

MEG CABOT

Short Stories

Reunion By Meg Cabot



This short story originally appeared in the anthology “Girls Night Out,” edited by Sarah Mlynowski and published by Red Dress Ink in 2006. Other contributors included Emily Giffin, Marian Keyes, Cecelia Ahern, and Kristin Gore.

All author proceeds from the collection went to War Child. The book is now out of print, and rights to the stories have since reverted back to the authors. I’m happy to offer this unedited version of mine, “Reunion,” for my readers to enjoy for free. This short story is part of the New York Journal “Boy Series,” Boy Next Door, Boy Meets Girl, and Every Boy’s Got One, and is told exclusively in emails.

REUNION

To: All
Sent: April 25, 2005 11:45AM
Fr: Scooter Potts <Scooter@bloomvillemotors.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Bloomville High School Class of 1995 10 Year Reunion

Hey, fellow Panthers! Guess what time it is? That's right: Our ten-year high school reunion! Can you believe it's been ten years since we graduated?

Though I still see some of you regularly (remember, there's a 10% discount for BHS grads here at Bloomville Motors), it will be great to catch up with those of you who left Indiana for such far flung places as New York City (Jo Buchanon's mom says that Jo's band, the Raving Lunatics, got a real positive review in The Village Voice for their first ever gig at the Wa Wa Hut!)

So put in that vacation request today, and start planning on an exciting weekend of fun connecting with your fellow classmates!

When: Friday Night July 15th at 8:00 p.m

What: Casual gathering at TGIF's on Main Street

When: Saturday Morning/Afternoon, July 16th, from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

What: Join classmates for a family picnic on the BHS football field

--A tour of the newly renovated school (we have a pool now, Panthers!) will be available for all who wish to take part

--Feel free to bring friends and family

--Activities will be planned for the children

When: Saturday Night, July 16th, from 7:00 until 11:00 p.m.

What: Reunion dinner, dancing, and fun in the BHS gymnasium

Catered by the Save-On Deli Department

Please plan on the fee to be \$25-30 per person.

Looking forward to seeing you all--and don't forget, if you have automotive needs, Bloomville Motors will beat any price, anywhere!

Go Panthers!

Fred "Scooter" Potts

Your Class President

REUNION

Owner/Operator Bloomville Motors

Servicing Greater Duane County

We put the Serv in Service!

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 11:49AM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Oh my God, Jo. Did you see it?

M

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 11:55AM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Oh, yeah. I saw it. I'm going to KILL my mother. She gave him my email address. And she told him about the gig.

I thought I was through with these people. Now they're stalking me. Through cyberspace, anyway.

You're not going, are you?

Jo

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 12:10PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Are you kidding? Do you see who they've got catering it? I guess it never occurred to Scooter to ask a fellow alumnus to cater our reunion. Instead he had to ask the deli department of a national grocery chain. I realize no one in our class ever cared how many trans fats they consumed in a single meal. But you would think they'd have thought of hiring a locally owned business before seeking out the services of a bloated national conglomerate that is strangling the small business person and ruining small town life as we knew it.

Of course I'm not going.

I mean, you're not going. Right?

M

REUNION

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 12:27PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Oh, right. You mean because I was so popular in high school, and there are so many people from there that I miss? Seriously, Mary, the only person I still even speak to from those days is you.

And what kind of grown man still calls himself Scooter?

Jo

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 12:45PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

At least you didn't have to sit behind him in Chem, like I did. I have seen enough of that butt crack to last me a lifetime.

M

To: All
Sent: April 25, 2005 1:01 PM
Fr: Terry Hicks <Thicks@aol.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Thanks, Scooter, and everyone, for getting this organized. I can't believe it has been ten years! So much has happened since we all last saw one another—it will be so much fun to see everyone again. We'll be heading over from Carmel with the kids as soon as Rich's shift at the hospital is over—he's head surgeon now. Wow, time sure does fly! Can't wait to introduce you to our twin honor students!

Terry (Summers) Hicks

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 1:05PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

I still f***ing hate her.

REUNION

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 1:07PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Yeah. What, are we going to start a string of "reply all" messages from the whole class until reunion time? Is everyone else really thrilled about this? I, for one, am not thrilled about seeing Terry Summers Hicks again, with her perfect little kids and handsome head surgeon husband.

And did you see how she managed to slip in the part about living in Carmel? She thinks she's so great, in her McMansion with her McMercedes and McMink coat.

I'm going to be Mcsick.

M

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 1:17PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Careful, Mary, Mary, your contrariness is showing.

Remember that time she called Jill Davis fat and you "accidentally" spilled your wheat grass juice all over her cheerleading uniform? That was pretty sweet.

OH MY GOD!!!!!! LOOK WHAT I JUST GOT:

<**To:** Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
<**Sent:** April 25, 2005 1:15PM
<**Fr:** Mike Saunders <MikeS@bloomvillegazette.com>
<**Re:** Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

<Hi Jo,

<I don't know if you'll remember me, but we both went to Bloomville High. We didn't <have any classes together, but I was a big fan of yours (I used to write for the school <paper, so I had to cover all the band's concerts. Your solo keyboard rendition of <Cream's "Sunshine of Your Love" at the Spring Jam totally rocked).

<I don't usually write to girls I hardly know, but I got the email about the Class Reunion, <and saw your address. Hope you don't mind. Congrats on the New York gig. Glad to <know you're still pursuing a music career.

<Mike Saunders

REUNION

WHO IS MIKE SAUNDERS????

Jo

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 1:29PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

I don't know!

I'm going downstairs to get my yearbook now...back in a sec.

Okay, back, here it is....Oh. OH. MY GOD. Check out the attached.

M

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 1:32PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Crazy Eyes! Crazy Eyes Saunders is stalking me!!!!

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 1:48PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Shut up, he's not stalking you. He just wrote to say hi. And look, I remember him now. He used to do that thing with his eyes on purpose, whenever anyone would try to take a picture of him. There are shots in here of him looking normal. He was on the yearbook committee. And the school paper. And in the band. He was just goofing around.

M

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 1:52PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

REUNION

A band geek! A band geek is stalking me!!!! Why can't he go stalk Terry?

Jo

To: Jo Buchanan <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 2:00PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Would you stop? I told you, I remember him now. He was a nice guy. And he's now the features editor for the Bloomville Gazette. He did a really nice write up of the store when I opened it.

You know, you could do a lot worse. And have. Considering some of your exes.

M

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 2:07PM
Fr: Jo Buchanan <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Oh, right, Mary. Because it wouldn't be too much of a cliché if I came back for my tenth reunion, met up with some random guy I don't even remember, and ended up marrying him and moving back to the small town I left behind a decade ago. Excuse me, this isn't a Reese Witherspoon movie. It's real life.

And besides, if he liked me so much back then, why didn't he ask me out?

Jo

To: Jo Buchanan <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 2:22PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Hmmm, I can't imagine why he never asked you out. Possibly because you were going out with a guy who had a safety pin stuck through his eyebrow all through high school? How could any other guy have asked you out? Without Trent pulling a knife on him?

How is Trent, anyway? Did he ever get out of prison?

M

REUNION

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 2:27PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Why do you always have to bring up Trent? You know he was always perfectly sweet around me. It wasn't his fault he had those issues.

Jo

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 2:34PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Issues? Jo, the guy you dated all through high school was running a secret underground meth lab. I guess all those charming friends of his named Gator and Bad Bart did not tip you off?

And your track record certainly improved once you dumped him, considering all the stellar boyfriends you've had since.

I just checked with my friend Cindy over at the Gazette. Mike's still single. And hetero.

M

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 2:27PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Oh my God, it was not my fault about Trent. HE TOLD ME HE WAS IN A BAND. Bad Bart is the perfect name for a bassist. How was I to know it is also a good name for a dealer?

You know there are no straight, single men left in New York City. YOU'RE the one in straight-guy central, out there in the Midwest. But who have YOU gone out with since high school?

Anyway, I can't chat anymore, I have to go audition new drummers for the band. The last one quit to go work on a cruise ship. Rock 'n roll is dead.

Jo

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 2:42PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

REUNION

Fine. Be that way. I'll find something to keep myself occupied until you get back.

M

To: Scooter Potts <Scooter@bloomvillemotors.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 3:15PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Dear Scooter,

Hi. You probably don't remember me, but I used to sit behind you in Chemistry in the 12th grade. I now own Bloomville Health Foods on Main Street. I'm sure you've seen it, as it is located next door to TGIF's, an establishment I see you enter nearly every day during Happy Hour.

I am writing to ask that you reconsider using the Save-On Deli Department as your caterer for the reunion dinner/dance. Not only is the Save-On completely oblivious to the amount of nitrates/chemicals used to preserve their meats, but many of their foods are genetically engineered and laden with dangerous trans fats—whereas at Bloomville Health Foods I see to it we only stock free-range, antibiotic free meats, as well as pesticide free and locally grown fruits, vegetables, and dairy products. Don't you think our class deserves the best? With Bloomville Health Foods, they'll get it.

Please let me know.

Mary Hutchins

Owner/Manager

Bloomville Health Foods

If you don't know where it came from, why would you put it your mouth?

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 3:29PM
Fr: Scooter Potts <Scooter@bloomvillemotors.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Dear Mary,

Of course I remember you! Boy, did you ever help me with the periodic table—that song you made up, the one to help us remember all the elements? I still catch myself singing it to myself to this very day.

It's really great to hear from you. I had no idea you owned Bloomville Health Foods. How come you never come over for Happy Hour at TGIF's? It's right across the street!

Anyway, I'd love to hear any ideas you might have for catering the reunion. Why don't you meet me over at TG's tonight, say, around six?

REUNION

Can't wait to catch up!

Sincerely,

Fred "Scooter" Potts

Owner/Operator Bloomville Motors

Servicing Greater Duane County

We put the Serv in Service!

To: Scooter Potts <Scooter@bloomvillemotors.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 3:15PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Dear Fred,

I have a better idea. Why don't YOU meet ME at my shop, and I'll give you a sampling of the kind food I think we should serve at the dinner dance? We do have a café in the store, you know. And, though this might come as a surprise to you, we do serve things other than alfalfa sprouts.

Of course, we don't serve beer. Do you think you can go one evening without slamming back some "brewskis" with your buds?

Best,

Mary Hutchins

Owner/Manager

Bloomville Health Foods

If you don't know where it came from, why would you put it your mouth?

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 3:40PM
Fr: Scooter Potts <Scooter@bloomvillemotors.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

To tell you the truth, Mary, I only do the Happy Hour thing to keep my name and face out there. My days as a small-town football hero are way past, and there's a lot of competition in the car dealer business these days. We small business owner's have gotta do whatever we can to stay in the game, as you well know!

See you at your place at six.

REUNION

Fred

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 7:27PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Okay, Mary, so I wrote him back.

Here's what I said:

<**To:** Mike Saunders <MikeS@bloomvillegazette.com>
<**Sent:** April 25, 2005 7:15PM
<**Fr:** Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
<**Re:** Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

<Dear Mike,

<Hi. The truth is, I don't remember you at all. We obviously traveled in very different <circles in high school. I did play "Sunshine of Your Love" in a concert once, but I think <you are otherwise getting me confused with someone else. It's totally fine, I just <wanted to let you know. I won't be at the reunion, because I don't really go in for those <kind of things, or care to "relive" that time in my life, which wasn't all that

<great, although I'm sure it was to people like Scooter Potts and Terry Summers. But I <hope you have a nice time and a nice life.

<Jo

That sounded OK, right? I didn't want to be TOO mean.

But I didn't want him to think, you know, that I'm interested.

Drummer auditions were a bust. There apparently isn't a single soul in this town who can drum and also hold a normal conversation (without being high). I don't know what we're going to do.

Sigh.

Jo

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 9:56 PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

REUNION

Hello, Mary, where are you? I've left you three text messages.

Jo

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 10:43 PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Seriously, Mary, are you blowing me off, or something?

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 11:23 PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

OH MY GOD!!!! OH MY GOD!!!! I WROTE TO CRAZY EYES SAUNDERS AND LOOK WHAT HE WROTE BACK TO ME:

<To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
<Sent: April 25, 2005 10:11PM
<Fr: Mike Saunders <MikeS@bloomvillegazette.com>
<Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

<Hey, Jo. That's okay about not remembering me. I wouldn't actually expect you <to, since you're right, we did travel in pretty different social circles. I was <always studying. But it seemed like whenever I looked up, there you'd be, doing <something zany with that friend of yours, Mary, like protesting the lack of fresh <greens in the caf.

<Seeing your name just brought back some old memories so I thought I would send an <email.

<Like you, I won't be attending the reunion. I agree, I'm not sure I want to relive those <days either—they were fine for people like Terri Summers and Scooter Potts, but for the <rest of us? Well, "sucked" is not a strong enough word. I actually won't be living in <Bloomville much longer, thankfully. I'm moving out to your neck of the woods next <month. I've landed a job at the New York Journal.

<Anyway, thanks for writing back, and good luck with the band. Did I mention I was in <marching band in high school? I played the drums. I've been thinking of taking them <up again if I ever get the time (though I doubt that would go over well in a Brooklyn <apartment)!

<Maybe someday we'll bump into each other at the Hut.

<Take care.

<Mike

REUNION

Crazy Eye Saunders is moving here! And he plays the drums! I forgot you said he was a band geek. He's a BAND GEEK WHO PLAYS THE DRUMS.

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 12:47 AM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

WHERE ARE YOU???? I NEED YOU!!!! I need you to tell me not to write back to Crazy Eyes Saunders and invite him to dinner when he gets here next month. Because you know what will happen:

I will fall madly in love with him, and then we'll get married, and then we'll have a baby, and then the Raving Lunatics will fall apart because I'll have moved to the suburbs because be to busy carpooling the kids to soccer practice to be in a band anymore.

I CAN'T BE THAT GIRL!

WHERE DID YOU GO???? You're ALWAYS home watching HBO at this hour. Did some perv sneak in your window and tie you to the bed and begin to do unspeakable things to you? Is it George Clooney? E me as soon as you get this or I'm calling my mother and making her go over there to check on you. If it's George Clooney let me know and I'll jump on the first plane and join you for a threesome (if you don't mind sharing).

Jo

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 10:34AM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to leave you in a lurch there. Something sort of...unexpected came up last night, and I had to deal with it.

I agree, Mike sounds kind of cute. Are you going to write back?

M

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 10:36 AM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Uh, what? That's it? No explanation? Where were you last night? What do you mean, "something sort of...unexpected came up"? Why won't you tell me where you were?

God, I hate this stupid reunion thing! It's making everyone cRaZy. I'm about to email Crazy Eyes

REUNION

Saunders back and ask him if he wants to meet me for dim sum next month when he moves her, and now you're acting all weird. Stupid Scooter and his stupid REUNION!!!

Jo

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 10:39AM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Well, the reunion's not really Fred's fault. I mean, he's more interested in moving on from high school than any of us. He's nothing like he was back then. Or how we thought he was. Or how I thought he was. Really, he's changed. He's lost a ton of weight. He pulls his jeans all the way up now.

But since he was class president, it's not like he has a choice. He HAS to put this reunion together.

M

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 10:50 AM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Excuse me—why are you calling Scooter by his real name, Fred? Why are you defending him? Did you email him? Did you two meet up or something?

OH MY GOD.

YOU SPENT THE NIGHT WITH SCOOTER POTTS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 11:05AM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

HOW DID YOU KNOW?

Anyway, don't judge me. I can't help it. I like him.

I can't believe I'm saying this.

But I like him.

M

REUNION

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 11:15 AM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Mary, I'm not judging you.

I'm very happy for you.

BUT oh my God. You're in love with Scooter Potts! I can't believe I have no one to tell. Except possibly Terry Hicks and the entire BHS list-serv.

You know what this means, don't you?

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 11:20AM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Jo, please do not tell Terry Hicks and the entire BHS list-serv that Fred and I slept together last night. I'm begging you.

And I'm afraid to ask what you think this means. Could you please just phone me and tell me?

And stop calling him Scooter.

His name is Fred.

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 25, 2005 11:15 AM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

It means you're going! You're GOING to the reunion. Aren't you? ADMIT IT. Mary, Mary quite contrary is going to her class reunion!

With Scooter Potts!

Jo

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 11:29AM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Dear Jo,

REUNION

Yes. I'm going.

Please stop calling him Scooter. I like him. Jo—I think I might love him. This is serious. I've never felt this way about a guy before. The fact that I feel it about Scooter—I mean Fred. Please just call me.

And please don't hate me.

M

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 1:42 PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Like I said on the phone, I don't hate you. I'm very, very happy for you.

I'm just sad for me.

Because now I'm going to be the only person in our entire school not going to this reunion. Except for Crazy Eyes Saunders.

Oh well, no one ever said a life of rock 'n roll was easy.

Jo

To: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 1:52PM
Fr: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

May I make a suggestion? Why don't you email Mike back and ask him if he'd like to get together when he comes to the city next month? Fred says he sees Mike occasionally at TGIF's, and that he seems like a nice guy. He said the only thing the two of them ever talk about is us . . . how funny we were. He says Mike gets a certain look in his eyes whenever your name comes up. I'm not making this up, either, Fred really said it!

And I don't mean that Mike gets crazy eyes, either.

M

PS I hesitate to add this, because I think deep down you know it, but the Rolling Stones didn't give up on their band and moved to the suburbs when they had children, so I don't see why you'd have to, either, just because you liked a guy. Lots of rock n' rollers live in New York City.

Give the guy a chance. You never know what might happen.

REUNION

To: Mary Hutchins <Mary@bloomvillehealthfoods.com>
Sent: April 26, 2005 2:12 PM
Fr: Jo Buchanon <JBuchanon@ravinglunatics.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

Fine. I'll write to him.

But don't get your hopes up. You live in small-town America, where things are simple and sweet (except for the serial killers). I live in the big city, where dreams are regularly crushed like ants. Don't blame me if this doesn't work out (which it won't) Mary quite contrary.

Jo

To: All
Sent: May 31, 2005 11:15AM
Fr: Scooter Potts <Scooter@bloomvillemotors.com>
Re: Bloomville High School Class of '95 Reunion

BHS Class of 1995

10 Year Class Reunion

Please save the weekend of July 15 and 16

Friday night: Informal gathering at Bloomville Health Food Café at 8:00 p.m.

Saturday morning: Picnic and tour at BHS at 11:00 a.m.

Saturday night: Dinner and dancing at BHS at 7:00 p.m.—catering by our own Mary Hutchins, Owner/Proprietor of Bloomville Health Foods

Entertainment courtesy of the Raving Lunatics, all the way from New York City, featuring Jo Buchanon, lead vocalist, and Mike Saunders on the drums!

More details to follow at a later date.

If you know of anyone from our class who is not receiving email updates regarding the reunion, please have them contact

Fred "Scooter" Potts or

Mary Hutchins

Remember, there's a 10% discount for BHS grads at

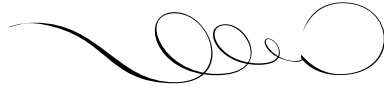
Bloomville Motors and Bloomville Health Foods!

--We put the Serv in Service--

--If you don't know where it came from, why would you put it in your mouth?--

BACK TO SCHOOL

Back To School By Meg Cabot



This story originally appeared in one of Seventeen Magazine's back to school issues.

BACK TO SCHOOL

I got it every year, just about this time: that giddy, excited feeling, that anything—anything—could happen. Sure, I'd never been the prettiest or most popular girl in my class before. But this year?

Things were going to be different.

Why shouldn't they? Hadn't I spent the whole summer—well, in between babysitting gigs to raise cash for that all-important back-to-school wardrobe—working out and giving up dessert so I could lose those last pesky five pounds? Not to mention laying on the roof of our carport, smothered in Coppertone with Sun-In in my hair, trying to get that healthy summer glow...no mean feat while battling a mom who kept calling me inside to empty the dishwasher.

But if I could just get him to look at me—and you all know who he was: Mr. Perfect, the guy with the locker next door to mine, who never gave me a second glance because of her, Ms. Perfect, who seemed to have achieved the ideal wardrobe, body, and highlights without the slightest bit of effort, and who was consequently glued at the hips to him—it would all have been worth it...even the hours I'd spent in the mall, attempting to replicate the cute outfits I'd seen in the pages of the two-inch thick fall issues of my favorite magazines.

And okay, by mall I mean outlet mall. But the stuff I found there looked almost exactly like the designer stuff in the photos, for a fraction of the price!

By the time the first day of school finally rolled around, and I'd strutted to the bus stop (because my friends and I had parents who couldn't afford to buy us cars for our birthdays), I'd barely be able to contain my excitement. Sure, the guys my best friend and I rode to school with (and had known since kindergarten) pretended they didn't notice a difference...but we didn't miss the sidelong glances they shot us from behind their Raybans. We looked good. They knew it. We knew it.

This year, things were going to be different.

The excitement lasted all the way until I got off the bus....

And then I saw her, Ms. Perfect, getting out of the red convertible her parents had gotten her for her birthday.

She was wearing my exact same outfit...only she had the real designer stuff I'd seen in the magazines, not knock-offs from the outlet mall.

There wasn't an ounce of spare fat on her. Her tan was all over, the result of water-skiing at the lake all summer, not hours stolen here and there on top of a carport. Her highlights were salon-perfect, not the result of at-home experimentation.

When I finally made it to my locker a few minutes later, there she was, in a liplock with him, Mr. Perfect.

And then it would hit me, all over again:

Nothing was going to be different this year. Nothing had changed. And nothing ever would.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Until, it turned out, college.

It happened the first month of school: I had finally given up on trying to be the prettiest, or the most popular. I didn't bother tanning, or trying to lose weight, or even getting a new fall wardrobe before school started. I was more concerned about getting into the right classes and making new friends in the dorm at the massive state university I'd gotten into.

I was barreling along campus—I still didn't have a car, but I had a kickass computer to write my novels and short stories on—so I almost didn't see the guy until I practically ran into him, and he said my name.

I looked up, astonished. On a campus of thirty thousand people, what were the chances that, at eight thirty in the morning, I'd run into someone I knew?

But there he was: Mr. Perfect.

"I didn't know you go here!" he cried, happily. "You look great. Hey, you should stop by the frat house tonight. We're having a party. I'd love to see you, catch up on old times. Here's my number."

I stared at him, confused. Where was Ms. Perfect?

Then I remembered. They'd broken up right before graduation.

This was my big chance. Things were finally going to be different now.

"Sorry," I heard myself saying. "I can't. I'm busy."

His face fell. "But—"

"I gotta go," I said. "Sorry. Bye."

When I got to class, I threw his number away. Because things were different now. The most important thing of all:

Me.

You Rock, Jen Greenley By Meg Cabot



This short story was the inspiration for what later went on to become my book TEEN IDOL. The story You Rock, Jen Greenley originally appeared in the teen magazine YM. YM ceased publication in 2004, after 72 years in circulation.

YOU ROCK, JEN GREENLEY

I witnessed the kidnapping of Betty Ann Mulvaney. Well, me and the twenty-three other people in first period Latin class at Clayton High School (student population 1,000).

Unlike everybody else, however, I actually did something to try to stop it. Well, sort of. I went, “Kurt. What are you doing?”

Kurt just rolled his eyes. He was all, “Relax, Jen. It’s a joke, okay?”

But there really wasn’t anything all that funny in the way Kurt Schraeder swiped Betty Ann from Mrs. Mulvaney’s desk, then stuffed her into his Jansport. Some of her yellow yarn hair got caught in the teeth of his backpack’s zipper, and everything.

Kurt didn’t care. He just went right on zipping.

I should have said something more. I should have said, “Put her back, Kurt.”

Only I didn’t.

Kurt was already high-fiving all of his friends, the other jocks who hang in the back row. They had to hide their smirks behind their workbooks when Mrs. Mulvaney came in after the second bell, a steaming cup of coffee in her hand.

“Good morning,” Mrs. Mulvaney sang.

Then she froze, her gaze going to the place on her desk where Betty Ann normally sat.

“Betty Ann?” Mrs. Mulvaney said, in this funny high-pitched voice...a voice that pierced my heart.

Because the thing is, Mrs. Mulvaney loves that stupid doll.

When Mrs. Mulvaney asked us if we’d seen Betty Ann, no one said anything. Because everybody—including me—is scared of Kurt. You just don’t cross a guy like that. If Kurt Schraeder wants to kidnap a teacher’s Cabbage Patch doll, you just let him, because otherwise you’ll end up in a body cast.

“You don’t think they’re going to do anything to her, do you?” I asked my best friend Trina at lunch that day. “What if they cut off her ear and send it to Mrs. M with a ransom note?”

“Oh my God,” Trina said. “Would you get a grip? It’s just a prank, okay? The seniors pull one every year.”

“It’s just....” I couldn’t get the picture of Betty Ann’s yarny hair getting caught in that zipper out of my head. “It just seems so wrong. Mrs. Mulvaney really loves that doll. I think...I think somebody should say something to Kurt.”

Trina rolled her eyes. “Do you have a death wish?”

“Who’s got a death wish?” Scott Bennet wanted to know, as he and his girlfriend Geri Lynn slid into chairs at our lunch table.

Trina pointed at me and said, “Miss Jennifer Greenley here. She wants to try and get Betty Ann back

YOU ROCK, JEN GREENLEY

from Kurt.”

“Ha,” Geri Lynn said. “Been nice knowing you, Jen.”

Geri Lynn jiggled her can of Diet Coke as she spoke. Geri Lynn likes her Diet Coke flat, so she jiggles the can until it gets that way. But that isn’t actually the weirdest thing about Geri Lynn. The weirdest thing about Geri Lynn—if you ask me, anyway—is that every time she and Scott make out in her parents’ basement rec room, Geri draws a little heart in her date book to mark the occasion.

I know this because she showed it to me once. There was a heart on like every single page.

Which is kind of funny. I mean that Geri and Scott are even going out. Because some people—like Trina, for instance—think Scott and I would make a better couple. On account of how he and I check out all the same books from the school library. Not that we’ve ever discussed this. It’s just that whenever I go to check out a book, Scott’s signature is always there, right above mine, on the book’s sign-out card.

Trina says Scott might have asked me out, instead of Geri, if it wasn’t for the fact that I’m so shy, I’ve barely ever even talked to him.

Still, I couldn’t help noticing—the last time Geri opened her datebook—that lately, there haven’t been all that many hearts in it.

“Jen’s right,” was what Scott said, to my total and complete surprise. “I know it’s a prank. But pranks are supposed to be funny. And this one’s just...not.”

Geri Lynn stopped jiggling her can.

“Hello,” she said. “What do you care? It’s just a stupid doll.”

“But Betty Ann isn’t just a doll,” Scott said, echoing—as he seemed to do so often—my own feelings exactly. “She’s sort of like the unofficial school mascot. Kurt’s gone too far this time. Somebody’s got to do something.”

Geri rolled her eyes and went, “Fine. You two try to get that stupid doll back. Don’t expect me to come to your funerals.”

Which was how I ended up in the front seat of Scott Bennet’s beat up old Audi later that afternoon, on Operation Rescue Betty Ann Mulvaney.

“So,” he wanted to know. “What’s the plan?”

Yeah. I would have liked to know the same thing. The problem was, I didn’t have one. All I’d been able to think about, since the moment Scott had said he’d help me get Betty Ann back, was that this must mean he likes me, at least a little. As a friend, maybe.

Which might explain why my palms were so sweaty all of a sudden.

“Um,” I said. “I guess the plan is...we go to his house? I know he was heading home after school. I overheard him telling some guys he’d meet them at the lake.”

YOU ROCK, JEN GREENLEY

“Sounds good,” Scott said, and made the turn onto Sycamore, Kurt’s street. “But what, exactly, are we going to do then? Break in and take her? Shouldn’t we wait until dark? Get some night-vision goggles?”

“Funny,” I said. “Just drive.”

When we drove up to Kurt’s house, his Grand Am wasn’t in the driveway.

“So,” Scott said, as he pulled into the driveway and switched the ignition off. “What now?”

“I don’t know,” I said. “I guess...we knock on the door and see if the doll’s here? I doubt he took her to the lake with him.”

Scott followed me up the steps to the Schraeders’ front door. I hoped he couldn’t see how hard my heart was beating beneath my T-shirt. The truth was, I was totally nervous. My stomach hurt. My hands were still all sweaty—but not because I was afraid of Kurt.

The door was opened by Kurt’s little sister. Her name, according to the gold necklace she wore, was Vicky.

Scott and I exchanged glances. Then, before he could say a word, I dropped my hands down to my knees (which was good, because then I could wipe the sweat off on my jeans) so that my gaze was level with hers and said, “Hi! Is your brother home?”

Vicky pulled the braid tip she’d been sucking on out of her mouth and went, “No. He went to the lake.”

“Oh, no,” I said, trying to look disappointed. “Well, did he leave something for me? A doll?”

Vicky’s eyes grew even wider. “You mean Betty Ann?”

“Yes,” I said, brightly. “Betty Ann. See, it’s my turn to look after her. Kurt probably forgot to tell you. Could you do me a favor? Could you run and get her for me?”

Back went the tip of the braid into the mouth.

“I’m not allowed to go in Kurt’s room,” Vicky said, as she sucked energetically. “He said if I did it again, he’d pound me.”

“Oh, he won’t mind this one time, Vicky,” I said. “In fact, you’ll be doing him a huge favor. Because you see, if I don’t get Betty Ann back, and right this very minute, someone is going to go to the school principal and tell him that Kurt’s the one who took Betty Ann in the first place, and then Kurt probably won’t get to graduate.”

The braid dropped from Vicky’s mouth. “Someone would do that?”

“Oh, yes,” I said. “Someone would. So you see, you’d really be helping Kurt if you could do this one little thing.”

“Okay,” Vicky said, with a shrug. “I’ll be right back.”

She took off. When I glanced at Scott, he was shaking his head at me...

YOU ROCK, JEN GREENLEY

...but there was a smile on his lips.

“What happened to you?” he wanted to know.

“What do you mean?” I asked, a little alarmed. I thought maybe I had something on my face.

“You never used to be like this,” Scott said. “You used to...I don’t know. Be kind of shy. This the most I’ve heard you talk...ever.”

I couldn’t believe he’d noticed. That he’d even been paying attention. To me.

“I don’t know,” I said, looking away so he wouldn’t see that I was blushing. “I guess I just decided to take a stand.”

“I’ll say,” Scott said.

We heard running footsteps, and then Vicky reappeared, Betty Ann in her arms.

“Here she is,” Vicky said, handing the doll over. “I found her under Kurt’s bed.”

“Thanks, Vicky,” I said, tucking Betty Ann beneath my arm. “You’re the best. “Bye!” Vicky called, and waved as we hurried down the steps to Scott’s car.

Once we were a safe distance from Sycamore, Scott glanced at me and said, “That was the coolest thing I’ve ever seen. You rock, Jen Greenley.”

It wasn’t a heart in a datebook.

But I couldn’t help feeling like it was a start.

Girl's Guide to New York Through the Movies
By Meg Cabot



This piece originally appeared in *Metropolis Found*, a collection compiled to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of New York is Book Country, an annual book festival. The book, which included contributions by authors including Donald Westlake, Billy Collins, Susan Isaacs, Lawrence Block, Robert Lipsyte, Ruth Reichl, and Edwidge Danticat, is now out of print. Here is the piece I contributed:

GIRL'S GUIDE TO NEW YORK THROUGH THE MOVIES

It's probably not surprising that, before moving to New York City—straight out of college, and from Indiana, the heart of the Midwest--the only thing I knew about the Big Apple was what I'd garnered from the movies.

Though I was in for a bit of a rough ride at first—I hadn't seen any movies depicting New York City trash and phone service strikes, both of which were underway when I arrived in Manhattan in 1989—movie lore served me pretty well as a guide to the big city, and has yet to fail me.

Consider:

Ghost—This movie convinced me that it is easy for sculptors to find affordable and enormous lofts in Soho. Although I have since become disabused of this notion, lingering doubt remains: maybe if I look just a little longer, I too will find an 3000 square foot duplex with parquet floors for \$900 a month and no broker's fee.

Rosemary's Baby— The Dakota really is just as dark and spooky inside as it is in the movie. But you still can't beat it for an unimpeded view of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Daylight—This thriller starring Sylvester Stallone, who becomes trapped inside a flooded Holland Tunnel after an explosion, has caused me closely to scrutinize every door marked Personnel Only along the tunnel every time I whiz past them. I've also memorized the locations of all the fire extinguishers down there, in case I need to grab one and use it to knock down the Personnel Only door in order to escape the roaring waters of the East River.

Breakfast at Tiffany's— I fell for this movie's assertion that living in a six floor walk-up can be charming, when in truth, there is nothing charming about a ditzzy girl who lives upstairs and is always losing her cat and bothering while you're busy trying to write on your novel. No wonder George Peppard's character never got any work done while he was living in that building.

Funny Face— Another misleader: the dark Greenwich village bookshop in which Audrey Hepburn is discovered by photographer Fred Astaire looks very sweet and bohemian. But as any of girl who frequents dark bookshops in Manhattan knows, they are just breeding grounds for bearded men in sandals with socks who try to hit on you by asking what you think of David Eggers's new book. Ew! (To the guys in the socks, not Dave Eggers.)

The Taking of Pelham One Two Three— I have ridden the subway for over 20 years now, and never once has my train been hijacked, giving me a really good excuse to be late for work. But hope springs eternal.

Spiderman— I always thought that the Roosevelt cable car looked dangerous, and now that I know how easily the Green Goblin can sever it from its moorings, I for one will take the subway in the unlikely event that I ever need to go to Roosevelt Island.

Quicksilver—There is some dispute over in which city, exactly, this movie is set. But there is no disputing that in it, Kevin Bacon plays a failed investment banker who becomes a bicycle messenger. The film's denouement seems to take place in the meat packing district, where Kevin races—on a bike—the evil Gypsy, who is driving a car. Not to give away the ending, but if you know of an overpass downtown that ends in a sudden drop off into the Hudson, could you please contact me? Thanks.

GIRL'S GUIDE TO NEW YORK THROUGH THE MOVIES

Moonstruck*—I had no interest whatsoever in opera until the scene where Cher is at the Met with Nicholas Cage, and the lights start going up—physically! By themselves. I had to see this phenomenon for myself, and so scored tickets to Medea early in my first year in Manhattan. The lights were as big a thrill in person as they were on film. Now I love opera. Who knew?

*Special note: Moonstruck is also the movie at the conclusion of which I heard a fellow Hoosier—seated not far from me at the Von Lee Theater in Bloomington, Indiana, where I first saw this—breathe as the credits rolled, “Oh, I just love movies about Jewish people!” All the characters in this film are Italian.

When Harry Met Sally— It’s not the Katz’s deli scene—which is great but could have happened anywhere—that always got to me. Instead, it’s the scene where Harry gets out of the station wagon in front of the arch at Washington Square. If you look through the arch behind Billy Crystal, you can see the World Trade Center. The fact that you can no longer see the towers still troubles and awes me, even though I witnessed their collapse in person. After moving to NYC, the Twin Towers quickly came to serve as my compass for finding the direction of downtown. For years after they disappeared, I felt directionless. At times, like so many New Yorkers, I still do.

Now that I have lived in New York for more than a decade, I have contributed my own fictional interpretation of it to the public consciousness—though in the movie version of my book, my characters have been mysteriously transported to San Francisco. In Mia Thermopolis’s Manhattan, however, the Twin Towers are still standing; my favorite Chinese restaurants—Great Shanghai and Number One Noodle Son—are still serving; and the Cote d’Azur principality of Genovia will always pale in comparison to my kingdom of choice, the city that never sleeps.

My Character By Meg Cabot



This was a piece I did in 2007 for something in England called “Storyquest,” with the Prince’s Foundation for Children and the Arts. During Storyquest, storytelling events took place all around the UK, at schools, libraries, and book festivals, emphasizing the importance of “story” and how “story” has changed lives and history. Some of the other storytellers with whom I worked during Storyquest were the authors Michael Murpurgo (*War Horse*), Jacqueline Wilson (*Bad Girls*), and Frank Cottrell Boyce (*Millions*).

The following was written as a performance piece to be read out loud (that’s why so many of the words are in capital letters, so I wouldn’t forget which words to emphasize while I was reading it)! All of the Storyquest participants were instructed to write a story about one of the characters in the picture below. I chose the blond girl in the yellow dress with the green dragon flying over her head.

In the spirit of Storyquest, you are welcome to perform this piece if you want, but please don’t forget to credit it to Meg Cabot, Storyquest 2007. All rights reserved.

MY CHARACTER



Oh my God, I can't believe this is even happening. I am so going to kill Stephanie, she SWORE she and Drew would meet me here. It is so TYPICAL of her not to show up. I knew she'd ditch me. She is ALWAYS ditching me. Just because she has a boyfriend now, she thinks she can treat her old friends like dirt. And when I complain, she's all, "Oh, Julia, you're just jealous because I have a boyfriend and you don't."

As if! I wouldn't date Drew if you PAID me. Stephanie says I don't have realistic expectations where boys are concerned.

But I know someday my prince will come. I KNOW IT.

Still, of all the times for Steph to ditch me. I mean, seriously, what is up with the dude with the tuba back at the end of the line? Why does he keep STARING at me? What is he even supposed to be? A guy playing the tuba? What kind of Halloween costume is THAT?

Maybe that isn't his costume. Maybe he's, like, in the school band. He looks kind of familiar.

Oh my God, if anyone I know sees me here I'm going to DIE. These people are so WEIRD.

And, no offense, but the pirate suit on the guy in front of me? It is SO not convincing. I'm sorry, but I saw Pirates of the Caribbean five times and, um, hello, Orlando didn't look anything like that.

And what's with the kid at the head of the line with the sword? I can't believe his parents would even let him buy that, he is WAY too young to be playing with sharp objects. Maybe that's why this line's taking so long--he's trying to talk them into buy it for him?

I swear, if this thing doesn't start moving soon, I am seriously leaving and going over to Costumes R Us, because this is getting RIDICULOUS.

Speaking of which, I don't recognize ANYONE here. Am I the ONLY person from Washington Irving High who understands that you are supposed to wear a COSTUME to a HALLOWEEN DANCE? It's bad enough I don't even have a date. But if I am the only one in the whole school who shows up in costume, I am going to die.

And it will all be Stephanie's fault. WHERE IS SHE? She SWORE she'd buy a costume, too. Even though Drew says dressing up is immature.

I'm surprised he can pronounce such a long word.

Oh my God, the band geek is STILL STARING at me. I am so glad Stephanie isn't here to witness this. She says all the guys in Band are losers.

MY CHARACTER

Although, seriously, if you think about it, at least guys who are in Band DO something. You know, besides play video games all day, like SOME PEOPLE. Named Drew.

OK, be cool. Don't look at Tuba Guy. I'll just keep my eyes on my shopping list here. Do I have everything I need? Tiara. Check. Ball gown. Check. I can't BELIEVE Stephanie said it wasn't very original of me to dress up as a princess. She had the nerve to say it was no wonder no boy had asked me to the dance, since I actually planned going as a princess.

But I totally could have gotten a date if I wanted to. I mean, I could have asked someone myself...if there were anyone even worth going with at Washington Irving. Which there isn't. If I wanted a boring jerk like Drew who thinks everything fun is immature, maybe. But is it MY fault I would like a boyfriend who, I don't know, actually has interests?

I don't care what Stephanie says. Someday, my prince is going to come. I'm not settling for some jerk like—

WHAT IS TAKING SO LONG? Why did I have to pick the longest check-out line in the entire store?

Is Tuba Guy still looking at me? Oh my God, he IS. Oh my God. He just SMILED!!! Okay, Tuba Guy just smiled at me. I am dying. I am totally dying.

He has a seriously cute smile, though.

You know, I don't get why Stephanie is so convinced that all guys in Band are losers. At least they know how to play an instrument. What does DREW know how to do? Get high score on Doom 3. And that's it.

Maybe I should smile back at Tuba Guy. Just a quick smile. Like this.

AAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH! My mobile's going off!!!!

"Hello? Stephanie? Where ARE you? Yes, I'm still at Costumes Galore, you should see the line—What do you mean you aren't going? Yes, I know Drew thinks Halloween Dances are stupid, but-- Well, just come to the dance without him. What do you mean, only losers go to dances alone? I AM GOING TO THE DANCE ALONE. DOES THAT MAKE ME A LOSER, STEPHANIE? IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?"

Oh my God. Tuba Guy is coming over. HE IS COMING OVER HERE. TO ME. Okay, be cool.

"Um, hold on a minute, Stephanie."

Okay. Smile at Tuba Guy. Oh my God, he's even cuter up close.

"Hi. Why, yes, I DO go to Washington Irving High. Oh, you do, too? I thought I recognized you from somewhere. You're in the band, right? Well, yeah, the tuba DOES kind of give it away. What? Yes, I AM going to the dance tonight. Oh? You ARE???"

"What? Well, I guess that would be--Um. Could you just hang on a sec?"

OH MY GOD I CAN'T BELIEVE HE ASKED ME TO THE DANCE!!!! TUBA GUY ASKED ME

MY CHARACTER

TO THE DANCE!!!!

“Hello, Stephanie? I’ve got to go. I’ve got a date. No, you don’t know him. He’s in Band.

“Oh, really? Well, you know what, Stephanie? I don’t really care what you think. Bye.

“Um, sorry about that. Now. Where were we? Me? Oh, I’m going as a—well, it’s kind of dumb, but as a princess.

“You’re going as a what? Wow. What a coincidence!”

I KNEW someday my prince would come.

Every Girl's Dream By Meg Cabot



I can't remember anymore where this short story featuring Jesse and Suze from the Mediator series first appeared (it's a stand alone story, not featured in any of the books). It's possible that it was for YM, a teen magazine that went out of print in 2004. In any case, it's been available on the Mediator series page for free on megcabot.com for some time, and now it's available free here as well. Enjoy!

EVERY GIRL'S DREAM

There I was, in a long white Jessica McClintock dress and orchid wrist corsage, moonlight playing on my hair and a pair of strong arms encircling my waist, while a masculine voice gently whispered my name: "Susannah." My dance partner's breath was soft against my cheek. "Susannah...."

Yeah. In my dreams.

In real life, the voice calling my name wasn't a bit masculine. That's because it belonged to a twelve-year-old boy.

"Uh, Suze? Yeah, there's something seriously wrong with these cannolis."

I tore my gaze from the whirling couples before me and looked down. Instead of the total hottie in a tux I'd been imagining, standing beside me was my redheaded stepbrother, holding a tray of Italian pastries.

"Kelly's really mad," Doc—known as David to everyone but me—said. "She says they're like deformed, or something."

Kelly was right. The cannolis were deformed. As vice-president of the sophomore class, and reluctant chairperson of the junior/senior prom committee (I had been appointed to the position when no other sophomore volunteered), I had tried to cut corners, using Doc's seventh grade Home Ec class as caterers. This was what I got for my efforts: deformed cannolis.

Not that I cared. Especially considering the fact that I was the only sophomore girl in the entire school, practically, who had not been asked to this particular dance. This dance I was chairperson of. What did I care about the stupid refreshments?

Oh, all right already. I cared.

"Suze, are you insane?" Kelly Prescott came stalking up, the skirt of her Nicole Miller evening gown shimmering in the moonlight that poured into the Mission's fountained courtyard. "You actually expect people to eat those?"

I looked down at the pastries, which were supposed to be tube-like shells but which looked more like pretzels.

"Are there any more cannolis, or are these the last batch?" I asked Doc.

"Um," he said, looking nervously at Kelly, who, being the most beautiful girl in Carmel, California, considered the two of us, mere mortals, complete freaks. She was right about one of us. And it wasn't Doc. "There should be more."

"Fine," I said. I took the tray of cannolis from him. To Kelly I said, "Don't worry about it. I'll take care of it. Go back to your date."

Kelly's date, senior-class president Greg Sanderson, was standing beneath a nearby palm tree, tall and coolly handsome in his tux. He was one of the best looking guys in school, so it was only fitting that he'd

EVERY GIRL'S DREAM

asked Kelly, though a lowly sophomore, to his prom....

Still, he'd only done so after his original date, Cheryl McKenna, unexpectedly, well....

Died.

But hey, it was Greg. What kind of fool would turn down an invitation to go to prom with Greg?

I'll tell you what kind: me. Not that he'd asked me, of course. But if he had, I'd have been forced to decline. Because my heart belongs to another. For all the good it does me.

Giving Kelly a smile she didn't deserve, I whisked the offending pastries back to the Mission Academy's kitchens. Built something like four hundred years ago by Franciscan monks, back in the days when three foot thick walls and giant oak beams overhead were not considered decor don'ts, the Mission, now a school, had updated the appliances—and added wiring—so that as I entered the kitchen, I could see my reflection in the huge Subzero fridge at the far end of the room. And let's just say I was not thrilled by what I saw.

Oh, the long white dress was fine. With my shoulder-length dark hair and the corsage—bought for me by my stepfather—I looked like a girl from another time.

The problem was the reflection I saw alongside mine. And that was the reflection of someone who really was from another time.

I whirled around fast to face him.

“What,” I demanded, “are you doing here?”

I'd nearly dropped the cannolis. He took the tray and set it gently on a nearby counter.

“Hello, querida,” he said, with a smile. “Nice to see you, too.”

It was the smile that did it. The smile that, each and every time I saw it, caused something inside of me to wilt.

Because even though he's been dead a hundred fifty years, Jesse is still the handsomest guy I've ever seen.

And I've seen a lot of them. Guys, I mean. Because, like the kid in that movie, I can see dead people.

Only unlike that kid, the ghosts don't scare me. One of them I sometimes think I might even love.

Okay, I'm pretty sure I do love.

Not that I'm about to let him know it. Because what kind of guy—even a dead one—could possibly ever love a freak like me?

But that doesn't mean I can't dream.

“I happen,” I said, looking away from Jesse's shrewd, night-dark eyes—not to mention the place where his old-fashioned shirt fell open to reveal a set of abs Greg Sanderson would have envied—“to be extremely busy right now.”

EVERY GIRL'S DREAM

“Oh, I can see that, Susannah,” Jesse said.

“I mean it,” I said. “I don’t have time to chat. I am in charge of making this prom a night these people will always remember.”

Jesse was leaning against one of the countertops, his arms folded across his chest. “These people,” he echoed, with another one of those smiles. “But not you?”

“It’s not my prom,” I said, with a shrug, trying not to notice how darkly tanned those arms of his were against the whiteness of his shirt. For a ghost, Jesse is extremely buff.

“So that means no dancing for you?” he asked.

I froze with a tray of fresh new—undeformed—cannolis I’d just removed from the fridge in my hands.

“Dancing?” I could feel heat rushing into my cheeks. He isn’t, I told myself sternly, asking you to dance. He’s just asking in general. Don’t get your hopes up.

It was too late. Already, in my mind’s eye, Jesse and I had joined the other couples out in that moonlit courtyard, those strong arms of his circling my waist, his soft breath against my cheek...

“Yes, dancing,” Jesse said. “Surely even in the twenty-first century, people still dance.”

I drew in a breath, wondering even as I did how I was going to reply.

I never got a chance to find out. Because before I could say a word, I saw her.

“Greg?” she called. “Greg? Where are you?”

My jaw dropped. I’d have recognized that lustrous blonde hair anywhere, but the hospital gown was a dead give away. No pun intended.

“Oh, no,” I said.

Cheryl, hearing my voice, came to stand uncertainly in the kitchen doorway. Her lovely, blue-eyed gaze was hopeful as she looked at Jesse and me.

“Hello,” she said, in the dazed but polite manner so often employed by the recently dead. “Have you seen my boyfriend, Greg? He was supposed to bring me here tonight, only he never showed up. He must have forgotten.”

Jesse and I exchanged glances. His was unreadable. Mine, as I was able to see only too well in my reflection in the fridge, was miserable.

Well, and why not? Seeing Cheryl like this was just further proof of my freakishness.

“Cheryl,” I said, putting down the tray of cannolis. “Listen. Greg didn’t forget to pick you up.”

Cheryl blinked like someone waking from a dream. Perhaps that’s what death is. Who knows? Well, Jesse knows, only he won’t tell me.

EVERY GIRL'S DREAM

"He must have forgotten," Cheryl said. "It's prom night."

"I know, Cheryl," I said, gently. "It is prom night. And Greg is here."

Cheryl's lovely face lit up. "He's here? Where? Oh, I've got to find him."

She turned to rush from the kitchen. I stopped her. The spirits of the dead are without matter—to everyone but freaks like me, of course. To us, they are flesh and bone—or, as in Jesse's case, muscle and mysterious smiles.

"Greg's here, Cheryl," I said. "But...he's here with someone else."

Cheryl's eyes filled instantly with tears. "But that can't be," she said, her voice rising slightly. "He asked me. Months ago."

"I know, Cheryl," I said. "But Greg had to ask someone else because you...well, you died, Cheryl."

She shook her head. "No, I didn't," she said. "That's ridiculous. I'm not dead. Look at me. I'm standing right here. I am not dead."

"You're standing right here in a hospital gown," I pointed out. "Cheryl, I'm sorry, but you died of a burst appendix two months ago. If you go out there now—if you try to talk to Greg—he won't see you. He can't. I can only see you because...well, because it's what I do. But the truth is, Cheryl, you're dead."

I saw it—the horror as my words sank in—spread across her lovely features.

And that's when she went mental.

Could you blame her? She'd been eighteen, and in love. She'd had everything to live for...college, career, marriage, kids...and now...

Well, now it was all gone.

"NO!" she screamed, her lovely face contorting into a mask of rage and despair. "NO! I don't believe you! You're lying!"

She wrenched free from my grasp.

"You're just jealous, that's all!" she screamed. "Jealous of me!"

That's when she brought both fists down into the tray of cannolis, sending its contents flying.

And not the deformed cannolis, either.

"Stop it!" I yelled, stepping forward and seizing her by both wrists. No matter how much she contorted her body or kicked out to be free, I wouldn't let her go. Not this time.

"You are dead, Cheryl," I said. "Do you hear me? Dead. It's not fair, but it's the way things are. I wish you had gotten to go to your prom. I know it's every girl's dream to go to prom with the guy she loves. But Cheryl, Greg has moved on. It was hard from him, but he did it. It's time you did the same."

EVERY GIRL'S DREAM

Something in my words—maybe the assurance that Greg had not had an easy time coping with her death, for all Kelly Prescott might wish otherwise—drove all the fight from her. She sagged against me.

Then, a second later, I heard her murmur, “I really am dead, aren't I?”

And then she was gone. Just like that.

Jesse, who had not stirred the whole time from the spot he'd been standing, confident I could handle Cheryl myself, was grinning.

“It's every girl's dream to guy to go to prom with the guy she loves?” he echoed, not just one, but both inky black eyebrows raised.

“Don't start with me,” I said. I tried to hide my suddenly flaming cheeks by scraping away what was left of the cannolis, and replacing them with the contents of an upended bag of chocolate chip cookies. “I have things to do.”

“Oh, yes,” Jesse said, getting out of my way as I stormed past him. “I can see that.”

If I'd hoped the night air would cool the fire in my face, I was disappointed. I was still feeling strangely flushed when I found Doc out in the courtyard, and shoved the tray of cookies at him.

“Suze, these aren't cannolis,” he said.

“I know. There aren't any more cannolis.”

“I thought there was a whole—”

“Not anymore,” I said, shortly, and turned away because I saw Kelly glaring at us from over Greg's shoulder. Whatever had happened now, I did not want to know. Because it could not possibly be as bad as what had happened to poor Cheryl McKenna, dead at eighteen.

Or to me, born a freak who can see ghosts.

But when I ducked into the shadows of the Mission's open-air corridor, hoping to escape, for a moment, the music and laughter, I found that I was not, in fact, alone at all. Jesse had followed me.

“You never answered my question,” he said, in a voice that was soft as moonlight. “Do people in the twenty-first century still dance?”

My heart beat thundered in my ears, far louder than the slow music. “Um,” I said, barely able to swallow, my throat had gone so dry. “Sometimes.”

“How about now?” he asked.

And then his strong arms were encircling my waist, his breath soft against my cheek as he gently whispered my name: “Susannah. Susannah....”

The End