



# Princess

forever



#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

MEG CABOT

*Friday, April 28, Gifted and Talented*

Okay. They've descended into madness.

I guess some of them (namely, Lana, Trisha, Shameeka, and Tina) didn't have that far to go, anyway.

But I think they've taken the word senioritis to new extremes.

So Tina and I were out in the hallway just before lunch when we ran into Lana, Trisha, and Shameeka, and Tina yelled, over the din of everyone passing by, "Did you guys hear? Michael is back! And his robotic arm is a huge success! And he's a millionaire!"

Lana and Trisha, as one might predict, both let out shrieks that I swear could have burst the glass in all the emergency fire pulls nearby. Shameeka was more subdued, but even she got a crazed look in her eyes.

Then, when we got into the jet line to get our yogurts and salads (well, those guys. They're all trying to lose five pounds before the prom. I was

getting a tofurkey burger), Tina started telling them about Michael's donating a CardioArm to the Columbia University Medical Center, and Lana went, "Oh my God, when is that, tomorrow? We are so going."

"Uh," I said, my heart sliding up into my throat.

"No, we aren't."

"Seriously," Trisha said, agreeing with me (I could have kissed her). "I've got a tanning appointment. I'm totally building up a golden glow for prom next weekend. I'm wearing white, you know."

"Whatever," Lana said, picking out diet sodas for all of us. "You can tan after."

"But we've got Mia's birthday party Monday," Trisha said. "There're going to be celebrities there. I don't want to look pasty in front of celebrities."

"Trisha really has her priorities straight," I pointed out. "Not looking pasty in front of celebrities comes before stalking my ex-boyfriends."

"I don't want to stalk Michael," Shameeka said.

"But I agree with Lana that we should at least check out this event. I want to see how Michael looks.

Aren't you curious, Mia?"

"No," I said, firmly. "And besides, I'm sure we won't be able to get in. It's probably closed to everyone but invited guests and press."

"Oh, that won't be a problem," Lana said. "You can get us in. You're a princess. And besides, even if you can't—you're on the staff of the Atom. Get us press passes. Just ask Lilly."

Lifting up my lunch tray, I shot her a very sarcastic look. It took Lana a second or two to realize what she'd said. Then, when she finally did, she went, "Oh. Yeah. He's her brother. And she was really mad at you about dumping him last year, or something. Right?"

"Let's just drop it," I said. I swear, I wasn't even hungry anymore. My tofurkey burger, sitting on its plate in front of me, looked completely unappetizing. I thought about ditching it for tacos. If ever there'd been a day I could have used some spicy beef, it seemed like today.

"Isn't your little sister writing for the Atom this year?" Shameeka asked Lana.

Lana looked over at her little sister Gretchen, who was sitting with the other cheerleaders at a table by the door.

“Oooh,” Lana said. “Good suggestion. She’s such a little butt kisser, trying to get extracurriculars for college, she’ll have been to the Atom meeting this morning for sure. Let me go check and see if she got assigned to the Michael story.”

I could have stabbed them both with my spork.

“I am going to go sit down now,” I said, from between gritted teeth. “With my boyfriend. You guys can come sit with me, but if you do, I don’t want you to be talking about this. In front of my boyfriend. Do you understand? Good.”

I kept my gaze locked on J.P. as I made my way across the caf to our table, determined not to glance in Lana’s direction. J.P., chatting with Boris, Perrin, and Ling Su, noticed me coming, looked up and smiled. I smiled back.

Still, out of the corner of my eye, I managed to see Lana hit her sister on the back of the head, grab her Miu Miu purse, and dig around in it.

Great. That could only mean one thing. Gretchen had press passes to tomorrow's event.

"How's it going?" J.P. asked me, as I sat down.

"Great," I lied.

Mia Thermopolis's Big Fat Lie Number Five.

"Fantastic," J.P. said. "Hey, there's something I wanted to ask you."

I froze with my tofurkey burger halfway to my lips. Oh, God. Here? Now? He was going to ask me to the prom in the cafeteria, in front of everybody?

This was J.P.'s idea of romantic?

No. It couldn't be. Because J.P.'s made me dinner at his apartment before when his parents were out of town, and he's pulled out all the stops candles, jazz on the stereo, delicious fettuccini Alfredo, chocolate mousse for dessert. The guy knows romantic.

And he's no slouch on Valentine's Day, either. He got me a beautiful heart locket (from Tiffany, of course) with our initials entwined on it for our first, and a diamond journey necklace (to show how far we'd come from that first kiss outside my building) for our second.

Surely he wasn't going to ask me to the prom as I was biting into a tofurkey burger in the cafeteria. Then again he thought he didn't have to bother asking me to the prom at all. So.

Tina, overhearing J.P.'s question as she slid her tray down next to Boris's, gasped.

Well, let's face it. She would. This is another reason I can never tell her about Ransom My Heart.

She'd never be able to keep it to herself. Especially the steamier parts. She'd want to know how I researched them.

Then she recovered herself and said, "Oh? You have a question for Mia, J.P.?"

"Uh," J.P. said. "Yeah..."

"How nice." Tina tried not to look like she was about to give birth to the eighteenth Duggar baby.

"Everybody? J.P. wants to ask Mia something."

"Uh," J.P. said, a light pink shade tinging his cheeks as a hush fell over the cafeteria table and everyone looked at him expectantly. "I just wanted to ask what you were getting Principal Gupta and the rest of them as thank you gifts for writing your letters

of recommendation?”

Oh. Also, phew.

“I’m getting them each a set of six hand-blown Genovian crystal water goblets,” I said. “With the Royal Genovian crest on them.”

“Oh,” he said, gulping. “I think my mom’s just going to get them each a gift certificate to Barnes and Noble.”

“I’m sure they’ll like that much better,” I said, feeling bad. Grandmere was always so over-the-top with her gift-giving.

“We’re giving them Swavorski crystal apples,” Ling Su and Perrin said, at the same time. This made them sound nerdier than they are. They’d actually completely given up sitting with the Backpack Patrol, as J.P. refers to Kenny’s—I mean, Kenneth’s—gang, across the caf, who’d taken to traveling everywhere with their giant backpacks of books, even this late in the school year, knowing full well they’d already gotten into their colleges of choice (well, second choice). Some of them had so many books, in fact, they used wheelie suitcases to

cart them around. It was like they'd never heard of using their lockers.

Lilly, who used to sit amongst them—until Lilly Tells It Like It Is took off and her lunch hour became too busy for her to spend it in the caf—with her multiple piercings and often variantly colored hair, looked like an exotic flower. I think they were all pretty sorry to see her go—although I'm not sure any of them but Kenny really noticed, seeing as how their heads were all buried in their advanced chem books.

“Well, that's taken care of,” Lana announced, setting her tray down. “Two o'clock tomorrow, geek.” She was addressing me. Geek is Lana's pet name for me. I've learned she means it as a term of endearment.

“What's at two o'clock tomorrow?” J.P. wanted to know.

“Nothing,” I said quickly, just as Shameeka slid her tray down, too, and said, covering for me, “Mani-pedi appointments. Who's got the Diet Cokes? Oh, thanks, Mia.”

“This is so lame.” Trisha took one of the Diet Cokes I’d bought, too. “Did I mention how lame this is? I have to tan.”

“What are they talking about?” J.P. asked Boris.

“Don’t ask,” Boris advised him. “Just ignore them, and maybe they’ll go away.”

And that was that. It was decided—sort of non-verbally, but more verbally after lunch was over and we were all walking to class and the guys were gone. Lana got press passes (two of them, one for a reporter, and one for a photographer) from her sister Gretchen for Michael’s donation of one of his CardioArms to Columbia.

Apparently they all think we’re going tomorrow (to them, two press passes = permission for the five of us to enter, in Lana Fantasy Land).

But the REAL fantasy is that they think I’m actually going to go, because no way I am setting foot anywhere near that place. I mean, nothing has changed—I still don’t want to see Michael—I still can’t see Michael not sneaking in to see him on Lana Weinberger’s little sister’s high school

newspaper's press pass. I mean, that is insane. That's like something out of a book--something that's just not going to happen.

Ever.

God, Boris is really scraping away on that thing! And Lilly isn't even here. Which is no big surprise, she hasn't been in G&T since her show got picked up by a television network in Seoul. She tapes every day during lunch and fifth period. They actually let her out of school to do this, and give her class credit and everything.

Which is cool. I guess she's a huge star in Korea.

Well, I always knew she'd be a star.

For some reason I just always thought I'd be friends with her when it happened.

Well, things change, I guess.

*Friday, April 29, French*

Tina won't stop texting me, even though I'm not texting back (I don't need a repeat performance of yesterday's debacle).

She wants to know what I'm going to wear tomorrow when we go to see Michael donate a CardioArm to Columbia's Medical Center. I wonder what it's like to live in Tinaville. I get the feeling it's very shiny there.

*Friday, April 29, Psychology*

I finally texted Tina back that I'm not going tomorrow.

There has been radio silence ever since, so I'm just slightly suspicious about what's going on between her and the rest of the gang.

It's slightly restful, however, not to have my phone buzzing every five seconds.

Amelia—I still haven't had your answerrrrrrr. I need you to dis-invite twenty-ffiveeeee people to your party. The captain is telling me we won't be able to set sailllllll with three hundred. Weeeeeeeeeee need to cut it down to two seventy five max. I think Nathan and Claire, Frank's niece and nephew, can go, obviously. What about your mother? You don't

need her there, do you? She'll understandddddd.  
And Frank, tooooooo. I'll be waiting for your call.  
Clarisse, your grandmotherrrrrrrr

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Sent from my BlackBerry Wireless Device

Oh my God.

Homework:

World History—Study for final

English Lit—Ditto

Trig—Ditto

Gifted and Talented—Ugh, I'm so SICK of  
Chopin

French—Final

Psychology II—Final

*Friday, April 29th, Dr. Knutz's Waiting Room*

Great, I walked in here today for my next to last session and who should be sitting here but none other than the Dowager Princess of Genovia herself.

I was like, "What the--" but fortunately managed to

control myself at the last minute.

“Oh, Amelia, there you are,” she said, like we were meeting for tea at the Carlyle, or whatever. “Why haven’t you phoned back?”

I just stared at her in horror. “Grandmere,” I said. “This is my therapy session.”

“Well, I know that, Amelia.” She smiled at the receptionist, as if to apologize for my idiocy. “I’m not slow, you know. But how else am I supposed to get you to communicate with me, when you won’t return my calls and you refuse to write back to my emails, which is the method of communication I thought was all the rage with you young people today? Really, I had no choice but to hunt you down here.”

“Grandmere.” I was seriously about to bubble over with rage. “If this is about my party, I am NOT disinviting my own mother and stepfather to make room for your society friends. Disinvite Nathan and Claire if you want, I don’t care. And can I just add, it is totally inappropriate of you to show up at therapy to talk to me about this. I realize we’ve had

joint therapy sessions in the past, but those were scheduled beforehand. You can't just show up at therapy and expect me to—”

“Oh, that.” Grandmere made a little waving motion in the air, the sapphire cocktail ring the Shah of Iran had given her sparkling as she did so. “Please. Vigo has straightened out the difficulties with the invitation list. And don't worry, your mother is safe. Though I wouldn't say the same for her parents. I hope they'll enjoy the view of the party from the steering deck. No, no, I'm here about That Boy.” I couldn't figure out what she was talking about at first. “J.P.?” She never calls J.P. That Boy. Grandmere loves J.P.. I mean seriously loves him. When the two of them get together, they talk about old Broadway shows I've never even heard of until I practically have to drag J.P. away. Grandmere is more than a little convinced she could have had a great career on the stage if she hadn't chosen to marry my grandfather and been the princess of a small European country instead of a huge Broadway star a la that girl who stars

in *Legally Blonde*, the musical. Only of course in Grandmere's mind, she's better than her.

"Not John Paul," Grandmere said, looking shocked at the very idea. "The other one. And this thing he's invented."

Michael? Grandmere had invited herself to my therapy session to talk to me about Michael?

Also, great. Thanks, Vigo. Had he set her BlackBerry to receive Google Alerts about me, too?

"Are you serious?" I swear at this point I had no idea what she was up to. I really hadn't put two and two together. I still thought she was worried about the party. "You want to invite Michael, now, too? Well, sorry, Grandmere, but no. Just because he's a famous millionaire inventor now doesn't mean I want him at my party. If you invite him, I swear I'll—"

"No. Amelia." Grandmere reached out and grabbed my hand. It wasn't one of her usual grasping, needy grabs, where she tries to force me to give her sciatica a massage. It was as if she was taking my hand to well, to hold it.

I was so surprised, I actually sank down onto the leather couch and looked at her, like, What? What's going on?

“The arm,” Grandmere said. Like a normal person, and not like she was telling me not to lift my pinky up when I drank my tea, or anything. “The robot arm he's made.”

I blinked at her. “What?”

“We need one,” she said. “For the hospital. You have to get us one.”

I blinked even harder. I've suspected Grandmere might be losing her mind for...well, the entire time I've known her, actually.

But now it was clear she'd gone completely around the bend.

“Grandmere.” I discreetly felt for her pulse. “Have you been taking your heart medication?”

“Not a donation,” Grandmere hastened to explain, sounding more like her usual self. “Tell him we'll pay. But, Amelia, you do know if we had something like that in our hospital in Genovia, we'd...well, it would improve the state of care we're able to give

our own citizens to such an incredible degree. They wouldn't have to go to Paris or Switzerland for heart surgery. Surely you see what a—”

I ripped my hand out from hers. Suddenly I saw that she wasn't crazy at all. Or suffering from a stroke or heart attack. Her pulse had been strong and steady.

“Oh my God!” I cried. “Grandmere!”

“What?” Grandmere looked bewildered by my outburst. “What is the matter? I'm asking you to ask Michael for one of his machines. Not donate it. I said we'd pay—”

“But you want me to use my relationship with him,” I cried, “so Dad can gain an edge over René in the election!”

Grandmere's drawn on eyebrows furrowed.

“I never said a word about the election!” she declared, in her most imperious voice. “But I did think, Amelia, if you were to go to this event at Columbia tomorrow—”

“Grandmere!” I sprang up from the couch. “You're horrible! Do you really think the people of Genovia

would be more likely to vote for Dad because he managed to buy them a CardioArm, as opposed to René, who's only managed to promise them an Applebees?"

Grandmere looked at me blankly.

"Well," she said. "Yes. Which would you rather have? Easy access to heart surgery, or a blooming onion?"

"That's Outback," I informed her, acidly. "And the point of a democracy is that no one's vote can be bought!"

"Oh, Amelia," Grandmere said, with a snort.

"Don't be naïve. Everyone can be bought. And anyway, how would you feel if I told you at my recent visit to the royal physician, he told me my heart condition has gotten more serious, and that I might need bypass surgery?"

I hesitated. She looked totally sincere.

"D-do you?" I stammered.

"Well," Grandmere said. "Not yet. But he did tell me I have to cut back to three Sidecars a week!"

I should have known.

“Grandmere,” I said. “Leave. Now.”

Grandmere frowned at me.

“You know, Amelia,” she said. “If your father loses this election, it will kill him. I know he’ll still be prince of Genovia and all of that, but he won’t rule it, and that, young lady, will be no one’s fault but your own.”

I groaned in frustration and said, “GET OUT!”

Which she did, muttering very darkly to Lars and to the receptionist, both of whom had watched our entire exchange with a great deal of amusement.

But honestly, I don’t see what’s so funny about it.

I guess to Grandmere, using an ex-boyfriend to jump to the head of the waiting list (as if Michael would even consider such a thing) to get a million dollar piece of medical equipment is just a normal day’s work.

But though we may share the same gene pool, I am nothing like my grandmother.

NOTHING.

*Friday, April 29, The limo home from Dr. Knutz's office*

Dr. K, as usual, was less than sympathetic to my problems. He seems to feel I've brought them all down upon myself.

Why can't I have a nice, normal therapist, who asks me, "And how do you feel about that?" and hands me anti-anxiety medication, like everyone else I go to school with?

Oh, no. I have to have the one therapist in all of Manhattan who doesn't believe in psychopharmaceuticals. And who thinks every crummy thing that happens to me (lately, anyway) is my own fault for not being emotionally honest with myself.

"How is my boyfriend not asking me to our senior prom my fault for not being honest with my emotions?" I asked him, at one point.

"When he asks you," Dr. Knutz said, countering my question with another question, in classic psychotherapist style, "are you going to say yes?"

"Well," I said, feeling uncomfortable (yes! I am

honest with myself to admit I felt uncomfortable at that question!). “I really don’t want to go to the prom.”

“I think you’ve answered your own question,” he said, a self-satisfied gleam shining behind the lenses of his glasses.

What is that even supposed to mean? How does that help me?

I’ll tell you: It doesn’t.

And you know what else? I’m just going to say it: Therapy doesn’t help me anymore.

Oh, don’t get me wrong. There was a time when it did, when Dr. K’s long rambling stories about the many horses he’d owned really helped me through my depression and what was going on with my dad and Genovia and the rumors about him and our family having known about Princess Amelie’s declaration all along—not to mention getting me through the SATs and the college application process and losing Michael and Lilly and all of that. Maybe since I’m not depressed anymore and the pressure’s off (somewhat) and he’s a child

psychologist and I'm not really a kid anymore—or won't be after Monday—I'm just ready to cut the cord now. Which is why our last therapy session is next week.

Anyway.

I tried to ask him what I should do about choosing a college, and the thing Grandmere had brought up, about getting Michael to donate one of his CardioArms to Genovia in time for Dad's election, and if I should just tell people the truth about Ransom My Heart.

Instead of offering constructive advice, Dr. K started telling me this long story about a mare he'd once had named Sugar, this thoroughbred he'd bought from a dealer who everyone said was such a great horse, and he knew was great horse, too.

On paper.

Even though on paper Sugar was this fantastic horse, Dr. Knutz could just never find his place in the saddle with her, and their rides were totally uncomfortable, and eventually he had to sell her, because it wasn't fair to Sugar, as he'd started

avoiding her, and riding all his other horses instead. Seriously. What does this story have to do with me? Plus, I'm so sick of horse stories I could scream. And I still don't know where I'm going to go to college, what I'm going to do about J.P. (or Michael), or how I'm going to stop lying to everyone.

Maybe I should just tell people I want to be a romance writer? I mean, I know everyone laughs at romance writers (until they actually read a romance). But what do I care? Everyone laughs at princesses, too. I'm pretty much used to it by now. But what if people read my book and think it's about I don't know.

Me?

Because it's so not. I don't even know how to shoot a bow and arrow (despite the erroneous movies made of my life).

Who would even name a horse Sugar? That's a little bit cliché, right?

*Friday, April 29th, The loft, 7PM*

Dear Ms. Delacroix,

Thank you for your submission. After a great deal of consideration, we have decided Ransom My Heart is not right for us at this time.

Sincerely,

Pembroke Publishing

Rejected again!

Seriously, is the entire publishing world on crack? How can no one want to publish my novel? I mean, I know it's not War and Peace, but I've seen way worse out there. My book is better than that! I mean, at least my book doesn't have spanking sex robots in it or anything.

Maybe if I'd put spanking sex robots in it, someone would want to publish it. But I can't put spanking sex robots in it now. It's too late, and besides, that wouldn't be historically accurate.

Anyway.

Things are insane here with preparations for arrivals

for the birthday extravaganza. Mamaw and Papaw will be staying at the Tribeca Grand this time, and every effort is being undertaken to see that Mom and Mr. G have as little one-on-one time with them as possible. They're being sent on tours of Ellis Island, Liberty Island, Little Italy, Harlem, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, Ripley's Believe or Not, and M&M World (the last three at their request).

Of course, they want to visit with me and Rocky (mostly Rocky), but Mom keeps saying, "Oh, there'll be plenty of time for that." They're only staying for three days. How there'll be time for visiting and all that touring, as well as the party, is a secret known only to Mom.

Uh-oh, an IM from Tina:

Iluvromance: So we're meeting on Broadway and 168th Street tomorrow at 1:30PM. The dedication ceremony or whatever it is starts at two so that should give us plenty of time to get good seats so we can see Michael up close.

What is it going to take to get through to these girls

that I am NOT going to this thing?

FatLouie: Sounds good!

“Sounds good” isn’t a lie. I mean, what she said does sound good.

It’ll be sad and all when they’re standing on the corner of Broadway and 168th all by themselves. But no one said life was fair.

Iluvromance: Wait...Mia, you are coming, right? Crud.

Whoa. How did she guess????

FatLouie: No. I told you I wasn’t.

Iluvromance: Mia, you HAVE to come! The whole thing is for nothing if you’re not there! I mean, aren’t you the least bit curious about how Michael looks after all this time? And whether or not—be serious, now—he cares? You know, in THAT way? Oh, God. She would have to play the “If he still cares” card.

FatLouie: Tina, I already have a boyfriend who loves me and whom I love back. And anyway, how am I going to be able to tell if Michael still cares “in THAT way” just by seeing him at some public

event?

Iluvromance: You'll be able to tell. You just will. Your eyes will meet across the room and you'll know. So. What are you going to wear????

Fortunately I just got a call from J.P.. He's done with rehearsal for the day and wants to grab some sushi at Blue Ribbon. Using his dad's producer connections, he's gotten a table for two (virtually impossible at a place like that on a Friday night). He wants to know if I can join him for some crispy salmon skin and dragon rolls.

My other choice for dinner is leftover pizza from last night, or two nights' old Number One Noodle Son cold sesame noodles.

Or I could shoot up to Grandmere's newly renovated condo at the Plaza and join her and Vigo for salads as they strategize for my party.

Hmmm, what to choose, what to choose? It's so hard.

And, okay, J.P. might use the opportunity to ask me to the prom like, maybe he'll slip a written invitation into an oyster shell or under a piece of unagi

something.

But I'm willing to risk it if only I can end this conversation.

FatLouie: Sorry, T, going out with J.P.. I'll text you later!

*Saturday, April 29, Midnight, The Loft*

It turns out I needn't have worried about J.P. asking me to the prom at dinner tonight. He was too exhausted from rehearsal—and frustrated: he spent almost the whole time complaining about Amber Cheeseman's little sister Stacey—even to be thinking about it, apparently.

And then after dinner, we had other concerns.

It's so weird how everywhere I go with J.P., the paparazzi seems to show up. This never happened when I dated Michael.

I guess that's the difference between going out with a lowly college student (which Michael was at the time), and a rich theater producer's son like J.P..

Anyway, as we were coming out of Blue Ribbon,

the paps were out in full force. I thought at first Lindsay Lohan must have been in there with her latest boy toy or whatever, and I was looking around for her.

But it turned out they were all trying to get pictures of ME.

At first it was fine, just whatever. I had on my new Christian Louboutin boots so I was feeling okay about it. It's like Lana says if you have on your CLs, nothing bad can happen to you (shallow but true). But then one of them yelled, "Hey, Princess, how does it feel to know your father is going to lose the election and to your cousin, René, who's never run so much as a Laundromat, let alone a whole country?"

I haven't had nearly four years of princess lessons (well, on and off) for nothing. It wasn't like I was unprepared for this. I just said, "No comment." Except that might have been a mistake, because of course if you say anything, that just baits them to ask you more, and even though J.P. and Lars and I were trying to walk back to the loft (it's

literally like two blocks from the restaurant, so we hadn't bothered with the limo), the paps crowded all around us, and we couldn't walk fast enough, especially since my CLs have like four inch heels and I haven't really practiced walking in them enough and I was kind of teetering in them (just a little) like Big Bird.

So the reporters were totally able to keep up even though I had Lars on one side and J.P. on the other, hustling me along.

“But your dad is losing in the polls,” the ‘journalist’ said. “Come on. That’s gotta hurt. Especially since if you had just kept your mouth shut, none of this would be happening.”

Man! These guys are brutal. Also, their grasp on politics is somewhat lacking.

“I did what was right for the people of Genovia,” I said, trying to keep a pleasant smile plastered across my face, the way Grandmere had taught me. “Now if you’ll excuse us, we’re just trying to get home—”

“Yeah, guys,” J.P. said, while Lars was opening his coat to make sure his gun showed. Not that this

ever scared the paps, because they knew good and well he couldn't shoot them (although he had, upon occasion, shoulder rolled a few of them). "Just leave her alone, will you?"

"You're the boyfriend, right?" one of the paps wanted to know. "Is that Abernathy-Reynolds, or Reynolds-Abernathy?"

"Reynolds-Abernathy," J.P. said. "And quit pushing!"

"The people of Genovia sure do seem to want blooming onions," another of the paparazzi pointed out. "Don't they, Princess? How does that make you feel?"

"I've been trained in a special technique that can send your nasal cartilage into your brain using only the heel of my hand," Lars informed the pap. "How does that make YOU feel?"

I know I should be used to this stuff by now. Really, there are other people who have it so much worse than me. I mean, at least the "press" lets me go to and from school in relative anonymity.

Still. Sometimes...

“Is it true Sir Paul McCartney is bringing Martha Stewart to your birthday party Monday night, Princess?” one of the reporters yelled.

“Is it true Prince William will be there?” yelled another.

“What about your ex-boyfriend?” yelled a third.

“Now that he’s back in—“

That was the exact moment when Lars physically threw me into an empty cab he’d signaled to pull over, and commanded it to take us around SoHo a few times until he was sure we’d shaken off all the reporters (who’ve given up staking out the loft due to the fact that all the residents, including Mom, Mr. G, and me routinely water-balloon-bombing them from above).

All I can say is, thank God J.P. is so busy with his play that he had no idea what that last reporter had been talking about. He no sooner checks the Internet for Google alerts on me (or Michael Moscovitz) than he remembers to eat breakfast. That’s how crazed he is right now.

Anyway, when we got back to the loft, there was

no sign of any reporters lurking around (thanks to their having gotten soaked one too many times due to Mom's expert aim).

That was when J.P. asked if he could come up.

I knew what he wanted, of course. I also knew Mom and Mr. G would be asleep, because they always crash early on Fridays after a long work week.

Really, the last thing I felt like doing after the paparazzi incident was to mess around in my room with my boyfriend.

But as he pointed out (beneath his breath, so Lars couldn't overhear), it had been ages since we'd been alone together, what with his rehearsal schedule and my princess stuff.

So I said goodbye to Lars at the vestibule, and let J.P. come up. I mean, he **WAS** sweet, defending me from the paparazzi like that.

And he let me have that extra piece of crispy salmon skin, even though I know he wanted it.

I feel terrible about lying to him about all the things I'm lying to him about. He really deserves a better, nicer girlfriend than me.

An Excerpt from Ransom My Heart by Daphne Delacroix

“I told you not to move!” said the diminutive captor astride Hugo’s back.

Hugo, admiring the slim arch of the foot, the only part of her that he could actually see, decided he ought to apologize now. Surely the girl had a right to be angry; in all innocence, she had come to the spring to bathe, not to be spied upon. And while he was greatly enjoying the feel of her nubile body against him, he was not enjoying her wrath. Better that he calm the spirited wench, and see her back on the road to Stephensgate, where he could make sure that she was kept from straddling other men’s backs, and thereby getting herself into mischief.

“I earnestly beg your pardon, demoiselle,” he began, in what he hoped was a contrite tone, though it was difficult for him to speak without laughing. “I stumbled upon you in your most private hour, and for that, I must ask your forgiveness—”

“I took you for simple, but not completely stupid,” was the girl’s surprising reply. Hugo was amazed to

hear that her own voice was as rich with amusement as his own.

“I meant for you to stumble upon me, of course,” she elaborated. Quick as lightning, the knife left his throat, and the maid seized both of his wrists and had them trussed behind him before he was even aware of what was happening.

“You’re my prisoner now,” Finnula Crais said, with evident satisfaction at a job well done. “To gain your freedom, you’ll have to pay for it. Handsomely.”

*Saturday, April 29, 10AM, The Loft*

Ever since I’ve woken up, all I can think about is what that reporter said about Dad losing in the polls, and it being all my fault.

I know it’s not true. I mean, yes, it’s true we’re having an election.

But the fact that Dad is losing isn’t my fault.

And then, naturally, my mind keeps turning back to what Grandmere said, back in Dr. Knutz’s office.

About how if we could get our hands on one of Michael's CardioArms, Dad might stand a better chance against René.

Except I know how wrong it is to think that way. The reason we need a CardioArm is because it would make the lives of the citizens of Genovia so much easier.

A CardioArm at the Royal Genovian Hospital wouldn't stimulate the economy or bring tourists to Genovia or even help Dad in the polls or anything like that, like Grandmere seems to believe.

But it would help Genovians who are sick not to have to travel to hospitals outside of our country to get medical care, because instead, they could easily get non-invasive heart surgery right inside our own borders. They'd save time and expense.

Plus, like the article said, they'd heal faster, because of the CardioArm's precision.

I'm not saying if we got one, people would be more likely to vote for Dad. I'm just saying, getting one would be the right thing to do—the princessy thing to do—for my own people.

And I'm not saying by going to the thing today, I want to get back together with Michael. I mean, if he'd even have me, which he fully wouldn't, because he's moved on, as is illustrated by the fact that clearly, he's been in Manhattan for a while now, and hasn't even so much as called. Or emailed.

I'm just saying obviously I should go to the thing at Columbia today. Because it's what a true princess would do for her people. Get them the most up-to-date medical technological available.

Just how I'm going to do that without looking like the world's biggest tool, I have no idea. I mean, I can't go, "Um, Michael, due to the fact that we used to date, even though I treated you horribly, can you jump Genovia to the top of the waiting list and get us a CardioArm right away? Here's a check."

But I think that's pretty much the way it's going to go. Part of being a princess means swallowing your pride and doing the right thing for your people, no matter how personally humiliating it might be.

And anyway, he still owes me for the Judith Gershner thing. I understand now that the reason

Michael didn't tell me about how he had sex with her before he and I started going out was because he knew I wasn't mature enough at the time to handle the information.

He was right: I wasn't.

And though it might be really manipulative and awful of me to use my past romantic relationship with Michael to try to get him to let us jump to the head of the CardioArm waiting list, this is Genovia we're talking about.

And it's my royal duty to do whatever I have to do for my country.

I haven't spent past four years with the combs of a tiara digging into my head for nothing, you know.

I guess didn't just learn which one was the soup spoon from Grandmere, after all.

I better go call Tina.

*Saturday, April 29, 1:45PM, Columbia University  
Medical Center, Simon and Louise Templeman Patient Care  
Pavilion*

This. Was. The. Worst. Idea. Ever.

I know this morning when I woke up I had some big noble idea that I was doing something way important for the people of Genovia.

And—okay, I'll admit it, maybe in some twisted way, I guess, for my dad.

But in actuality, this is just insane. I mean, Michael's entire family is here. All the Moscovitzes! Even his grandma! Yes! Nana Moscovitz is here!

I'm so embarrassed I could die.

And, okay, I've made us all sit in the very back row (security here is very lax: they let us all in, even though we only had the two passes), where, thank God, it doesn't appear there's any chance any of them is going to see us (but Lars and Waheem, Tina's bodyguard, are so tall, what are the chances of them not being noticed? I've made them wait outside. They're so mad at me. But what am I supposed to do? I can't risk the chance of Lilly seeing them).

And I know the whole point of this was my actually speaking to Michael.

But I didn't know Lilly was going to be here! Which was incredibly stupid of me. I should have assumed, of course. I mean, that Michael's family (including his sister, who brought Kenny, I mean Kenneth, who is wearing a SUIT. And Lilly is wearing a dress and she's taken out all her piercings. I barely recognized her) would of course be at such an important and prestigious event.

How can I go up and talk to Michael in front of her? It's true Lilly and I are not exactly at each other's throats anymore, but we're definitely not friends, either. The last thing I need right now is her revving up [ihatemiathermopolis.com](http://ihatemiathermopolis.com) again.

Which I could totally see her doing if she suspected I was trying to use her brother to, oh, I don't know, get a CardioArm for my country, or something. Lana says it's no big deal and I should just go up to the Drs. Moscovitz and say hi. Lana says she's totally on friendly terms with all her exes parents (which, considering it's Lana, is like, half of the population of the Upper East Side), even though she's used most of their sons for sex, and even

worse things (such as? What is worse than using a boy for sex? I don't even want to know. Lana took Tina and me to the Pink Pussy Cat Boutique last year because she said we needed educating in that department, and while I did make a purchase, it was only a Hello Kitty personal massager. But you don't even want to know what Lana bought).

But Lana's never dated any guy for as long as Michael and I dated. And she wasn't best friends with any of those guys' sisters, or made them as mad at her as Lilly was mad at me. So going up to them at public events and being all, "Hey, how's it going?" is no big deal for Lana.

I, on the other hand, cannot go up to the Drs. Moscovitz and go, "Oh, hey, hi, Dr. and Dr. Moscovitz. How you doing? Remember me? The girl who acted like a total byotch to your son and who used to be best friends with your daughter? Oh, and hey, Nana Moscovitz. How's that rugelach you used to make? Yum, I used to love that stuff! Good times."

Anyway. This donation thing is turning out to

be a huge event (fortunately, because there are a ton of people I can slouch behind and remain unseen). There's press from everywhere, *Anesthesia Magazine* to *PC World*. They've got hors d'oeuvres and stuff, too, and a lot of model-looking types, slinking around in tight red dresses, passing around champagne.

There's no sign of Michael so far, though. He's probably in a green room somewhere, getting a massage from one of those slinky dress girls. That's what bazillionaire robotic arm inventors do before giving away major donations to their alma maters. I'm just guessing.

Tina says I should stop writing in my journal and pay attention in case Michael comes in (she doesn't believe my slinky model massage theory). Also, she thinks the dark sunglasses and beret I'm wearing are only drawing attention to myself, not serving as a good disguise.

But what does Tina know? This has never happened to her before. She—  
Oh.

My.

God.

Michael just walked in...

I can't breathe.

*Saturday, April 29, 3:00 PM, Columbia University  
Medical Center, Ladies Room*

Okay. I messed up.

Really, really messed up.

It's just he looks so incredibly good.

I don't know what he's been doing to work out while he was overseas...fighting monks in the Himalayans like Christian Bale in Batman Begins is what Lana thinks. Trisha says plain old weight lifting, while Shameeka says probably a combination of lifting and cardio.

Tina thinks he just "got hit with a stick of pure awesomeness."

But whatever it was, he's almost as wide in the shoulders now as Lars, and I highly doubt it's because he's wearing an actual shoulder holster

under his Hugo Boss suit coat, which Lana suggested.

And he's got a real haircut, like a grownup man, and his hands look huge for some reason, and he didn't seem at all nervous coming out onto that stage and shaking Dr. Arthur Ward's hand. He was totally at ease, like he comes out and speaks in front of hundreds of people all the time!

And that's because he probably does.

And he was smiling, and looking all the audience members in the eye, just like Grandmere always tells me to do, and he didn't need notecards to give his speech, he had the whole thing memorized (just like Grandmere also always tells me to do).

And he was funny and smart and I sat up and took my beret off and also my sunglasses so I could see him better and all of my insides melted in on themselves and I knew I had made the worst mistake coming here. Ever.

Because all it did was make me realize all over again how much I wish we hadn't broken up.

I'm not saying I don't love J.P. and all of that.

I just wish...I...

I don't even know.

But I do know I wish I hadn't come here! And I knew for sure, the minute Michael started speaking, and thanking everyone for having him and describing how he'd come up with the idea for Pavlov Surgical (which I already knew of course—he'd named it for his dog, Pavlov, which is the most adorable thing, ever), that there was no way I was going to go up to him afterwards. Even if Lilly and his parents and Nana Moscovitz hadn't been there. Not even for the people of Genovia. No way. Not ever.

I just couldn't trust myself to go up and speak to him and not throw my arms around his neck and plunge my tongue down his throat, like Finnula does to Hugo in *Ransom My Heart*.

I know! And I have a boyfriend! A boyfriend I love! Even if—well. There's that Other Thing.

So I was like, It's fine, we're in the last row, we'll just sneak out when he's done talking.

I really thought it wouldn't be any big deal. Lars

was still out in the hallway with Waheem, even though I could see him peeking in at me and giving me the evil eye (which he completely learned from Grandmere). There was no chance of us getting busted unless Lana or Trisha began making out with one of the other members of the press who was sitting around us, none of whom was cute, anyway, so that seemed pretty unlikely.

But then Michael started introducing the other members of the CardioArm team—you know, who'd helped him invent it or make it or market it or whatever?

And one of them was this totally cute girl named Midori, and when she came out on the stage she gave Michael this big hug, and I could tell...I mean, I could just tell...

Well, anyway, that's when I knew they were a couple and also when I could feel the oatmeal with raisins I'd had for breakfast almost coming up into my throat. Which made no sense because we're broken up and, oh, yeah, as mentioned previously, I HAVE A BOYFRIEND.

Anyway, Tina saw the hug, too, and leaned over to whisper, “I’m sure they’re just friends and they work together. Seriously, don’t worry about it.” To which I whispered back, “Yeah, right. Because all guys just ignore the girl in the micromini at work.”

Which of course Tina had no reply for. Because Midori’s micromini looked as supercute as she did. And every guy in the room was ignoring it. NOT. And then Michael presented his CardioArm—which was way bigger than I thought it would be—and everyone clapped, and he ducked his dark head and looked adorably modest.

And then Dr. Arthur Ward surprised him by giving him an honorary masters degree in science. Just, you know, as one does.

So then everyone clapped some more, and the Drs. Moscovitz came up on stage with Nana and Lilly (Kenny—I mean, Kenneth—hung back, until Lilly finally signaled for him to join them, which he did, after a lot of hesitation and her waving at him, and finally stamping her foot kind of imperiously, which

was very Lilly-like, and made people laugh, even people who didn't know her) and the whole family hugged, and I just...

I started bawling. Really.

Not because Michael has a new girlfriend now, or anything lame like that.

But because it was just so sweet, to see them all up there hugging like that, a family that I personally know, and who has been through so much, what with Michael and Lilly's parents almost-divorce and now their getting back together and Lilly's general psycho-ness and Michael's going off to Japan and working so hard, and...

...and they were all just so happy. It was just so... nice. It was this sweet moment of success and triumph and wonderfulness.

And there I was, spying on them. Because I wanted to use Michael, to get something that, yes, my country needs, but I don't in any way deserve. I mean, we can wait, like everybody else.

Basically, I felt like I was totally invading their privacy, and that I had no right to be there. Because

I didn't. I was there on false pretenses.

And it was time to leave.

So I looked at all the other girls—as best I could see them through my tears—and I was like, “Let's go.”

“But you haven't even talked to him!” Tina cried.

“And I'm not going to,” I said. I knew as I said it that this was the princessy thing to do. To leave

Michael alone. He was happy now. He didn't need crazy, neurotic me, messing up his life anymore.

He had sweet, smart Micromini Midori—or if not her, someone like her. The last thing he needed was lying, romance-writing Princess Mia.

Who by the way already had a boyfriend.

“Let's sneak out one at a time,” I said. “I'll go first, I have to stop in the bathroom.” I knew I had to

write all this down while it was still fresh in my mind. Besides which, I had to re-apply my eyeliner

and mascara, since I'd just cried it all off. “I'll meet you guys back at Broadway and One-sixty-eighth.”

“This blows,” Lana said. She is very in touch with her feelings.

“The limo's waiting there,” I said. “I'll take you to

Pinkberry. My treat.”

“Pinkberry, my butt,” Lana said. “You’re taking us to Nobu.”

“Fine,” I said.

So I snuck in here. Where I’ve reapplied my makeup, and I’m writing this.

Really, it’s better this way. To let him go. Not that I ever really had him, or could have, really but...well, “‘tis a far, far better thing I do,” and all of that. I’m sure Grandmere wouldn’t think so. But this really is the more princessy thing to do. The Moscovitzes looked so happy. Even Lilly.

And she’s never happy.

Okay, I better go meet those guys. I think Lars might actually shoot me if I make him wait any longer. I—

Hey, those shoes look really familiar.

Oh, no.

It’s Lilly.