

QUEEN OF MY HEART

Colette stepped onto the balcony and sighed. A movement below made her look down, and she saw two **LARGE BLUE EYES** staring up at her.

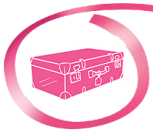
“Colette!”

“**YOU'RE HERE?**”

she gasped with surprise.

“Yes! From the moment I saw you at the *dance*, you left a mark on my heart that I cannot erase!”





Colette blushed, but before she could reply, another squeak interjected.

“Coco, **hurry up!** We need to continue on the tour. There are other mice waiting to come in!”

Colette shook her snout, and the young ratlet with blue eyes vanished. Instead, her **energetic** friend Pam appeared, in the fur and whiskers.

“Okay, okay, I’m coming,” Colette said with a sigh.

The visit to **Juliet’s balcony** and the story of her sweet love for Romeo had dragged Colette into a romantic **daydream**, complete with a very charming suitor of her own!

Colette and the other Thea Sisters were in the city where **William Shakespeare’s** famous play took place: Verona.

And at that moment, they were actually

ROMEO AND JULIET

*"With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls,
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do, that dares love attempt."*

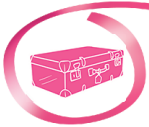
Romeo says these words in the second act of *Romeo and Juliet*, a celebrated play written by William Shakespeare at the end of the sixteenth century. The play tells the story of the love between two mice in Verona, Italy, who belonged to feuding families: the Montagues and the Capulets. Their love is deep and intense, but their story has a dramatic, tragic ending.

Similar stories of young love had been told many times throughout history, but Shakespeare's version was so moving that his work is still very famous today.



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

He was an English playwright and poet who lived from c. 1564 to 1616 and is considered one of the greatest writers of all time. He wrote 154 sonnets and thirty-seven plays that are studied and performed even today, five centuries later!



visiting a building known as Juliet's house! It even had a **balcony** just like the one where Romeo declared his love in the theatrical mousterpiece.

“So, what do you think of **JULIET'S HOUSE?**” asked Sebastiano, a ratlet the Thea Sisters had befriended. He was from Verona and had offered to be their **guide** to the area that weekend.

“It feels just like we're in the story!”

commented Nicky. “Thanks for bringing us!”

Paulina looked thoughtful. **“Shakespeare** was English,



so why did he choose to tell the story of a mouselet born in **ITALY**?” she asked.

Sebastiano smiled. “In Shakespeare’s time, the story of young love was well known all across **EUROPE**.”





“A very romantic legend,” said Nicky.

Colette **sighed**. “And to think that Romeo and Juliet declared their great love right from this balcony . . . It must have been an **emotional** moment!”

It's a new addition! “Coco, I don’t want to spoil your cheese,” Violet cut in, “but I read that that’s not actually the case. Right, Sebastiano?”



Their friend nodded. “This balcony was an **addition** built just last century. But the building itself is much older, and really belonged to the Dal Cappello family — a name that’s similar to Capulet, **Juliet’s** family in the story.”

“That doesn’t matter,” Colette said dreamily. “Even if it isn’t real, I want to believe it happened like Shakespeare described it! It’s so romantic . . .”

Her friends **smiled**.

“Okay, sister, you can have your daydreams, if you like,” Pam said, winking at Colette. “**But let’s keep going!**” She headed toward the stairs that led up to the next floor.

