

MY LITTLE PHONY

A CLIQUE NOVEL BY
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poppy

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
New York Boston

THE BLOCK ESTATE
MASSIE'S ROOM
Friday, December 5th
9:37 P.M.

Hours later, Massie's Friday-night sleepover was in full swing. Four matching D&G sleeping bags were unfurled in flower-petal formation, with Bean's bed in the center. Belle Fleur Jasmine Verbena candles flickered on the long, white dresser. Mountains of Bliss face masks, Essie and OPI nail essentials, and yogurt-covered low-fat pretzels were strewn across the carpet. Everything was there, in its place. And at the same time, it felt like something was missing.

Massie stared out across the snowy lawn into the guest-house's warmly lit living room, where Claire and her neo-friends were engaged in some sort of sewing project. They kept throwing their heads back like they were having the most fun time in the history of Westchester. Massie swore she could hear their laughter from her sleeping bag. It was ah-nnoying squared.

"I've got it!" Dylan speed-waved her air-drying Sag Harbor Essie-polished fingernails. "Your plan is to make Claire think that Todd looks great so she'll shave her head too," she guessed.

"Opposite of right," Massie replied, zipping up Dylan's turquoise ankle booties. She examined her foot. "Cute for spring," she declared.

"Think we'll know why you shaved Todd's head by then?"

Kristen asked, rolling onto her back. Candlelight flickered across her flawless skin.

“You’re sending Claire a warning. Like, you could shave off her power at any time.” Alicia twirled a lock of hair around her index finger and mimed yanking it out of her head.

“Opposite of makes sense,” Massie giggled, and then she craned her neck to spy on Claire through the window, noting with satisfaction that her former beta was still wearing the blue hat. She watched as Claire threw something at Layne’s head. Layne sprang up and immediately caught whatever it was in her mouth.

“Are you trying to make the neo-friends think Todd has some sort of contagious disease?” Kristen asked.

“Something *lice* that . . .”

“Ehmagawd!” Kristen smacked Massie’s back. “You want them to think Todd has *lice*!”

Massie turned away from the window and applauded. “Yayyy! Opposite of wrong!”

Alicia gasped. Dylan tossed away the floaty green boho scarf she’d been weaving through her hair. “No!” they cried out in unison.

“Oh yes.” Massie grabbed her iPhone off her purple bedspread and fired off a text to Layne. “Phase two of the plan will be activated in three . . . two . . . one . . .” She tapped SEND.

Massie: Heads up! There’s a louse in the house. Y do U think Todd shaved his head? Make sure Claire

doesn't wear Todd's blue hat. Sleep tight. Don't let the head bugs bite! ^o^

"Massie, that wasn't very nice," Kristen smirked.

"I know," Massie admitted. "But her friends were really *bugging* me."

Everyone burst into laughter.

"*Shave* it for someone who cares," Dylan howled, tears running down her cheeks.

Alicia was laughing so hard, her boobs shook. "Life's an *itch!*"

Massie's iPhone *bwooped*.

"Is it Claire?" Dylan asked.

Alicia looked over Massie's shoulder. "OMG, it's Landon."

Landon: My birthday is Tues. U and Bean want to come 4 cake?

"Is 'cake' code for 'lip-kissing'?" Dylan balanced on her tippy-toes to get a glimpse of Massie's screen.

"Yeah, he just loves lip-kissing Bean," Massie snapped, feeling slightly unnerved by her crush's offer. It wasn't that she didn't like Landon. From his blue-green eyes to his rugged preppyness and his high level of pug appreciation, Massie had no complaints. But the idea of lip-kissing him threw her off-kilter. It had been months since she had lip-kissed Der-rington. What if she'd forgotten how? What if she got a sudden lip spasm and drooled on Landon? What if techniques had

changed and she'd missed the *Cosmo* article that detailed the updated kiss-dos and -don'ts? Landon was a hawt ninth-grader who was probably at least nine times more experienced than she was. What if she didn't measure up?

"Come awn," Alicia teased. "You know he's gonna want to give you a taste of his *cake*."

The girls giggled. Massie tried to smile.

"What are you going to wear for your first cake?" Kristen asked, spreading a dollop of face mask over her smooth forehead.

"Something by Anna Sui?" said Dylan, waving a frilly red ruffled blouse like a toreador.

Massie wrinkled her nose, hoping her friends thought her look of horror had to do with fashion rather than lip-passion. "Too sweet."

"Prada!" said Alicia.

"Nada," said Massie. "A little *too* sophisticated."

Dylan held up a black sequined top. "Marc always knows what men like."

"Maybe something French?" Alicia tried, slipping into a nude Lacroix heel.

Kristen's green eyes widened. "Ehmagawd. What if Landon wants to kiss you . . . *en français*?"

"In French class?" Dylan asked.

"No, like THIS!" Alicia stuck out her tongue and waggled it around. Kristen exploded into laughter. Dylan made fake smooching sounds. Massie tried her very best not to melt into a puddle of Chanel No. 19-scented sweat.

What if Landon was into extreme lip-kissing? She had seen people do it in movies, and there seemed to be a lot of neck movement involved. But what was actually going on *inside* their mouth? It was like the tapered harem pants trend—totally baffling.

But the alpha couldn't expose her jumpy nerves. Her betas expected her to know everything and to approach life with confidence and knowledge. Instinctively, Massie peeked out at the guesthouse again. Her subconscious guided her toward Claire, just as it always did during times of insecurity. But she was nowhere in sight. Massie would have to deal with this one alone.

Her iPhone *bwooped* again.

Landon: Is that a yes?

"Someone's hungry for some cake," Alicia giggled.

"Too bad," Massie declared authoritatively. "*No one's* eating *cake* with all that H1N1 going around. It's unsafe!"

"Puh-lease," Alicia rolled her big brown eyes. "That's so last year."

Dylan took a swig of her Red Bull. "Swiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiine fluuuuuuuuuuuuu," she burped.

Kristen laughed so hard, she snorted like a pig.

"See?" Massie pointed. "Kristen just got it!"

"Whatevs." Alicia petted her faux-rabbit pillowcase. "I'd get the *swine* from someone that *fine*." She grabbed Massie's iPhone.

“Hey!” Massie lunged toward her like she was at a Tory Burch sample sale and Alicia was the last pair of gold-embellished T-strap wedge sandals. “Give that back!”

“I WANT UR LIPS TO LAND ON ME!” Alicia typed, her fingers flying over the keypad. “Get it?” she asked. “LAND-on.”

Massie grabbed Alicia’s arm, knocking the phone to the floor. She reached for it, but Kristen busted out some crazy soccer move and leg-swept it away. Then, lifting it with her toes, Kristen popped it into her hand.

“Impressive,” Dylan marveled.

Kristen smiled her thanks while she typed. “LET’S SWAP SWINE!”

Dylan grabbed the phone. “I’ve got it: HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO . . . OFF MY LIPS.”

“Hand that over, or I’m going to give you the Todd Cut while you’re sleeping!” Massie growled.

Dylan tossed her the phone. Massie caught it in her right hand, her thumb grazing the screen.

Bwooooooop!

Oh no.

No.

No no no no noooo.

The snow outside seemed to stop swirling. Dylan froze mid-laugh. Alicia paused mid-gloss. Kristen’s mouth fixed in a round *O*. Bean rolled over and played dead. Massie wished she would die for real.

“Eh-ma-killmenow!” she wailed. “That message just got sent!”

After a quick exchange of nervous glances, the girls snapped into emergency advice mode.

“Maybe he lost his phone,” Dylan said quietly.

“Maybe he went blind,” Kristen offered.

“Maybe Bark chewed his phone,” Alicia tried.

“Yeah,” Dylan added. “Like an iBone.”

“Opposite of funny!” Massie wailed.

Just then she heard the tune from “You Belong with Me”—Landon’s exclusive ringtone.

Landon: ☺ U read my mind. ☺

“Ehmagawd,” Massie gasped. “He thinks I sent those! Now what?”

Alicia tossed Massie her dented tube of Clarins lip balm. “Start moisturizing, that’s what.”

A yogurt-cover pretzel began inching its way back up Massie’s throat. It was obviously freaking out, too, and eager to escape. If only it could take her with it.

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Poppy

Little, Brown and Company
Hachette Book Group
237 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017
For more of your favorite series, go to www.pickapoppy.com

First Edition: August 2010

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Cover design by Andrea C. Uva
Cover photos by Roger Moenks
Author photo by Gillian Crane



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Produced by Alloy Entertainment
151 West 26th Street, New York, NY 10001

ISBN: 978-0-316-08444-4

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Printed in the United States of America