



The Voices of Silence by Bel Mooney

Subjects: Family—Romania—Fiction; Romania—History—Revolution, 1989—Fiction

Book List: Europe

Props: Scarf, M&Ms



(Wear scarf on head) 13-year-old Flora dreamed of chocolate. In her dreams, she saw herself in a boat which landed on an island made entirely of chocolate. She ate and ate and ate and never got sick. But a luxurious food like chocolate was just that to Flora, a dream. She couldn't buy it because she lived in Romania in 1989. Her county was under communist rule and had been for the past 43 years. In her country, everything was run by the government. Food, clothing, household items, everything was rationed by the government. It was a time of want and poverty for her country. Although her parents had both gone to college, there were no decent jobs available to them. Her family had no choice but to stand in lines at the back of stores for their needs. Each morning, at dawn, Flora's mother stood in a line to buy bread and milk. At the end of the day, both parents stood in more lines. There were lines to buy whatever vegetables were available, olives, cheese, or baggy clothes. If you were out and you saw a line, you got in it because it was bound to be something you needed. Sometimes, there would even be oranges for sale. Then you would see hundreds of people in line, waiting for days no matter how cold or snowy it was.

But, of course, no one could complain, no one dared speak out against the country's leader, Ceausescu (kuseko). The secret police were everywhere. You didn't know who to trust or who might betray you. So, people stood in lines, silent. It

was a strange, unreal, intense silence between neighbors, acquaintances—even friends. Flora's father was sick of it. She could hear her mother and father arguing about it behind closed doors. Her father was planning something and her mother was scared.

Flora didn't understand, but tried not to think about it. She preferred to think about the new boy in school, Daniel. He was good looking, wore real jeans, had meat in his sandwiches, and chocolate for dessert. He was smart and nice to everyone, especially to Flora. On her birthday, he gave her a package of M&Ms. *(Bring out M&Ms, eat one)* She was so grateful, she made them last for days. But his gift made her parents distrust him, and Flora's best friend Alys didn't seem to like Daniel at all. Flora was pretty sure she was jealous.

But things were just not adding up. Why was Daniel so lucky when everyone else was so poor? What did Alys know about him that Flora didn't and why was he giving her so much attention? Her parents were arguing more than ever. What was her father planning to do? Follow Flora in the year 1989, the year a massive revolution tore her county apart. *(Hold up book)* *The Voices of Silence* by Bel Mooney.