

PRINCESA!

By Diana F. Johnson

A shy bilingual female Chihuahua-Dachshund mix dog finds the hero within her by rescuing other animals in danger.

The story describes the lives of a shy mixed-breed dog, PRINCESA, her owner, RICARDO BONILLA, 14, and his mother, DELORES, who must split time between Los Angeles and her late husband's coffee business in Puerto Rico.

Disappointed when his mother in Puerto Rico can't get back to L.A. in time for his 14th birthday party planned by his AUNT ELENA, Ricardo and Princesa hitch a ride on a plane bound for the island. In Los Angeles and on the plane trip, Ricardo and Princesa draw the attention of two inept and clumsy pet thieves, TITO RUIZ and Tito's sidekick, MIGUELITO. Tito plots to capture Princesa to sell on the rare and endangered-species black market. When Ricardo and Princesa arrive in Puerto Rico, Tito and Miguelito continue to tail the boy and his dog.

Ricardo's unexpected appearance delights his mother. But the overworked mother still can't be with her son that evening. Instead, Delores arranges for him and Princesa to attend a lavish Puerto Rican Night masquerade party at posh La Mirada Hotel. Fireworks light black skies. Ricardo loses track of Princesa in crowds of costumed guests. At the party through a cunning ruse, the villains capture Princesa. Tito Ruiz locks her in a cage in the back of his old van along with other caged animals and birds. Together, Ricardo and Delores face impossible odds in their desperate search for Princesa. POLICE OFFICERS warn them that they'll never find a small lost dog on the island.

Empowered by her adventure, Princesa outwits the villains. She escapes, then risks all to return to free GUPTA, a rare BIRD-WING BUTTERFLY, and the other prisoners. A chase ensues into the mysterious El Yunque rain forest. There, Princesa hides in a cave. She communicates with Gupta in their own mysterious way. Princesa sends Gupta to Ricardo and Delores. Gupta leads them to Princesa. Meanwhile, FOREST RANGERS arrest Tito and Miguelito after they skid into a ravine. Ricardo persuades Delores to arrange their business so that Delores can move to Los Angeles. They return to L.A. with a new, confident Princesa. Princesa announces to all, "I am Princesa!"

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