

# PAMELA DUMOND

*Ladies in Waiting: #1*

## *Part-time* **PRINCESS**

**TWO PRINCES ARE IN LOVE WITH HER.**

***TOO BAD SHE'S AN IMPOSTER.***



## Part-time Princess

(Ladies-in-Waiting, #1)

By

Pamela DuMond

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## Chapter 1

I sat tall, posture perfect, practically regal on a cushy, leather seat in the First Class section of British Airlines Flight #1509 to London. My Chanel traveling outfit fit me like a dream: it was casual but screamed money. *More money than I earned during the last six months at my previous job.*

I tapped my matching Chanel bag and tote with the toe of my designer shoe and slid them a few inches until they were safely tucked under the seat in front of me. Even

though I was inside a plane, I still wore my new designer sunglasses: when my new employer slid them on my face and instructed me to look into the mirror—they were so freaking cool! I’ve been called a lot of things in my life and trust me, cool wasn’t one of them.

A female flight attendant leaned down toward me as passengers jostled past her on their way to the back of this fancy bus. “The flight’s been delayed for a bit, Lady Billingsley. There are tornados in Oklahoma, Iowa and Kansas. We’re waiting for a few passengers from connecting flights.”

I glanced out the window: storm clouds bustled low in the skies overhead and a brisk wind ruffled the tarps on the baggage carts. “Bad weather,” I said. “So typical this time of year in Chicago.”

“Can I get you something to drink before takeoff? And, perhaps, a snack?”

I smiled and tried not to appear shocked as I looked at her nametag. “You are sweet, Kristine.” The one time I’d flown before today the flight attendants practically ripped the water bottle from my sweaty hands prior to takeoff. But that was when I was in coach.

*And that was when I was Lucille Marie Trabbicio—not Lady Elizabeth Billingsley.*

“I’d love a...” What would Elizabeth pick if she were flying? She didn’t seem to be the type to get trashed out of her mind, especially not on long trips. She wouldn’t want to get dehydrated: there’d be too much damage to her skin, her make-up could smudge and possibly damage her outfit. She also wouldn’t want to eat anything too salty as she might retain water. Bloating was a look that Elizabeth would not tolerate.

“A Pellegrino, please,” I said. “Thank you. Is it okay—I mean might I send an urgent e-mail? It’s for business.”

“Of course.” Kristine nodded. “Super quick! Captain says we’ll be pulling back from the gate in a matter of minutes.”

I nodded, reached in my purse for my state-of-the-art iPhone and flipped it open. I logged into my new Gmail account that Mr. Philips had created for my part-time job. I typed a clandestine message to his and Elizabeth’s BFF, Zara, using their secret code names.

*Dear Lady and The Damp:*

*Slight delay in departing ORD. Will check in once I’ve landed in London and transferred planes. Excited!! Please wish E good luck on her important mystery mission. And hang in there with the bad back thing Damp. Maybe go see a good chiropractor.*

*Fondly,  
Lucy*

Then I remembered to use my code name, deleted ~~Lucy~~ and typed the word *Groucho*.

I fiddled with my phone until I found “Airplane Mode,” and turned it on. I tucked my phone in my bag and pulled out a copy of *British Vogue*. Lady Zara encouraged me to page through the American, British and Italian versions of the fashion rag and familiarize myself with popular designers. I flipped through the magazine, glanced at the

pricey clothes, expensive makeup and the pouty models. *Pucci. Gucci. Valentino. Oh my!*

I accepted the mineral water from the flight attendant and thanked her. I thought about my cushy signing bonus and couldn't help but smile. I'd paid my rent, as well as Uncle John's dues for the month at Vail Assisted Living. Score! I leaned back in my seat, closed my eyes and predicted that this new part-time job that I'd signed confidentiality clauses up the wazoo for would be a breeze. *I was already nailing it!*

The flight to London would take around nine hours. Plenty of time for me to review the cast of characters in Lady Elizabeth Billingsley's life, as well as their names, titles and relationships with her. I had a two-hour layover at Heathrow before my connecting flight to Elizabeth's home in Fredonia—the small, crown jewel of a country tucked in the mountains between France, Switzerland and Italy.

When someone squeezed the top of my knee. “Well, well, if it isn't Lady Elizabeth Theresa Billingsley in the flesh. Isn't *this* a sweet surprise?” A guy asked as he settled into the aisle seat next to me. My gaze fixed on his muscular hand as he caressed my knee again and then ran his index finger up my inner thigh for a very-long heartbeat.

One of the reasons I scored this part-time job was because I swore to my new employers that I could roll with the punches and improvise during unexpected events. I planned on that happening when I landed in Sauerhausen, the capital of Fredonia—not on the nine-hour flight from Chicago to London.

*You've got to be kidding me. The First Class section of British Airways had perverts?* I smacked him, but only managed to slap my own knee because he had lightening quick reflexes; his hand had already vanished from my thigh.

“That might leave a bruise, Princess. Which I'll happily kiss away,” he said.

“Look, dickwipe,” I hissed. “Who the hell do you think—” Oops. Reboot. I was now Lady Elizabeth Theresa Billingsley from post-card perfect Fredonia.

*Not Lucille Trabbicio—a former cocktail waitress at MadDog bikers' bar on Chicago's Southside.*

I cleared my throat and composed myself. “I apologize, sir. I do believe you accidentally bumped my knee and I over-reacted.”

“Oh, Lizzie. That was clearly no accident. ‘Look, dickwipe?’ Colorful language. I'm impressed. Apparently your time in the States has warmed your frosty demeanor. I can't believe my good fortune on running into you again.” He settled into his seat. “How long has it been? Fifteen months?”

I blinked. This guy not only knew Elizabeth but also had a nickname for her. I combed my brain but I didn't recognize him from any of the pictures she or Zara showed me.

Mr. Cocky pushed his leather bag under the seat in front and belted himself in. Slouched back and ran his fingers through his jet-black hair. “Did you miss me love?”

I looked at his hand that had clutched my knee just moments earlier. It was large, had no ring on the important finger and now rested on top of his thigh—which was muscular, clad in jeans and ended in slightly scuffed leather boots.

*Nice. Very, very nice. Whoa—hold the door...* I shook my head. No, he was *not* nice. This knee-squeezer was an opportunist and obviously depraved. My gaze traveled up and took in his finely cut sports jacket layered over a V-neck T-shirt that exposed just the right amount of black chest hair. *Hmm.*

He leaned toward me as his index finger grazed the underside of my chin. “Has anything else warmed up Lizzie?” He tilted my face upward toward his full lips. “Do you remember all the fun and games we played? All the dirty, dirty things that you and I did?” He grinned. “And then—did again. I was done at round three, but you insisted on a fourth.”

*Holy crap did he just say what I thought he said?*

I gazed up at his face into the bluest eyes I’d seen in my entire life. The highest cheekbones. The blackest hair that was cropped in a medium-length-style with one disheveled lock that fell onto his forehead.

*Hello—this might have been the best-looking man I’ve met in my entire twenty-one year-old life.* I inhaled sharply.

And quickly realized I was being a complete dork and gave my head a shake. *Get a grip, Lucy*, I admonished myself. Elizabeth, Zara or Mr. Philips would have shown me this guy’s picture if he were at all important. This had to be a fluke. An accident. At the worst—a chance encounter. “I think you’re mistaken.” I decided to hedge my bets. Elizabeth might have hired a down-on-her-luck girl, but not a dumb one. “Do we know each other?”

“There you go with that dry sense of humor I always enjoy. Breathe, Lizzie. Take-offs and landings always frighten you. Do you want me to help you through it? *Just like I used to?*” He held out his hand and regarded me with a twinkle in his eyes.

Kristine the flight attendant stood at the front of the plane and spoke into the intercom. “Welcome to British Air Flight 1509 from Chicago O’Hare International Airport to Heathrow, London. In a few minutes we will be pulling back from the gate. Please take a moment to review the following safety information for this plane located in the seat pocket in front of you. While our captain and co-pilots are tip-top, we’ll obviously be passing through bumpy weather as we depart the Windy City.”

“Um.” I wondered why my tongue suddenly felt awkward inside the confines of my mouth. “Um...” *Earth to Lucy. You are being paid a king’s ransom. Do not screw up this job for a stunning pair of blue eyes, a little pitter-patter in your heart and a tingling in your nether-regions.*

“Excuse me, sir.” A short, coiffed, helmet-headed Barbara Walters type peered down her nose at us. “I’m so sorry, but I think you’re in my seat. 3B?” She peered at her ticket stub. “I do believe I am in 3B.”

“Oh.” He pulled his ticket stub from his pants pocket and checked it. “You’re right, Ma’am. I’m in 4A.” He unbuckled his seatbelt. “I must have been hypnotized by this young woman’s beauty.”

Phew! Lucky for me I wasn’t going to be stuck next to Mr. Cocky for the next nine hours.

He leaned his head toward mine and whispered, “I know you’re disappointed Lizzie. I’ll make it up to you, I promise. There’s always the Mile-High Club. I do believe you once said those very words to me. I’ll never forget my initiation. Thank you. *Seriously, thank you.* That was a defining moment in my life.”

I coughed, clamped my hand over my mouth and collapsed forward—my boobs slapping my thighs.

He grabbed his leather duffel off the floor and stood up. “Can I help you with your bags?” he asked the woman and moved into the aisle.

“You’re not only handsome, but a gentleman. Thank you for your kind offer, sir, but I’m good. My name’s Jane Dawson. I could swear I’ve seen you before. I’m bad with names, but I never forget a face.” She plopped down into the seat next to me, looked up and winked at him. “It’ll come to me.”

He held out his hand to her. “You can call me Nick.”

Jane smiled and shook his hand. “Nice to meet you, Nick. I’ll figure out how I know you. I’m good at this!” She leaned down and pushed her carry-on under the seat in front of her.

I breathed a sigh of relief and then realized I was going to be seated next to *the Jane Dawson*—the famous news reporter whose career spanned decades. I clenched my hands together and gazed out the window as the plane backed away from the terminal.

“You look familiar too, miss.” Jane said. “Albeit like you’ve seen a ghost or recently had food poisoning. First Class on British Air is practically like opening a copy of *People Magazine*. You never know whom you’ll bump into here.”

I smiled at her. “It’s my pleasure to meet you, Ms. Dawson. You’re an amazing reporter and your career is spectacular. My name is... Elizabeth.” I leaned close to her and whispered. “Thank you for saving me from that man. I’d much prefer to sit next to you during this incredibly long flight.”

“Luck of the draw, Elizabeth. I was in 3B after all. Are you nervous during takeoffs dear?”

“No. I’ve done this a million times.” The plane taxied onto the runway and I gripped the armrests like a young gold-digger holding tight to an octogenarian billionaire’s arm in a Vegas wedding chapel. The aircraft paused for a few moments as thunder boomed and lightning struck in the woods and neighborhoods in the near distance.

A piece of paper shaped like a tiny airplane flew over my head and crashed onto my lap. I unfolded it and read:

*My dearest Lizzie:*

*Liar, liar, pants on fire. Do we need to do something about that? I’m happy to help.*

*Always,  
Nick.*

I scrunched the paper into a ball, flung it over my seat back toward him and heard a low chuckle. “I’ll be just fine, Ms. Dawson. Nothing out of the ordinary or unusual about today.” I smiled at her, inhaled deeply and held my breath.

Except that everything about today was out of the ordinary and unusual. Because this was the biggest day of my new part-time job. And I was indeed the poster-child for Ms. Liar, Liar, Pants-on-Fire.

*I closed my eyes, leaned back, tried to ignore the hot guy kicking the back of my chair and I remembered how I got here...*