

would i lie to you
a gossip girl
novel

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Truth is beautiful, without doubt; but so are lies.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Disclaimer: All the real names of places, people, and events have been altered or abbreviated to protect the innocent. Namely, me.

hey people!

Do you ever feel like the luckiest girl alive? Well, you're not, because I am. At this moment, I'm sunning myself on über-social, totally gorgeous Main Beach in East Hampton, watching the preppy boys pull off their pastel Lacoste polos and smear Coppertone all over their sun-dappled shoulders. See, there's a reason any New Yorker who doesn't want to leave the city completely summers in the Hamptons, and it's the same reason people wear Christian Louboutin strappy sandals or fly first class: the best is just better.

Speaking of the best, nobody does it better than Eres. I'm a modest girl, but even I think I look pretty stunning in my mango-colored halter bikini top and matching boy shorts. Okay, maybe I'm not that modest, but why should I be? If you were looking this gorgeous lolling about on a white sand East Hampton beach, you'd be talking about it too. As I learned in my private, all-girls' Upper East Side elementary school, it's not bragging if it's true.

Thank goodness summer is here, and we're finally getting down to the hard work of taking it easy. After a busy June in the city, July has arrived with a gentle breeze off the Sound and standing reservations at all of the Hamptons' best restaurants. Hot and humid Manhattan is close by, but we'd rather stroll around barefoot in our Eres or Missoni tapestry-print bikinis and Calypso batik sarongs, or steer our platinum-colored Mercedes CLK 500 con-

vertibles up and down Main Street in East Hampton in search of the ever-elusive parking spot and the boys in Billabong board shorts.

We're the boys with sun-kissed hair, driving back from Montauk with our surfboards strapped to our Cherokees' roof racks. We're the girls giggling from our lime- and raspberry-colored beach towels, or partaking in some after-sun pampering at the Aveda Salon in Bridgehampton. We're the princes and princesses of the Upper East Side, and now we rule the beach. If you're one of us, aka the chosen ones, I'll be seeing you around the Island. It seems the season is already in full swing, especially now that some of our favorite faces have decided to grace us with their presences. Namely . . .

the dynamic duo

Just so you know, I can't keep up either. The weather report on these two seems to change daily. Are they friends? Are they enemies? Frenemies? Lovers? You know who I'm talking about: **B** and **S**, and the one thing I know for certain is that they're now certified, official fashion icons. Yes, we've known all along, but it seems the fashion-elite are finally catching up. After meeting **B** and **S** on the film set of *Breakfast at Fred's* last month, a certain monogrammed-velvet-slipper-wearing tastemaker—he of the capped teeth and year-round Palm Beach tan—has decided to keep the two girls at his Georgica Pond manse for inspiration. I hope his menagerie (which I hear includes several lapdogs, a pair of llamas, and two scary-thin saucer-eyed models plucked from Estonian obscurity to star in his upcoming ad campaign) doesn't become too jealous of the new arrivals. Oh, who am I kidding? Those two always manage to make everyone jealous. After all, they have kind of a lot to be jealous of.

summertime, and the living ain't easy . . .

. . . for everyone else. It seems some girls really do have all the luck, and everybody but us is plum out of it. For instance:

Poor **N**, working every day on the coach's split-level house or sulking by his pool in Georgica Pond all by his lonesome. What's he so upset about? The collapse of his romance with that skanky, gum-snapping townie girl? Believe me, she wouldn't know an Eres bikini if someone threw it at her Clairol Nice 'n Easy #102 bottle-blond head. But hello? I'm available. . . .

Poor **V**, trapped in her own circle of hell: living with longtime love **D** but not kissing him, and picking dried booger-globs off her black Carhartt cargos while the hyperactive little boys she's babysitting burp the alphabet.

And poor **D** . . . Well, maybe he doesn't deserve too much pity, since he was cheating on **V** with that flaky yoga girl, and now **V** is stuck in **D**'s little sister **J**'s pale-pink bedroom next door. Besides, he's still got his "work" and a seemingly bottomless canister of Folgers crystals. Sometimes it seems he likes bad coffee and bad poetry more than he likes girls. I cannot imagine!

your e-mail



Dear GG,

I don't know where else to turn, so please help me out. I tried to put the moves on my gorgeous upstairs neighbor, but it didn't work out. Then I met her incredible roommate, and it totally worked out . . . or seemed to. We had this romantic summer-in-the-city thing happening and she even said maybe I'd come visit her in the Hamptons. Then the other morning I knocked on her door and she was gone. No furniture, no clothes, no note, no nothing. What gives? Do I call her, or is that just too stalkerish?

— Bummed and Brokenhearted



Dear B&B,

The best of us can be hard to keep hold of. If it's meant to be,

she'll come back and shower you with soft petal kisses. And if not, treasure your memories and chalk it up to the fleeting nature of summer romances. BTW, if you're on the market, maybe I can help heal your broken heart? Send me your picture!

— GG

Q:

Dear GG,

All-time weirdest sighting ever: alien imposter version of a couple of girls I sort of know from the city, a hot blonde and a skinny brunette, giggling on the beach near the Maidstone Arms together. They were like Louis Vuitton knockoffs from a street vendor—from far away, they almost seemed like the real deal, but up close . . . Well, some things you just can't fake. Who the ___ are they?

— Seeing Double (or Quadruple)

A:

Dear SDoQ,

Now that a certain blond and brunette pair have become muses to a very famous and flamboyant fashion designer, we're going to be seeing more and more look-alikes. It's going to drive the boys insane. The question is, who will snag the real things?

— GG

sightings

B shopping for new luggage—a quest that took her to Barneys, then Tod's, then Bally. Doesn't that girl ever get tired? Obviously not, and neither does her AmEx Black card, which her mother just gave back to her following **B**'s \$30,000 international shopping spree. Yikes! **S** at the newsstand on the corner of Eighty-fourth and Madison, loading up on every available fashion and celebrity glossy, surreptitiously scanning the columns for mention of herself. A girl needs beach reading. A dejected-looking **N**, picking up a lukewarm six-pack of Corona at that

seedy liquor store in Hampton Bays. No word on whether he was stocking up for a romantic sunset barbecue on the beach or just drowning his sorrows. Given the shenanigans at the *Breakfast at Fred's* wrap party, probably the latter. **V** and **D** together (but not like you think) at the corner bodega at Ninety-second and Amsterdam, foraging for supplies for their communal home. They're such an old married couple—all toilet-paper shopping, no sex. **K** and **I** at the Union Square Whole Foods, obliviously bumping their shopping baskets into all the other customers while their black town car waited outside. Word to the wise, girls: you might be stocking up on watercress, rice cakes, and unflavored seltzer water to take to the Hamptons, but when you help yourself to five (or six or seven) of the truffle samples, you've blown your bikini-butt diet. Still, those things are good. **C** reemerging from a weeklong hiatus from the social scene. Turns out he's been ensconced in his favorite rooftop suite at the new Boatdeck Hotel on Gansevoort Street . . . and he wasn't alone: a certain brassy blonde whose roots appear to have grown at least half an inch was right by his side. Remember her? I know **N** does.

It's going to be a sultry, bustling July, people, but you know I never rest. You'll always know who's coming, who's going, who's crashing the hottest parties on Gin Lane, Further Lane, and all those tacky Hamptons nightclubs, and who's sneaking around under the cool cover of night. After all, I'm everywhere. Well, everywhere that's anywhere, anyway.

You know you love me.

gossip girl

s and b peek into the fun-house mirror

“Hello? Hello?” Blair Waldorf and Serena van der Woodsen swept into the sparsely decorated foyer of Bailey Winter’s East Hampton midcentury-modern retreat. Outside the hydrangeas were blooming, the pollen was flying, and the temperature was rising, but inside it felt cool, clean, and crisp. Blair dropped her salmon-pink leather Tod’s carryall onto the zebrawood floor and called out again, “Hellooooo?”

“Anybody home?” Serena pushed her vintage wood-paneled Chanel sunglasses on top of her head. She was used to houses full of antiques, but if she had a summer house, she’d want it to look just like this—sleek, clean, and antiqueless.

“You’re here, you’re here, you’re here!” The couturier to the jet set glided down the polished ebony staircase like an oversize toddler on Christmas morning, clapping his hands delightedly and shouting over the chorus of yelps from the five pugs following in his wake.

Blair swapped three air kisses with the designer and noticed, for the first time, that he was so short his head was exactly level with her chin. After providing the costumes for

Breakfast at Fred's, the teen remake of the Audrey Hepburn classic *Breakfast at Tiffany's* starring none other than Blair's oldest and best friend, Serena, Bailey had invited Blair and Serena to be his muses at his Georgica Pond estate for the summer. They would inspire his new line, Summer/Winter by Bailey Winter, a one-show-only collection of his most exciting summer and winter looks.

"Thank you so much for having us," Blair purred as the five little dogs sniffed enthusiastically at her pale pink South of the Highway-polished toes, clad that day in—of course—white linen Bailey Winter espadrilles.

"Don't be shy!" the designer cried over Blair's right shoulder, startling Serena, who was still standing on the threshold, taking in the scene. "Come here and give me a big kissie-poo immediately!"

Serena followed Blair's example, depositing her hunter green Hermès canvas tote on the well-polished floor and embracing the diminutive designer. The pugs swirled around her, rubbing their fat, drool-dripping jowls against her already-tanned legs.

"Oh my goodness, behave!" Bailey scolded the dogs, though they paid no attention, wagging their tiny blond rumps crazily. "Girls, let me introduce you. These are Azzedine, Coco, Cristóbal, Gianni, and Madame Grès." He nodded to his five bug-eyed dogs. "Kiddies, these are the girls: Blair Waldorf and Serena van der Woodsen, my new muses. Play nice!"

"Should I get the bags?" inquired a deep voice with a vaguely German accent. Blair turned to see a lanky, floppy-haired boy enter the room from the sunlight-flooded hallway

that led to the back of the house. Blair could see an almost-black infinity-edge swimming pool through the floor-to-ceiling windows behind him. The boy was wearing a threadbare orange T-shirt that barely covered his caramel-colored biceps, and tattered olive cargo shorts that hung below his knees. Where had she seen him before? In an Abercrombie catalog? In his underwear on a billboard in Times Square?

In her dreams?

“Oh hel-*looooo*, Stefan,” Bailey squealed. “The girls will stay in the pool house.”

“Certainly.” Stefan grinned, grabbing Blair’s and Serena’s abandoned bags.

“We’ve got more in the car,” Blair informed him, admiring the way his biceps flexed as he negotiated her overstuffed carryall.

“Naughty girl!” Bailey stage-whispered, catching Blair’s eye. He placed a well-tanned if slightly orange arm around her shoulders, giving her a squeeze. “He’s a treat, isn’t he?”

Blair nodded enthusiastically, although the sight of Stefan’s taut arms and sun-kissed hair made her think of the one-time/maybe-still love of her life, Nate Archibald. The sun always seemed to work magic on Nate’s body. He could be wearing a nerdy polo from back in ninth grade and the dorky pressed Brooks Brothers khaki Bermuda shorts his mom always bought for him, but with a tan he still looked ridiculously hot.

Pulling up to Bailey’s concrete-and-glass house a few minutes ago, Blair hadn’t been able to help but surreptitiously scan the neighboring driveways for sight of Nate’s car. His family always summered in Maine, but she’d heard he was staying at their new Hamptons beach house while he worked for his

coach. She'd never been there, but it was around here somewhere. Not that she'd really thought about it or anything.

Sure she hasn't.

It was the last summer vacation of her entire life—yes, college would have summer vacations, too, but Blair expected they would be filled with important internships at fashion magazines, archeological digs in the desert of Mumbai, or “anthropological” research in the south of France. In a mere eight weeks she'd pack her new bisque-colored BMW (a graduation present from her globe-trotting and gay but still-sweet dad) and drive to New Haven to begin her life as a Yale. Until then, she was determined to make the most of her life as a fashion muse. She'd spend her days sipping limoncello and chilled vodka by the pool and her nights kneading Stefan's arm muscles. Or searching for Nate. Or not searching for Nate. Whatever.

“Your house is beautiful.”

The sound of Serena's voice snapped Blair out of her reverie, and she stopped admiring Stefan's shapely arms and studied her best friend, who was sitting on the floor surrounded by Bailey's dogs, smiling happily. She wore a long white cotton spaghetti-strap Marni dress with purple crochet trim. On anyone else it would have looked horribly hippie Aunt Moonbeam from San Francisco, but of course it looked completely ravishing on Serena.

“I'm glad my humble abode meets Serena van der Woodsen's exacting standards,” Bailey replied.

Six bedrooms, seven baths, aviary, pool house, helipad, and tennis court: humble abode, indeed.

Serena cradled Coco in her arms and kissed her adorably

deformed-looking face. The pug wheezed and snorted happily. Serena hadn't rolled around on the floor with a dog since she'd dated Blair's stepbrother, Aaron. His dog, Mookie, had drooled all over Blair's bedroom and scared Kitty Minky, Blair's cat, into peeing everywhere, but Serena had a soft spot for him anyway. She wondered if Bailey would let Coco sleep with her in the guest house at night, like a real-life teddy bear.

"Someone's taken a shine to you, eh, Coco?" Bailey cooed, tickling the dog under her furry chin as though she were a hairy little baby. "Come, come. I'll give you the grand tour."

Blair frowned at the four other dogs, all staring at her expectantly. The last thing she wanted was some mutt drooling all over her linen Calypso tunic.

"This way, girls." Bailey beckoned, leading the five dogs and two girls like a flock of ducks down the cavernous hallway and into the main part of the house. The hall was lined with wall-size Ellsworth Kelly red circle paintings that Blair recognized from a spread on the Winter estate in last summer's *Elle Decor*, and opened onto a massive kitchen with poured concrete counters. A huge teak bowl filled with brilliant yellow lemons sat squarely on one counter. "This is the kitchen," explained their jovial host. "But the only thing you really need to know is that the bar is over there." He pointed to a metal corner table lined with an asymmetrical stack of glass decanters. "Allow me."

Bailey went to work pouring one of the clear liquors over ice and crushed mint leaves and handed two full martini glasses to Blair and Serena, who had to shift Coco under her arm to accept the drink.

“What is this anyway?” Blair raised her dark, perfectly arched eyebrows suspiciously.

“Just a mint tea for my girls!” Bailey emptied his own martini glass in a long gulp, and then poured himself a refill. “And the fridge is stocked, so raid away. Just don’t tell me about it—it’s swimsuit season, don’t you know.”

“Right,” Blair agreed, inwardly rolling her eyes. Old people were always talking about watching what they ate, but she intended to consume as much Cold Stone Creamery ice cream and Balthazar French bread as she liked and still look glorious in her new ivory-and-sky-blue striped Blumarine bikini.

Yummy.

“Come, come.” Bailey flung the doors open onto the sunny bluestone patio. “That’s the pool, and that,” he continued, pointing at a low, concrete bungalow that was like a miniature version of the main house, “is your home away from home. The pool house. I daresay you’ll be quite comfortable there. We’ve got the AC cranked, the sheets are imported from Umbria, and Stefan will fetch you anything you need.”

Anything?

“There are just two more very important people you girls *must* meet,” Bailey gushed, and clapped his hands gaily, spilling what remained of his cocktail. “Svetlana! Ibiza! Front and center, please!”

More dogs?

“Comink, Meester Winter!”

Two leggy amazons burst out of the pool house—their pool house—and rushed toward Blair, Bailey, and Serena. The dogs erupted into an ecstatic barking chorus.

“I Svetlana,” announced the girl with ass-length whitish-blond hair and no discernable hips. She was wearing a minuscule neon-orange bikini bottom and two tiny orange triangles over her nonexistent boobs.

“I *am* Ibiza,” pronounced the other girl carefully. She had chestnut-colored hair layered to frame her almost foxlike face, brilliant blue eyes, and a bright smile that was slightly marred by two very prominent buckteeth. Her lavender-and-gold striped bathing suit was one of those horrible and complicated cutout one-pieces that looks like a bikini from behind. A carefully placed circular cutout in front revealed her rather fuzzy navel.

Ew!

Ibiza, which sounded more like a brand of car than a name, placed her hands on Blair’s arm and air kissed her twice. Blair shuddered with horror, realizing that, except for her excruciating orthodontic issues, this girl looked exactly like her. She wrenched out of the girl’s grip and studied the other model, who was, on closer inspection, a diluted version of Serena, minus the grace, poise, and New England breeding. What the hell was going on?

“Ibiza and Svetlana are going to be the faces of the new line, darlings. On the ads, you know,” Bailey explained with a satisfied sigh. “You two are the inspiration, obviously.”

Obviously.

“They’re here to watch you. To *be* you, really,” he went on, dramatically raising his martini glass as if he were starring in *Rent* on Broadway. “I want them to capture your very essence!”

Um, hello, creepiness?

“Pleased to meet you.” Serena offered her hand to the girls, turning to her own doppelganger first. Serena was always unfailingly polite, but even she couldn’t stop skeeving out on the inside. Apart from the high-pitched voice and questionable taste in swimwear, Svetlana looked just like her, but not. It was like Halloween in fourth grade when she and Blair had dressed up like their homeroom teachers, complete with wigs, ugly Talbots cardigans, and brown loafers.

“It’s going to be like a giant slumber party!” Bailey screamed like a six-year-old girl.

Ibiza and Svetlana giggled fakely. “Pillow fight!” they yelled in unison in their thick eastern bloc accents.

“God, you two are divine!” Bailey threw his glass onto the velvety green lawn and clapped his hands together again in rapid-fire applause.

Blair glared at the quasi-mirror images of her and Serena. To everyone else, they probably looked like happy, carefree, malnourished Barbie dolls, but Blair had always been more perceptive than the average girl. Sure, Ibiza and Svetlana were probably supposed to just sit around waiting for Blair and Serena to rub off on them, but Blair could see something else in their beady foreign eyes. Something calculated and decidedly bitchy.

And it takes one to know one.

These girls weren’t interested in being second best. Ibiza and Svetlana definitely had other plans.

Well, then.

Blair turned and grinned at Serena, suddenly very happy that she had her best friend with her. She grabbed Serena’s hand. “Let’s cool off,” she whispered naughtily.

“Good idea.” Serena understood immediately. She let Coco wriggle out of her grasp. Then the pair leapt into the tempting blue swimming pool, shoes and all, squealing as they landed in the perfectly body-temperature water.

“Eek!” screeched Bailey as the chlorinated pool water splashed his gleaming white linen trousers. “Now this,” he announced to no one in particular, “is inspiring. *Hilfe!* Stefan, quickly: my sketchbook! *Bitte*, dearest!”

Blair dunked her head under the glittering, rippling water, feeling her dark hair swirl around her. She surfaced just in time to see Ibiza turn to Svetlana conspiratorially. And with that, the copycats stepped to the edge of the pool and cannonballed into the deep end, their bones slapping the water.

Welcome to your new family, girls!

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