



Princess

in pink



#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

MEG CABOT

Monday, May 5, Gifted and Talented

I don't know how long I'm going to be able to take this. You could cut the tension in this room with a knife. I almost wish Mrs. Hill would come in and yell at us or something. Anything, ANYTHING to break this awful silence.

Yes, silence. I know it seems weird that there'd be silence in the G and T room, considering that this is where Boris Pelkowski is supposed to practice his violin, usually with so much vigor that we are forced to lock him in the supply closet so that we are not maddened by the incessant scraping of his bow.

But no. That bow has been silenced... I fear forever. Silenced by the cruel blow of heartache, in the form of a philandering girlfriend...who happens to be my best friend Lilly.

Lilly is sitting here next to me pretending like she doesn't feel the waves of silent grief radiating from her boyfriend, who is sitting in the back corner of the room by the globe, his head buried in his arms. She has to be pretending, because everybody else

can feel them. The waves of grief emanating from her boyfriend, I mean. At least, I think so. True, Michael is working on his keyboard like nothing is going on. But he has headphones on. Maybe headphones shield you from radiating waves of grief.

I should have asked for headphones for my birthday.

I wonder if I should go over to the teachers' lounge and get Mrs. Hill and tell her Boris is sick. Because I really do think he might be. Sick, I mean. Sick at heart and possibly even in the brain. How can Lilly be so mean? It is like she is punishing Boris for a crime he didn't commit. All through lunch, Boris kept asking her if they could go somewhere private, like the third floor stairwell, to talk, and Lilly just kept saying, "I'm sorry, Boris, but there's nothing to talk about. It's over between us. You're just going to have to accept it, and move on."

"But why?" Boris kept wailing. Really loud, too. Like loud enough that the jocks and cheerleaders, over at the popular people's table, kept looking over

at us and snickering. It was a little embarrassing. But very dramatic. “What did I do?”

“You didn’t do anything,” Lilly said, throwing him a bone at last. “I am just not in love with you anymore. Our relationship has progressed to its natural peak, and while I will always treasure the memories of what we had together, it’s time for me to move on. I’ve helped you achieve self-actualization, Boris. You don’t need me anymore. I have to turn my attention to another tortured soul.” I don’t know what Lilly means about Boris having reached self-actualization. I mean, it isn’t like he’s gotten rid of his bionater, or anything. And he’s still tucking his sweater into his pants, except when I remind him not to. He is probably the least self-actualized person I know...

...with the exception of myself, of course.

Boris didn’t take any of this too well. I mean, as far as kiss-offs go, it was pretty harsh. But Boris should know as well as anybody that once Lilly makes up her mind about something, that’s pretty much it. She’s sitting here right now working on the speech

she wants Jangbu to give at a press conference she's having him hold at the Chinatown Holiday Inn tonight.

Boris might as well face it: he's as good as forgotten.

I wonder how the Drs. Moscovitz are going to feel when Lilly introduces them to Jangbu. I am fairly sure my dad wouldn't let me date a guy who'd graduated from high school already. Except Michael, of course. But he doesn't count, because I've known him for so long.

Uh-oh. Something is happening. Boris has lifted his head from his desk. He is gazing at Lilly with eyes that remind me of hotly blazing coals...if I had ever seen hotly blazing coals, which I haven't, because coal fires are forbidden within the city limits of Manhattan due to anti-smog regulations. But whatever. He is gazing at her with the same kind of fixed concentration he used to stare at his picture of world-class violinist, and Boris's role model, Joshua Bell. He's opening his mouth. He's about to say something.

WHY AM I THE ONLY PERSON IN THIS CLASS WHO IS PAYING THE SLIGHTEST BIT OF ATTENTION TO WHAT IS GOING ON

Monday, May 5, Nurse's Office

Oh my God, that was so dramatic, I can barely write. Seriously. I have never seen so much blood. I am almost surely destined for some kind of career in the medical sciences, however, because I didn't feel like fainting. Not even once. In fact, except for Michael and maybe Lars, I think I am the only person in the room to have kept my head. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that, being a writer, I am a natural observer of all human interactions, and I saw what was coming before anyone... maybe even Boris. The nurse even said that if it hadn't been for my quick intervention, Boris might have lost a lot more blood. Ha! How's that for princesslike behavior, Grand-mère? I saved a guy's life!

Well, okay, maybe not his life, but whatever, Boris

might have passed out or something if it hadn't been for me. I can't even imagine what caused him to freak out like that. Well, yes, I guess I can. I think the silence in the G and T room caused Boris to go momentarily mental. Seriously.

I can totally see how it would, since it was bugging me, as well.

Anyway, what happened was, we were all just sitting there minding our own business well, except for me, of course, since I was watching Boris when all of a sudden he stood up and went, "Lilly, I can't take this anymore! You can't do this to me! You've got to give me a chance to prove my undying devotion!"

Or at least it was something like that. It's kind of hard to remember, given what happened next.

I do remember how Lilly replied, however. She was actually somewhat kind. You could tell she felt a little bit bad about her behavior towards Boris at my party. She went, in a nice voice, "Boris, seriously, I am so sorry, especially about the way it happened. But the truth is, when a love like mine for Jangbu

takes hold, there's no stopping it. You can't hold back New York baseball fans when the Yankees win the World Series. You can't hold back New York shoppers with Century Twenty-One has a sale. You can't hold back the floodwaters in the F train subway tunnels when it pours. Similarly, you can't hold back love like the kind I feel for Jangbu. I am so, so sorry about it, but seriously, there's nothing I can do. I love him."

These words, gently as they were spoken and even I, Lilly's severest critic, with the possible exception of her brother, will admit they were spoken gently seemed to hit Boris like a fist. He shuddered all over. Next thing I knew, he'd picked up the giant globe next to him which really was a feat of some athleticism, that globe weighs a ton. In fact, the reason it's in the G and T room is that it's so heavy, nobody can get it to spin anymore, so the administration, rather than throwing it away, must have figured, well, just stick it in the classroom with the nerds, they'll take anything...after all, they're nerds.

So there was Boris hypoglycemic, asthmatic, deviated-septum, and allergy prone Boris holding this big heavy globe over his head, as if he were Atlas or He-Man or the Rock or somebody.

“Lilly,” he said in a strangled, very un-Borislike voice I should probably point out that by this time everyone in the room was paying attention: I mean, Michael had taken off his headphones and was looking at Boris very intently, and even the quiet guy who is supposed to be working on this new kind of SuperGlue that sticks to objects but not to human skin (so you won’t have that sticky-finger problem anymore after gluing the sole of your shoe back together) was totally aware of what was happening around him for once.

“If you don’t take me back,” Boris said, breathing hard that globe had to weigh fifty pounds at least, and he was holding it **OVER HIS HEAD** “I will drop this globe on my head.”

Everyone sort of inhaled at the same time. I think I can safely say that there was no doubt in anybody’s mind that Boris meant what he said. He was totally

going to drop that globe on his head. Seeing it written down, it looks kind of funny I mean, really, who DOES things like that? Threatens to drop a globe on his head?

But this WAS Gifted and Talented class. I mean, geniuses are ALWAYS doing weird stuff like dropping globes on their heads. I bet there are geniuses out there who have dropped weirder stuff than globes on their heads. Like cinder blocks and cats and stuff. Just to see what would happen.

I mean, come on. They're geniuses.

Because Boris was a genius, and so was Lilly, she reacted to his threat the way only another genius would. A normal girl, like me, would have gone, "No, Boris! Put the globe down, Boris! Let's talk, Boris!"

But Lilly, being a genius, and having a genius's curiosity about what would happen if Boris did drop the globe on his head and maybe because she wanted to see if she really did have enough power over him to make him do it just went, in a disgusted voice, "Go ahead. See if I care."

And that's when it happened. You could tell Boris had second thoughts like it finally sunk into his love-addled brain that dropping a fifty pound globe on his head probably wasn't the best way to handle the situation.

But just as he was about to put the globe down, it slipped maybe accidentally. Or maybe on purpose, what the Drs. Moscovitz call a self-fulfilling prophecy, like when you say, "Oh, I don't want that to happen," and then because you said that and you're thinking about it so much, you accidentally-on-purpose make it happen and Boris dropped the globe on his head.

The globe made this sickening hollow thunking sound as it hit Boris's skull the same noise that eggplant made as it hit the sidewalk that time I dropped it out Lilly's fifteenth story bedroom window--before the whole thing bounced off Boris's head and went crashing to the floor.

And then Boris clapped his hands to his scalp and started staggering around, upsetting the sticky glue guy, who seemed to be afraid Boris would crash

into him and mess up his notes.

It was kind of interesting to see how everyone reacted. Lilly put both hands to her cheeks and just stood there, pale as...well, death. Michael swore and started towards Boris. Lars ran from the room, yelling, "Mrs. Hill! Mrs. Hill!"

And I not even really aware of what I was doing stood up, whipped off my school sweater, strode up to Boris and yelled, "Sit down!" since he was running all around like a chicken with his head cut off. Not that I have ever seen a chicken with its head recently cut off I hope never to see this in my lifetime.

But you get what I mean.

Boris, to my very great surprise, did what I said. He sank down into the nearest desk, shivering like Rommel during a thunderstorm. Then I said, in the same commanding voice that didn't seem to belong to me, "Move your hands!"

And Boris moved his hands off his head.

That's when I stuck my wadded up sweater over the small hole in Boris's head, to stop the bleeding, just

like I saw a vet do on Animal Precinct when Officer Anne Marie Lucas brought in a pit bull that had been shot.

After that, all hell excuse me, but it is true broke loose.

* Lilly started crying in great big baby sobs, which I haven't seen her do since we were in second grade and I accidentally-on-purpose shoved a spatula down her throat while we were frosting birthday cupcakes to hand out to the class because she was eating all the frosting and I was afraid there wouldn't be enough to cover all the cupcakes.

* The guy with the glue ran out of the room.

* Mrs. Hill came running into the room, followed by Lars and about half the faculty, who'd apparently all been in the teachers' lounge doing nothing, as the teachers at Albert Einstein High School are wont to do.

* Michael was bent over Boris going, in a calm, soothing voice I am pretty sure he learned from his parents, who often get calls in the middle of the night from patients of theirs who have gone

off their medication for whatever reason and are threatening to drive up and down the Merrick Parkway in a clown suit, “It’s going to be all right. Boris, you’re going to be all right. Just take a deep breath.

Good. Now take another one. Deep, even breaths. Good.

You’re going to be fine. You’re going to be just fine.”

And I just kept standing there with my sweater pressed to the top of Boris’s head, while the globe, having apparently come unstuck thanks to the fall or perhaps the lubrication from Boris’s blood spun lazily around, eventually come to rest with the country of Ecuador most prominent.

One of the teachers went and got the nurse, who made me move my sweater a little so that she could see Boris’s wound. Then she hastily made me press the sweater back down. Then she said to Boris in the same calming voice Michael was using, “Come along, young man. Let’s go to my office.”

Only Boris couldn’t walk to the nurse’s office by

himself, since when he tried to stand up his knees sort of gave out beneath him, probably on account of his hypoglycemia. So Lars and Michael half-carried Boris to the nurse's office while I just kept my sweater pressed to his head, because, well, nobody had told me to stop.

As we passed Lilly on our way out, I got a good look at her face, and she really had gone pale as death her face was the color of New York City snow, kind of pale grey tinged with yellow. She also looked a bit sick to her stomach. Which if you ask me serves her right.

So now Michael and Lars and I are sitting here as the nurse fills out an incident report. She called Boris's mother, who is supposed to come get him and take him to their family doctor. While the wound caused by the globe isn't too deep, the nurse thinks it will probably require a few stitches, and that Boris will need a tetanus shot. The nurse was very complimentary of my quick action. She went, "You're the princess, aren't you?" and I demurely replied that I was.

I can't help feeling really proud of myself.
It is strange how even though I don't like seeing blood in movies and stuff, in real life, it didn't bother me a bit. Seeing Boris's blood, I mean. Because I had to sit with my head between my knees in Bio that time they showed the acupuncture film. But seeing that blood spurt out of Boris's skull in real life didn't cause me so much as a twinge. Maybe I'll have a delayed reaction, or something. You know, like post-traumatic stress syndrome. Although to be frank, if all of this princess stuff hasn't caused me PTSS, I highly doubt seeing my best friend's ex-boyfriend drop a globe on his head is going to do it.
Uh-oh. Here comes Principal Gupta.

Monday, May 5, French

Mia, is it true about Boris? Did he really try to kill himself during fifth period by stabbing himself in the chest with a protractor? Tina
Of course not. He tried to kill himself by dropping a globe on his head.

OH MY GOD!!!!!!! Is he going to be all right?

Yes, thanks to the quick action of Michael and me. He'll probably have a bad headache for a few days, though. The worst part was talking to Principal Gupta. Because of course she wanted to know why he did it. And I didn't want Lilly to get in trouble, or anything. Not that it's Lilly's fault, or anything. Well, I guess it sort of is....

Of course it is!!!! You don't think she could have handled the whole thing a little better? My God, she was practically Frenching Jangbu right in front of Boris! So what did you say to Principal UpChuck? Oh, you know, the usual. Boris must have cracked under all the pressure AEHS teachers put on us, and why can't the Administration cancel finals like they did in Harry Potter 2. Only she didn't listen, because it's not like anyone is dead, or a giant snake was chasing us around, or anything.

Still, it is fully the most romantic thing I have ever heard. Only in my wildest dreams would a man be so desperate to win back my heart that he'd do something like drop a globe on his head.

I know! If you ask me, Lilly is totally rethinking the Jangbu thing. At least, I think so. I actually haven't seen her since it all happened.

My God, who knew that all this time, inside Boris's spindly chest beat the heart of a Heathcliff-like lover?

Tcha! I wonder if his spirit is going to roam around East 75th Street the way Heathcliff's roamed around the moor. You know, after Cathy died.

I kind of always thought Boris was cute. I mean, I know mouth-breathers annoy you, but you have to admit, he has very beautiful hands.

HANDS? Who cares about HANDS?????

Um, they are slightly important. Hello. They're what guys TOUCH you with.

You are sick, Tina. Very sick.

Although that might be the pot calling the kettle black given my whole neck thing with Michael.

But whatever. I have never ADMITTED that to anyone. Out loud.

Monday, May 5, in the limo on the way to princess lessons

I am so totally the star of the school. As if the princess thing were not enough, now it's going all around Albert Einstein that Michael and I saved Boris's life. My God, we are like the Dr. Kovach and Nurse Abby of AEHS!!!!!!!!!! And Michael even LOOKS a little like Dr. Kovach. You know, with the dark hair and the gorgeous chest and all.

I don't even know why my mother is bothering with a midwife. She should just have me deliver the baby. I could so totally do it. All I'd need is like some scissors and a catcher's mitt. Jeez.

God. I am going to have to rethink this whole writer thing. My talents may lie in a completely different sphere.

Monday, May 5, Lobby of the Plaza

Lars just told me that to get into medical school you actually have to have good grades in math and science. I can see why you'd have to know science, but why MATH????? WHY????? Why is the American educational system conspiring against me to keep me from reaching my career goals?

Monday, May 5, on the way home from the Plaza

Trust Grand-mère to burst my bubble. I was still riding high from the medical miracle I'd performed back at school well, it WAS a miracle: a miracle I hadn't passed out from the sight of all that blood when Grand-mère was like, "So when can I schedule your fitting at Chanel? Because I've put a dress on hold there that I think will be perfect for this little prom you're so excited about, but if you want it on time, you'll have to have it fitted in the next day or so."

So then I had to explain to her that Michael and I still weren't going to the prom.

She didn't react to the news like a normal grandmother, of course. A normal grandmother would have been all sympathetic and would have patted my hand and given me some home-baked cookies or a dollar or something.

Not my grandmother. Oh, no. My grandmother was just like, "Well, then you obviously didn't do as I instructed."

Jeez! Blame the victim, Grandma!

“Whaddaya mean?” I blurted out. So of course Grand’Mère was all, “What do I mean? Is that what you said? Then ask me properly.”

“What...do...you...mean...Grand’Mère?” I asked her, more politely, though inwardly, of course, I didn’t feel very polite at all.

“I mean that you haven’t done as I said. I told you that if you found the right incentive, your Michael would be only too happy to escort to you the prom. But clearly, you would rather sit around and sulk then take the sort of action necessary to get what it is that you want.”

I took umbrage at that.

“I beg your pardon, Grand’Mère,” I said, “but I have done everything humanly possible to convince Michael to go to the prom.” Short, of course, of actually explaining to him why it was so important to me to go. Because I’m not so sure even if I did tell Michael why it was so important to me, he’d agree to go. And how much would THAT suck? You know, if I bared my soul to the man I love, only to have him decide that his desire not to attend

something as lame as the prom was stronger than his desire to see my dream come true?

“On the contrary, you have not,” Grand’Mère said. She stubbed out her cigarette and, exhaling plumes of grey smoke from her nostrils it is totally shocking how the weight of the Genovian throne rests solely on my slender shoulders, and yet my own grandmother remains unconcerned about the effects of her secondhand smoke on my lungs went, “I’ve explained this to you before, Amelia. In situations where opposing parties are striving to achieve detente, and yet are failing to reach it, it is always in your best interest to step back and ask yourself what the enemy wants.”

I blinked at her through all the smoke. “I’m supposed to figure out what Michael wants?”

“Correct.”

I shrugged. “Easy. He doesn’t want to go to the prom. Because it’s lame.”

“No. That is what Michael doesn’t want. What does he want?”

I had to think about that one.

“Um,” I said, watching Rommel as he, seeing that Grand’Mère was otherwise occupied, leaned over and surreptitiously began licking all the fur off one of his paws. “I guess...Michael wants to play in his band?”

“Bien,” Grand’Mère said, which means good in French. “But what else might he want?”

“Um,” I said. “I don’t know.” I was still thinking about the band thing. It is the duty of the freshman, sophomore, and junior classes to put on the prom for the seniors, even though we ourselves do not get to go, unless invited by a senior. I tried to remember what the Prom Committee had reported in *The Atom*, so far as the arrangements they’d made for music at the prom. I think they’d hired a DJ or something.

“Of course you know what Michael wants, “ Grand’Mère said, sharply. “Michael wants what every man wants.”

“You mean...” I felt stunned by the rapidity with which my grandmother’s mind worked. “You mean I should ask the prom committee to let Michael’s

band play at the prom?”

Grand'Mère started to choke for some reason.

“Wh-what?” she demanded, hacking up half a lung, practically.

I sat back in my seat, completely at a loss for words. It had never occurred to me before, but Grand'Mère's solution to the problem was totally perfect. Nothing would delight Michael more than an actual, paying gig for Skinner Box. And I would get to go to the prom...and not just with the man of my dreams, but with an actual member of the band. Is there anything cooler in the world than being at the prom with a member of the band playing at the prom? Um, no. No, there is not.

“Grand'Mère,” I breathed. “You're a genius!”

Grand'Mère was slurping up the last of the ice in her Sidecar. “I don't have the slightest idea what you're talking about, Amelia,” she said.

But I knew that, for the first time in her life, Grand'Mère was just being modest.

Then I remembered that I was supposed to be angry with her, on account of Jangbu. So I went,

“But, Grand’Mère, be serious a minute. This thing with the busboys...the strike. You’ve got to do something. It’s all your fault, you know.”

Grand’Mère eyed me over all the blue smoke coming out of the new cigarette she’d just lit.

“Why, you ungrateful little chit,” she said. “I solve all of your problems, and this is the thanks you show me?”

“I’m serious, Grand’Mère,” I said. “You’ve got to call Les Hautes Manger and tell them about Rommel. Tell them it was your fault that Jangbu tripped, and that they’ve got to hire him back. It isn’t fair, otherwise. I mean, the poor guy lost his job!”

“He’ll find another,” Grand’Mère said, dismissively.

“Not without references,” I pointed out.

“So he can go back to his native land,” Grand’Mère said. “I’m sure his parents miss him.”

“Grand’Mère, he’s from Nepal, a country that has been under Chinese oppression for decades. He can’t go back there. There are no jobs. He’ll starve.”

“I no longer care to discuss this,” Grand’Mère

said, loftily. “Tell me the ten different courses traditionally served at a royal Genovian wedding.”

“Grand’Mère!”

“Tell me!”

So I had no choice but to rattle off the ten different courses traditionally served at a Genovian wedding: olives, antipasto, pasta, fish, meat, salad, bread, cheese, fruit, dessert (note to self: when Michael and I get married, remember not to do it in Genovia, unless the palace’ll do an all vegetarian meal).

I don’t understand how someone who has embraced the dark side as fully as Grand’Mère can come up with brilliant stuff like getting Michael’s band to play at the prom.

But I guess even Darth Vader had his moments. I can’t think of any right now, but I’m sure he had some.