

**CHARMED AND DANGEROUS**  
**THE RISE OF THE PRETTY COMMITTEE**

**THE CLIQUE PREQUEL**  
**BY LISI HARRISON**



**poppy**

**LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY**  
New York Boston

WESTCHESTER, NY  
THE BLOCK ESTATE  
Friday, December 31st  
6:01 P.M.

*“Bonne annéeeeeee!”* Kendra Block trilled into the phone with gushing enthusiasm.

“Happy New Year, darling!” Massie’s father added over swirling laughter, clinking champagne flutes, and strains of “Auld Lang Syne.” “We love you!”

“I love you toooooo!” Massie shouted back. But from the stillness of her crisp navy blue and white bedroom those words sounded hollow, lonely, forced; like whoo-hooing on a private riding trail after a blanketing snowfall.

She eyed the swamp green screen on her Motorola flip phone.

Was it really midnight in Paris?

It was like her mom and dad had ridden a time machine six hours into the future. Even though they were parents, Massie envied them. They already knew whether their night was magical: whether their outfits would inspire copycats . . . whether their jokes were LOL-worthy . . . whether their conversation topics were charming . . . whether their New Year’s Eve story had a happy ending . . . whether—

“Where are you?” Kendra asked, oozing giddiness.

“M’room.” Massie plopped onto the edge of her navy duvet and flexed her toes. *Was silver polish fun or done? Class or crass? Mature or manure? Gawd, if only there was some kind of list that told girls what was in and what was out. . . .*

“Open your door.” Kendra giggled.

“Huh? Why?”

“Go!” Kendra insisted with mock frustration.

Massie slid off the edge of her bed, her gold silk kimono sparking and snapping with static electricity.

“Does she like it?” William asked in the background.

“Shhhhh,” Kendra hissed. “She hasn’t seen it yet.”

Massie squeaked with burst-at-the-seams impatience.

“Is the door open? Are you there yet?” Kendra asked.

“Almost.” Massie padded across the white wool rug, heart revving. *Was it the tiny black pug she had been begging for? Oh, puh-lease make it the tiny black pug she had been begging for! With a big red bow atop her mini head and a diamond anklet with a bone charm.* That would semi-make up for her mother’s holiday “surprise” where she’d transformed Massie’s three-shades-of-pink boudoir into a showroom for Tommy Hilfiger. Blue, red, and white everything. It put the *nawt* in nautical. But she decided to put up with it because the decorator assured her it was “fresh” and Massie’s best friends agreed.

“Okay, I’m here.” She gripped the brass anchor-shaped doorknob.

“Yayyyyyyyyy!” screeched Kendra. “Openit! Openit! Openit!”

Turning the anchor slowly, so as not to startle the pup, Massie cracked the door and peered out. Expecting a nose full of new-puppy smell, she inhaled deeply. All she got was the sharp floral scent of Crabtree & Evelyn’s Spring Rain home spray, her mom’s favorite.

Massie lowered her gaze, ready to make contact with a pair of moist black eyes. Eyes that would pulsate hearts for her new master and—

“*Ew!*” she blurted at the sudden appearance of a woman’s bare feet. Size nine. Calloused. Dry. Neglected.

A plaid flannel nightgown skimmed the woman’s ankles and tented her stocky body. Strands of long black hair, freed from their tight bun but contorted from hours of captivity, clung to the glistening Pond’s cold cream slathered on the side of her face.

“Inez?”

“Happy New Year.” She held a Tiffany box in her palm and smiled warmly.

Ignoring the housekeeper, Massie peered left, then right. Was the pug hiding? Was she part two of her parents’ guilt gift? Was the blue box a red herring?

But, as usual, nothing in the hallway seemed out of

place. The only panting came from Inez, who must have been instructed to run up the winding staircase before Massie opened the door.

“Do you love it?” her mother asked.

“Does she love it?” her father echoed.

Sensing Massie’s paralyzing disappointment, Inez opened the box for her. “Beuuuutiful.” The housekeeper dangled the glistening gold charm bracelet under Massie’s jutting chin.

“It has all of your favorite things on it,” Kendra explained. “A high-heeled shoe, a dollar sign, a horse, a diamond-encrusted bell—for the diamonds, obviously, not the bell—and a pig.”

“A *pig*?”

“Yes, you wanted one for Christmas, only we’ve had the hardest time finding housebroken breeds so we—”

“Mohhhm, I wanted a *pug*, nawt a *pig*.”

Kendra gasped in horror. “William,” she called into the party noise. “She wanted a *pug*, not a *pig*! . . . I know . . . *huge* relief!” Her lips returned to the mouthpiece. “Those are so much easier to find, darling. We’ll get one as soon as we return to the *États-Unis*.”

“Yay!” Massie pinched the bracelet off Inez’s finger and slid it on. It was a little loose, but nothing she couldn’t have Mr. Novick, the family jeweler, fix after the holidays. She examined her wrist from all angles, study-

ing the way the light reflected off the chain. Aside from the mistaken-bacon it was actually kinda cute. And no one else had one . . . yet.

Fireworks soared and popped on the other end of the call. Massie felt like exploding right along with them. She was finally going to get a puppy! A confidant. A real best friend. A sibling.

“Oh, and we got you a tiny gold Eiffel Tower. It’s ab-so-lutely chaaarming.” Kendra giggled at her corny pun.

Massie’s phone beeped.

The swamp green screen flashed AHNNA.

Her palms began to sweat.

One last firecracker whistled in the background, then fizzled out.

The phone beeped again.

Ignoring the call would mean violating Ahnna’s strict “talk or walk” policy, an offense that would put Massie in social solitary for an entire weekend. No phone calls, e-mails, IMs, or gossip alerts. She had to act.

Now.

“SoundsgreatMomIcan’twaitHappyNewYearIloveyou seeeyoutomorrownightbye.”

*Click.*

“Hullo?” Massie answered quickly. She wave-thanked Inez, then shut the bedroom door.

“Vicky and Sheldon’ll be pulling up in five,” barked the girl on the other end.

The line went dead.

With quaking thumbs, Massie set the stopwatch on her Motorola, then tossed it on her bed. Thankfully, her dark, glossy hair had been professionally twisted into a loose chignon hours ago. Cheeks were tinted to a flirty blush. Lips shimmered with rose-scented gloss. And the faceless mannequin in the corner of her bedroom looked festive times ten in an Agnès B. dress, with a shiny black ticket lodged between her thin porcelain fingers.

Massie slid the gold charm bracelet onto her model’s stiff white arm and stepped back to evaluate. Head cocked, she finger-tapped her chin.

“HMMMMMMM.” She sighed. “Something is awf. Not awful, just awf.”

The black minidress stamped with silver metallic triangles hung like couture. Gunmetal gray Prada wedges and black cashmere kneesocks would add just the right amount of funk to the function. And the coveted ticket to famed talk-show host Merri-Lee Marvil’s celebrity-studded *New Year’s Yves* broadcast—where a one-of-a-kind Yves Saint Laurent beaded clutch would drop at midnight like the Times Square ball—was the perfect accessory.

Soooooo . . . chin-tap . . . chin-tap . . . chin-tap . . .

What was it? What was putting the “out” in her outfit?

The soft yellow light from her bedside lantern reflected off the charm bracelet and winked at her. The new kid was trying to tell her something.

*Ehmagawd, GOLD!*

The gold charm bracelet clashed with the silver triangles on the dress and gunmetal gray shoes. It was like chewing mint gum and drinking Diet Coke. It was a bitter combination. And the last thing she needed was for people in India or Cairo (or wherever) to be watching Merri-Lee Marvil’s celebrity-studded *New Year’s Yves* broadcast and saying that some American was mixing metals. And if *they* noticed, Ahnna would *definitely* notice.

Massie glanced at her phone—00:02:16:23.

*Ehmagawd! Only two minutes, sixteen seconds, and twenty-three whatever left!*

She could ditch the bracelet, but it was new. And gold. And totally enviable. It could start trends or, at the very least, conversations. But rethink the Agnès B.? At *this* hour? Impossible.

Anxiety ravaged her flesh like razor burn.

*Whattodo? Whattodo? Whattodo?*

And then, in a stroke of brilliance, Massie pinned her gold *M* brooch to one sock, and a gold *B* to the other.

The initial pins were a perfect way to tie the whole thing together. After a quick digital picture of the outfit—to avoid duplication in the future—Massie tore the clothes off her body double and speed-dressed. Just as she was sliding the bracelet up her thin wrist, BMW tires crunched the gravel on her driveway.

Her alarm beeped—00:00:00:00.

Inez's voice came over the white intercom on her nightstand. "The Pinchers are here."

Massie smoothed her dress. "Nine-seven," she rated herself out of ten, docking point three for her pale December skin. Satisfied, she turned away from her otherwise flawless reflection.

Racing down the stairs Massie blinked back the cyclone of questions twisting through her brain. Would Ahnna approve of her clothes or turn up her nose? Would she make memories or enemies? Would mixed metals set trends or disgust friends?

Ahhhh, to be in France and already have all the answers.

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