

**KILL
THE
BOY
BAND**

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Point

**For my mother and father,
the world's best storytellers.
—GM**

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Endpaper band silhouette © R. Gino Santa Maria / Shutterfree, LLC/Dreamstime

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available

ISBN 978-0-545-86747-4

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

16 17 18 19 20

Printed in the U.S.A. 23

First edition, March 2016

Book design by Yaffa Jaskoll

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People have called me crazy.

It's understandable; fangirls get a bad rap all the time. They say we're weird, hysterical, obsessed, certifiable. But those people don't understand. Just because I love something a lot doesn't mean I'm crazy. And I did love *The Ruperts* a lot. I loved them more than soft-serve vanilla ice cream in summer, more than seeing a new review of one of my fanfics, more than discovering a good '80s movie I'd never seen before.

Just because I was a *Ruperts* fangirl does not mean I was crazy.

I think it's important that you know that up front. Because everything I'm about to tell you is going to seem . . . well, crazy.

Rupert Pierpont was in our hotel room.

You're probably curious about how we pulled this off. It's

not every day you get to be alone with a member of the most popular boy band ever.

Wait. Let me rephrase that.

It's not every day you get to be alone with the biggest flop in the most popular boy band ever while he is blindfolded and bound to a hotel armchair.

I know what you're probably thinking: What made him such a flop? But we'll get to that. First, Erin and Isabel and Apple and I just stared at him, waiting for him to regain consciousness.

We hadn't turned on the lights yet, so the room was only lit by the afternoon sunlight peeking through the wood-framed windows. It splashed the gray carpet and parts of the plum-purple walls, turning them violet. Overall, though, the place was dark. You could say it matched the current vibe.

The only sound in the room came from the clicking noises on Isabel's phone. The screen wasn't much more than millions of cracks, and the skin was a homemade paper-and-Scotch-tape collage of Rupert L.'s bare chest, but Isabel clutched her phone like it was the most precious thing in the world to her. It probably was. She held the screen to her face as she typed, which cast her in an eerie, campfire-blue glow. She was the first to break the silence. "What *is* he wearing?"

"Hip-hop," I said.

Literally, the words “HIP-HOP” dangled at the end of the chain around his neck. Rupert P. was nothing if not a walking identity crisis. Just two weeks ago he’d been all about the punk thing, with spiked hair and bleached eyebrows. But today he was buried under a jersey, saggy pants, high-tops, and, of course, the chain that spelled the whole ensemble out for you. It felt all wrong, though. The jersey wasn’t even a basketball jersey; it was a child-size hockey jersey for some team called the Red Wings. Leave it to Rupert P. to get an identity crisis wrong. “An aggressive style choice.”

“He tried it,” Isabel snorted.

“I think he looks cute,” Apple said, her already full cheeks going fuller with her smile.

“We’re all well aware that you do,” Erin said.

It was hours or maybe just minutes, but after what felt like an agonizingly long stretch Rupert P. started to stir. He rolled his neck, tried to move his arms, slow at first but then all jagged and frantic and stuck. I was kind of in awe, watching it all. I had no idea tights could make such sturdy knots.

Finally, the perfectly pruned eyebrows that stuck out over the top of his blindfold (BTW, tights also make really good blindfolds) rose in fear, or realization. And the first thing he said was:

“Griffin?”

We all looked at one another. Isabel's phone lost its magnetic hold on her eyes long enough for her to roll them, but there were the beginnings of a smirk curling her upper lip. She went back to thumb-typing with a renewed relish. Apple's forehead crinkled, and having no food on hand to munch on (her go-to when things get stressy), she did the next best thing: She chewed on a strip of her dyed auburn hair. But the two of them were in my periphery because my eyes were focused on Erin. I told her this was a bad idea. But Erin doesn't listen so much as ignore. She says I still have my baby teeth. I tell her there's nothing wrong with being nice. Erin says, "Fuck nice."

Usually she's straightening my collar or tucking my hair behind my ear when she says it, though, and the word "fuck" coupled with "nice" has never sounded so reassuring.

Right then, though, when it mattered most, Erin said nothing. She only smiled.

Erin was all shine and pale golden hues, but her face really lit up when she smiled. Her mouth—lips always painted red—was the standout feature on her face. When she talked, it moved in subtly unexpected ways, like she'd grown up speaking another language, or had an accent once upon a time and English was this new exotic tongue. It was transfixing. I know because I've seen the way boys look at Erin when she says things—often the most innocuous things. They stare at her

mouth. Girls stare too. I think part of the reason Erin took to liking me straightaway was because I always focused on her eyes. Unlike every other part of her, they were dark and did not cast spells.

But her smile was like a cavity, a sweetness you were sometimes hesitant to peer into for fear you'd plummet to its sugary depths. Truly a bummer that Rupert P. was too blindfolded to see it.

"No, not *Griffin*," Erin said. Singsong. Sweet. Sexy. Screwed up if you thought about it, but somehow fitting.

Every part of Rupert P. got very still very suddenly, except for his chest, which rose and fell so fiercely it was like it was hooked up to a defibrillator. I could feel the outburst coming. *CLEAR!*

"Who the hell are you people?!" Rupert P. yelled, his posh London accent catching on "hell."

Here's the truth: None of us liked Rupert P., except for Apple, and if I'd had a choice about which of The Ruperts to kidnap, I certainly would not have picked him. Rupert P. was that one boy band member that every boy band must inevitably have: the Ugly One. Historically, ugly boy band members have often tried to distract from their faces by doing the absolute most with their hair (beards, dye, never-cute braids), but Rupert P. couldn't even be bothered to put that mess under a hat.