



PARTY GIRL



Carmen Reid

About the Book

Exams, exams, exams ... no wonder the St Jude's girls are desperate for a PARTY!

Gina's new boyfriend may be an AMAZING dancer, but is he really as nice as he seems?

Amy wants to track down her real mum, but she's SCARED of what she might find out.

Niffy's romance could be getting too HOT to handle.

And as for Min - she needs to be dragged from the study room, even if she SCREAMS!

Time to buy a FABULOUS new dress, grab a CUTE pair of shoes and join the girls for an UNFORGETTABLE night out!

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CORGI BOOKS

MEET THE ST JUDE'S GIRLS ...

GINA

Full name: Gina Louise Winkleman-Peterson

Home: A fabulous white and glass architect-designed beach house with pool on the Californian coast

Likes: Sunshine (sadly not often found in Edinburgh), swimming, Halloween, pointy ankle boots, Prada or anything Prada-esque, Reese's Pieces, her cell phone, her little brother Menzie (sometimes), coffee, Dermot O'Hagan ... *and* Callum Cormack

Dislikes: Slithery octopus-type kisses, the totally gross sludge-green St Jude's school uniform, deadly dull history lessons, Charlie Fotherington-whatsit, boiled vegetables of any kind (I mean guys, like, haven't you heard of stir-fry?)

Would like to be: A screenwriter - but absolutely no one in the whole world knows about that

Fascinating fact: Gina has three other best friends at her old school in California - Paula, Ria and Maddison. They still can't believe she goes to boarding school in Scotland

NIFFY

Full name: Luella Edith Millicent Pethurer
Nairn-Bassett (no wonder she's called
either 'Niffy' or 'Lou')

Home: The ancient, crumbling ancestral
mansion Blacklough Hall in Cumbria, England

Likes: Playing pranks, enormous horses
and slobbery dogs, all team games, (especially
hockey - she's really good), the St J's assembly
game Banshee Buzzword Bingo (which she
invented), her big brother Finn, the odd
sneaked glass of expensive red wine, all school
food, but especially pudding

Dislikes: Dresses, dressing up, poncy shoes
and fussy clothes of any description, make-up,
fussing with her hair, fussing about anything
at all, her real name

Would like to be: A professional rider - an
international show-jumper, or maybe a three-day
eventer - that way she could do show jumping,
dressage and her favourite, cross-country jumping

Fascinating fact: She can be fully
dressed in all her riding clothes and
hat in twenty-five seconds flat

MIN

Full name: Asimina Singupta

Home: A big family house with a huge garden in a suburb of Durban, South Africa

Likes: Running really, really fast and winning, being top of the class in every single subject, doing homework (it's so interesting when you really get into it), mango lassis, gold bracelets, reading science books, borrowing Amy's clothes, her mum's home-made curries

Dislikes: The sight of blood, Biology lessons, babysitting her little brothers and sisters, the food at St J's, wearing her hair in plaits, Scottish grey skies

Would like to be: A medical researcher or medical physicist. She has to do something medical because of her doctor parents but it can't involve blood!

Fascinating fact: Min's mother taught herself Italian and went all the way to Pisa to get her medical degree

AMY

Full name: Amy Margaret McCorquodale

Home: Recently forced to downsize from an amazing penthouse flat in Glasgow, Scotland, with a terrace and panoramic view of the city

Likes: Designer jeans (Iceberg), designer bags (Marc Jacobs), designer boots (Jimmy Choo, but only when her dad is feeling incredibly generous), Edinburgh's Harvey Nichols (obviously), very handsome boys, diamonds, champagne, dance music, dressing up and going out, her gran's mince and tatties

Dislikes: Penny Boswell-Hackett, Mrs Norah 'the Neb' Knebworth, everything in Niffy's wardrobe, French lessons, people teasing her about her Glaswegian accent, oh and Penny Boswell-Hackett (have you got that?)

Would like to be: Officially, she's going to do a law degree, then join her dad's nightclub business. Secretly, she'd like to be a famous and fabulous actress

Fascinating fact: Amy's mum and dad were teenagers when she ... er ... arrived. She was brought up by her dad, her gran and her grandpa. She hasn't seen her real mum for years

Chapter One

'THIS PLACE IS a complete and utter dump! We have to *do* something. *Now!*' Gina exclaimed, and just to make her point she kicked at one of the great heaps of stuff on the floor of the cramped dorm.

'*Ow!*' she yelled, as her big toe made contact with something hard. 'Are we collecting rocks in here now?' She knelt down in her cute pyjamas, burrowed into the pile and found a dumbbell - an actual metal dumbbell. No wonder her toe was smarting. 'Why are there dumbbells on the floor?'

'It's where we keep everything else,' Niffy, the owner of the dumbbell, snapped. Niffy's real name was Luella Nairn-Bassett, but she'd been nicknamed Niffy at school for so long that she now felt surprised whenever people called her Luella.

'Well, it's got to stop! Right now! We need to clean up or I am going to go *crazy!*' Gina added in her unmistakable Californian accent.

The Iris dorm, right up on the top attic floor of St Jude's boarding house, could probably have been quite a nice room. It had pale walls decorated with flowery wallpaper, and windows set into the sloping ceiling which looked out over the school's playing fields and tennis courts and towards the imposing main school building.

But the dorm was completely jam-packed with four beds, a large wooden wardrobe, four chests of drawers, four

teenage girls and all their stuff, including backpacks, bags and suitcases, because these girls were all boarders who didn't leave school until the holidays.

It was 9.45 in the evening and all the members of this dorm were in the room because it was time to get ready for lights out at 10.15. Niffy, tall and lanky with shortish curly hair which was dotted here and there with gingery clumps - a bad home-dying experiment - was already in her dressing gown; she was reading on top of her bed.

Min, an interesting combination of a pretty Asian girl with a singsong South African accent, was brushing out her long hair and thinking about having a shower. The fourth girl in the room was Amy McCorquodale. Just like Californian Gina, Amy had blonde hair, blue eyes and an unusually pretty face, but unlike her friend in her beautiful silk pyjamas, Amy was still dressed in the dreaded St J's uniform, and it was hard to look lovely in a grey skirt, sludgy green cardigan and - horror of horrors - sludgy green knee socks.

'It's getting late,' Niffy complained. 'If you want to do a big tidy-up, then you'll have to wait until tomorrow.'

'I do not want to do a big tidy-up. It's not just my stuff!' Gina protested. 'Everyone in this room needs to help. We can't close the drawers; we can't even see the floor. The stuff has taken over!'

'Speak for yourself,' Niffy replied. 'I've shoved everything I own under my bed and it's perfectly fine there.'

Gina glanced over to Niffy and saw that this was true. A great jumble of books, sports kit, bags and clothes filled the entire space under the bed. There was even a tennis-racket handle poking out as a nice trip hazard.

'Now that is just a total mess,' Gina said, pointing at it all. 'How are you ever going to find anything in there?'

'Using the traditional Niffy method,' Amy chipped in.

'And what's that?' Niffy wondered.

‘Rummage and swear,’ Amy replied.

‘I don’t know why you two are having a go at *me*,’ Niffy protested. ‘We can’t close the wardrobe door because of Gina’s in-line skates, which by the way she has never used and probably never will. And as for the top of your chest of drawers, Amy, that is a paper avalanche just waiting to happen—’

‘Could we all stop having a go at each other?’ Min broke in. ‘Gina just wanted to say that we need to tidy up. And she’s right.’

Min’s words immediately changed the atmosphere. Min – Asimina Singupta, to give her her full name – was a quiet, studious and kind person. For her to intervene, sounding a little bit cross, was so unusual that the three others immediately fell into a guilty silence.

‘It’s only twenty-five minutes till lights out.’ Niffy made one last attempt at an excuse.

‘Lame,’ Min said. ‘You know perfectly well that Mrs Knebworth would be delighted to find us tidying up, even if we are late for lights out. C’mon, I’ll help you tackle the mountain under your bed so that Gina and Amy can get on with their own things.’

With a big sigh, Niffy knelt down and began by pulling out the tennis racket. Amy sat beside the pile of paperwork on her chest of drawers, and Gina went to the wardrobe to see if she could rearrange some of the things in there so that the door would actually close.

‘The skates are from my dad, Pieter – you know, my new dad ...’ Gina explained. ‘Well, my real dad ... but it still feels kinda new to me because we’ve been out of touch for so long.’

‘Yeah, we know,’ Amy assured her.

‘I’ve only had them for a few weeks and I haven’t had a chance to use them because—’

‘There’s no skate park around here?’ Niffy offered. ‘Due to the fact that you go to school in Edinburgh, Scotland, as

opposed to Malibu, California. Maybe your new dad doesn't know that much about you?'

'He knows about plenty,' Gina snapped back.

She was a little touchy on the subject of her new dad and she knew it. But he had only really been back in her life for a few weeks and it was taking some getting used to. Gina had a stepdad, Mick, who had been 'Dad' to her for as long as she could remember, and she'd almost forgotten about her other 'real' dad until he had suddenly turned up, completely unexpectedly, in California when she had been over there for the recent Easter holidays. Now, this term, she'd been emailing him, calling him, and Facebooking his three children - and she was getting gifts from them. It was very exciting. She had this whole other family in her life - twin halvesisters and a half-brother - who she hadn't even known about before.

She picked up one of the skates. It was big, clunky and purple. She hadn't even tried it on, let alone tried to skate. To be honest, the thought of skating scared her. She remembered trying a few times when she was about ten years old, and getting bumped and hurt and scraped. Pieter was just trying to be nice - all his other kids loved skating - but by giving her skates, he'd just proved that he didn't know her very well yet.

She pushed the skate towards the back of the cupboard, where it joined the heap of boots, sandals, shoes and hockey sticks. Really, it wasn't just tidying up which was needed in this dorm, it was throwing out. Everyone - apart from Min - seemed to have way too much stuff.

'Maybe we could put some of the things you don't use much on top of the wardrobe?' Min suggested to Niffy. The pile being dragged out from under Niffy's bed seemed to be growing bigger and bigger, but still there was more stuff to be brought to light.

'What on earth is that?' Amy asked.

Gina looked round. Amy was pointing to a huge, navy-blue rugby shirt which Min had just pulled out from Niffy's pile.

Niffy blushed a little, shrugged a little, then confessed: 'Angus gave it to me. I got cold when we were out ... I borrowed it and he said I could keep it.'

'Woohoo,' Min teased.

'The rugby jumper of romance,' Gina added, just for the fun of seeing Niffy blush a little more.

'*Eurgh!* You've got to be joking! You wore his cheesy old rugby jumper? I would rather go naked than wear some smelly boy's honking old jumper!' Amy exclaimed.

'Mind your own beeswax,' Niffy ordered, rumpling the jumper up in her hands and shoving it into a drawer.

Meanwhile, Gina and Min laughed at the thought of precious Amy in a stinky rugby top, because when she wasn't in school uniform, Amy was always beautifully dressed and perfectly turned out.

Just then there was a brief knock and the dorm door opened.

'Girls, bedtime. Oh, my goodness! Just what is going on in here?!' The boarding housemistress, Norah Knebworth, was standing in front of them with a very disapproving look on her face.

The Neb, as she was known, was a short, solid and quite frankly terrifying lady around about the fifty-something mark. She disapproved of just about everything, and was never afraid to let her disapproval show. She had a way of glaring at St Jude's boarders which made them feel as if their innermost thoughts and all their secrets were plainly visible on their faces.

Min immediately shrank down, and Gina and Amy were stopped in their tracks; Niffy was the only one who risked the cheeky reply: 'It's just what it looks like, Mrs K: we're having a spring-clean.'

'At five minutes to ten?' she asked, drawing in a sharp breath and crossing her arms under the bosom equivalent of a tank.

'Well, we started ages ago,' Amy began, 'but it's taking us longer than we expected.'

'Amy McCorquodale, you're not even changed! You're not even in your pyjamas!' Mrs Knebworth exclaimed.

'I am,' Niffy pointed out.

'Yes, you are, but you're sitting in front of an entire evening's worth of clearing up!'

'Well, we had to do something. This room was a disaster,' Gina said, going to Niffy's defence.

'Was a disaster?' Mrs Knebworth asked. 'It *is* a disaster. Twenty minutes,' she decided. 'I'm giving you a twenty-minute extension. If you're not sorted out by then, I'll have to wake you at six in the morning to carry on with the clear-up.'

She went out of the room, leaving the girls to glare at each other accusingly.

'This is all your fault,' Niffy said, to no one in particular. She reached over into her pile and pulled out two hockey boots caked in dried mud. The movement caused the pile to shift. A tube of tennis balls fell down, along with a fat brown envelope with Amy's name on the front. 'This isn't mine. What's this?' she asked, picking it up.

Amy looked, saw the envelope and immediately snatched it up. 'How did that get in there?' she asked.

'No idea,' Niffy replied.

'I've been looking *everywhere* for that,' Amy told her.

'I don't know how it got there,' Niffy said. 'Maybe if your paperwork wasn't in such a state ...'

'What's in the envelope anyway?' Gina asked.

'This is the letter my dad sent me. You know ... about my mum. This is all the information he has about where she is, what she's doing and how I might be able to get in touch with her.'

'Oh, my gosh. Are you going to do anything about that?' Gina asked. 'I mean, I know you were thinking about it ... but maybe you've changed your mind?'

Amy gave a sigh. 'It's difficult,' she admitted. 'It really is difficult. My dad doesn't want me to do this. But it's my mum. I mean, I've never known my mum, I've never had a mum. Don't you think I should be allowed to meet her? Even just the once?'

Chapter Two

GINA AND AMY were at the back of the queue to get into the classroom the next morning for French, and as soon as they entered the room Gina could see there was going to be a problem.

The desks had been re-arranged, with everyone shaken out of their usual seating positions, and now the only two chairs left were one in front of and one beside the only girl in the whole school who Amy just couldn't stand: Penny Boswell-Hackett.

Gina hadn't been at St Jude's long enough to know how the huge resentment had really built up between Amy and Penny. But it had been growing and growing for years now, with both girls doing everything they could to make each other's lives unpleasant. Amy would argue, however, that Penny always started it.

Just last week, Amy had managed to sabotage a dance Penny had organized and *kiss* Penny's new boyfriend. So it was not exactly a great idea for Amy to sit beside Penny right now.

'I'll go there,' Gina hissed, pointing to the chair next to Penny. 'You sit in front.'

Amy nodded and stalked towards the chair, head high, pointedly ignoring Penny. But Penny looked up and immediately let a frown settle on her freckled face.

'*You're* here,' she hissed, 'so now I'm in dunce's corner.'

Amy didn't look round, but Gina shot Penny a disapproving glare. Everyone knew that Penny was one of the best pupils in the French class, but that didn't give her the right to be rude to Amy.

Madame Bensimon, their French teacher, who was genuinely French, had a stack of papers in her hand, and she began going through the class, handing the sheets out with comments.

'Nice effort,' she told Gina, as she landed the essay on her desk.

'Beautiful,' was the comment for Penny.

'Ah, Amy, so much improved. I really enjoyed this piece and your grammar was *excellent*.'

Astonished by this unaccustomed praise, Amy held up her paper to look for the mark she'd been given.

Over her shoulder, Gina could see the big red 'A'. 'I'm jealous!' she told her friend.

As soon as Madame Bensimon was out of earshot, Penny hissed, in a horrible sneering voice, 'Not bad for a scummy girl who grew up in a scummy tower block.'

Now Amy turned and Gina could see that her face was absolutely livid with hurt and anger. But she didn't say anything. She just looked long and hard at Penny, then snatched up all her things and, to the astonishment of the whole class, ran out of the room.

'Amy?!' Madame called after her. 'Amy, are you all right? Are you ill?'

The classroom door shut with a slam. For a moment, the rest of the class sat in a stunned silence, then Gina stood up.

'I think I should go and make sure she's OK.'

'Yes, Gina,' Madame agreed, 'that would be very kind.'

Gina stepped out of the classroom and into the long, wide corridor. It was already empty. She tried to guess where Amy might have gone. The Upper Fifts at St Jude's didn't have their own common room in the main school

building, so she guessed that Amy had either gone to one of the loos or to the library. She walked quickly to the nearest block of loos. Opening the door, she saw that all the cubicles were empty. 'Amy,' she called out anyway, but there was no reply.

She hurried on to the library. It was weird walking along the corridors in silence like this. Usually they were packed and noisy as hundreds of girls made their way from one class to the next.

In the library, Gina could only see sixth formers swotting away over their books. No sign of her friend's blonde head.

She checked another two bathroom areas and then began to feel worried. Where *was* Amy? Gina stopped for a moment to think hard. If she wanted quiet, if she wanted to be somewhere totally undisturbed, to be left alone ... where would she head?

Moments later, Gina thought she had the answer and began to run towards the locker rooms. Four different classes shared the fifth-form locker rooms, where coats and blazers were hung up in the mornings and sports kit was stored. During class time, the locker rooms were totally empty because no one had a reason to come in here.

Gina opened the door quietly and listened. Almost immediately she could hear Amy's quiet sobs, so she hurried towards her.

'Amy!' Gina said soothingly. 'Amy ... it's OK.'

Amy had opened up the slim metal door of her locker and had leaned her face inside, burying it in her blazer.

'Amy,' Gina repeated and put her hand on her friend's shoulder. Now Amy had to notice her, even if she didn't want to.

'It's true!' Amy blurted out, all choked with tears, her head still inside the locker. 'What she said is true. I *am* a scummy girl who grew up in a scummy tower block.'

Gina just snorted. 'Yeah, right, and she's pond life who just happened to grow up in a mansion or whatever. I don't