

RLAKERS
OVERTWIXI™
The Princess
AND HER THRONE



ILLUSTRATED
BY Jesse Lewis

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table of contents

Meet Cécilie	3
1. The Airport	9
2. The First Bridge	15
3. Bad Guys	23
4. Overtwixt	31
5. Princess Cécilie	41
6. Horses and Unicorns	47
7. The Second Bridge	55
8. Magic	63
9. Quests	73
10. The Third Bridge	81
11. Ewan's First Battle	89

12. Bah-le-le-le-leeeee-i-oo-uuuu	99
13. Armor and Sword	109
14. Cécilie's Subjects	119
15. Becoming the Princess	129
16. A Throne and a Truth	139
17. A New Best Friend	149
18. The Battle for Eqland	161
19. Long Live the Princess!	185
20. The Truth No One Else Could Teach Her	193
The Rest of the Story	203
About the Author	204
About the Illustrator	205

For **Sadie**,
my one and only Princess



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AND HER THRONE

• Meet Cécilie •

(pronounced SESS-ill-lee)

Cécilie Ollivaros was not special.

At least, *she* didn't think she was special. She wasn't the first or the best—or even the last or the worst—at anything.

Her brother Nachton (NAWK-tuhn) was the *oldest* kid in Cécilie's family, and he thought he was the *smartest* too. Cécilie would never admit it, but he kinda was. Nachton had read more books than the rest of the family combined. He was 15.

4 • OVERTWIXT

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Her other brother, Ewan (YOO-wun), was the *youngest* kid in Cécilie's family, and everyone agreed he was the *funniest*. Ewan had a whole made-up language that only he used. Mostly that was because he couldn't pronounce grown-up words. He was only 5.

And then there was Cécilie's sister, Amélie (AWM-uh-lee). Amélie was the *prettiest*, the *most talented*, the *most graceful*... She even had the *most friends* of any of the Ollivaros children. She was 12.

But Cécilie... Cécilie was just Cécilie. Boring. She liked to read, but not as much as Nachton. She was funny sometimes, but people only smiled at her jokes instead of

laughing—like they did anytime Ewan said anything at all. And Cécilie wished *she* was half as pretty, talented, or graceful as her big sister, Amélie, but she just wasn't. Cécilie was only 8, but somehow she didn't think any of this would change when she got older.

Sure, Mom and Daddy said that Cécilie was special, but it was their job to say stuff like that. Daddy called her things like “sweetheart” and “honey”—and he didn't call Amélie anything like that (though maybe that was because Amélie asked him to stop). Best of all, Daddy called Cécilie his “Princess.” That made her feel special, at least... though Mom usually laughed and said, “Princess? She's a full-fledged drama queen!” Whatever *that* meant.

6 • OVERTWIXT
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But if you asked anyone whose opinion mattered, they would say, “Cécilie? Oh, sure... her. Yeah, she’s okay.” But they wouldn’t sound excited about it, and they wouldn’t explain how awesome Cécilie was at this or that, or what wonderful memories they had rooming with her at this camp, or sitting next to her on that trip, or... you get the idea.

At least, all of this is what *Cécilie* thought. Cécilie didn’t think she was special, and she was sure no one else did either. Daddy and Mom didn’t count.

Regardless, this story is about Cécilie. It’s not about Amélie, and it’s not about Ewan, and it’s *definitely* not about Nachton, though they’re all in this story too. If you want to read more

8 • OVERTWIXT

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about them, there's a much longer version of this book for you. *This* story is about *Cécilie*.

You see, *Cécilie* is special... and this is the story of how she discovered that for herself. All it took was an impossible trip to a magical world with floating islands and talking horses.

Oh, and unicorns, too.

Can't forget the unicorns.

chapter one

• The Airport •

Cécilie and her family were late for their flight. Again. It seemed like anytime they drove to the airport to get on an airplane, they were in a big rush. Then they had to stand around waiting in a long line, doing *nothing*. Then it was a big rush again! Airports were confusing.

Now they were riding in an underground train, traveling from one side of the airport to the other. Daddy kept looking at his watch nervously, and Mom was trying to keep him calm.

10 • OVERTWIXT
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Nachton was reading a book. Amélie was staring at her cell phone. Cécilie wished *she* had a cell phone, but she wasn't old enough.

The train swerved suddenly, and Cécilie almost lost her grip on the metal handrail. This was *not* a very smooth ride.

“Hey, Sessy!” Ewan called. (That's what he called Cécilie, since he couldn't pronounce her name.) “Watch dis!” Pulling his hand out of Mom's, he pretended he was walking on a balance beam at the playground. Cécilie giggled.

“Ewan!” Daddy said firmly. “You come back and hold Mommy's hand right now! Cécilie, don't encourage him.”

Cécilie blushed. Trying to pretend she wasn't embarrassed, she turned to look at the other passengers on the train.

There was a girl her age riding nearby. The girl was beautiful, with long blonde hair and bright blue eyes. Cécilie wished *she* had blue eyes.

Sighing, Cécilie turned the other direction and saw a different girl. This girl was older and taller than Cécilie, with chocolate-colored skin and tiny braids in her hair. And she didn't have a single freckle! Cécilie wished *she* had such perfect skin.

“Cécilie!” Amélie hissed. “Stop staring!” She said this without taking her eyes off her phone.

12 • OVERTWIXT

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Cécilie stuck out her tongue at Amélie. Cécilie wished *she* was the older sister, so she could give orders to Amélie, instead of the other way around.

“Hey look, Amélie!” Cécilie said suddenly, pretending to be excited and pointing to the back of the train. “Isn’t that the girl from your favorite channel?! The really *famous* one?!”

Amélie didn’t respond, and she still didn’t look up.

Scowling, Cécilie turned to Nachton. Her big brother was standing with his feet spread apart, reading his book without holding any of the handrails. In other words, he was trying to look cool.

“Hey, Nachton!” Cécilie said suddenly, making her voice sound afraid. “I think the train is about to crash! You better grab the railing, or you could get *paralyzed!*”

Nachton didn’t react either.

Mom and Daddy did, though. They both looked at Cécilie with disappointment and disapproval. “Don’t be a drama queen,” Mom said. At the same time, Daddy said, “Don’t exaggerate, honey.”

“Yeah,” Nachton said immediately. “Stop exaggerating.”

“You’re *such* a drama queen,” Amélie added, still not looking up from her phone.

Cécilie folded her arms and huffed. She wished for lots of things

14 • OVERTWIXT
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that would never happen. But mostly, Cécilie wished she was an only child. Not that she wanted her brothers and sister *dead* or anything. But life would be a lot easier if they were her cousins or something, so that Cécilie only had to see them once a month.

Finally, the train started slowing down. Daddy repeated the same lecture he already gave twice today: “We’re late, so we need to run all the way to Gate 3.” Then the train stopped and the doors slid open. “Okay,” Daddy yelled, “let’s go!”

chapter two

• The First Bridge •

Next thing Cécilie knew, her family was running down a wide airport hallway toward Gate 3. They passed airplane gates on both the left and the right. Cécilie counted down the numbers as they ran: Gate 18... Gate 16... Gate 15... The even numbers were on their right, and the odd numbers were on their left. Now they were passing Gate 14... and they had to go all the way to Gate 3?!

“I don’t think I can make it!”
Cécilie gasped. “Go on without me!”

16 • OVERTWIXT
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“C’mon, Cécilie, keep up!” Daddy said.

She gritted her teeth and ran faster. Gates 12 and 11... Gate 10... Gates 7 and 6... And then Cécilie saw Gate 3! It was all the way at the end of the hallway, near the back left corner. Why did it have to be at the very *end*?

There was an airport employee standing there, wearing a blue uniform. Cécilie knew that this man would look at their tickets and decide whether they were allowed to get on the plane. The man had a beard and a very nice smile. He noticed Cécilie’s family running towards him, and he waved urgently. “Hurry!” he yelled.

Cécilie grabbed Ewan’s hand and ran even *faster*, as fast as she possibly

could. They ran right through the doorway next to the bearded man in the uniform.

Now they were in a really narrow hallway, and Cécilie was forced to slow down. The airplane had to be close now. That was good, because Cécilie was breathing *really* hard. She could hear Amélie and Nachton breathing hard behind her too.

Cécilie walked around a corner in the narrow hallway, and she almost ran into a red-headed boy going the other direction. Cécilie jumped aside, pulling Ewan with her. But Amélie didn't notice the boy in time. They ran right into each other! And then Nachton came around the corner and tripped, falling on top of the boy and Amélie. Backpacks went everywhere, along

18 • OVERTWIXT
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with Nachton's book and Amélie's cell phone.

"Quickly, quickly!" the bearded airport employee said. He came down the hallway after them, then helped the kids to their feet. "It's almost too late!" He saw Cécilie looking at him, and he winked back at her.

Cécilie smiled. She turned around to start running again. Then she stopped almost immediately.

There was something very strange going on here. For one thing, she wasn't standing in a narrow hallway anymore; it had turned into a long rope bridge! For another thing, there was no plane at the other end of the bridge. Instead, there was a grassy field... and beyond that, a *mountain!*

Ewan tested one of the wooden planks of the rope bridge. “Cool-awesome-neat!” he yelled. “C’mon, Sessy!” Then he pulled his hand out of hers and started bouncing along the bridge toward the mountain. Cécilie ran after him, and the rope bridge started swaying from side to side.

“Ewan, Cécilie, wait!” Amélie yelled. She sounded really scared that the hallway had turned into a rope bridge, but Cécilie kept running. She had to catch up to Ewan!

The little boy got to the end of the bridge and started rolling around in the soft grass. Cécilie stopped next to him and bent over to catch her breath.

“What in the *world?*” Nachton gasped. He was staring past Cécilie.

20 • OVERTWIXT
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“There are no mountains in the airport!”

Amélie’s eyes were wide with fear. “Nachton?” she asked quietly. “Where are we? And where are Mom and Dad?”

Everyone turned to look at the bridge.



There was no sign of Mom or Daddy, but there *was* someone on the bridge behind the kids: the airport employee with the beard.

“Good morning, and welcome to Overtwixt!” he announced. It was definitely the same man who winked at Cécilie and told her family to hurry... but he wasn’t a normal man anymore! Now he was half-man and half-*horse*.

“You’re a centaur!” Nachton blurted.

The bearded man-horse nodded. “Now hurry, we don’t have much time. Everyone back on your feet!”

Suddenly, a terrifying roar came from the sky! Cécilie looked up and saw a *dragon* swooping toward them! All

22 • OVERTWIXT
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four kids almost fell over backwards, trying to get away.

Fortunately, the dragon didn't see them. It flew straight to the rope bridge, grabbed hold of it in the middle, and pulled with all its might. The ropes began to snap.

And just like that, the bridge back to the airport (and back to Cécilie's parents) was destroyed. Leaving the children stranded here...

Wherever *here* was.