hurting people's feelings.

And I didn't stop there. I kept going. I told her how I'd moved here recently. I told her that I had just made new friends. I told her how I'd forgotten my journal at a friend's house and worried that if my friend had read it, I would have hurt her feelings.

I told her about Benjamin and how I knew that he had caught lice twice, but that it wasn't his fault and in fact



he had the greatest hair I'd ever seen. I told her about my Dad's vegetable garden and how he needed a green thumb.

As I rambled on, Madame X didn't act like she thought there was something wrong. Instead she listened. Her eyes looked very kind and understanding, just like my mom's eyes whenever she listens to a client.

When I was done, Madame X nodded.

"May I see the journal?" she asked, holding out her hand.

I hesitated.

"You can trust me," she said.

I handed it over. I'm not sure why. Maybe it was because of the kindness in her voice.

We both sat down on the bridge. Madame X read a few pages of my journal. Every so often, while reading a paragraph, she laughed, or nodded, or sighed wistfully\*. Finally, she closed the book and gave it back to me.

"My dear child," she said. "You're not just a Collector of Secrets."

"I'm not?"

"You are a writer!"

"I am?" I was puzzled.



“That is what writers do. They write down what they see and hear, and then think about it. Sometimes they make up things, which is jolly good fun.”

“Yes, it is fun,” I agreed.

“So, you thought I was a witch?” she asked. She’d obviously read the parts in my journal about my climb up the big ivy-covered stone wall.

“Yes. I did. It’s just...I heard you talking, or at least I thought it was you. It sounded like someone casting a spell. You were in your garden and I was...” I stopped speaking. I wasn’t sure if I should use the word spying, even if that is exactly what I had been doing.

Fortunately, Madame X didn’t ask any more questions. Instead, she said, “I think it’s time for me to tell you *my* secret.” Then she took off her floppy hat and sunglasses. When I saw her face, I couldn’t believe my eyes.

“You’re H.K. Dowdy!” I practically screamed the words out loud. “My favorite author in the whole wide world!”

She looked exactly like her picture on her books. Inside the back cover of every book, there’s always the same photo of a pretty lady with brown hair, holding her



little black cat, Shadow.

“When you heard me in my garden, beyond the wall,” she explained, “I was just putting the final touches on my latest book, where the evil Master Woodlesnitch is casting a spell on Hannah’s sister. The tapping you heard was me typing away on my laptop keyboard. I am very fast and, yes, you are correct, I do believe it can sound like a mouse scurrying around. I like that simile\* a lot! Might I borrow it from you?”

“Why don’t you want anyone to know who you are?” I asked.

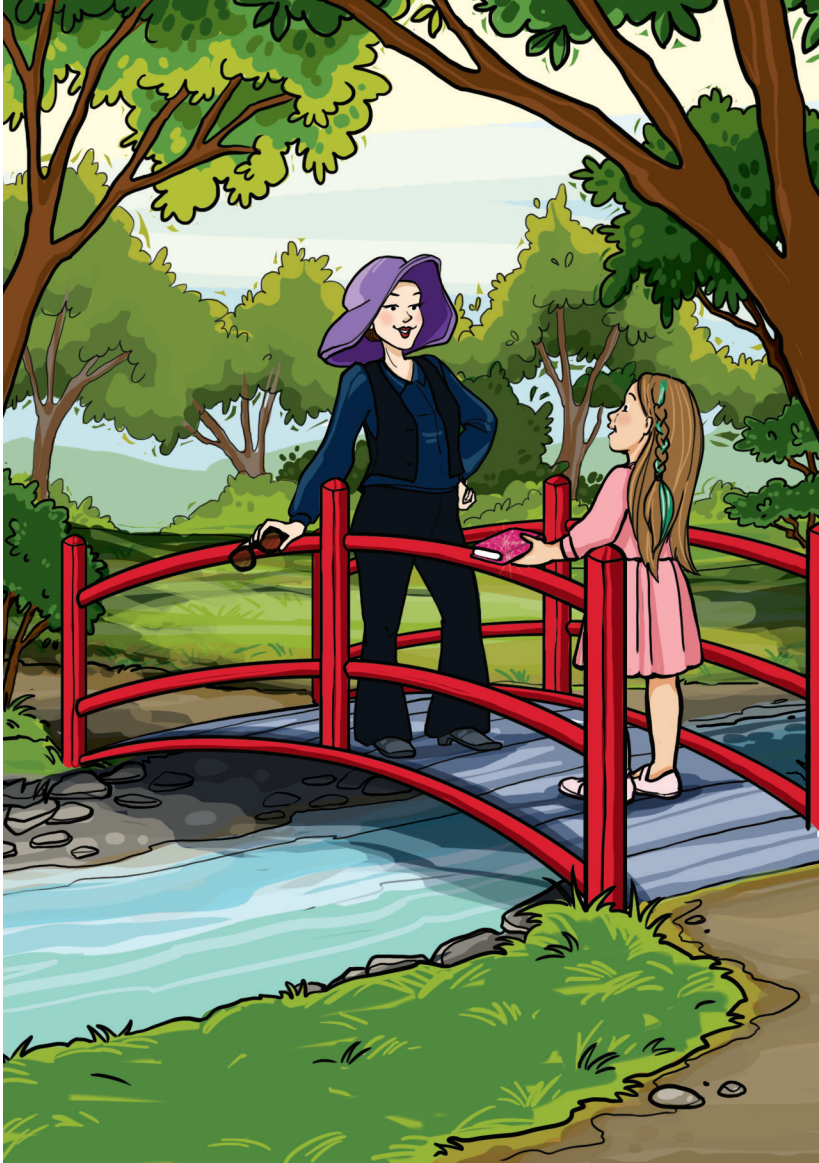
“I need absolute privacy to write,” she said. “I also don’t want people sniffing around. My work is top secret. You understand? I mustn’t give away the surprises before people read the book.”

“No, you musn’t,” I agreed. She made a very good point.

“You won’t tell anyone about me, will you? Not a soul?”

I shook my head. “I won’t. I promise.” Then I thought of something. “Maybe just my mother. She is very trustworthy. I swear.”





“Lucky girl. Mine’s a terrifying blabbermouth!” she said with a silly laugh. “Now, can you promise me something else?”

“What?”

“Don’t stop writing! If it makes you happy, you should jolly well keep doing it!”

“But what about keeping peoples’ secrets safe?” I asked her.

“Just do what I do,” H.K. Dowdy replied. “Change the names. Then you don’t have to worry about hurting people’s feelings.”

“Wow, that’s a really good idea.”

And with that, Madame X (otherwise known as H.K. Dowdy) put on her hat and sunglasses and marched down the path. I hoped I’d see her again.

As I turned to walk home, my journal clutched to my chest, I had no idea that something else had gone missing. Something even more precious than my pink sparkly journal.



## *Chapter Eleven*

### PIPPY STRIKES AGAIN

I always close the chicken coop at night, after dinnertime. By instinct\* the chickens head inside before sunset, so Faith, Hope, and Charity were already roosting on their perch when I peeked inside.

“Goodnight, my lovelies!” I said.

Faith was nestling her head into Hope’s feathers. It was so cute. Charity, the biggest chicken, was in her own corner, next to a small peephole. She likes to keep guard. But Pippi was nowhere to be seen. I looked back at the run\*. She wasn’t there either.

“Pippi!” I shouted, “Where are you?”

I looked under the ramp, behind the chicken mirror\*, and under a bucket that was upside down. To be extra sure, I checked inside the coop one more time. Was she hiding under Charity? Sometimes she nestles under Charity’s tummy and you can’t even see her.





But she wasn't there. Where did she go? I started to panic. My dad had told me that when it gets dark, the foxes and weasels come out to hunt. A little chicken like Pippi wouldn't stand a chance.

"Check the woods, she might be there!" I pleaded, tugging my mother out the front door into the yard. She was still putting on a sweater. There was no time to waste. She knew the spots where the chickens roamed during the day. And I couldn't go into the dark woods by myself.

"Don't forget to look under the white rock!" I shouted after her. "Sometimes the chickens hang around there." She nodded and disappeared into the trees.

"She'll be all right, sweetheart," my dad said, placing a greenhouse\* cover over his tomato patch. His tomatoes still hadn't turned red, but he wasn't giving up on them.

"I'll look too," he said, removing his gardening gloves. "You wait here, in case she comes back." I nodded and watched Dad disappear behind the barn.

"Pippi!" he called. "Come out, come out, wherever you are!"

Soon, Dad's voice trailed off and all was silent. He



must have gone into the woods too. I was worried. If Pippi had gone deep into the forest, she'd be very hard to find.

Mom had said she'd check Isabella Higgins's farm when she got to the road on the other side. Once, Pippi had wandered over there. Isabella found her trying to wrestle herself a spot at their hen feeder. But that had been during the day. This was nighttime.

As I sat on our front porch, fearing the worst, Moira Sisley-Brown showed up for her Tuesday night appointment.

"I'm very sorry," I said, in my most polite voice, "but my mother's not here right now."

Moira didn't look happy. She reminded me that the pie contest was tomorrow and she wanted her bangs to look their best. Especially because she expected to win and was just told that a famous pie blogger was going to be there, taking photos. She needed perfect bangs and a perfect pie.

She paced back and forth nervously. I didn't want her to blame my mother for missing her appointment. It wasn't Mom's fault Pippi had run away. *What could I do?* That's when I got an idea. It was risky. It might not work.



But it was my only hope.



Reid was there in minutes. Her dad drove her over right after my call.

“I’m here,” she said, “but I’m still not sure I can do it. Maybe we should wait for your mother?”

“But I’ve seen you practice on the wig. You snipped those bangs perfectly. Mom even said so.”

“What if your mom was just being nice?” Reid worried.

“She wasn’t just being nice. It’s true. Come on, I know you can do it!”

That’s when Moira chimed in.

“I have faith, dear,” she said, putting on a salon cape all by herself and taking a seat in the salon chair. “Besides, I go to bed at eight-thirty sharp. It’s either now, or I’m a complete disaster at the contest tomorrow.”

Reid nervously picked up the scissors.

In a few snips, the job was done. *Did she even snip anything at all?* I wasn’t sure, but when Moira looked in the mirror, she seemed very satisfied.



Then, to our surprise, she said, “Now I’m ready for something different.”

“Different?” I was in shock. Moira *never* changes her hair.

“What about that crown braid you’re always talking about? I hear you’re good at those, Drew.”

“She’s an expert,” said Reid.

I put on my salon apron. Then I took a breath. Slowly and carefully I separated Moira’s thick hair into sections, and then started weaving them together, one by one.

“How about adding this?” Reid suggested, holding up one of her homemade bows. It was made of satin ribbon and was black. Moira’s favorite color.

“Perfect,” I replied, stepping back to let Reid place it. She found just the right spot.

“If you sleep with a scarf or shower cap tonight, your style should look smooth for tomorrow,” I told Moira. “I’ll use some hair spray too, just to be safe.”

When I finished with the hair spray, Reid gave Moira the hand mirror so she could see her new hairdo from all angles. Moira pouted her lips and studied herself



for a long time. Reid and I looked at each other and shrugged.

*Did Moira like it?*

“It’s perfect,” she said, handing the mirror back to me and smiling. “I don’t know why I didn’t do something like this years ago. Thank you both so much.”

“You’ll win the prize for best pie *and* best hairstyle!” said Reid.

Reid and I were both pretty excited, especially when Moira paid us twenty whole dollars for the cut and style. We felt like professional hairstylists!

When Moira left, I turned to Reid and gave her a big hug. I was so proud of her. Her hard work practicing had paid off.

“Maybe me and scissors do get along after all!” she said.

“I never doubted it.” I grabbed the broom and started sweeping up the salon floor. Reid put the ribbons, elastics, hair spray, and combs back in the cart, neatly. She reminded me of Mom. Organized and tidy.

That’s when Mom charged back into the salon.

“Oh, my goodness,” she said, out of breath from



running. “I forgot about Moira!”

“Don’t worry about it, Mom,” I said, taking off my apron. “We got it covered.”

Before I could tell her the story, we heard clucking noises. I dropped the broom and charged outside with Reid following right behind me.

Dad was walking toward the hair salon, carrying a bundle of rusty-red feathers.

“Pippi!” I cried out, rushing over and taking her in my arms. Usually she squawks and wiggles until she’s free. But tonight, she rested calmly in my arms, clucking happily.

“Where did you find her?”

“You’ll never guess,” Dad said. “She was up in your favorite tree, and inside your secret cubbyhole, resting cozy as you please. I just found her now.”

“Rascal,” Mom chided\*, giving her a quick pet.

To this day, we don’t know how Pippi got up the tree. *Could chickens really fly after all?*





## Chapter Twelve

### A SPECIAL GIFT

It was the middle of November when the last leaf fell from the sycamore tree. I was sitting in the hair salon, next to the round window, when I noticed it, fluttering up and down in the breeze, and then landing softly on the ground by the chicken coop.

That very same day, I learned that the Cherry Lake Library had received a copy of the latest book in the *Hannah the Hapless Witch* book series.

Miss Georgia couldn't stop talking about it. She was back in Hair on Wheels, getting another dousing of my mother's special cranberry color.

"It's quite an honor. We're the very first public library to get a copy," she told us. "It was a gift from an unknown donor\*. They dropped it off, wrapped in brown paper, with no note attached. Isn't that mysterious?"

"Very," Mom said, giving me a quick glance.





“Can I be the first one to check it out from the library?” I asked Miss Georgia. “H.K. Dowdy is my favorite writer.”

“Sorry, dear,” she said. “Though I love your mother’s haircuts, I can’t allow for any favoritism\* can I? You’ll have to put a reserve on it using the library reservation system. Just like everyone else.”

“I understand,” I said. Then I picked up my journal.

*Miss ~~Georgia~~ Cranberry is very fair. That's why I could never be a librarian. I'd give all my friends the best books first and never charge them late fees.*

I would have written more on this topic, but there was no more room in my journal. I'd reached the very last page. I sighed and wiggled in my seat. Miss Georgia looked at me and smiled. I think she felt bad about not being able to give me the library book.

“Maybe you can give me one of those special hairstyles you’re so famous for,” she said.

“Sure,” I said with a grin.



Ever since Reid and I did Moira's hair, word of our hairstyling talents had spread all over Cherry Lake. Apparently, people were just as impressed with the crown braid as they were with Moira's yummy, prize-winning pie.

"Do you think you'll follow in your mother's footsteps and be a hairstylist yourself?" Miss Georgia asked me. "You obviously have a gift."

"Actually, I think I want to be a writer," I said.

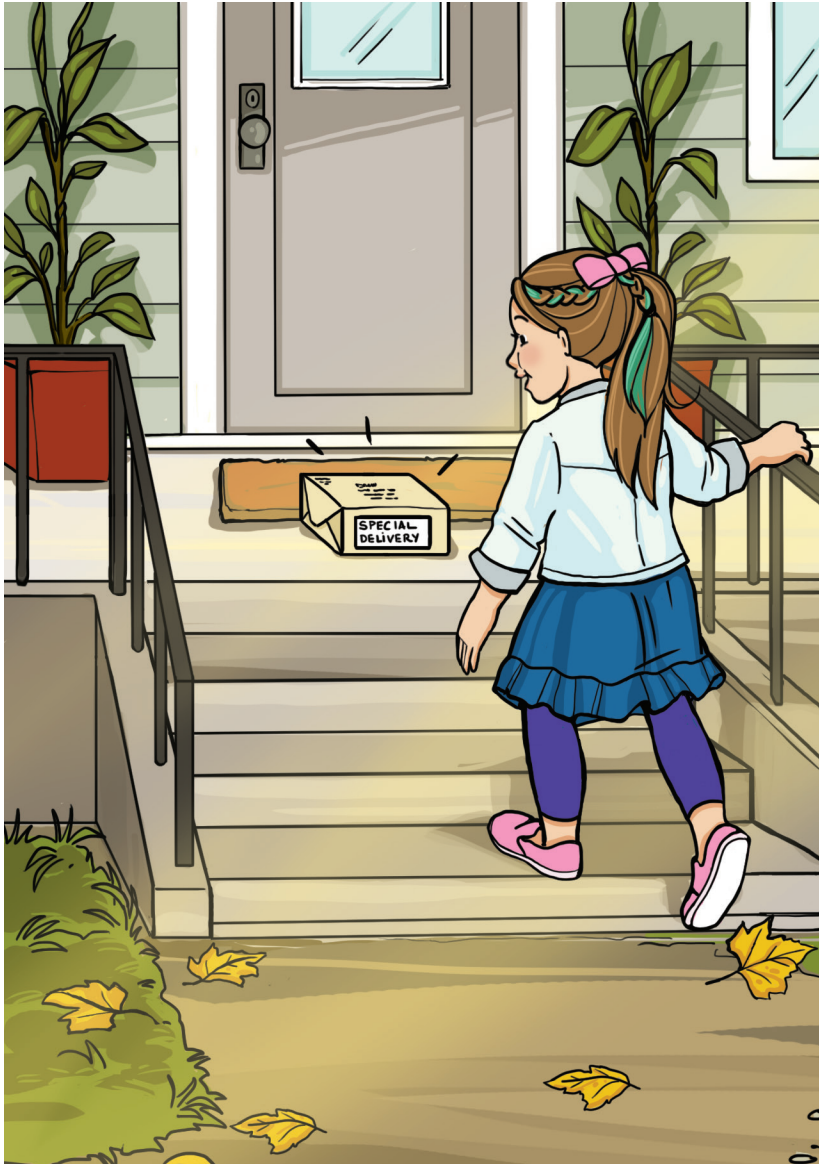
"Is that so?" Miss Georgia nodded approvingly. "I guess one day I'll be placing your book on the shelf at the Cherry Lake Library."

"Maybe," I replied, shyly.

When I left the salon and headed back to our farmhouse, I thought about all the things that had happened to me in the last few months. A new home, new hair salon, and new friends. Runaway chickens and runaway secrets.

Looking back, I can see how everything led up to the very next moment—me, coming to the front porch and staring down at a package at my feet. It was wrapped in brown paper and addressed to me. Dad said it had arrived that morning.





I picked up the package and ran upstairs to my room. I hurried over to the bed, sat down, and opened it. Inside was a special-edition, boxed set of the entire *Hannah the Hapless Witch* series.

“Sister Quest!” I shouted, leaping up from the bed.

The books were all hardcovers and the box they came in was covered with red velvet and printed with gold letters. Inside, page after page of color illustrations showed scenes of Hannah Porter’s adventures.

When I opened the first book, there was another surprise. Written on the inside cover was a short note.

*To a very special young lady. Thanks for keeping my secret safe. And keep writing.*

*Yours truly,*

*Madame X*

I kept staring at those words and how special they were, almost like magic.

Then I noticed there was something else inside the package, something smaller and wrapped in yellow tissue paper. I peeled the paper away and pulled out a brand-new



journal. It had a blue cover dotted with little stars. Holding the journal closed was a very sturdy-looking gold lock with a key. It was beautiful. And the timing couldn't have been more perfect.

I carried the journal over to my desk, and as I turned the golden key, I heard a voice shouting and singing. It was my father. I looked out the window. Dad was doing a little dance by his garden, a giant grin on his face. His tomatoes had finally turned red.

I smiled, opened up the first page of my new journal and picked up my pen.

I knew exactly what I was going to write.



## Glossary

*Many words have more than one meaning. Here are the definitions of words marked with this symbol \* (an asterisk) as they are used in this story.*

**approximation:** *something that looks almost exactly like something else*

**bob:** *a short haircut, usually jaw-length*

**braided bangs:** *hairstyles where the front hair and bangs are braided across the top of the forehead*

**chicken mirror:** *a mirror placed in a chicken coop for fun because they like looking at themselves*

**chided:** *scolded gently*

**chignon:** *a knot or coil of hair arranged on the back of a person's head*

**collage:** *artwork made by gluing materials such as photos, bits of paper, or fabric onto poster board or another backing*



**comb:** *a brightly colored, fleshy part of the top of a chicken's head that looks like a hair comb*

**cue:** *something said or done that lets someone else know it is time for them to do a certain action*

**donor:** *a person who gives something for free to help another person or organization*

**“elbow grease”:** *hard work*

**favoritism:** *unfairly treating someone in a better way than others*

**frantic:** *wild with fear or panic*

**greenhouse:** *a frame with clear panels on the walls and roof that is used to protect and grow plants*

**instinct:** *a natural way of acting or thinking in a situation*

**occupant:** *the person who lives in a certain house or apartment*

**micro bangs:** *bangs cut very short, above the eyebrows and close to the hairline*

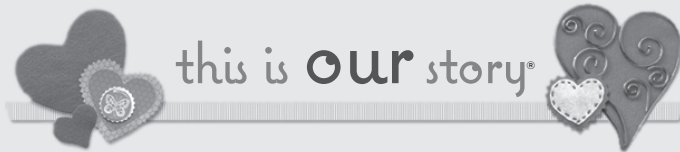
**pixie cut:** *a short haircut, usually just one*



*inch to three inches long but  
sometimes a bit longer on top*  
**“put my finger on”:** *think of or  
remember*  
**run:** *for chickens, an enclosed or fenced  
outdoor space where they can  
walk around or graze*  
**side sweeps:** *hairstyles where the hair is  
parted on the side and the hair and  
bangs are swept in one direction*  
**simile:** *a phrase that compares two  
things, using the words  
“like” or “as”*  
**“spill the beans”:** *reveal a secret*  
**strutted:** *walked proudly*  
**temporary:** *something that will last for  
or be used for only a short time*  
**updos:** *hairstyles where longer hair is  
pulled up and away from the  
face and neck*  
**wistfully:** *with a feeling of longing for  
something from the past*







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And have we got a story to tell.

*Our Generation*® is unlike any that has come before. We're making a positive impact on our community by performing small, but powerful, acts of kindness, standing tall for causes we believe in, and creating a narrative where everyone can make a difference.

We're speaking up for those around us, taking leaps to develop big ideas, and embracing new opportunities without ever forgetting to build lasting memories along the way. From playing sports outdoors and learning new instruments, to singing out loud and dancing around, we're laughing together with friends as we share in the best moments of being a kid.

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In her journal, Drew likes to write  
about all the funny things that happen  
in the hair salon. You can start a journal too!

This is **my** first journal:

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[illegible]

**Get your own journal, like Drew, and keep on writing!**







### *About the Author*

*Laura Leigh Motte is a Montreal-based screenwriter and novelist. As a child, you could often find her high up in the branches of a sycamore tree, reading a good book. Hair Salon Secrets is Laura's third Our Generation® book.*

### *About the Illustrator*

*Passionate about drawing from an early age, Géraldine Charette decided to pursue her studies in computer multimedia in order to further develop her style and technique. Her favorite themes to explore in her illustrations are fashion and urban life. In her free time, Géraldine loves to paint and travel. She is passionate about horses and loves spending time at the stable. It's where she feels most at peace and gives her time to think and fuel her creativity.*



*Hair Salon Secrets became the book that you are holding in your hands with the assistance of the talented people at Maison Battat Inc., including Joe Battat, Dany Battat, Sandy Jacinto, Loredana Ramacieri, Véronique Casavant, Cynthia Lopez, Laurie Gaudreau-Levesque, Alexandra Bonfâ, Ananda Guarany, Jenny Gambino, Arlee Stewart, Natalie Cohen, Zeynep Yasar, Joanne Burke Casey, Pamela Shrimpton, and Joni Vetne.*





this is OUR story®

# Hair Salon Secrets

When Drew™ moves from the big city to a farm in Cherry Lake, Virginia, it's not easy meeting friends. Fortunately, she has four feathery chickens to keep her company. She also helps out in her mother's hair salon. It was once a rusty old travel trailer that they polished and painted and named "Hair on Wheels." Styling hair is one of Drew's favorite hobbies.

Drew also likes secrets. And Hair on Wheels is full of them. There's something about having their hair washed and combed and styled that makes people talk. And boy, do they talk! They tell Drew and her mother some pretty interesting secrets.

But secrets need to be kept safe. Is Drew up for the challenge?

It's impossible to separate **Our Generation®** characters from the generation of girls who read about and play with them, for they are one and the same. They're changing the world by making their households greener. They're baking cupcakes to help charities. They're writing in their journals, practicing for recitals, doing cartwheels down the block and giggling with their friends until they can hardly breathe. **Our Generation** is about girls growing up together. "This is our story" reflects the community of these amazing girls as they laugh, learn and create the narrative of their own generation.

Ages 7 and up

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