



Anu & Friedbert Stohner

Luna-Lila. The Absolute
Biggest Best Friend's Secret

© S. Fischer Verlag GmbH,
Frankfurt, 2016

The first chapter

'That's enough! Tomorrow I'm coming to school with you and I'll give them both what for!' said Luna-Lila and whacked her pretty princess hand down hard on Wilma's Silver Star Pony duvet cover.

Wilma was still sniffing a bit but said nothing. Luna-Lila wasn't allowed to come to school with her and she knew that perfectly well.

'And don't say I can't – this time I'm doing it anyway!'

Luna-Lila didn't whack the duvet this time but clenched her fists and put on her I'm-a-princess-and-I do-what-I-like face.

Usually that made Wilma laugh but not today. The thing at school with Ulli and Olli was getting worse and worse. Ulli and Olli had been in class for a couple of weeks, ever since the start of the new school year and Wilma had moved to the second grade. But they were already playing top dog and wanted to have all the say. They were twins, big and sturdy, and nobody dared go against them. They were constantly looking for trouble and now they'd started demanding stuff. And if you didn't give them what they wanted, they'd do something nasty. Today they'd come over to Wilma and wanted her glitter pen, the one she always used to draw the stars in the sky in her Silver Star Pony pictures. Wilma did just the best Silver Star Pony pictures in the whole class.

'That's a nice pen,' Ulli had said.

'We really like that one,' Olli had said.

They always did it like that so that afterwards they could make out they definitely hadn't asked for anything and if someone wanted simply to give them something, there was nothing they could do.

Wilma would probably have handed over another pen. But not her glitter pen.

'You can easily buy them at normal stationery shops,' she'd said. Luckily Frau Werner, the teacher, had come into the classroom and shooed Ulli and Olli away to their seats.

'Revenge!' they'd hissed and Wilma's tummy tensed when she thought about the next day.

Today they hadn't actually done anything further but kept grinning across at her. And as she and her very best friend, Aylin, were walking across the playground after school, the two nasty pieces of work were waiting at the school gate and shouted after her, 'See you tomorrow!'

'Time to stop moaning,' said Luna-Lila briskly. 'Let's think instead about what we're going to do tomorrow.'

'But you know, don't you...'

'What?'

'That you...'

'Stop it, quiet, I don't want to hear any more!'

'Luna-Rosa, please!'

Oh, you dumbo! Now Wilma had gone and let slip the wrong name. She hadn't done that for ages.

'Pardon?'

Earlier Luna-Lila had had her usual strong-minded princess voice which made clear that she was unaccustomed to being contradicted. But now she came out with that 'Pardon?' so composedly and so softly you could barely hear it. Wilma imagined that this would be how a queen would respond if her maid were to suggest she squeeze the toothpaste onto the toothbrush herself.

'Sorry, I really am,' said Wilma. 'It just slipped out because...'

'...because you're getting so worked up about the terrible twins – and that's why I'm coming with you tomorrow. Stop it, quiet, basta!'

Luna-Lila was talking normally again now, all strong-minded, and Wilma was relieved. The last time she'd got the name wrong, Luna-Lila had made such a drama out of it that Wilma had dropped her Silver Star Pony mug and it had broken into a thousand pieces. What's more, Luna-Rosa was actually Luna-Lila's proper name. But she didn't like it because she hated the colour it suggested – pink! Apparently pink would attract handsome princes and handsome princes were revolting. If Wilma had been a princess, she'd definitely not have had anything against handsome princes. Wilma liked pink, too, really. But you couldn't talk to Luna-Lila about that.

'You can wear a pretty pink dress and dainty pink shoes and wait for your handsome prince, if you want to, but just leave me in peace!' was what she always said. Wilma

needed only be wearing the teeniest bit of pink for Luna-Lila to be in a grump the whole time. So Wilma thought it better to let it go. Lila was a pretty name, too, and lilac a pretty flower, and it was Luna-Lila's favourite colour. That was why she'd chosen the name for herself.

'How about if I write Tweedledum and Tweedledee with glitter pen on the back of their jackets without them knowing?' asked Luna-Lila, after she'd been lost in thought for a while, stroking the silver mane of the pony on the duvet cover.

'Whose jackets?' asked Wilma.

'Whose d'you think?' said Luna-Lila and whacked the poor pony on the head.

At that very moment the door was opened as if by a ghostly hand and Nils stuck his head round it. Nils was Wilma's little brother and a gigantic pest. His greatest wish was to catch Wilma with Luna-Lila because Luna-Lila wasn't actually allowed to exist. So now he was peering round the whole room as usual and said, 'Were you talking to someone?'

'Me? – No,' said Wilma.

'You were – I heard you,' said Nils.

'So were you perhaps listening in secret?' asked Wilma. 'You know what Mum says if she hears you've been eavesdropping.'

'Me? Eavesdropping? – No,' said Nils and his head disappeared as fast as it had appeared.

But he was back in moments.

'Looking for something?' asked Wilma.

'Time to eat,' said Nils and shut the door with a bang. He was a gigantic pest with a short temper.

Luna-Lila tapped her forehead to show he was nutty and Wilma's smile came back for the first time since they'd sat down on the bed together.

'We'll talk about it later, OK?' said Luna-Lila. 'I've got such a good idea about all this but first I need something to eat.'

'D'you mean, you want to...'

'...come downstairs with you, yes,' said Lila and was at the door so fast that Wilma couldn't disagree.

The second chapter

The fact of the matter was that Luna-Lila was a secret princess. Wilma had known her since she was four. One day, Luna-Lila was simply there. Or Luna-Rosa as she was called then. The rest of the family had not seen her and not heard her and thought Wilma had just made her up. But they all found the princess very droll and were pleased when Wilma brought her to the dinner table. It was also very amusing when Wilma would tell them what Luna-Lila didn't care for about the food because she was accustomed to something rather better – being a princess. Or when Wilma had to explain to them that Luna-Rosa wanted all of a sudden to be called Luna-Lila and got angry if anyone used her old name.

Luna-Lila had her own plate and sat on the empty chair next to Wilma. Everything went fine until Wilma started school. Then it was all schoolgirls don't have imaginary friends now, do they.... And no imaginary princesses, either. And no you can't take her to school with you. But that's what Wilma had planned to do.

'But she isn't imaginary at all!' Wilma had said.

'As far as I know, even really invisible princesses are not allowed in school,' Dad had said, laughing.

And Mum had raised her eyebrows. That always meant it was serious.

'Wilma, darling,' she'd said, 'there are plenty of nice children at school but sometimes not so nice ones and they'll say things like look at that girl over there, she's still playing nursery games with a princess who doesn't exist, and then they'll all make fun of you.'

'Just say: But I don't care!' Luna-Lila whispered to Wilma.

'But I don't care!' Wilma said bravely.

'It's OK to say that now,' Mum said. 'But if it actually happens, you'll feel a bit differently about it – and then it's too late.'

'But can she still be my friend at home?' asked Wilma. 'I like her so much. And she definitely likes me, too. Or even very definitely. She never says it because with princesses you can see it anyway.'

'Maybe you could just say to her that you don't have so much time these days and could she just come and see you from time to time,' Mum had suggested. 'Then it'll be like when someone special moves away and you don't see each other so often even though you still really like each other. And Luna-Rosa's parents have probably been wondering for a long time why she's away from the castle so much.'

'She's called Luna-Lila.' Wilma corrected her mother.

And then Dad laughed again and said, 'The handsome princes over her way must have flat feet from waiting in vain for so long below the window of her bower.'

Everybody had thought this was hilariously funny, even Nils, who was four at the time and can't have had any idea what a bower was.

'All rubbish with knobs on!' Luna-Lila had complained later but from then on it was clear to Wilma it would be best if she made out Luna-Lila had vanished. And so that's what she did.

Of course, Lila-Luna had sulked at first but did then give her some peace. What else was she to do? The others definitely couldn't see her and couldn't hear her so, apart from Wilma, she had nobody to grumble to. But she didn't allow Wilma to prevent her from doing anything and continued to sit at the table with her after that. Wilma was supposed to carry on as if nothing was going on. Nils, the pest, would watch Wilma like a hawk to see where she was looking and whether she would let the cat out of the bag because - for some reason - he was sure that Wilma was telling tall stories and that Luna-Lila was actually still there.

That was the reason Wilma sighed softly as she followed Luna-Lila down the stairs. Once again, for the whole of the evening meal, she was going to have to pretend the seat next to her at the table was empty even though someone was sitting there, secretly pinching food from her plate and daring to complain if it wasn't to her liking.

'Something wrong?' asked Luna-Lila, hearing Wilma's sigh. She looked back over her shoulder and Wilma noticed she could raise her eyebrows exactly like Mum did. And when she did, she looked almost as strict. Wilma would sometimes try it out herself in front of the mirror but all she did was look a bit slow on the uptake, as if she hadn't understood something.

'No,' sighed Wilma.

'Then pull yourself together, please!' said Luna-Lila. As they reached the bottom of the stairs and turned the corner, they saw all the others were already sitting at the table, waiting: Mum, Dad, Nils and William. William was Wilma's nice, older brother and had already turned eleven.

'Something wrong?' asked Mum but only raised her eyebrows halfway, thank goodness.

'No, why?' said Wilma, while Luna-Lila made a bee-line for the two empty seats at the table.

'Your eyes look a bit red to me,' said Mum. 'Have you been crying, poppet?'

'It's probably a bit of dust,' said Wilma. 'I've been clearing up my room.'

And that was true, she really had - before she'd cried her eyes out to Luna-Lila because of the vile twins.

One of the two empty chairs was already pulled out a bit and so Luna-Lila sat on that one and Wilma eased out the other one and sat down, too. It had been good that first chair was already pulled out because it meant Wilma hadn't had unobtrusively to nudge it backwards to make room for Luna-Lila. Only Nils was ever on the lookout

for something like that. And Mum was never on the lookout but did notice everything, unfortunately.

Nils, the only one already to have started, glowered up from his plate with suspicion. 'She waffpeaking mwiv fomeone, I've 'eard 'um,' he said and waved his fork at Wilma. It was spaghetti with meatballs in tomato sauce, his favourite.

'You don't speak with your mouth full, you mucky pig!' said Wilma.

'Wilma, please!' said Mum.

But it was too late. Nils went red in the face and protested so vigorously that a partial mouthful of spaghetti with meatballs in tomato sauce splattered across the table in little bits. 'Mon't fay mucky fig and mig girlf don't fpeak wiv imagimewy prinfeffef.'

Nils was sitting directly opposite Luna-Lila and next to William who was, in turn, opposite Wilma. Mum and Dad sat at each end of the table. Wilma could afford only a brief glance to one side but enough to see that everything Nils had spat across towards Luna-Lila was now being flicked back at him. Thank goodness everyone was looking at Nils and his increasingly red, angry face and so nobody noticed. Not even Mum.

'Nils!'

Mum's eyebrows had nearly disappeared beneath her fringe.

'Mmwo?'

'Point number one, don't speak with your mouth full, Wilma's quite right. Two, don't tell tales and point three, it's not 'What?' but 'Pardon?'

Mum sounded like she sometimes did when her work appointments got messed up. She was a dentist and once two men with the same appointment time had almost come to blows as to which of them would be first in the dentist's chair. Mum had to threaten an extra injection to get them to calm down. Since then she'd always got quite worked up about problems with the appointments book and this meant she sometimes needed a bit of time in the evening before she could be the best Mummy in the world again.

This was why Nils said nothing but lowered his face so close to his plate that the tip of his nose almost brushed the topmost meatball.

But Dad did say something and tried to look as strict as Mum. But instead he just looked a bit like Wilma had in front of the mirror.

'You are doing him an injustice, my dear,' he said to Mum.

'I am?'

'He didn't say 'what?' at all.'

'He didn't?'

Meanwhile, Mum's eyebrows had disappeared beneath her fringe.

'No,' said Dad. 'He said 'mmwo'. I heard him.'

And it turned into an evening meal full of fun and laughter.

For more information and reading copies please contact us at Fischer Publishing Group:

Esther Mallm (esther.mallm@fischerverlage.de)

Ilka Wesche (ilka.wesche@fischerverlage.de)

Elke Fuhrmann (elke.fuhrmann@fischerverlage.de)

,